

Press Information: the International Welcome Center North (IWCN)

The IWCN is a unique ‘one stop shop’ for International people in the Northern Netherlands- that is, the provinces of Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe. Founded in 2014 to address a requirement for support for International people in the North, the IWCN is a cooperation between the Gemeente Groningen, Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND), the University of Groningen (RuG), and Stichting Connect International.

Based in the city of Groningen, the IWCN provides a number for International people, aimed not only at making their settling in in the Northern Netherlands as pleasant as possible, but also at attracting and retaining more International people in the region.

For Newcomers

One of the main day-to-day functions of the IWCN is acting as an information point and expat centre. Highly-skilled migrants, their families and people using various other forms of residence permit may make use of the expedited formalities offered by the Center, shortening the time and distance required in picking up a residence permit, and registering in the municipal database (BRP).

Through Stichting Connect International, the IWCN helps people feel at home in the Northern Netherlands through an ever-changing and diverse selection of events. These range from Dutch language courses, to workshops on employment, to social events for new parents; and more.

For Residents

The IWCN is also a well-used information point for the International community: anyone is welcome to ask any question, and the IWCN’s friendly and knowledgeable staff can provide trustable and independent advice. This is reflected in the *Service Partner* programme- the IWCN recommends and refers International people to reputable service providers, covering a whole range of business and service.

Throughout the year, the IWCN also has a calendar of informative events- whether on topical challenges, such as Brexit, or with partner organizations about working and living in the North. The Center also produces a number of informative publications, available for free to all who need them.

For Businesses

Throughout the Northern Netherlands, there is significant opportunity for start-up businesses, and for existing businesses to think more internationally- whether through hiring staff or exporting to new markets. The IWCN works with companies to ease their transition into being more international.

Another role that the IWCN plays within the Northern Dutch business-scape, is assisting International start-ups, who have gained residence in the Netherlands through the Start-Up Permit. Working closely with the various Launch Centres within the region, the IWCN not only provides its services to help new entrepreneurs settle in, it also provides business support and networking advice.

Internationalization

The IWCN also works as an NGO in the field of Internationalization. It runs and participates in a series of smaller and larger projects, aimed at retaining and attracting more people to the Northern Netherlands. Initiatives such as Be Smart Be International work with the business community to get more companies in the North to think of international staff and working across borders, whilst the IWCN also undertakes large research projects to better inform its advice and support within the North.

One of the largest projects, and one in which the IWCN takes a central role, is Make It In the North. This is a coming together of over 30 government bodies, institutions, and businesses and includes several sub-projects, such as an International-focussed job platform, English-language news and events (The Northern Times and Here & Now), market research for companies that wish to export; harmonization of research projects, and more.

The IWCN is also an important component of, and partner to, a large number of Internationalisation projects in Groningen City itself, including City Central, Groningen.nl, and At Home in Groningen.

Supporters

The International Welcome Center North is supported by the following Municipalities:

- Assen
- Eemsdelta
- Emmen
- Groningen
- Heerenveen
- Het Hogeland
- Leeuwarden
- Midden-Groningen
- Noordenveld
- Smallingerland
- Súdwest-Fryslân
- Veendam

Contact

For more information about the IWCN, or to get involved, please e-mail info@iwcn.nl or call +31 (0)50 367 71 97

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