

Praise for

Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands

"Every study programme at every ROC, university of applied sciences, and university should hand out this book during open days. *Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands* is a must-read for all students and should be seen as an investment in both their current life and future. Living according to the *Key Takeaways* from this book will ensure that young people do not burden themselves with enormous debts that will haunt them for the rest of their lives."

—Ron Bormans, *Former Chairman of the Executive Board of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Chairman of the Advisory Committee Strategic Education Alliance*

"*Living Rich as a Student in The Netherlands* helps students transition into university life while also serving as a valuable guide beyond graduation. Relevant at every stage of the student journey, it empowers students, including recent graduates like myself, to make smart financial choices and build a lasting foundation. With theory, practical examples, and personal stories, this book is an invaluable resource for any student looking to start making smart financial decisions that last a lifetime."

—Isabelle de Cuba, *Alumni Rotterdam Business School, Founder of the Mindful Journal*

"Mr. Seute has truly nailed it with this must-have, must-read book. Students often struggle with a limited budget, stretching every euro in impossible ways just to make ends meet. Some take on temporary jobs while studying, while others face real financial hardship. In simple and practical terms, Mr. Seute outlines the essential steps students can take not just to survive, but to save money along the way. I highly recommend this book to all students—I only wish it had been available when I was a student myself."

—Evelyn Wever-Croes, *Former Prime Minister of Aruba*

"A valuable resource for students looking to make smarter financial decisions and build lasting habits for the future."

—Diederik Kemmerling, *President of the Aruba Chamber of Commerce*

"I have great admiration for Franklin's genuine commitment to help students and young professionals on the topic of personal finances. With his new book he reaffirms his commitment and empowers the readers to take control of their finances and to be truly independent and free. It's the ultimate guide for any student!"

—James van der Linde MSc, *Former Head of Education Department Arubahuis, Owner Dinamico Training and Consultancy*

"If you want to learn how to achieve financial stability in young adulthood, this book is for you. This book comes at a crucial time, as many young adults face financial challenges. The book is well-written and filled with practical examples that address key financial issues young adults often encounter."

—Dr. O. Eerenberg, *Lecturer at Avans University of Applied Sciences*

"Are you a student in the Netherlands? Buy this book! It will save you money, time and trouble. After reading *Living Rich as a student in the Netherlands* you know the rules as it gives you all practical information about what you need to know when studying here but it will also give you the tools to a financially stable start of your adult life. A must-read for all young adults in the Netherlands!"

—Kumi Tempels, *Senior Policy Advisor at Nuffic and Volunteer Helping Young People Become and Remain Financially Fit*

"*Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands* is the ultimate guide for students who want to thrive financially without sacrificing the fun of student life. The Five Bucket System shared in this book, offers a practical and effective way to manage your income and expenses wisely. It's packed with hands-on strategies to help you live debt-free, make the most of your student years, and start building wealth for the future. If you want to take control of your finances and truly live rich as a student in the Netherlands, this book shows you exactly how to do it."

—James Ocalia, *Author of 'Roots and Renewal - a Path to Sustainability in Aruba'*

"*Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands* is an outstanding guide for students, promoting financial literacy, early wealth-building, and responsible money management. It's a must-read for any young person looking to take control of their financial future."

—Geoffrey Wever, *Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs and Primary Sector of Aruba*

"*Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands* is a must-have for students and young professionals looking to build financial resilience. Franklin Seute's Five-Bucket System, combined with his practical advice, makes this book a powerful guide to financial stability in the Netherlands."

—Peter Auwerda, *Father of Three International Students in the Netherlands*

"This book is an essential guide for students and young professionals looking to make the most of their time in the Netherlands. With insightful tips on budgeting, housing, and everyday life, it offers practical advice for anyone wanting to live well without overspending."

—**Joselin Croes, *Director of the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Aruba in the Netherlands***

"*Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands* by Franklin Seute is an inspiring and practical guide for students in the Netherlands who want to take control of their finances and lifestyle. Franklin shares his powerful story with honesty and resilience, offering valuable lessons on financial discipline and informed decision-making. His insights empower students to build a strong financial foundation while maintaining a high-quality lifestyle. A must-read for anyone looking to thrive, not just survive, during their student years!"

—**Viola Heutger**

"For students but also for young starters and adults, living in the Netherlands or in the Dutch Kingdom, all of us can learn from *Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands* and improve our financial literacy. The book gives insights and tips on how to improve your way of spending money, but also teaches us new habits to hold and make money. All with one purpose: to live without financial worries and have a good life!"

—**Anna Maria Proveyer-Groot, *Director of the Department of Education Aruba***

"With his second and even stronger book, *Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands*, Franklin Seute reaches an even broader audience. Once again, he proves his talent as both a writer and financial guide, helping students thrive. His Five-Bucket System offers practical insights not just for students—it provided valuable takeaways for me too, which I'll certainly apply. Hailing from Aruba, the island can take pride as Franklin continues to inspire. I have no doubt we'll see another great book from him soon. I sincerely encourage him to continue (creative) writing and sharing his insights."

—**Jorien Wuite, *Founder of Creative Hub Lemonade, Former Minister and Member of the Dutch House of Representatives***

Living Rich as a Student in the Netherlands

*Your Ultimate **Financial Guide** to Building
Wealth as a **Student** or **Young Professional***



Franklin R. Seute

Second Edition



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SECOND EDITION

"This book is dedicated to all students and young professionals in the Netherlands—and to anyone striving to take control of their personal finances."

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Preface to the Second Edition

Since its initial release, this book has established itself as an invaluable resource, serving as a practical guide for both international and Dutch students alike to effectively manage their personal finances and embrace a frugal lifestyle in the Netherlands. The core objective of this book is to provide students and young professionals with a comprehensive understanding of how living frugally in the Netherlands can help someone attain financial independence in the future. Additionally, it aims to equip students with essential knowledge on budgeting, managing, earning, and investing money while navigating their student journey.

As I am finishing the last chapters of this book, I've completed my bachelor's degree in mechatronics engineering and can close the chapter of my student life. Since then, I've been working as an engineer in the Netherlands and continue to help students with their finances. It has been a long and wonderful journey, and I am grateful for all the opportunities the Netherlands has offered me and will always cherish the great friendships I made. However, there were also many struggles I encountered during my time as a student in the Netherlands. At 17, I moved to the Netherlands after finishing high school in Aruba. In 2015, I started studying at Avans University of Applied Science in Breda, right when the Dutch government ditched the basic grant and introduced the loan system for students. If that wasn't bad enough I finished my bachelors right when they reintroduced the basic grant. So now I start my adult life with a huge student debt of almost €100K which means getting a reasonable mortgage is out of the picture. In 2020, the pandemic hit, and on top of everything else, there's been an ongoing housing crisis in the Netherlands that makes finding a place especially hard for low-income international stu-

dents. Money played a huge role in my overall student experience. If you didn't have wealthy parents to pay your rent and fund your lifestyle, you had to learn to live with what you could afford and that's basically surviving with €1.000, while average living expenses were around €1.350. Our generation is dubbed the "*unlucky generation*" (*pechgeneratie* in Dutch) due to all the unfortunate events that occurred during my university years. In spite of all of this, it made me resilient. I gained insightful knowledge on how to deal with difficult situations as a student. I once had doubts about how I could ever pay back my student debts or afford a house in the future, but all these worries have vanished thanks to the solutions I've found and shared in this book. This is one of the main reasons I wrote this book, to help other students face their problems and become more resilient and confident with their finances.

I am incredibly grateful for the students who have read and found value in the first edition; you have taken significant strides toward improving your personal finances. From the early drafts and pre-orders in 2020 to the prospective students preparing to embark on their studies in the Netherlands, I extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you. Over time, I have had the privilege of presenting this book alongside workshops to diverse audiences, both in the Netherlands and in the Caribbean, further assisting students in their budgeting endeavors.

In this second edition, you can expect a wealth of new content and an arsenal of tools for the frugal student. Building upon the feedback received from the first edition along with additional insights gathered throughout the years, I have attempted to perfect this book. My aim is to provide you with a complete and practical guide to living a student life with the confidence to manage your finances effectively. My aspiration is for this book to become a timeless piece, ensuring that its practical lessons and tips remain relevant even in the future. If you find value in this book, I kindly invite you to consider recommending it to others, as your support would greatly contribute to the expansion of the frugal student community in the Netherlands. Thank you.

Sincerely,

—Franklin Seute
Tilburg, the Netherlands

Introduction: The '*Pechgeneratie*'

Congratulations on taking the first step towards improving your financial situation as a student or young professional! If you're anything like me, you've experienced struggles with money at some point in your life and are eager to improve your financial situation. Studying abroad, particularly in the Netherlands, can be a whole new adventure, and it's crucial to understand how everything works financially. I moved from Aruba to the Netherlands in 2015 to pursue my studies, and like many international students, I quickly realized how complex and overwhelming the financial system can be. Unfortunately, there isn't a comprehensive guide for Dutch and international students that covers all the financial aspects you need to know when you start studying and living independently in the Netherlands. Instead of having all the information readily available, people often advise you to figure things out on your own and make the most of it. However, the reality is that there are numerous financial mistakes you can avoid if you're aware of them in advance.

Realizing this, I decided to make a change because not everyone is familiar with all financial aspects of student life. While some individuals might know a few ways to save money as a student (such as finding affordable furniture or applying for government benefits), not many can provide you with a comprehensive A-to-Z guide on saving, managing, and earning

money as a student. That's precisely why I created this book—to help you navigate through student life and offer insights on how you can improve your financial situation.

Compared to our parents' generation, many of us in the younger generation are starting adult life with significantly more student debt and higher interest rates, making it harder to achieve financial stability. Everything is getting more expensive, and the world economy is experiencing a sharp rise in inflation. We are also in a housing crisis; most of us can't afford a decent place to live anymore due to high demand and limited supply. The Dutch media even dubbed our generation the "unlucky generation" (*pechgeneratie* in Dutch). I'm in the group of students who did not receive a basic grant (part of the student finance scheme) between 2015 and 2022. I began my studies in 2015, the very year the Dutch government removed the basic grant and introduced the student loan. In 2023, I completed my bachelor's degree—just after the basic grant was reintroduced. So you can imagine how unlucky I feel repaying all that additional student debt.



Now the question is: how can we, as the "unlucky generation", become financially independent when all odds seem against us? How can we thrive financially in times of uncertainty? This is a hard question to answer, because there isn't a clear path. However, there's one thing I can tell you for sure: this book will definitely give you some answers and help you reach your financial goals. Over the years I've done extensive research on personal finance and studying in the Netherlands. I've spoken to hundreds of students about their finances to better understand our shared struggles. I've also given workshops to help students improve their financial situation and build confidence in managing their money. I've compiled every tip and insight I know about budgeting, managing money, taxes, earning income, repaying student debt, investing, and navigating student life in general. Additionally, this book is filled with useful web-

sites, tools, organizations, and apps, along with my personal experiences as both an international and Dutch student living in the Netherlands. What this book offers you is financial peace of mind, financial understanding, financial stability, and a blueprint for achieving financial independence — all based on the principles of frugality. By the time you finish this book, you'll feel more confident about your money, knowing you're on the path to financial independence.

Financial independence: *having enough income to cover your living expenses without needing to actively work.*

Financial independence means having enough income to cover your basic needs without needing to actively work. It's a dream many of us share—to bid farewell to money worries and embrace financial independence. And you know what? Your time as a student is the perfect opportunity to start! Now, let's get real for a moment. We're all pursuing different careers here—engineers, doctors, lawyers, architects, professors, economists, artists, you name it. But here's the truth—money matters to all of us, regardless of our field of study. It may not be obvious at first, but sooner or later, the pivotal role money plays in our lives becomes crystal clear. That's why it's essential to start intertwining your chosen academic path with financial literacy. Learning about money is essential in life. After all, what lies ahead after graduation? Working and living independently; all of these things come with financial responsibilities. Living independently while studying can bring its fair share of stress as you're juggling between coursework and finances. But don't worry, I'm here to help you navigate that path and ensure your financial well-being. Together, we'll keep those stress levels in check. Imagine gaining a solid understanding of money matters and having a clear view of your future, free from impulsive spending on things you don't truly need. It's all about being in control. Let's make your student days a time of growth, learning, and financial empowerment!

To me, having money means having the freedom to make choices and live life on my own terms. Having the ability to do whatever I want when

I want and not needing to work is true freedom. If you cherish freedom as much as I do, then you'll be motivated to strive for mental, emotional, and financial freedom. Within the pages of this book, you'll discover essential knowledge on how to become a financially empowered student by harnessing the power of frugality. Drawing from research papers, personal finance books, and my own experiences as an international/Dutch student living frugally in the Netherlands, this book delves into the defensive side of money management—focusing on savings and financial control—rather than solely on earning and investing, all of which are crucial for building wealth. This book incorporates examples and clear diagrams to simplify complex information, ensuring a straightforward learning experience. This book is divided into four parts:

Part I: A Frugal Lifestyle—Thrift to Thrive

The first part focuses on what most millionaires and billionaires have in common—a **frugal mindset**. This part emphasizes how frugal habits set financially successful individuals apart from the rest, why even high-income earners live paycheck-to-paycheck, and how you as a student or young professional can break this cycle with the help of the principles of frugality. Moreover, you will learn how the student finance (DUO) works, which scholarships and tax benefits are available in the Netherlands, and why student discounts matter more than earning extra money. Appendix A: **Arsenal of Tools for the Frugal Student** is filled with useful apps, websites, and organizations that you can use to help you during your time studying in the Netherlands. In the back of the book you will find helpful checklists and templates about budgeting, you can fill in.¹

Part II: Hitting The Limit—Taking Control of Your Finances

Once you've adopted a frugal mindset, it's time for Part II: **hitting the limit**. This phase involves evaluating your entire financial situation and creating a budget that provides a comprehensive overview of your income and expenses. Numerous categories of monthly expenditures offer potential areas for savings. I'll show you various money-saving techniques that, when applied consistently, will enable you to surpass your financial goals over time.

¹Check out appendices B, E, F and G.

Part III: Building Back Up—How To Accumulate Wealth

After hitting the limit, Part III delves into rebuilding, but with a focus on meaningful expenditure. Here, you'll find the strategy I use to take full control of my finances—the **five-bucket system**. This system ensures you always have funds available for unexpected circumstances while also planning for the future. By applying this money-saving strategy you will automatically accumulate wealth each month.

Part IV: Become Limitless—Because Earning Income Has No Limit

Once you've gained mastery over your finances, it's time for the final part: **become limitless**. In this phase, you'll discover the eight ways to generate income as a student or young professional, giving you the opportunity to have multiple income streams in the future. You will learn how the three income tax boxes in the Netherlands work and what the best way is to repay your student debt. Lastly, you will gain a fundamental understanding of investing and the power of compound interest. Also, you will know which investment app is the best to use.

Who is This Book For?

At the beginning, this book was solely intended for international students wanting to get a head start with their finances in the Netherlands. However, 90% of this book is also applicable to Dutch students and young professionals living independently. There's a lot of practical information and tips on saving, budgeting, earning, and investing that not everyone might know of. That's why it was a bit hard to determine the right audience for this book. I think a better way to put it is this:

"This book is mainly intended for students and young professionals in the Netherlands who want to improve their personal finances by learning how to save, budget, manage, earn, and invest money, as well as how to handle debt and taxes."

For **international students** specifically, Part I and II are important because they illustrate the requirements for a smooth transition in the Netherlands, as well as the average living expenses and how to reduce them. For **Dutch students** and **young professionals** in particular, Part III and IV highlight the five-bucket system I use to effectively manage my finances, the eight income streams, how the Dutch income tax system works, and

the importance of investing.

How To Read This Book

This book is a practical guide that is meant to help you every step of the way with your finances. That being said, there are key takeaways at the end of each chapter. All websites, apps, organizations, and tools for the frugal student are summarized in Appendix A. There are a number of essential templates at the back of the book that you can also fill in. Are you excited to embark on this journey? Fantastic! Before we dive in, make sure you're comfortably settled. Take care of the essentials for your new home (bed sheets and plates, not just beer), and get ready to take notes. Initially, it may seem challenging, and that's because it is. However, don't worry, and don't let it intimidate you. After a few months of practice, you'll become familiar with the Dutch system and be grateful that you've made this decision. Let's get started!