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**TO:**

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**FROM:**

**DANIELA PIANGIOLINO**

**Subject:** Short Stay contracts are harmful for international students

**Dear Nijmegen City Council,**

My name is Daniela Piangiolino and I am an Italian student at Radboud University.

When I first moved to Nijmegen, I was lucky enough to sublet a room from a tenant living in SSH& Leeuwenstein for three months and then get a room in SSH& Vossenveld for about seven months, since students have the possibility to be provided by SSH& with Short Stay contracts, which can last either four months, seven months, or eleven months, depending on the check-in time. After that, I was kicked out from the student housing like the rest of the tenants, and I entered the jungle of scams and “no internationals!” rooms ads on Facebook and Kamernet. After two months looking for a place, I was blessed by the positive response of an international landlord, who took me into his house.

My story has a happy ending, but I know an infinity of international students facing the same issue. Students that spend months on their friends’ couch or floor; students that are forced to stay in hotels or hostels for months before even being invited to a kijkavond; students that cannot find any other option than going back home in their country with the risk of not being able to ever come back to the Netherlands; students that decide to not even go to Erasmus to Radboud University because they were not offered any help in finding a place to stay (despite their application being on time with the housing office). The list of cases could go on and on; every single international student has a story (rarely positive) about housing in Nijmegen.

It is fundamental to take into account that the amount of available Short Stay rooms is not enough to accommodate all students that are eligible. Especially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, less students were offered the possibility of getting a room with a Short Stay contract. Those who are lucky are offered a Short Stay contract (usually between September/August; September/January; January/August) with SSH&, but they do not receive any help afterwards. Yes, there is the option to subscribe to the weekly SSH& room lottery, but students cannot rely on it.

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Short Stay contracts are not only harmful to international students because of their short duration, but also because of:

1. The inability to cancel your rental agreement throughout the duration of the stay, making it impossible to find a new room while renting from SSH&;
2. The inability to sublet your Short Stay room to third parties;
3. The shortage of Short Stay rooms to host all those who apply and are eligible to get a room;
4. The considerably high rental fee compared to the same rooms offered outside the Short Stay contract.

The shortage of housing in Nijmegen (and in the Netherlands) is real, as also the huge number of international students that are homeless or in the constant research of accommodation. If Short Stay contracts are the only way to welcome international students, then there is something wrong. For sure it is helpful to have a room when we arrive, but being kicked out without any possibility of staying or switching rooms is extremely harmful for the (mental) health of the students and the continuation of their academic career in the Netherlands.

Most students fall in love with Nijmegen when they arrive, and have a good time in their study programmes, so it is a shame to create such a stressful and overall negative experience in regards of accommodation. As the majority of rooms outside the domain of SSH& are explicitly not welcoming international students, the room hunting is a real hell on Earth.

I hope that you will find these arguments helpful and consider a substantial change in the type of stay contracts that can be offered to (international) students in Nijmegen. The situation is dramatic and it cannot be ignored anymore.

Yours sincerely,

**Daniela Piangiolino**