



INTERNATIONAL CONVIVIUM CASA MUNDO

The Ruimzicht Foundation (www.ruimzicht.nl) offers accommodation to Dutch as well as foreign students in the city of Groningen. A convivium (from the Latin, literally meaning 'sharing life together') is a student community. Characteristic for a convivium, is that its residents deliberately choose to live in a group and to weekly reserve time for moments of reflection, a good conversation or a sociable activity.

The Community

Ruimzicht Foundation has had years of experience in accommodating students. It manages eight of these communities in the university towns of Amsterdam, Groningen and Utrecht, where a total of 100 students live together inspired by a Christian outlook on life. The convivium in Groningen is the 'youngest' convivium, developed in collaboration with the Protestant Theological University (PThU). New to this community is its international character: It's the first convivium where Dutch as well as foreign students live together.

An Enriching Experience

Living in a convivium is an enriching experience for almost all of its residents:

'A convivium stands for living together, and that is exactly what it is. You really live together, like one big family. And of course there are irritations once in a while, but that's life. Living together with a group of totally different people and still managing to create a home, that is what makes living in a convivium so special'

Pieter-Jan, 23 jaar

'It is more than sharing a house, it's learning to live with other cultures and respecting them, maybe even experiencing communication problems sometimes.'

Margje, from The Netherlands

'I can celebrate together traditions like Sinterklaas or try stampot'

Lee, from South-Korea



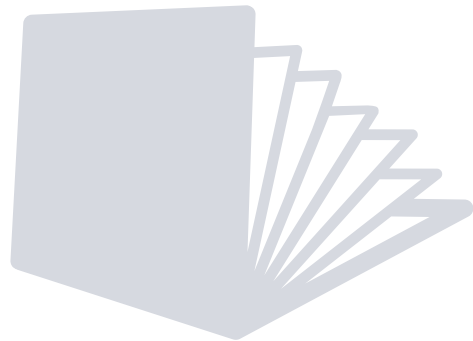
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE JOINING THE INTERNATIONAL CONVIVIAM

Structure of the International Convivium

The international convivium accommodates 15 residents: seven Dutch and eight foreign residents. The composition of residents is mixed: male and female, and each resident has his or her own room. The foreign residents have been selected by the PThU, and have been invited to study in the Netherlands at the one-year Master's Degree Theology Program at the PThU. The Dutch residents are senior students or have just started their first job.

Global

The global character of the convivium is evident: a world of its own, with a colourful mixture of cultures. Each resident contributes his or her own tradition and habits, and you become acquainted with different views and (religious) insights that may be completely different from yours. You will definitely be surprised. Did you know that the Netherlands celebrates an 'Animal Day', and have you ever celebrated 'Sinterklaas'? You will view your own society differently; things you have taken for granted will suddenly become less obvious. If you have the ability to face the unknown with an open and inquisitive attitude, along with a healthy sense of humour, you will gain new insights, special experiences and friendships. The communicative language is English.



Creating a Home Together

According to the concept of the international convivium, a part of the group of residents will change each year. At the beginning of the academic year, the foreign students will arrive, returning to their families and home country 12 months later. Saying goodbye is part of the deal. The Dutch residents reside at the convivium for a longer period; they usually stay on for three years, thus guaranteeing continuity in the convivium. This does not imply that the Dutch residents are (more) responsible for the success of living together. It is a shared responsibility, all residents playing their separate roles.

Together, you will create a home for each other. If you decide to join the International Convivium you agree to stay for a whole year, i.e. until the end of term, on a single basis.





Evening at Home

Sitting round the table together is fundamental for the convivium. Sharing a meal means more than eating the same food. Eating together offers an opportunity to get to know each other better: it is a chance to connect. If and when you eat together is decided by the group, but happens at least every Wednesday evening. This is the evening everybody stays at home and participates. Dinner ends with a simple liturgical moment, each time prepared by someone else.

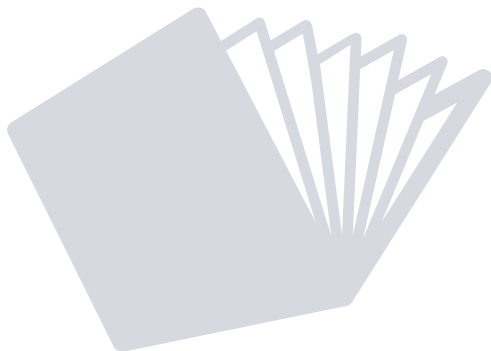
This is followed by the home gathering, again, joined by everyone. The structure of this evening varies and depends on what you agree upon. One time it may have a reflective character, another time you may discuss a current topic. It can also turn out to be a cultural or sports event. Not to forget December 5th: Sinterklaas'!

Apart from this weekly evening at home, you will see and meet each other regularly but of course each person has his or her own (study) program, personal appointments and social contacts. You are free to do so, and will have enough time for your own activities.



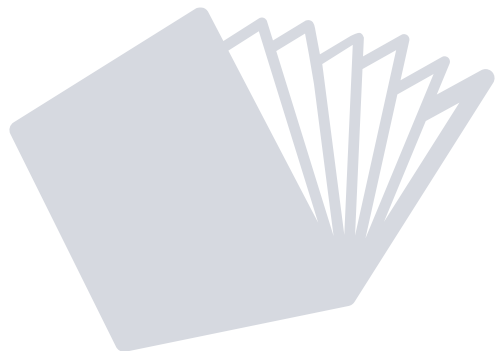
Organization

As in any regular household, practical matters need to be taken care of; this is no different in a convivium. This responsibility lies within the so-called 'triarchy', three members of the convivium who make sure that home life runs smoothly concerning organizational matters. Three times a year the student council of Stichting Ruimzicht gets together, a council in which the international convivium is also represented. The annual national convivium day is meant for all residents. For the sake of continuity, participation in the triarchy and the student council is reserved for Dutch residents only. A good tradition within Ruimzicht is to inaugurate new residents after a period of approximately three months. In a special ceremony you will become an official member of the convivium. This is an official event, but with a playful undertone.



Support

A (part-time) chaplain is associated with the Ruimzicht Foundation. Her main task is to guide and support the 8 convivium communities and their residents. Among other things, she is responsible for the intake of new residents, and will be present at important events within the convivium. She can also be asked to assist in the preparation of the home gatherings. Furthermore, the convivium chaplain is available when things aren't running quite smoothly and the convivium wishes to seek advice from a dedicated outsider. For practical and financial matters the foreign students can appeal to the international officer at PThU. Pastoral care is provided by the student chaplain at PThU, the student chaplains of the Groningen Student Chaplaincy (GSP), one of the ministers of the involved church communities in Groningen or the minister/preacher of one's own congregation.



Who Is Eligible For The International Convivium:

A resident of the international convivium:

- is enthusiastic about the international convivium concept and endorses Ruimzicht's objectives
- deliberately chooses this kind of cohabitation
- will attend a 1-year Master of Theology program (for foreign residents) or is a senior student/working student/at the beginning of his career (for Dutch residents)
- will reserve time for the 'huisavond'
- is interested in others and is able to deal with diversity in faith, culture and inclination
- demonstrates a true interest in other cultures
- has an open, inquisitive nature
- is a trustworthy, self-reliant person and is able to put things into perspective
- speaks English



The international convivium is a joint initiative of