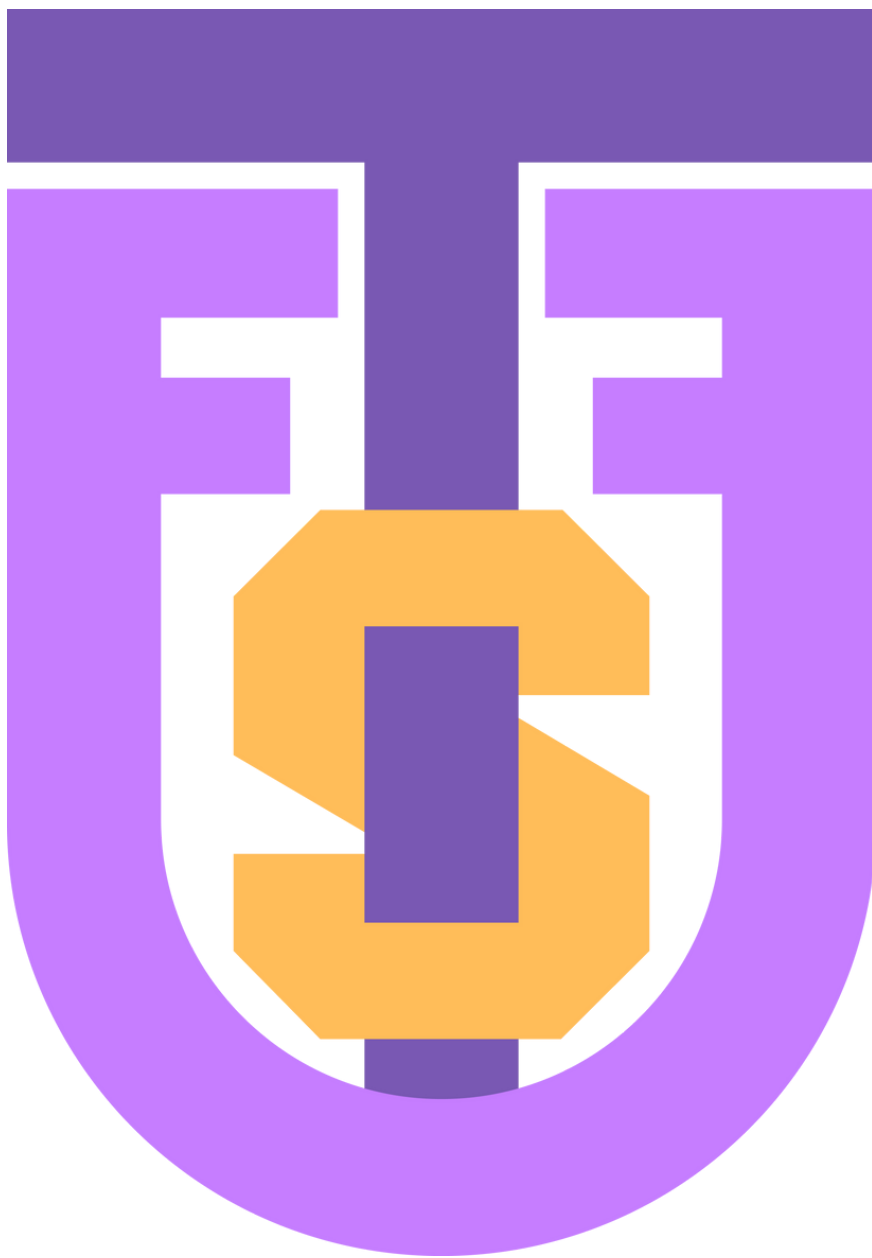


# Internationalisation Vision

2023 - 2024



# Introduction

## Dear Reader

Within this vision we aim to explain our opinions and views within our student housing portfolio. This vision is meant to be seen as a public opinion of the union upon which we will base our further policy. This means that this vision will function as our public decree of our opinion regarding student housing policy. This document will also function as the basis upon which later boards will have to write their policy.

The fact that the policy has to find its basis in our vision documents has two main reasons. This way we ensure that the vision documents of F.U.S.T. are consistently updated and we ensure that the actions of the board can be traced back to a decision by the General Meetings (seeing as this vision document also directs the board in their daily tasks). Thus always keeping the union's opinions relevant and based upon the opinion it's members.

Lastly, we want to recognise the ambiguity that comes with an vision document such as this. We therefore also want to clearly state that within this vision document is room for discretion of the board. If there are any questions or doubts about the handling of this vision document by any board, we redirect you to the General Meetings.

**On behalf of the 1st board of F.U.S.T.,**  
**Nikola Novoselec**  
**Treasurer Federal Union Students Tilburg**

# Supporting and Clarifying

Tilburg has emerged as a significant destination for international students, with data from Tilburg University indicating that they comprise 25% of the student population.<sup>1</sup> This figure has shown a consistent upward trend in recent years. Despite a decline in international student numbers over the past two years due to lower recruitment efforts and transparency about housing issues, their presence in Tilburg and nationwide is still increasing.

Recent political shifts in the Netherlands, however, might pose challenges to this trend. The issue of international students has become increasingly contentious in Dutch politics, with growing calls for reducing their numbers and limiting English-taught courses. In this context, F.U.S.T. takes a stance of unequivocal support for international students in Tilburg. F.U.S.T. is not involved in national migration policy debates; our focus is solely on the welfare of students in Tilburg. We maintain that every student, regardless of origin, deserves support from relevant representative bodies.

However, in order to support the cohort of international students, it is crucial to understand that their needs and problems often differ significantly from those of their Dutch counterparts. Bringing clarity to the specific challenges faced by international students in Tilburg and determining the best approaches to address them are essential steps in providing support to this group. By doing so, F.U.S.T. will demonstrate its care and respect for the distinct experiences of this student group, hopefully making them feel valued and understood.

## Integration

The cornerstone of our vision for internationalisation is integration. It's about helping maintain a Tilburg where all international students, regardless of their origin, feel valued and connected. A recent national survey has highlighted a critical gap in this area, with many internationals wanting more contact with the local Dutch population.<sup>2</sup> Despite this being a national sample, we have also observed similar problems in Tilburg. To address this, F.U.S.T. is committed to implementing programs that facilitate cultural exchange and mutual understanding. We envision initiatives like community events, working on projects of common interest and educational gatherings that bring internationals and locals together, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect.

## Accessibility for Internationals

Another key aspect of our vision is ensuring that internationals in Tilburg have access to the full spectrum of opportunities the city offers, especially within student associations. It has been reported that language and cultural barriers often hinder this participation.<sup>2</sup> To combat this, F.U.S.T. advocates for a bilingual approach in organizational operations, promoting both Dutch and English in communications. This strategy is aimed at creating a welcoming environment where internationals feel confident and encouraged to participate actively in community life. However, accessibility involves more than just the use of language. Fostering an atmosphere of openness towards international students is vital for making them feel included. Without a deep-seated culture of acceptance for international students—rather than mere tolerance—they are likely to feel unwelcome. Therefore, it is crucial for F.U.S.T. to not only position itself but to genuinely be a union that serves the international student.

## Acquiring Bureaucratic Competency

One of the most daunting challenges for internationals is navigating the local administrative and bureaucratic systems. From housing and healthcare to understanding local laws and financial systems, the complexity can be overwhelming. And this has been impacting the lives of international students, with many of them reporting feeling uninformed about important bureaucratic information.<sup>2</sup> F.U.S.T. places a high priority on providing comprehensive information and support in these areas. We plan to develop lectures, informational guides, and online sources to help provide information in these matters. Our goal is to ensure that every international resident in Tilburg has the knowledge and resources they need to manage their administrative affairs with ease and confidence

<sup>1</sup> Tilburg University. (2023). *Current student registrations at Tilburg University: number of students stabilizes*.

<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/current/news/more-news/current-student-registrations-tilburg-university-number-students-stabilizes>

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus Student Network The Netherlands, Landelijke Studentenvakbond, Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg. (2022). Annual international student survey. <https://iso.nl/2022/08/annual-international-student-survey-internationale-student-blijft-tweederangs-student/>

## Conclusion

This vision document aims to clearly define our approach to the intricate issue of internationalization. It signifies F.U.S.T.'s commitment to not overlook the needs of international students within our functions. Many of the challenges they face remain ambiguous, a direct consequence of their limited integration into the Dutch student representation system. We are dedicated to closing this gap, ensuring international students become an integral part of F.U.S.T.'s structure, and proactively addressing their unique challenges.