



Changes to civic integration requirements, the Netherlands

19 August 2013

1. Civic integration *abroad* exam

All Third Country Nationals (TCNs), Non-EU citizens, between the ages of 16 to 65 years who want to migrate to the Netherlands are required to take a civic integration test abroad. A number of exemptions are in place, these are described below.

In this test basic knowledge of the Dutch language (TGN) and Dutch society (KNS) is tested. In addition, a reading and comprehension test will be taken¹. The exam can be taken at Dutch embassy or Dutch Consulate General in the country of origin or country of permanent residence. The country of permanent residence is the country where the migrant has resided legally during three months or longer under. The exam must be passed before the arrival in the Netherlands.

In addition to possible courses given in your locality, material to learn Dutch and make your acquaintance with the Dutch society can be bought at the Dutch Consulate or Embassy. In addition, some sites offer free online material and exercises. These are, amongst others:

<http://www.exercisesinburgering.nl/inburgering-buitenland/zinnen-herhalen> - Dutch language

<http://toetskns.nl/leren/> - Dutch society

<http://www.buitenlandsepartner.nl/oefenmateriaal/> and

<http://www.buitenlandsepartner.nl/oefenmateriaal/#bestanden> - Dutch society and Dutch language

2. Who is required to take the civic integration exam in the Netherlands and abroad?

Taking the civic integration exam (abroad) is mandatory for most TCNs. A number TCNs are exempt of taking the test due to bilateral or other agreements (such as Turkey²); or because the Dutch government has declared the citizens of these countries to be 'culturally similar' to the Netherlands. *Citizens* of the following countries are exempt from taking the civic integration test:

- Citizens from a European Union (EU) country, European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland;
- Monaco;
- Australia;

1 <http://www.naarnederland.nl/en/the-exam>

2 http://kdw.ind.nl/KnowledgeRoot.aspx?knowledge_id=MWOTurkseOnderdanenEnHunGezinsleden

- Canada;
- Japan;
- New Zealand;
- United States;
- South Korea.

Source: [Alphen aan de Rijn](#)

In addition, the following *persons* are **exempt** from taking the civic integration test:

- those with a Dutch passport;
- Individuals younger than 18 years;
- Individuals older than 65 years;
- Those who have lived 8 years or more in the Netherlands when they became were school age;
- Those who hold Dutch diplomas, certificates or evidence of a particular course taken in the Dutch language;
- Those who reside temporarily in the Netherlands to study or work (as an expat for example).

Source: [Rijksoverheid](#)

Furthermore, an **exemption** (for which one has to pay) may be asked for the following persons:

- Surinamese citizens who have completed their basic education in the Dutch language in the Netherlands or in Suriname³
- People who temporarily (will) reside in the Netherlands, such as students, au pairs and temporary migrant workers
- Those who have the Dutch nationality, but were born outside the Netherlands
- Asylum Migrants and the spouses, partners and children of asylum seekers who come to the Netherlands for family reunification. However, the asylum seeker might have to follow the integration *programme* when in the Netherlands⁴.

The Civic integration test is also compulsory for **clerics** such as imams and pastors. The test is still mandatory, but from 1 January 2013 the *course* is no longer available to clerics⁵.

3. The new Civic integration exam

The new civic integration law came into force on 1 January 2013. Integration is defined in the new law as “Integration means that someone who has come to the Netherlands speaks Dutch and is familiar with the culture and the values and norms. People must be able to understand, comprehend and tolerate each other. Integration is therefore necessary for those who wish to live here.”⁶

3 An official document needs to be presented: schriftelijk bewijs nodig dat is afgegeven en gelegaliseerd door het Surinaamse ministerie van Onderwijs en Volksontwikkeling

4 http://www.alphenaandenrijn.nl/Gemeente/Digitaal_Loket/Vac_s/Inwoners/Ministerie_van_Binnenlandse_Zaken_en_Koninkrijksrelaties/W/Wie_moeten_het_basisexamen_inburgering_afleggen_en_wie_niet Accessed 15 August 2013

5 <http://www.government.nl/issues/integration/integration-in-the-netherlands>

6 Government of the Netherlands. In:

In this new law, the responsibility to follow civic integration courses and take the exam is placed with the newcomer. The newcomer is responsible for finding a school or an organisation where he can learn Dutch. It is also possible to create your own suitable learning environment and work with voluntary or other (online) resources to learn Dutch and follow the civic integration courses.

The government may provide the newcomer with a **loan** to pay and follow the courses. The loan will be granted if the newcomer follows the course in a quality approved school or establishment.

The **exam consists** of one practical test and three central exams: newcomers to the Netherlands must show that they can *understand, read and write* Dutch sufficiently. They must also show that they are sufficiently *familiar with Dutch society*. Candidates who pass all four parts receive a certificate to show they are sufficiently integrated. Newcomers to the Netherlands may prepare themselves for the test by attending a civic integration course; but this is not compulsory.

The newcomer is also responsible for taking the **exam and passing it within 3 years** from his arrival in the Netherlands. An extension of this 3 year period may be granted provided that the person who requests it has a reasonable justification (illiteracy, illness, etc). Taking the exam costs euro 250.

The **locations** where the exam can be taken have been reduced. Not every municipality has an examination location; these can be found in 5 municipalities. These are Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Rijswijk, Rotterdam and Zwolle.

Those people who have **passed their exam** will finally receive a letter with an invitation to their 'graduation ceremony', as well as information on where and when to pick up the diploma.

4. Measures to promote integration

Besides tightening up the law, the government wants to introduce other [measures to boost integration](#). For instance:

- Clothing that covers the face will be banned in education, the care sector, public transport and in public-authority buildings; in public places the police will be authorised to order individuals to remove such clothing, for the purposes of identification. Individuals who wear clothing that covers the face will not qualify for social assistance benefit.
- Attempts to integrate into Dutch society will be consistently monitored from the start. Those who do not make sufficient effort will lose their residence permit, with the exception of people holding asylum residence permits. But the latter group will also be expected to make an effort to find work⁷.

This information applies to those who are required by law to follow the civic integration trajectory (courses and exams) and who arrived in the Netherlands, applied for residence or received their residence permit after 1 January 2013.

http://www.newtoholland.nl/NewToHolland/app/en/subjects/content/DUO/DUO/NieuwinNederland/Integration-en-55d8ef89.xml?category=permits_and visa

7 Government of the Netherlands. In: <http://www.government.nl/issues/integration/integration-in-the-netherlands>

Sources

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<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/inburgering-en-integratie/vraag-en-antwoord/moet-ik-als-nieuwkomer-inburgeren.html> Accessed 13 August 2013

<http://www.naarnederland.nl/en/the-exam>

Government of the Netherlands, New to Holland. In:

http://www.newtoholland.nl/NewToHolland/app/en/subjects/content/DUO/DUO/NieuwinNederland/Integration-en-55d8ef89.xml?category=permits_and_visa Accessed 19 August 2013