



## Joining your partner in the Netherlands

### Are you planning to live with your partner in the Netherlands?

If so, read this leaflet first.

### Think carefully about your decision!

It is not easy to move to another country.

### If you move to the Netherlands, you will have obligations:

- You must learn the Dutch language.
- You must learn about Dutch society and customs.
- You must take an active part in Dutch life, for instance by working or taking a course.

This process is called 'civic integration' or 'integrating into Dutch society'.

### Make a plan with your partner

- What can you do to start learning Dutch in the country where you are living?
- What kind of work or course are you interested in? And how do you plan to find it?
- Do you already have a qualification? If so, it may be valid in the Netherlands. But first you must have it evaluated.
- Where are you going to live?

A plan can help you make a good start in the Netherlands.

### This leaflet will help you make a plan

It tells you all about life in the Netherlands:

- opportunities
- obligations
- and possible problems

## Step 1: Preparation

### *What do you know about the Netherlands?*

You have probably wondered what the Netherlands is like. Make sure that you know what to expect. Perhaps you have already started the civic integration process. To be allowed to live in the Netherlands, you must pass the Civic Integration Examination Abroad. You can read all about it in this leaflet (see Step 2).

### *Do people in the Netherlands have it easy?*

The Netherlands is a prosperous country. But it is also expensive to live there and not everyone is rich. By working, you earn money to cover your living costs. It is usual for both partners in a couple to work.

### *Talk to your partner*

Tell your partner what you expect. And ask your partner what he or she expects. Make agreements about who will do the cleaning and cooking, or look after the children. For a couple, living together in a new country is not always easy. Especially if you and your partner have never lived in the same house, or perhaps only for a short time.

### *If you move to the Netherlands, you will have a lot to organize*

For example:

You must continue with the civic integration progress by attending an integration course (*inburgeringscursus*). You must make the arrangements yourself. Read all about *civic integration in the Netherlands* elsewhere in this leaflet (see Step 3).

You must arrange health insurance, and register with a local doctor and dentist.

You must look for work or a course. Getting a job is the quickest way to integrate into Dutch society.

Do you have any qualifications? If so, you must have them evaluated (*diplomawaardering*). A foreign qualification may not be equivalent to a Dutch one. In that case, you will have to do some extra training in the Netherlands and get an extra qualification before you can start working at the same level.

### *Prepare carefully for the first few weeks*

During your first few weeks in the Netherlands, your partner may be out at work, so you will often be alone. Make sure you have enough to do. Explore your new neighborhood. Get to know people, including people from a different country than you. This will help you to learn Dutch more quickly.

Here are some useful tips from other people who have settled in the Netherlands:

'Get to know the area where you live. Walk or cycle round the streets. Each time, try to go a bit further away from home.'

'Make an effort to speak Dutch. Don't always expect people to translate for you.'

'Every day, talk to your neighbors and people in the shops.'

'Learn to ride a bike or drive a car.'

'Go to the local community centre (*buurthuis*). They often organize interesting activities.'

'Are you making slow progress with learning Dutch? Then ask your teacher for more homework. Or take some extra lessons.'

'Watch Dutch TV every day.'

'You can learn Dutch faster by watching children's TV programs and by reading the subtitles for deaf people (go to Teletext page 888).'

'Speak only Dutch for a few hours every day, or a whole day every week.'

'Find a volunteer language coach (*vrijwillige taalcoach*).'

'Ask people to correct you if you make a mistake in Dutch or if your pronunciation is wrong.'

'Look for a job. If you don't find one, do some unpaid volunteer work (*vrijwilligerswerk*).'

'Join a club (*vereniging*) in your area. It's a good way to meet people who can help you.'

### *Both you and your partner must look after your children*

In the Netherlands, children are brought up by both their parents, not just their mother. It is considered normal to bring up children and work or attend a course.

### *Your rights: what you need to know*

In the Netherlands, some things will be different than in your country. For example, men and women have the same rights. Your partner cannot tell you what to do. You decide that yourself. You make your own choices about how and where to spend your time and who to talk to.

### *Marriage and divorce: a free choice*

In the Netherlands, forced marriage is against the law. Forcing someone to stay married is also forbidden. Every person is free to marry or not to marry, and to choose their own partner. Divorce is also a free choice. You can find more information (in Dutch) at: [www.trouwentegenjewil.nl](http://www.trouwentegenjewil.nl), [www.chatmetfier.nl](http://www.chatmetfier.nl), [www.hallokezban.nl](http://www.hallokezban.nl), [www.alsniemandietsweet.nl](http://www.alsniemandietsweet.nl).

### *Getting help*

What should you do if problems arise between you and your partner, or between you and your partner's family? Or if someone acts violently towards you? In the Netherlands, you can get help in situations like these. Contact:

your doctor

a social worker (*maatschappelijke werker*)

the Domestic Violence Advice and Support Centre, at [www.huiselijkgeweld.nl](http://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl)

You will receive help and protection, and your problems will be treated confidentially.

### *Everyone is equal*

In the Netherlands, we treat everyone the same. Discrimination is forbidden by law.

It's okay to be gay or lesbian.

It's okay to have a different opinion.

It's okay to have a different skin colour.

To find out more, go to [www.discriminatie.nl](http://www.discriminatie.nl).

### *Circumcision and FGM are against the law*

In the Netherlands it is forbidden to circumcise girls and women. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a punishable offence. If you yourself have already been circumcised, you will not be punished. But you can ask for help, for instance from a doctor.

## ***Step 2: Civic integration abroad***

### *Passing the Civic Integration Examination Abroad*

You must make a start with civic integration in the country where you live, before you come to the Netherlands. In order to obtain a Dutch residence permit (MNV), you must first pass an examination – the Civic Integration Examination Abroad (*basisexamen inburgering in het buitenland*). This is compulsory, even if you are an imam or preacher.

### *Where can I get more information about admission to the Netherlands and applying for an MNV?*

Contact the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND):

Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND)  
Telephone: 0900 1234561 (€0.10 per minute)  
From abroad, the number is: +31 20 889 30 45  
Internet: [www.ind.nl](http://www.ind.nl). Go to the *Klantdienstwijzer* (in Dutch) to find out if you are required to take the exam.

### *What does the Civic Integration Examination Abroad consist of?*

The exam consists of three tests:

1. Spoken Dutch: you must be able to speak Dutch.
2. Reading Comprehension: you must be able to read Dutch.
3. Knowledge of Dutch Society: you must know about Dutch life and customs, and also the rules and regulations in the Netherlands.

### *What to expect during the exam*

#### *Spoken Dutch*

There are two kinds of questions:

1. On the screen you see a man or woman. He or she asks you a question. Answer the question.
2. You hear a sentence. You also see it on the computer screen. The sentence is incomplete. You have to finish the sentence yourself. Say the answer.

#### *Reading Comprehension*

There are two kinds of questions:

1. On the headphones you hear a word, number or sentence. You read four words, numbers or sentences on the computer. Click on the correct answer.
2. You read six short texts on the computer. With each text, there are two questions. Each question has three or four possible answers. Click on the correct answer.

#### *Knowledge of Dutch Society*

There are 30 questions on the computer. Each one has a photo. You can read and hear the questions. Each question has two possible answers. Click on the correct answer. The questions are about seven subjects:

1. The Netherlands: geography, housing and transport
2. Dutch history
3. Government and the Dutch constitution, voting and democracy, and legislation
4. The Dutch language, and why it is important to learn it
5. Parenting and education
6. The healthcare system
7. Work and income

#### *Preparing for the civic integration exam with the self-study package*

You can prepare for the exam with a self-study package entitled *Naar Nederland*. It teaches you the Dutch language and introduces you to life in the Netherlands. The package costs about €100. You can buy it from bookshops or order it online. For more information, go to [www.naarnederland.nl](http://www.naarnederland.nl).

You can also go to [www.naarnederland.nl](http://www.naarnederland.nl) if you want to practise for the civic integration exam. There you will find a sample of the three tests.

*The self-study package consists of six items:*

1. A guide and audio CD
2. A DVD film about the Netherlands (*Naar Nederland*)
3. A book containing photos from the film *Naar Nederland* with an audio CD
4. A work book, *Naar Nederland: Nederlands voor anderstaligen* ('To the Netherlands: Dutch for non-Dutch speakers') with audio CDs
5. A DVD containing a computer-based practice program
6. A login code for the online practice program

*The self-study package is available in Dutch and 18 foreign languages:*

Chinese, Dari, English, French, Indonesian, Kurdish, Moroccan Arabic, Pashto, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Standard Arabic, Tarifit/Rif Berber, Thai, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

#### *Where can I take the exam?*

- At a Dutch embassy
- At a Dutch consulate

Go to <http://www.inburgeren.nl/apps/aanmelden/#/> to find out whether your country has a Dutch embassy or consulate where you can take the exam. If not, you will have to travel to another country. When you register for the exam you can choose the country where you want to take the exam.

#### *How do I register for the exam?*

Fill in the form at [www.naarnederland.nl/category/aanmelden](http://www.naarnederland.nl/category/aanmelden). Together, the three parts of the exam cost €350. But you can also take any part separately, for instance if you fail it and want to retake it. *Spoken Dutch* costs €150. *Reading Comprehension* costs €100. *Knowledge of Dutch Society* costs €100. The exam is organized by the Education Executive Agency (DUO).

#### *What happens after I have registered?*

After you have registered, you will receive confirmation from DUO, telling you how to pay the exam fees. When your payment has been received, DUO will contact you again and invite you to make an exam appointment with a Dutch embassy or consulate. For more information, go to [www.naarnederland.nl](http://www.naarnederland.nl). If you have any questions, call the public information service line on 1400 (from within the Netherlands). From abroad, call +31 77 465 6767. You can also send an email. Go to [www.rijksoverheid.nl](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl).

#### *What happens on the day of the exam?*

- You arrive at the consulate or embassy at the date and time arranged.
- You go to the reception desk.
- You show your passport or other identity document (*identiteitsbewijs*). The official makes a copy.
- The official takes a photo of you.
- The official takes your fingerprints.
- All the data are entered in the computer.

#### *What is the procedure if I take all three parts of the exam together?*

1. The official explains the *Knowledge of Dutch Society* test.
2. You take the *Knowledge of Dutch Society* test. You have a maximum of 30 minutes.
3. After a short break, the official explains the *Reading Comprehension* test.
4. You take the *Reading Comprehension* test. You have a maximum of 35 minutes.
5. After a short break, the official explains the *Spoken Dutch* test.
6. You take the *Spoken Dutch* test. You have a maximum of 30 minutes.

You take the exam on a computer. In total, you will be at the embassy or consulate for about two hours.

#### *Pass or fail?*

To get a 'pass' result, you must be successful in all three parts of the exam. You will receive the results for each part separately. If you fail any one part of the exam, you will have to take that part again.

#### *When will I get the results?*

DUO will send you your exam results as soon as possible, in any case within eight weeks. If you have passed all three parts of the exam, you can apply for a residence permit (MVV). Please note that certain rules apply to residence permit applications. For more information, contact the Immigration

and Naturalization Service (IND). Go to [www.ind.nl](http://www.ind.nl) or call 088 0430 430. From abroad, call +31 88 0430 430.

*Apply for your residence permit within one year of passing the exam*

If you are too late, you will have to take the whole exam again. The year starts from the date on which you passed the whole exam, or the last part of it.

*What happens if I fail the exam?*

You can take the exam again. You will have to re-register and pay the exam fees again: <http://www.naarnederland.nl/category/aanmelden>.

*Some people are exempt from taking the exam*

To find out whether this applies to you, go to: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/nieuw-in-nederland/vraag-en-antwoord/kan-ik-vrijstelling-krijgen-voor-het-basisexamen-inburgering-in-het-buitenland.html>

*What if I cannot take the exam?*

Some people are unable to take the exam, for instance for health reasons. To find out whether you can claim exemption on these grounds, go to:

<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/nieuw-in-nederland/vraag-en-antwoord/kan-ik-onthefing-krijgen-voor-een-inburgeringsexamen.html>

Please note that even if you are exempted from the civic integration exam abroad, you may still be obliged to follow a civic integration course in the Netherlands (*inburgeringsplichtig*). To find out more, go to [www.inburgeren.nl](http://www.inburgeren.nl).

*Where can I find more information about the exam?*

For more information, go to [www.naarnederland.nl](http://www.naarnederland.nl). If you have any questions, call the public information service line on 1400 (from within the Netherlands). From abroad, call +31 77 465 6767. You can also send an email. Go to [www.rijksoverheid.nl](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl).

### ***Step 3: Civic integration in the Netherlands***

*You must also pass a civic integration exam in the Netherlands*

It is called the Civic Integration Examination in the Netherlands. It is more difficult than the exam taken abroad. You have to speak better Dutch and know more about the Netherlands. This will help you to integrate into Dutch society and have a better chance of finding work.

The exam consists of six parts:

1. *Reading Comprehension*: you must be able to read Dutch.
2. *Listening Comprehension*: you must be able to understand Dutch.
3. *Writing Skills*: you must be able to write Dutch.
4. *Spoken Dutch*: you must be able to speak Dutch.
5. *Knowledge of Dutch Society*: you must know about Dutch life and customs, and also the rules and regulations in the Netherlands.
6. *Finding your way on the Dutch labour market*: you must be able to find work.

## *What to expect during the exam*

### *1. Reading Comprehension*

You take the exam on the computer. You read Dutch texts, for example from a newspaper. There are several questions with each text, and several possible answers. Click on the correct answer.

### *2. Listening Comprehension*

You take the exam on the computer. You watch short films and listen to spoken texts. With each film, you hear several questions and see several possible answers. Click on the correct answer.

### *3. Writing Skills*

You take the exam on paper. You may be asked to:

write a letter

fill in a form

finish several incomplete sentences

write an e-mail message, for instance to a friend on their birthday

fill in a form for an employment agency

### *4. Spoken Dutch*

You take the exam on the computer. The exam is in two parts:

You will hear several questions. Say the correct answer.

You watch and listen to several short films. You see several possible answers to each question. Click on the correct answer.

### *5. Knowledge of Dutch Society*

You take the exam on the computer. You watch and listen to several short films. With each film there are several questions and a number of possible answers. Click on the correct answer.

### *6. Finding your way on the Dutch labor market*

The exam is in two parts:

You make up a file about yourself, in which you describe your talents and the things you can do. You also describe the kind of work you would like to do, now and in a few years' time. We call this file a 'portfolio'. See the box below.

Your portfolio will be checked by an examiner. If the examiner is satisfied, you will be invited to an interview. At the interview, you and the examiner will talk about your portfolio.

### *It is your responsibility to pass the exam*

You have to do the learning yourself. But you can also get help. A civic integration course gives you a better chance of passing the exam. However, it is not compulsory.

If you would like to attend a civic integration course, go to [www.ikwilinburgeren.nl](http://www.ikwilinburgeren.nl).

### *You must pay for the civic integration course and exam yourself*

If you cannot afford to pay the course or exam fees, you can borrow money from DUO. You will have to pay the money back later on, with interest.

Why a portfolio?

*Finding and keeping a job is difficult*

That's why you make a portfolio: a file with all kinds of information about yourself and the kind of work you are able to do. If you are granted a residence permit on 1 January 2015 or later, your portfolio is part of the civic integration exam. It belongs to part 6: *Finding your way on the labour market*. For more information, go to [www.inburgeren.nl](http://www.inburgeren.nl).

*What kind of things should you put in your portfolio?*

Your portfolio should contain 'result cards' (*resultaatkaarten*), which you fill in yourself:

Think about the kind of work you want to do. Write this on the card.

Think about the kind of work you are able to do. Write this on the card.

Find out what work is available and write it down.

Learn how Dutch people work. Think about what you need to change in order to work in the Netherlands. Write down what you need to change.

Write down what kind of work you want to do in the future. Make a career plan (*loopbaanplanning*).



Websites that can help you with your portfolio

<http://www.123test.nl/beroepen>

You can take lots of different tests here. The tests will help you to learn more about yourself and your interests.

<http://www.beroepeninbeeld.nl>

<http://www.opleidingenberoep.nl>

<http://www.internettv.ROC.nl>

Here you can read about different occupations and take tests. These websites help you to decide the kind of work you want to do.

<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/middelbaar-beroepsonderwijs>

Here you can read about education and training. You can find out which training is necessary for various occupations.

[http://www.nationaleberoepengids.nl/Arbeidsmarkt\\_perspectief](http://www.nationaleberoepengids.nl/Arbeidsmarkt_perspectief)

Here you can read about the chances of finding work.

[https://www.werk.nl/portal/page/portal/werk\\_nl/werknemer/meer\\_weten/kansen\\_vergroten/tipsvoorallochtonen/internationale diplomawaardering](https://www.werk.nl/portal/page/portal/werk_nl/werknemer/meer_weten/kansen_vergroten/tipsvoorallochtonen/internationale diplomawaardering)

This website tells you how to get your qualifications and certificates evaluated.

<http://www.idw.n/diplomawaardering-aanvragen.html>

Do you have a school-leaving qualification? This website tells you how to get your certificate evaluated.

<http://www.nuffic.nl/diplomawaardering/beroepserkenning/inkomende-mobiliteit>

Do you have a higher education qualification? This website tells you how to get your certificate evaluated.