

# Resolution on the Long-Term Study Penalty in the Netherlands

## Introduction

As the European Student Union, we strongly oppose the reintroduction of the long-term study penalty (langstudeerboete) in the Netherlands. This stance also extends to any proposed alternatives from the government, such as raising tuition fees. We stand firmly against shifting the financial burden of budget cuts onto students.

In its Coalition Agreement, the Dutch government has announced plans to reintroduce the long-term study penalty, set to take effect from the academic year 2026/2027. This policy will impose an additional annual fee of €3000 for students who incur more than one year of study delay. This measure comes at a time when students are already facing significant financial challenges due to recent policy changes, including increased interest rates on student loans and the removal of the temporary increase of the financial assistance.

## Policy Rationale

The government argues that the penalty will incentivize students to graduate nominally, thereby reducing public expenditure and alleviating labour market shortages by accelerating the entry of graduates into the workforce. In practice, however, students exceeding the one-year delay threshold will face an extra financial burden of €3000 per year on top of their regular tuition fees.

## Consequences of the Long-Term Study Penalty

### Disproportionate Impact on Vulnerable Groups

The penalty will disproportionately affect vulnerable student groups, including first-generation students, students with a non-Western migration background, and students with disabilities. These groups are more likely to encounter study delays due to systemic barriers, thereby exacerbating inequality and reducing access to higher education for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## **Discouragement of Personal and Societal Development**

Financial pressure resulting from the penalty will deter students from engaging in valuable extracurricular activities, such as student governance, volunteer work, and internships. These activities are essential for students' personal growth and societal contribution, yet the penalty discourages participation by prioritising swift academic completion over personal development.

## **Worsening Mental Health**

Students already face immense performance pressure to graduate within the nominal study period. The financial strain imposed by the penalty will only heighten this stress, with significant implications for their mental health. Research by the Trimbos Institute underscores that financial difficulties are a major risk factor for mental health issues, such as depression, further demonstrating the detrimental impact of this policy.

## **Decreased Enrollment and Continuation Rates**

The reintroduction of the long-term study penalty is likely to discourage students from enrolling in higher education or pursuing advanced degrees, such as master's programs. Evidence from the penalty's initial implementation in 2012 shows that similar measures led to a noticeable decline in enrollment numbers. The financial risks associated with potential study delays create a significant deterrent, particularly for students from lower-income households.

## **Precedent from 2012**

When the penalty was previously introduced in 2012, it sparked widespread protests and had numerous unintended consequences. It disproportionately affected non-traditional students, such as part-time students, working students, and those who had to combine studies with caregiving responsibilities. The measure also failed to achieve its intended goal of reducing study delays, as structural causes such as course availability and mental health issues were not addressed.

## **Increased Financial Burden**

An additional €3000 per year represents a severe financial challenge for students, particularly those already struggling with rising living costs and student loan

repayments. The penalty will lead to higher levels of student debt and amplify stress, creating long-term economic repercussions for individuals and society.

### **Our Stance**

We, as the European Student Union, categorically oppose not only the reintroduction of the long-term study penalty but also any alternative measures that increase financial burdens on students, such as higher tuition fees. Students should not bear the cost of government budget cuts.

The penalty undermines the principles of accessibility, equal opportunity, and mental well-being in higher education. It prioritises short-term fiscal gains over the long-term societal benefits of an educated and well-rounded population. We urge the Dutch government to reconsider this policy and explore more equitable solutions to address budgetary concerns without compromising the well-being and prospects of students.

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Proposers: ISO

Seconders: LSVb, USI