

Summary of advisory report 55

What comes from afar...Shaping Dutch bilateral research policy

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) asked the Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy (AWT) whether and how the new EU policy on international scientific cooperation should influence Dutch bilateral research policy. More specifically, the question is what form bilateral research cooperation should take in the future between the Netherlands and China, Indonesia, Russia and Hungary.

The Council has considered this question and advises the Minister of OCW to stop the bilateral research policy. The Council considers this policy to be ineffective, superfluous and of little added value.

Ineffective. The bilateral research policy is intended to increase the quality of Dutch research. In order to achieve that aim, you have to find the best researchers, whatever country they come from. The bilateral research policy encourages the opposite approach and is therefore ineffective.

Superfluous. The European Union is increasingly pursuing a policy of strengthening international research cooperation. A separate Dutch policy focused on bilateral research cooperation is therefore superfluous.

Little added value. Dutch knowledge institutes are fully cooperating with sister organisations elsewhere in the world. They are cooperating on such a large scale that the bilateral research policy of the Dutch government has little added value.

The AWT considers the research cooperation with Indonesia to be an exception. There is a lot of unique research material in Indonesia that is vital to Dutch scientists. Access to this material must remain guaranteed, which is why the research cooperation with Indonesia must continue.

The AWT does not want in any way to diminish the international dimension of science in the Netherlands with this advice. It is undeniable that internationalisation is becoming increasingly important for science. At the moment there is even an international 'battle for brains' in progress. Many Western countries are increasing their efforts to hold on to scarce scientific talent. If the Netherlands does not change its policy, it looks as though it will lose this battle. The AWT believes that reversing this trend is the real challenge for Dutch scientific policy. It therefore has three recommendations with a view to making the Netherlands attractive to foreign researchers:

- Create a fund to attract top researchers to the Netherlands
- Shorten the procedures for obtaining residence and work permits
- Lower the cost of residence and work permits.

