

# China's influence and the Chinese community in the Netherlands

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## Contents

Summary of key findings	2
Policy recommendations	3
1. Objectives of the report	4
2. Data and methods of research	6
3. The development and structure of the Chinese community in the Netherlands	8
4. Chinese organisations in the Netherlands	12
4.1. Organisations aimed at promoting the interests of the Chinese population	12
4.2. Organisations operating as extensions of the Chinese Government or Communist Party	14
4.3. Organisations of communities from a specific region of origin	15
4.4. Organisations of Chinese faith communities	16
4.5. Organisations focused on a specific political goal in China	17
4.6. Organisations for Chinese social work	17
4.7. Chinese educational organisations	18
4.8. Organisations for professional groups, culture, sport, and public holidays	18
5. Chinese media	20
5.1. United Times 荷兰联合时报	<b>Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.</b>
5.2. China Times 中荷商报	20
5.3. HollandOne.com 荷兰一网	21
5.4. CRTV (Chinese Radio and Television) 城市之声	21
5.5. GoGoDutch.com 荷乐网	21
5.6. Asian News 华侨新天地	22
6. Overseas Chinese and the Chinese government	23
6.1. The United Front and the Overseas Chinese	23
6.2. Party organisation abroad	28
7. Chinese influence in the Netherlands	32
7.1. The fragmented demography of the Chinese population in the Netherlands and the Chinese government	32
7.2. Overseas Chinese policy in the Netherlands	34
8. Conclusion	39
Appendix 1: List of Chinese organisations and media	43
Appendix 2: WeChat use among Chinese in the Netherlands	46

## Summary of key findings

The extent of influence by the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on Chinese diasporic communities and Chinese citizens in the Netherlands is at present still limited and has not led to harmful interference in Dutch society. This is not to say, however, that there are currently no developments that deserve scrutiny, as the basis for influencing the Chinese community in the Netherlands has been laid. It is therefore important to anticipate the future possibility of interference and to take proactive measures in this regard.

In the recent two decades, the ambition of the Chinese government and the CCP to wield their influence among overseas Chinese communities has grown, as have the instruments at their disposal to do so. Overseas Chinese are increasingly considered as an integral part of the Chinese nation and as an advantage that can be exploited for strategic objectives. The institutions of the so-called United Front department of the CCP play a key role in this process.

Members of the Chinese diasporic communities and Chinese citizens in the Netherlands are both a target and a (potential) instrument of Chinese influence. Diasporic leaders who have backgrounds in regions of China with long-standing traditions of emigration dominate the organisations of the Chinese communities in the Netherlands and their relations with the PRC. More direct influence is exercised over the official Chinese student association in the Netherlands. In addition, the PRC also shapes the output of media outlets produced in the Netherlands by the Chinese community, leaving little room for opinions or activities that deviate from the official Chinese narrative, particularly when it comes to China's foreign policy and sovereignty claims.

Organisations and groups that, according to the Chinese government, pursue subversive goals (such as Uighur or Tibetan activist refugees, supporters of the Hong Kong democracy movement, and also members of the Falun Gong that is banned in China) suffer the reach of the Chinese government in the form of intimidation or reprisals, or the fear thereof.

China's influence is also noticeable in the role played by some members of the Chinese diasporic communities in the Netherlands in positively presenting economic opportunities in relation to China, for example with regard to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Dutch local authorities and Dutch or Dutch-Chinese business associations and friendship organisations often play a more prominent role in these processes, however.

The Chinese authorities only seem lightly to control the use of Chinese social media (specifically the messaging platform WeChat) in the Netherlands. Administrators of WeChat groups in the Netherlands are only minimally active and not supervised from China. This also applies to the use of WeChat among, for example, the Uighur community. Members of such communities obviously are careful about what they write on Chinese social media, but still use these regularly.

The freedom, security and room for forming and expressing opinions of all Chinese diasporic communities and Chinese citizens living in the Netherlands must be safeguarded. Members of the Chinese communities need to be more closely connected with Dutch society, while a full representation of groups, opinions and interests among them should be guaranteed. This particularly applies to groups that wish to operate independently of, or to be critical towards, the PRC. However, it also applies more broadly to members of the Chinese community in the Netherlands who often choose to avoid expressions and activities at odds with the Chinese government.

The uproar over the coronavirus and the growing distrust of the PRC have contributed to many members of the Chinese diasporic communities and Chinese citizens in the Netherlands feeling marginalized and undeservedly criticized. With that in mind, it is of the utmost importance that the

Dutch government take steps to tackle threats from China. However, it is equally important that this does not alienate the Chinese diasporic communities in the Netherlands from Dutch society, which naturally also applies to the large number of people with a Chinese background who are fully integrated into Dutch society

## Policy recommendations

1. Restart the dialogue between the Dutch government and representatives of the Chinese communities in the Netherlands that came to a standstill after the end of the Dutch government's minority policy in 2011. A wide cross-section of organisations and interests of the Chinese communities in the Netherlands should be included in this dialogue. The objectives of the dialogue are the promotion of the integration, participation, diversity, and openness of the Chinese communities in the Netherlands and to alert Dutch society to influencing efforts from China.
2. Define goals for extracurricular Chinese language education (Saturday schools) in the Netherlands and facilitate the provision of teaching material that is tailored to Dutch society instead of China.
3. Strengthen the targeted assistance to Chinese communities in the Netherlands in areas like elderly care, social work, Dutch language education and legal assistance.
4. The activities of CCP members in the Netherlands must take place in accordance with clear norms and regulations. Only activities targeted at the future re-integration in China of CCP members can be allowed, as long as full transparency of these activities is provided. Covert party activities are to be prohibited.
5. Facilitate the availability of Chinese language media and media production whose content and operations are independent from media or news agencies from China. This could include a (new) Dutch broadcasting station geared towards Chinese or Asian communities in the Netherlands, Chinese language news reports by Dutch media platforms, or improving the diversity of existing Chinese language media by increasing the availability of media from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia and North America.
6. Establish partnerships with local governments in the most important areas of origin in Zhejiang, Fujian, Hong Kong and Guangdong in order to shape collaboration with China regarding the Chinese communities in the Netherlands. The interests and position of the Chinese communities should be at the core of this collaboration, instead of the superpower ambitions of the central government of China.
7. Raise cases of intimidation of Uighurs and other critics of the PRC who reside in the Netherlands at the diplomatic and political level, including during discussions and negotiations with the PRC on other topics and areas.
8. Introduce a system to monitor and detect cases of Chinese influence and interference in the Netherlands and conduct research into the nature, extent and consequences of the links between Chinese and Dutch governments and organisations that aim to strengthen the relationship and collaboration between the two countries. This system and research should cover, but not be limited to, the Chinese communities in the Netherlands. The aim of these initiatives is not to proscribe or discredit relationships and collaborations, but to uncover and counter any use of these links for interference and manipulation practices by the Chinese government and the CCP.

## 1. Objectives of the report

Chinese influence on Dutch society, politics, and the economy is currently very much in the spotlight. In discussions in the Netherlands, the focus is mainly on people living here who have a Chinese nationality or ethnic background. As this report will show, the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have specific policy tools at their disposal for potentially exercising influence. These tools are focused on those who are commonly referred to as the “overseas Chinese”, which are Chinese citizens (Huaqiao 华侨) and people of Chinese origin (Huaren 华人) who live outside of China for a long time or even permanently.

In addition to the overseas Chinese, there is a long history of Chinese (state) companies exerting influence directed at, and through, non-Chinese organisations and individuals, something which has become stronger and more direct in recent years. This is especially the case in the countries of the so-called “Belt and Road” (*yi dai yi lu* 一帶一路) where many Chinese companies are active. This influence exerted by Chinese companies is orchestrated not only through other policy instruments utilised by the Chinese government and CCP, but also often serves different purposes. Chinese companies and non-Chinese organisations and individuals have therefore been excluded from this investigation, but may be discussed in follow-up investigations.

The questions this project is trying to answer are:

1. What are the main instruments that the Chinese government and the Communist Party employ to influence the Chinese people in the Netherlands?
2. Does Chinese *influence* also lead to *influencing* Chinese individuals, groups, institutions, or interests in the Netherlands, or even *interference* in Dutch affairs?
3. What is, or what could be, the *effect* of Chinese influence or interference on politics and society in the Netherlands?

In addition, at the request of the project’s commissioning party, this report also gives a fairly comprehensive overview of the development and composition of the Chinese population in the Netherlands and of the main Chinese organisations and groups, as well as the main Chinese-language media and social media (WeChat) used by people in the Netherlands.

Concerns about Chinese influence abroad have grown exponentially in recent years, first in Australia and then in the United States. In the last few years, concern has also grown in Europe. This is primarily to do with the simple fact that China is becoming increasingly important globally. The Chinese economy is continuing to grow, although not as spectacularly as it did in the 1990s and 2000s. This not only makes China more prosperous, but also means that it accounts for an increasing share of the world economy.

China’s greater significance, however, is about much more than just the economy. Under President Xi Jinping, the country has emerged as a superpower with global ambitions and even as a potential rival to the United States. While President Barack Obama was still looking for a balance between rivalry and cooperation during his second term, President Donald Trump was fully committed to confrontation. Meanwhile, the Trade War between China and the US, which began in 2017, has escalated into an open conflict that has long since ceased to be just about trade. In the face of strategic rivalry, some areas of cooperation and the intertwining of investments, product development, scientific research, student exchanges, storage and access to data, and even stock market listings of Chinese companies on Wall Street are being put on hold, weaponised, or even completely discontinued.

In this new geopolitical climate, growing suspicions about Chinese influence and even interference have often been the first signs of shifts in perceptions about economic, societal, cultural, and political interdependence with China. The same applies to the Netherlands. Although the presence of Confucius Institutes at a number of Dutch universities had previously drawn criticism, until recently China's influence in the Netherlands was not a widely discussed issue. For example, a study on academic cooperation between Europe and China conducted by LeidenAsiaCentre in 2018 found that university administrators and researchers were barely aware of the potential risks that cooperation with Chinese partners could have.<sup>1</sup> This report, as well as the 2019 decision to cease the Groningen project to build a campus in the Chinese city of Yantai, have increased awareness about China. Clear steps are now being taken to prevent the improper use of cooperation without negating the many advantages that come with it.

Although a growing awareness about the risks in our relations with China is very important, there are also dangers to this. First of all, in other countries where an awareness about the risks posed by China emerged earlier, think tank studies and policy notes have often tended to draw far-reaching or general conclusions that are based on very limited evidence or just a small number of cases. This can present suspicions about Chinese interference as a *fait accompli*. Such "known unknowns" are a dangerous basis for policymaking, but they can play an important role in raising awareness about the *possibility* of Chinese interference, especially in those discussions where an image of China as it was 10 or 15 years ago still dominates.

Secondly, in discussions about Chinese influence a whole range of different kinds of influence, interference, and even sabotage, are often lumped together. Chinese "soft power", its "public diplomacy" (such as the activities of Confucius institutes, Chinese cultural centres, and the support of Chinese-language media), and the activities and expressions of Chinese embassies and diplomats, are certainly not always innocent. However, these things are really of a different order compared to activities such as disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks, bribery or threats to politicians and citizens, interference in elections or the work of governments, and espionage and theft of civilian, military or "dual use" technology. All these different aspects of China's presence in another country should be carefully considered before any judgment is made as to whether what the Chinese government is doing is considered to be an acceptable influence or whether Chinese actors have crossed the line of undue influencing or undermining interference.

Thirdly, it should be mentioned here that allegations of Chinese influence can have extremely negative consequences for Sino-Dutch people, companies and institutions. Chinese companies have suffered from this before, but in 2020 and 2021, individual Chinese (or others with a "Chinese" appearance) have also been the target of insults, threats, and sometimes even physical violence. If our interviewees are to be believed, one of the consequences of this is that Chinese Dutch people often identify more, rather than less, with China. So, in the long run, they could be an easier target of attempts by the Chinese government to win them over to the Chinese cause.

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<sup>1</sup> Ingrid d'Hooghe, Annemarie Montulet, Marijn de Wolf and Frank N. Pieke, *Assessing Europe-China Collaboration in Higher Education and Research*. Leiden: Leiden Asia Centre, 2018, <https://leidenasiacentre.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/LeidenAsiaCentre-Report-Assessing-Europe-China-Collaboration-in-Higher-Education-and-Research.pdf>.

## 2. Data and methods of research

This research consists of the following components:

1. Analysis of the people, organisations, and modalities of the Chinese government and Communist Party that actively seek to gain influence over the Chinese community in the Netherlands or specific parts of this community.
2. Analysis of the nature and degree of influence of the Chinese government and Communist Party on Chinese-language media (newspapers, TV, radio), Internet and social media that are read, produced, or used in the Netherlands.
3. Analysis of the aims, themes, and degree of influence of individuals and organisations by the Chinese government and Communist Party, as well as analysis of the measures that have been taken or have been considered by specific individuals or organisations in order to counter this influence.

This project has gathered the following information and data:

1. Interviews with a total of 33 leaders of Chinese and Chinese-Dutch organisations, associations, faith communities and key information officers in the Netherlands;
2. Information from Chinese, English, and Dutch public sources (media outlets, the Internet, and social media) about the Chinese population in the Netherlands and its links with Chinese governments;
3. Chinese-language scientific literature in the field of Communist Party organisation and Party building abroad;
4. A systematic inventory of reports in Chinese, English, and Dutch media and publicly available sources about the main Chinese organisations and individuals in the Netherlands and their links with China;
5. An inventory of the most important media and social media channels produced or used by Chinese Dutch and Chinese people in the Netherlands.

The main aim of the project was to understand the role played by prominent individuals, organisations, and media in facilitating Chinese government and CCP influence over Chinese Dutch people. It was therefore definitely not the aim of this research to measure the extent of Chinese government and CCP influence on Chinese Dutch people and Chinese people living in the Netherlands or to measure these people's experiences of influence. **The people we have interviewed should therefore not be seen – and were not intended – as a representative sample of the entire Chinese population in the Netherlands. However, our interviews and other research do give a reliable picture of the nature and modes of Chinese government and CCP influence over the Chinese population in the Netherlands.** This report does not wish to make statements about how “ordinary” Chinese people in the Netherlands experience or do not experience influence from China.

In carrying out this research, we have given full disclosure of our work and the aims of the research. The Chinese Embassy in The Hague was informed of the project and its objectives at an early stage but did not provide any response. Interviewees were told before their interviews that this was an investigation commissioned by the Dutch government on the extent of the Chinese government and CCP's influence on Chinese people in the Netherlands. In most cases, this seemed to have little to no impact on the degree of candour shown during the interview. Apart from a relatively small number (3-4) very experienced “gatekeepers” of relations between the Chinese-Dutch population and Dutch society, the interviewees generally spoke freely and often – especially given the subject of the research – shared relatively sensitive information and opinions.

The biggest obstacle often turned out to be obtaining contact information (phone numbers, WeChat identities, email addresses). In the end, it was only possible to contact many of those providing information for this research through previously interviewed persons. This in itself might be an illustration of how much the Chinese community in the Netherlands is inward-looking. In addition, there were also a number of people who either refused to participate, appeared to have gone back to China, or who simply did not respond to repeated requests for an interview.

The use of multiple sources of information proved to be a crucial component of the study. Data obtained from Chinese-language sources (the Internet, WeChat, and media) could be tested during the interviews and the interviews often put us on the right track in our source research. We have also always tried to independently confirm key information as much as possible, either in a (different) interview or by finding it in a written source.

We would like to stress that this research has relied solely on public sources and on what has been told to us in the interviews. In no way have we used confidential information from the Dutch or any other government. In this report, we took the unusual step of using information without references to specific interviews. Given the sensitivities surrounding Chinese influence abroad and the political relations among the Chinese population in the Netherlands, we thought it best to conduct the interviews on the basis of strict anonymity. Therefore, the report does not contain any direct quotes or other information that could be traced to a particular person. We also do not provide references to individual interviews or a list of the persons and organisations that we interviewed. Nor do we mention the names of people in this report, except occasionally when it comes to people who are operating in public roles. The interviews were almost all conducted by Frank Pieke, using Dutch, Mandarin-Chinese, or English. In most cases, one of the other researchers working on this study also provided a summary of the interview.

The research was carried out on behalf of the LeidenAsiaCentre by Frank Pieke and four researchers who participated in one or more aspects of the project under his leadership. Responsibility for the investigation and content of the report lies solely with Pieke.

### 3. The development and structure of the Chinese community in the Netherlands

The presence of Chinese people in the Netherlands dates back to the end of the nineteenth century when itinerant traders in trinkets from the area around the city of Qingtian in Zhejiang Province reached Europe. In 1911, Chinese stokers from the areas of Guangdong province adjacent to Hong Kong (what is now Shenzhen) were recruited in England to break a sailors' strike. Between 1916 and 1918, several hundred thousand Chinese people, mainly from Shandong province and the countryside around the city of Wenzhou in Zhejiang province, were recruited by the Allies for logistical support and trench digging in northern France. Several thousand remained in Europe after the war, with some of these ending up in the Netherlands. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Netherlands also had a number of Chinese students from the Dutch East Indies. These students were educated at Dutch-speaking schools and did not usually speak Chinese, instead having Malay or a regional Indonesian language as their mother tongue.

These small and floating Chinese communities decreased sharply in number during the Great Depression and The Second World War, but would still become growth centres for the Chinese communities in the Netherlands after the war. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, Hong Kong Chinese were numerically much more important. China gradually closed after the 1949 revolution, and during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) emigration to the capitalist West was made completely impossible. Hong Kong Chinese from England, or Chinese from the adjacent region of the mainland in Guangdong, filled the gap left by this lack of Chinese coming from mainland China. These people were largely responsible for the rapid growth and distribution of the Sino-Indian restaurants in the Netherlands. Attracted by the opportunities offered by the restaurant sector, a significant number of Chinese from Singapore or Malaysia came to the Netherlands in the 1970s. Cantonese, which all these Chinese people spoke or learned here, quickly became the most important Chinese language in the Netherlands (and elsewhere in Western Europe).

In addition to the Hong Kong Chinese, the number of Chinese people from Indonesia also grew considerably in the 1950s and 1960s. Because they were well educated and fluent in Dutch and often did not speak Chinese, these Chinese people remained separate from the other Chinese groups in the Netherlands. The same was true, albeit to a lesser extent, for the Hakka-speaking Chinese who came to the Netherlands around the time of the independence of Suriname in 1975. It was also true for the mainly Cantonese-speaking Sino-Vietnamese boat people who came here in the late 1970s. Their status as Dutch citizens or political refugees meant that they were not dependent on jobs in Chinese restaurants and therefore did not have to gain a place in the Hong Kong-dominated Chinese community.

In the second half of the 1970s, migration from the PRC became possible again. At first the number of people coming from the PRC was small, but it rose rapidly. In particular, Chinese people came to the Netherlands from the areas around Qingtian and Wenzhou to work in Chinese-Indian restaurants here. Although Qingtian and Wenzhou are less than 100 kilometres apart and have mutually intelligible dialects, they still developed their own communities. In the second half of the 1980s, a largely new migrant group was added to the groups of Chinese people in the Netherlands. These were Chinese people from the areas around the city of Fuzhou (especially the Changle region), the capital of Fujian Province, and the Fuqing district a little further south. These people were part of a diaspora that spread across the world in a few years. Although the language of these Fujianese is completely

different from both Cantonese and the languages of the people from Wenzhou and from Qingtian, they too mostly ended up in the Chinese restaurant sector.<sup>2</sup>

Until about the year 2000, the Chinese population in the Netherlands consisted of two, internally very diverse groups. The first and largest group was concentrated almost exclusively in the restaurant sector. Most of these people came from areas in Southeast China that had traditionally specialized in emigration. The second and much smaller group had come from former Dutch colonies (such as Indonesia and Suriname) or had come to the Netherlands as political refugees. These people were not concentrated in a particular sector of the economy and were often much more integrated into Dutch society.

Driven by fundamental changes in China itself, the already great diversity of the Chinese community in the Netherlands has increased even more in the new millennium. In less than a decade after 1994, China changed from a state-socialist country, where people were tied to working and living in a particular place, to a society of autonomous families and individuals. The reform of state-owned enterprises, the relaxation of the household registration system (*hukou* 户口), the transition from social housing to a private housing market, and the growth and further opening up of higher education all compelled the population to take responsibility for their livelihoods and their children's futures.

The new freedoms and responsibilities brought new groups of Chinese people from very different backgrounds and territories in China to the Netherlands and other parts of Europe. Farmers and workers sought unskilled and temporary work here in areas such as agriculture, construction, prostitution, and personal care, but ultimately still mainly in the Chinese restaurant sector. From the 1990s, Chinese people were allowed to study abroad without a scholarship and at their own expense. This meant the number of Chinese students in the Netherlands increased rapidly. More and more highly educated Chinese also found jobs in business or higher education. Often these were Chinese people who had graduated in the Netherlands and had found work after their studies. A smaller group of often highly educated Chinese people work here as expats for Chinese or other international companies and organisations, or are married to Dutch citizens.

Another group of new migrants from the PRC are the Uighurs, of whom about 2000 currently live in the Netherlands. From the 1990s onwards, many Uighurs moved to Central Asia and the Middle East as students or pilgrims in search of sources of authentic Islam. After the PRC authorities began to put increasing pressure on the governments of those countries to return Uighur people to China, as well as pressuring individual Uighurs themselves, many of them sought safe haven in Western Europe and North America. The Dutch Uighur community is divided, but is also strongly linked to the global Uighur diaspora. There are also links with the Turkish community in the Netherlands, with Turkish language and culture being very similar to those of the Uighurs. The current Uighur community in the Netherlands also has a growing second generation.<sup>3</sup>

The changes in Chinese migration flows are also clear from research carried out in 2011 by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) on Chinese people in the Netherlands. For technical reasons, this study did not include the Chinese groups from Indonesia, Suriname, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore. However, the CBS report estimated these groups to be a total of between 15,000 and 25,000 people.

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<sup>2</sup> The information for these first four paragraphs of this chapter is derived from Pieke's previous publications on the development of Chinese migration in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe, see Frank N. Pieke, *De positie van de Chinezen in Nederland* (The position of the Chinese in the Netherlands) (Leiden: Sinological Institute, 1988); Frank N. Pieke and Gregor Benton, eds, *The Chinese in Europe*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998; Frank N. Pieke, Pál Nyíri, Mette Thunø and Antonella Ceccagno, *Transnational Chinese: Fujianese Migrants in Europe*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to our interviews, we also derive this information about the Uighurs in part from the research in progress being carried out by Elke Spiessens, a PhD candidate at Leiden University and Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster.

On January 1, 2011, 51,000 first-generation Chinese immigrants from the PRC, Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan were reported to be living in the Netherlands. The number of second generation Chinese-Dutch people was 28,000. Of the first generation of Chinese immigrants to have settled in the Netherlands in 1990 or earlier, almost three quarters were born in Hong Kong or Guangdong province. Among this first generation of immigrants that came before 1990, just over 60% came from Hong Kong, while just over 20% of them came from Zhejiang (Wenzhou and Qingtian). Only 4% of these immigrants came from “other provinces” (excluding Beijing and Shanghai).<sup>4</sup> Since 2000, the Chinese community has grown rapidly. This is due to both new migrants from the PRC and the growth of the second generation in the Netherlands. This growth meant that by 2011 both the number of new migrants and the second generation had grown to about the same size as the group of pre-2000 migrants.<sup>5</sup>

Although a more recent (2020) study by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics is limited to only people with Chinese nationality, it does provide insight into the composition and professional profile of the students and so-called ‘knowledge migrants’ among the new migrants that have come from the PRC since 2000. In 2019, there were 37,000 people with Chinese nationality living in the Netherlands, or 0.2% of the total Dutch population. The number of Chinese nationals living in the Netherlands has therefore grown sharply in the last 20 years, there being just 8000 people of Chinese nationality living here in 1995. Of those with Chinese nationality, 400 are studying for a PhD, which is about 10% of all the international PhD students in the Netherlands. According to previous research (conducted in 2015) by the Central Planning Bureau, 43% of Chinese PhD students remain in the Netherlands after graduation. In addition, in 2019 there were 4500 Chinese people studying for a BA or MA in the Netherlands. It has been found that 33% of BA students and 40% of MA students remain in the Netherlands after graduation.<sup>6</sup>

The shifts in migration flows to the Netherlands have had fundamental cultural, economic, linguistic, and political consequences. Until the 1990s, the restaurant sector was dominated by Cantonese-speaking Hongkongers. With the arrival of large numbers of new migrants, people coming from Wenzhou and to a lesser extent from Qingtian have taken their place. The national standard language, Mandarin, has taken over from Cantonese as a common language, although there are very few of the migrants for whom this is their mother tongue and it is often only imperfectly mastered. The increasing number of Chinese people from cities and provinces outside of the traditional overseas Chinese regions of origin, and in particular the presence of more and more highly educated Chinese, has further encouraged this transition to Mandarin. The much greater role of Chinese media, social

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<sup>4</sup> Carel Harmsen, *Ruim 51 duizend Chinezen van de eerste generatie in Nederland* (More than 51 thousand first generation Chinese in the Netherlands), The Hague: Central Bureau of Statistics, 28 April 2011, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/achtergrond/2011/17/ruim-51-duizend-chinezen-van-de-eerste-generatie-in-nederland>, read on 22 January 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Linder, Lotte van Oostrom, Frank van der Linden and Carel Harmsen, *Chinezen in Nederland in het eerste decennium van de 21ste eeuw* (Chinese in the Netherlands in the first decade of the 21st century), *Bevolkingstrends*, 2011(4), 22 December 2011, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/achtergrond/2011/51/chinezen-in-nederland-in-het-eerste-decennium-van-de-21ste-eeuw>, p. 28, diagram 1, read on 22 January 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Dennis Cremers, Iryna Rud, Sarah Creemers, “Chinese werknemers en studenten in Nederland “ (Chinese employees and students in the Netherlands). In *Internationaliseringsmonitor China 2020-II*, The Hague: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020, pp. 93-116, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/publicatie/2020/26/internationaliseringsmonitor-2020-tweede-kwartaal-thema-china>, read on 22 January 2022; Iryna Rud, Bram Wouterse and Roel van Elk, *Stay Rates of Foreign PhD Graduates in the Netherlands*. CPB Background Document, The Hague: Central Planning Bureau, 2015, <https://www.cpb.nl/sites/default/files/publicaties/download/cpb-background-document-stay-rates-foreign-phd-graduates-netherlands.pdf>, read on 22 January 2021.

media and the Chinese government among the Chinese in the Netherlands, has also spread the passive command of Mandarin even more.

Changes in the composition of the Chinese population in the Netherlands are not only driven by migration. Because the limits in the growth of traditional Sino-Indian restaurants have long been reached, many Chinese Dutch people from the restaurant sector have sought refuge in related sectors such as snack bars or sushi bars. Since the 1990s, migration from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, and from the former colonies, has only been sporadic. These communities now consist of several generations, with the original migrants often starting to age and their children and grandchildren becoming increasingly prominent. Although members of these second and third generations may still have spent part of their childhood in Asia, they are primarily Dutch. They also generally have little interest in the Chinese restaurant sector. Many of them have a regular job in the Dutch economy, others have started businesses which may sometimes (but certainly not always) be related to China or Chinese people, such as hotels, more expensive restaurants, travel agencies, or in trade with China. Most of these second and third generation people speak only the Chinese mother tongue of their parents (Cantonese, Hakka, Wenzhounese, Fuzhounese). However, some have also learned Mandarin, for example in Chinese schools at weekends or at a Chinese or Dutch university.

## 4. Chinese organisations in the Netherlands

Chinese-Dutch people have set up a large number of organisations, especially since the 1980s. In 1989, there were already 83 such organisations in the Netherlands, and by 1996 this number had risen to 130. Currently, there are likely to be hundreds of organisations run by Chinese-Dutch people in the Netherlands. It is impossible to examine and discuss all of these organisations individually, or even to count them with certainty. We therefore limit ourselves to more general descriptions of different categories of organisations. For each category, we will also give a more specific review of some of the most important organisations, noting that some organisations belong in more than one category. A more extensive list of Chinese organisations in the Netherlands has been attached to this report as Appendix 1.<sup>7</sup>

### 4.1. Organisations aimed at promoting the interests of the Chinese population

In the 1980s, a question under discussion was whether Chinese people should also be included in the Dutch government's recently implemented minority policy. Although they were ultimately not recognised as being one of the target groups of this policy (and therefore there was no national subsidy for Chinese schools, which was the main point of contention), they were given the right to participate in the existing participation structure for minorities and to apply for government subsidies.<sup>8</sup>

A number of organisations were set up to represent the Chinese community in the discussions on minority status and later minority consultation with the Dutch government. The main aim of these organisations was to highlight the interests of Chinese-Dutch people and to be a point of contact for Dutch public authorities. Eventually, this resulted in the establishment of the *Chinese Participation Body* (Inspraakorgaan Chinezen) in 2003. In 2004, this Participation Body was given the right to join the National Minority Consultation, which was dissolved in 2011 with the dismantling of the Dutch government's minorities policy.

The Participation Body no longer functions (although it has never been dissolved). However, a number of organisations set up in the decades before this, to provide representation of Chinese people have survived the abolition of the government's minority policy. The *National Federation of Chinese Organisations in the Netherlands* (LFCON, 全荷兰华人社团联合会) is the most important of these. The LFCON has existed since 1987 as a forum for consultation between the approximately 100 affiliated Chinese organisations. The Federation elects a President for a term of three years, while the leaders of the member associations can all hold the title of Vice-President. However, compared with the situation 20 years ago, much has changed with the LFCON. Since the abolition of minority consultations, LFCON has had relatively little to do with the Dutch government, except in the case of special events that directly affect Chinese people in the Netherlands or Sino-Dutch relations. Instead, the LFCON is much more prominent in Chinese media, government, and party documents, as the main representative organisation of Chinese people in the Netherlands. It also plays a role in receiving Chinese delegations visiting the Netherlands. The LFCON has therefore changed from being a contact point with the Dutch government to being primarily a point of contact between the Chinese government and the Chinese population in the Netherlands. This is also reflected in the composition of the board and the meetings. The role played by Chinese community centres and Hong Kong organisations has diminished, and instead organisations of Chinese people from the PRC, in particular people from Wenzhou and to a lesser extent those from Qingtian, have now become much more

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<sup>7</sup> B.R. Rijkschroef, *Ethnic entrepreneurship: the Chinese hospitality sector in the Netherlands and the United States*. Groningen: PhD Dissertation in Psychological, Pedagogical and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen, 1988, p. 98.

<sup>8</sup> Pieke, 1998; Rijkschroef 1998, chapter 5.

significant within the organisation. This is partly the result of the significant growth in the number of people from the mainland Chinese cities of Wenzhou and Qingtian in the Netherlands. However, this change in the composition of the LFCON reduces the expression of the interests of Hong Kong people and other Cantonese people, Fujianese people, students, knowledge migrants, and especially the second generation. It is an open question whether this is also a conscious choice that has been made by the Chinese government. However, the current makeup of the LFCON means that the PRC government's image of Chinese people in the Netherlands can only be incomplete. On the other hand, it must be stressed that the current president of LFCON is praised by everyone we have spoken to. Not only has he been able to revive the LFCON after major problems under his predecessor, but he is also working hard to connect the many different Chinese groups in the Netherlands.

Another organisation is the *General Chinese Association in the Netherlands* (旅荷华侨总会). This organisation was founded in 1947, making it by far the oldest surviving Chinese organisation in the Netherlands. It was originally an organisation which consisted only of people from Wenzhou and Qingtian. However, in the 1970s and 1980s the Association also admitted Chinese people coming from other regions, including through an association agreement with the Cantonese association *Fayin* (see below). During the minority debate, the Association strongly profiled itself as the representative of all Chinese people in the Netherlands, until this role was taken over by LFCON in the 1990s. Since then, the Wenzhouese dominance of the Association has become stronger again. In 1987 Qingtian Chinese founded their own organisation, partly out of their dissatisfaction with the dominance of people from Wenzhou in the Association. The Association has traditionally had excellent links with the Chinese Embassy and the authorities in the Wenzhou region of mainland China. It regularly comes forward when the Chinese government's positions on issues like Taiwan or the South China Sea are discussed, especially in the media in China or the Chinese media in the Netherlands. In these contexts, it seeks to demonstrate the unbreakable patriotic bond between all Chinese people in the world.

In a number of larger cities in the Netherlands, associations of Chinese-Dutch entrepreneurs represent the interests of Chinese restaurants, travel agencies, shops, import and export traders, hotels and real estate companies. Their main point of contact is the urban municipality, where they draw attention to the interests of their members, for example in the field of regulations and subsidy schemes.

There are a number of organisations that represent a specific part of the Chinese population. These include the *National Federation of Chinese Elderly Associations Chun Pah in the Netherlands* (荷兰松柏联合总会) set up in 1987 and the *National Federation of Chinese Women's Associations* (荷兰华人华侨妇女联合总会) set up in the year 2000. Another such organisation is the *Chinese Youth Association Netherlands* (华裔协商会), which was founded in 1987 and focuses on Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, the *National Federation of Chinese Youth Associations* (荷兰华人青年联合会) dates back to 2006 and mainly targets Chinese students, ex-students and other highly educated Chinese immigrants, although a number of Chinese people raised in the Netherlands are also members. The *Dutch Youth Federation* cooperates with the *European Chinese Youth Federation* (欧洲华侨华人青年联合总会). Also very active is the *Chinese Student Association Erasmus University Rotterdam* (CSA-EUR, not to be confused with the ACSSNL discussed below). This organisation has as its members both second generation Chinese people in the Netherlands and also students from China and other countries.

These associations are mainly concerned with organising or coordinating activities (lectures, symposia, performances, birthday celebrations, outings, events, parties) and providing information to, or helping, their different target groups. The elderly association and the women's association are decentralised and their activities are mainly organised by their affiliated regional branches. Hong Kong Chinese and second-generation Chinese are strongly represented in these associations.

The *Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the Netherlands* (ACSSNL, 中国留荷学生学者联合会) has branches in a total of 16 cities in the Netherlands, as well as a separate branch for students who have come to study in the Netherlands with a Chinese government grant from the China Scholarship Council (CSC). The ACSSNL presents itself as the only Chinese student organisation that is supported by the Chinese Embassy. The aim of the association is to represent the interests of Chinese students, as well as to promote their integration into Dutch society and exchange with Dutch and other foreign students. Membership is not mandatory, even for those students with a Chinese government grant.

#### 4.2. *Organisations operating as extensions of the Chinese Government or Communist Party*

The Netherlands has a number of organisations set up by the Chinese government and Communist Party, with the aim of representing these two bodies' interests and positions. These organisations usually focus primarily on native Dutch people or Dutch institutions and companies, but their task also often means that they are in contact with Chinese or Chinese Dutch people residing in the Netherlands.

The most famous of these organisations are undoubtedly the *Confucius Institutes*, which are located in Groningen (with a separate department in Amsterdam) and Maastricht. There was also a Confucius Institute in Leiden which was closed in 2019. Confucius Institutes are directly controlled by the Chinese government through the Ministry of Education and the headquarters of the Confucius Institutes in Beijing. LeidenAsiaCentre researchers Ingrid d'Hooghe and Brigitte Dekker carried out an extensive study on this subject for the Clingendael Institute. They concluded that "no evidence has been found of influence in secondary schools working with the two Confucius Institutes in the Netherlands"<sup>9</sup>. The influence that the Confucius Institutes have on the Chinese population also seems to be small, especially since the primary purpose of these institutes is to spread Chinese culture and language among non-Chinese foreigners. Chinese schools in the Netherlands have their own connections with the Chinese government without involving the Confucius Institutes (see below).

The same can be said of the *Chinese Cultural Center* (中国文化中心) in The Hague. This was opened in 2016 under an agreement between the Netherlands and China signed during the Chinese president Xi Jinping's state visit to the Netherlands in 2014. The Center was set up by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Beijing and the *Jiangsu Provincial Economic and Trade Office* located in Tilburg. The Jiangsu office aims to promote business ties between the Chinese mainland province and the Netherlands, and to support Chinese companies in the Netherlands. The Dutch province of North Brabant is important for China because it is one of the endpoints (in Tilburg) of the Belt-and-Road train network and because of the large number of high-tech companies that are located in the Eindhoven region.

The *China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification* (中国和平统一促进会) was set up in Beijing in 1988. The current president of the Council is Wang Yang (汪洋), member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party and chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (中国人民政治协商会议). The latter is one of the main instruments of the CCP's United Front (see below). The council's aim is to unite overseas Chinese people behind the goal of protecting the unity of the nation. This goal translates primarily into an attempt to get Chinese people abroad behind the official foreign policy positions of the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party, in particular with regard to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, the South China Sea, Tibet, Xinjiang and other points of contention that touch on China's sovereignty claims. The Dutch branch of the Council was set up in 2000 after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) came to power in Taiwan and overseas Chinese leaders in the Netherlands wanted to express

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<sup>9</sup> Ingrid d'Hooghe and Brigitte Dekker, *China's invloed op onderwijs in Nederland: een verkenning* (China's influence on education in the Netherlands: an exploration), The Hague: Clingendael (2020), p. 1. [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Rapport\\_politieke\\_beïnvloeding\\_in\\_het\\_onderwijs\\_juni\\_2020.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Rapport_politieke_beïnvloeding_in_het_onderwijs_juni_2020.pdf), read on 21 January 2021.

their concern about this. There are about 100 members, mostly presidents of Chinese organisations in the Netherlands. Both the first and the current (third) President-in-Office of the Council have roots in Taiwan, something which serves to emphasise the pan-Chinese character of the Council. The Reunification Council is particularly active in making statements in the Chinese media in the Netherlands. Where it deems this appropriate, the Council also lodges objections with the Dutch Government or at third-country embassies in The Hague. The Council has no formal ties with the Chinese Embassy. Although the Council is a section of the Reunification Council in Beijing, it states that the activities which it carries out in the Netherlands are decided solely on the basis of discussions and initiatives by its members in the Netherlands.

#### 4.3. *Organisations of communities from a specific region of origin*

It is estimated that there are a few dozen organisations made up of Chinese people coming from certain areas of China. It is typical of overseas Chinese communities that such organisations are not mutually exclusive. One or more organisations for smaller areas can exist alongside an organisation for the larger area of which these smaller areas are a part of. In setting up new organisations, personal factors, such as rivalry and disagreement, sometimes play a major role. For example, the Netherlands not only has an organisation for the Wenzhou region (*Vereniging van Wenzhou Chinezen in Nederland* 荷兰温州同乡会), but also for the regions of Wencheng (*Vereniging Wencheng Nederland* 荷兰文成同乡会) and Rui'an (*Vereniging van Chinezen Rui-an in Nederland* 荷兰瑞安教育基金会), both of which are part of Wenzhou.

These organisations serve a number of different purposes. They organise celebrations during Chinese holidays such as the Lunar New Year, and also organise fundraisers for charities as well as other social and cultural activities for members. In addition, these organisations act as a representation and contact point for other Chinese organisations in the Netherlands and the government in the area of origin. Former and current presidents or board members participate in meetings or celebrations at the Chinese Embassy, sit on the board of the LFCON, receive delegations from China and are the point of contact for the Office of Overseas Affairs and the Overseas Chinese Federation in their territory of origin. Thirdly, these organisations for people from particular regions are often part of a European or even global network of organisations in other countries that have Chinese people from the same region. These organisations are therefore hubs in a transnational diaspora in which the government of the region where the members came from and overseas communities are linked.

We discuss a number of these organisations below.

The aforementioned *General Chinese Association in the Netherlands*, together with the *Fa Yin Chinese Association in the Netherlands* (旅荷华人联谊会), were set up before the large migrant flows from the PRC started in the late 1970s. Despite their “general” names, these organisations mainly or exclusively unite Chinese Dutch people from a certain province: Zhejiang in the case of the General Association, and Guangdong for Fayin. In the current landscape of a rich range of functional and region-based organisations, they no longer fit so well, while their role as representing Chinese people in Dutch society has been taken over by the LFCON. The General Association now acts as an organisation for Chinese people originating from Wenzhou (including Wencheng and Rui'an) and still is a link with the Chinese authorities in Wenzhou. Fayin's Chinese school started in 1979. The school has now separated from the association and is run by younger, often Dutch-born Chinese. Fayin itself has only a small number of older members and hardly any money left for activities.

Founded in 1983, the *Qingtian Netherlands Foundation* (荷兰青同乡会) represents the oldest and largest group of Chinese people in the Netherlands. It is probably the most active of the organisations representing Chinese people coming from a particular region in the Netherlands. The association has enabled people from Qingtian to present themselves independently of the traditionally dominant people from Wenzhou, both within the group of Chinese from Zhejiang Province and within the Chinese-Dutch population as a whole.

Another of these organisations is the *Guangdong Federation Netherlands* (荷兰广东总会). Its members are organisations from the large Cantonese-speaking Chinese population, which consists of very different communities of Hongkongers, Chinese from what is now Shenzhen, as well as Cantonese people from Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore). The Hakka-speaking Suriname Chinese are often also involved in the Cantonese community, of which quite a few are actually Hakkas who also speak Cantonese well. The Hong Kong-Chinese group in particular has quite a number of organisations. These are often organised on the basis of village of origin or kinship group. There is also a more general *Hong Kong New Territories Group* (HKNTG) with ties to the Hong Kong Government Trade Office in Brussels.

The Cantonese population as a whole remains mainly oriented towards Hong Kong rather than the People's Republic of China (PRC). During a visit to the Netherlands in 2012, a delegation from the government of mainland China's Guangdong province suggested that something had to be done about the Cantonese people in the Netherlands (i.e. the Hongkongers)'s lack of interest in Chinese politics. The head of the delegation suggested setting up a representative federation of all Cantonese organisations in the Netherlands to act as a point of contact for the Guangdong authorities. This happened in June 2012. A pre-existing Guangdong Federation was re-established, after which a number of Hong Kong organisations that were members of it promptly quit. It was argued that the newly established federation should be instrumental in connecting Cantonese associations in the Netherlands with the organisations of other Chinese communities as well as promoting the integration of Cantonese people into Dutch domestic politics and society.<sup>10</sup> There are currently about 30 that represent Cantonese people, mainly those from Hong Kong. Despite the initiative by the Guangdong authorities to establish a new Federation, the integration of the Cantonese/Hong Kong community into the organisational structure of the Chinese community in the Netherlands is still difficult. This does not necessarily have to do with these groups unwillingness to fit into a structure defined by the PRC. As with the people from Qingtian (and perhaps also the Fujianese), a distrust and friction with the dominant people from Wenzhou seems to be more important.

#### 4.4. Organisations of Chinese faith communities

Chinese Protestant-Christian churches have been active in the Netherlands for many decades. This could be described as a form of "reverse mission" in Western countries, although this missionary work focuses exclusively on the Chinese people living here. The first of these were churches from Hong Kong and Taiwan, which were established in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the original centres of the Chinese people in the Netherlands, in the 1950s and 1960s. With the arrival of ever larger numbers of Chinese people from mainland China, the number of Protestant churches has grown greatly, with new churches often founded by Chinese missionaries, while more recently also some churches being founded by people from the Netherlands as well. These churches act as a cornerstone of the local community for many Chinese people in the Netherlands. They appeal to generally higher educated Chinese, but Chinese Dutch people from the traditional overseas communities have also found their way to them.

Chinese temples in the Netherlands are a more recent phenomenon. These are often part of global networks of religious sects from Taiwan or Hong Kong. Although they usually portray themselves as Buddhists abroad, some of these sects, such as the *Yiguandao*, are more "syncretic", being a mixture of Buddhist, Taoist and sometimes Christian or other religious elements. Their number is growing and

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<sup>10</sup> "荷兰广东总会首访广东 省侨办主任提四点希望" (The Dutch Guangdong Association visits Guangdong for the first time, the director of the Provincial Office for Overseas Chinese Affairs gives hope on four points), 人民网 (People's Daily Network) 31 October 2012, <http://world.people.com.cn/GB/n/2012/1031/c157278-19453245.html>, read on 13 January 2021. Different sources of information contradict each other on the issue of whether there was already a Cantonese federation before 2012 that was established with the direct approval of the Guangdong authorities, or that the Federation was a completely new organisation.

the temples are also becoming increasingly popular, partly because they are seen by at least some of the Chinese people in the Netherlands as natively Chinese, in contrast with the churches. Temples in the Netherlands generally belong to faith communities that are recognised by the government in China, meaning that they can operate openly and with the support of prominent Dutch Chinese people. Examples are the *Longquan temple* in Utrecht and the *He Hua temple* in Amsterdam. Like the churches, the Chinese temples in the Netherlands nevertheless maintain an appropriate distance from the Chinese Embassy. In some cases, their connection with a parent organisation in Taiwan or Hong Kong is of course also a complicating factor.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.5. Organisations focused on a specific political goal in China

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has many critics, a number of which are also represented in the Netherlands. This includes organisations like the religious sect *Falun Gong* (法轮功), organisations of Uighurs and Tibetans and their Dutch sympathisers (e.g. *Free Uyghur, Tibet Support Group*), organisations that draw attention to the situation in Hong Kong (e.g. *NL4HK*), and even a section of the *China Democratic Party* (中国民主党) that was set up and banned in 1998. Many of these organisations are part of an international network of similar organisations. As far as we know, the Netherlands has no organisations of Chinese dissidents. Due to the deep divisions between them on fundamental issues, such as the status of Hong Kong, Taiwan or Chinese minorities, there have not been many joint activities between these organisations. However, there has been a greater alignment between them in recent years in response to the increasingly harsh stance of the Chinese authorities on a wide range of issues. This has led, for example, to joint demonstrations by a number of different organisations.

#### 4.6. Organisations for Chinese social work

In the 1980s, Chinese centres were established in major cities in the Netherlands that mirrored the then recently established Dutch model of social work for minorities. The most famous were *Wa Lai* (华励) in Amsterdam, the *Chinese Bridge* in The Hague and the *Foundation for Chinese Culture, Recreation and Social Work* (CCRM, later *Wah Fook Wui* 华福会) in Rotterdam. This last organisation was active nationwide and also published a biweekly newspaper in Dutch and Chinese but is no longer active. At the time when these centres were established, the Chinese population in the Netherlands had become more complex. In addition to recent, relatively young, immigrants, there were more children, elderly, unemployed, and disabled. The aim of the centres was to help Chinese people in their city or region with problems that could no longer be fully solved within the Chinese community itself. Soon these centres made contact with the municipal and national authorities, seeking advice and financial support. In addition to social work, they were also committed to special homes for Chinese elderly people and schools for additional education in the Chinese language.

These centres have barely been active in the last ten years. Following the end of the minority policy, national and municipal subsidies were discontinued. Only the *Chinese Bridge* is still funded by the municipality of The Hague, but nevertheless, due to financial difficulties, it is increasingly acting as a generally accessible centre and community centre. The Hague municipality attaches great importance to ties with China and the role of the city as the centre of the Chinese community in the Netherlands,

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<sup>11</sup> The Yiguandao (which has a range of organisations spread across the Netherlands) and the Foguanshan (to which the He Hua temple in Amsterdam belongs) both have their headquarters in Taiwan. The Yiguandao is prohibited in China, while Foguanshan is recognised as a Buddhist cult with the support of Xi Jinping himself. See Nikolas Broy, Jens Reinke, Philip Clart, *Migrating Buddhas and Global Confucianism: The Transnational Space-Making of Taiwanese Religious Organisations*. Working paper series of SFB 1199 University of Leipzig No. 8; Iain Johnson, "Is a Buddhist Group Changing China? Or Is China Changing It?". *New York Times* 24 June 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/24/world/asia/china-buddhism-fo-guang-shan.html>, read on 30 January 2021.

a role that has been built up through great commitment in the last twenty years. The *Chinese Bridge* is an important part of this.

#### 4.7. Chinese educational organisations

With the growth of the second generation since the 1980s, numerous extracurricular Chinese classes have been set up in the Netherlands. In these classes, Chinese children (and often a number of Dutch children) are usually taught Chinese on Saturdays. Chinese churches and temples, social work centres, and other Chinese organisations, took the initiative to start these classes. Some of these schools have been subsidized by the local municipality or have been allowed to use classrooms in a school in the city or region.

Today, most schools operate independently of the Chinese associations or churches which originally set them up. Unlike in the 1980s, there are now very few classes in Cantonese (in The Hague and Amsterdam), and almost all of the classes now teach Mandarin. Until 2005, Chinese schools were able to use textbooks developed using Dutch government subsidies. However, the abolition of the minority policy put an end to this. The book in question costs 25 euros, which is seen as far too expensive for the classes to use without a subsidy. As a result, now only textbooks from China are used, with the schools only having to pay transport costs of about one euro per copy. Only Cantonese classes still use their own Cantonese teaching materials developed in the 1990s.

The cooperation between Chinese schools in the Netherlands takes place through the *Foundation of Chinese Education in the Netherlands* (Stichting Chinese Onderwijs Nederland, 荷兰中文教育协会). This Foundation in turn cooperates with the aforementioned *Office for Overseas Chinese Affairs* (Qiaoban) in Beijing, which also provides Chinese textbooks via the Qiaoban attaché to the Chinese Embassy in The Hague. Where appropriate, the Foundation receives delegations from Qiaoban who are travelling through Europe. The Foundation has also worked with the Confucius Institute in Leiden to provide training for teachers at Chinese schools.

The *Federation of Chinese Education in the Netherlands* (FCEN, 荷兰中文教育基金会) was founded in 2013 by a number of Cantonese people in The Hague. The organisation originated in a prominent Chinese church in the Netherlands (CEMI, Christian Evangelical Mission International). This church was also the founder of the CCRM Foundation and the Chinese School in The Hague in the 1980s. FCEN gives prizes to Chinese students, but unfortunately many schools in the Netherlands do not respond to requests to nominate candidates for these prizes. Quite coincidentally, in Chinese the name of the FCEN is practically identical to the Chinese International Education Foundation (中国国际中文教育基金会), which was founded in Beijing in 2020 and manages the Confucius Institutes. However, the FCEN only has relations with the provincial government in Guangdong, has little contact with the Chinese Embassy, and is not a member of the LFCON.

#### 4.8. Organisations for professional groups, culture, sport, and public holidays

Many dozens of regional and national organisations are engaged in promoting activities connected to China such as the Chinese language, Chinese literature, acupuncture, traditional medicine, calligraphy, painting, music, and martial arts. Some of these groups are run on a purely voluntary basis. Others operate entirely or partly commercially, including groups such as Caihong (彩虹) in Brabant and the allegedly very successful *Shenzhou Open University* (神州中医药大学) for traditional Chinese medicine in Amsterdam. In the 1980s, the CCRM established a *Chinese Sports Federation in the Netherlands* (全荷华人联合体育运动总会) which is still active today.

More politically charged is the *Foundation for Chinese Cultural Events Netherlands* (CCEN, 荷兰中国文化基金会) which celebrates the Chinese New Year with a big event in The Hague's City Hall. This celebration is an annual showcase of the warm and close ties between the Netherlands and China. It is organised by the Chinese Embassy, the Municipality of The Hague, and the Netherlands-China

Friendship Association. Numerous Chinese organisations, media, and individuals are involved in the celebration as organisers or donors.

One professional organisation is the *Association of Chinese Scientists and Engineers* (荷兰华人学者与工程师协会). This was founded in 1997 by graduates who had found work in the Netherlands. The aim of the Association is to help members with their careers through meetings and conferences such as the Innovation Forum that is held in collaboration with the Rotterdam School of Management. The Association also aims to help members in their personal lives, for example through speed dating sessions. The Association has no close ties with the Chinese Embassy and is only occasionally asked to help with a visit by a delegation from China. Delegations of the Association do travel regularly to China, because members are interested in business opportunities or career opportunities in China. However, the Association is not, or at least no longer, involved in the Chinese government's program to recruit "talents" from outside of China. The Association is a member of the *Federation of Chinese Professional Associations in Europe* (荷兰华人学者与工程师协会) and even organised the Federation's 12th forum in Delft in 2020.

The *Association of Chinese-Asian Hospitality Entrepreneurs* (中饮公会) is an industry association for Chinese hospitality entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. It represents the interests of Chinese hospitality entrepreneurs by, for example, advocating for the admission of specialised Chinese chefs. During the corona crisis, it has called for more attention to be given to the position of the hospitality industry. For its members, the Association organises cooking classes or wine tours, and also provides mediation and discounts for catering-related business facilities.

In this overview of organisations for Chinese professionals in the Netherlands, two organisations for business people should also be mentioned. The *Dragon Business Club* (荷兰华人商业人才协会) was founded about ten years ago by second and third generation Chinese-Dutch entrepreneurs and professionals doing business related to China. The Club merged with the *Netherlands China Business Council* (NCBC) in 2020 and is therefore no longer an organisation that is specifically for Chinese Dutch people.

Another business organisation is the *Dutch Chinese Young Entrepreneurs Foundation* (DCYE, 荷兰华人青年企业家). This Foundation is an organisation consisting of younger entrepreneurs and professionals with a Chinese background and Dutch companies or entrepreneurs who are doing business with Asia. DCYE serves as a platform for business contacts and says it provides access to an exclusive international network of strategic alliances in more than 70 countries.

## 5. Chinese media

There is a relatively large number of Chinese-language media in the Netherlands. Because this is potentially a very large field of research, we have limited ourselves to examining media produced in the Netherlands for or by the Chinese community and the degree of influence of the Chinese authorities over this production.

We do not provide an overview of the many Chinese media in China itself that are focused on a foreign (Chinese-speaking) audience. Chinese correspondents and news agencies stationed in the Netherlands are also not considered here, as they are focused on news gathering for coverage in China.

As with media in other languages, the different types of media are increasingly overlapping. Newspapers, radio, and television stations often have their own websites and accounts on multiple social media platforms. The same applies to companies, governments and institutions, including platforms for making information commercially or publicly accessible. Social media such as WeChat (微信, see Appendix 2 of this report) are increasingly becoming the main gateway to all kinds of media, services, governments, and companies.

Below we briefly discuss the main media produced in the Netherlands for or by the Chinese community.

### 5.1. *United Times* 荷兰联合时报

The United Times was founded in 2010 when the current owner and editor-in-chief took over the financially troubled Chinese newspaper *Tangrenjie* (唐人街) in Rotterdam. The newspaper reports on domestic news from the Netherlands and events among the overseas Chinese in the Netherlands and elsewhere, as well as international news and news from China. In the latter two cases, the choices about what is covered and the reporting itself are tailored to the needs of Chinese communities in the Netherlands. The newspaper's revenue depends exclusively from advertisements. The newspaper is distributed once every three weeks in a printed edition of 30,000 copies via restaurants, shops, and markets. It is also sent via postal services to addresses in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. In addition, there is also a digital edition of the newspaper.

The newspaper mainly derives its content from Dutch media (in particular NOS, Telegraaf, AD), from which relevant news is translated for the Chinese speaking audiences. International news and news from China are mainly obtained from the China News Service (CNS, 中国新闻社, see also Chapter 6 of this report) of the State Council Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, whose news gathering is more tailored towards social issues relevant to ordinary Chinese. The newspaper retrieves relatively little content from the official Xinhua news agency, whose news is highly politicised and which therefore is not very relevant to Chinese communities in the Netherlands. The collaboration with CNS works both ways. CNS gives news to them for free, in exchange for news about the Netherlands provided to them by the United Times.

### 5.2. *China Times* 中荷商报

The China Times is one of the best-known Chinese-language newspapers currently available in the Netherlands. It is a newspaper that primarily focuses on business reporting, which is also evident from the Chinese name (literally "China-Netherlands Business Paper"). The newspaper was founded in 2003 by a member of the Chinese community who grew up in the Netherlands. There are currently around 5000 subscribers who receive the newspaper delivered to their homes. In addition, there are 200 pick-up points in places such as shops and hairdressers, especially in cities with large Chinese communities. The China Times is written entirely in (traditional) Chinese. Thanks in part to the mediation of the Chinese Embassy, the China Times is also offered on flights to and from China by the airlines China Southern and KLM, and previously Xiamen Air. The newspaper focuses on first-

generation members of the Chinese diasporic community, and also increasingly on Chinese expats living in the Netherlands. Because the newspaper is written in Chinese, the second-generation of the community is not a target group. The newspaper mainly features news from other, mostly Dutch news sources. These posts are rewritten by the editors in Chinese. It covers both Dutch news and news about China, with a focus on business topics that are considered interesting. There is also an agreement with the Netherlands office of the official Chinese news agency Xinhua, which allows China Times to make use of this agency's news reports for a fee.

### 5.3. *HollandOne.com* 荷兰一网

HollandOne is a Chinese-language online newspaper that is registered in China. The owner and editor-in-chief has worked in the media sectors in China and the Netherlands for many years. He founded HollandOne in 2010. For a number of years he also published a Dutch edition that mainly focused on the second generation members of the Chinese diasporic community in the Netherlands. However, this was stopped in 2020 due to lack of success. HollandOne retrieves a large part of its content from Dutch media (NOS, RTL, Telegraaf, AD). This is because its main goal is to inform its readers about what is going on in the Netherlands. In addition, the editor-in-chief also gathers news about things that concern Chinese people in the Netherlands.

The expenses for the newspaper are covered by advertising revenue. The reporting of the newspaper takes into account political sensitivities on certain topics such as Xinjiang and Tibet. The newspaper follows reports in China and the Chinese position expressed by the Chinese Embassy during meetings for the Dutch press.

### 5.4. *CRTV (Chinese Radio and Television)* 城市之声

CRTV focuses on Chinese immigrants from mainland China and Hong Kong, students from China, as well as Dutch people interested in Chinese culture. Programs are broadcast in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Dutch.

CRTV was founded in 1996 by Chinese graduates, and was called Chinese Radio Amsterdam (CRA) at the time. Its aim is to connect Chinese and Western culture and society through various media channels. CRTV is an organisation that makes radio and television for the Chinese community living in the Netherlands. CRTV functions as a communication platform between different generations of Chinese and between the Chinese community and Dutch society. The main purpose of the radio broadcasts in Chinese is to inform the Chinese community about social, cultural, and political issues.

### 5.5. *GoGoDutch.com* 荷乐网

GoGoDutch is a Chinese-language website based in Rotterdam, as well as an official WeChat account and mobile app that offer news and practical information about the Netherlands to Chinese people who live, or want to live, in the Netherlands. The company has been around since 2001 and was founded by two former Chinese students at the time, because they encountered a lack of information that hindered their daily lives in the Netherlands. Within Chinese-language new media in the Netherlands, GoGoDutch is an important player.

GoGoDutch offers practical information about the labour market, education, and the housing market in the Netherlands. Much of the content consists of personal stories written by Chinese students. It also collects news from other Chinese-language platforms about the Netherlands and selections of news articles translated from Dutch media appear. The homepage contains information about restaurants and tourist attractions in the Netherlands that does not appear to be updated very regularly.

Companies can advertise on the website/app for a fee. Dutch companies and universities, for example, can reach a Chinese audience in this way. In addition, GoGoDutch has also started selling Western products to customers in China.<sup>12</sup>

#### 5.6. Asian News 华侨新天地

Asian News has been around since 1992. It claims to be the largest Chinese newspaper in the Netherlands with a circulation of 50,000 that also includes some readers in parts of Germany and Belgium. A new edition is produced every three weeks. The newspaper is distributed free of charge through Chinese companies and institutions, such as restaurants, shops, travel agencies, associations, and the Chinese Embassy. In addition, it is sent free of charge on request to companies and to individuals who have subscribed to this service.

The newspaper contains news that is interesting for the Chinese community in the Netherlands, helping this community to stay informed about such things as developments in the legal sphere, finance, Chinese festivals and associations, and more general news. For its news gathering, Asian News collaborates with Chinese news organisations such as Xinhua, China News Service, and Xinmin Evening News. There is a special section for announcements and advertisements from the Chinese community, for example about the activities of different associations. The newspaper also has a website where articles are posted and where the newspaper can be read digitally. This website also features a modest “marketplace”. Asian News is also present on Chinese-language social media (i.e. WeChat and Weibo) and non-Chinese social media (i.e. Facebook and Twitter).

By also publishing in Dutch, the newspaper tries to reach out to younger members of the Chinese community in the Netherlands (who often do not read Chinese) and to Western entrepreneurs who want to do business with China. The newspaper says it wants to be a platform for different generations of the Chinese community, for different ethnic groups, and for business relations.

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<sup>12</sup> Garrie Van Pinxteren and Frank N. Pieke, *Nederland door Chinese ogen: van groepstoerist tot Internetjournalist* (The Netherlands through Chinese eyes: from group tourist to Internet journalist), Amsterdam: Balans, 2017, pp. 85-86.

## 6. Overseas Chinese and the Chinese government

Overseas Chinese have been targets of government policy in China for many centuries. Sometimes they have been seen as traitors or capitalist enemies and a threat to the essence of the Chinese people. However, they have also been portrayed as China's spearhead abroad, for example in attempts to export the Communist revolution during the heyday of the Cultural Revolution. More often, the overseas Chinese have simply been seen as useful: as investors, as a reservoir of highly educated "talents" and advanced Western knowledge, and as a point of contact and source of information about the cultures, politics, and societies of other countries. Overseas Chinese are also important to China because in the regions of China from which they originate (侨乡) many people have returned from migration (归侨) or depend on family or relatives abroad (侨眷). Others in those areas of origin hope or expect to go abroad, sometimes temporarily but often for a longer period of time. Local authorities in these areas are often directly or indirectly involved in migration and the communities of migrants abroad.

All these elements are now reflected in the institutions and policies for overseas Chinese people, or those which fall under the label of pursuing what is called "overseas Chinese work" (侨务工作).<sup>13</sup> Within the Chinese state and the Chinese Communist Party there are a number of different institutions present at each level of the administrative structure (this levels are centre 中央, province 省, prefecture 地区, region/district 县/区, municipality 乡/镇). Until 2020, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (侨务办公室) of the State Council (Cabinet) played the most important role in the implementation of the overseas Chinese policy. In addition, the Office of Taiwanese Affairs (台湾事务办公室) often has an input, as overseas Chinese communities are an important playing field in the rivalry between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan. Specific aspects of overseas Chinese policy are also the responsibility of various ministries (Foreign Affairs, Education, Trade, Public Security, Labour and Social Affairs) or Party departments (Organisation, Propaganda).

### 6.1. The United Front and the Overseas Chinese

However, it is not the government but the CCP that plays the most important role, both in the formulation of policy and increasingly in its implementation. Central to this is the Department for United Front Work (统一战线工作部), called the United Front (统战部). This is more generally responsible for the leading role of the Party in its relations with non-communist but allied social and political forces in Chinese society. The groups which the United Front is responsible for dealing with therefore include private business, religions, minorities, the eight so-called "democratic parties" (民主党派), non-partisan intellectuals, Taiwan, Hong, and Macau, Tibet, Xinjiang, and also overseas Chinese people.

The CCP Central Committee has very recently adopted new regulations for the United Front, specifying the categories of people that the organisation is responsible for and its tasks. As in the previous regulations, which were issued in 2015, as well as the targets mentioned above, United Front work is also considered to involve "people studying abroad or returning from study abroad" (出国和归国留学人员) and "other people in need of contact and unity" (其他需要联系和团结的人员).

So, in principle, anyone who might be able to engage in heterodox activities can become a target of United Front work. This means that students studying abroad are no longer excluded from the scope

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<sup>13</sup> There is quite a bit of literature on policy towards the overseas Chinese. Below we base our information mainly on Elena Barabantseva, *Overseas Chinese, Ethnic Minorities, and Nationalism: De-Centering China*, London: Routledge, 2010 In Mette Thunø, "Reaching Out and Incorporating Chinese Overseas: The Trans-territorial Scope of the PRC by the End of the 20th Century", *China Quarterly* 168: 910-929 (2001).

of United Front work. The United Front is thus rapidly developing from a somewhat antiquarian mechanism that aimed to broaden the CCP's support base into a cornerstone of the Party's grip on internal and external security and of the monitoring (and possibly enforcement) of political orthodoxy at home and abroad. This steady expansion of the United Front's responsibilities and administrative scope has already been extensively documented in a number of think tank reports published in 2020, causing rising reservations and suspicions abroad.<sup>14</sup>

Another indication that the United Front is being further strengthened is Article 7 of the recently published 2021 regulations. This article mentions for the first time a "leading group for united front work" (统一战线工作领导小组) at the central level, set up to further shape the Politburo leadership of the United Front Department. In the (provisional) regulations that were published in 2015, such leading groups were only made mandatory at a non-central level. Leading groups or committees are a mechanism that is being increasingly used by the CCP to coordinate the tasks of ministries and departments in a given area and to strengthen the central leadership's grip on the administration.<sup>15</sup>

The most important difference between the regulations announced in 2015 and in 2021 – and a difference that is important for this report – is a new chapter (Chapter 10) dedicated to the overseas Chinese. This chapter is worth quoting in more detail:

The main tasks of the overseas United Front include: strengthening ideological and political leadership, increasing love for the motherland and understanding and recognition of the Chinese Communist Party and socialism with Chinese characteristics by overseas Chinese and students studying abroad; passing on and disseminating the excellent Chinese culture, encouraging cultural exchanges between China and abroad; encouraging overseas Chinese to participate in China's reform and opening up and socialist modernization, and integrating them into the great cause of national rejuvenation; curbing separatist forces such as "Taiwan's independence" and protecting the country's core interests; (...) The main tasks of Overseas Chinese Affairs Office are: strengthening work on the theme of cohesion and sharing the Chinese dream among representatives of overseas Chinese people, returned overseas Chinese people

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<sup>14</sup> Alex Joske, *The Party Speaks for You: Foreign Interference and the Chinese Communist Party's United Front System*, Canberra: Australian Strategic Policy Institute, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/party-speaks-you>, Read at 10 January 2021; Ryan Fedasiuk, *Putting Money in the Party's Mouth: How China Mobilizes Funding for United Front Work*, China Brief 20(16), 2020, <https://jamestown.org/program/putting-money-in-the-partys-mouth-how-china-mobilizes-funding-for-united-front-work/>, read on 10 January 2021. In China, of course, people are also very aware of these reports and the suspicions and accusations they contain. The recent article by Chen Yiping 陈奕平, Guan Yijia 关亦佳 and Yin Zhaoyi 尹昭伊 with the title "The influence of the new 'China threat theory' on the work and countermeasures of the overseas United Front" (新"中国威胁论"对海外统战工作的影响及对策, 统一战线学研究 (Verenigd Front Onderzoek) 2020(6): 4-13) suggests the following countermeasures: "organizing academic forces to counter false reports, encouraging Chinese leaders and politicians from abroad to express their opinions, allowing the Chinese media to play their full role, as well as proving that Chinese policy is not unique to China". Ironically, it is regrettable for the authors of this article that most of these countermeasures will only confirm the suspicions.

<sup>15</sup> The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued the Regulations on the Work of the United Front of the Communist Party of China (The Central Committee issues regulations for the joint front work of the Chinese Communist Party) on 21 December 2020, <http://www.zyztb.gov.cn/tzyw/349746.jhtml>, read on 9 January 2021. The full Article 7 reads as follows: "The Party Central Committee has set up a leading working group. The United Front's Central Leading Group for Work, headed by the Politburo and the Standing Committee of the Central Committee, conducts research, deployment, coordination, guidance and supervision on the study and implementation of the main theories, policies and laws and regulations of the Party's Central Committee on the Unity Front. It monitors and examines the main issues of the United Front and makes proposals to the Party's Central Committee."

and overseas Chinese people's relatives (...); coordination of domestic and foreign overseas Chinese affairs.

In the ways mentioned above, overseas Chinese people are seen as an extension of the Chinese nation, with the CCP being presented as the embodiment of that nation. There is a blurring of the gap between Chinese people in China and abroad. It is only at the end of this new chapter in the regulations that the older and more conventional ideas about integration and contribution to the country are mentioned.

Yet the United Front, like most party bodies, still does relatively little itself. Instead it works mainly through the management and coordination of a number of more specialised institutions within government, politics, and society. In the case of the overseas Chinese, the most important of these are the already mentioned Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, the Overseas Chinese Federation (归国华侨联合会, 侨联), the Zhigong Party (致公党),<sup>16</sup> and the overseas Chinese committees of the People's Congress (parliament, 人民代表大会) and the Consultative People's Conference (a kind of senate, 人民政治协商会议). The China News Service (CNS, 中国新闻社) of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office is also the responsibility of the United Front. This news agency provides reporting and news gathering specifically aimed at overseas Chinese and Chinese media abroad. The United Front also directs the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification (中国和平统一促进会).

Of these institutions the Overseas Chinese Federation is of great and increasing importance. Formally, the Federation was only responsible for the affairs of overseas Chinese people who had returned to China. However, for a number of years the Federation has played an increasingly important role in relations with the overseas Chinese communities abroad. In 2020, the government's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office was fully absorbed by the United Front of the Party and transferred its functions to the Federation. This acquisition has taken place at every level of the administrative hierarchy. The difference and division of tasks in overseas Chinese work between the government and the Party and between the interior and abroad has increasingly disappeared. However, this should not be seen as a power grab by the United Front specifically, but as a more general takeover of executive responsibilities in many policy areas by the Party at the expense of the government.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that overseas Chinese people are the responsibility of the United Front is not coincidental, but a consequence of the ambiguity that has surrounded the status of overseas Chinese people since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. As mentioned in the introduction to this report, the People's Republic of China distinguishes between Huaqiao (华侨) and Huaren (华人). The former are Chinese citizens living abroad and the latter are foreign citizens with Chinese roots (former Chinese citizens and their descendants). All Chinese abroad are encouraged to take on the citizenship of the country where they live and integrate into society. However, regardless of their nationality, both Huaqiao and Huaren are family and relatives who remain inseparable from the homeland.

Until a few years ago, this was mainly a convenient way to maximise the benefits of ties with overseas Chinese people and to avoid the responsibilities and risks. It was also a way to protect the overseas Chinese people themselves, who are often suspected of Chinese or Communist sympathies, especially in Southeast Asia. The main goal was to use the overseas Chinese for the development of China and to involve them as little as possible in China's foreign policy.

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<sup>16</sup> The Zhigong Party was founded in San Francisco in 1925 by nationalist Chinese. In 1949, the party was invited to participate in the first session of the Consultative People's Conference in Beijing as one of the so-called "democratic parties" included in the United Front of CCP. The Zhigong Party represents returned overseas Chinese and others with overseas ties.

<sup>17</sup> Nis Grünberg In Katja Drinhausen, *The Party Leads on Everything: China's Changing Governance in Xi Jinping's New Era*, Berlin: MERICS, 2019, <https://merics.org/en/report/party-leads-everything>, Read on 21 January 2021.

Since about the turn of the century, however, there has been a gradual turnaround in the approach. As we have already seen in Chapter 1, emigration from the People's Republic of China has become much more diverse since the 1990s. As this change occurred, the higher educated among these so-called "new migrants" (新移民), such as students, businessmen and professionals, quickly received the full attention of the Chinese government. The government's main focus was on maximising the usefulness of these new groups for China by encouraging remigration, investment, and knowledge transfer. New organisations and forums were set up in China or around the world to actively build and shape those relationships, such as the World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (世界华裔商大会), the Overseas Chinese Business Science and Technology Innovation Cooperation and Exchange Conference (华商企业科技创新合作交流), the China Overseas Exchange Association (中华海外交流协会) and the China Center for Globalization (全球化智库).

Relations with traditional Chinese communities were also taken to a new level. Here the focus was on the most prominent leaders of Chinese organisations and other influential overseas Chinese people. Relations with these people were developed in various ways, for example through prestigious conferences in Beijing or around the world, such as the World Congress of Overseas Chinese Associations (世界华侨华人社团联谊大会), the World Forum of Overseas Chinese (世界华人论坛), and the World Forum of Chinese-language Media (世界华文传媒论坛).<sup>18</sup> In addition, more ad hoc conferences for prominent overseas Chinese people have regularly been organised. Overseas Chinese leaders have also been involved by appointing them as "advisers" (顾问) of the overseas Chinese Federation. Furthermore, there is a more prominent role for overseas Chinese delegates in, for example, the People's Political Consultative Conference. Through these conferences and visits by prominent overseas Chinese, the Chinese government and Party have built a network of contacts within overseas Chinese communities that is much larger and more diverse than in the past. This network, in turn, is then used to better control overseas Chinese communities. Attempts have been made to prevent the proliferation of all kinds of Chinese organisations by making organisational demands that organisations must be strengthened and "standardized" (规范化). Proposals have also been made to set up organisations for specific target groups. In the Netherlands, as we have already seen, this was the case with the Guangdong Federation, but the Dragon Business Club also originated because of a suggestion made at a large overseas Chinese conference in Beijing in 2006.

Another way in which the Chinese government, and more specifically the Party, has had a hand in the organisational and leadership structures of Chinese communities is the so-called study and research courses (研习班). These courses, which are for overseas Chinese leaders and for the "young directors" of the Chinese Association for Foreign Exchange, have been held at a central level since 2012.<sup>19</sup> These courses are intended both to convey the views and policies of the Chinese government to the main leaders within Chinese communities and to strengthen the government and CCP network within those communities.<sup>20</sup> In addition, business considerations also play a role, for example in the way these courses facilitate overseas Chinese people's exploration of investment opportunities in China.

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<sup>18</sup> Hong Liu and Els van Dongen, "China's Diaspora Policies as a New Mode of Transnational Governance", *Journal of Contemporary China* 25: 805-821, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> 国务院侨办侨领研习班在清华大学开班 (Start of course for overseas Chinese leaders of the Office For Overseas Chinese Affairs of the State Council), Tsinghua University (Tsinghua Universiteit) website, <https://news.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/1012/59618.htm>, 2 April 2018, read on 19 January 2021.

<sup>20</sup> See 赵可金 (Zhao Kejin) and 刘思如 (Liu Siru), "中国侨务公共外交的兴起" (The rise of public diplomacy for overseas Chinese affairs in China, 东北亚论坛 (Northeast Asia Forum) 109(5): 13-23, 2013, <http://www.imir.tsinghua.edu.cn/publish/iis/7236/20120308004952896512257/2013-8-16.pdf>, read on 11 January 2021; 林逢春 (Lin Fengchun) and 吴婷 (Wu Ting), "中国侨务公共外交的服务管理模式探析 — 基于中国与华人高技术新移民的趋同利益" (An analysis of the service management mode of Chinese overseas Chinese public diplomacy — Based on the convergence of interests between Chinese people and Chinese high-

While it used to be the regional governments in the areas of China from which overseas Chinese people originated that handled relations with them, now the central government is taking the initiative. Ideas about the “cohesion” (凝聚力) of the “Chinese nation” (中华民族), to which the overseas Chinese are also considered to belong, regardless of their nationality, are increasingly being used. Although it is still mentioned that overseas Chinese people must integrate into the society of the country where they live, this notion is disappearing into the background.<sup>21</sup>

This change in direction has accelerated since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. Even more than under his predecessor Hu Jintao, Xi has dropped all trepidation in relations with the overseas Chinese. As the heirs of Chinese culture abroad, Xi has urged Chinese people overseas to help in China’s public diplomacy offensive, to “tell the story of China in the right way” (讲好中国故事) and to realize the “Chinese Dream” (中国梦).<sup>22</sup>

The overseas Chinese are also involved in Xi’s foreign policy initiatives, particularly the Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>23</sup> Chinese people living in Belt and Road countries are urged to play a role in this initiative by improving China’s reputation, creating a “good political climate” for cooperation, and contributing to identifying and possibly also financing or implementing projects.<sup>24</sup> Even more than in the past, overseas Chinese leaders, organisations and media are expected to endorse and promote the views of the PRC and ensure that forces that threaten the unity of the Chinese nation (Uighur and Tibetan

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tech new immigrants), 中国与国际关系学刊 (Journal of China and International Relations) 2(2): 27-37, 2014, <https://journals.aau.dk/index.php/jcir/article/view/937/756>, read on 11 January 2021. In the inimitable jargon of the CCP, this is about “persons with Three Novelties In Four Attributes” (三新四有人士), where the Three Novelties refer to the “new renaissance of people of Chinese origin, the new overseas Chinese, and the new power of overseas Chinese organisations” (华裔新生化, 新华侨华人, 侨团新力量). The Four Attributes refer to “politically Influential, socially influential, economically powerful and professionally successful” (政治上有影响, 社会上有地位, 经济上有实力, 专业上有造诣), see 郑兴 (Zheng Xing) and Yang Ziyan (杨子岩), “第一侨务大省的‘转型’经” (The ‘transformation’ experience of the largest overseas Chinese province), 人民日报海外版 欧洲刊 (People’s Daily Overseas Edition (Europe)) 20 May 2012, <https://issuu.com/peopledailyuk/docs/26a01-24>, read on 11 January 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Leo Suryadinata, *The Rise of China and the Chinese Overseas: A Study of Beijing’s Changing Policy in Southeast Asia and Beyond*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2017; Mette Thunø, “China’s New Global Position: Changing Policies towards the Chinese Diaspora in the 21st Century”, in Bernard Wong and Chee-Beng So eds, *China’s Rise and the Chinese Overseas*. New York: Routledge, pp. 184-208, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Routinely mentioned as sources of China’s new approach of the overseas Chinese in this context are Xi’s comments in 2014 when receiving members of the 7<sup>th</sup> World Friendship Conference of Overseas Chinese Associations (World Congress of Overseas Chinese Associations); his words at a reception organised by overseas Chinese in Seattle in 2015; and his speech at the CCP Party Congress in 2017. Also Are Large Experience With In Empathy For Sea Chinese Affairs During Are Career in Fujian, Zhejiang In Shanghai Cited, See Zhang Chunwang (Zhang Chunwang), An analysis of the practice and theoretical origin of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important discourse on overseas Chinese affairs (An Analysis of the Practice In Theoretical Origin Of Important Treatises Of Secretary-General Xi Jinping over Overseas Chinese Affairs), Overseas Chinese research (Research To Overseas Chinese) 2019(3), <http://www.chinaql.org/n1/2019/0916/c420265-31356016.html>, Read at 14 January 2021.

<sup>23</sup> The connection between the Belt and Road and the overseas Chinese was made during the “World Conference of the Federation of Chinese Clan Associations” in 2014, when Xi Jinping was also present, and then in 2015 during the “World *Huaqiao Huaren* Businessmen and Industrialists Conference” organised by the OCAO, see Suryadinata 2016 p. 174.

<sup>24</sup> 李晓峰 (Li Xiaofeng), 邹浩 (Zou Jie), 游雯 (You Wen) and 田云华 (Tian Yunhue), “海外华侨华人经济暨文化统战工作与‘一带一路’建设” (Overseas Chinese economic and cultural united front work and “Belt and Road” Construction, 广东省社会主义学院学报 (Journal of the Institute of Socialism of Guangdong Province) 78: 51-55, 2020.

exiles, Falun Gong, the Taiwanese government, pro-Hong Kong independence activists) are condemned.

## 6.2. Party organisation abroad

In addition to the institutions and formal policies aimed at overseas Chinese people, the CCP also seeks to strengthen its own direct presence abroad (and in Hong Kong and Macau). In 2017, a number of cases came to light about the presence of Party cells at universities and Chinese companies abroad and some Chinese newspapers also publicly reported on this.<sup>25</sup>

The immediate consequence of these 2017 “revelations” was that the CCP sought to give less publicity to its foreign activities, without halting the building of the Party organisation abroad. However even with this more discreet approach from the CCP, in Chinese publications it is still not difficult to find evidence of the existence of active party branches at foreign universities and Chinese companies (including those in Europe). In particular, Chinese universities that have many student exchanges abroad have set up temporary Party branches among their students at foreign universities. One example is the Party branch set up by exchange students from Shanghai International Studies University (SISU).<sup>26</sup> One university even says it has an “overseas Party branch” that is present in “four continents and eight countries.” As in many other cases, this Party branch functions to a large extent virtually using what is called the “Internet+” (互联网+) method, which includes the use of social media, online meetings, and online teaching materials and courses.<sup>27</sup> However, it is an open question whether this type of Party work actually has substance, or is just done for show. On the other hand, it must be said that for a Chinese institution such as the University of Defence Technology (国防科技大学)

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<sup>25</sup> Such as Zhang Yu, “CPC Members Encounter Obstacles While Trying to Establish Party Branches Overseas”. *Global Times* 28 November 2017, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1077619.shtml>, read on 11 January 2021. For an article on party branches in the U.S., see Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, “The Chinese Communist Party is Setting Up Cells at Universities across America,” *Foreign Policy* 18 April 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/18/the-chinese-communist-party-is-setting-up-cells-at-universities-across-america-china-students-beijing-surveillance/>, read on 11 January 2021.

<sup>26</sup> An early example is “我院海外党支部举行工作总结” (The overseas party branch at our college held a summary meeting on its work), “同济大学建筑与城市规划学院研究生网” (Tongji University School of Architecture and Urban Planning Graduate Network), 1 December 2008. <https://gs-caup.tongji.edu.cn/9a/eb/c11126a105195/page.htm>, read on 7 January 2021. According to a Chinese source, a Party branch was also set up at Utrecht University in 2011 by an enthusiastic lecturer who travelled with a group of exchange students from Shanghai International Studies University, see “飘扬在海外的党旗：记上海外国语大学西方语系党总支的“海外党小组” (Flying the party flag overseas: Remember the overseas Chinese of the Western Language Department of the University of China “Overseas party group”). 上海基层党建 (Shanghai grass-roots party building) March 1, 2012, <https://www.shjcdj.cn/djWeb/djweb/web/djweb/home!info.action?articleid=4028811b335a881f0135c8a05a2461ca&catalogid=40289f0f5a84374f015a843f6d540001>, read on 11 January 2021.

<sup>27</sup> “身在彼岸 心系祖国 党员在海外也有‘家’ ——西安外国语大学西方语言文化学院海外党支部风采展示” (Living on the other side with the heart in the motherland; party members also have a “home” abroad: showcase of an overseas party branch of the Western Language and Culture College of Xi’an International Studies University), 第二届全国高校“两学一做”支部风采展示活动 (Showcases at the second session of the “two studies and one do” exhibitions of party branches at colleges and universities), 教育部政治思想工作司主办, 中国大学生在线承办单位 (Sponsored by the Department of Political and Ideological Work of the Ministry of Education and organised by Chinese Students Online). <http://zhibu.univs.cn/front/article/show/1/dfc97ce2d56d11e79b5e5254004dfc45>, read on 9 January 2021.

having Party branches among students abroad is of great importance to ensure that these overseas students return to China, of course with the knowledge they have acquired.<sup>28</sup>

Party building (党建) is a standard aspect of the Party organisation in China itself and is even a discipline of education and research in, for example, party schools. Party building is concerned with the presence of the Party at the grassroots of society. It involves the recruitment and cultivation of Party members and potential Party members, the organisation and activities of Party branches and Party committees, and the strengthening of the behaviour and ideological awareness of party members.<sup>29</sup>

Over the past 15 years, efforts have increasingly been made to increase and strengthen the Party's presence across the breadth of Chinese society. Xi Jinping has further accelerated this process. In addition, he has also increased the direct political and administrative role of the Party and strengthened its grip on the government, the army, the judicial system, civil society and business.

China's increasing globalization, however, presents the Party with a number of particular challenges. This Party is both being challenged to manage the presence and activity of Party members and committees within foreign organisations and companies in China itself and also to manage Party members residing outside of China. This concerns Party members that, in principle, go abroad temporarily, as well as non-Party members that emigrate permanently. The number of Chinese students abroad has increased rapidly. State-owned institutions and companies increasingly have projects or investments outside China, requiring them to send more of their staff to Hong Kong, Macau, or to other countries overseas. Chinese recruitment agencies also often send large groups of employees abroad on temporary contracts.

In all these cases, there are Party members amongst those going to live overseas. These Party members will in principle remain members of the Party committee to which they belong in China. The Party committees of universities and companies are expected to also involve members abroad in their activities as far as possible and, if possible, to organise activities abroad. In addition, Party members abroad are expected to remain involved in the Party where they are. The Party committee of the local Chinese embassy or consulate is responsible for Party members among the students and employees of companies and institutions. The foreign offices of recruitment agencies are responsible for Party members among the workers who they help to send overseas.<sup>30</sup>

However, these arrangements do not appear to work properly in practice and often lead to Party members being left out of the picture. These Party members' great distance from China makes it very difficult in practice for Party committees in China to fully involve them in activities. The embassies and consulates often lack the necessary staff, and perhaps also the motivation, to keep in touch with Party members in the country or region where they are located.

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<sup>28</sup> 王握文 (Wang Huowen), “国防科技大学在留学人员中设立海外党支部” (The National University of Defense Technology has established an overseas party branch among foreign students), 解放军报 (Newspaper of the People's Liberation), 10 May 2013, <http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n/2013/0510/c117092-21439870.html>, read on 11 January 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Frank N. Pieke, *The Good Communist: Elite Training and State Building in Today's China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2009).

<sup>30</sup> 中共中央组织部关于改进接转出国留学、劳务人员中党员组织关系办法的通知(组通字〔1984〕15号) (Notification from the Organisation department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on measures to improve the Organisation relations of party members among workers and labourers transferred abroad (Document of the Organisation Department 1984 No. 15)), published on the website of the College of Sciences of the Shanghai University of Science and Technology (上海理工大学理学院) on 24 April 2018. <https://lxy.usst.edu.cn/t86/2018/0424/c2330a40229/page.htm>, read on 8 January 2021.

From the Party's point of view, there are a number of major problems with this ineffective management of members based overseas. Without an active connection to a Party branch, it is thought that Party members could fall victim to the "sugared bullets" (糖衣炮弹) of the Western lifestyle. The Party is concerned that the "Party spirit" (党性) and "Party discipline" (党纪) of members might collapse and that it could risk losing control of its members. The lack of contact with the Party can also pose problems for the members themselves. Party members who have to reactivate their membership of the Party branch upon their return to China may find they have been put behind by their time abroad, at the expense of their careers and further development as Party members.

In order to ensure that the Party does not lose control of its members abroad, the Organisation Department of the CCP amended its regulations in 2016. Party members can now also be organised abroad in (temporary) local party branches.<sup>31</sup>

According to recent Chinese literature, new models and methods of Party building abroad are actively being considered and experimented with, in addition to pre-existing arrangements where the embassy or recruitment agency is responsible. For example, it is now also possible to set up a network of regional Party branches, for which the Party committee in the local branch of a large Chinese state-owned enterprise is then responsible and takes on a coordinating role. This reduces the pressure on the staff of the embassy and makes it possible to organise Party members who are spread out in different institutions that do not themselves have a Party organisation.<sup>32</sup>

This literature stresses that the situation abroad is fundamentally different (内外有别) and that Party building overseas is organised based on the principles of "flexibility, simplicity, security and secrecy" (灵活、简便、安全、保密). Overseas, open Party activities are often not possible, especially in situations where, for example, employees of a Chinese company frequently work with non-Chinese colleagues. Covert Party activities are therefore often necessary, where the principle of the "five non-disclosures" (五不公开) is observed. It is also necessary to make greater use of the Internet and social media.<sup>33</sup>

Party building overseas therefore focuses primarily on improving the Party's grip on its own members. The Party is concerned that the appeal of living abroad will dislodge some from the Party, so that when they return to China they will no longer prove reliable.

It is important to keep in mind that this only concerns those Party members who are temporarily staying outside China. Chinese people who have chosen to settle permanently abroad give up their membership of the Chinese Communist Party (or put it on hold) and are therefore no longer the goal

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<sup>31</sup> "派出部委将党员名单通知驻外使领馆党委，各驻外使领馆党委可根据党员人数、分布状况以及驻在国情况，建立党支部、党小组或单独联系" (The party committees of the embassies and consulates abroad may establish party divisions, party groups or individual contacts on the basis of the number of party members, their distribution and the status of their country), 中组部 (CCP Central Organisation Department), Central 关于改进接转出国留学、劳务人员中党员组织关系办法的通知 (Notification on improving measures for the organisational relationship of party members among those transferred to study and work abroad), Article 1, 27 September 2016, <http://zzb.czm.com/info/1007/1308.htm> read on 7 January 2021.

<sup>32</sup> 强舸 (Qiang Ge), "一带一路"背景下国有企业境外党建的四种模式" (Four forms of overseas party building within state-owned enterprises against the background of the "Belt and Road"), 党建新论 (New theory of party building) 2018(6): 49-55.

<sup>33</sup> 江海军 (Jiang Haijun), "加强海外党建工作探析" (Analysis of the strengthening of overseas party building work), 现代国企研究 (Research of modern state-owned enterprises) 2019(12): 307; 中国太平保险集团党委 (Party Committee of Taiping Insurance Group of China), "特区不特殊境外无例外—中国太平保险集团积极探索境外党建工作新路子" (No exceptions abroad - China Taiping Insurance Group actively investigates new ways of Party building abroad), 党建 (Party building) 2018(9): 56-57.

of Party-building work. Instead, these people are subject to the existing overseas Chinese policy instruments, tailored to their status as foreign residents with Chinese roots, that we have discussed earlier in this chapter.

Nor is there any mention in Chinese literature of Party building as an instrument of influence on other countries. However, there is partisan work as a means of combating corruption and coordinating the activities of Chinese companies and institutions in a particular region. This is particularly important in the less developed countries of the Belt and Road Initiative that do not have a well-functioning legal system. It therefore focuses primarily on Chinese organisations and their Party members, not on their foreign partners or employees.

## 7. Chinese influence in the Netherlands

In the sections above, we have discussed how in recent years the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party have increased their ambitions to strengthen their influence among Chinese communities, companies, and institutions. We have shown the ways in which they have strengthened and expanded their arsenal of resources to this end. The question is to what extent this has also had consequences in the Netherlands.

### *7.1. The fragmented demography of the Chinese population in the Netherlands and the Chinese government*

Even if the policies had not changed, the growth of the Chinese population as well as the increase in the number of Chinese companies and institutions from the PRC make it almost inevitable that the imprint of the Chinese government becomes more prominent in the Netherlands as well. This greater imprint of the Chinese government is apparent not only among companies, students, and knowledge migrants, but also within the traditional Chinese communities and their organisations. Chinese Dutch people from the PRC have eclipsed Chinese people from Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Suriname and Taiwan in the last twenty years.

However, there are also very clear differences among those from the 'People's Republic of China' that are based in the Netherlands. The Chinese people from the area around the city of Wenzhou (Rui'an, Yongjia, Ping'yang, the city of Wenzhou itself and especially Wencheng) were already a part of the General Chinese Association of the Netherlands (ACVN) in the past, but previously this group was numerically outnumbered by Hong Kong Chinese people. With the large-scale immigration from Wenzhou in more recent times, they have gained a dominant position over Hong Kong people. The communities from Qingtian and Fujian, who are also from the PRC, have also grown strongly and strengthened their position in the Association.

This dominant position of the groups from the PRC emerges in various ways. The LFCON, which serves as a formal link between Chinese people in the Netherlands and Dutch society and government, has become an organisation that is dominated by people from the Wenzhou and Qingtian regions. Set up as a broad platform for all Chinese, people from Hong Kong played a prominent role within the LFCON in the early years. Although presidents of the LFCON were regularly Cantonese people in the past, this has not been the case in recent years. A number of Cantonese associations and leaders that we interviewed for this report said that they were not even members of the LFCON. Meetings of the LFCON are reportedly sometimes not held in Mandarin, but instead in the Wenzhou dialect, which many Cantonese people are not able to understand or speak. This is in contrast to the situation last century, when Cantonese was the *lingua franca* of Chinese people in the Netherlands. In some cases, where Cantonese people are in the majority, Cantonese (or Dutch) is still spoken however.

People from Wenzhou are also the most prominent in relations with the Chinese government at the central level. News articles and official governmental documents about connections with Chinese people in the Netherlands that we analysed for this report consistently referred to the LFCON and to the General Chinese Association, which is completely dominated by people from Wenzhou. These documents also referred to an insignificant organisation that is also called the General Chinese Association of the Netherlands in Dutch (Algemene Chinese Vereniging Nederland) and has only a small difference in the Chinese name (荷兰华人总会). The documents hardly referenced the organisations of other Chinese communities in the Netherlands at all.

Other Chinese organisations and leaders primarily keep in touch with the local authorities in their region of origin and play only a supporting role in relations with Beijing. This is particularly clear in the case of the Guangdong Federation, which is fully focused on the Guangdong authorities in its contacts with China. However, the same situation also applies to the Qingtian and Fujian associations.

The dominance of people from Wenzhou in the image that the Chinese government has of Chinese people in the Netherlands is evident from a list of the most mentioned Dutch Chinese people in the Chinese media and government websites. In the top 20, there are 10 people from Wenzhou and four people from Qingtian, with only one person from Hong Kong and one Chinese person born in the Netherlands. It should also be noted that three of the four people from Qingtian are in the top five.

For this report, we made an inventory based on Chinese sources of 54 visits by overseas Chinese leaders to China, as well as the Chinese delegations which have come to the Netherlands over the past ten years. This inventory also reveals the dominance of people from Wenzhou. Only one organisation, Fayin, both received Taiwanese people or visited Taiwan and was also present during visits by delegations from Guangdong to the Netherlands. Visits to China, and the reception of central government delegations, were all carried out by LFCON and the two General Chinese Associations or their individual leaders. The Council for Peaceful Reunification and the Association of Chinese Scientists and Engineers also played a more modest role in these visits and receptions. Organisations of people from other regions of origin were of course involved in visits to, or delegations from, their own local areas, with LFCON often present as a formal host.

A “delegation for the inspection of trade and culture along the Belt and Road” (一带一路经贸文化考察访问团), even though it was made up of members of an association of people from the small Chinese county of Wencheng, was still received in China in 2018 by the Central United Front and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office. The Deputy Director of the Office warmly thanked the Dutch Chinese for their efforts for China: “In the so-called South China Sea arbitration case and other incidents, the Dutch overseas Chinese are also at the forefront. They didn’t hesitate to stand up for China. I would like to thank you.”<sup>34</sup> The attention given to this delegation can only be explained by the fact that Wencheng is home to the ruling group and the most important leaders of the Wenzhou Chinese.

Delegations and visits, both to and from the Netherlands, largely concern the Chinese organisations that one would expect: the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, the Zhigong Party, Federation of Overseas Chinese, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, the United Front, and the Council for Peaceful Reunification. Delegations or visits, for the most part, take place at the central level or at the level of overseas Chinese origin areas. In some cases, however, there are visits to places in China that one would not immediately expect. One such case was a visit to the “capital of the Hakkas” Meizhou, in North Guangdong, which was made with the aim of strengthening relations with Dutch Hakkas. There have also been visits to the provinces of Guangxi, Jilin, Chongqing, and Hubei, where exploring trade and investment opportunities was the driving force. Personal (business) relationships sometimes play a role in this.

It is important to examine these divisions within the Chinese-Dutch population. Although these divisions are played out through relations with the Chinese authorities, they are primarily (sub)ethnic in nature.

These divisions therefore are not about resistance to the dominant role of the PRC among Chinese Dutch people. This is a fact accepted by most Chinese people, just as the rise of Mandarin in Chinese schools is seen as a logical consequence of China’s rise. This also applies to people from Hong Kong and other Cantonese people. Their organisations and leaders keep an appropriate distance from the other communities of Chinese Dutch people precisely by strengthening their relations with the authorities in Guangdong Province through the Guangdong Federation. An important factor here is also a strong nationalism or national pride that is also held by many Hong Kong people and in which the PRC is seen as the natural embodiment of the Chinese nation.

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<sup>34</sup> “荷兰文成同乡会一带一路访问团回家看看!” (The Belt and Road delegation of the Dutch Wencheng Association went home to see for themselves!), 荷兰一网 (HollandOne.com) 25 April 2018, <https://hollandone.com/1610/>, read on 12 January 2021.

## 7.2. Overseas Chinese policy in the Netherlands

In 2019, the Central Overseas Chinese Federation visited Europe and came to the Netherlands as part of this visit.<sup>35</sup> According to reports, this visit yielded only platitudes. However, a meeting in Milan six months later with the director of the Federation, Wan Lijun (万立骏), where the president of the National Federation of Chinese Organisations in the Netherlands (LFCON) was also present, was more productive. This probably had to do with the fact that the tasks of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office had been transferred to the Federation.

Wan's speech called for a study of the Decision of the Fourth Plenum of the CCP Central Committee. His speech would not have been out of place at a Party meeting in China, something which reveals how much the overseas Chinese are now seen as part of the Chinese nation led by the Party, as well as the role they are seen to have in representing not only China but also the Chinese socialist system. Wan not only mentioned the need to "tell China's story correctly", but spoke more specifically about "telling the story of China's system correctly and propagating China's state system" (讲好中国制度故事, 宣传'中国之治'). In addition, he revealed that the role of the Federation of Overseas Chinese would greatly increase and that it would work to better connect the various aspects involved in coordinating with overseas Chinese people, both at home and abroad.

This even stronger management of overseas Chinese communities by the Chinese Communist Party, envisaged by the Federation of Overseas Chinese, is also becoming visible in the Netherlands. During our interviews with Chinese-Dutch organisations and media, it repeatedly turned out that there was an almost casual willingness to accommodate Beijing or at least not to irritate Beijing. The Chinese-Dutch media generally do this by avoiding reporting on strictly "political" topics and focusing on social and cultural topics and business news. If it is necessary to address issues that are "sensitive" for the Chinese government, these organisations try to stick with Beijing's narrative. This is done without explicit guidelines being given. Editors and journalists know from the Chinese media and news agencies with which they work, and the press conferences given by the Chinese Embassy, what is expected and what is not expected. It helps, of course, that the editors of most of these media organisations have also had work experience in the media in China before coming to the Netherlands.

What undoubtedly also plays an important role in this conformism to Beijing's wishes is the participation by leaders of Chinese organisations and other prominent Chinese people in the conferences and other meetings of United Front-affiliated organisations in China. For example, a list (probably from 2013) of 373 "directors" (理事) of the Chinese Association for Foreign Exchange includes six Dutch Chinese people. From our interviews we know that, at least in 2013 and 2018, one or more<sup>36</sup> Chinese-Dutch people participated in study and training courses (研习班, see section 7.1) for "leaders of Chinese organisations from Africa and Europe", or participated in courses for "young directors of the Chinese Association for Foreign Exchange". At least one prominent Chinese-Dutch person we interviewed had also participated in a session of the Political Consultative Conference in Beijing and a number of others at the local people's conference in their area of origin. In 2019, Chinese Dutch people were also invited to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China in Beijing.

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<sup>35</sup> 张亮 (Zhang Liang), "探索侨务工作新方式 研讨华侨华人新形象 中国侨联代表团访荷" (Exploring new ways to work on overseas Chinese affairs – Discussion on the new image of overseas Chinese – Delegation of the Federation of Overseas Chinese visits the Netherlands), 环球网 (Huanqiu.com), 14 april 2019, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnKjFYe>, read on 12 January 2021.

<sup>36</sup> See 中国海外交流协会第五届理事会理事名单(List of members of the fifth board of directors of the China Overseas Exchange Association), <http://www.cnzsy.com/fujian/393096.html>, read on 20 January 2021.

This habitual conformism applies to most Chinese organisations. This is even true for organisations set up directly by the Chinese authorities. The Association for Peaceful Reunification, an organisation overtly affiliated to the United Front, argues that opinions and issues on which it expresses views are decided by its members themselves without direct interference from Beijing or the Chinese Embassy in The Hague. This also applies to organisations with deep roots in the Netherlands itself, especially now that these organisations are practically all dominated by Chinese people from Wenzhou, Qingtian or other parts of the mainland. It should be noted once again that relations with local authorities in the region of origin usually play a much greater role than those with Beijing.

The General Association has traditionally had warm ties with the Embassy and has always supported the foreign policy of the PRC. This also applies today to LFCON, which is routinely considered as a first point of contact by the central Chinese authorities. LFCON also regularly calls on its affiliated associations to express and defend the views of the Chinese government. The incentive to stay in step is not only about prestige: loyalty to the PRC is also essential for the many organisations whose main objective is to maintain the bond between a community of Chinese in the Netherlands and their region of origin. For an organisation such as the Foundation of Chinese Education in the Netherlands, the connection with the Chinese authorities has direct material benefits. Now that Dutch subsidies have been dropped, they are dependent on Beijing for their teaching materials.

Nevertheless, there are a number of organisations that are uncomfortable with the current situation where the PRC claims the position of the centre of the Chinese nation. Hong Kong organisations in particular are often very coy about China and Chinese political positions, including Hong Kong's recent demonstrations and the National Security Law. They are afraid to make statements about China or relations among the Chinese population in the Netherlands. There is also resentment that they have much less access to the Chinese Embassy than the PRC organisations. The same goes for Chinese temples and denominations that try to maintain a friendly, but minimal, connection with the Chinese Embassy.

Some of these elements can also be found among younger Chinese in the Netherlands. Chinese students from the PRC generally do not appear to be involved in PRC foreign policy in the Netherlands. However, as d'Hooghe and Dekker have already reported, there are regular cases of Chinese students who do not feel free to engage in political discussions or try to steer discussions during lectures. There are also likely to be cases where Chinese students are being watched by fellow students or the Chinese Embassy.<sup>37</sup>

Although the official student association ACSSNL, recognized by the Chinese Embassy, has become more active throughout the Netherlands in recent years, it is still mainly concerned with social activities, well-being, and mutual assistance. Nevertheless, members of the ACSSNL are increasingly active in the propagation of Chinese government positions. This happened, for example, in The Hague in 2016, when the association presented a petition in protest against the ruling of the UNCLOS tribunal on the South China Sea. It was also seen in Leiden in 2017, during the 19th Congress of the CCP.<sup>38</sup> However, the vast majority of students in the Netherlands, including those who are members of the ACSSNL, are not CCP members and are not otherwise politically engaged by the Chinese Embassy. Chinese students who actively promote the views and policies of the PRC do so, as far as we have seen, out of their own conviction and national pride, or perhaps with a future career in China in mind.

The second generation of Chinese Dutch people who grew up in the Netherlands occupy a fundamentally different position from the first generation. The policy of the PRC regularly mentions the importance of involving this generation more closely with China through things such as summer camps, courses, training, and visits. They are considered an important reservoir of knowledge, talent,

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<sup>37</sup> d'Hooghe and Dekker 2020: 13.

<sup>38</sup> d'Hooghe and Dekker 2020.

and connection with foreign countries. In practice, however, it is repeatedly apparent that these ethnic Chinese are seen primarily as foreigners. Relations with the Chinese community in the Netherlands run almost exclusively through the first generation of Chinese leaders who themselves emigrated from the PRC. In other words, the second generation is a target, but not an instrument of overseas Chinese policy. Language often plays a role in this. The Chinese who grew up here often speak only the regional Chinese language of their parents, while the Chinese government functions exclusively in Mandarin.

Nevertheless, a number of prominent Chinese Dutch people who grew up in the Netherlands would like to be more involved in the relationship between the Chinese-Dutch population and the Chinese government, but find that they are excluded from this. Their role is that of intermediary between the Chinese-Dutch population and Dutch society; meanwhile, the role of the first generation is to shape relations with the Chinese government. This is also evident from the organisations in which they operate. These are primarily Chinese schools and other Chinese education organisations, the sports federation and youth organisations, organisations for Chinese entrepreneurs and other businessmen, and the few remaining Chinese social work centres. A number of Chinese people who grew up in the Netherlands are also active in Chinese churches and temples.

Homegrown Chinese people are also found in activities aimed at Dutch society and politics. First-generation Chinese Dutch people from Hong Kong were already active in Dutch politics as early as the 1980s, especially as municipal councillors, but that now seems to have come to an end. According to a 2013 article in the official CCP newspaper the People's Daily (人民日报), the *Chinese Political Integration and Participation Fund* (荷兰华人参政议政基金会) was established in the Netherlands in 2006 to encourage the exercise of active and passive voting rights among Chinese-Dutch nationals. The same article mentions the fact that in the 2012 election campaign, a Chinese-Dutch politician was supported by the Guangdong Federation. In 2013, the LFCON held the *Chinese-Dutch Discussion Meeting for Political Integration and Participation* (荷兰侨界参政议政座谈会).<sup>39</sup>

In 2018, a number of Chinese Dutch people (generally but not exclusively born in the Netherlands) stood as candidates – albeit without success – in municipal elections in The Hague and Amsterdam as well as other municipalities. We have found no evidence that such initiatives are still being undertaken at the moment, but the participation of Chinese Dutch people in local or national politics remained a topical theme for many of our interlocutors.

As the role played by LFCON in the 2013 discussion meeting shows, participation in Dutch politics is also supported by first-generation leaders of the Chinese community. These leaders regret the fact that Chinese Dutch people keep their distance from Dutch politics and use their passive and active voting rights much less than other minorities. They see the new generation of Chinese Dutch people as offering an opportunity to rectify this situation. Apart from the fight against racism, however, it remains unclear what exactly could be part of political agenda to unite different Chinese people in the Netherlands. It is also not clear (but certainly cannot be ruled out) whether the support of first-generation leaders is partly driven by the Beijing government's strategy of encouraging overseas Chinese to participate more in local politics.

During the corona crisis that began in the spring of 2020, the Chinese population in the Netherlands was confronted with overt anti-Chinese expressions and actions. These can be seen as the result of an explosive mixture of fear and anger about the spread of the virus from China as well as the rising distrust of the PRC seen in the Netherlands. Second-generation Chinese in particular came up against

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<sup>39</sup> “荷兰侨界举办参政议政座谈会” (The Dutch overseas Chinese held a symposium on political participation), 人民日报 (Volksdagblad) 28 August 2013, [http://www.peopledaily.eu/ozxw/hl/20130828\\_6233.html](http://www.peopledaily.eu/ozxw/hl/20130828_6233.html), read on 13 January 2021.

this, partly because they and their children were most directly confronted with it as a result of their integration into Dutch society.<sup>40</sup>

For the Chinese government, the corona crisis has also had positive aspects. As happened after the 2008 earthquake in China's central Sichuan province, during the spring of 2020 Chinese people abroad took action to raise money and to send face masks and medical supplies to China. For many, the discrimination and mistreatment of Chinese people they experienced reinforced the feeling of being Chinese and of the need to rely on the Chinese government.<sup>41</sup>

The Chinese Embassy in The Hague has direct relations with the Chinese people in the Netherlands, regardless of their nationality. Until the tasks of the State Council's Overseas Chinese Affairs Office were taken over by the Federation of Overseas Chinese in 2020, the Office issued an attaché to the Chinese Embassy in The Hague. This attaché had a relatively low rank. It is unclear whether a senior United Front representative is also working at the Chinese Embassy. It is in line with expectations that the Federation will soon send a replacement.

More important for the Chinese people in the Netherlands are the permanent secretary and his office and the education department of the Chinese Embassy. The permanent secretary's office is responsible for coordinating with overseas Chinese leaders, for example when receiving a delegation or official from China. The education department deals with, among other things, the Chinese students in the Netherlands. This responsibility means that for students on a Chinese scholarship, but not for students who pay for their studies themselves, the embassy must maintain regular contact with them and actively pay attention to their "learning situation and thinking" (思想和学习情况).<sup>42</sup>

The Chinese Embassy in The Hague focuses on relations with Chinese people in the Netherlands. It is particularly focused on relations with the first generation of leaders of organisations of Chinese people from the traditional overseas territories in China (primarily in Zhejiang Province, as well as in Fujian and Guangdong) and students that are studying in the Netherlands on Chinese government scholarships. Much of this role is practical (visas, work permits, study, well-being) or ceremonial (celebrations of October 1st and Chinese New Year). In addition, meetings with Chinese associations are also sometimes held. These meetings can be about laws and regulations in the Netherlands, but also about Chinese politics or regulations, or specific problems that are at play. The Chinese Embassy is also active online and defends China's positions using the Internet and social media.

The embassy actively directs the official student association ACSSNL. In the spring of 2020, for example, the local departments of the association were instructed regarding how to distribute aid packages from China that contained face masks and other supplies. The association has also been instructed about how, for example, the Chinese New Year gala should be organised. Meetings regarding major political events in China are also held for the leaders of ACSSNL local branches. In the autumn of 2020,

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<sup>40</sup> See, for example, "Chinezen zijn discriminatie zat en praten met wethouder over oplossingen" (Chinese are tired of discrimination and talk to alderman about solutions). *Rijnmond* 20 February 2020, <https://www.rijnmond.nl/nieuws/192273/Chinezen-zijn-discriminatie-zat-en-praten-met-wethouder-over-oplossingen>, read on 13 January 2021; " 'We moeten Nederland, ons tweede vaderland, beschermen zonder paniek te zaaien' " (We must protect the Netherlands, our second homeland, without sowing panic). *De Volkskrant* 10 February 2020.

<sup>41</sup> See 陈奕平 (Chen Yiping), 尹昭伊 (Yin Zhaoyi) and 关亦佳 (Guan Yijia), "华侨华人与全球新冠肺炎疫情防控: 贡献、挑战与政策建议" (Overseas Chinese and the global prevention and fight against the new COVID-19: contributions, challenges and policy recommendations), *华侨华人历史研究* (Magazine for overseas Chinese history) 2020(3): 109.

<sup>42</sup> 中华人民共和国教育部 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China), 国家公派出国留学研究生管理规定 (试行) (Regulations on the management of PhD students studying abroad by the government (trial version)), Article 16.

such a meeting on the 14th five-year plan was organised by the embassy. The branch chairpersons were given an explanation by the head of the Chinese Embassy's education department regarding the significance of this plan. They then had to write an essay about it themselves. However, no request was made to share or distribute the content of this meeting to the other members of the leadership or the ordinary members the branch, or organise other activities.

We have found no evidence that the Embassy sets up or directs Party branches among Chinese students or companies here. Given the picture we have outlined in section 6.2 above, and the fact that in the past Party branches were active at Dutch universities, it seems more likely that Party members are directed from China by their Party committee at the university of origin or the parent company.

Those Chinese people who are permanently resident in the Netherlands have given up or suspended their party membership in accordance with the policy of the CCP. However, former party members can often be found in leadership roles within Chinese organisations in the Netherlands that are strongly linked to the Chinese government. Furthermore, former Party members in leadership positions regularly encounter each other, either formally or informally.

The China Jiangsu Provincial Economic and Trade office, based in Tilburg, in principle operates at a provincial and lower level (but not exclusively in North Brabant). The office falls under the Trade Office (商务厅) of Jiangsu Province and emphatically has no diplomatic role, although the Chinese Embassy helps it establish contacts at the national level in the Netherlands. The main responsibility of the office is to facilitate trade and investment for Chinese business. However, it is also active in other areas. As mentioned earlier, the office heads the Chinese Cultural Centre in The Hague. Although the it has little interest in the traditional overseas Chinese people in the Netherlands, it does explicitly seek cooperation with business people in the Dutch Chinese community. Its main point of contact in this is the Dutch Chinese Young Entrepreneurs Foundation (DCYE). The DCYE is also helpful in establishing contacts with large Dutch companies and the government at a national level, something that the office, as a provincial organisation, cannot do.

Cooperation with Chinese entrepreneurs in the Netherlands is more than just a way to promote Jiangsu's economy. Thanks to the intervention of the Jiangsu office in the Netherlands, the DCYE recently concluded a cooperation agreement with the Federation of Overseas Chinese in Jiangsu Province under the Belt and Road Initiative. The Chinese government policy of involving overseas Chinese people in the BRI is a political task for which the Federation of Overseas Chinese bears primary responsibility.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This agreement is one of a total of 45 agreements between Jiangsu and business organisations in 27 countries. This is evident from a very detailed discipline inspection report of the Party Group of the Jiangsu Federation for Overseas Chinese, see 中共江苏省纪律检查委员会, 江苏省监察委员会 (CCP Jiangsu Province Discipline Inspection Commission and the Jiangsu Province Supervisory Commission), 省侨联党组关于巡视整改进展情况的通报 (Announcement of the Provincial Federation of Overseas Chinese party group on progress with inspection and improvement), 9 December 2020, [http://www.jssjw.gov.cn/art/2020/12/9/art\\_4592\\_143567.html](http://www.jssjw.gov.cn/art/2020/12/9/art_4592_143567.html), read on 14 January 2021.

## 8. Conclusion

In the policies the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party distinguish between different groups of Chinese people abroad in a number of ways.

First of all, there is a difference between Chinese citizens who are temporarily staying abroad for study or work and those (citizen or not) who have left China for an unlimited period of time.

The Chinese government and the CCP want the first group to be involved, as much as possible, in the Chinese society with a prospective of their return in the future. This is done, for example, by means of the official student associations. For Party members, it is also carried out through the establishment of (temporary) Party branches. This approach therefore does not aim to use these Chinese citizens for influence or interference abroad. An exception to this rule is attempts to use Party branches in Belt and Road countries to coordinate the activities of various Chinese companies or institutions in a particular country or region, but this seems less relevant in the Netherlands given that the Netherlands has not joined the BRI.

The second, much larger group is considered to be basically all “overseas Chinese people”. While conventional overseas Chinese policy makes a strict distinction between Chinese citizens and citizens of other countries of Chinese origin, this distinction fades in the growing emphasis of the bond with and unity of the global “Chinese nation”. All Chinese people are considered as belonging to the “Chinese nation” of which the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party are the centre and the embodiment.

This expected solidarity is used to pursue more material objectives, such as to promote trade and investment, “talent” recruitment, and to strengthen links with the regions of origin and relatives or family in these regions. Overseas Chinese are also encouraged to be more generally committed to China. For example, the National Federation of Chinese Women’s Associations in the Netherlands cooperates in numerous charity projects and donations with local departments of the Chinese Women’s Federation under the responsibility of the United Front (中华妇女联合会, 妇联). Sometimes contacts were made directly, while in other cases the Office of Overseas Affairs mediates.

However, the intangible purposes of this expected solidarity are just as important. The Chinese government and CCP does not only seek to display the greatness and unity of the Chinese nation, but also expects (verbal) support for China’s sovereignty claims (such as those regarding Taiwan, the South China Sea, Tibet, and Xinjiang) and for China’s foreign policies. Despite the often swollen rhetoric, China is pragmatic about this and only deploys the overseas Chinese people in a particular country when this serves China’s interests and the balance of power towards that country allows it.

In practice (at least in the Netherlands), the PRC has relied mainly on older, first-generation overseas Chinese leaders and media. Younger Chinese, both those who grew up abroad and the more educated among the so-called “new Chinese migrants”, are targets of PRC government policy, but cannot be trusted enough to implement this policy, especially when it comes to the more explicit political goals.

Prominent individuals in the Chinese diasporic community in the Netherlands are involved in various aspects of China-Netherlands relations and in a number of different ways. This applies both to leaders of the traditional overseas Chinese communities, as well as knowledge migrants, former students and Chinese Dutch people who grew up here. These are partly informal and personal relationships, but local Dutch authorities and organisations that focus on a certain aspect of these relationships also play a role, in particular in the promotion of trade and investment relations. These types of organisations usually have both Chinese and non-Chinese members and board members. This method is regularly used to promote the Belt and Road in the Netherlands. Prominent Chinese leaders in the

Netherlands, for example, are involved in the “Dutch BRI Research and Development Centre” (一带一路荷兰研究发展中心).<sup>44</sup>

We must stress that we have found no evidence that these channels of Chinese influence operate privately or have led to harmful influence. The involvement of Chinese-Dutch people in the BRI often seems to be more of a desire than a reality. **It is, of course, the case that in this way pro-Chinese interests and beliefs can find their way into the Dutch social and political playing field. This is a subject that urgently needs further investigation.**

In general, we conclude that Chinese policy towards overseas Chinese people and other Chinese people temporarily residing abroad has become much more ambitious in recent years. The Chinese government and CCP have also developed much **stronger and more extensive organisational and political tools for deploying overseas Chinese people to work for the interests and goals of the PRC. This is in itself a reason to be vigilant. However, based on our research, we conclude that little influence has been seen in practice in the Netherlands so far.**

Chinese influence in the Netherlands is not (yet) being used. Beijing can of course see the merit of Chinese leaders, media, and organisations here. However, their efforts to promote China's preferences in the Netherlands are currently mainly verbal and symbolic in nature, without having direct consequences. This means that Chinese people in the Netherlands can have little further concern about what the Chinese government might expect from them.

To return to the three research questions stated at the beginning of this report, we conclude the following.

**We note that the Chinese government and CCP are exercising a certain degree of influence on the Chinese population, organisations, and media in the Netherlands. This influence has clearly increased over the past twenty years (research question 1). This also leads to a degree of influence within Dutch society, especially when this influence is associated with Dutch-Chinese friendship or cooperation organisations or local authorities in the Netherlands. However, we have found no evidence of (attempted) interference in Dutch affairs or decision-making (research question 2). The impact of Chinese influence to date is therefore rather small and is limited to encouraging a positive attitude towards strengthening cooperation with local governments in China and stimulating mutual trade and investment (research question 3).**

However, these conclusions do not mean that there is no cause for concern, both on the part of the Chinese community in the Netherlands and on the part of the Dutch government.

First, the Chinese government has significantly expanded and strengthened its overseas Chinese policy goals and instruments in recent years. The use and consequences of this have been very limited in the Netherlands to date, but that is no guarantee that this will continue to be the case. **It is therefore important that the government now takes steps at the local and national level to shape and strengthen its involvement with the Chinese-Dutch population.**

In addition, it is very important to continue to closely monitor the development and deployment of these instruments in the Netherlands and to take action if this exceeds the limits of what is acceptable. **The first priority in our relations with China must be to protect our rule of law and our political**

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<sup>44</sup> See, for example, “一带一路”荷兰研究发展中心与山东菏泽市政府签订合作发展协议” (“One Belt One Road “ Dutch Research and Development Centre has signed a cooperation agreement with the municipal government of Shandong Heze), 环球网 (Global Times Network) 29 augustus 2017, [https://www.sohu.com/a/168128188\\_162522](https://www.sohu.com/a/168128188_162522), read on 20 January 2021. This is probably the Belt & Road Research & Development Centre whose contact address is at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Leiden that came into Chinese hands a few years ago, see <https://thebeltandroadnl.com/>, read on 10 February 2021.

**system, whereas Chinese Dutch people are often the most vulnerable from influence.** They should be protected from Chinese interference or even threats. The fact that this concern is not a fantasy is shown by the intimidation to which the Uighur community is exposed and of which Chinese people from outside the PRC are wary.

Secondly, this report has described how the Chinese community is now almost entirely dominated by Chinese people from the PRC, particularly from the Wenzhou region, while Chinese people with other roots have been forced into secondary significance. The important role of the LFCON (National Federation of Chinese Organisations in the Netherlands) is an example. This organisation covers, as it were, the Chinese community in the Netherlands. Most of the organisations we have spoken to are members of the LFCON and participate in their meetings. In addition, it acts as a point of contact between the Chinese authorities and the community. The fact that the current and former presidents of LFCON are both from the Wenzhou/Qingtian region and that the Wenzhou dialect of Chinese is spoken at some of the LFCON meetings, meaning that some of the members present are unable to understand the conversations had during those meetings, is significant in this regard.

This dominance and the increasing influence of the PRC makes it very difficult for Chinese Dutch people to express themselves on topics that deviates too much from Beijing's political correctness. This applies not only to the first generation, but also to at least some of the Chinese Dutch people who grew up in the Netherlands. While organisations involved with social work, religion, education, culture, leisure, sport, and business may have complete freedom to do whatever they want, they cannot express themselves politically, in case they wish to do so.

This, for example, puts Hong Kong Chinese people in a difficult position, especially at a time when the freedoms of the people in Hong Kong are increasingly being curtailed. Most choose to emphasise China's unity and not to comment further on "politics".

Organisations active in the Netherlands that oppose the policies adopted by the Chinese government in, for example, Xinjiang or Hong Kong, have seen that there are groups within the Chinese community that actively support these Chinese government positions. For example, protesting Uighurs in the Netherlands faced a counter-demonstration by Dutch-speaking Chinese who expressed official Chinese government positions. In addition, a large number of Chinese organisations and companies in the Netherlands, including the LFCON, expressed support in a newspaper – United Times and on social media for the National Security Law, the Hong Kong police, and the SAR government.

An article on the protest movement in Hong Kong in the university newspaper of the University of Groningen resulted in a response from the ACSSNL department in Groningen. On WeChat, this Chinese student organisation stated that this article had presented too broad a notion of freedom of expression. Very recently (February 2021), the situation in Groningen escalated further, with a petition by Groningen students that called for the university to stop working with the Confucius Institute, which allegedly influences students and employees.<sup>45</sup>

However, according to dissident organisations involving Chinese people in the Netherlands, there is no large-scale direct pressure or intimidation from the Chinese community in their direction. **However, these cases do confirm the fact that the Chinese community in the Netherlands is now dominated by people with roots in mainland China and that there is little room for opinions on these types of topics that are odds with those of the Chinese government.**

Groups and organisations that are explicitly committed, or that could be committed to pursuing objectives considered "subversive" by the Chinese authorities (such as positions taken by some Tibetans or Uighurs, as well as calls for Hong Kong autonomy, or for Taiwanese independence, and

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<sup>45</sup> "Studenten in Nederland vrezen China: 'sommigen durven hun mond niet open te doen' " (Students in the Netherlands fear China: 'some do not dare to open their mouths'). NOS February 17th, 2021, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2369102-studenten-in-nederland-vrezen-china-sommigen-durven-hun-mond-niet-open-te-doen.html>, read on 23 February 2021.

support for the Falun Gong) may also face direct consequences. In 2020, Uighurs compiled an extensive record regarding the harassment of Uighurs in the Netherlands by China and reported this to the public prosecutor in Amsterdam. In other cases, these overseas Chinese people are more worried about possible consequences for themselves, or for family members in China or Hong Kong, than they are about actually experiencing such consequences while in the Netherlands. **It is very important that the Dutch government takes action on the Uighur dossier and other reports of harassment from China in the future and brings it up at the diplomatic and political level.**

The Dutch government must also recognise its own responsibility for China's attraction among Chinese people in the Netherlands. After the demise of the minority policy, there was little left for Chinese organisations and leaders to gain from cultivating relations with the Dutch government. Many organisations and individual leaders have therefore increasingly turned to China. China's growth and increasing prestige also, of course, have great appeal. This also applies to Chinese schools, which now operate without supervision or funding and therefore have to source practically all of their teaching materials from China.

The recent uproar over the coronavirus and growing Western distrust of the PRC further contributes to the fact that the Chinese population in the Netherlands feels marginalised by things that the vast majority of them have nothing to do with. These include espionage, disinformation campaigns, misuse of research cooperation, face mask diplomacy, strategic use of investments or acquisitions in the Dutch economy and, more generally, China's geopolitical rivalry. **It is of the utmost importance that the Dutch government takes clear and considered steps to deal with these threats. However, it is equally important that this does not alienate the Chinese population residing in the Netherlands from Dutch society.**

## Appendix 1: List of Chinese organisations and media

Below is a list of important organisations within the Chinese community in the Netherlands. It is not a list of our interview partners. This list is not complete and has been compiled on the basis of, among other things, relevance to this study. In many cases, we chose to include an umbrella organisation rather than local organisations, so for example, national educational organisations are included, instead of individual Chinese schools.

<u>Dutch name</u>	<u>Chinese name</u>	<u>Website</u>	<u>Email</u>
<b>Cultural organisations</b>			
Hua Yi Xie Shang Hui	华裔协商会	<a href="https://www.huayixieshanghui.nl/">https://www.huayixieshanghui.nl/</a>	info@huayixieshanghui.nl
Stichting Chinees Nieuwjaar Festival		<a href="http://www.chineesnieuwjaarfestival.nl/">http://www.chineesnieuwjaarfestival.nl/</a>	chineesnieuwjaarfestival@gmail.com
<b>Government/Party organisations</b>			
Chinees Cultureel Centrum	海牙中国文化中心	<a href="http://www.ccchague.org/nl/index.html">http://www.ccchague.org/nl/index.html</a>	info@ccchague.org
Jiangsu Provincial Economic and Trade Office in Nederland		<a href="http://china-jiangsu.nl/">http://china-jiangsu.nl/</a>	
China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification	荷兰中国和平统一促进会 / 荷兰和平统一促进会		
<b>Native place associations</b>			
Algemene Chinese Vereniging in Nederland	旅荷华侨总会		
Nederlands-Chinese Algemene Vereniging	荷蘭華人總會		
Geboortestreekvereniging Wenzhou	荷兰温州同乡会		
Geboortestreekvereniging Qingtian	荷兰青田同乡会		
Benelux Tsung Tsin Association	歐洲荷比盧崇正總會	<a href="https://tsungtsin.eu/">https://tsungtsin.eu/</a>	
Guangdong Federatie Nederland	荷兰广东总会		
Vereniging van Chinezen Rui-an in Nederland	荷兰瑞安教育基金会	<a href="https://www.vvcrain.com/">https://www.vvcrain.com/</a>	vvcrain@gmail.com
Geboortestreekvereniging Wencheng	荷兰文成同乡会		

Verenigde Geboortestreekvereniging Fujian	旅荷福建同乡联合会		
Geboortestreekvereniging Yongjia	旅荷浙江永嘉同乡会		
TaiwanShianChin	荷蘭台灣鄉親會		
<b>Trade</b>			
Hollands-Chinese Kamer van Koophandel	荷兰中国总商会	<a href="http://www.hckvk.com/">http://www.hckvk.com/</a>	
Shenzhen Association in the Netherlands and Belgium	荷比深圳总商会暨联谊	<a href="http://szba.eu/">http://szba.eu/</a>	
<b>Youth</b>			
Landelijke Federatie Chinese Jongerenverenigingen	荷兰华人青年联合会	<a href="https://www.lfcj.nl/">https://www.lfcj.nl/</a>	lfcj.info@gmail.com
Jongeren Organisatie Nederlandse Chinezen		<a href="https://www.jonc.nl/">https://www.jonc.nl/</a>	joncevent@gmail.com
<b>Umbrella organisation</b>			
Landelijke Federatie van Chinese Organisaties	全荷华人社团联合会		
<b>Media</b>			
China Times	中荷商报	<a href="https://chinatimes.nl/">https://chinatimes.nl/</a>	info@chinatimes.nl
United Times	荷兰联合时报	<a href="http://www.shunhe.nl/">http://www.shunhe.nl/</a>	shunhemedia@gmail.com
Asian News	华侨新天地	<a href="http://asiannews.nl/chinese/">http://asiannews.nl/chinese/</a>	info@asiannews.nl
Chinese radio & tv CRTV	CRTV	<a href="http://www.crtv.nl/">http://www.crtv.nl/</a>	info@crtv.nl
Hollandone	荷兰一网	<a href="https://hollandone.com/">https://hollandone.com/</a>	info@hollandone.com
N.v.t.	荷兰生活网	<a href="https://www.dutchcn.com/">https://www.dutchcn.com/</a>	info@dutchcn.com
Gogodutch	荷乐网	<a href="https://www.gogodutch.com/">https://www.gogodutch.com/</a>	info@gogodutch.com
Epoch Times Nederland		<a href="https://www.epochtimes.nl/">https://www.epochtimes.nl/</a>	nederland@epochtimes.com
<b>Activist</b>			
Free Uyghur		<a href="https://freeuyghur.org/nl/">https://freeuyghur.org/nl/</a>	info@freeuyghur.org
Tibet Support Group		<a href="https://tibet.nu/">https://tibet.nu/</a>	
NL4HK			nlforhk@gmail.com

Stichting Oeigoeren Nederland		<a href="http://www.uyghur.nl/nl/">http://www.uyghur.nl/nl/</a>	
Vereniging Oeigoeren in Nederland		<a href="https://www.facebook.com/uyghuromroep/">https://www.facebook.com/uyghuromroep/</a>	uyghuromroep@gmail.com
<b>Entrepreneurs</b>			
Chinese Ondernemers Rotterdam en Omgeving			
Vereniging Chinese-Aziatische Horeca Ondernemers (VCHO)	中饮公会	<a href="https://vcho.nl/">https://vcho.nl/</a>	info@vcho.nl
VCCO Vereniging Chinese Cafetaria Ondernemers	荷兰华人薯店总会	<a href="https://vcco-nl.com/">https://vcco-nl.com/</a>	vcco2019@gmail.com
Dutch-Chinese Young Entrepreneurs	荷兰华人青年企业家协会	<a href="https://dcye.nl/">https://dcye.nl/</a>	info@dcye.nl
Chinese Ondernemersvereniging Amsterdam	阿姆斯特丹华商会	<a href="http://www.chineseondernemers.nl/contact.html">http://www.chineseondernemers.nl/contact.html</a>	info@chineseondernemers.nl
New China Town		<a href="https://newchinatown.org/">https://newchinatown.org/</a>	Newchinatown070@gmail.com
<b>Education</b>			
Foundation Chinese Education NL	荷蘭中文教育基金會	<a href="http://fcen.org/">http://fcen.org/</a>	info@fcen.org
Chinees Onderwijscentrum Nederland	荷兰话精英教育中心	<a href="https://www.chineesvoorkindern.nl/index.php/nl/">https://www.chineesvoorkindern.nl/index.php/nl/</a>	info@chineesvoorkindern.nl
Stichting Chinees Onderwijs	荷兰中文教育协会	<a href="http://www.chineesonderwijs.nl/">http://www.chineesonderwijs.nl/</a>	info@chineesonderwijs.nl
<b>Elderly</b>			
Chun Pah Landelijke Federatie van Chinese Ouderenverenigingen	荷兰松柏联合总会		
Fayin Amsterdam (is bovendien een Chinese school)	旅荷华人联谊会	<a href="http://www.fayinschool.nl/">http://www.fayinschool.nl/</a>	chineseschoolfayin@gmail.com
De Chinese Brug	中橋	<a href="http://www.chinesebrug.nl/">http://www.chinesebrug.nl/</a>	info@chinesebrug.nl
<b>Professional</b>			
Center for Chinese Professionals in the Netherlands	荷兰华人经济技术发展中心		

## Appendix 2: WeChat use among Chinese in the Netherlands

WeChat (微信) is the most important social media platform used by the Chinese community in the Netherlands. There are many other Chinese and non-Chinese social media in use, but the functionality and flexibility of WeChat make it an almost universally used medium. Below we introduce the most important features and aspects of WeChat, based on an inventory of groups as well as structured interviews with eight so-called administrators of WeChat groups. An extensive list of public (or “official” WeChat groups is also included.

The main WeChat functions are the following:

*WeChat Groups* (微信群) are closed groups of friends within the WeChat messenger function, similar to the function of Whatsapp groups. The maximum member number for a group is 500.

*WeChat Moments* (微信朋友圈) are the main communities of friends/contacts within WeChat, similar to the function of Facebook. WeChat users can also opt to make their ‘Moments’ posts inaccessible to certain contacts within WeChat.

*WeChat Official Accounts* (微信公众号) publish information/posts and that can be “followed” (similar to subscribing) by WeChat users. After following an official account, WeChat user can find all of their followed accounts’ new posts under “Subscriptions” (订阅号信息) in their main chat window. People can share articles from a WeChat Official Account to a chat window and can also leave comments.

*WeChat Mini programs* (微信小程序), a function launched in 2017, are applications within the WeChat app that are like an app within itself, accessible with just a click from within WeChat.

*WeChat Circles* (微信圈) is a Community tool (or: “mini program”) that was implemented in late 2019 and that can be found under the WeChat Search function to access an interest-sharing community where users can search for WeChat Circle groups they can join.

Members of the Chinese community in the Netherlands use Official WeChat Accounts to stay informed about news related to the Netherlands and living in the Netherlands. WeChat Moments is an important social media channel, WeChat Mini Programs are useful applications to get and post information, while WeChat Groups play a role in communicating with other community members who live in the Netherlands and who have shared interests or live in the same city.

Official WeChat Accounts are central locations within the WeChat environment. Popular accounts such as *GoGoDutch* (荷乐网) are followed by a large number of WeChat users in the Netherlands.

Most cities in the Netherlands with a (significant) number of members of the Chinese community will have different WeChat groups to exchange information and make connections. Groups can vary significantly in size. When groups reach the maximum of 500 members, often multiple groups are formed (for example: Groningen Group 1, Groningen Group 2).

The members of a group are not necessarily all located in the Netherlands, since students can return to China and still be a member of that group although they have already graduated and left the country. There are often also special groups for returnees.

There are countless different chat groups, smaller and larger ones, depending on interests and target groups; there are groups for friends, students, but also for Dutch-Chinese / Chinese in the Netherlands who own a restaurant business, for overseas Chinese interested in exchanging money, people who are looking for jobs, people interested in investing in the stock market, people teaching Chinese, book clubs, second-hand markets, Chinese mums in the Netherlands, those interested in cooking, etc.

WeChat Official Accounts are open to every WeChat user and are therefore a useful starting point to gain more insight into the WeChat activities and interests of Chinese diasporic communities in the Netherlands. It is very likely that many different active official accounts are matched by (multiple)

corresponding active WeChat Groups. For example, if there is a WeChat Official Account for the Chinese Christian Community in Rotterdam, it is very likely that the members of such an account will also be active in one or more related WeChat Groups.

For some purposes, a WeChat Official Account is a more appropriate way of communicating than a private WeChat Group. This is especially the case for people looking for things like study information, home rental, job applications, personal ads. A WeChat Official Account is a place where messages can be placed and pinned down in the corresponding category, while in a WeChat Group people chat and it is difficult to get an overview of the available information.

People can only join a WeChat Group at the invitation of the WeChat Group Administrator (群主) or by being added by an individual WeChat user associated with the group, depending on the group's settings. The closed nature of groups might be explained by a number of reasons: because they are private spaces where friends can talk, but also because they are environments where administrators are responsible for the information that is exchanged under new regulations in force since 2017.<sup>46</sup>

Since some WeChat Groups are also abused by scammers, you could argue that joining a WeChat group is a sign of mutual trust. Most groups are for a specific community only. One can only become a member if the administrator or a member first checks your profile (or after a short self-introduction). For example, you only get access to a chat group for Chinese students in Maastricht if you are actually a Chinese student studying in Maastricht.

For this report, we spoke to six administrators of WeChat Groups. Because WeChat Groups are not publicly accessible, the only way to do so was through our personal contacts. As such, nothing can be said about how representative these six are for other administrators in the Netherlands. Three of the interviewees acted as administrators for more than one group on WeChat.

Group activity varies. In general, groups of companies or institutions are more active. A restaurant owner can announce daily takeaway dishes in the group; a company can regularly place new vacancies and professional training courses. Specific task-oriented groups are also regularly active. For example, a group looking for a place to live in Amsterdam regularly receives advertisements. Hobby-oriented groups tend to become inactive over time.

The activities of regionally oriented and some social-identity groups also vary. They can become active at certain times, for example when new members join (i.e. at the beginning of the academic year for university student groups). But the interviews show that such groups tend to become more task-oriented groups over time, serving as an information exchange platform or a second-hand market.

The administrator is the person who initially founded the group. This person may transfer the management rights to another person. The administrator is not explicitly mentioned in the group information; however, he or she usually appears first on the list of members. An administrator's administrative rights include deleting people, publishing notifications, renaming the group, and approving new members.

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<sup>46</sup> 互联网群组信息服务管理规定 (Provisions regarding the management of internet group information services). 国家互联网信息办公室(National Internet Information Office), effective from 8 October 2017, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%BA%92%E8%81%94%E7%BD%91%E7%BE%A4%E7%BB%84%E4%BF%A1%E6%81%AF%E6%9C%8D%E5%8A%A1%E7%AE%A1%E7%90%86%E8%A7%84%E5%AE%9A/22114653?fr=aladdin%22%3E%E4%BA%92%E8%81%94%E7%BD%91%E7%BE%A4%E7%BB%84%E4%BF%A1%E6%81%AF%E6%9C%8D%E5%8A%A1%E7%AE%A1%E7%90%86%E8%A7%84%E5%AE%9A>, read on 10 January 2021.

In general, the administrators interviewed assumed only limited responsibilities and spent little time leading the group. The two most frequently mentioned daily tasks were deleting spam and forwarding information that is relevant to the group.

Administrators of groups sometimes also contact other groups to advertise their products and enlarge their sales market. Many administrators will spend more time following the group at first, with the effort diluting over time. With the exception of two groups that were part of a company, the administrators reported that they no longer read the group messages daily.

During the interviews, administrators were asked if any unwanted incidents occurred in the group. This could be a personal conflict or a violation of WeChat's regulations. A few of them have experienced personal conflicts in their groups. They did not usually take action unless the conflict lasted a long time. In that case, they called on both parties to end their conversation in the chat and removed these members from the group if they refused. The most frequently mentioned unwanted topic is unsolicited advertising. Only one administrator of a group (which shares Dutch expressions and translations) warned about "unhealthy" content. Some others also warned against exchanging money, as this is not legally allowed.

None of the administrators can remember a case where the group chat was censored from China. This lack of incidents may be the result of group members being aware of what can and cannot be said and done, but it is also possible that an administrator no longer actively monitors the messages and simply does not notice such incidents.

Although there is a new regulation that holds group administrators responsible for illegal behaviour in their groups, few administrators interviewed are aware of this regulation or of their legal responsibilities. Such information is also not actively provided to them when setting up the group.

None of the administrators interviewed stated that they had any connection or interaction with the Chinese authorities, such as the Chinese Embassy in the Netherlands or an institution in China. If a Chinese government agency wants to make an announcement, this is usually done via their Official Account and is then posted by other Official Accounts (e.g. GoGoDutch). The information can then be shared in private WeChat groups by members who consider the information important. The administrators interviewed have never received information or instructions directly from the authorities.

The interactions of administrators with the Dutch authorities or Dutch WeChat groups are also very limited. Most groups do not interact with other online or offline groups, with the exception of groups trying to advertise a business.

## List of the most important official public accounts in the Netherlands

This is not a complete list. We have omitted some of the smaller and/or inactive accounts. There are also Dutch commercial companies, brands and universities that have their own WeChat accounts for advertising purposes, and we did not include them in this list.

Ài Hèlán Píngtái 爱荷兰平台, WeChat ID: aihelan911

Individually run, this WeChat account shares articles related to news in the Netherlands and also provides practical information for those looking for jobs, housing, etc. According to an estimate by WeChat data tool “Xiguaji”, this account has over 100,000 active subscribers. A similar estimate (of around 130,000 active users) is provided by “Newrank.”

Amdada Holland 大大华人网荷兰分站, WeChat ID: agdada123

Amdada is a global online platform for overseas Chinese. Via its website and through its WeChat application, users can join the WeChat account for Holland, which provides general news, information about studying, shopping, working, and living in the Netherlands. Website: [amdada.com/city/hl/](http://amdada.com/city/hl/)

Asian News 华侨新天地, WeChat ID: asiannews

Founded in 1992, Asian News is a newspaper mainly distributed in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. Its WeChat account is estimated to have over 100,800 followers (Xiguaji, September 2020). There is also the website [asiannews.nl](http://asiannews.nl) and Weibo [Asian News](#) (currently inactive).

Chinese Association of Life-Sciences in the Netherlands CALN 荷兰华人生命科学协会, WeChat ID: CALN\_weixin

The Chinese Association of Life-Sciences in the Netherlands (CALN) was founded in 1995 to provide a platform for exchanges between China and the Netherlands in the field of science and technology, to promote exchanges between member scientists in the Netherlands. This account provides information about relevant news and (global) activities.

CCGN (Chinese Christelijke Gemeente in Nederland) 荷兰华人基督教会鹿特丹堂, WeChat ID: gh\_61987e1bba20

This account was registered in 2017 and is part of the Rotterdam-based Chinese Christian Church Community. The account shares articles and podcasts, that are basically church sermons in which various Bible chapters are read. Members can also comment on the WeChat ‘sermons.’ The account is like a small community and does not have enough members to be listed by online WeChat data analysis tools.

ChinaTimesNI 中荷商报, WeChat ID: chinatimesnl

Founded in 2003, China Times is a business-oriented newspaper, [supported](#) by the Chinese Embassy in the Netherlands. Its WeChat account has some 30,000 followers ([estimate](#) by WeChat analysis tool Xiguaji, September 2020). There is also a website [chinatimes.nl](http://chinatimes.nl) and Weibo [中荷商报 ChinaTimes](#).

Chinese Embassy in the Netherlands 中国驻荷兰王国大使馆, WeChat ID: “embassy-in-holland”

This is the official WeChat account of the Chinese Embassy in the Netherlands, which shares relevant news for Chinese in the Netherlands, for example: embassy notifications, covid19 updates, activities, and services. The account also allows users to contact the embassy directly. According to an estimate by the Newrank WeChat analysis tool, the account has over 200,000 subscribers.

Dutch China Desk, WeChat ID: “DutchChinaDesk”

Registered in 2020 by Dutch China Desk BV (the Netherlands), this account is part of the Grand Thornton company and informs Chinese in the Netherlands about taxation, consulting and law.

DutchCN.com 荷兰生活网: We Chat ID: dutchcncom

Launched by Yaband Media in 2017, Hélán shēnghuówǎng [claims](#) to reach over than 150k Chinese users in the Netherlands. According to an [estimate](#) by Xiguaji (September 2020), their WeChat account has some 128,000 active subscribers. Hélán shēnghuówǎng also has website [DutchCn.com](#), WeChat Miniprogram 荷兰同城信息 and Weibo [荷兰生活网](#).

GogoDutch 荷乐网, WeChat ID: hoigogodutch

GogoDutch was launched by a privately held company (Beijing Hele Trading Company 北京荷乐商贸易有限责任公司) in 2015, and is known as one of the largest news platforms targeting Chinese in the Netherlands. It also has an app, the website [www.gogodutch.com](#), WeChat Miniprogram 荷兰便民圈 and Weibo account [荷乐网 GogoDutch](#). Its WeChat Official Account has 446,187 followers according to [Newrank.cn](#) as of September 2020, [Xiguaji](#) estimates it has 152,000 active followers. The account focuses on everyday news and offers shopping deals. GogoDutch also hosts message boards. When looking to join new WeChat Groups, GogoDutch is a useful starting point.

Hélán Fángwū Shēnghuówǎng 荷兰房屋生活网, WeChat ID: gh\_2b1244b1e56e

This account is individually run and was only registered under this name in February of 2020. It is not ranked by WeChat analysis tools (yet). This account provides information and news about the Dutch real estate market, and about relevant laws and regulations relating to home rental and ownership.

Hélán Biànmín Xìnxī Píngtái 荷兰便民信息平台, WeChat ID: helanbianmin

Similar to the WeChat Official Account “荷兰公共平台” [“Holland Public Platform”], this account is focused on providing general information to Chinese living in the Netherlands about all sorts of topics, from job-searching to rentals to studying. Every day posts feature many different ads and phone numbers.

Hélán Gōnggòng Píngtái 荷兰公共平台, WeChat ID: “qqqq13941389057”

Individually run since 2017, this WeChat Account is a lively place where people can post and scroll new posts every day relating to job offers, job searching, store rentals, housing, personal ads, immigration assistance, and much more. According to an estimate by [NewRank](#), this account has over 54,000 active members. It really is a ‘public platform’ in the sense that it lists relevant information and phone numbers for Chinese in the Netherlands and allows users to post and request information.

Helan Online 荷兰在线, WeChat ID: helanonlinechina

This account, that has an estimated fan base of 27,000 (September 2020), is run by Dutch Online (<https://helanonline.cn/>), part of RNW Media (Radio Nederland Wereldomroep). It shares news and articles related to the Netherlands and Dutch culture.

Helan Info 此荷兰非彼河南, WeChat ID: helaninfo

This account is registered by an individual and provides news and information about the Netherlands, mostly focusing on leisure and tourism. Its active fanbase is estimated to be around 12,000 people (Newrank, September 2020).

HoITalent 荷兰求职, WeChat ID: Hoitalent

This is a corporate account by Hoitalent, an online job and internship portal for international students. The account provides information about job offers, but also gives information on wages, taxes, or how to compile a resume. According to [NewRank](#), this account has around 16,000 active subscribers.

### Holland ChinaTown Servicedesk 荷兰华人街生活服务台

This is actually not a WeChat Official Account, but a WeChat Mini Program. It allows users to look for and post job vacancies, shop rentals/sales, home rentals/sales, second-hand items, restaurant options, and more. The mini program allows users to focus their search to the regions of Rotterdam, Amsterdam, The Hague, Delft, Utrecht, Eindhoven, Leiden, Groningen, Tilburg, or Arnhem. Only registered users can post to the platform.

### Holland One 一网荷兰, WeChat ID: hollandone

‘Holland One’ was registered in 2015 as an individually run account, and has over 100,000 subscribers (an estimate of 148,000 users is [provided](#) by Newrank). The account shares news and information about the Netherlands, Europe, and Sino-Dutch relations.

### Holland Today 今日荷兰, WeChat ID: gh\_0261fbe40ba8

WeChat account set up by ChinaTimesNI (中荷商报 ChinaTimes) in 2018 providing everyday Dutch and international news, including a daily podcast. The account has approximately 3030 active subscribers according to an [online estimate](#) (September 2020).

### HollandMilker 荷兰奶叔, WeChat ID: “HollandMilker”

This account is registered by FrieslandCampina and provides general lifestyle articles about health, parenting, food, and milk.

### Huárén māmā zài hélán 华人妈妈在荷兰, WeChat ID: chinesemamas\_nl

This WeChat account, started in 2017, introduces itself as a group launched by Chinese mothers living in the Netherlands, to provide and exchange information about parenting. According to Xiguaji, the account approximately has 5080 subscribers (September 2020).

### Líxué zài hélán 留学在荷兰, WeChat ID: hollandstudy

This WeChat account, that has approximately 17,000 subscribers (September 2020), is affiliated with the study abroad agency ‘Orange Dream Study’ (橙梦留学 [cmenglx.com](#)) and provides information about Dutch universities and studying in the Netherlands.

### NextPortHolland 下一站荷兰, WeChat ID: NextPortHolland

This account is run by the Dutch Digital China Marketing Agency Nextport China since 2015, and provides information about lifestyle, travel, and education in the Netherlands.

### Study in Holland 荷兰教育代表处, WeChat ID: studyinholland

**About:** This is the official account of Nuffic Neso China, providing all kinds of information about studying in the Netherlands. Website: [www.nesochina.org/](#)

### Vereniging van Chinese Wetenschappers en Ingenieurs in Nederland 荷兰华人学者与工程师协会, WeChat ID:www\_vwci\_nl

This WeChat account is marked as being privately run, but it is part of the network of the Dutch Association of Chinese Scholars and Engineers (VCWI), which was established in 1997. The WeChat account is estimated to have somewhat over 5000 active members (Newrank, September 2020).

### Xīn ōuzhōu 新欧洲, WeChat ID: xineuro

According to WeChat analyze tools such as Newrank, this account is also often followed by those following the GoGoDutch, ChinaTimesnl, Dutchcn, and HollandOne accounts. This account, with an estimated fanbase of over 700,000, provides information and news about Europe, with a strong focus on France.

## Examples of WeChat groups for Chinese communities in the Netherlands

Since there is no public overview of WeChat Groups and these groups themselves are decided, the following is just a list of examples of existing groups to give a general impression.

- “China Euro” 中欧
  - *Group for exchanging money.*
- “Chinese in Holland Bring [Things] Back and Forth” 荷兰华人往返带物群
  - *Group where people can help each other to bring things/luggage back to China, or from China back to the Netherlands.*
- “Chinese in Holland Investment Communication Group” 荷兰华人投资交流群
  - *Group for exchanging information about investing.*
- “Destined to be in Holland” 缘在荷兰
  - *Group for making friends.*
- “Dutch Chinese Book Club/International” 荷兰华人书友会-国际
  - *Multiple groups for discussing books, news, and more.*
- “Dutch Chinese Forum” 荷兰华人华人论坛群
  - *Chat group.*
- “Dutch Chinese Help Group” 荷兰华人打听求助群
- “Dutch Chinese Housing Rental & Sale Group” 荷兰华人房屋租售群
- “Dutch Chinese Recruitment Group” 荷兰华人招聘求职群
- “Dutch Chinese Second-Hand Market Group” 荷兰华人二手交易群
  - *Group for buying/selling second-hand items.*
- “Dutch Chinese Shop Transfer Group” 荷兰华人店铺转让群
- “Dutch Living Network” 荷兰生活网生活菌
  - *Group under the Dutchcn platform.*
- “Dutch Pronunciation Study Group” 荷兰语拼读学习群
  - *Group focused on language learning.*
- “Holland Information Exchange Group” 荷兰交流信息微信群
  - *Group for exchanging information about living in the Netherlands.*
- “Holland Exchange Students Entrepreneurship Group” 荷兰留学生创业群
  - *Group for Chinese exchange students in the Netherlands.*
- “Holland Business Owners” 荷兰公司老板微信群
  - *Group to exchange experiences on starting & running a company in the Netherlands.*
- “Holland Skateboarding Group” 荷兰滑板交流群
  - *Sport-focused group.*
- “Information Group for Chinese Working in the Netherlands” 华人荷兰职场交流群
  - *Group for those living and working in the Netherlands.*
- “Leiden Student Union New Student Group 2017” 2017 莱顿学联新生群
  - *One among many year-focused student groups.*

- “Sharing Dutch Sceneries Club” 荷兰美景分享微信群
  - *Group to share photos of Dutch landscape and tips on where to visit.*
- “University Twente 2019” UT 2019
  - *One among many groups for new students arriving at university in a particular year.*
- “Utrecht Chinese Exchange Students Group” 荷兰乌德勒支华人留学生微信群 *Group for Chinese exchange students studying in Utrecht.*
- “Wechat Group for Almere Poort” Almere poort 微信群
  - *One among many local groups.*

There are also groups for:

- Amsterdam/Rotterdam/Maastricht/Delft/Wageningen etc. Chinese exchange students
- Business-focused groups for Chinese in the Netherlands
- Chinese teachers in the Netherlands
- Chinese restaurant owner groups
- Cooking exchange groups
- Hometown groups (for people coming from same place in China)
- Hobby focused groups (e.g. pets or photography)
- Language Learning
- Looking for romance / groups for singles (单身群)
- Pregnant women and/or mothers in Amsterdam, Eindhoven, and other cities (妈妈微信群)
- Religion-focused groups
- Second-hand buying/selling for different cities
- Shopping and *daigou*
- Sports-related groups
- Travel-focused
- Work-related groups