

LANGUAGE & TRAINING CENTRE

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Fortunately, a growing number of universities and universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands offer a higher education preparatory programme to refugee students with an asylum permit. Even though each of these education programmes has its own subject matter and focus areas, they all offer courses that prepare candidates for higher education entrance exams. With the vast majority of course participants not intending to enrol in a programme with a strong language component, such as Philosophy, Law or History, the History course is usually not part of the admissions test for the course participant's intended programme. This is unfortunate, because art, as a medium, belongs in the debate on migration and identity.

While 'integration' and 'culture' are dominant themes in the migration debate, the links between integration, art and culture are often neglected. In fact, recent scholarly research underscored the importance of a wide array of artistic mediums, because these contribute to the exploration of one's own cultural identity and to mutual understanding. At the same time, the resulting dialogue contributes to learning a language, something that plays a key role in the integration process.

Participants in the Erasmus Preparatory Year will complete their civic integration, a purpose-driven form of social integration, during the higher education preparatory year. But what is the actual purpose served? Why do politicians so frequently emphasise the importance of 'active citizenship'? What view of the world does a Dutch painter in the Golden Age provide? Are his civic ideals consistent with current reality? What is a newcomer's perspective in this matter? With a visit to the Mauritshuis, the EUR Language & Training Centre organised an intercultural dialogue based on questions that continuously need to be asked, regardless of whether clear-cut answers can be found for these questions.