

Opposing 10-Year Naturalisation for the Netherlands (Tech-Focused)

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Author: OK

Executive summary

Doubling the naturalisation waiting time from **5 to 10 years** will harm the Netherlands' competitiveness in deep-tech, especially **life sciences & biotech**, by weakening talent attraction and retention precisely when peer countries are liberalising (e.g., **Germany: 5 years since 2024**). Dutch startups already face acute skill shortages and depend heavily on international founders and employees (~30% of startup workforce is foreign talent). **Knowledge-migrant inflows declined from ~26,250 (2022) → 21,500 (2023) → ~16,000 (2024)**, compounding hiring gaps. The Dutch life-sciences sector (thousands of organisations; major hubs like **Leiden Bio Science Park** with ~25k employees, 27k students) relies on internationally mobile specialists. A longer path to citizenship reduces long-term attachment and deters founders who benchmark EU jurisdictions. Evidence from OECD and NL research shows that naturalisation **improves employment and earnings**, accelerating integration and productivity. This proposal would place NL among the most restrictive regimes in the EU, risking brain-drain, fewer venture-backable companies, and slower biotech translation.

Key figures

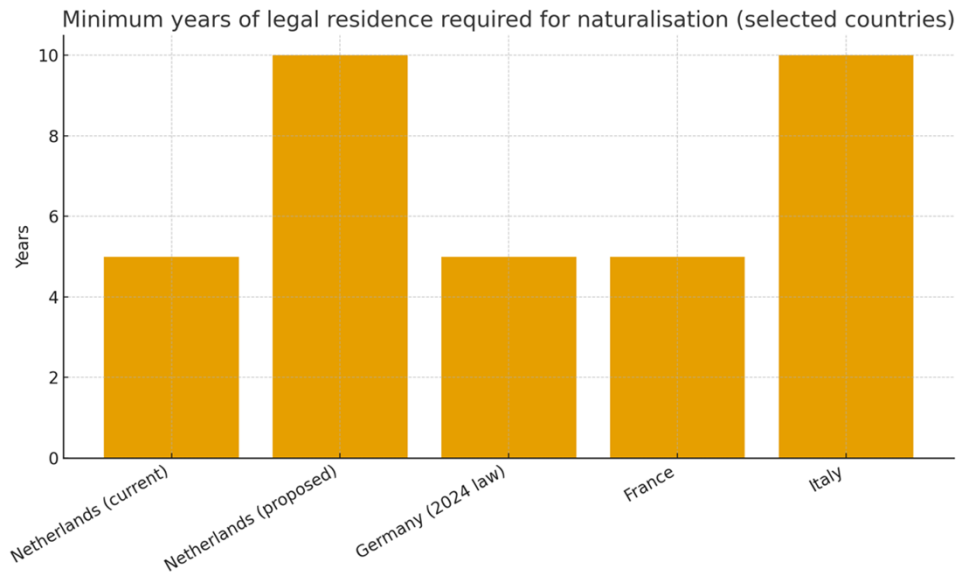


Figure 1. Minimum years of residence for naturalisation (selected): NL current 5; **NL proposed 10**; Germany 5; France 5; Italy 10. *Source:* DE 2024 reform (BMI/Gov); FR official portal; IT Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Dutch cabinet announcement & consultation.

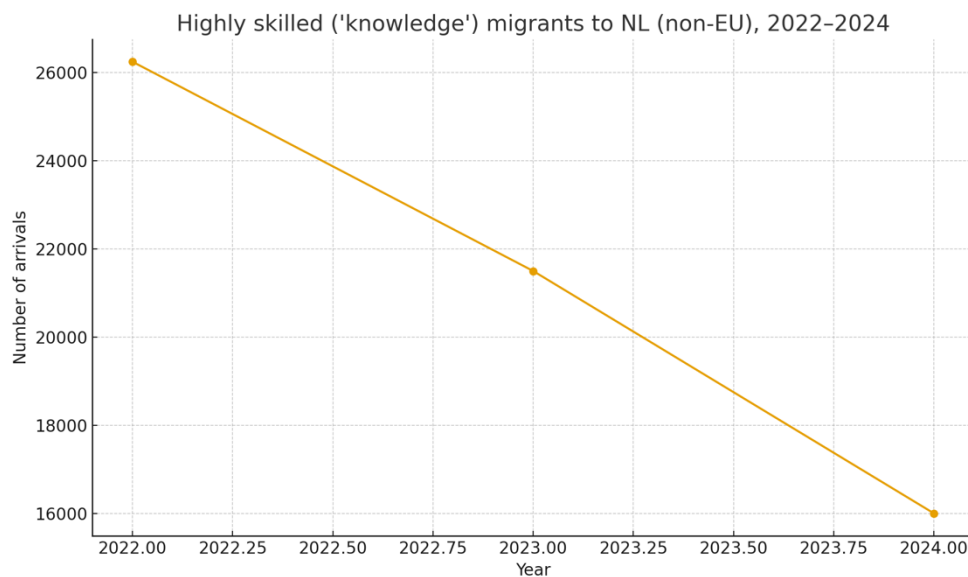


Figure 2. Knowledge-migrant (highly skilled) arrivals, NL (non-EU), 2022–2024: **26,250 → 21,500 → ~16,000**. *Source:* CBS 2024/2025 releases; DutchNews/NLTimes summaries of CBS.

Attracting international talent is crucial to overcome the shortage of talent

Dutch startups already rely heavily on foreign talent

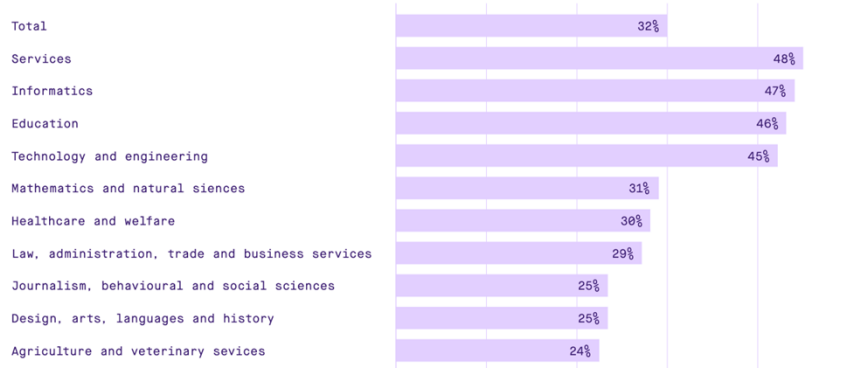


* Source Techleap, based on the language skills of 50k startup and scaleup employees on LinkedIn. Foreign talent is estimated by number of people that are native or bilingual in another language than Dutch and English. Another 25% of employees reported to be Native or Bilingual in English and didn't report Dutch as their first language.

STATE OF DUTCH TECH 2024

30% of international graduates stay in the Netherlands to work after their studies, which is equivalent to around 4k graduates per year.

% of working international students in the Netherlands after 1 year



Source: A third of international graduates working in the Netherlands, CBS 2023

70

Figure 3. Startup workforce composition (approx.): ~30% foreign talent in Dutch startups. Source: Slide 70 of State of Dutch Tech 2024 report from *impactcity.nl*

Argumentation (step-by-step)

1) NL would become a restrictive outlier as peers liberalise

Germany lowered its residency requirement from 8 → **5 years** in 2024 (with faster tracks), explicitly to attract skilled workers and speed integration. France remains at **~5 years** (tightening language criteria but not the residency baseline). **Italy** is at **10 years** for non-EU nationals. Moving NL to **10** undermines its relative attractiveness within the EU's integrated market.

2) Startups—and biotech in particular—depend on foreign talent

Techleap reports **~30% of startup staff are foreign talent**, reflecting persistent gaps in senior engineering, data science, and specialised roles. Lengthening the horizon to citizenship increases uncertainty (voting, mobility, family planning) and reduces retention of founders and key staff.

3) The talent pipeline is already weakening

Knowledge-migrant arrivals fell: about **26,250 (2022)** → **21,500 (2023)** (−18%) → **~16,000 (2024)** (−26% YoY; −39% vs 2022). A 10-year wait would be a further deterrent signal, especially for globally mobile scientists comparing EU hubs.

4) The LSH/biotech cluster relies on global mobility

The NL Life Sciences & Health sector comprises thousands of organisations and >50k jobs; hubs like **Leiden Bio Science Park** alone host **~25k employees** and **27k students**, drawing a large international community. Growth projections assume continued inflows of international specialists.

5) Foreign founders are high-impact

Dealroom/ecosystem sources record **hundreds** of foreign-born founders building in NL (including VC-backed firms). A longer citizenship path signals reduced long-term inclusion to precisely this high-impact group in deep-tech and biotech spin-outs.

6) Naturalisation accelerates integration and earnings

OECD and NL studies find **post-naturalisation gains** in employment and income, controlling for confounders. A reachable citizenship horizon **creates** the bond the proposal seeks—delaying it postpones integration benefits and productivity gains.

7) The proposal conflicts with strategic tech goals

While NL aims to safeguard strategic technologies (bio/semis) and grow deep-tech, starving these sectors of international founders and senior staff creates a policy mismatch. This also clashes with ~€1 billion in recent Dutch public investments in strategic technology (e.g., National Growth Fund allocations across semiconductors, AI and life sciences). Restricting the talent pipeline undermines the return on these taxpayer-funded investments.

8) Risk of regional brain-drain

With **Germany (5y)**, **France (5y)**, and nearby biotech hubs 2–4 hours away, founders and PIs can relocate with low friction if long-term inclusion feels out of reach in NL.

9) Macroeconomic timing is poor

2023–2024 showed slower VC, fewer IPOs, and concentration of late-stage funding. Policy should **lower**, not raise, barriers that discourage new founder cohorts in life sciences.

Concrete asks to the legislator

1. **Withdraw** the 10-year proposal; maintain **5 years** as the standard.
2. If deeper integration is the aim, **accelerate** citizenship for STEM PhDs, researchers, knowledge-migrants, and accredited startup founders (e.g., **3–5 years** with language/civics benchmarks).
3. **Pair** naturalisation with targeted integration investments (language, civic participation, entrepreneurship support) shown to amplify labour-market gains.

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Appendix A — Methods & data notes

- **Figure 1** compares statutory minimum residency years as of **1 Oct 2025** using official government sources; France tightened **language** criteria in 2025 but residency minimum remains **~5 years**.
- **Figure 2** uses CBS series for “knowledge migrants” (highly skilled, non-EU). 2022 value uses CBS-reported ~26.25k (via CBS/press summaries); 2023 CBS: **21.5k**; 2024 CBS press: approx. **16k**.
- **Figure 3** uses Techleap’s *State of Dutch Tech* (2024/2025) headline metric of **~30%** foreign talent share in Dutch startups.

Appendix B — One-paragraph submission (≤1,500 characters)

I strongly oppose doubling the naturalisation term to 10 years. The Netherlands’ startup and biotech ecosystems already depend on international talent (≈30% of startup staff are foreign), while knowledge-migrant inflows have fallen since 2022 (≈26,250→21,500→~16,000). Meanwhile, Germany reduced its residency requirement to **5 years** in 2024 to attract skilled workers. The Dutch Life Sciences & Health sector—anchored by hubs like Leiden Bio Science Park (≈25k employees; 27k students)—relies on globally mobile specialists. Research from the OECD and Netherlands shows that naturalisation **improves** employment and earnings, accelerating integration and productivity. Extending the path to citizenship will deter founders and senior scientists who can choose nearby countries with shorter timelines, risking brain-drain and fewer venture-backable companies. Please maintain the **5-year** standard and, if anything, **accelerate** citizenship for STEM PhDs, researchers and startup founders while investing in language and civic participation.