

## YAG submission for internet consultation 'AMvB' and 'Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs'

24 June 2024

The Young Academy Groningen has taken notice of the proposed “Toets Anderstalig Onderwijs” (TAO) of new and existing education programs as part of the Wet Internationalisering in Balans (WIB). We have several concerns which we present below (not in order of importance).

- An important element of the TAO is the criterion of labour market needs. However, this element ignores the fact that many Bachelor level programs at a university do not educate people for a *specific* job, but they teach people analytical thinking, and scientifically sound content. These transferable skills and knowledge are highly valuable for Dutch society, and the strong focus on the criterion of preparing for a specific labour market need fully dismisses these added values.
- In the current TAO, the programs cannot ask for an exception when there is a lack of available staff, because programs (and as such: staff members) get time to learn the Dutch language. However, this completely underestimates the time it will cost for a person to learn Dutch to such a high level that they can confidently teach students about their knowledge and expertise. And it overestimates the number of skilled people (those with the right expertise) who are willing to do so. When the law requires non-Dutch speaking researchers to learn the Dutch language at such a high level in a short time, this will negatively affect the number and the quality of people willing to pursue an academic career at a Dutch university. This will inevitably lead to a ‘brain drain’ or loss of talented people.
- In addition, the proposal suggests that even when non-Dutch academic staff are not able to teach in Dutch, there is sufficient knowledge and expertise within the Dutch-speaking group. However, given the experience we have had being in hiring committees, this number seems highly overestimated. When no exception can be granted and there is no availability for staff, this implies we have to lower the standards of our lecturers. This will negatively affect the quality of education as well as research.
- The current definition of belonging to a specific region (“krimpregio” or “border region”) is based on the specific region within the Netherlands. But the way universities are related to each other is better reflected using the EU regions. For example, the University of the North initiative covers more than only the 3 northern Dutch provinces, but also includes northern parts of Germany. This definition of regional aligns much more realistically with how universities are connected within a region.

In sum, the aim of the WIB and as a consequence the TAO is to better balance the number of Dutch vs. English programs in the Netherlands, and that these measures are meant to reinforce the importance of the Dutch language in Dutch academia. This seems to fully overlook the fact that international discourse generally takes place in English. By taking these measures, this will not be changed. In fact, these measures will end up having the opposite result: isolating Dutch academia and lowering the status that Dutch science (research and teaching) has gained over the years. This will also negatively influence attracting skilled and knowledgeable lecturers.

Finally, it implies that many courses no longer be taught by leaders in the field, resulting in a lower quality of education.