



On-campus changes to reinforce TiSEM as a truly welcoming international faculty

Faculty Council TiSEM, Term 2021-2022, Cycle 3

Memo from: Student Party ECCO

Memo to: Faculty Council of Tilburg School of Economics and Management

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Executive summary

With the ever growing amount of international students entering Tisem due to the implications of the 2018-2021 strategy, international students make up an increasingly large percentage of students within TiSEM as of 2022. Given the growing inflow of internationals and TiSEM's focus within their faculty and curriculum on Internationalization, ECCO feels there are changes the Management Team should (and could) make within the next academic year to significantly improve it's openness to International students with a bottom-up approach.

Empathize: We interviewed several stakeholders to create a better overview on the current internationalization measures. The interviewed parties include: Academic Directors, ASSET and the University Council. We constructed interviews based on the input we collected and asked a total of 18 international students across 4 studies about their opinions and feelings on the following three topics: *Perception of TiSEM, Integration and Engagement on campus and Awareness of & access to facilities & Opportunities.*

The interviews were subsequently used to recognise 5 key problems:

1. Social segregation due to the language barrier and tendency to speak Dutch when internationals have a stake in the activity.
2. Lack of communication for existing facilities and lack of responsibility for continually improving internationalization, diversity and inclusion.
3. Low active engagement from International students in (extracurricular) activities of *on-campus organizations**.
4. A lack of (perceived) opportunity for internationals to enter into a board-year.
5. A lack of a physical space for students and staff to interact with each other.

Based on our recognised issues we framed a set of solutions by using student ideas, interviews with stakeholders and Interviews with similar Economics and management faculties across the Netherlands. The universities we interviewed included: UVA, Erasmus, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Utrecht university. After sketching ideas based on the input we came up with raw sketches of solutions, we ran our framed solutions by Jorna Leenheer and the Independents for some feedback and followed up with our finalized solutions. We managed to formulate 5 solutions about which you can read more in the report, the recommendations for the management team are:

- (A) *Appointment of a Diversity and Inclusion Officer.*
- (B) *Physical space for social interaction.*
- (C) *Additional (partial) board grants for non-EEA students.*
- (D) *International Language use.*
- (E) *Communication about the facilities that TiSEM offers its students.*

Introduction

Within the last few years, the ever increasing base of international students within Tilburg University (TiU), has put an expanding strain on the already poorly manageable housing issue that has held strong in Tilburg. This issue has further revealed and amplified other problems with respect to integration that internationals face within TiSEM (Tilburg School of Economics and Management).

In the previous TiSEM strategy, the Management Team prioritized increasing the number of internationals that enroll by 25%, compared to the academic year 2016-2017 (Strategy 2018-2021). A considerable part of the strategy revolved around growth and becoming a member of a productive international network.

The TiSEM strategy 2022-2027 took an ambitious step by stating it wishes to foster an international experience on campus, ECCO wholly endorses this and thinks there are feasible changes. We have written down recommendations TiSEM could undertake to achieve this vision of a truly internationally integrated faculty.

As TiSEM has the most international studies and a curriculum that actively engages with it's cultural composition, we believe that TiSEM is uniquely positioned to launch pilots and initiatives to foster the international experience. Because we are a large faculty with a lot of moving parts we would propose a bottom up approach, where the Management Team (MT) can first launch initiatives and pilots using our recommendations below and then closely monitor the results via feedback from students, teachers, parties and associations.

Empathise

To understand the situation to the best extent possible, we reviewed numerous academic articles in the field of multicultural education and interaction. Afterwards, we had several conversations with relevant stakeholders, who have a birds-eye view on relevant student movements and work with them closely on a daily basis. The point of these meetings was to form a preliminary understanding of the overarching problems that TiSEM faces, and how they relate to the university as a whole. Some of the contacted parties included: University Council parties Front & SAM, Faculty study association Asset, Student association ESN Tilburg and the Academic Directors (ADs) of Economics, E&BI and IBA. The takeaways from these conversations and questions can be found in the appendix.

Notably, the effects of the native to non-native ratio in interactive lectures and tutorials was mentioned frequently. This ratio affects the inclusiveness of the atmosphere, making the interactive lectures and tutorials an instrumental part of creating inclusiveness. A second observation, that was mainly prevalent within the AD's interviews, was the perceived lack of English-spoken activities which should invite students to mix with other students.

One interesting case-observation is regarding Asset IB&M, one of the study associations under the umbrella of Asset. This association attracted a lot of international students, which led to the organization of more English-spoken activities. In turn, the higher amount of English-spoken activities has led to more inclusiveness and an organically developed multicultural atmosphere.

In addition, we've talked to the current president of Student Association I*ESN, who is also an IBA student and an active member of Asset IB&M. She noted a trend regarding the participation rates of international students in associations: they are quite high at the beginning of the academic year but steadily decline as the year goes on. According to her, this occurs because associations often focus (more) on Dutch students.

Finally the student parties of the University Council think that communication and positional restraints play a part in lessening internationalization. They believe that internationalization would be boosted by having international students in boards of associations. However, for internationals and non-EEA students the barrier for considering a board year is much higher than for national students. Firstly, this is because of the vast majority of Dutch students in association boards, which might seem uninviting. Secondly, the financial burden for these students is much higher, due to higher living costs. More specifically for non-EEA students, their tuition is also significantly higher than for others (~9k vs. ~2k annual tuition).

Based on our contact with the faculty, with participation from the AD of the E&BI bachelor program and the Asset SBIT chairman (oversees internationalization), a list of topics and a list with questions for international students were composed (see appendix). As can be seen, the questions were divided into three groups, with the following topics: perception of TiSEM: regional vs. global, integration & engagement on campus, awareness of & access to facilities & opportunities.

We contacted students from Bachelor programmes E&BI and IBA to participate in the interviews, for the following reasons: IBA is one of the most well-established studies in TiSEM, where internationalization plays a big role in the program as well as the community. In contrast to this, we included the newer bachelor for E&BI in this project, since the students have a vastly different mindset (entrepreneurial vs. managerial or job related).

When students were asked about their opinions on TiSEM and its curriculum in general, the overall response was rather positive. Some observations from the first topic: international E&BI students generally feel there are too few opportunities organized for them at which they could interact with other TiSEM students. E&BI students also feel that cases used in their education are mostly Netherlands-focused instead of international-focused, which is something they feel can hamper their expertise regarding international companies. Moreover, students from both E&BI and IBA seem to

have a need for more follow-up events after TOP Week organized by the faculty, which facilitate interaction between students in the first weeks at Tilburg University. Examples could be activities with PASS mentors, a buddy program or more formal introductory events after TOP Week.

Some notable observations regarding the topic integration and engagement: students seem to think language is one of the main barriers. In addition, there seems to be a positive correlation between the growing percentage of internationals and the willingness of Dutch students to speak English. Students also noted that in smaller groups, Dutch students tend to speak Dutch. Next to that, neither E&BI students nor IBA students are aware of any current measures TiSEM is taking to actively mix different cultures and feel there is a lack of opportunities to do so. Lastly, IBA students seem to experience problems with invigilators giving Dutch explanations, this is present to a lesser extent in E&BI.

Finally, the insights regarding awareness of & access to facilities & opportunities: Internationals in IBA expressed their wish for more extracurricular opportunities. Moreover, the majority of internationals feels that even when a vacancy is available and communicated in English, they are still unsure of how open employers are to internationals, resulting in hesitation to apply. The last point often addressed was that none of the students in our sample were aware of any events meant to facilitate the interaction with internationals.

Students also took the liberty to add some of their ideas and/or directions they thought the faculty should take. These ideas and directions (repeatedly) included:

- More extensive implementation of the buddy-system.
- A bigger emphasis on English friendly clubs & events.
- More opportunities for internationals to network.
- A bigger emphasis on an international TOP Week.
- More diverse work groups for projects and tutorials.

Defining Key Players

A few key players outside of the TiSEM Management Team can be considered when it comes to having influence on the internationalization of TiSEM.

Study Association Asset: This study association, which has an extensive set of informal activities and career related opportunities, also helps students connect through ‘active membership’ in which students form committees to organize events or operations. Their direct ties to TiSEM and large base of involved students, gives them perhaps the biggest impact regarding integration and career opportunities. As currently constructed, Asset has a small representable level of international members compared to the studies it is attached to. Only the study association Asset IB&M has grown noticeably in terms of internationalization over the past few years. In order to match the needs of international students, Asset hosts international events and tries to get in touch with a representative base of international companies.

Career Services TiSEM: A department within TiSEM that governs student career development by getting students in tune with their interests, developing their professional and personal skills and offering them career opportunities. These opportunities are communicated through their platform: the Career Portal.

MAK: MAK is the organization that provides student mentors for both the TOP Week and the subsequent mentorship groups throughout the year.

Program for Academic Study Success (PASS): In PASS, the mentors from MAK help students to optimize their chances for study success. However, PASS has had management shifts and re-organisations in the past two years, leading to different implementations of the mentor groups each time.

Recognised Problems

The following are problems that have been recognised through the conversations with students and relevant parties. We feel that these could be significantly improved by the TiSEM Management Team in collaboration with other key players within one year.

- (1) Social segregation due to the language barrier and tendency of Dutch students to speak Dutch, even when internationals have a stake in the activity.
- (2) Lack of communication for existing facilities and lack of a person responsible for continually improving internationalization, diversity and inclusion.
- (3) Low engagement from International students in (extracurricular) activities of *on-campus organizations**.
- (4) A lack of (perceived) opportunity for internationals to enter into a board-year.
- (5) A lack of a physical space for students and staff to interact with each other.

One thing that can be mentioned as a problem we do recognise but we do not feel we can have a direct impact on is the current state of TOP Week.

*On-campus meaning Enactus, Asset, Student jobs, etc.

Framing a solution

During our research, we were also intrigued with whether economics faculties of other universities were facing the same issues. We contacted staff, staff representatives or student representatives from Erasmus University, Maastricht University, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University. The interview questions (see appendix) were focused on finding actions that a faculty could undertake to improve internationalization.

The current state of internalization, within the economics faculties of the aforementioned universities, was viewed as generally very positive. The reason for this was often attributed to the large percentage of international students who study there. The Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Amsterdam currently has more international students than Dutch students. The interviewed student representative explained that this distribution causes the faculty and its students to adopt an international mindset. The faculty staff grew to be for a large part international, which led to all policy and communication being in English. National students are also more inclined to communicate in the shared language, both off and on campus. A logical but critical consequence of this is that international students are more likely to feel at home; they are not viewed as outsiders. The international diversity also makes it abundantly clear that all activities within the faculty are organized and executed completely in English. Some of the universities also make use of the International Student Barometer (ISB) for providing guidance and feedback on internationalization.

An Erasmus University staff representative and an University of Amsterdam student representative also attributed their positive international student satisfaction to using a Diversity & Inclusion Officer (DIC), which all faculties had. Practical uses, that were outlined by the representatives, of having a Diversity & Inclusion Officer are as follows; students and staff have a clear person to talk to regarding this issue, DIC can actively search for diversity and reduce bias in the decision making process, and can train staff about implicit bias during the hiring process.

Student Party ECCO was also notified of a recent project that Erasmus University has undertaken, it is called The Living Room. It is a physical location on the campus grounds where students can meet, interact and socialize in an informal way. Due to the pandemic students can also

participate in an online environment where various activities are organized to improve well-being. A staff representative was very enthusiastic about the impact it already has.

Ideation

After gathering the necessary input from all relevant parties, all data was compiled and summarized. After this we used the ideas we got from different students, stakeholders and universities to formulate concrete plans relating the five issues mentioned above:

- *Multicultural group cycling in tutorials and projects (1)*
- *International language use as primary in all applicable situations (1)(3)*
- *Appointment of a Diversity and Inclusion officer within TiSEM (2)*
- *Communication about the faculty and its facilities (2)*
- *Recurring activities with Top group as carry-through from TOP week (3)(1)*
- *Active encouragement for new international board candidates (4)(3)*
- *Additional Board grants/compensations for non-EEA students under strict conditions (4)*
- *Physical space where students can interact (5)*

After coming up with our own solutions, we discussed these ideas with the chair of the Independents for TiSEM and Jorna Leenheer, who gave their feedback. This feedback session helped us group and refine our initial ideas into the following categories:

- Recommendations to the TiSEM Management Team.
 - Main changes: Bigger changes that would take a project or more resources.
 - Household changes: Smaller tweaks and changes that can be made in a short timespan.
- Recommendations & exploratory ideas for AD's & course coordinators.
- Recommendations & exploratory ideas for ASSET, MAK and Career Services

Recommendations to the TiSEM Management Team

Main changes

(A) Appointment of a Diversity and Inclusion Officer

Looking at the collectivity of identified problems, Student Party ECCO noticed that the faculty could be more inclusive to students and staff. In the 2022-2027 TiSEM strategy it is also clearly outlined that CARING is one of the core values that TiSEM adheres to and aspires to. Student Party ECCO would advise the TiSEM Management Team to hire a Diversity and Inclusion Officer (DIC), this action would be in line with the following key strategic aspirations: 1d, 2c, 2d, 2j, 4h, 5c and 5h.

The representatives, from the economics faculty of Erasmus University and University of Amsterdam, that we spoke to were abundantly clear about the positive changes one Diversity and Inclusion Officer per faculty brings. TiSEM could benefit from taking a similar approach. Currently such a role does not exist within the faculty, however we do have university wide initiatives: Philip Eijland Diversity Program; Diversity & Inclusion action plan; Gender Equality Plan 2022-2025; Tilburg University Network for Inclusion; Diversity & Equality. There are also several employees who focus on internationalization, inclusion and diversity.

These current initiatives and employees are nonetheless not sufficient enough. TiSEM students and staff do not have a defined person to talk to when facing diversity and inclusion issues. A Diversity and Inclusion Officer would also be aware of all the problems that students and staff face regarding this issue. The DIC could thus be very useful for faculty level stakeholder management, policy advice and guidance on diversity and inclusion policy implementation. In addition this person is in charge of the training and education of personnel regarding this topic. A Diversity and Inclusion

Officer would make a specific person responsible for continually improving the diversity and inclusion at our faculty, and thus partially solve the (2) recognized problem.

(B) Physical space for social interaction

In line with the core values of the 2022-2027 strategy CONNECTED, we try to solve the issue regarding student engagement, interaction and networking (recognized problem 3 & 5) by creating an open space, devoid of working places and designed in a way that encourages interaction and play between students (and faculty).

This idea came up in the meetings held with various universities. For example, The Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) has had positive experiences with a location on campus called The Living Room, which encouraged students and faculty to relax and get to know each other. This idea later gained momentum when we put it up for review with our stakeholders, who encouraged the idea. The space as constructed at EUR contains board games, chairs, some couches and is meant to inspire conversation and play. At Tilburg University, the popular table tennis table in the intermezzo building constitutes a great example of a connecting addition to a common space. We recommend involving students in the design of this space, and co-creating a space where TiSEM can show its identity.

Our proposal is to allocate a space which would ideally be more central on the campus to be TiSEM's new "living room". Of course, the timeline in which this is possible depends on the availability of such a space. This room could be monitored for the amount of visitors, monthly growth, and subsequently could be measured in effectiveness through the (annual) student survey given out by the faculty/university.

(C) Additional (partial) board grants for non-EEA students

Dutch and international TiSEM students should be given the same opportunities. In the current situation this does not happen. International students, more specifically students outside of the European Economic Area (EEA), have a much higher cost for their studies. The most notable cost difference is their tuition fee, which amounts to 9000 Euro (2022-2023) per bachelor year. EEA students will pay 2209 Euro for the same academic year.

This discrepancy in tuition fee directly impacts the student's willingness to participate in extracurricular activities, such as a board year. Having international students in a board would force the Dutch speaking board members to use English as the primary language, and thus also internationalize its activities. Asset IB&M pointed out that all activities organized in English also attract more international students, resulting in better integration.

In the interest of the CONNECTED and CARING values TiSEM wants to uphold in the 2022-2027 TiSEM strategy, Student Party ECCO believes that the faculty could take a major step in addressing the recognized problems (3) and (4).

We would propose that students who are non-EEA get (partial) additional compensation for a board year. This encourages equality of opportunity within TiSEM for all students. Some rules need to be set for this incentive to work as intended. One important rule would be that additional board grants for non-EEA students can be approved before the start of the board year. Pre-approving these grants would provide certainty to their financial situation before the start of the board year. Student Party ECCO would be open to a dialogue about what limitations and restrictions would be needed to create a financially feasible approach.

It is possible 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.

Household changes

(D) International Language use

Whilst English is the only used language during lectures in international programs, tutorials and other facets of education have remaining issues that could use a few small tweaks. These slight improvements could be applied to live up to the international standard that TiSEM has set for itself. The following ideas could be made almost instantaneously to improve on the recognized problems (1) and (3).

- State on the top of the information sheet, given to the invigilators, either “this is a Dutch exam” for Dutch courses, or “This is an English exam” for English courses. This refrains invigilators from speaking Dutch when international students are present, which is an issue that has been vocalized by many students.
- Discourage lecturers and staff from using phrases such as: “I’m forgetting the English word, (insert dutch phrase)”. This prevents international staff and students from being excluded from conversations. This principle can be implemented in any staff training.
- Change the current email template from “English below”, to “Dutch below”. Almost all TiSEM students can read English very well, while not everyone is able to read Dutch. A more inclusive approach would be to first express a message in the universally used language. For those Dutch students who prefer to read in their native language, the message is written in Dutch below.
- Although asking for all meetings to be in English is an unnecessary requirement, we felt that something had to be changed about the fact that some minutes, working files, website names and datasets are still being reported in Dutch, even when internationals have to interpret and use the information. We suggest that all meetings, regardless of the language spoken by it’s participants, have to be minuted in English. We would also strongly encourage the use of English in working files, website names and datasets.

(E) Communication about the facilities that TiSEM offers its students

The TiSEM faculty already has an abundance of facilities that students can make use of. Students who actively participate in on- and off-campus activities have a better grasp of the available facilities that are provided to students. It is however important that all students are aware of these resources. The general consensus of the students, especially first-year and second-year international students, we interviewed was that they are unaware of many of the facilities. We noticed that Career Services is trying to increase their exposure, they recently discussed this with several students during a sounding board meeting.

Student Party ECCO would be in favour of additionally promoting all facilities through the means of a yearly email. All student relevant facilitative staff would be asked to write a short informative description of what their department entails. The summaries would be bundled into one PDF, and attached to the email. Since the description would be focused on core activities and contact details, only small updates need to be made every year. This guidebook would be a useful tool to all students, especially international students who find it more difficult to navigate the new surroundings..

Recommendations & exploratory ideas for AD’s & course coördinators

(F) Re-Imagining multicultural group work

In the interview with Laurens Banziger (Asset IB&M chairman) we discussed the fact that IB&M had seemed to have hit a critical threshold regarding the amount of international student members. The larger than average participation rates of international students seemed to stimulate the integration and

mixing of different cultures within their activities and association. International TiSEM students informed us that Dutch students were more likely to speak Dutch when the amount of Dutch students was significantly larger than the amount of international students.

We would suggest specific courses to experiment with different student compositions. Possible compositions could be project groups consisting of 1/4th, 2/5th, and 1/2 international students. Surveys could be used to see what exactly works best for the whole team. First-year courses would be ideal such an experiment. First-year students are more inclined to form new groups and are more willing to connect with other new students. The interviewees did express that project groups with only one international student would usually result in non-inclusive behaviour.

Recommendations & exploratory ideas for Asset and MAK

We believe one of the most important processes in the interaction and engagement of Dutch and international students to be Asset and MAK. Their committees and events are very often used to become more engaged with your fellow students. To make an impact with the aforementioned proposals we will be seeking a dialogue with Asset and MAK in order to discuss and hopefully find traction with the following proposals/ideas.

(G) Active encouragement for new international board candidates (Asset/MAK).

(H) Recurring activities with TOP Week group as carry-through from TOP Week (MAK).

(I) International language use as primary in all applicable situations (Asset/MAK).

Restraints of our approach

Whilst we feel there is a lot of value in the nuances of qualitative interviews, we do feel there is a lack of statistical reference to further direct and strengthen our findings. We also did not make use of a large scale survey, we can thus not fully conclude, although we are fairly confident, that the experiences faced by our interviewees are representative of all TiSEM students.

It remains hard to gauge how many stones were left unturned while making this memo. We also ran into some issues regarding backtracking and looking into older management plans due to accessibility, and do not have access to the mass surveys executed by the management team.

We also acknowledge that a lot of our potential plans need to be continually monitored and reviewed for potential changes and developments in order to gain the best result, whilst we feel a dedicated position for internationalization definitely helps in that regard, this still remains a point of concern in terms of measurability and planning.

Appendix

This memo will be made public during the Faculty Council, afterwards it will be posted on the website of Student Party ECCO. We as Student Party ECCO find privacy very important, we have thus decided to not include the names of the interviewed students nor the staff and student representatives of the other universities. If one were to be interested in validating our qualitative data, we could provide this information to you confidentially.

Stakeholder interview questions:

University Council: *Interviewed SAM & FRONT*

- What is your stance on where inclusivity at Tilburg University is currently at? Does it feel like it's in a good place? What are some measures currently (or that have recently) being implemented by your organization or your counterpart that might help/hinder the integration of internationals on campus into the University?
- What have you noticed about participation rates in the past few months that you've been a part of this board? This can be in terms of internationals being represented amongst your activities such as the council but also in-party participation and as far as you're aware, study participation.
- What do you think as a representative of Front Could be changed to better include and give equality of opportunity to internationals in terms of being socially and academically involved within the campus grounds?
- What are some Ideas you have that might help to give equal opportunity to internationals and nationals to mix socially and in things like study associations and fractions within the university?

Study association Asset:

- Participation rates (active, non-active members)?
- Participation rates (active, non-active members)?
- Relevant insights brought about by Asset higher ups, your brainstorm input?
- Any additional insights?

Academic Directors: *Interviewed E&BI AD, IBA ED, Economics AD*

- How do teachers facilitate student interaction between international and Dutch students?
- What type of behavior can lead to counter productivity regarding student segregation?
- What measures are being taken by implemented methods, such as PASS and Skills Lab?
- What is the behavior shown by nationals which can lead to unwanted results?

Main topics from initial formative interviews with Stakeholders

- Team dynamics -> Projects & tutorials
- Incentives to mix (be welcome)
- Total state of uni (regional International)
- Current measures (common room, IB&M)
- Daily issues
- Board & Positional Restraints
- Events (Formal & Informal)
- Awareness of facilities

Student Interview Questions

Perception of TISEM: Regional vs. Global

- What is your view on Tisem as a whole? Regarding MT, state of the Internationalization & General remarks?
- What is your view on the general curriculum & teaching within Tisem/Your study? Do you feel it is universally applicable to all people?
- In your view, what should(and could) Tilburg University do to improve as a truly welcoming international university?

Integration & Engagement on Campus

- How do you feel about the current measures in place for Internationals and Nationals to mix together? What problems remain?
- What do you feel Tutorials do to help create a good platform for international teamwork and Integration? What are your experiences with team dynamics when Nationals and Internationals are mixed together in different proportions?
- What positives and negatives do you experience within lectures and examinations as an international student?
- In comparison to what you expected, what has been your biggest surprise/disappointment living and studying in Tilburg University?

Awareness of & Access to facilities & Opportunities

- What is your perception of your or your peers' opportunities within the university? Do you feel you can do the same extracurricular activities? (Board years, Student Job Opportunities)
- How aware are you of Facilities that are there for you to improve your academic life at Tilburg University? What facilities do you feel are missing?
- Are you aware of internationalization events, have you ever been to one? What effects did it have on you? What do you think could be improved for it to have the desired outcome?

N-students: E&BI = 5, IBA = 11, Others = 3

Questions to ask to student representatives and staff representatives of other faculties of other universities.

- What is your stance on where integration and inclusion is currently at in your faculty? Does it feel like it's in a good place? What are some current rules within the faculty that promote the inclusiveness of international students? Do you think other universities should adopt this as well?
- What do you think a faculty could do to better include and give equality of opportunity to internationals in terms of being socially and academically involved within the campus grounds?
- Is there currently (or recently) an international staff member part of the Management Team or other important organ within the faculty? If so, has that brought changes to the faculty that further promote the internationalization of the faculty?
- What is the thing your faculty does best with regards to student integration?

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