

International knowledge workers day @ Philips Drachten

About getting to know each other and the North of Holland



**Philips Drachten
21st January 2014**

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Dutch High-tech industry has a substantial added value for Dutch economy due to dominant positions in world markets and in niche markets. The main objective of the topsector policy is to maintain these positions and even expand them. For this purpose continuous R&D and Innovation are necessary. Knowledge workers at masters and PhD level are needed to carry out these R&D activities. Labour market for this category is becoming more and more international. Even global. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how international knowledge workers perceive living and working in The Netherlands. NOM and High Tech NL organized a meet and greet about this issue the 21st of January. Philips Drachten hosted the event.



Asking searching questions

It is not only about perception of The Netherlands. Holland is just a spot on the map. But what makes Holland a *hotspot* on the map? Why do international knowledge workers choose for studying and working in The Netherlands? What knowledge regions in the world do we compete with? And what makes them stay? All questions which are extremely interesting for hightech industry to find answers to. And how can we find answers? Well, invite a group of people you want to meet. And ask them searching questions! That was exactly what NOM (Investement and Development Agency for The Northern Netherlands) had in mind when Hans

Praat, in charge of regional economic development, was up to when he discussed this matter with Jos van Erp, Program Director Human Capital of High Tech NL. Hans liked to add one more essential question: “what stimulates international knowledge workers wanting to work and live in the Northern part of The Netherlands?” Because the three provinces in the North do have an interesting set of high-tech industry. Which consists of more than 150 companies of whom Philips Drachten and Fokker Technologies in Hoogeveen might be the biggest companies, but definitely not the only ones. High Tech NL has several years of experience in the field of organizing interactive meetings with well defined target groups like international knowledge workers. Besides that, High Tech NL works together in the field of scientific research on the matter with the Maastricht University so a lot of knowledge already is available. That is why a decision was easily taken to organize this meeting in The North. Philips Drachten was so kind to host this activity.

A daily torture

More than 80 guests found their way to Philips Drachten at 10.30 hours in the morning, of whom some even came by bus from the Eindhoven area, organized by the High Tech NL office. After having a cup of coffee and some cake the group entered the modernly equipped conference room. They were welcomed by Jos van Erp who, for this occasion, was asked to be chairman of the day. He gave the floor to Mr. Rob Karsmakers, Managing Director of Philips Drachten, the first keynote speaker. Mr Karsmakers can be considered to be an international knowledge worker –expat- himself. For he spent more than 27 years working for Philips in various countries, among which Taiwan.



Mr Rob Karsmakers

It even wasn't that easy to repatriate in The Netherlands where life seems to end at 20.00 hours the evening and rain is a daily torture. But at the other hand, he had found an extremely interesting challenge; develop Philips Drachten to become the world's market leader and convince the Philips board that concentrating activities like R&D, Innovation and production in Drachten would be the best choice under certain conditions. And look what he and his team

have achieved! Philips Drachten doesn't suffer from the economic crisis much. In 2014 again an important investment will be done to modernize and expand the production facilities. Did you know that The New York Times recently pointed out Philips Drachten as the benchmark company on efficient manufacturing methods?*

Paradise on earth

Jos van Erp thanked Mr Rob Karsmakers and took the floor. He showed some figures illustrating the developments in Dutch high-tech industry proving the need of international knowledge workers. He showed some suggestions about people and situations that might influence the reputation of our country. And yes, there is a difference between visiting The Netherlands as a tourist or choosing to build up a career and a private life! His rough picture was illustrated more in real life detail by Mr Richard Willmann, R&D Director at Philips Drachten, who is a German expat himself. He described his career thus far and the reasons for choosing to work at Philips in Drachten. One of those reasons was the fact that the Dutch do have an open culture for foreigners.



Listening to keynote speakers

The country offers a save environment for children to learn and play. As a small country, the Dutch are used to operate in an international setting. Mr Richard Willmann lives in Amsterdam and accept the fact that he has to travel each day about one hour and a half to get to his job. By the way, in Drachten, traffic jams are hardly known. A paradise on earth? Far from that. There is much to improve. For example immediate access to health care is not a matter of course. And although everybody speaks English this is prohibit for official functionaries of whom you depend in various situations. Mr Richard Willmann was helped by the Amsterdam expat centre to get his official documents organized. This service should be available in Groningen so that, especially for the North of The Netherlands, one should be able to guide international knowledge workers to a living in this area.



Interactive table discussions

Experiences and opinions

After listening to the interesting keynote speakers the guests were invited to participate in the table discussion sessions which were prepared and moderated by alumni students of the Maastricht University and some other facilitators. In groups of about 10 people around the

table, four questions were discussed in various group compositions following the carousel concept. Each shift was introduced by a sound signal after 20 minutes. Only interrupted by a tasty lunch, the interactive sessions formed definitively the heart of the meeting. A lot of experiences and opinions were shared and discussed. Notes were taken by the moderators. After the interactive table sessions five Philips employees guided the guests through the production and R&D facilities. This definitively was an impressive presentation of one of the world most modern production facilities!

Employers point of view

The successful day was finished by a panel discussion. Mr Rob Karsmakers, Mr Frank Snellens (HR director) and Mr Kor Visscher (Director Industrial Projects & Facilities) represented Phillips Drachten. The panel was completed by Mr Nikos Vogiatzis, an expat form Greece who is studying and working more then eight years in The Netherlands and who only one months ago moved to Groningen for reasons of a job change. The questions, answers and discussions underlined the findings during the interactive sessions, mainly from the point of view of Philips as an employer.



The panel. Mr Visscher, Mr Vogiatzis, Mr Karsmakers and Mr Snellens

We want to know everything!

Together we concluded that the International Knowledge Workers Day had been successful in various points of view. Experiences and opinions were shared, new people were added to social networks and new (job) opportunities were discovered. Two similar events will be organized at short term. One in the Province of South Holland and one in the Twente area. But is this all? No! The alumni will work out a report on their findings during the table sessions. This report will be available next week and send to the participants. Those who are interested can ask either NOM or High Tech NL to send a digital exemplar. Because about international knowledge workers..... We want to know everything!

Jos van Erp, January 21st 2014



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[*http://www.dutchdfa.com/news/1121/nyti-mes-visits-robots-in-drachten](http://www.dutchdfa.com/news/1121/nyti-mes-visits-robots-in-drachten)

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