

Diplomatic Visit to UNU-MERIT

On the 2nd of September, UNU-MERIT welcomed a delegation of Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of The Netherlands – Mrs. Joanna van Vliet (CdP Amman), Hans Blankenberg (CdP Kabul) and Dirk Jan Kop (CG Osaka). This visit was organised in the framework of Ambassadors' Conference at the Maastricht University, and coordinated by Professor Geert Duysters.

UNU-MERIT, as a research institute within the United Nations system, offers a unique multicultural and multiethnic environment, uniting people from across the globe. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Ambassadors were interested in the research, training and daily life at the institute.

The meeting was opened by the Director Professor Luc Soete. In the welcoming speech he introduced the history, research strategy and current activities of the institute. Then the Ambassadors briefly outlined functions of Netherlands Embassies abroad and diplomatic work in general.

In the following speech Professor Robin Cowan, the Head of the training programmes elaborated on the structure and organisation of PhD programme offered by UNU-MERIT, as well as a diversity of PhD topics. Next, PhD researcher Sergey Filippov made a presentation in which he shared a foreigner's view on the Dutch education and the life in the Netherlands.

These presentations provided valuable inputs into the subsequent roundtable, in which Ambassadors, UNU-MERIT leadership and PhD researchers openly and constructively shared their views on a variety of issues pertaining to a life of foreigners (students in particular) in The Netherlands.

Specifically, the Ambassadors were interested in motivation of PhD researchers to choose The Netherlands as a place to pursue their PhD degree, and what Royal Netherlands Embassies can do in order to influence this motivation.

This issue is attracting best students and talents from all the world is high on the agenda today considering the globalising nature of knowledge and education, and international competition between universities. The Ambassadors

At the end of the fruitful discussion, the Dutch ambassadors suggested to all the students and PhD researchers, upon returning back home, to join Alumni Associations at the Royal Embassies of the Netherlands in the respective countries, to keep in touch and top serve as "informal Dutch ambassadors" at home.

By Sergey Filippov



Their Excellencies Joanna van Vliet (CdP Amman), Hans Blankenberg (CdP Kabul) and Dirk Jan Kop (CG Osaka)



Standing: Prof. Robin Cowan, Sergey Filippov, Hans Blankenberg, Joanna van Vliet, Dirk Jan Kop, Prof. Luc Soete, Asel Doranova. Sitting: Donatus Kosi Ayitey, Shuan SadreGhazi, Ying Zhang, Thanh Le Phuoc, Luciana Marins