

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR: UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

The current discussion on internationalisation and the parliamentary motion on reducing the intake of international students has not escaped the attention of Maastricht University's (UM) council. By means of this letter, on behalf of the (UM) student and staff community, it wishes to express its deep concern with the "one-size fits all" solution direction that is now likely to be followed.

The university council believes that such a solution is very detrimental to a border region, with a strongly ageing population like the province of Limburg. A province also traditionally characterised by its international character.

Together with other higher education institutions, Maastricht University plays an important role in innovating and helping to develop the province. The influx of students, both national and international, is indispensable for this. The influx of international students in Limburg, too, has a significant and stimulating effect on the local economy. First of all, graduates are a potential solution to existing labour market shortages. In addition, it also provides an opportunity to attract start-ups, companies and other organisations, thanks to the wide and diverse supply of qualified personnel delivered by these educational institutions.

The University Council also wishes to emphasise the link that exists between the number of international students and the internationality of the academic staff working within the university. It is very important that scientific talent and research projects are retained for the region. Projects such as the Brightlands campuses, and the Einstein Telescope are only possible thanks to the competitiveness and academic competence that UM brings to the table. If UM can no longer provide this added value, it is very likely that it will become increasingly difficult to qualify to set up, organise, or complete large-scale research projects. This will not only affect the region, but also the position of the Netherlands as a country of knowledge.

The council wants to reiterate the fact that Limburg is a border region, with a very unique place within the Netherlands. Besides students, workers from almost all occupational groups commute to Limburg daily from Belgium and Germany. This, too, expresses the deeply intertwined international character of the region.

It is therefore fitting that UM reflects this in both its student and staff population. But also in its educational offering. As the UM community, we believe that this international composition not only adds value to the region, but also to further knowledge development in the Netherlands and beyond.

The council believes that fostering an international student and workforce community is the solution, not the problem.

We therefore call on the minister to take into account the different signature of each university, the region and domains in which a university acts and which it represents, and strongly urge customisation.