

Dear future PhD candidate,

With this document we want to welcome you to Wageningen, the Wageningen University and our graduate school [WIMEK](#).

Starting a PhD in Wageningen very likely means moving (from abroad) to this small town for a period of time, which can range from months to years. Much needs to be arranged prior and after your arrival in Wageningen and we hope we can provide you with some of the necessary information. Via this document and also this [page](#) you can find a lot of information related to the Netherlands, Wageningen, visa's and housing.

If you have indicated on your registration form that you would like to have a buddy, you can also ask him or her for advice on a number of these steps.

A buddy is a fellow PhD that can help showing you around and help you find answers to questions you might have before and at the start of your PhD. If you did not indicate you would like to have a buddy, but you would like us to assign you a buddy, please do not hesitate to reach out to us via [Wimek@wur.nl](mailto:Wimek@wur.nl), or ask the secretary of your department if they can arrange a buddy for you.

Note that this document contains general information about topics such as visa application, housing and taxes and the steps you need to take for your PhD project before arrival. You will receive information specifically related to the different steps during your PhD project, separately at a later stage.

We realize you will undoubtedly encounter situations not discussed in this document. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your fellow PhDs, colleagues, supervisors, the WIMEK PhD council and WIMEK when you need help or advice.

## Table of Contents

Before arrival .....	3
<i>1 Practical information</i> .....	3
1.2 Finding a place to live.....	3
1.3 Traveling to Wageningen for the first time.....	4
1.4 To Arrange Before Arrival .....	4
<i>2 Things to do for your PhD project before arrival</i> .....	5
2.1 PhD categories .....	5
2.2 Admission procedure .....	5
Upon arrival .....	7
<i>3 Visa and registration</i> .....	7
3.1 Picking up your residence permit .....	7
3.2 Municipality registration.....	7
3.3 DigiD digital identification.....	8
3.4 Opening a Dutch bank account.....	8
<i>4 Applying for insurance</i> .....	8
4.1 Health insurance .....	8
4.2 Reliability insurance .....	9
4.3 Household Contents Insurance.....	9
<i>5 Salary and tax (for employed PhD candidate)</i> .....	9
5.1 Salary & benefits .....	9
5.2 Taxes .....	9
5.3 Subsidies .....	10
5.4 30% tax ruling (for international employed PhD candidate) .....	10
<i>6 Healthcare and support</i> .....	11
6.1 Company doctor .....	11
6.2 Counselors.....	11
6.3 General practitioner.....	12
6.4 Hospital in Ede .....	12
6.5 Emergencies.....	13
6.6 Dentists .....	13
6.7 Pharmacies.....	13
<i>7 Transportation</i> .....	14
7.1 Cycling.....	14
7.2 Public Transportation.....	14
7.3 OV-chipkaart .....	14

## Before arrival

### *1 Practical information*

#### 1.1 Applying for a visa (for non-EU PhD candidate)

After your WIMEK registration is completed, WUR assists Non-EU PhD candidates to obtain a visa and residence permit. The [Expat Centre Food Valley](#) assists PhD candidates that are employed by WUR, or those that bring family members with the visa application procedure.

Should a PhD candidate wish to come to the Netherlands with a spouse or partner and/or children, this needs to be discussed beforehand with the supervisor from WUR, to avoid incomplete and delayed applications.

The Expat Centre Food Valley or PhD Services will request approval from the [Dutch Immigration Office](#) (Immigratie- en naturalisatiedienst; IND). After IND has approved your request, you can apply for a visa at the Dutch embassy in your home country.

For other PhD candidates, a WUR contact person/supervisor can request the [Doctoral Service Centre](#) to assist with the application. More information regarding visas for international PhD candidate can be found [here](#).

#### 1.2 Finding a place to live

Finding housing in Wageningen can be very challenging, particularly at the start of the academic year (August, September). Therefore, start looking for a place as soon as possible.

Idealis is the main housing provider for students and PhD candidates in Wageningen. To search and apply for Idealis accommodation, you must register at [ROOM.nl](#) and follow the procedure there. Priority arrangements for Idealis exist for sandwich and scholarship PhD candidates coming to the Netherlands for the first time. Your supervisor can register this priority by completing the urgency form and sending it to the Doctoral Service Centre via [immigration.dsc@wur.nl](mailto:immigration.dsc@wur.nl). The priority is valid for 2 months.

Other platforms to find long-term and short-term places to (sub)rent in Wageningen are listed [here](#) and to rent a room with a landlord or landlady you can also look [here](#).

One of the pages were most (subrent) rooms get posted, is the Facebook page Wageningen Student Plaza. We therefore recommend you join this group.

Information on B&B and hotels in Wageningen can be found [here](#) and [here](#). [Airbnb](#) also offers several rooms in the area.

If you hold a long-stay visa (MVV) or a resident permit, you are obliged to search for a place that allows you to register your resident address with the municipality in the long-term. Before you sign a (sub)renting contract, ensure that you can register yourself on the address.

Please be aware that some people try to take advantage of the tight housing situation by advertising fake offers and scamming. Never transfer the money before signing a proper contract or if you are in doubt of the reliability of an offer.

### 1.3 Traveling to Wageningen for the first time

If you come to the Netherlands by airplane, you will likely arrive at Schiphol Airport. From there, you can take the train to Ede-Wageningen train station and then take the bus C303 or 86 to Wageningen, which bus you need to take depends on where you want to go within Wageningen.

To plan your travel you can use the public transport websites.

- The [NS website](#) is specifically for trains in the Netherlands,
- The [NS international](#) website, is the website to plan train trips between the Netherlands and other countries
- The [9292 website](#) will provide information about all forms of public transport. You can plan your entire trip door to door using the 9292 website.

Always check the public transport website shortly before departure, to ensure your transport runs as planned.

Instead of using public transport, you could also check the [website BlaBla car](#) to see if other people are making the same trip as you by car and you can share the ride with them.

### 1.4 To Arrange Before Arrival

For more practical information about preparing to move to Wageningen, especially from abroad, check out the [To Arrange Before Arrival article series](#) by the Wageningen International Students blog.

## *2 Things to do for your PhD project before arrival*

### 2.1 PhD categories

WUR classifies PhD candidates into [five categories](#).

- Employed PhD candidates
- Scholarship PhD candidates (Sandwich Fellow PhD, Sandwich PhD and Guest PhD)
- Externally Financed PhD candidates
- External PhD candidates
- Employee in PhD track

The candidates in these categories have different rights and positions within the organization. Check with your supervisor and HR what your rights are and whether you are responsible for registering your own working hours.

### 2.2 Admission procedure

There are tasks to complete for the university and graduate school admission before you officially start your PhD. International PhD candidates, especially non-EU citizens, have a few more tasks to prepare regarding immigration.

As the lawful procedures may take a few months, it is recommended to complete the required applications as soon as possible. To assist your preparation, we suggest the stepwise preparation below.

**Step 1:** Get proof of acceptance from your research group (for PhD candidates not employed by WUR). After you and your supervisor(s) come to an agreement on your PhD project, your supervisor(s) is responsible for providing you the letter of acceptance. This letter is required for the registration with the WIMEK graduate school.

#### Step 2: Register with WIMEK

The registration with WIMEK requires (i) a completed WIMEK registration form and (ii) supporting documents, including passport, education diplomas, and (if applicable) certificate of proficiency in the English language, check out what is applicable to you [here](#). (If you are a PhD candidate not employed by WUR (e.g., guest PhD), you also need the letter of acceptance (from Step 1).

See full information on WIMEK registration and download the registration form [here](#).

When your registration is approved, you will receive a letter of acceptance from WIMEK. For international PhD candidates, this letter of acceptance is necessary for your visa application.

If you have questions or encounter difficulties regarding registration, contact your supervisor(s) or the WIMEK office ([wimek@wur.nl](mailto:wimek@wur.nl)).

Step 3: Register with the department and sign a PhD contract (for PhD candidate not employed by WUR)

Your supervisor has the responsibility to proceed with your registration and PhD contract with ESG (Environmental Sciences Group) or AFSG (Agrotechnology and Food Sciences Group).

For guest and sandwich PhD candidates with external funding, a tuition fee must be paid. The contract/agreement cannot be signed without prior validation of diplomas and check of proficiency in English (Step 2).

If the requirements are not met, the contract/agreement must specify at what moment these requirements should be met (usually within 18 months from the start of the PhD program).

## Upon arrival

### *3 Visa and registration*

#### 3.1 Picking up your residence permit

If you come to the Netherlands from a non-EU country, you will first receive a long stay (MVV) visa. Once you have arrived in the Netherlands, the next step is to change the visa into a residence permit (in Dutch: Verblijfsvergunning) you will find more information about this process [here](#). You should have been informed about this after you have received the visa, as part of the procedure by IND.

Be aware that it is not possible to change a short-stay (VKV) visa into a residence permit while in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to apply for a long-stay visa instead, unless you are certain that your visit will be less than three months.

If there are changes during your stay which influence your residence permit, you must communicate these to the IND. You can find examples of changes and information about the process [here](#).

Keep in mind that your residence permit has an expiry date, depending on individual conditions. You should proceed with the prolongation of your residence permit on time.

#### 3.2 Municipality registration

When you know that you will stay in the Netherlands longer than four months, you are considered a resident and you are lawfully required to register your living address in the in the Municipal Personal Records Database (Gemeentelijke Basisadministratie, GBA).

The registration at the municipality must be done within five days of arrival, otherwise you risk getting fined. If you move within Wageningen, your address must also be changed within 5 days of moving. The registration must be done by you personally; you have to make an appointment online and then visit the municipality to register.

[Here](#) you can find more general information about registering at the municipality and [here](#) you can find information about registering in Wageningen

Wageningen Municipality (town hall) address: Markt 22, Postbus 1, 6700 AA, Tel: 031749 29 11, [gemeente@wageningen.nl](mailto:gemeente@wageningen.nl)

If you will live in another city/village, you need to register at the municipality in that city. See more information [here](#).

It may take a few weeks before you are legally registered. After being registered, you will receive a unique Citizen Service Number (BSN, in Dutch: Burger Service Nummer) that you will need for other Dutch administrative issues (e.g., opening a Dutch bank account).

### 3.3 DigiD digital identification

[DigiD](#) is a means of identifying yourself, when accessing Dutch formal services online securely. You can use your DigiD to log in online on the Dutch government website, tax office website, public services, healthcare institutions, educational institutes and your pension fund. It is advisable to apply for DigiD as soon as possible and install the app on your mobile phone.

### 3.4 Opening a Dutch bank account

When you are employed in the Netherlands, or when you receive a scholarship and will stay for a long period, you may consider opening a Dutch bank account. You can find information on this [webpage](#) about which banks you can choose from and how you can open an account. For very specific questions it is best to contact the bank of your choice directly.

## *4 Applying for insurance*

### 4.1 Health insurance

By Dutch law, you are obliged to have a health insurance (in Dutch: zorgverzekering) if you are living here. You will need to arrange a health insurance within the first 4 months after your arrival. For comprehensive information about health insurance within the Dutch healthcare system in the Netherlands, visit this [site](#). You can find an overview of the different health insurance suppliers [here](#). On this website you can also make a comparison between health insurances based on what you would like to have insured.

In general when you are employed by a Dutch employer, you qualify for the Dutch social security system, and consequently you must have at least the Dutch basic health insurance.

There is a [collective health insurance](#) with discount for employees of WUR, including PhD candidates with a WUR contract, at Menzis insurance company, but you are free to choose any other insurance company. The choice can also depend on the length of your stay and type of PhD.

Note that if you are obliged to take the Dutch basic health insurance, you may be eligible for compensation for your insurance costs called healthcare benefits, depending on your salary. You can find information on eligibility and how to apply for healthcare benefit [here](#).



If you do not qualify for the Dutch social security system and thus do not have to apply for Dutch basic health insurance, you need to find another adequate insurance (e.g., student/PhD insurance) whilst staying in the Netherlands. The organization that assists your immigration (Expat Center Food Valley or PhD Services) can arrange insurances for you (and your family members) with one of companies. However, you can also apply for the insurance by yourself based on your own preference.

#### 4.2 Reliability insurance

It is wise to arrange a liability insurance (in Dutch: Wettelijke aansprakelijkheids verzekering), but it is not compulsory. If you unintentionally injure someone else or damage their property and this person wants a refund, the insurance can cover the expenses. This can be arranged when you open a Dutch bank account but also later via internet banking.

#### 4.3 Household Contents Insurance

Another good insurance to have, is for your valuable household contents (in Dutch: Inboedelverzekering). It covers damages caused by, for example, burglary and fire. This can be arranged when you open a Dutch bank account but also later via online banking.

### *5 Salary and tax (for employed PhD candidate)*

#### 5.1 Salary & benefits

When you are employed by WUR, you are subject to the collective labour agreement for Dutch Universities (CAO NU) or Wageningen Research (CAO WR). These are very similar agreements and they contain agreements on terms and conditions of employment, personal development, leave, occupational health and safety, employment contracts and pensions. Read more about the CAO [here](#).

In general, you can specify your own employment benefits with several exchange options. Get in touch with your HR contact person if you have specific questions.

Read full information about salary, tax and pension at WUR [here](#).

#### 5.2 Taxes

If you are an employed PhD at WUR, taxes are automatically subtracted from your income. Depending on your salary (including from other jobs), there is a possibility to get a tax refund for part of your taxes. To get this refund, you will need to fill out a tax return form, you can find more information about filling out the tax return [here](#).

In some cases you are obliged to fill out a tax return form, in that case you will be informed by the

tax office (in Dutch: Belastingdienst). Taxes need to be tackled between January 1st and April 1st of the following year.

Taxes can be filled in by hand or online, and the latter is recommended. You should have a DigiD to be able to access the tax office website and your personal pre-filled tax form.

- Be on time! Often there is an expiry date. If you are late, you can get into serious troubles. If you happen to be late, call the tax office to explain and send it anyway.
- Make a copy of every official or important form you hand in. Do not throw anything away.
- Be aware that the tax office may not be allowed to give information in English because of legal issues. In this case, ask someone who is proficient in Dutch and English to assist you.

In case you are not certain about certain aspects in the form, get in touch with the tax office in order to make sure you fill them out correctly.

### 5.3 Subsidies

The Dutch government provides several types of financial benefits and allowances for citizens and residents in the Netherlands, mostly via the Dutch tax office (Belastingdienst). The benefit (in Dutch: toeslagen) system is designed to support people with low incomes, by helping them cover basic living costs such as rent, health insurance, childcare and raising children.

You can apply for benefits [online](#) (weblink). On the tax office website, go to 'mijn toeslagen'. Log in with your DigiD and you can find the information and forms you need.

For most benefits and allowances, you will have to apply yourself. Subsidies include

- Childcare benefits read [here](#) for more information;
- Rental benefits, read [here](#) for more information
- Health care benefits, read [here](#) for more information

### 5.4 30% tax ruling (for international employed PhD candidate)

The 30% tax ruling (also known as the 30% facility) is a tax advantage for highly skilled migrants moving to the Netherlands for a specific employment role. When the necessary conditions are met, the employer can grant a tax-free allowance equivalent to 30% of the gross salary subject to Dutch payroll tax. This is intended as compensation for the extra costs that international employees can incur when moving to a new country for their work (e.g. higher living expenses compared to your home country, costs for health insurance and medical tests, and travelling costs). You can find more specific information, requirements, and evaluate if you are eligible [here](#).

## *6 Healthcare and support*

There are different places you can receive support when it comes to your health, both within and outside of the Wageningen University. If you are international, the Dutch healthcare system is likely to be different from the healthcare system in your home country.

The comprehensive guide to the healthcare system in the Netherlands can be found [here](#). WUR also provides some information about the Dutch healthcare facilities and services in Wageningen [here](#).

### 6.1 Company doctor

It is possible for PhDs employed by WUR to consult the company doctor regarding absences due to sickness, prevention of sickness, and advice. These conversations will be kept confidential. Both ill and healthy employees can make appointments with the company doctor on their own initiative. You can find the [contact details](#) for the company doctor on the intranet.

### 6.2 Counselors

To determine the type of support or counsellor that fits your situation you can have a look at this [page](#)

#### *6.2.1 Occupational Social Worker*

All PhD students employed by WUR can get support from an occupational social worker, whether as a preventative measure or if they are experiencing health issues. The occupational social worker can help regarding questions related to work and well-being, issues with colleagues, stress, personal problems and more. All the conversations with the occupational social worker are confidential. You can find the [contact details](#) of the occupational social workers on the intranet.

#### *6.2.2 Confidential counsellors for undesirable behaviour*

The confidential counsellors for undesirable behaviour can be consulted when experiencing undesirable and/or intimidating behaviour such as bullying, sexual harassment, intimidation, discrimination, aggression, etc. Or when observing this happening to others. You can find [contact details](#) and more information about [complaint procedures](#) on the intranet. A code of conduct has been developed on the topic of social safety, you can find the code of conduct [here](#).

#### *6.2.3 Confidential counsellor for scientific integrity*

[The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) applies to all of the scientific work of the academic practitioners at Wageningen University & Research. The Code of Conduct sets out the principles that each academic has to take into account. There are [special confidential counsellors for scientific integrity](#), a committee and a [scientific integrity complaints procedure](#). You can find [contact details](#) and more information about [complaint procedures](#) on the intranet.

### 6.3 General practitioner

The first point of contact outside of the WUR when you have health problems is a general practitioner (GP; in Dutch: huisarts). If necessary, the GP will then direct you to other medical specialists or transfer you to the hospital.

While it is not mandatory to register with a GP, we strongly recommend it, because it may be difficult to find a suitable doctor when you are in urgent need. Our advice is to register with a GP as soon as possible after you receive your residence permit. Another important thing to note is that you must have health insurance (see also section Applying for insurance).

The choice of a GP is a personal matter, a list of all general practitioners in Wageningen is provided [here](#). After making a choice, you can request registration at the chosen GP practice.

If you reside in Wageningen or Bennekom, there is also the possibility to register to [the Student Medical Center \(SMC\)](#), which is located right on WUR campus. The address of the SMC is:

- Nexus gebouw 117, Akkermaalsbos 14, 6708WB.

After office hours (weekend/evening/night/national holidays) you can go to the GP center Gelderse Vallei in Ede. You can find the GP station at the emergency room at Hospital Gelderse Vallei in Ede, together with the Emergency Department, the service pharmacy and the dentist post. This is only for medical problems which are emergencies and cannot wait until the next day. Note that you always have to call first for an appointment (Tel: 0318-200800).

### 6.4 Hospital in Ede

The nearest hospital from Wageningen is Hospital '[Gelderse Vallei](#)', located in Ede. It is important to carefully read the following information to make sure you know what to do and how to get there, in case you need to go to the hospital.

The address of the hospital is

- Willy Brandtlaan 10, 6716RP.

The hospital can be reached by bus (bus stop 'Ziekenhuis Gelderse Vallei').

Please note that it's not allowed to visit the hospital without an appointment, unless it is an emergency.

During the night, when there is no public transport, it may be necessary to take a regiotaxi. The costs vary between € 2 and € 10. (Tel: 0900 55 11 551, € 0.10 per minute. website: [www.valleihopper.nl](http://www.valleihopper.nl))

## 6.5 Emergencies

In an emergency, there are several options to get in contact.

Phone 112 EMERGENCY NUMBER for life-threatening emergencies.

### 6.5.1 Non-life threatening emergencies

In case of a non-life threatening medical emergency, call your own GP/dentist or the emergency number of the practices (see section General practitioner and section Dentist)

Other non-life threatening emergency numbers:

- Police: 0900-8844

- Fire Brigade: 0317 412237

For emergencies at work, please follow the instructions for your specific building, which should be posted in labs and rooms.

## 6.6 Dentists

Similar to GPs, you have to register at the dentist practice (in Dutch: tandartsen) before you can receive dental treatments. You can find the list of dentists in Wageningen [here](#). Outside of the opening hours (weekend/evening/night/national holidays) you can go to the dental center Gelderse Vallei in Ede for emergencies that cannot wait until the next day. Note that you always have to call first for an appointment (Tel: 0318-611888).

## 6.7 Pharmacies

If you are given a prescription by the GP, you need to collect the medicine from one of the pharmacies in Wageningen. Please ask your GP which pharmacy you are registered at (usually the one close to your living address).

[Here](#) is a list of some pharmacies in Wageningen.

## 6.8 Safety & Health

[Here](#) you can find information, among others, on health issues related to computer work and tips.

## 7 Transportation

### 7.1 Cycling

Wageningen is a rather small town and buildings on WUR campus can be easily reached by bicycle (in Dutch: fiets). In the Netherlands the system of traffic control and, more importantly, the motorists themselves, take cyclists into account and accidents are rare.

For safe cycling, both for yourselves and others on the roads, we strongly suggest you to take a look at the Dutch traffic rules for cycling [here](#) (weblink). Disobeying the rules could get you a fine of at least €90.

There are many bicycle shops in Wageningen to buy a new or second-hand bicycle. A list of addresses is collected [here](#) (weblink), with some tip and tricks in choosing a bicycle.

If you prefer to rent a bicycle, take a look at the options [here](#) (weblink).

### 7.2 Public Transportation

The main available public transports in Wageningen is buses. From Wageningen bus station, there are regular bus services to towns such as Ede, Arnhem and Utrecht.

The Netherlands has an extensive railway network (NS) with regular train services. Information about tickets and special arrangements at reduced prices and about departure/ arrival times may be obtained on [NS website](#) and the Dutch travelling planning service, [9292](#).

### 7.3 OV-chipkaart

With the OV-chipcard, you have access to all public transportation: train, bus, tram and metro in the Netherlands. The card contains a chip that can be charged with a balance in euro that allows you to travel everywhere in the Netherlands, or with a single fare, return ticket or season ticket.

There are two different types of OV-chipkaart from which to choose: Personal OV-chipkaart and Anonymous OV-chipkaart. You can get more information about the card and possible discount prescriptions via this [website](#).