**GET IN TOUCH (GIT) COMING INTO LIFE**

Already for some years the TU/e organized several activities to stimulate the well-being of their international colleagues and of their spouses, such as introduction days, a buddy system and get-togethers for spouses. Yet the feedback they received suggested that many spouses still have trouble adapting, building new networks, and making sense of their new lives, in the period after arriving in Eindhoven.

Each year several international employees prematurely have been leaving the university. This appears to be largely due to the spouses not coping well with their new life. This is in accordance with the findings reported in literature (see for instance van Erp, 2011, p. 105).

As researched by the TU/e, there was a need for something that could help prevent the international employees from leaving Eindhoven and going back to their country. Mainly since their partners felt distant and lonely in a new place, moving back to their own place seemed rather necessary. All in all, this gave the TU/e the incentive to increase its efforts towards the spouses.

By happy coincidence Carola Eijsenring (founder Indigo-Wereld) mentioned around that same time in her regular contact with Willem van Hoorn (Adviser internationalization, Eindhoven University of Technology, Department for Personnel and Organization) her freshly developed new program, specifically meant for international spouses. Carola (and one of her volunteer international spouses in Indigo-Wereld) had come up with this concept, because they had found out that a lot of highly educated international spouses struggled with finding an equally leveled connection with their new residence and with others (Dutch & internationals) to build up their new social networks and create an anchoring in their new residence.

This fruitful meetup led to the request of the TU/e to Indigo-Wereld to organize some pilot groups, modified and tailor-made to fit the needs of the TU/e international spouses (2011). Because both pilots had been positively evaluated, they continued with the regular Get in Touch program, created & executed by Indigo-Wereld and offered for free by TU/e to the spouses of their international knowledge workers (straight from 2012 till now).

Hence started Get in Touch, the social support program for accompanying spouses of international knowledge workers, where they can feel safe and warm. Main mantra with certitude was happy partner= happy employee= happy employers. The vice president of the TU/e Board Mr. Jo van Ham, expressed in the GiT film “Get in touch with .. Get in Touch” ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3V9r_tfBbug>, 2014): “HR management has not only to do with the job and the workload, but should also support the spouses. The program helps them to make friends and to have an idea of what Eindhoven has to offer.”

An extra back support for GiT came in **2014** when Carola Eijsenring and Willem van Hoorn were happily invited in London to receive the **International** **EMEA Award** for the **“best family support program”** in **Europe**.

In the course of time, Carola opened up her GiT program to spouses from other companies or organizations, as well. Regularly individual ‘external’ spouses are interested to join the program too, which is possible on a personal membership basis.

The main goal of the GiT Program is to help spouses to build up again a meaningful life in their new residence, by connecting spouses with their new home town, with other people and with the inner strength of each individual person. Or in other words: by energizing, socializing and empowering people.