

INTERNATIONAL GRONINGEN

INTERNATIONALIZATION POLICY 2021-2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Council adopted the Review of Groningen's Internationalization Policy 2017-2020, with the prospect to reassess this policy at the end of 2020. In Appendix 1, you will find an overview reflecting on the policy achievements for that period. The Mayor and Vice Mayors of Groningen have concluded that the outlines of the 2017-2020 policy framework remain valid. Therefore, the internationalization policy for 2021-2024 mostly builds on the existing policy framework. In the following, we will explain why the city needs an internationalization policy and what we seek to achieve.

In the internationalization policy for 2021-2024, the four policy lines in current use will mostly be continued. However, there are some shifts in emphasis regarding the content, reflecting new developments and more refined objectives. The central starting point of this policy is that internationalization serves as a means to achieve our Municipality's goals. The policy lines have been adapted to demonstrate as clearly as possible that they are guided by that principle. Subsequently, a number of main topics are identified on which we will primarily focus our international efforts. These topics are fully in line with the Municipality's ambitions for a 'healthy, green and happy Groningen'.

In the coming years, we will expand our focus on partnerships within Europe. Europe offers many opportunities for the acquisition of projects, for international image-building of our city and for influencing policy on matters that are important to Groningen. Our further international relations and economic partnerships will also be guided by our substantive goals. Furthermore, we will continue to work on providing the best possible infrastructure for international talent in Groningen, and the Welcome Policy will remain an important part of our internationalization policy.

GRONINGEN
AND THE
WORLD



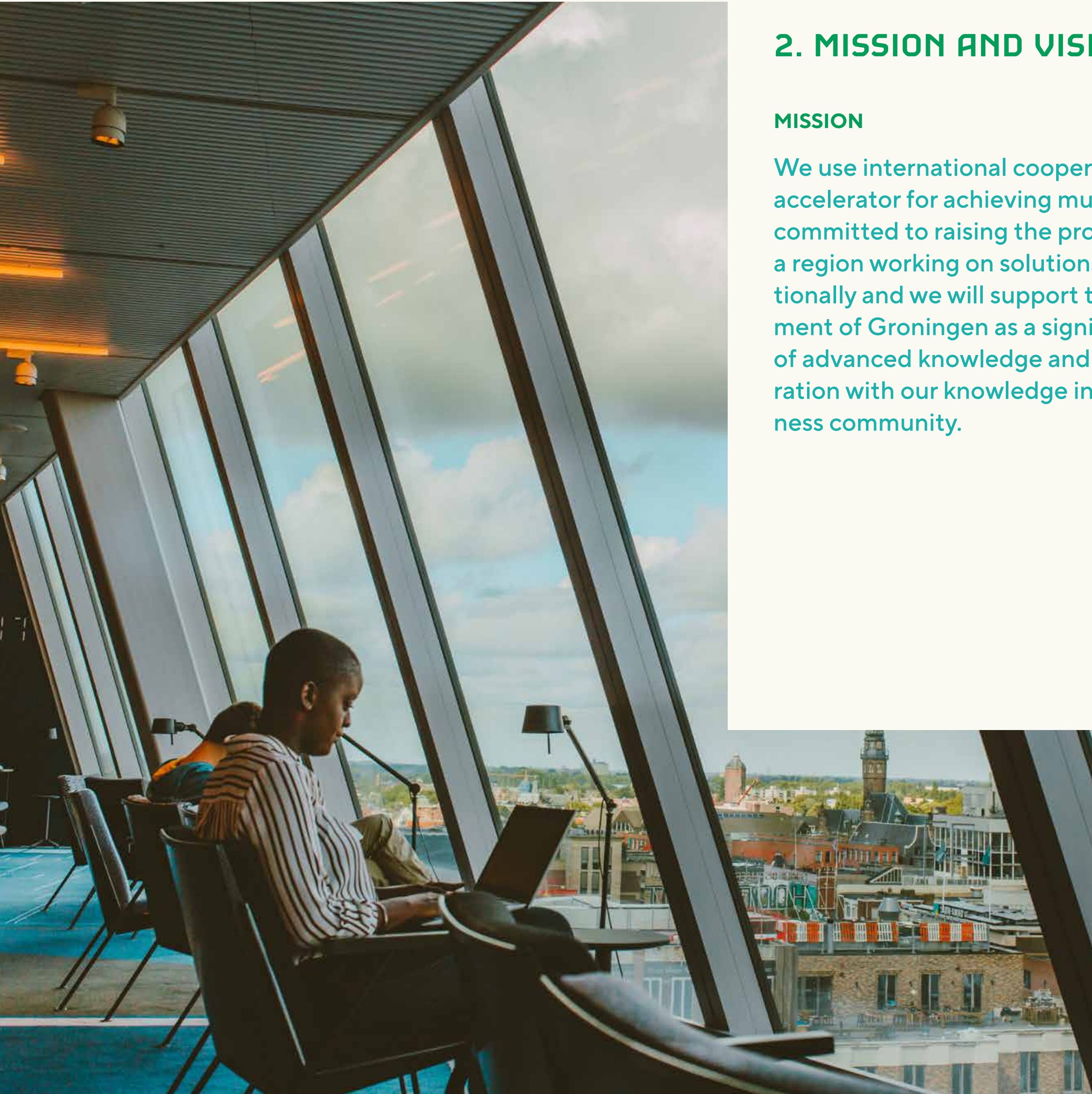
2. MISSION AND VISION

MISSION

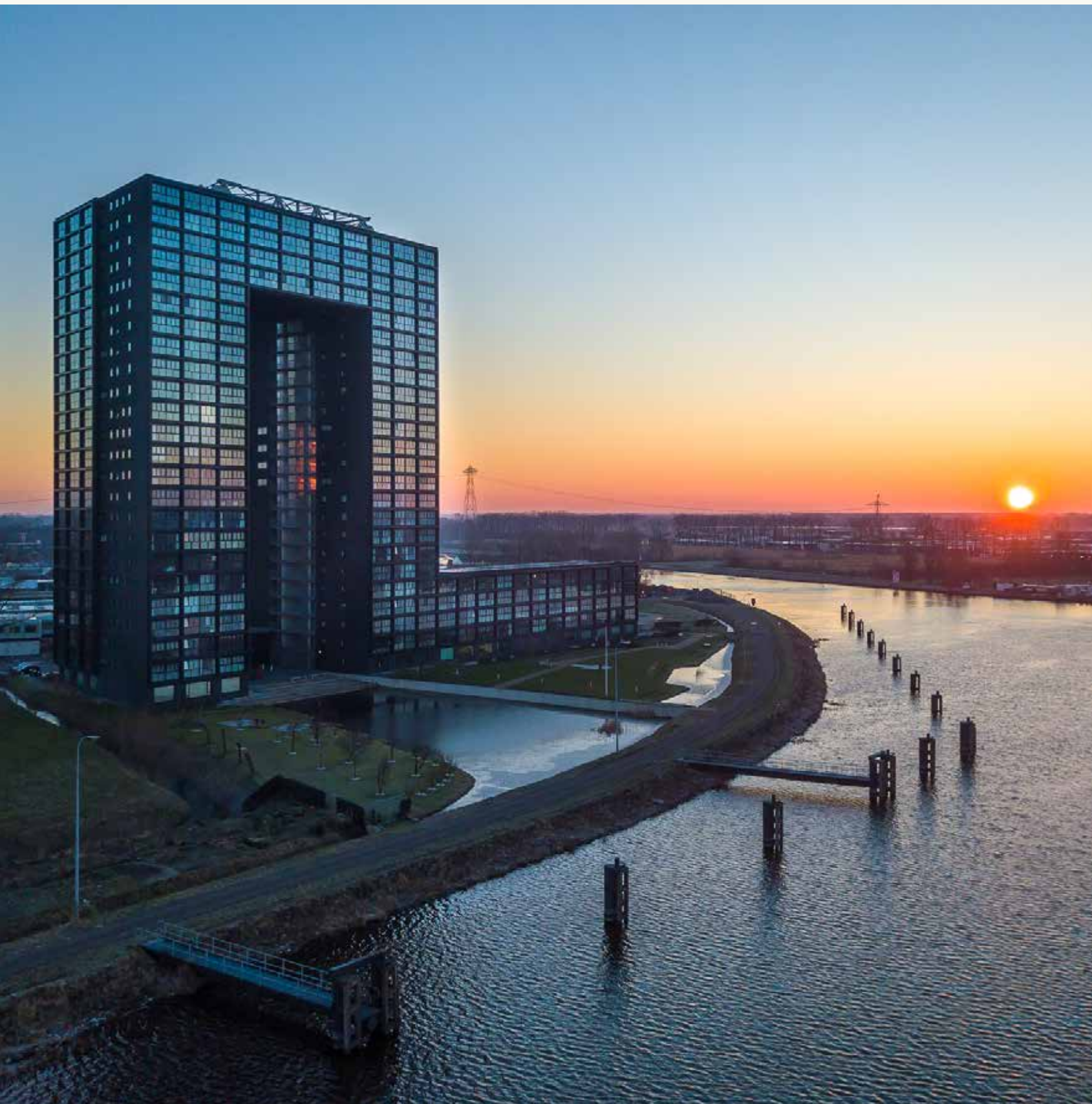
We use international cooperation as a catalyst and accelerator for achieving municipal goals. We are committed to raising the profile of Groningen as a region working on solutions that matter internationally and we will support the further development of Groningen as a significant city in the area of advanced knowledge and innovations, in collaboration with our knowledge institutions and our business community.

VISION

Knowledge and talent are essential factors for our economy and business climate. In an increasingly internationalized world, the city of Groningen is well-positioned as an international city of knowledge. Groningen is and will remain a proud and confident international frontrunner in innovative societal challenges related to a 'healthy, green and happy Groningen'.



**ADVANCED
KNOWLEDGE &
INNOVATION**



**FRONTRUNNER
& INSPIRING
ROLE MODEL**

3. PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

Our main premise is that internationalization is not an end in itself. Rather, we use it as a means to achieve and further our municipal goals.

In order to sustain Groningen's position as an international frontrunner and a city of knowledge we must also focus on continuing to attract and retain international talent.

SUBSTANTIVE GOALS

We have identified certain focus areas in which international cooperation could be particularly rewarding for Groningen – areas in which our city has already achieved international recognition. In these areas, we are already operating in relevant international networks, building an image for our region, receiving delegations and actively organizing international activities. In the coming years, we will strive to be an international frontrunner and an inspiring role model in the development of the following topics:

- Green transitions: for instance, the energy transition and energy as a motor for city district renewal, hydrogen as a new carrier for energy, climate change adaptation and the circular economy.
- Quality of life: like Groningen as a healthy and sustainable place for everyone, and sustainable mobility for a better quality of living climate.
- The digital transition.

These topics are also in line with several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Wherever relevant, we will therefore link our international activities to the SDGs. These are already being used by various international actors and can thus serve as a shared 'language' in international cooperation.

Naturally, the topics described above are not the only substantive goals to which internationalization can contribute. However, in order to use our capacity to the best effect and to make an efficient qualitative contribution, we will focus our efforts on the themes listed above. We can expand the list to other themes if requested – for instance by international partners – and feasible.

4. POLICY LINES

4.1 GRONINGEN IN EUROPE

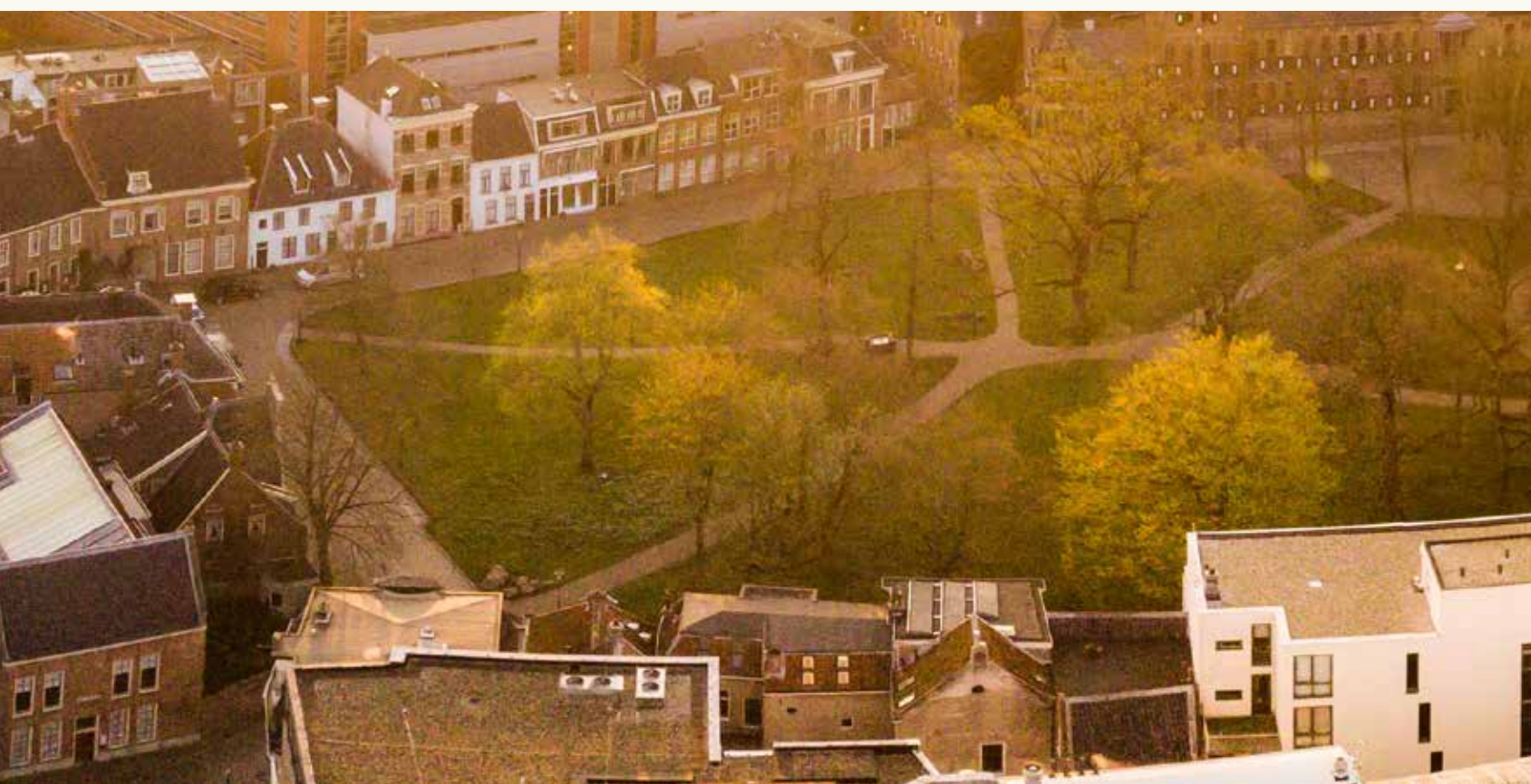
In most of the focus areas listed before, the goals of our Municipality closely match those of the European Union. Often, the similarities in ambitions and goals are so close that they offer good and concrete opportunities for the development of innovative European projects that are eligible for funding by the European Commission. This makes it possible to achieve innovative goals better, faster or more conveniently.

Since 2015, we have been working on the acquisition of projects in Brussels, using our own EU office 'Cities Northern Netherlands'. The staff of this EU office work to acquire and develop European projects, maintain networks and relationships, and build the image of the NG4 (Leeuwarden, Groningen, Assen and Emmen) as interesting and innovative cooperation partners. We have participated successfully in European projects for a number of years. From 2014 to 2020, the Municipality participated in 14 European projects that account for a total European contribution of more than €11,000,000. In order to continue on this successful path, we need to make clear choices regarding the focus of our efforts. The main topics on which we are focusing our European cooperation efforts are equal to the focus areas listed before. For more information, also see the summary of the European Strategy in Appendix 2.

Wherever possible, we engage in European project development together with our partners, such as knowledge institutions and the business community in certain industries – often in knowledge-intensive sectors. We also seek to involve residents of our city through participatory methods. We use our contacts and networks for project development and strive to influence policy in line with our ambitions. There is also a need for cooperation in image-building and advocacy on shared challenges with the national government and other Dutch cities. We reach out to Brussels via The Hague and similarly to The Hague via Brussels because, in some cases, it helps to play in an European field.

In short, during the coming years we will focus strongly on European project development, image-building and policy advocacy.

¹ERAC reporting 2020



4.2 RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Our international relationship management and the maintenance of our diplomatic relations is another important means of contributing to our main goals. Special attention is given to our ties with the northern German cities of Oldenburg, Bremen and Hamburg. We cherish our long-standing, intensive and successful relationships with these cities and remain committed to maintaining good neighbourliness.

In a broader international context, we will also work to be a good host and a reliable partner in international relations. In city diplomacy, we stimulate valuable knowledge exchanges and make the best possible use of the innovative power of cross-border cooperation.

We will approach our existing ties with Chinese partner cities Tianjin and Xi'an in a pragmatic way, mindful of the human rights situation in China. We will closely follow our national government's guidelines on this matter. Furthermore, the council has decided to continue our city partnerships with San Carlos and Murmansk, in which valuable connections between populations are paramount.

In short, in the coming years we will continue to focus on being a good and reliable partner, both in current and in new diplomatic relations, especially with northern German cities. We will approach our existing ties with Chinese partner cities pragmatically.



**GOOD HOST
& RELIABLE
PARTNER**



4.3 ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Economic cooperation is another activity that contributes to strengthening our position as an international city of knowledge. Our current cooperation with Germany is an important part of our international economic policy. We have challenges in common with the cities of Oldenburg, Bremen and Hamburg, and we exchange knowledge about possible solutions. We build close relationships with governments, knowledge institutions and entrepreneurs in search of joint solutions. At times we do this through joint projects, often of European nature. Wherever needed and possible, we open doors for entrepreneurs, enabling them to do business with each other or to set up projects. We pay special attention to our common interest in good infrastructure for cross-border (rail) transport.

Additionally, we will focus on developing and maintaining relationships with other European cities. We build these relationships with a view to future rail and other connections, but also with regard to (project) cooperation within our main focus areas. In this regard, it will also be interesting and useful for Groningen to engage in closer cooperation with a number of Scandinavian cities.

In addition to seeking European partners, we also look further afield at relationships around the world which are useful to our city and which offer opportunities for collaboration on our main topics, in cooperation with knowledge institutions and the business community.

In the coming years, we will further develop economic cooperation with northern German partner cities. Additionally, we will establish partnerships with other European cities aimed at cooperation on the main focus areas identified. We will also seek opportunities for cooperation outside Europe that contribute to the achievement of municipal goals.



**COOPERATION
WITH EUROPEAN
CITIES**

4.4 WELCOME POLICY

Since its initiation in 2017, we have been carrying out our Welcome Policy in cooperation with the signatories of the ‘The Accord of Groningen’ and the partners of the International Welcome Center North (IWCN). The IWCN now has a clear place in our regional economic infrastructure. The Welcome Policy aims to lower barriers for international talents who want to settle here, either temporarily or permanently. Attracting and retaining international talent is essential for Groningen as an innovative city of knowledge. It will therefore remain necessary to continue investing in this. Within the Welcome Policy, the offer of affordable and attractive housing for internationals and the provision of education for international children are topics that require further attention.

The Welcome Policy, as implemented under the direction of The Accord of Groningen, has four pillars:

Housing	Improved availability of housing, as well as better housing information, for internationals. Besides a website of the Accord partners and housing corporations, there are now also commercial companies that actively focus on housing for internationals.
Work	Gaining access to the Dutch labour market can be difficult for internationals. The Make it in the North project is working on opening up the labour market for internationals with an English-language site on job vacancies, events and information services for employers.
Opening up the city	Creating opportunities for internationals, helping them to get in touch with other residents, providing information about culture, sports, health care and other matters. Both Connect International (a partner in IWCN) and City Central are doing a lot of good work in this field. Here and Now in Groningen has become a very successful cultural platform.
Communication	There is a new English-language portal (www.groningen.nl) offering information to people who want to live, work or have fun in Groningen. Extensive information provided by the municipality, but also by private parties, is available in English.

A great deal of progress has been made in all four pillars during recent years, but ongoing attention to these issues will remain necessary in the coming years in order to stay on this successful course. We will therefore continue to focus our efforts on this in the years to come.

In summary, in the coming years we aim to maintain the success of the Welcome Policy by continuing to work on its four pillars. In this regard, we need to pay special attention to affordable housing for internationals and education for international children.

**LOWER BARRIERS
FOR INTERNATIONAL
TALENTS**



5. PRECONDITIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL & PERSONNEL COMMITMENT

The budget remains equal to that of the previous policy frame:

Working budget internationalization	€ 40.000
Working budget partner cities	€ 20.000
Subsidy fund for city partnerships & global awareness-raising	€ 130.000
Economy budget – IWCN	€ 100.000
Economy budget – EU Office Cities Northern Netherlands	€ 75.000
Economy budget – relationships Chinese partner cities	€ 10.000
Total	€375.000

N.B.: The Welcome Policy is financed through The Accord of Groningen; The Accord of Groningen partners make annual agreements on its budget.

In addition to the above-listed budget, the scope of staffing for International Affairs amounts to approximately 4.0 FTE within the regular concern formation .

5.2 POLICY HORIZON

In principle, this policy applies for the usual term of four years. If necessary, additions or adjustments can be made to the implementation of the policy framework, in response to new developments, for instance in European policy or other important geopolitical shifts.