

## **‘Talent development increasingly recognized in European higher education’**

*First structured overview of honors programs in European higher education published*

### PRESS RELEASE

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**Talent development has been put higher on the agenda in European higher education over the last fifteen years. The Netherlands is clearly the front runner in this respect. The culture towards excellence has become more positive, but development of honors programs is still limited. Pioneers and change agents need to get more freedom and space to develop experimental forms of education to stimulate talent development.**

These are some main conclusions in the new book ‘Talent Development in European Higher Education: Honors Programs in the Benelux, Nordic and German-Speaking Countries’, published today through SpringerOpen. Authored by Dr. Marca V.C. Wolfensberger at Hanze University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, the book presents the first-ever overview of special provisions for talented students in higher education in eleven European countries. Provisions were reviewed at 303 higher education institutions (HEIs), with almost four million students.

#### *Honors programs*

Special programs for talented students (honors programs) were found to be up and running at 72 HEIs in six countries. Over half of all HEIs with honors programs (39 out of 72) are found in the Netherlands. Germany (17) has around a quarter of the HEIs with honors programs. Belgium (4), Denmark (6), Finland (3) and Austria (3) divide the remaining quarter. In Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Luxembourg and Switzerland no honors programs were found.

#### *Talent development*

The new book also intends to give insight in national climates towards academic talent. From the early 2000s, talent development has been put higher on the agenda across European countries. However, focus is often on provisions for children. In higher education, structures to support talent development are lacking. So far, the Netherlands is the only country with a nationwide organization to bring honors programs together (the Sirius Programme). All Dutch research universities and all large universities of applied sciences have developed honors education. In other countries the number of programs is limited, but there are great examples and hopeful signs that more programs will start in the coming years.

#### *Open access*

‘We think this book provides a wealth of practical information on existing programs, networks, key persons and literature’, says Dr. Wolfensberger. ‘We hope to facilitate exchange of knowledge and ideas. Educators can find examples of good practices and honors students can make an informed choice on programs in Europe.’ Wolfensberger hopes to extend the research project: ‘It is very valuable to now have structured information available about these eleven countries, but there is much more to know about talent development throughout Europe and the world.’ Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen and the Sirius Programme jointly decided to fund publication in open access through Springer.

The book is freely available to all at:

<http://www.springer.com/education+%26+language/higher+education/book/978-3-319-12918-1>

A (paid) paper copy of the book can also be ordered here.

*About the author*

Dr. Marca V.C. Wolfensberger heads the Research Centre for Talent Development in Higher Education and Society at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen and is also Director of the Honors Program at the Faculty of Geosciences at Utrecht University, both in the Netherlands. Since 2013, she is the first European fellow of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), the American association of undergraduate honors programs. For this research project she was supported by a grant from the Sirius Programme, which unites Dutch HEIs offering honors education.

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*Note to editor (not for publication):*

More information, tables and maps can be obtained from Maarten Hogenstijn (project leader), [m.hogenstijn@pl.hanze.nl](mailto:m.hogenstijn@pl.hanze.nl), +31-(0)610531652. Interview requests for Dr. Wolfensberger can also be addressed here.