

ESN GRONINGEN

DISPUTEN

manual



Your group. Your vibe. Your Dispuut.

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What is a Dispuut?

Have you ever wanted to be part of something more personal, more lasting, and more meaningful than just a student committee or a WhatsApp group? That's what a Dispuut is all about!

In Dutch student culture, a Dispuut is a tight-knit group of students who stick together over the years. While every Dispuut is unique, they all share a sense of belonging and continuity. It's a place where traditions are born, friendships are formed, and members share a strong group identity. While originally a Dutch concept that is central to many Dutch student associations, ESN Groningen is now opening this tradition to international and Dutch students alike.

An ESN Dispuut is what you make of it. While they can be formed around a certain theme, at their core, they are just a group of people who enjoy spending time together and want to make that bond something a bit more meaningful. You build your own group culture, your own inside jokes, maybe even a chant or a weird little ritual. It's about making memories—and having a place where you feel you belong.

Disputen are semi-independent, but still part of the ESN community, meaning they are a great way to stay connected with the association, for example, after doing a committee or being involved at the Introduction Weeks.

In short: a Dispuut within ESN is a small community that's fun, flexible, and completely your own. You define it—but you also carry it forward.

Why Join or Start a Dispuut?



University life is full of new faces, fun events, and fleeting moments—but sometimes, you want something that lasts a little longer. That's where Disputen come in.

Joining (or starting!) a Dispuut gives you the chance to build something more personal and more consistent. It's your own small group of people you can count on—whether it's for spontaneous nights out, deep convos, inside jokes, or just a midweek dinner that turns into a tradition.

For international students, it's also a great way to experience a meaningful part of Dutch student culture in an open, inclusive setting. And for everyone, it's a chance to create your own mini community within the bigger ESN crowd.

Disputen are flexible and self-driven. You don't have to attend meetings or organize big events unless you want to. It's all about bonding, creating shared traditions, and making your time in Groningen feel a little more like home.

A Dispuut lets you stay connected to the ESN community in a way that's personal, low-pressure, and fun. It's a chance to build your own student experience—on your own terms, with people you actually click with.



Disputen at ESN Groningen

How to Start a Dispuut

Thinking about starting your own Dispuut? If you're an ESNcard holder and you've got a small group of motivated friends, you're already halfway there. Simply fill out the official proposal form on the ESN website — all the necessary information is already laid out for you in this manual, so you'll know exactly what you're signing up for.

Your proposal should include the name of your Dispuut, at least four founding members, a leadership structure with a president and treasurer, and a vision for the Dispuut's identity e.g. who the Dispuut is for, whether it is formed around a certain topic or hobby, or simply the vibe you are going for. This is the moment to think about what makes your group unique.

The proposal will be reviewed by the Disputen Approval Committee (DAC) within two weeks. They'll assess if your Dispuut has a unique identity and fits within ESN's code of conduct and values.

Once approved, your Dispuut will enter the integration period to officially establish your group and connect more closely with ESN Groningen.

Integration Period

Once your proposal is approved, your group officially becomes a candidate Dispuut — and your integration period begins! This short, dynamic phase is designed to help you form your Dispuut’s identity, build a strong bond, and get connected to ESN Groningen in a fun and meaningful way.

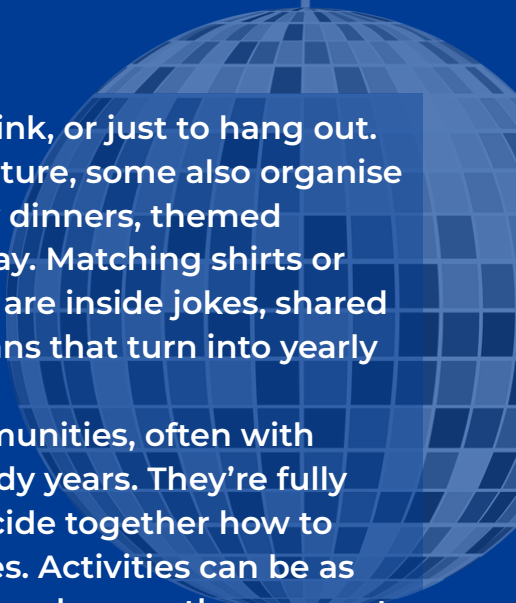
The Integration Period includes a few key moments:

- A Field Day with fun challenges around the city
- Creating your own “Dispuut Rulebook” with your internal structure, Dispuut logo, values, traditions, and whatever makes your Dispuut unique
- A Themed Inauguration Dinner to wrap up this period as a group
- A Dispuut certificate & picture, marking your transition from a candidate Dispuut to an officially recognised ESN Dispuut

This period isn’t about pressure or performance — it’s for you to shape your Dispuut together, bond as a group, and start your ESN chapter with shared memories.

Life Inside a Dispuut

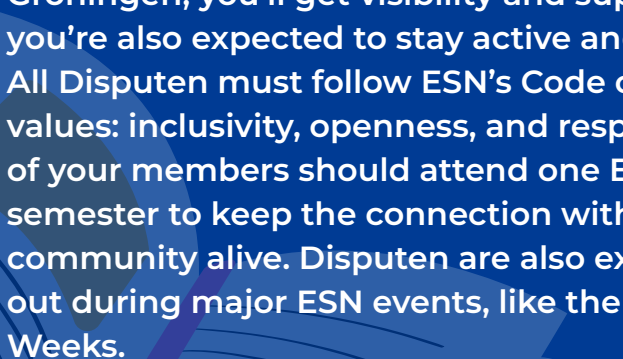
Life in a Dispuut is what you make it — there's no fixed format, which means your group has full freedom to shape its own vibe, routines, and traditions. Many Disputen choose a set day each week



to meet, often for dinner, a drink, or just to hang out. Inspired by Dutch student culture, some also organise borrels, Christmas or birthday dinners, themed events, or even weekends away. Matching shirts or merch are common — and so are inside jokes, shared traditions, or spontaneous plans that turn into yearly rituals.


Disputen are multi-year communities, often with members across different study years. They're fully self-organised, so you can decide together how to divide roles or create new ones. Activities can be as relaxed or creative as you like, as long as they respect ESN's Code of Conduct. In the end, a Dispuut becomes whatever your group turns it into — and that's the fun of it.

Responsibilities of a Recognised Dispuut



Once your Dispuut is officially recognised by ESN Groningen, you'll get visibility and support — but you're also expected to stay active and engaged. All Disputen must follow ESN's Code of Conduct and values: inclusivity, openness, and respect. At least 50% of your members should attend one ESN event per semester to keep the connection with the wider ESN community alive. Disputen are also expected to help out during major ESN events, like the Introduction Weeks.

Internally, your group should keep organising activities and stay in touch with the



Integration Coordinator (IC) of the ESN Groningen board. Presidents join two check-in meetings per year to share updates, feedback, and ideas.

In return, you'll get promotion on ESN's channels and a platform to grow your Dispuut — while helping shape an international take on Dutch student life.

How to Join an Existing Dispuut?

Want to join an existing Dispuut? Awesome! Any ESNcard holder can apply! — but keep in mind that Disputen are selective by nature. Like traditional Dutch Disputen, members are chosen by the current group, often based on shared vibes or interests.

There are two main recruitment periods each year: late September and late February. That's when you can apply to join their new generation of members. Each group runs its own selection process — from interviews to dinners or casual get-togethers.

If you're selected, you'll take part in a fun and short integration period to get to know your group and its traditions. This period can look different for every Dispuut, but its main purpose is for you to grow closer to the people in your future Dispuut.

Keep an eye on ESN's socials and website to see when and which Disputen are open!



FAQs

How is a Dispuut different from a committee?

Disputen are social, self-organized groups focused on community and traditions and exist for multiple years, while committees handle specific tasks or events. A committee is chosen by the ESN Groningen board, and members are only part of it for a maximum of one year.

Can I join if I'm only here for one semester?

Yes, of course! All Disputen are open to short-term members, but selection is eventually up to the group.

Can I leave a Dispuut when I don't like it anymore?

Absolutely, you can leave anytime. Just inform the president of your Dispuut at least a week in advance.

Are there any costs associated with starting or joining a Dispuut?

Generally, there are no formal costs associated with starting or joining a Dispuut. However, members need to have a valid ESNcard. Furthermore, some internal Dispuut activities or merch might have small costs, but these are decided within the group.

What if I don't know anyone?

No worries! Disputen often choose new members based on shared interests, not just existing friendships. After all, their purpose is also to form new friendships, meaning they are a great way for you to meet new people.

Can I join or start a Dispuut if I'm a Dutch and not an international student?

Yes, definitely! Membership is open to any ESNcard holder. We are happy to also encourage Dutch students to join or start a Dispuut!

Can Disputen collaborate with each other?

Yes, they can always team up for activities or socials. This is eventually up to the Disputen themselves.

Couldn't find your question?

In case you have a different question about the Disputen, don't hesitate to send an email to integration@esn-groningen.nl. We are happy to help!

Final Words



We hope that with this manual we could give you a good introduction to the ESN Disputen and motivate you to start or join a Dispuut yourself!

If you want any more tips on specific topics or have a question or comment about anything related to the ESN Disputen, feel free to contact us via integration@esn-groningen.nl.

On behalf of ESN Groningen, we wish you good luck and lots of fun with the Disputen!

