



Integration policy based on Dutch values

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The government believes that Dutch society and the values it is based on should be central to integration policy.

People who wish to live in the Netherlands are expected to contribute to social cohesion and demonstrate involvement and citizenship. The government is justified in imposing requirements on immigrants because society places the same demands on its own citizens.

This was the message conveyed by Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations Piet Hein Donner in a letter to the House of Representatives on integration, engagement and citizenship. With this change of course, the government is distancing itself from the relativism embedded in the model of the multicultural society. The new integration policy takes as its starting point a society which is changing, partly due to the influence of migrants, but is not interchangeable with any other.

The government believes that integration policy with a more mandatory character is needed to prevent fragmentation and segregation in society, which would ultimately result in no-one feeling at home in the Netherlands. In his letter Mr Donner states that integration is not the responsibility of the public authorities but rather of those who decide to settle in the Netherlands. Every citizen is expected to contribute to Dutch society by taking responsibility for their subsistence, for their living environment and for society as a whole. For instance, immigrants are expected to learn the language and learn about Dutch society.

Integration policy will no longer target specific groups. Anti-social and criminal behaviour will be combated without regard for ethnic origin. Mr Donner also assumes that the general labour market, education and housing policies enable all citizens to build a life for themselves in accordance with their ability. The letter sets out the following measures in the area of integration, engagement and citizenship:

- the Civic Integration Act will be amended and made more rigorous;
- grants and measures for the integration of specific groups will be terminated and incorporated in general integration policy;
- a bill dealing with forced marriage under criminal law will be introduced, and prevention of forced marriage will be made a priority;
- a bill will be introduced banning face coverings in public;
- a common agenda for modern citizenship will be drawn up in cooperation with municipalities, civil society organisations and citizens.