

# Internationalization Agenda for Education 2006-2011

15 september 2005

Internationalization must become an integrated component of education

Historically, the Netherlands has always had a strong international focus and one that can be assigned a prominent place in the education we provide. There are also a number of reasons from the more recent past for maintaining and accentuating that focus. Society is becoming more and more international. We have more and more contact with other population groups and the Netherlands is competing with other countries on the education market. From the socio-cultural and economic point of view it is important that education keeps up with the international trends. Students, pupils and teachers must have the necessary knowledge and skills to prepare and enable them to collaborate and co-exist with foreign people and institutions, whether in the Netherlands or some other country. Education institutions and the education system as such will therefore have to acquire an increased international orientation.

After fifteen years of internationalization policy, it is clear that internationalization is not, as yet, an integrated component of education. The process can be accelerated and improved both as regards content and organization. With this 2006-2011 agenda, the Education Council wants to contribute to the further internationalization of education so that this aspect becomes a natural and integrated feature of education in all sectors.

How can the internationalization of education be encouraged?

The request for recommendations to which this agenda is a response was taken the form of the following question: *How can we encourage the internationalization of education?* The answer to this question is laid down in a number of recommendations for the division of tasks between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, intermediary organizations and educational institutions, and in ten agenda points.

Three recommendations for the division of tasks

*(1) Develop a quality mark for institutions*

Intermediary organizations which stimulate and facilitate the internationalization of education (such as the European Platform, the Nuffic and the CINOP) can develop a quality mark or certificate for educational institutions to determine the level of internationalization. Insight can be created, in each educational sector, into the extent to which an institution is internationalized. A voluntary quality mark would be a recognition of the quality that the institutions provide. At the same time, institutions that are not awarded such a quality mark, would be encouraged to initiate or improve relevant initiatives.

*(2) Provide an internationalization front office in each education sector*

Secondly, in each sector, (virtual) front offices need to be created within the educational institutions or at the intermediary organizations. These would be points of contact for pupils, students and teachers who have questions on, for example, exchange activities, linking with other institutions, grants and content-related queries. This will make internationalization accessible to everyone.

*(3) Lay down an Internationalization Policy*

It goes without saying that the government also has a role to play, particularly when it can support the developments referred to above. For example, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science could draw up an *Internationalization Policy*, in collaboration with actors in the field, and ensure its implementation in terms of substance in line with developments in Europe. The *Internationalization Policy* ought, in any case, to include the following ten agenda points.

The ten agenda points for the coming years

The Council regards the following ten agenda points to be important for the future:

*Internationalization of the curriculum*

- (1) Determine the extent to which each curriculum content and each curriculum can be internationalized. Include international knowledge and skills in the curricula and focus on specific international reference points, such as linking with activities of the European Union and the Council of

Europe, in order to create something that we would designate, in the Dutch context, as a European cultural frame of reference and a link with European citizenship.

- (2) Use ICT (information and communication technology) for internationalization purposes. The Internet will have to be used more and more as a meeting point for schools, pupils and students or as a means of preparing for a physical exchange.
- (3) Develop and export international curricula (for example the international baccalaureate) which are gaining ground in all sectors of education. The Council will put forward recommendations relating to international curricula and standards at a later stage.
- (4) Organize continuous, cosmopolitan, international educational routes. Young people are being educated more and more at international schools and schools with varying international orientations. This means that children start their education careers at an internationally-oriented primary school and end it by graduating from an international higher education institution, by which time they are ready to enter the international employment market.

#### *International contacts*

- (5) Encourage international partnerships and cooperation between institutions in the Netherlands and abroad. They constitute an incentive for internationalization.
- (6) Encourage international mobility and encounters. Particularly in secondary education, vocational education and higher education, time spent studying or on a work placement abroad is a valuable supplement to the teaching programme. In primary education this could take the form of virtual contact.
- (7) Ensure recognition and transparency between education systems through cooperation, in Europe and elsewhere, in the field of international agreements on systems and on accreditation.

#### *Internationalization and inter-sector aspects*

- (8) Link up with other policy areas and international organizations, for example in relation to work placement and exchange programmes run by other ministries and organizations or developments at the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) or the ILO (International Labour Organization).
- (9) Encourage internationalization within the framework of life-long learning. The expectation is that the international mobility of employees will increase. Attention should therefore be paid to standards for the appraisal of international competence and to making international agreements with professional sectors for post-initial education and working practice.

#### *Export education*

- (10) Pay continuous attention to the international competitive position of higher education and explore the possibilities for secondary and vocational education. A number of the components of the education we provide are internationally valuable and are there to be used. The same applies to curricula and qualifications (we have a considerable international reputation as regards developing tests), although worthwhile export services could also be created in the areas of quality control, inter-review procedures and accreditation.

The Education Council should focus on internationalization in its other recommendations. The *Internationalization Agenda for Education 2006-2011* provides points of departure for the Council to issue recommendations on various matters in the future. At the start of 2006, for example, the Council is going to issue recommendations on international curricula and standards. Any other recommendations will only be made after the Minister has issued a policy response.