



Board Grants for non-EEA Students  
Student Party SAM together with Student Party ECCO  
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## Introduction

Student Party ECCO correctly framed a problem amongst the students of TiSEM: the segregation between Dutch and international students. There is a great inflow of international students at our university. The university strives towards a welcoming environment for both Dutch and international students. Within the strategy towards 2027 the ambition to better the connection between Dutch and international students is appointed, as is the affirmation that the different groups of students do not always connect with each other. Parties ECCO & SAM believe that this segregation is partly due to the higher threshold for international students to engage in extracurricular activities of associations, or apply for a board year.

Student Party SAM is convinced that this problem occurs not only within the TiSEM department, but also within the other schools. Therefore, both parties think that the university should and could do more to improve its openness to International students, with a bottom up approach.

ECCO came to Student Party SAM due to their similar stances on internationalization and because the general topics that are tackled in this joint proposal had been explored in a previous meeting. Both parties believe students should be given the same opportunities for development when studying in Tilburg. Entering into a board year might be one of the solutions with the most effective ways to do so and should therefore be equal amongst all students, encouraged and recognized.

## The Current Situation

The university has taken great steps in improving the inclusion of international students and the recognition of student boards. But there is a perceived lack of English-spoken activities for international students. The offer of English-spoken activities is important for the inclusion of international students. International students, just as others, wish to learn and grow from not only the offered education but also from the offered possibilities to develop outside of their curriculum. Activities, organized by associations and students themselves, are therefore very important. But the lower focus on English-spoken activities can be a hindrance for international students to participate.

Within the department of TiSEM, Asset | IB&M is one of the study associations under the umbrella of Asset. This association attracts a lot of international students, causing an increase of English-spoken activities. In turn, this high amount of English-spoken activities has led to more inclusiveness and an organically developed multicultural atmosphere. Asset | IB&M pointed out that all activities organized in English also attract more international students, resulting in better integration. The current president of Student Association ESN, who is also an IBA student, noted the trend regarding the international participation rate. She stated that the participation rate of international students in associations is higher at the beginning of the academic year, but slowly

declines as the year progresses. According to her, this often occurs due to the larger focus on Dutch students by these organizations.

There are some notable observations regarding the language barrier between international and Dutch students. Students themselves seem to think that language forms a barrier. Students noted that in smaller groups, Dutch students tend to speak Dutch. However, there seems to be a positive correlation between the growing percentage of international students and the willingness of Dutch students to speak English. Nevertheless, students feel there is a lack of opportunities to actively mix different cultures. Lastly, IBA students seem to experience problems with invigilators giving Dutch explanations. This seems to be present to a lesser extent among E&BI students, but our parties fear that it is an occurring problem within other departments as well.

We as student party in the University Council think that the lack of participation and internationalization within associations is partly due to the communication and positional restraints. We believe that the lack of international students within the board of associations is partly due to the lack of communication and given opportunities for these students. For international students and non-EEA students, the barrier for considering a board year is much higher than for national students. Firstly, because of the majority of Dutch students within association boards. Secondly, the financial burden for international and non-EEA students is much higher than for national students. International students encounter higher living costs and non-EEA students also encounter a higher tuition fee than others (~9k vs. ~2k annual tuition).

To put it in concrete terms, we recognize the following three problems:

- 1) The low engagement from International students in (extracurricular) activities.
- 2) A lack of (perceived) opportunity for international students to enter into a boardyear.
- 3) Social segregation due to the language barrier and tendency of Dutch students to speak Dutch, even when internationals are present.

### **Board Grants for non-EEA Students**

Student Party SAM and Student Party ECCO are convinced that international students and non-EEA students should be encouraged more to participate in extracurricular activities or enter into a boardyear.

Student Party ECCO proposed the following idea: an additional board grant or compensation for non-EEA students, under strict conditions. These ideas were presented to the chair of the Independents for TiSEM and Jorna Leenheer, who gave their feedback.

Faculty Party ECCO also presented their ideas to Student Party SAM. Student Party SAM believes that the international student should and could be given the right opportunities to enter into a boardyear and participate in English-spoken extracurricular activities. Therefore, Student Party

SAM agrees with Student Party ECCO, and sees an opportunity in additional board grants for non-EEA students. We strongly believe that this situation not only occurs within the TiSEM department, as it corresponds to earlier and other mentions among students.

Both Dutch and international students should be given the same opportunities. In the current situation, this is not the case. Students outside of the European Economic Area (EEA), have much higher costs for their studies. The most notable cost difference is their tuition fee. It amounts to ~9000 Euro (2022-2023). For the same academic year, a EEA student pays ~ 2209 Euro in tuition fee. This discrepancy in tuition fees directly impacts the student's willingness to participate into a board year. These students are often, due to large costs, pressured to graduate nominally. This hinders students to develop outside of their curriculum or participate in larger extracurricular activities. In the interest of the universities strategy towards 2022-2027, and the values of being a connected and caring society, parties SAM & ECCO believe that the university could take a major step, recognizing the current described problem.

Student Party SAM, together with Student Party ECCO would like to propose the following:

- A) Students who are non-EEA get (partial) additional compensation for a board year. Or,
- B) A waiver of the tuition fee of non-EEA students, up to the amount a national or EEA student would pay in tuition.

We believe that the proposals above would provide an equality of opportunity for all students. The framed solutions were run by Jorna Leenheer and the Independents of the Faculty Council. ECCO gathered feedback and followed up with our finalized solutions after the initial memo: 'On-campus changes to reinforce TiSEM as a truly welcoming international faculty' had gained feedback in the Faculty Council cycle 3 and was partially redirected to the University-Council level.

Important agreements regarding additional compensation should be made. Namely, we believe that it is important that an additional board grant for non-EEA students can be approved before the start of the board year. This would provide certainty for the financial situation of the concerning student.

Both parties, SAM & ECCO, are able to track the progress of this plan, along with the steps we intend to make in encouraging international board applications, by keeping track of the amount of applications submitted for additional board grants.

## What we want

Student Party SAM and Student Party ECCO would like to see more equality for Dutch, EEA and non-EEA students, in their possibility to develop outside of their curriculum. Therefore, we would like to see an implementation of additional board grants or waivers for the ambitious student, who wants to enter into a board year. We hope to lower the threshold for non-EEA students and

lessen their financial burdens when applying for a board year. Student Party SAM and Student Party ECCO are open for further collaboration regarding this proposal. We are open to discuss the limitations and restrictions that would be needed to create a financially feasible approach. With this initiative, we hope to better the possibilities for non-EEA students to fulfill their ambitions.