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Naturalisation: becoming more Dutch than the Dutch themselves

We are a family of five from Guatemala and have been living in Leeuwarden for more than seven years now. We would like to know more about naturalisation. We are interested in obtaining Dutch passports, partly because we are tired of the mandatory residence permit renewals. The annual renewal costs are absurd. Furthermore, we feel like native Dutch people, our children are fluent in Dutch, and even we (the parents) are slowly getting used to the 'g' and 'sch' in the Dutch language. We have decided that our future is here. What kind of rules and regulations apply to naturalisation and what are the costs involved?

Naturalisation, or naturalisatie in Dutch, is one of the ways to obtain the Dutch nationality and subsequently secure a Dutch passport. The conditions with regard to naturalisation are quite strict and the procedure as such is usually lengthy and quite costly.



- The Dutch Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (IND) stipulates the following conditions:
- You are of age, in other words 18 or above. If you are under 18, you are deemed to be of age if you are married or have been married;
- You have been legal resident in the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles or Aruba for 5 years or more. "Legal" means that you are entitled to residence. There are a few exceptions to this rule, including the following: you are married to, the registered partner of, or are living with, a Dutch man or woman (both of you being unmarried). In that case, you can submit an application for naturalisation after 3 years of marriage and continuous cohabitation;
- You have a residence permit for a non-temporary purpose, such as family reunification or paid employment. If you have a residence permit with a purpose of a temporary nature – for example, for study or medical treatment – you cannot be naturalised;
- You are sufficiently integrated and can speak and understand the Dutch language. You must demonstrate this by taking a naturalisation test. If you have already successfully passed an integration test (NT2 level 2 or higher) or have a similar qualification, you do not need to take a naturalisation test. This also applies to people who are unable to take the test on account of a physical or mental disability.
- Furthermore, as someone who is "integrated" it is not appropriate

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for you to be married to more than one man or woman simultaneously;

- You have not received a prison sentence, training order, community service or large fine during the past 4 years.

You can start the naturalisation procedure through your local municipality at the Afdeling Burgerzaken office. A civil servant will assist you with filling out the mandatory paperwork.

If you meet all the aforementioned conditions, the following documents are required to start the naturalisation procedure: a valid passport, a valid residence permit, a birth certificate, and the naturalisation test certificate or comparable qualification.

You can apply for naturalisation on behalf of your children. Your spouse has to apply herself/himself.

Please note that if (one of) your child(ren) is aged 12 (or above), he/she must agree to the naturalisation application. He/she is required to sign the application and be present whilst the application is submitted. The civil servant will subsequently carry out an in-depth investigation and will draft a recommendation.

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This recommendation can be negative or positive. The civil servant will then send the application file together with the recommendation to the IND. The IND will assess the entire file. If and when the applications are approved, a proposal will be sent to Queen Beatrix. She has to sign the proposal. With her signature you will become Dutch nationals.

Starting the first of January 2004, the costs related to naturalisation are as follows:

Costs naturalisation test (naturalisatietoets)

part 1: EUR 90
part 2: EUR 165

Costs naturalisation application (naturalisatieaanvraag)

single application low fee: EUR 229
single application high fee: EUR 344
combined application low fee: EUR 322
combined application high fee: EUR 437

This column is for informative purposes only, is general in nature, and is not intended to be a substitute for competent legal and professional advice. Dutch rules and regulations regarding foreigners, policy, procedures, work permits, visas, and residence permits are continuously subject to change.

Patrick R. Rovers,
lawyer with Van Velzen CS

7 January 2004

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