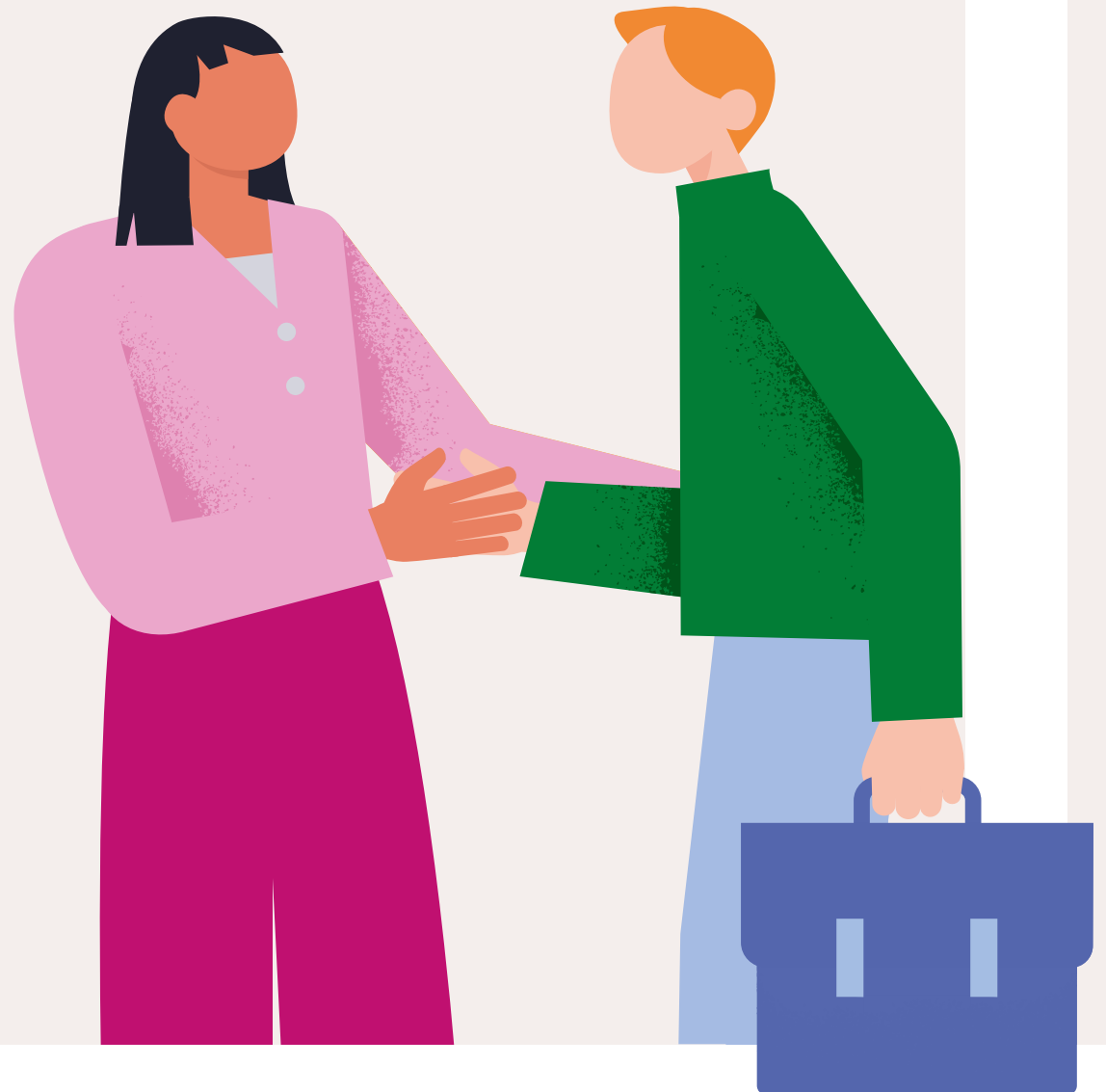


# Hiring international graduates

The employers' perspective

June 2025

**nuffic**  
meet the world





# Key findings

This study examines employers' attitudes towards hiring international graduates in the Netherlands, using survey and focusgroup/interview data. With this study, we look into the perceived advantages, disadvantages and employers' needs from universities and the government.

## 8 out of 10

employers experience more advantages than disadvantages with having different nationalities in the workplace.

**Diversity is the main advantage of hiring internationals, along with:**

personal qualities

specialised knowledge

innovation



## Barriers to Hiring



**3 out of 10** employers always/regularly see language barriers as an obstacle.



**2 out of 10** employers always/regularly see administrative procedures as an obstacle.

## Advantages of international graduates with a Dutch degree

- Hold qualifications that meet Dutch educational standards.
- Are already familiar with Dutch society and culture.



## Employers' needs from universities & government

### From universities

- More focus on labour market needs.
- Closer collaboration between universities and employers.

### From the government

- Reduced administrative burdens for hiring international talent.
- Continued investment in higher education and regional development.



# Contents

Key findings	2
Introduction and previous research	4
Methodology	12
Results	19
Conclusions	51
Reference list	54
Acknowledgments	57
Appendices	58



# Introduction and previous research

Advantages of hiring international graduates for the country and the organisation	6
Employer-perceived disadvantages	7
Aim of this research	10



## Definitions

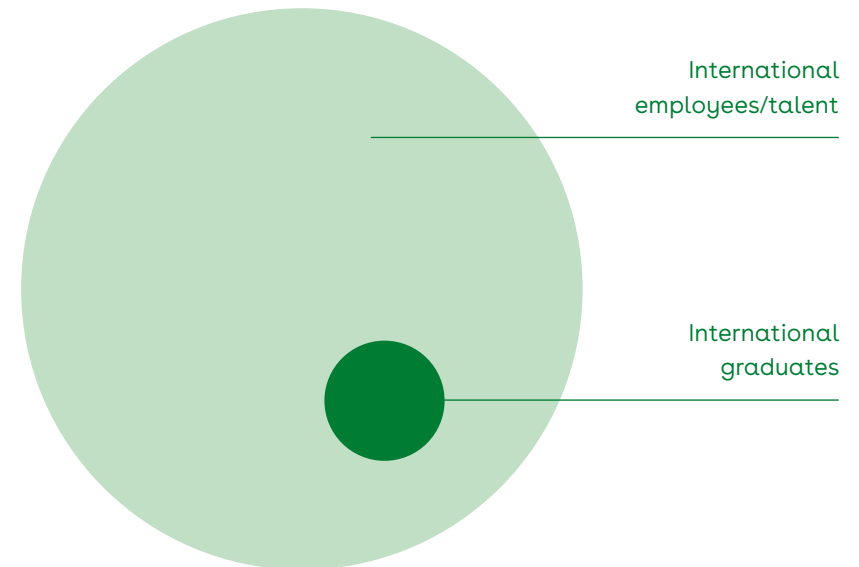
The focus of our research is the employers' perspective on hiring international graduates. We define **international graduates** as internationals (non-Dutch passport holders) who completed their degree (Bachelor's or Master's) at a Dutch university.

During the course of the study and in our conversations with employers we found that employers most often understand international graduates to be internationals regardless of where they studied. To make this distinction clear, we define **international employees or international talent** as internationals (non-Dutch passport holders) working in the Netherlands, regardless of whether they completed their degree at a Dutch university. Only when we specifically use the term 'international graduates', do we mean internationals who hold a degree from a Dutch university. For a visualisation, see [figure 1](#) on the right.

In this report we often refer to **universities**, meaning both universities of applied science and research universities in the Netherlands.

In our research, we use the terms 'companies' and 'organisations' interchangeably. It is important to note that 'companies' does not exclusively refer to private entities, but may also include public organisations.

**Figure 1.** Conceptual visualisation of the relation between international graduates and international employees/talent. International graduates are part of the bigger category of international employees/talent, but have as distinct characteristic that they graduated from a Dutch university.





### **Entering the Dutch labour market is challenging**

In 2024, 30,020 international graduates from the 2013-14 to 2018-19 cohorts were still living in the Netherlands five years after completing their studies at a Dutch higher education institution (Nuffic, 2025). Staying after graduation is not always an easy road for international graduates, as many of them face practical, financial and linguistic challenges (Nuffic, 2023). Specifically, 51% of the international graduates in this previous study left the Netherlands because they could not find suitable work and 69% struggled with the Dutch language requirements during job applications. Furthermore, almost a third (30%) experienced discrimination at work and during job interviews. These obstacles, among others, can make it difficult for international graduates to enter the Dutch labour market.

## **Advantages of hiring international graduates for the country and the organisation**

International graduates not only make important contributions to the Dutch labour market, but also to the organisation's overall success. Below, we give an overview of previous literature on such contributions at a national level, as well as literature on employers' perceptions on the contributions international graduates make to the organisation (organisational level).

### **International graduates contribute to the Dutch labour market**

International graduates who stay and work in the Netherlands make important contributions to the Dutch labour market (CPB, 2019; Nuffic, 2022). The Dutch labour market is currently tight, meaning that there are more vacancies than people to fill the vacancies. This results in companies struggling to find personnel (UWV, 2024). Estimates suggest a labour shortage of nearly half a million workers between 2023 and 2027 (PwC, 2022). Hiring international graduates can help address this challenge by expanding the available talent pool. This is vital for economic growth—especially in the context of an ageing population and ongoing labour shortages (Nuffic, 2022).

### **International graduates can be an asset for the organisation**

Hiring international graduates is not only beneficial at a national level, but also for the organisation (organisational level). Literature suggests that employers value the contributions that international graduates make in their organisation – namely diversity, innovation, country-specific knowledge and language skills.

### **Diversity, innovation and success**

Firstly, employers perceive that hiring international graduates can help the organisation become more diverse, innovative, and successful. Employers view the diversity and new knowledge international graduates bring as an asset (Johnston et al., 2021). Moreover, they believe that a multicultural workforce enhances



creativity and that internationals are hard workers (Fang et al., 2022). In that previous study, employers with such beliefs were more inclined to hire international graduates. Lastly, employers feel that internationals can offer different perspectives and innovative ideas, which can improve the overall performance of the company (Kukushkin & Watt, 2009).

### **Country-specific knowledge and language skills**

Secondly, employers in a previous study indicated that their companies can benefit from international graduates' intercultural competences and multilingualism (Shchegolev et al., 2016). International graduates grew up in another country and have country-specific knowledge, which can be useful when doing business with this country. Employers also appreciate international graduates' fluency in foreign languages.

## **Employer-perceived disadvantages**

### **Employers also see disadvantages**

Employers not only see advantages in hiring international graduates, but also some disadvantages. The main disadvantages identified in the literature are related to the perceived lack of language skills and specific interpersonal qualities, as well as cultural differences and administrative hurdles.

### **Lack of language skills**

Some employers perceive that international graduates lack language skills (De Lange et al., 2019). Particularly, not speaking the local language can be seen as a disadvantage by employers. This can be especially the case in specific sectors such as health care or education, where language skills are essential. Furthermore, not speaking the local language can be an obstacle for employers in small- and medium-sized companies because resources for recruitment and hiring in another language are often limited (Nigitsch et al., 2024; Kukushkin & Watt, 2009).

### **Administrative burdens**

Administrative issues can delay or deter employers from hiring international graduates (Nigitsch et al., 2024). These issues are linked to lengthy processing times for work permits, the legal complexities surrounding visas, and uncertainty about labour law matters. Furthermore, outdated and slow immigration processes can be particularly challenging for smaller and less experienced companies.

### **Lack of specific interpersonal qualities**

Some employers think that international graduates lack specific interpersonal qualities that are appropriate to the Dutch culture (De Lange et al., 2019). Some examples of such qualities are the ability to work independently, taking initiative, speaking up, and taking responsibility for your tasks. Moreover, some employers may fear that international graduates may have difficulties fitting into the organisation and understand the local workplace norms (Johnston et al., 2021).



### Cultural differences

Some employers also fear that cultural differences can potentially create friction in the workplace and can be difficult to manage (SCP, 2023; Johnston et al., 2021; De Lange et al., 2019). For instance, some employers think that it can be demanding for the organisation to accommodate certain religious or cultural needs that internationals may have (Johnston et al., 2021). Moreover, negative stereotyping and prejudice against internationals can influence the selection process, further hindering their integration into the labour market (De Lange et al., 2019).



### Explainer

#### *Current legislation on labour market access and residency for international graduates*

Students from the European Economic Area (EEA) (the European Union plus Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Iceland) have full access to the Dutch labour market and can also reside in the country without having formal employment, as long as they have enough money to live on (IND, 2024).

Students from outside the EEA need a study permit to study, and after graduation they can apply for a residence permit for an orientation year (IND, 2025). With this one-year

residence permit, they have full access to the labour market without a work permit. During this year, an international graduate can look for employment that will make them eligible for a residence permit for highly skilled migrants.

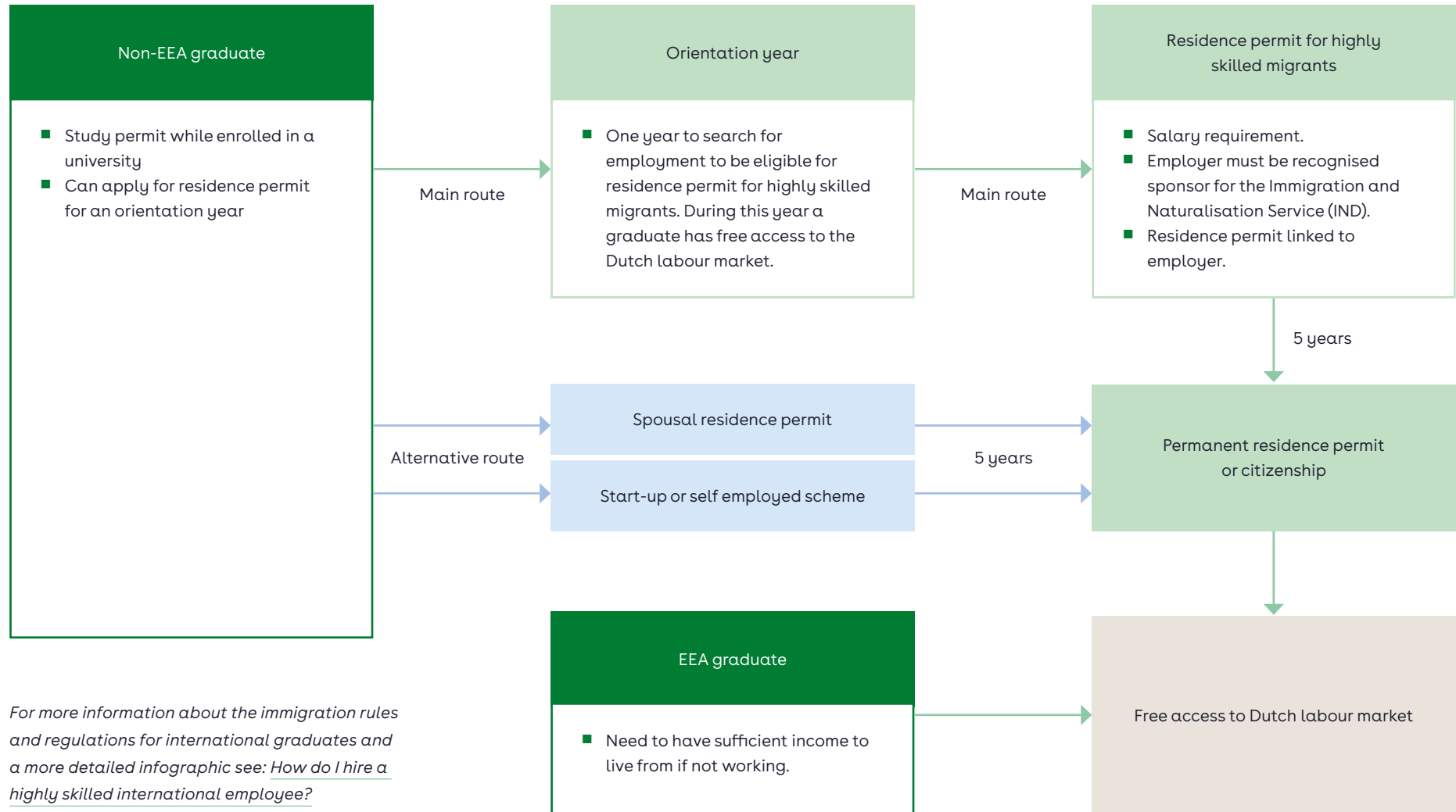
To apply for a residence permit for the purpose of employment as a highly skilled migrant (under the highly skilled migrant scheme), the employer must be a recognised sponsor with the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), and the job must meet specific salary requirements. For graduates from Dutch universities, the minimum salary is lower than the standard amount. The residence permit for highly skilled migrants is linked to the employer of the graduate. When a highly skilled migrant loses their employment, they lose their legal residence status.

After five years of legal residence, one can apply for a permanent residence permit in the Netherlands. Under certain conditions one can also apply for citizenship after five years. Apart from the highly skilled migrant scheme, an international graduate could also stay in the Netherlands by beginning a start-up, being self-employment, or obtaining a spousal residence permit.

On the next page you can find a simplified infographic of these schemes (see [Infographic 1](#)).



**Infographic 1.** Labour market access and residency for non-EEA graduates



For more information about the immigration rules and regulations for international graduates and a more detailed infographic see: [How do I hire a highly skilled international employee?](#)



## Aim of this research

### **Lack of prior knowledge on the employers' perspective in the Netherlands**

Previous studies have examined the perspectives of international graduates, specifically the various challenges they face when accessing the labour market, as well as what helps them find employment (Nuffic, 2024). However, apart from looking solely into the experiences of international graduates, it is also important to examine the employers' perspective. For instance, the concept of 'employer-ability' (Morley, 2001) refers to employers' ability and willingness to hire internationals (Slotte, 2023). Are employers in the Netherlands open and ready to hire international graduates? And if so, what challenges do they face in employing them?

There have been relevant studies on employers' perspective in other countries such as Canada, Australia, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Germany and Russia (Fang, 2022; Johnston et al., 2021; Interlocality, 2025; Kukushkin, 2009; Nigitsch et al., 2024; Shchegolev et al., 2016). However, studies focusing on the Dutch context are limited (De Lange et al., 2019). Moreover, research in the Netherlands has mainly focused on internationals in general, leaving a gap for studying internationals with a Dutch higher education degree in particular. Since this group has already lived and studied in the Netherlands before seeking employment,

findings for this particular group may differ compared to the general group of internationals.

### **Aim of the current study and research questions**

Given the abovementioned gaps in the literature, the aim of the current research is to shed more light on the employers' perspective on international graduates in the Netherlands. Specifically, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the attitudes of employers in the Netherlands towards hiring international graduates, namely the advantages and disadvantages they perceive. The needs from different stakeholders are also examined.

#### **Research questions**

1. What are the attitudes of employers in the Netherlands towards hiring international graduates?
  - Do they perceive more advantages or disadvantages in hiring them?
  - Which advantages and disadvantages do they perceive?
2. What do employers need from different stakeholder groups (universities and the government) in hiring international graduates?



### *Effect of company size, region, and sector*

In our analysis, we also took company's size, region and sector into consideration. This is because previous studies have shown that these factors can play a role in employers' attitudes towards hiring internationals (Fang, 2022; De Lange et al., 2019; Nigitsch et al, 2024; Kukushkin & Watt, 2009). More specifically, larger companies, as well as those based in urban areas, are more inclined to hire immigrants compared to small- to medium-sized companies and those located in rural areas (Fang, 2022). In fact, more international graduates find jobs in specific areas of the Netherlands, such as the Randstad, compared to other/more rural areas (Nuffic, 2025). Furthermore, employers in sectors such as retail, hospitality, and food industry tend to be more open in hiring international graduates compared to employers in other sectors (Fang, 2022; De Lange et al., 2019).

Addressing the abovementioned research questions can contribute to the development of policies and practices among different stakeholders such as the government and universities. The latter in particular have a crucial role in connecting international graduates with the labour market. Gaining more research insights into this topic can inform relevant policies. These policies can help overcome barriers to employing international graduates in the Netherlands, and result in higher retention of international graduates. Increasing the retention can further help combating labour market shortages in the Netherlands.



# Methodology

Data collection	13
Method of analysis	14
Limitations	15
Characteristics of the survey respondents	15





The method used in this study is a mixed methods approach containing both quantitative data collected with a survey, as well as qualitative data based on focus groups and interviews. This mixed methods approach allows the research question to be answered using multiple types of data – combining quantitative data with qualitative insights. This combination facilitates a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the topic (Harvard Catalyst, 2023).

## Data collection

### 1. Survey

For the quantitative data collection, we distributed an online survey between August and November 2024. The survey questions were developed based on previous literature and the research questions.

The topics involved in the survey were the following:

1. Demographics regarding the respondent's role, company's origin, region, size, sector, work type, as well as presence and origin of international employees/graduates at the company;
2. Language use in vacancies, during job interviews, formal and informal communication;
3. Obstacles/disadvantages in hiring international graduates;
4. Advantages in hiring international graduates;
5. Weighing advantages and disadvantages;

6. Skills and qualities employers paying attention to when hiring;
7. Discrimination against international graduates;
8. Inclusion at the workplace.

The survey was aimed at professionals involved in the hiring process at their company/organisation. To find participants for this survey, we used different methods. We shared the survey with our contacts via email, social media such as LinkedIn, and we handed out flyers at different events and conferences. The most important characteristics of the survey respondents will be discussed in the section '*Characteristics of the survey respondents*'. For more detailed information on the demographics and representativeness of the survey, see [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#) respectively.

### 2. Focus group discussions and interviews

The qualitative part of the data collection consisted of focus group discussions and interviews with a total of 34 employers. Between August and October 2024, we conducted eight physical focus group discussions in various areas in the Netherlands. Each focus group session took about two hours and included 3-8 participants. Within the same time period, we conducted three online semi-structured interviews with additional respondents.

The topics of the focus groups and interviews were decided based on the literature review and the research questions. The questions



we asked during the focus groups and interviews focused on the following topics:

1. The added value/advantages and disadvantages of hiring international graduates;
2. Experienced obstacles in hiring and retaining international graduates;
3. Language issues;
4. Interventions to attract international graduates;
5. Inclusive work environment;
6. Needs from different stakeholders such as the government and universities.

The participants for the focus groups and interviews were selected from Nuffic's network and with the help of several regional economic boards and other associations (for more details see [Acknowledgments](#)). Participants were diverse in terms of region, role and type of company/organisation and their companies varied in the extent to which they employed internationals. For more information, specifically about the characteristics of the focus group and interview participants, see [Appendix 3](#).

## Method of analysis

### 1. Survey

In the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked whether they were involved in the hiring process of their company. Only respondents who said that they were involved were included in the analysis. In total, 549 respondents started filling in the survey, but not all completed it. In our analysis, we included respondents who filled in the survey at least until question 20 (of the 28 in total), as this included the most important demographic questions. This gave us a total of 382 respondents. To analyse and visualise the data we used the Tableau, SPSS and Python software. When relevant, to examine if the differences between groups were statistically significant, we conducted a series of t-tests.

### 2. Focus group discussions and interviews

The focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with employers were recorded and transcribed. We analysed the content of the transcriptions with the method of thematic analysis by coding the fragments to pre-determined themes and subthemes and creating new codes and themes when necessary. To do this, we used the NVivo software.



## Limitations

A few limitations need to be taken into account when interpreting the findings of this research.

Firstly, it is possible that respondents who had some affinity with international employees or internationalisation in general were more likely to fill in the survey than those without. Specifically, a high share (85%) of our survey respondents hire internationals in their company. This high percentage implies an overrepresentation of companies who are more likely to hire internationals<sup>1</sup>.

Secondly, even though we asked all participants in the focus groups and interviews, specifically about international graduates, sometimes participants were referring to international employees in general. Therefore, it is possible that the terms 'international graduate' and 'international employee or international' have been used interchangeably, and that our findings could be applicable to both groups.

Thirdly, it is possible that multiple respondents from the same company answered the survey. While this may have led to some

companies being represented more than once, we still consider this valuable, as employer experiences can vary within the same company.

## Characteristics of the survey respondents

Below, we present the most important characteristics of the survey respondents.

### Role

Respondents in the survey were involved in the hiring process of their company and had different roles and responsibilities. Specifically, a little more than half of them (52.4%) were working as directors/team leaders/managers/coordinators. The rest (47.6%) were employees with a mix of positions such as Human Resources employees and recruiters.

### Origin of the company

The majority of survey respondents (73.3%) worked at Dutch companies (Dutch-controlled companies based in the Netherlands with no subsidiaries abroad). The remaining 26.7% of the respondents worked at multinational companies, being either Dutch multinationals (Dutch-controlled companies with subsidiaries abroad) or foreign multinationals (companies under ultimate control abroad).

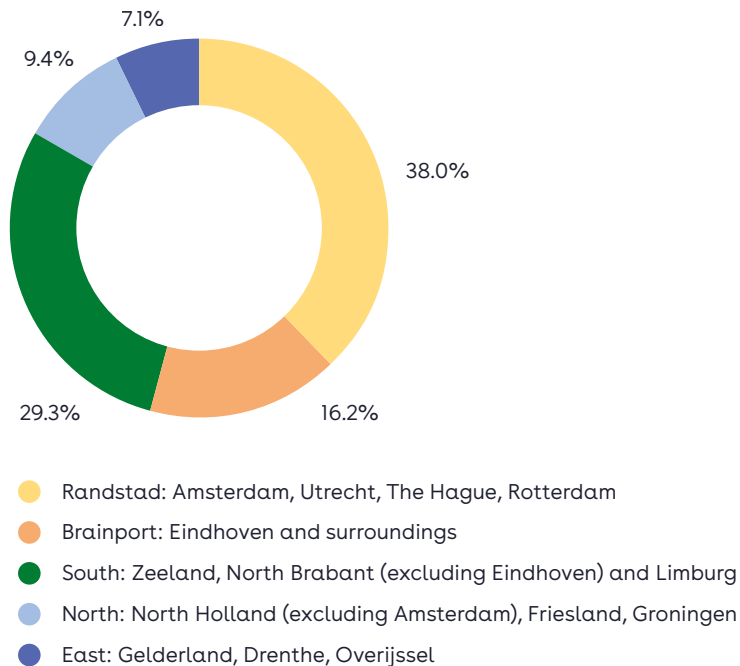
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<sup>1</sup> Disclaimer: It is difficult to quantify this based on national statistics, as no recent data is available on the share of companies hiring internationals in the Netherlands, to the best of our knowledge.

## Region

For the purposes of this study we defined five regions, as shown in [Figure 2](#). More than half of respondents (54.2%) worked in companies that were located in the Randstad or the Brainport area (38% and 16.2% respectively). 3 out of 10 respondents worked for companies in the South. Respondents from the North and the East together made up 16.5% of all respondents.

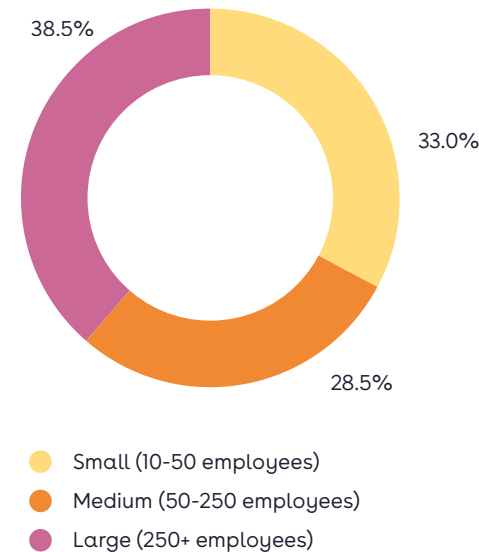
**Figure 2.** Answers to the question: 'In what region is your company primarily located?' N=382



## Company size

In the survey, we defined company size as small (10-50 employees), medium (50-250 employees) and large (250+ employees). More than half of respondents worked in small- or medium-sized companies (28.4% and 30.3% respectively) and 41.3% worked in large companies (see [Figure 3](#)). Micro companies (1-9 employees) were not included in this study.

**Figure 3.** Answers to the question: 'What is the company size (of your particular office)?' N=382

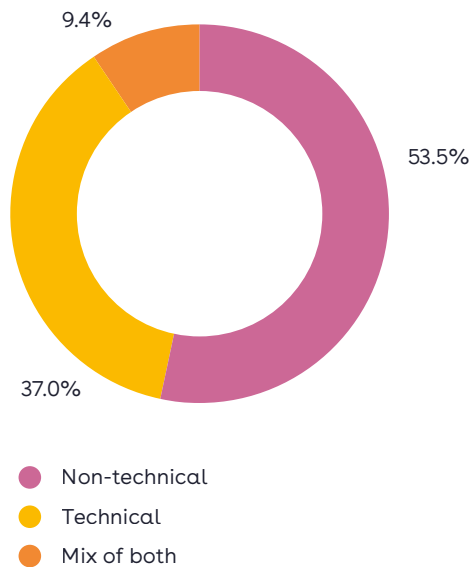




## Sector

Respondents worked in different sectors, which we grouped by technical and non-technical sector, based on previous research (Nuffic, 2024). Particularly, 53.5% worked in companies that operate in a non-technical sector (e.g. culture, sports and recreation, education, academia, research and development, transport and logistics), 37% worked in the technical sector (e.g. IT and technology, construction, and industry), and 9.4% a mix of both (see [Figure 4](#)).

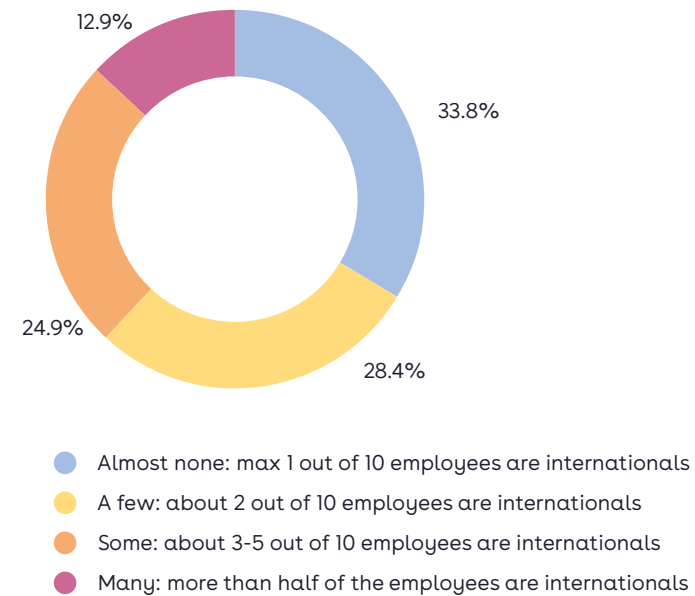
**Figure 4.** Answers to the question: 'What sector is your company primarily engaged in?' N=381



## International employees in the company

We asked respondents whether there are international employees working at their company. 84.8% of them said yes. Respondents who answered this question with 'Yes', were asked to estimate the proportion of international employees at their company. About one third (33.8%) of the respondents indicated that they have almost no internationals at their company (see [Figure 5](#)).

**Figure 5.** Answers to the question: 'What is the (estimated) percentage of international employees?' N=315





A bit more than a quarter (28.4%) said that they have a few internationals: about 2 out of 10 employees are internationals. Another quarter (24.9%) said that they have some internationals, with approximately 3-5 out of 10 employees being internationals. Lastly, according to a small percentage of our respondents (12.9%) international employees at their company are the majority, more than half.

### **International graduates in the company**

Respondents who indicated having international employees in their company, were asked whether they specifically have international graduates in their company (internationals who graduated in the Netherlands). 80% of them said 'Yes', 13% said 'No' and 7% did not know.

# Results

Attitudes	20
More advantages or disadvantages	20
Perceived advantages	22
Perceived disadvantages	29
Differences based on sector, region and company's size	42
Needs	45
Needs from universities	46
Needs from the government	48



# Attitudes



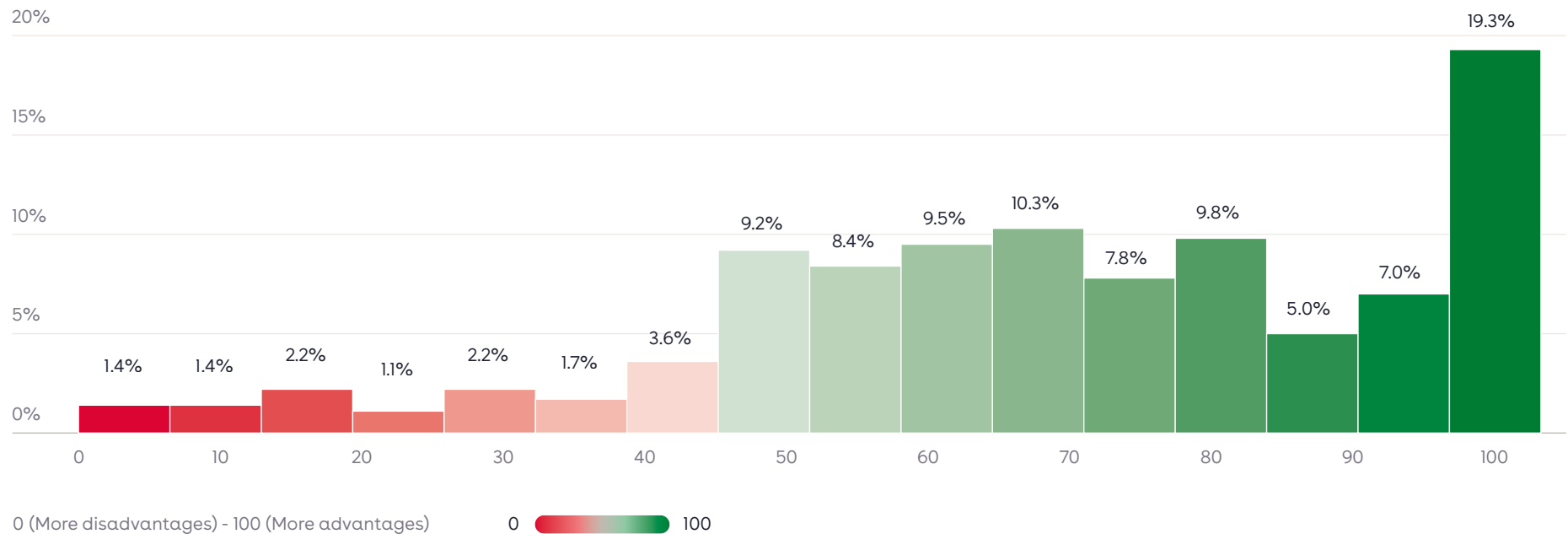
## More advantages or disadvantages

### Employers see more advantages than disadvantages

Survey respondents were asked if they thought different nationalities in one workplace had more advantages or disadvantages, in a scale ranging from 0 (more disadvantages) to 100 (more advantages). About 22.8% of all survey respondents

gave a number below 50, meaning that these respondents perceived more disadvantages than advantages. On the contrary, 77.2% of all survey respondents gave an answer ranging from 50 to 100. Particularly, 19.3% selected the maximum value on the scale (95-100). The average score was 69.5. Thus, we can conclude that for the majority of our respondents the advantages outweigh the disadvantages (see [Figure 6](#)).

**Figure 6.** Answers to the question: 'How do you experience different nationalities in one workplace? It has more disadvantages (0) - more advantages (100)' N=358



For employers, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages when they decided to hire internationals and work with different nationalities in their workforce. As noted in one of the open questions of the survey:

*'People still often think in terms of obstacles, whereas we should see it as an opportunity.'*

On the contrary, it was also observed that some companies are not fully prepared or willing to accommodate a diverse workforce. As mentioned in the focus groups and interviews, there are companies who have a labour shortage, but are unwilling to broaden their talent pool to internationals. According to employers, some possible reasons for that are that people do not see the urgency or added value of hiring internationals or that they fear the unknown.

Deciding not to hire internationals is in some cases not a result of a rational decision-making process, but rooted in biased beliefs. A few employers shared that there have been instances within their companies where Dutch candidates are being favoured over international applicants. The following example of hiring discrimination was mentioned:

*'I personally think that many of the obstacles we are talking about here in hiring, originate with the companies and the managers themselves, and their limiting beliefs. I often see that when people can choose between a Dutch person with the same papers versus an international with the same papers, then yes, 90% (just a guess) actually choose the Dutch person, which is perhaps very unfair, right? Perhaps the others are actually better. But I still think that it is partly due to their beliefs.'*

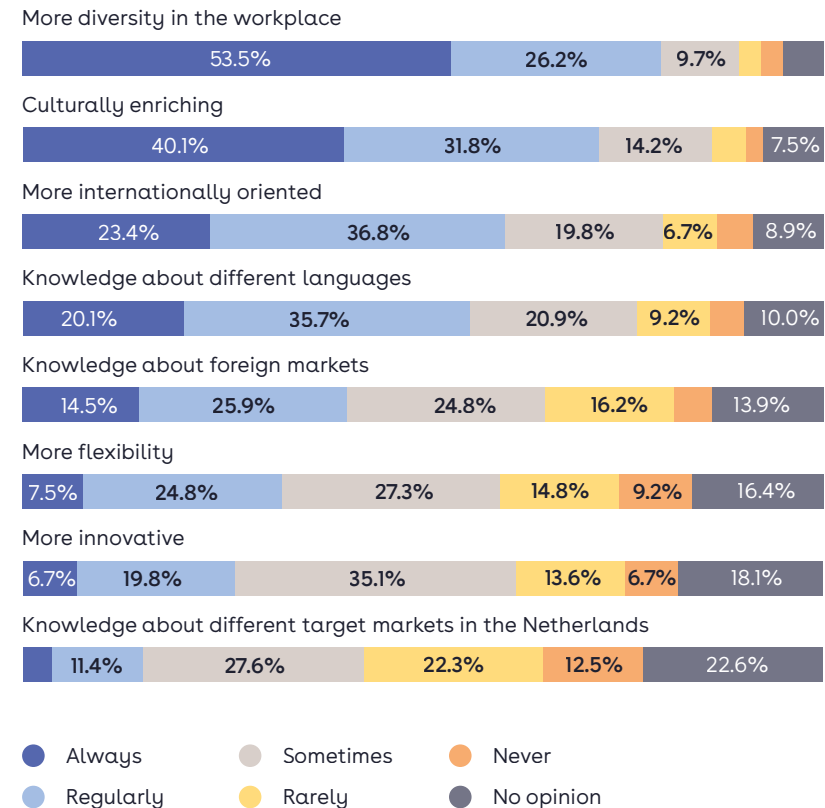
## Perceived advantages

### Diversity was the main advantage

In our survey we asked respondents how often they experience certain advantages specifically when hiring international graduates. The answer options were 'always', 'regularly', 'sometimes', 'rarely', 'never', and 'no opinion'. The findings are outlined in [Figure 7](#).

Bringing more diversity into the workplace was regarded as the most experienced advantage by respondents. Almost 80% of the respondents always or regularly experienced diversity as an advantage. The other main advantages were cultural enrichment (71.9%), international orientation (60.2%) and knowledge of other languages (55.8%). Approximately 40% of respondents always or regularly experienced international graduates' knowledge of foreign markets as an advantage. Knowledge about different target markets in the Netherlands was experienced the least by respondents as an advantage. Regarding the latter, almost a quarter of the respondents (22.6%) had no opinion.

**Figure 7.** Answers to the question: 'To what extent do you experience the following as an advantage when hiring an international graduate?' N=359







As mentioned above, our survey respondents see advantages in hiring international graduates, such as diversity, cultural enrichment, knowledge, flexibility and innovation. These survey results are in line with findings from the focus groups and interviews. More specifically, the employers we talked to also see advantages in the area of diversity, innovation, personal qualities, knowledge and skills. By analysing the focus groups and interviews, we identified two main categories of perceived advantages:

- A. The first category of perceived advantages refers to the **diversity, innovation and personal qualities** internationals bring to the company (mainly focused on 'soft skills').
- B. The second category is about having **more highly skilled professionals** in the company (mainly focused on 'hard skills').

Below, we discuss the findings from the focus groups and interviews along the lines of these two categories. The findings pertaining to international employees in general is described first, and then those specific to international graduates are examined when relevant.

## A. Diversity, innovation and personal qualities

The following advantages refer to international employees in general, but can also be applicable to international graduates specifically.

### 1. Diverse and inclusive organisation

Employers in more than half of our focus groups/interviews mentioned that hiring internationals can change the culture of the organisation in a positive way. For instance, a diverse work environment can help employees gain fresh perspectives and reflect on their own culture and work habits. Employers indicated that a culturally diverse workplace, when successful, can promote openness and teamwork. Moreover, it was mentioned that companies need employees who can operate in an international environment. While internationals often possess those skills, they are not exclusive to them and can also be found in Dutch employees.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that their companies want to be a reflection of society and profile themselves as being inclusive. Thus, a multicultural team reflects the international character of the Netherlands. For example, one employer said:

*'We want to be a company for everyone, to be a good reflection of society and that also includes internationals.'*



Another advantage mentioned in the focus groups and interviews is that internationals bring connections from their home countries and global communities. Their ability to build networks can also attract more talent, further strengthening the company's workforce. For example, when there are already international employees in the company it becomes easier to be more attractive to other international candidates. Diversity is also appreciated by Dutch candidates. For example, one employer noted:

*'What I do see as being of added value for Dutch employees, for Dutch applicants, is that being an international-minded organisation provides an extra level of attraction. That's certainly the case with Gen Z and everything that goes with it. We get that question more often from applicants, including from Dutch applicants: "How many nationalities do you have?", etcetera. Because it means you are better.'*

## 2. Diversity fosters innovation

In almost all focus groups/interviews it was mentioned that international employees bring diverse perspectives to the workplace. As noted, internationals offer unique problem-solving approaches that may not have been previously considered. The combination of different ways of thinking may enhance creativity and lead to more effective solutions. Overall, more diversity within teams fosters innovation in the work output,

enriches the organisation and drives company performance. For example, one employer indicated:

*'[Having international employees in the organisation] gives different perspectives. In other words, I think one person from New Zealand, one from Brazil and one from Nijmegen know more than three people from Nijmegen. I think having a different perspective, having more perspective, therefore that probably results in better decision-making.'*

## 3. Proactive and flexible employees

Employers also found that internationals often demonstrate high proactivity and adaptability. Moving to a new country requires flexibility and resilience, making international employees valuable assets to companies seeking open-minded professionals who can quickly adjust to different work environments. For instance, one employer mentioned:

*'A student who decides to study abroad or someone who decides to work abroad as a knowledge worker are often people who are more enterprising, more proactive, more focused on gaining new experiences.'*

## 4. Dedicated and loyal employees

In about half of our focus groups/interviews employers noted that international employees have extra appreciation for job opportunities in the Netherlands and consequently often





demonstrate strong commitment and work ethic. As mentioned by employers, international employees tend to be more loyal and thankful for their job compared to Dutch employees.

It was also mentioned that international employees are more present at work, because, for many of them, work is more than just a job. As internationals often have a smaller circle of family and friends in the Netherlands, work becomes also a place for acquiring and maintaining social connections. For example, one employer mentioned:

*'Because they are coming to a new country, they naturally don't have a large social network here [...] They are meeting with each other a lot outside work, and also go to institutions like the expat help, for example. That really means they are socially more active than the nationals that we have within the company. That's something that can also have a positive effect in my experience.'*

Moreover, it was observed by employers that the strong dedication of internationals make them valuable contributors to organisational stability. International employees tend to stay longer in the company compared to local employees, who may change jobs more frequently. Employers suspect that one possible reason for this is that international employees perceive finding new opportunities as more challenging. For example, one employer mentioned:

*'Because for people that come from abroad, when they find a job, they stick with it because they know their chances for them getting another position are lower [...] The risks of leaving a job are higher so they stick with it.'*

On the flip side, in about three focus groups/interviews employers mentioned that some companies may take advantage of the dedication of internationals, try to get more out of their employees and push the boundaries of labour legislation. As they said, there are employers who try to benefit in that way from international candidates from specific countries that have lower salary standards than local candidates.

## B. More highly skilled professionals

### 1. Larger talent pool

In almost all focus groups/interviews employers agreed that hiring internationals gives companies the opportunity to recruit from a larger talent pool. Given the labour market shortages in the Netherlands, employers face a practical issue; they often have difficulties filling in vacancies. For example, one employer mentioned:

*'It is actually an extra group of talent that you can tap into in a time of large staff shortages.'*



Furthermore, hiring internationals can help companies and the region achieve certain goals and ambitions such as expanding the company and increasing the number of highly educated professionals in the region.

## 2. Specialised knowledge

A larger talent pool can also provide access to more specialised knowledge, which is another aspect that employers highly value in internationals. It was mentioned that companies are in need of staff with specialised knowledge and that the available talent pool in the Netherlands is often not big enough. Especially when searching for specialised knowledge in an international field like the technical sector, having a larger talent pool gives employers the opportunity to be more selective. For instance, one employer said:

*'We mainly look at covering our increased need for personnel and getting the best knowledge from the market. And being in the IT domain, it's just a shame to only stick to Dutch applicants. Specific knowledge is also an issue in this regard.'*

## 3. Knowledge on foreign markets

Another advantage mentioned by employers was that international employees bring global market knowledge. Their understanding of foreign markets and business cultures is especially valuable for companies looking to expand internationally. The following example was mentioned:

*'If you're going to expand your business to a German market and your company's base is here, then by having Germans in your company as your employee, you get more and better insights into the German market.'*

## 4. Language skills

According to employers, the fact that internationals are fluent in the language of their country of origin can be useful when communicating with customers from this country. This is particularly true in companies targeting foreign customers, as these customers tend to appreciate being able to communicate with the company representatives in their native language. For instance, one employer gave the following example:

*'They know the culture of the customers, which immediately creates a bond in that respect. We have customers in Greece, but also Greek employees [...] It means they can often communicate in their own language and many customers appreciate being able to communicate in their own native language. And that is something that our international employees can offer.'*



## International graduates specifically

Employers in the focus groups and interviews reported the abovementioned advantages when talking about international employees in general. Since international graduates, who have studied in the Netherlands, are a subset of this group, these advantages may also apply to them. Additionally, when focusing specifically on international graduates, employers mentioned additional advantages, outlined below.

### 1. A degree of high quality by Dutch standards

According to the analysis, a big asset of international graduates is that they hold a degree from a Dutch higher institution. Companies are in great need of highly educated candidates with degrees that meet Dutch standards. What employers value is knowing what to expect from these candidates in terms of quality.

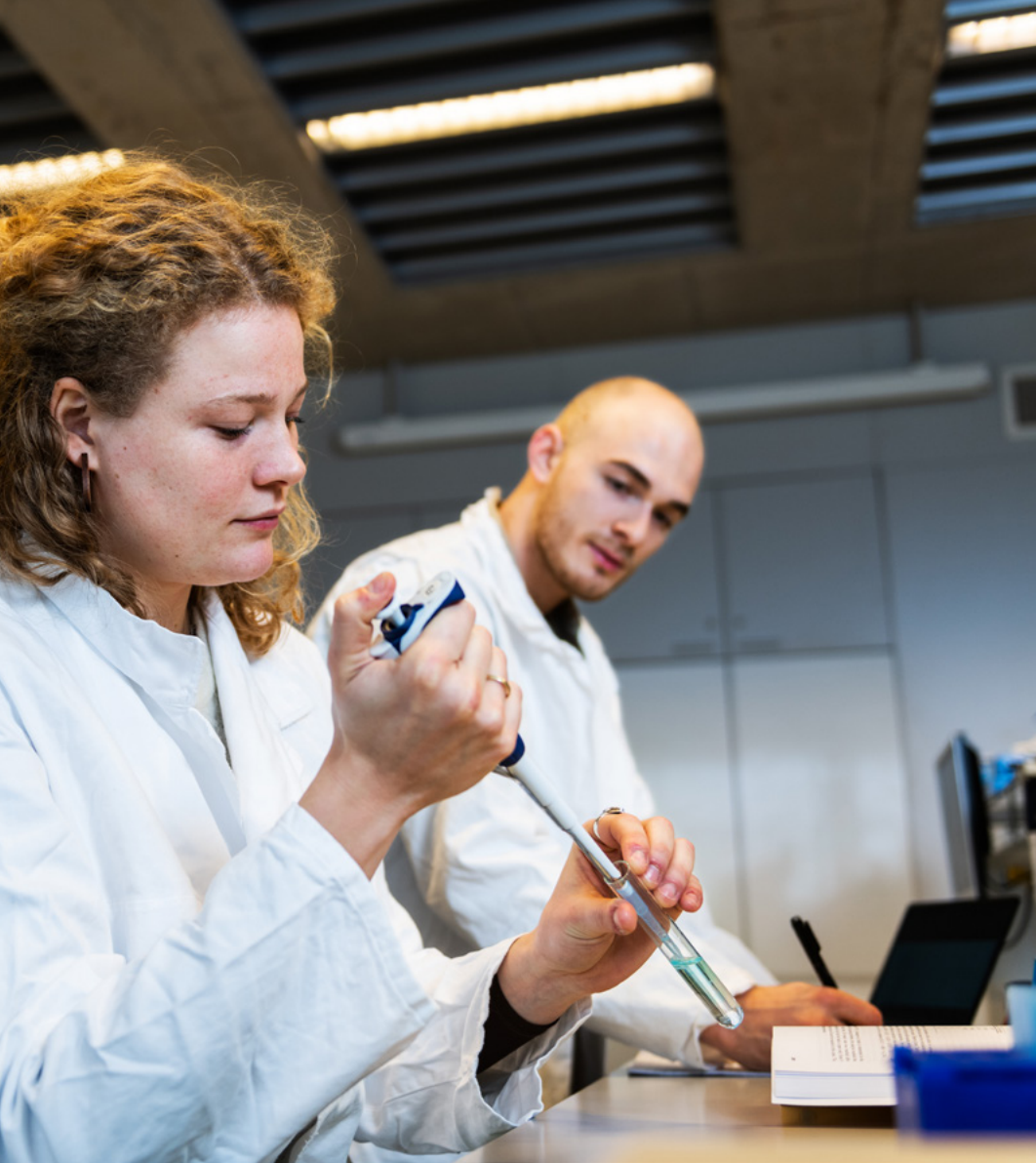
According to employers, especially in technical sectors such as IT, there are not enough Dutch graduates in the Netherlands to fill in vacancies. Thus, considering international graduates can be valuable as well, given that they have been educated in the Netherlands. For example, one employer said:

*'The amount of people that we need, it wouldn't be enough if we just focused on the Dutch students. So, we are actually very happy that people from other countries are applying, because they are also good professionals and they come from the Dutch educational system. That means they are meeting certain standards as well.'*

Furthermore, it was mentioned that in fields such as IT and finance, there are many international students at Dutch universities. As a result, the available talent pool is already very international for employers who recruit from Dutch universities.

### 2. Familiarity after internship is an asset

Another advantage that employers noted about international graduates in particular is the following: international students who do an internship at a company as part of their study tend to be more loyal towards this company and stay to work there after graduation. It was also mentioned that international graduates often seem enthusiastic about their prospects. Additionally, their familiarity with the company is seen by employers as a big asset. For instance, one employer noted:



*'We have this feedback session just before they graduate, and I also have this midterm event where I interview the best interns, where I want to take them to the next stage and actually hire them. Most of them are very enthusiastic if they get the job and you see it. They also have very good expectations about staying here. They want to stay for the long term, they want to really build their career here.'*

In about two focus groups/interviews employers indicated that at their company there is a preference for hiring international graduates rather than other internationals, since they feel that international graduates are already familiar with the communication styles needed to work in a Dutch work environment.

## Perceived disadvantages

To get a full picture of employer attitudes, we not only asked about the advantages of hiring international employees, but also the perceived disadvantages. In the survey, we asked respondents to what extent they experienced specific obstacles when hiring international graduates (see Figure 8). The answer options were 'always', 'regularly', 'sometimes', 'rarely', 'never', and 'no opinion'.

### Language barriers

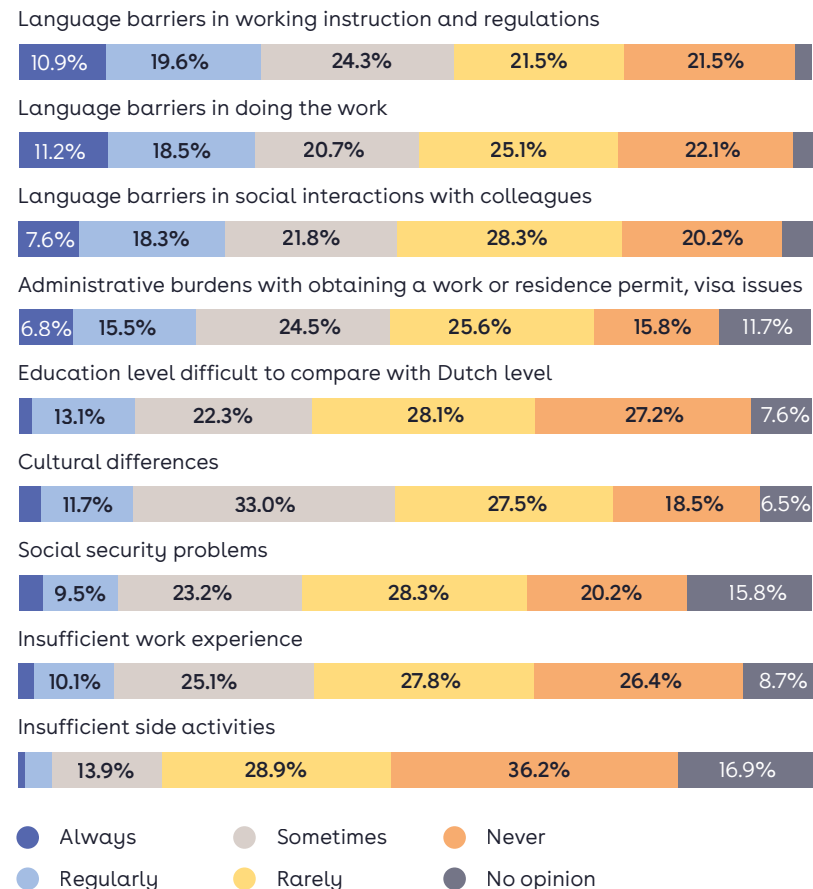
Employers perceive language barriers as the most common obstacle in hiring international graduates. Almost one third of the respondents (30.5%) indicated that they always or regularly experience language barriers in work instructions and regulations. Other language-related obstacles are language barriers when doing the work (29.7%) and language barriers in social interactions with colleagues (25.9%).

### Administration and other obstacles

Besides language barriers, employers also experience administrative burdens and other obstacles when hiring international graduates (Figure 8). In particular, almost one fourth of the respondents (22.3%) regularly or always experienced administrative burdens related to obtaining a work or residence permit. Moreover, 14.7% reported regularly or always having difficulties with comparing the level of education of international employees with the corresponding Dutch level. The least frequently experienced

obstacles were cultural differences, social security problems, insufficient work experience and insufficient side activities.

**Figure 8.** Answers to the question: 'To what extent do you experience the following as an obstacle when hiring an international graduate?' N=367





### More on Dutch language

Specifically about the use of Dutch language, we asked our survey respondents some additional questions. The majority (almost 60%) indicated that job interviews take place in both Dutch and English. According to almost 3 out of 10, interviews take place only in Dutch. Moreover, 4 out of 10 said that they post their job vacancies only in Dutch.

Furthermore, slightly more than half of our survey respondents said that Dutch language skills are important or very important and that Dutch is the official language in their company. Half of them also indicated that Dutch is required to carry out work responsibilities and according to 2 out of 10, excellent Dutch is expected from their employees.

Regarding the importance of Dutch for the social interactions at work, the majority (60%) found it important or very important. Almost half of the respondents indicated that informal communication and social interactions at work take place only in Dutch (42.7%), and about 45% said that they use a combination of Dutch and English. For a more detailed overview of the results on Dutch language use, see [Appendix 4](#).

Our survey results show that language barriers and administrative burdens were perceived as important disadvantages in hiring international graduates. These results are in line with findings from the focus groups and interviews. More specifically, the majority of the focus groups and interview participants also experienced language barriers and administrative burdens. Based on the analysis of the focus groups and interviews, we identified three main categories of perceived disadvantages:

- A. The first category relates to **language**.
- B. The second to **administration and regulations**.
- C. The third to **cultural differences and social integration**.
- D. And the fourth category refers to **other** perceived disadvantages such as concerns with specific degrees, knowledge security, living across borders, and the political climate.

Below, we discuss the findings from the focus groups and interviews along the lines of these four categories. The findings pertaining to international employees in general are described first, and then those specific to international graduates are examined when relevant.





## A. Disadvantages related to language

On the one hand, foreign language skills have been brought up as an advantage of international employees. On the other hand, lacking Dutch language skills can be seen as a disadvantage by employers. More specifically, during the focus groups and interviews, a lot of attention was given to issues related to language at work. Below, we present an overview of the language barriers mentioned during the focus groups and interviews.

### 1. The challenge of translating all processes to English

In almost half of our focus groups/interviews, employers talked about the importance of switching to English when hiring international employees, especially when these international employees don't speak Dutch. Big companies may already have everything set up to be able to run all processes in English. However, when small and medium companies of Dutch origin hire internationals who don't speak Dutch, they need to change their work language to English. According to employers, translating all their processes to English can be challenging and time-consuming. Whereas changing documentation relating to internal processes can be somewhat straightforward, external communication and legal documentation is difficult to change. For example, the following was mentioned regarding employers' challenges with translating all their processes:

*'The moment a foreign employee comes to you, the entire policy has to be in English right there and then [...] We have to translate all the safety scenes, and not everyone understands that, so then we have a problem. So, yes, you wouldn't really expect it, everyone can speak English these days, but it is really something that plays a role.'*

As mentioned in the focus groups and interviews, switching from Dutch to English in all communications can be challenging for Dutch employees. Some Dutch employees are not confident in English and do not feel comfortable speaking it. On the other hand, for some international employees, English is also not their first language. As a result, expressing themselves can be difficult for both Dutch and international employees.

### 2. The challenge of getting international employees to learn Dutch

Employers in about two focus groups/interviews said that their companies hire internationals who can already speak Dutch or are willing to learn, rather than choosing to switch their operations to English. One reason for this choice is that these companies are operating in a work field where Dutch language skills are necessary. Additionally, employers said that the way systems are set up in their company (for instance HR or safety procedures) requires a level of Dutch language skills. Thus, they prefer international candidates with previous experience in Dutch or a willingness to learn. In one focus group/interview



employers mentioned that even from the very beginning, in the job interviews, they explain to international candidates that they expect them to learn Dutch. Most candidates then express their willingness to do so.

According to the focus groups and interviews, getting international employees to learn Dutch can be challenging for employers. In particular, issues related to costs, motivation and time were mentioned. First of all, it can be expensive and time-consuming for the company to offer Dutch language courses. Secondly, it can be difficult to motivate their employees to follow Dutch courses. As mentioned in one focus group/interview, employers believe some international employees do not see the value of learning Dutch, because they do not expect to stay long at the company. Thirdly, a key challenge is that international employees often lack the time to commit to learning Dutch, as work and social commitments take priority. Additionally, even when they try to learn, native Dutch speakers frequently switch to English, which, though well-intentioned, limits opportunities for practice and hinders language acquisition.

### 3. Issues with productivity and communication

In about two focus groups/interviews, employers mentioned that a potential downside of hiring internationals is that these employees may not be able to understand the nuances of the native language. When employees need to work in Dutch and haven't mastered the language yet, it may take longer to complete certain tasks. As a result, international employees

might be less productive compared to Dutch native speakers, according to these employers. Even when they speak Dutch well, it can be difficult to fully understand the context and the nuances of the language. For instance, it was mentioned that during heated discussions or situations when they need to express complex ideas and emotions, it can be difficult for internationals to fully express themselves. Especially moving up the hierarchy, employers found that language barriers can be more prominent. For example, one employer mentioned:

*'For example, we have a manager who has learned Dutch and thinks he can do it well. But he sometimes misses the context and that makes it very difficult sometimes.'*

### 4. Language barriers in informal interactions and team cohesion

During the focus groups and interviews, it was also discussed how language barriers in informal workplace interactions can pose challenges for communication and team cohesion. Less cohesion in the team is a challenge for employers, as it can negatively affect the company.

Effective communication is essential for collaboration and a positive team dynamic. For example, casual conversations, such as sharing jokes during lunch breaks, help strengthen workplace relationships. However, limited language skills can make social interactions difficult and, at times, awkward. Particularly, informal communication can feel awkward when





language or cultural barriers make jokes or references difficult to understand.

In about two focus groups/interviews, employers noted that while English is the official working language at their company, it is used less frequently in informal settings, such as lunch breaks. Dutch employees may unintentionally revert to speaking Dutch, making it difficult for non-Dutch speakers to participate in conversations. When this occurs regularly, international employees may feel excluded and, in response, form their own groups where English is the primary language. This separation can create a divide between Dutch-speaking and non-Dutch-speaking colleagues.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that the Netherlands is often seen as an English-speaking country, which means international employees have certain expectations. However, these expectations are not always the reality with Dutch employees speaking in their own language. Employers acknowledged the responsibility of their Dutch employees to speak English during social interactions and be inclusive towards international employees. As indicated:

*'You need to really go all English, because otherwise you cannot make people feel welcome and groups start forming within the company. That's not helpful, and that's definitely not what you want [...] They need to also feel like a part of the team.'*



## B. Disadvantages related to administration and regulations

As mentioned above, our survey respondents perceived administrative burdens as an obstacle in hiring international graduates. This is in line with the focus groups and interviews findings, since challenges regarding administration and regulations also came up when talking to employers. Employers may experience these challenges before internationals are hired, but also after the hiring process is completed. Importantly, these challenges can make hiring internationals less appealing to companies, and therefore these challenges are seen as a disadvantage of hiring them.

### Challenges before hiring

#### 1. Becoming a recognised sponsor perceived as complex and time consuming

Before hiring internationals, employers need to arrange certain paperwork. When candidates come from a non-EEA country, the amount of paperwork is much higher because they need to obtain a work and residence permit in order to work in the Netherlands. To provide new international employees with a residence

permit for highly skilled migrants, employers need to become a recognised sponsor. This is an important step for employers to make sure they can hire international employees coming from outside the EEA.

However, becoming a recognised sponsor was perceived by employers in about three focus groups/interviews as complex, costly and time-consuming. Unlike small companies, large companies often have a whole team dedicated to the hiring process of internationals. Smaller companies, on the other hand, are often unfamiliar with the steps of becoming a recognised sponsor. As mentioned by employers, once companies manage to become recognised sponsors, it's easier, but until they get to that point, a big investment in terms of money and time is required. As two employers mentioned:

*'There's a lot of paperwork you need to arrange in order to become a recognised sponsor. And it's a hassle and costs money.'*

*'Once you are a recognised sponsor, you know how to do it, but you need to invest time in it.'*



## 2. Hiring internationals can be more expensive

Employers in more than half of our focus groups/interviews mentioned that it is more expensive to hire an international employee especially from outside of the EEA, as opposed to a local candidate. Firstly, visa costs need to be paid in advance by the employers. Secondly, Dutch regulations set specific salary criteria and requirements for hiring non-EEA nationals in the Netherlands. These salary criteria and requirements can make it less attractive for companies to hire non-EEA candidates. For smaller companies, in particular, it is sometimes difficult to fulfil these criteria, especially in entry-level positions. For example, as one respondent put it:

*'We are a smaller company at the moment. To hire people outside of Europe, you have to meet all kinds of salary conditions [...] If they come from outside Europe, then they have to earn a certain percentage more than the rest, which really pushes the price higher. That is sometimes why we don't do that. It's easier, though, when it's a higher-level position.'*

## Challenges after hiring

### Internationals need help settling in

As mentioned by employers in the focus groups and interviews, international employees often need help settling in the Netherlands. For instance, they need help registering with local authorities, finding housing, securing childcare or schooling for their families, and/or arranging practical matters. Finding housing was mentioned by the majority of the employers as a challenge. Helping the family settle in also requires attention. For instance, as mentioned by employers, there were issues with the integration of the international employees' family, which resulted in the employee leaving the Netherlands. Moreover, companies often need to provide assistance to their international employees with complex legal issues such as contracts and residency status. These issues may require significant time and effort to resolve, adding up to the administrative workload. For instance, as one employer mentioned:

*'And then there are parts of labour law, but also other legalities within the Netherlands, that are simply very complex for people who are not from here. It means that, as a company, you have to pay attention to that often or at least be able to refer people. Which simply entails extra work.'*

## International graduates specifically

The abovementioned disadvantages, highlighted by respondents during the focus groups and interviews are related to hiring international talent in general. These disadvantages may also apply to international graduates, though to a lesser extent in some cases. Below, we illustrate specific findings that apply only to international graduates.

### 1. Lack of work experience and difficulties with obtaining part-time work permit

As pointed out by employers, international graduates who have recently graduated from a Dutch higher education institution often lack work experience and network. Employers in one focus group/interview mentioned that international students are on average less likely to have a part-time job during their studies, while for Dutch students this is more the norm. While this could have multiple reasons, delays or complications in obtaining a work permit for part-time employment of international students were mentioned as a hindering factor. These delays and complications can affect job opportunities of international graduates and the flow from a part-time job during studies to a full-time job after graduation.

### 2. Difficulties with internships

Given the abovementioned difficulties of international graduates in accessing the labour market, doing an internship can be important for building some work experience. Internships are seen by employers as an important gateway to get to know international students and hire them after they graduate.

Employers who want to hire non-EEA students and graduates for an internship, as a precursor for them to start working at their company, are required to ask Dutch universities for a signature on the Nuffic Internship Agreement (see Explainer, page 37). This is to make sure the agreement meets the requirements of the Foreign Nationals Employment Act (In Dutch: *BuWav*) (2022). A few employers mentioned that universities do not always want to sign this agreement, which makes it impossible for a non-EEA student to start an internship. For instance, one employer noted:

*'We still get a lot of people in because they are European. There is no Nuffic agreement needed. So, we don't have any issue in hiring them, but I really feel bad for these [non-European] people because I remember a few cases where they were kind of devastated. It was like kind of fighting against a wall because there was not a good or positive answer from the university. "No is no. We're not going to sign it." And there is nothing you can do about it. And if the Nuffic [agreement] is not signed, then we cannot proceed.'*



## Explainer

The Nuffic Internship Agreement is a formal contract for non-EEA students completing internships in the Netherlands. It is signed by the student, the Dutch educational institution, and the internship employer, ensuring that the internship is focused on learning outcomes rather than employment. The agreement outlines key details such as the duration of the internship, working hours, remuneration, and the roles of all parties involved. A valid residence permit must also be provided. From June 2024, the UNL contract can replace the Nuffic Agreement for university students. For more information, see (in Dutch): [Wet- en regelgeving voor internationale studenten | Nuffic](#).

### 3. Difficulties for non-EEA graduates to start a job

As noted by employers, some non-EEA graduates were unable to start a job, because of uncertainty about when they can start working. According to the experience of a few employers, sometimes there are delays in issuing graduation certificates by Dutch universities. According to employers, this certificate is needed for issuing the highly skilled migrant permit with lower salary criterium or the orientation year visa. As a result, companies are unable to determine when a candidate can start work. This may impose costs on both international graduates and employers. It can also put international graduates at a

disadvantage compared to Dutch candidates and further delay their career progression. Employers need to be flexible in their own hiring process to accommodate international graduates. For example, one respondent mentioned:

*'We often want to hire them, but they haven't yet graduated at that point. So, then it very much becomes a waiting game to see how quickly the school can process everything, because otherwise they cannot apply for an orientation year at the IND. It varies a lot from school to school and it can sometimes take a very long time. While they can actually already work, and we would like to start with them, we just have to wait.'*



## C. Cultural differences and social integration

While cultural differences have also been brought up as an advantage of hiring internationals, employers in about two focus groups/interviews said that cultural differences can also be a disadvantage or challenge. As a result, some employers may hesitate to hire internationals, because they fear that cultural differences can potentially create challenges in the workplace. In this section, we describe findings on such perceptions and experiences as mentioned in our focus groups and interviews.

### 1. Expressing (dis)agreement or seeking help

In the focus groups and interviews, employers mentioned that people from different countries may have different approaches to expressing (dis)agreement and seeking help, which can create misunderstandings and conflicts. For example, in about five focus groups/interviews employers said that according to their perception, Dutch employees are typically direct and not afraid to express disagreement or set boundaries. In contrast, they have experienced that employees from cultures with strong hierarchical structures may avoid saying 'no' or are reluctant to admit uncertainty, fearing it could be seen as disrespectful. As noted, in some cases international employees may agree to tasks they are unable to complete or not fully understand rather than ask for help or clarification. This can lead to misinterpretations and tasks being completed incorrectly or not at all, which can further cause friction. For example, the following experience was shared:

*'For people from India, hierarchy is a big thing. For us as a Dutch company, hierarchy is non-existent, or at least not that much. And for them, even if they see a problem, they don't say out loud: "I see a problem". And sometimes you have conflicts with managers that are of Dutch nationality and people from India. Because employees from India, say: "Yes, I will do it" and they don't do it because they don't have time. But they don't come out and say: "I don't have time. I need extra help. Can you give me a hand?" or they make false promises.'*

Additionally, a few employers mentioned that hesitating to ask for help is more prevalent among younger international employees with limited experience who fear job insecurity. In some cases, international employees may hesitate to voice concerns about heavy workloads, which, according to our respondents, can lead to stress, burnout, and increased absenteeism.

### 2. Dutch directness may offend internationals

According to employers, people from different countries may have a different approach on how they give and receive feedback, which can be challenging for interactions at work. In the focus groups and interviews, it was noted that Dutch people are often perceived as blunt because they speak their minds directly. Employees from other cultures may not always appreciate this straightforwardness and may interpret it in a negative way and feel offended. As a result, it can take time for these employees to





adjust and feel comfortable within the organisation. For example, one employer mentioned:

*'What people sometimes say about us (Dutch) is that we are quite direct. We simply see that some people with a different culture have a bit more difficulty dealing with that. Or that they interpret that in a different way, as a personal attack, for example, while that is not necessarily meant as such. So, it simply takes a bit more time for those people to get settled in our organisation.'*

### 3. Self-reliance is a given at a Dutch workplace

Cultural differences in expectations of self-reliance can also potentially create friction in the workplace, according to employers. As noted by employers, in Dutch culture, self-reliance is the norm, with individuals expected to seek out information and solve problems independently. In contrast, some international employees expect managers to provide direct instructions. For example, when an employee approaches a manager with a problem, a typical Dutch response might be, *'Figure it out yourself'*, which, according to employers, can be challenging for international employees to understand. For instance, one employer noted:

*'That is actually also a cultural difference, that in the Netherlands more self-reliance is expected of you than in other countries.'*

### 4. Other cultural differences that might be challenging

Employers highlighted several other cultural differences in the workplace that may be perceived by employers as a disadvantage in hiring internationals. Such cultural differences can be varying attitudes towards mistakes – as some cultures fear errors more than others. Moreover, some cultural differences in workplace formality were also observed. For example, employers noted that some cultures expect formal attire for interviews, which contrasts with the more casual approach often seen in the Netherlands. Work ethic norms, including working hours and lunch breaks, may also differ. Lastly, employers in one focus group/interview expressed that, in their experience, employees from certain cultural backgrounds may have difficulty accepting female leaders. As mentioned, this can be challenging for managers:

*'Cultural differences. In management positions, for example, some cultures have a little more difficulty with female managers, which sometimes leads to issues. It happens sometimes. It's difficult to manage.'*

### 5. Social integration can be difficult and time-consuming

As noted by employers, some international employees do not feel socially integrated in the Netherlands, which can also be a challenge for the organisation. Especially for international employees who have not studied in the Netherlands or have only recently moved there, it is more difficult to integrate both socially



and culturally within Dutch society at large. Some employers offer support to their international employees with regard to building a new social network. However, sometimes internationals may struggle with the lack of support networks, leading to a desire for more interaction with Dutch colleagues. Some Dutch colleagues may not share this need due to their established social lives. One employer gave the following example:

*‘What I see as a disadvantage is that, as these people do not come from here, they actually have a very small social network and I know that Dutch people are not social at all, like saying “Come and celebrate Christmas with us” [...] And I notice more than once that a new colleague hopes that we will become friends. And I find that very difficult, because I also have a very busy social life, and then I am just like the rest of the Dutch. Yes, well, I can have a drink once in a while, but actually you know...’*

### **The disadvantage of limited social integration applies less to international graduates**

According to the experiences of employers, social integration is generally smoother for international graduates, since they are already familiar with Dutch society and culture. It was mentioned that international graduates are more accustomed to the Dutch workplace and its etiquettes than other international employees. Employers indicated that they only arrange help

with settlement for internationals who have not studied or lived in the Netherlands before. As noted by employers, in Dutch culture, self-reliance is the norm, with individuals expected to seek out information and solve problems independently. Internationals that studied in the Netherlands are already familiar with this approach since the Dutch educational system works in a similar way. For instance, one employer mentioned:

*‘When they have already studied in the Netherlands, they have more experience living here and they know how things work. Like, even the work culture at the universities in the Netherlands, they are trying to implement the same culture that you would have at your potential job. So, this is much easier.’*

## **D. Other perceived disadvantages**

### **1. Concerns with foreign degrees**

In about three focus groups/interviews, employers expressed concerns regarding hiring internationals with foreign degrees. These concerns were specifically about whether the education and knowledge of international candidates were equivalent to the Dutch educational system. This does not apply to international graduates specifically, as they graduated from a Dutch university.





## 2. Knowledge security

Employers in about three focus groups/interviews shared that they hesitate to recruit internationals due to knowledge security concerns; fears that critical knowledge and expertise could be accessed or misused by foreign organisations or governments. It was noted that certain companies actively avoid hiring candidates, including international graduates from Dutch universities, from specific countries, due to these concerns.

## 3. Living across borders

According to a few employers, there is often some hesitation to hire internationals living across the borders of the Netherlands. Companies in the border region perceive obstacles with regard to how many hours an employee has to be in the country, related to the national tax laws. This limits their ability to hire people who live just across the border and prefer not to work more than 50% of the time in the Netherlands. This is particularly the case for part-time workers or hybrid work situations. As one employer mentioned:

*'We have those: living in Germany, working in the Netherlands. With us you have to be in the office in the Netherlands for at least roughly 51%. Otherwise, social security payments occur in Germany. Setting up a payroll abroad costs so much money and for certain positions that's fine, but for a "home-grown job" we usually say "No".'*

## 4. The political climate

Moreover, it was mentioned that the current political climate has made international recruitment more challenging. Employers signal a broader political shift away from welcoming international talent. As mentioned by employers, the current political environment influences the willingness of employers to hire international employees or change company policies. Employers also noted that new laws and regulations are being created that make it more difficult to hire international employees. For example, one employer said:

*'The legislation has quite a few thresholds and that is only going to increase with this current government. And then, of course, the new law is coming, one that is creating quite some tension. It's a new law that says everyone from abroad has to be screened first<sup>2</sup>.'*

<sup>2</sup> Disclaimer: This quote does not accurately reflect the scope of the proposed law. According to the current proposal, screening would apply only to researchers and master's students working with sensitive knowledge. For more information, see the following link (in Dutch): [Screening voor wetenschappers die met sensitieve kennis willen werken | Nieuwsbericht | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

## Differences based on sector, region and company's size

To test whether employers' attitudes differ based on sector, region and company size, we did some further analysis on the survey responses and focus groups/interviews. Regarding the survey responses, we conducted a series of statistical tests, called t-tests (for a detailed overview of the results, see [Appendix 5](#)). The main results from the statistical analysis are outlined below, together with some insights from the focus groups and interviews.

### Sector

#### Non-technical sectors see more advantages

Non-technical sectors were more positive about hiring internationals in comparison to the technical sectors. They had a significantly higher score when it came to the question about whether they see more disadvantages (0) or advantages (100) in having different nationalities in one workplace. More specifically, the average for technical sectors was 64.4, while the average for non-technical sectors was 73. This finding suggests that, compared to technical sectors, those working in non-technical sectors tend to see more advantages than disadvantages in that respect. To shed more light onto possible explanations for this difference, we conducted some additional analyses (see also [Appendix 6](#)).

Further analyses on the differences between technical and non-technical sectors revealed a mismatch between Dutch language proficiency needed for the job versus for social interactions. In technical sectors, it is often the case that Dutch is not required for the job, but considered important for the social interactions at work. Compared to non-technical sectors, in technical sectors, employers experienced language barriers during social interactions more often. Furthermore, in technical sectors, it was more common for the employers in our sample to be executives at a company where internationals were the minority. This may make speaking Dutch even more dominant in social settings within a company. We also found that employers in the technical sector experience administrative burdens related to work and residence permits more often.

These insights provide some possible explanations as to why employers in the technical sector perceive less advantages in having different nationalities in their workplace compared to non-technical sectors. Going deeper into possible explanations is beyond the scope of this study, and therefore it should be further examined in future research.

Moreover, during the focus groups and interviews employers also mentioned that the Dutch language level required for the job differ per sector and job type. Technical sectors such as IT and engineering typically offer more English-speaking opportunities. However, sectors like manufacturing and operations still require



Dutch proficiency due to the need for communication across all organisational levels. Moreover, in jobs where the employees need to have a lot of contact with Dutch customers or patients, not speaking Dutch can be a challenge. As mentioned in the focusgroups/interviews:

*'I think it really depends on the job. Because it's easier in production or logistic jobs, there are less language problems. But with office jobs, papers are in Dutch, emails are in Dutch, suppliers are in Dutch. So, the office job is more challenging.'*

## Region

### **Randstad and Brainport do not significantly differ from other regions**

More international graduates find jobs in areas of the Netherlands such as the Randstad and Brainport compared to other areas (Nuffic, 2025). Therefore, we compared the Randstad and Brainport with the other regions, to see if there were any statistically significant differences in employers' attitudes. As it turned out, there were none (for a detailed overview of the results, see [Appendix 5](#)). However, the focus group and interview conversations shed more light on some of the regional differences and specific issues that regions experience differently like language barriers, and social integration.

### **Difference perspectives on language and social integration**

Employers in the focus groups/interviews mentioned the following experiences specific to their region: in the Eastern region, employers said that they struggle with integrating internationals, partly due to Dutch being the primary language in the workplace. This limits English-speaking job availability. Moreover, as noted by employers, regions with a local dialect, like Limburg, face additional language barriers. It was observed that in areas outside the Randstad and Brainport, the internationalisation of the highly skilled workforce is mostly less advanced and employers have less experience with hiring international graduates. As employers working in the province of Gelderland mentioned:

*'We were never that focused on [international talent] as a region. [...] We are just less aware of it.'*

*'Are we as a region actually ready to embed or embrace so many international employees? In social life just like that? We are not a Randstad or Eindhoven.'*



## Company's size

### Big companies see more advantages

Big companies were more positive about hiring international employees in comparison with small-/medium-sized companies. Particularly, there was a significant difference in whether companies see more disadvantages (0) or advantages (100) in having different nationalities in one workplace. The average for small-/medium-sized companies was 67.3, while the average for big companies was 73.

### Small companies experience more challenges

During the focus groups and interviews, employers mentioned differences based on the size of the company. In particular, large companies have well-established HR processes with dedicated teams for international mobility, campus recruitment, and diversity programmes, making them more open to hiring international employees. However, small companies identify more barriers when it comes to language, HR capacity, and mindset for change. Due to lack of capacity and resources, smaller companies struggle with visa costs and relocation expenses and are often unaware of available resources to assist with these challenges. Some face a fear of change when it comes to adapting protocols, systems, and documents for international employees. As mentioned:

*'You really notice a big difference between large companies, medium-sized companies, and small companies [...] You have the large companies that are completely about innovation and they really call it that. And then you have the medium-sized companies that I think run into the fact that you have to make that cultural shift. That the protocols, the documents, your system are actually not ready for it yet. And then what we often notice with small companies is that there is simply a fear; When they hear IND, an alarm bell goes on in their mind and they think it is too difficult to hire internationals, let's forget the whole thing.'*

# Needs



During the focus groups and interviews, we asked employers what they need from different stakeholders to facilitate the hiring of international employees. Employers mentioned various needs that require actions taken from universities and the government.

## **What employers need to do themselves**

However, employers also acknowledged their own responsibility and emphasised that there are certain actions that need to be taken by them as employers and their management team. First of all, employers mentioned that it is important for companies to realise the urgency and added value of hiring international employees, including international graduates. Secondly, it was noted that there is a need for training of all employees to promote cultural awareness and inclusive leadership. Thirdly, employers emphasised the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for all candidates during recruitment. Moreover, they also identified the need to ease language barriers and create a pleasant and inclusive social environment at work. Lastly, employers feel they need to engage with international graduates early on and be more active in connecting with universities.

Below we outline what employers indicated they need from other actors, such as universities and the government. Employers' needs from the government concern the broader international talent pool, which includes, but is not limited to, international graduates. In contrast, their needs from universities are specifically focused on international graduates.





## Needs from universities

Employers identified a series of needs from universities that would help them in employing international graduates from Dutch universities. The main needs refer to the following:

1. Better alignment with labour market needs;
2. Having a dedicated contact person;
3. Support and guidance for students;
4. Mandatory Dutch language courses.

### 1. Better alignment with labour market needs

Employers in about five focus groups/interviews emphasised the need for education to better align with labour market needs. As mentioned by employers, there is a big demand for graduates skilled in finance and technology, but that there is less demand for graduates in social sciences. In about two focus groups/interviews, employers also highlighted the importance of attracting a more diverse student population in terms of nationality and gender. This would in turn facilitate increased diversity in the workplace.

In about four focus groups/interviews, employers expressed that universities don't seem to have a direct incentive to help students find jobs in the Netherlands, as it isn't typically part of their core responsibilities. While some universities admit a wide range of international students, they don't always prioritise connecting them with job opportunities after graduation. Instead, the focus

tends to be more on theory and less on practice, which can make it harder for students, especially international ones, to find local employment. According to employers, this can be particularly the case with research universities. Where research universities seem to have less interaction with companies and focus more on research, universities of applied sciences tend to prioritise placing students with companies and facilitate internships.

Regarding internships in particular, employers in about four focus groups/interviews felt that universities do not prioritise helping international students find an internship, specifically if the internship is not a requirement for their studies. Employers identify a need for universities to further integrate internships and work experience into their programmes.

### 2. Having a dedicated contact person

Employers expressed the need for stronger collaboration with universities. However, in some institutions there is no standardised approach to communication between employers and university career services. Particularly, there is often no dedicated employer liaison professional and engaging with student association boards can be challenging. These boards often vary in professionalism and change annually. Employers said that this frequent turnover makes it harder to establish long-term relationships. Therefore, having a dedicated office and spokesperson for employer relations could help strengthen collaboration between employers and universities.



### 3. Support and guidance for students

Employers participating in four different focus groups/ interviews expressed that international students are not adequately supported in finding employment after their studies. For example, graduates lack guidance on the job search process, and information on the orientation-year visas. According to employers, universities should provide clearer guidance and information to their students about the job market. Despite information being online, employers notice that students often feel lost and address questions to them that should be addressed by the university. As mentioned before, some students struggle due to paperwork issues preventing them from gaining work experience through an internship. It was also observed that the quality of support varies significantly depending on the supervisor. Moreover, employers mention that short processing times for diploma issuance are crucial, as hiring international graduates is often delayed due to some universities being late in issuing diplomas. This causes uncertainty in work start dates, both for the employer and employee.

Employers also recommended that universities should encourage students to get a part-time job during their studies. This way, students would get to know the labour market and working culture, which can help get a full-time job after graduation.

*Students should also be proactive*

Employers also suggested that both universities and students need to take more initiative: universities in offering career guidance and students in seeking it. Just as it is important to have resources available, students must also be proactive in seeking out information and begin their labour market orientation early.

### 4. Mandatory Dutch language courses

As mentioned before, command of the Dutch language is an important part of hiring and retaining internationals. In terms of preparing international students for the Dutch labour market, employers in about three focus groups/interviews suggested to keep English programmes, but make Dutch language courses mandatory for international students during their studies. Employers feel that this would improve both students' social integration and their employability in the Dutch labour market. While some universities offer Dutch language courses, they are seen as insufficient, and providing them as an employer can be costly. Employers believe that incorporating Dutch courses into study programmes would retain more international students. As two employers mentioned:





*'So, what we say is "Incorporate [Dutch language courses] in the study programme", because Dutch is needed anyway and then they [international students] get the time [to learn Dutch]. Otherwise I think it's not affordable for them [...] The university gives them a social Dutch course, that's like eight sessions or four sessions of basic Dutch, but that's not enough to be able to function in the workplace.'*

*'I think we should focus on people who really want to learn the language because then they become part of society.'*

## Needs from the government

Employers we spoke to mentioned various needs they have related to the government. These needs can be summarised into the following points based on how often they were brought up in the discussion:

1. Adapting certain regulations;
2. Maintaining funding;
3. Clear information and support;
4. Regional branding;
5. Welcoming attitude.

### 1. Adapting certain regulations

As mentioned before, employers deal with an array of administrative tasks when hiring international employees, especially from outside the EEA. More than half of the employers in this study expressed the need to ease these administrative burdens by simplifying processes. It was suggested that the government should evaluate and update existing regulations, while taking the needs of the candidates and the companies into consideration. Specifically, it was mentioned that there is a need for adapting the residence permit processes, such as lowering salary requirements. Such adaptations would help ease the hiring process and make it easier and more affordable for companies to hire internationals.





### *Adaptations specifically about international graduates*

Regarding international graduates in particular, employers made some additional suggestions. Firstly, they suggested that policy by the government should encourage learning Dutch already during studying. This would help international graduates be more prepared to enter the Dutch labour market after graduation. Secondly, employers suggested allowing students to have a work permit that covers full-time work during the summer and part-time work during the school year. Thirdly, employers in one focus group/interview suggested doubling the duration of the orientation year. These employers see that one year is not long enough, as it only gives internationals a single shot to find a job at a company that is a recognised sponsor. They feel that a two-year orientation visa would be better suited and have a positive influence on the retention of international students. As noted:

*'Internationals stay unhappy at a company where they don't want to be because they're a recognised sponsor. This is also not good for the company because if they're unhappy, they're probably less productive. In Germany, I read it is two years. I think that's way better. It makes way more sense and that will have a big influence on retention.'*

## **2. Maintaining funding**

Employers in about three different focus groups/interviews mentioned that it is essential for the Dutch government to continue investing in education and research. Employers recruit graduates and benefit from access to research facilities for innovation and lift on the knowledge hubs created by universities. Sustained investment in higher education will help ensure that knowledge and innovation are effectively brought to the market. According to employers, reduced funding in education will make it more difficult for the Dutch (knowledge) economy to excel. For example, one employer noted:

*'Well, the fact that education and research are being cut back like that is obviously killing us. So, I think that's just the most important thing. We just really need to keep investing in that [...] As a government, just keep investing and don't go all out in cutting back education and research. Both for the knowledge institutes and for the companies.'*

It was also noted that funding for learning Dutch during studying would be beneficial for international graduates entering the Dutch labour market.



### 3. Clearer information and support

The need for central and clear information provision on hiring international talent was highlighted often. Employers in one focus group/interview had the feeling that there is some unclarity on whether topics related to international talent is more the concern of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Economic Affairs or the concern of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus, establishing policy at a central level could be beneficial. Additionally, employers expressed a need for clearer information on legislation and transparency about regulations. Especially smaller businesses and companies are in need of concrete and practical help to be able to accommodate international employees properly, from the hiring process up until the integration within the company. It was also mentioned that the government can aid in providing the necessary forms and information in both Dutch and English.

### 4. Regional branding

Almost one third of the employers in our focus groups/interviews expressed a need for a more supportive environment for international employees within different regions outside the Randstad and South-East Brabant. It was suggested that the national government could foster these environments by providing support to local governments. This way, local governments could, in turn, facilitate regional branding and make necessary investments. As noted by employers, making investments in local amenities such as infrastructure is crucial.

A more attractive living environment and providing housing options would help encourage internationals to settle in the region.

### 5. Welcoming attitude

Employers also mentioned that they would be aided in hiring internationals if the government would adopt a positive attitude regarding attracting international talent. They emphasised the importance of the government clearly communicating that the Netherlands is welcoming towards internationals:

*‘The most important thing is really that we clearly indicate at the national level to the world outside of the Netherlands that internationals are welcome.’*

According to employers, this welcoming attitude should be reflected not only in the communication, but also in the policy. For instance, one employer mentioned that policies such as reducing English-taught programmes may reduce the number of international students coming to the Netherlands, which in turn will result in a smaller talent pool of international graduates. This would be challenging for employers, since as mentioned in our focus groups and interviews, they find it important that the available talent pool stays big enough.



# Conclusions





The Netherlands is facing labour market shortages, and international graduates can help address these by securing employment in the Netherlands after graduation. This study examines employers' attitudes in the Netherlands toward hiring international graduates, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. We conducted focus groups and interviews with 34 employers and surveyed 382 employers.

### **Employers experience more advantages than disadvantages**

The majority of the employers in our study (almost 80%) experience more advantages than disadvantages with having different nationalities in the workplace. The main advantages of hiring international employees/graduates include bringing more diversity, innovation, as well important personal qualities and knowledge to the company.

### **International graduates bring additional advantages**

Some additional advantages were mentioned specifically for international graduates. Firstly, holding a degree from a Dutch university is a big asset according to employers, because they are then more confident that the degree meets their standards. Secondly, international graduates can more easily adapt to the company and Dutch society, since they are already familiar with the Dutch way of living, studying and working. The latter, for example, through internships.

### **Language barriers and administration are most common disadvantages**

The main disadvantages of hiring international employees/graduates were related to language barriers such as in work instructions and regulations, when doing the work and in social interactions with colleagues. Moreover, employers faced challenges related to administration and regulations, especially when hiring non-EEA candidates. Such challenges involve becoming a recognised sponsor and meeting the salary requirements for highly skilled migrant residence permits. Smaller companies experience these challenges more, since they often have limited capacity and resources, for instance in covering administrative costs.

Some disadvantages were also mentioned in the area of cultural differences and social integration. For example, some international employees/graduates may hesitate to express their disagreement or seek help. This can be challenging for the employers since the work culture in the Netherlands often assumes self-reliance and is less hierarchical. Moreover, international employees, especially if they did not study in the Netherlands, may need help with settling in, which can be experienced as difficult and time-consuming by employers.



### **Employers expect universities to pay more attention to labour market needs**

Employers in our study expressed that education should better align with the needs of the labour market, for example through facilitating internships for students. Additionally, more cooperation between employers and universities is desired and having a dedicated contact person at universities would help. Employers also find it important that students are guided more towards entering the labour market and learning Dutch during their studies.

### **Employers need more support from the government**

Firstly, employers suggested adaptations of certain regulations by the government that would help make hiring international talent less complex and more affordable. Such adaptations could be, for example, lowering the salary requirements for residence permits and doubling the duration of the orientation year. Secondly, maintaining funding for universities is also important, since companies benefit from the knowledge and innovation produced in higher education. Thirdly, investments in local amenities such as infrastructure and housing would help attract more international talent in regions outside the existing hubs. Last but not least, according to employers, it is crucial that the government is welcoming towards international employees/ graduates in their communication and policy.





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# Appendices

1. Further information on characteristics of survey respondents	59
2. Representativeness of the survey respondents	60
3. Characteristics of focus group/ interview participants	61
4. Dutch language use	62
5. Group differences based on sectors, regions, and company sizes	63
6. Differences between technical and non-technical sectors	66





# Appendix 1

## Further information on characteristics of survey respondents

Below we provide extra (demographic) information about survey respondents.

### **Number of company locations**

About two-thirds of the companies represented had locations in the Netherlands alone (68.1%), with a third of those only having one location. The rest (31.9%) had locations in both the Netherlands and abroad.

### **Main focus of the work**

About 41.4% of the respondents worked at companies where teamwork is the main focus and another 38% worked at companies mainly focusing on client interaction. A small percentage (9.4%) indicated they mainly worked individually and about 11.3% had a mix of teamwork, client interaction and individual work.

### **Primary form of the work**

The primary work form of the company was pretty evenly split between hybrid (41.4%) and in person (36.1%). The rest (23.5%) followed varied work forms: depending on the team, working at the client's location, working from home, or in other arrangements such as different locations or a mix of multiple options.

### **Origin of international employees**

Most respondents (61.8%) worked at companies with international employees from an even mix of both European Economic Area (EEA) and non-EEA countries. One-third of respondents said the international employees came mainly from EEA countries. A small percentage (5.8%) indicated the international employees mainly came from non-EEA countries. The rest (1.5%) did not know.

### **Proportion of international graduates**

Of the companies with international graduates, about two-thirds (64.1%) indicated that between 0-50% of the international employee population graduated in the Netherlands. About one-fifth (19.3%) indicated that 50-100% of the international employees graduated in the Netherlands, and the rest (16.6%) did not know.

# Appendix 2

## Representativeness of the survey respondents

Below, the research sample is compared to the general population in the Netherlands with regard to different variables. Note that, unlike in our research where ‘company’ is used more broadly as an umbrella term (including public organisations), in national statistics, the term primarily refers to private entities.

### Origin of the company

At the national level, around 36% of employment in the Netherlands was at (Dutch or internationally owned) multinational companies in 2022 (Weusten et al., 2024). In our sample, around 27% of the respondents were working at multinationals. This implies that employers at multinationals were relatively underrepresented in our sample.

### Region

The regions in our study do not exactly match those in national statistics (CBS, 2024), mainly because we define Brainport and Randstad separately, which are not precisely captured in national data. To estimate representativeness, we make a rough comparison (please note this is an approximation). According to CBS, Randstad includes South Holland, Utrecht, and the southern part of North Holland (CBS, n.d.). Based on national statistics, around 48% of employment is located in the Randstad (including all of North Holland, as South Holland could not be isolated). In our sample, 38% of the employers worked in the Randstad (see [Figure 2](#)), suggesting it is underrepresented. Similarly, about 15% of national employment is in North Brabant, which we use as a proxy for Brainport. In our data, 16% worked in Brainport,

indicating good representativeness. Finally, around 37% of employment nationally is in other provinces, compared to 46% in our data, suggesting an overrepresentation of other provinces.

### Company size

In the Netherlands, among companies with more than ten employees, 78% of them were small (10-50 employees), around 17% were medium (50-250 employees) and around 5% of them were large (CBS, 2025). Given the distribution of our sample, we see that small companies were underrepresented (33.0%), whereas medium and large companies were overrepresented (28.5% and 38.5%, see [Figure 3](#)).

### Sector

Due to differences in sector definitions between our study and those used in the national statistics by CBS, a direct comparison is not possible. Instead, we examined the sectors defined by CBS and calculated the proportion that can be considered part of the technical sector<sup>3</sup> (CBS, 2023). According to our calculations based on national statistics, approximately 10% of jobs fall within the technical sector. Although the inclusion of a ‘mixed of both’ category in our data further complicates the assessment of representativeness, the fact that 37% of our respondents work in the technical sector (see [Figure 4](#)) suggests that this sector is overrepresented in our sample.

3 We take the following sectors from the national statistics as technical in our calculation: Construction, Information and communication, Water companies and waste management, Energy supply, Mining.



## Appendix 3

### Characteristics of focus group/interview participants

The 34 employers we talked to during the focus groups and interviews had a range of positions such as HR advisor, recruiter, manager. More than half of them were women. Their companies/ organisations were located in different areas of the Netherlands, namely in Eindhoven, Amsterdam, Roermond, Arnhem, Den Haag, Venlo, Groningen, Delft, Rotterdam, Nijmegen and Sittard-Geleen. There was a mix of representatives from private and public companies (21 from private, 8 from public and 5 from public private partnerships).

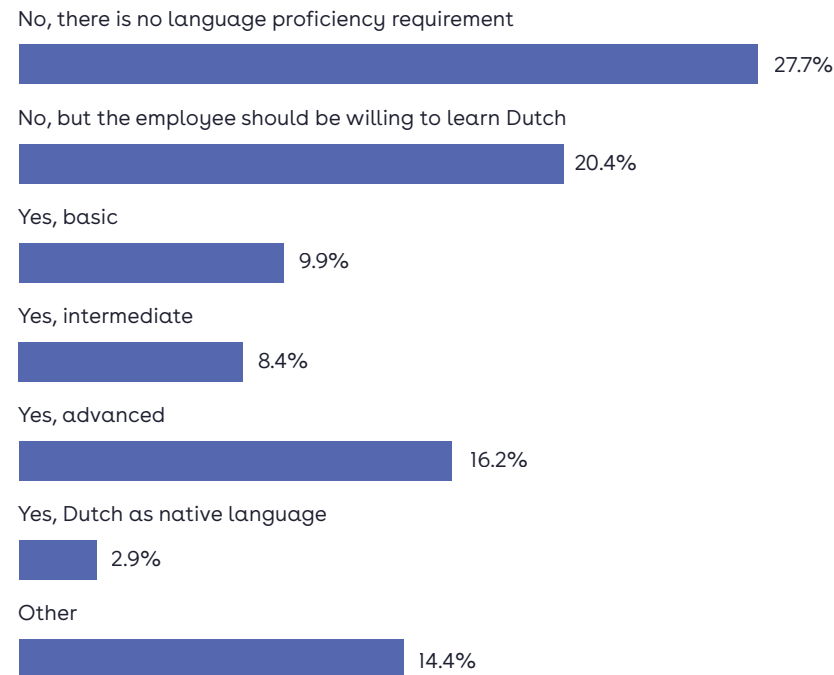
# Appendix 4

## Dutch language use

**Figure A-4.** Responses on different questions regarding language use. N=382.

### Required level of Dutch

Does your company require a certain starting level of proficiency in Dutch for employees?

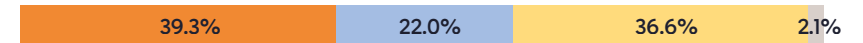


### Language use in hiring

In what language are interviews being held?



What language are your job posts in?



● Dutch ● English ● Other ● Both

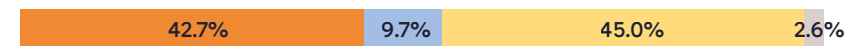
### Language use for the job

What is the primary language of operation?

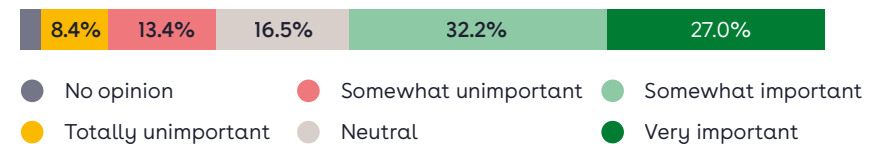


### Language use in informal interaction

What is the primary language of informal interaction (for example during the lunch breaks)?



How important is it for employees to be able to speak Dutch for the social culture at work?



● No opinion ● Somewhat unimportant ● Somewhat important  
● Totally unimportant ● Neutral ● Very important





# Appendix 5

## Group differences based on sectors, regions, and company sizes

**Table A-1.** Differences in advantages and disadvantages perceived by employers between regions.

	Average score of total sample	Average score of Randstand/Brainport	Average score of other regions	t-score <sup>1</sup>
<b>How do you experience different nationalities in one workplace? It has... (0=more disadvantages – 100=more advantages)</b>	69.5	70.6	68.1	-0.988
<b>Advantages (1=Never – 5=Always)</b>				
More diversity in the workplace	4.3	4.3	4.3	-0.37
Culturally enriching	4.1	4.1	4.1	0.279
More internationally oriented	3.8	3.7	3.8	1.045
Knowledge of different languages	3.7	3.6	3.7	0.043
Knowledge of foreign markets	3.3	3.3	3.4	0.728
More flexibility	3.1	3.0	3.2	1.163
More innovative	3.1	3.0	3.1	0.962
Knowledge of different target markets in the Netherlands	2.6	2.6	2.6	0.01
<b>Disadvantages/obstacles (1=Never – 5=Always)</b>				
Language barriers in work instructions and regulations	2.8	2.7	2.8	0.417
Language barriers when doing the work	2.7	2.7	2.7	-0.422
Administrative burdens for work or residence permits, visa issues	2.7	2.7	2.7	0.522
Language barriers in social interactions with colleagues	2.6	2.6	2.7	1.022
Cultural differences	2.5	2.4	2.6	0.955
Problems with social security	2.4	2.2	2.6	2.716
Level of education difficult to compare with Dutch level	2.3	2.3	2.3	0.597
Insufficient work experience	2.3	2.2	2.3	0.524
Insufficient secondary activities	1.8	1.8	2.0	1.794

<sup>1</sup>Significance level is based on adjusted p-value (Benjamini-Yekutieli method). \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001. No asterisk mean there is no strong evidence on statistical significance.



**Table A-2.** Differences in advantages and disadvantages perceived by employers between sectors.

	Average score of total sample	Average score of technical sector	Average score of non-technical sector	t-score <sup>1</sup>
<b>How do you experience different nationalities in one workplace? It has... (0=more disadvantages – 100=more advantages)</b>	69.4	64.4	73.0	3.214 **
<b>Advantages (1=Never – 5=Always)</b>				
More diversity in the workplace	4.3	4.2	4.4	2.522 *
Culturally enriching	4.1	3.9	4.3	3.726 ***
More internationally oriented	3.8	3.6	3.9	2.963 **
Knowledge of different languages	3.7	3.3	3.9	4.55 ***
Knowledge of foreign markets	3.4	2.9	3.7	6.026 ***
More flexibility	3.1	2.8	3.3	3.623 ***
More innovative	3.1	2.9	3.2	2.328
Knowledge of different target markets in the Netherlands	2.7	2.3	2.9	4.9 ***
<b>Disadvantages/obstacles (1=Never – 5= Always)</b>				
Language barriers in work instructions and regulations	2.7	3.0	2.6	-2.972 *
Language barriers when doing the work	2.7	2.9	2.5	-2.318
Administrative burdens for work or residence permits, visa issues	2.7	3.0	2.5	-3.429 **
Language barriers in social interactions with colleagues	2.6	2.9	2.4	-3.893 ***
Cultural differences	2.5	2.7	2.4	-2.167
Problems with social security	2.4	2.6	2.2	-2.819 *
Level of education difficult to compare with Dutch level	2.3	2.6	2.1	-3.979 ***
Insufficient work experience	2.3	2.6	2.0	-5.037 ***
Insufficient secondary activities	1.9	2.0	1.7	-2.761 *

<sup>1</sup>Significance level is based on adjusted p-value (Benjamini-Yekutieli method). \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001. No asterisk mean there is no strong evidence on statistical significance.



**Table A-3.** Differences in advantages and disadvantages perceived by employers depending on company size.

	Average score of total sample	Average score of small or medium-sized companies	Average score of large companies	t-score <sup>1</sup>
<b>How do you experience different nationalities in one workplace? It has... (0=more disadvantages – 100=more advantages)</b>	69.5	67.3	73.0	2.156 *
<b>Advantages (1=Never – 5=Always)</b>				
More diversity in the workplace	4.3	4.2	4.5	2.208
Culturally enriching	4.1	4.1	4.2	1.384
More internationally oriented	3.8	3.7	3.8	0.502
Knowledge of different languages	3.7	3.5	3.8	2.218
Knowledge of foreign markets	3.3	3.2	3.5	2.132
More flexibility	3.1	3.1	3.0	-0.652
More innovative	3.1	3.0	3.1	0.899
Knowledge of different target markets in the Netherlands	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.608
<b>Disadvantages/Obstacles (1=Never – 5=Always)</b>				
Language barriers in work instructions and regulations	2.8	2.8	2.8	-0.047
Language barriers when doing the work	2.7	2.7	2.7	-0.479
Administrative burdens for work or residence permits, visa issues	2.7	2.8	2.5	-2.1
Language barriers in social interactions with colleagues	2.6	2.6	2.6	0.054
Cultural differences	2.5	2.5	2.5	0.052
Problems with social security	2.4	2.4	2.4	-0.196
Level of education difficult to compare with Dutch level	2.3	2.3	2.3	0.136
Insufficient work experience	2.3	2.3	2.3	0.142
Insufficient secondary activities	1.8	1.8	1.8	0.082

<sup>1</sup>Significance level is based on adjusted p-value (Benjamini-Yekutieli method). \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001. No asterisk mean there is no strong evidence on statistical significance.



## Appendix 6

### Differences between technical and non-technical sectors

Dutch is more often the official company language in non-technical sectors (60.9%) than in technical sectors (54.7%), meaning that these companies operate exclusively in Dutch rather than using it alongside English. Moreover, a higher proportion of companies in the technical sector (53.2%) report that Dutch is not compulsory for their employees, not even at a basic level, compared to the non-technical sector (44.1%).

Interestingly, informal interactions—such as lunch meetings—are more often only in Dutch in the technical sector (49.6%) than in the non-technical sector (38.7%). Similarly, more companies in the technical sector (61.7%) than in the non-technical sector (56.4%) consider Dutch language skills important for their company's social culture.

In terms of international talent and administrative issues, a higher percentage of companies in the technical sector (31.2%) report encountering administrative difficulties (e.g. with visas) regularly or always compared to those in the non-technical sector (15.2%). Lastly, more companies in the non-technical sector (12.7%) report that at least half of their employees are international talent, compared to 7.8% in the technical sector.

# Colophon

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