



Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst
Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid

How can you become a Dutch citizen? The procedure on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba





How can you become a Dutch citizen?

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1. The reason behind this publication

What are the steps you must take to acquire Dutch nationality? This question is central to the publication you are now reading. It is intended for all foreign nationals (non-Dutch citizens) who want to become a Dutch citizen and live in the public entities of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. A separate publication is available for former Dutch citizens who want to become a Dutch citizen.

In this publication you will find information on:

- the conditions you have to fulfil in order to become a Dutch citizen;
- the documents which are required;
- how the procedure works.

Three ways to become a Dutch citizen

You can become a Dutch citizen in three ways.

By operation of law: by birth or acknowledgement.

Any child of a married Dutch father or mother is automatically a Dutch citizen after their birth, even if they were born outside the European part of the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, or the public entities of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. A child of an unmarried Dutch mother is also automatically a Dutch citizen after their birth. However, a child of an unmarried non-Dutch mother and a Dutch father will only become a Dutch citizen if the father acknowledges the child before or after the birth, but before the child reaches the age of 7. If a child is only acknowledged at age 7 or older, the Dutch father must demonstrate, with DNA evidence, that he is the biological father within 1 year after acknowledgement. This DNA evidence has to meet strict requirements (in accordance with the DNA Testing (Paternity) Decree [Besluit DNA-onderzoek vaderschap]). If the Dutch father is unwilling or unable to submit DNA evidence, he can also choose to make an option statement for the child (aged 7 or older). However, he must then look after and raise this child for the first 3 years of their life and must be able to demonstrate this. More details are available on this in Chapter 3. Underage children can also acquire Dutch citizenship by operation of law through adoption.

Through the option procedure: by making a statement that you want to become a Dutch citizen.

This procedure applies to a number of groups, for example to children of immigrants who were born in the European Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten or the public entities of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

Through naturalisation: this is the third way to become a Dutch citizen. This publication examines the second and third way.

2. A brief look at becoming a Dutch citizen

If you want to become a Dutch citizen, you will have dealings with the service desks of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit on Bonaire, St. Eustatius or Saba and with the Immigration and Naturalisation Service [Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst] (IND) in the Netherlands.

The service desks of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit

If you think you meet the conditions for the option procedure or naturalisation, you can go to one of the following service desks of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit:

- Bonaire: Kaya Almrante Pedro, Luis Brion 12 Kralendijk Telephone no.: +599-7158330
- St. Eustatius: Cottageroad z/n, Oranjestad Telephone no.: +599-3183377
- Saba: Cap. Matthew Levenstone Street z/n, The Bottom Telephone no.: +599-4163805

You can also make an appointment by telephone to submit the application.

The employee of the service desk of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will assess, together with you, whether you fulfil the conditions and will help you submit an application for naturalisation or an option statement. If you fulfil the conditions for the option procedure, the Minister (read: the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit) will take a decision. In the case of naturalisation the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will carry out a preliminary investigation and compile a naturalisation dossier. The Caribbean Netherlands IND will transfer the naturalisation dossier to the IND in the Netherlands. The ultimate decision is taken by the IND in the Netherlands.

The Immigration and Naturalisation Service

The IND in the Netherlands assesses your application for naturalisation as a Dutch citizen, if necessary by carrying out extra investigations. The IND determines whether you should be recommended for Dutch citizenship.

Conditions

The first thing you have to do is check whether you fulfil the conditions. You can find the conditions in Chapter 3 of this publication. Separate conditions apply to the option procedure and to the naturalisation procedure. If you fulfil the conditions for the option procedure, you can make an option statement at the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit of the public entity where you live. If you fulfil the conditions for naturalisation, you can submit an application for naturalisation to the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit.

Public law transitional regime

During the 5year period before your application for naturalisation or option statement you must not have served a prison sentence, received a study order or been ordered to do community service, nor have paid a substantial fine or have had one imposed for a crime. This 5 year period is referred to as the rehabilitation period.

Since the 1st of May 2018, the rehabilitation period has been 5 years instead of 4. If you submitted your application for naturalisation or made your option statement before the 1st of May 2018, you will still be subject to the 4-year rehabilitation period.

Documents

When you submit an application, the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will also ask you for a number of documents such as your passport, residence permit, birth certificate, marriage certificate, etc. These documents must, in principle, be original and legalised. You may have to take a naturalisation test to show that you are sufficiently integrated. The Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will also investigate whether you have ever been in trouble with the police.

Costs

Both the option procedure and the naturalisation procedure cost money. You will have to pay the costs immediately when you submit your application. This publication does not contain any information about the costs or any exemption from paying fees. If you would like to know in advance what the costs are, please visit www.ind.nl or www.rijksdienstcn.com. The website www.ind.nl also contains information on how you can contact the IND by telephone. You can also contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit of the public entity where you live (by telephone). If you wish to contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit by telephone, you should call +599-7158330, which is the general information telephone number. You will not be refunded if your application is rejected, or if you withdraw your application at a later date.

Assessment

In the case of the option procedure, the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will process the option statement you have made. The Caribbean Netherlands IND unit decides on behalf of the Minister whether you will be granted Dutch citizenship. In the case of naturalisation, the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will compile a dossier and send it to the IND in the Netherlands. The IND in the Netherlands assesses your application for naturalisation. If your application is successful, a proposal for you to be granted Dutch citizenship will be submitted to His Majesty the King for signing. His Majesty the King ultimately grants Dutch citizenship. If your application for naturalisation is successful, the Island Governor of the public entity where you live will invite you to attend a naturalisation ceremony. During the ceremony attention will be paid to the meaning of Dutch nationality and your solidarity with society.

You are obliged to attend the naturalisation ceremony and make a declaration of solidarity there.

You will only become a Dutch citizen if you attend the naturalisation ceremony, make the declaration of solidarity and take receipt of your naturalisation certificate.

If you do not fulfil the conditions for naturalisation, you will receive a letter from the IND stating why you are not eligible for Dutch citizenship. You can lodge an objection against this decision. The letter will explain how you can do this.

Duration

If you want to use the option procedure, you should bear in mind that it will take approximately 3 months after the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit has received your statement. The naturalisation procedure takes approximately 1 year.

Renouncing your nationality

If you become a Dutch citizen via the option procedure or naturalisation you must, in principle, renounce your current nationality/nationalities and also provide evidence that you have done so. Exceptions apply, as described in Chapters 3 and 4 of this publication.

NB! If you make an option statement pursuant to Article 6, paragraph one, introduction and under e of the Netherlands Nationality Act [Rijkswet op het Nederlanderschap] (RWN), you must, in principle, renounce your current nationality. When you make your option statement, you must also sign a declaration of willingness. The obligation to renounce your current nationality does not apply to the other option categories.

You can find tables relating to both procedures in the annex.

3. Who is eligible?

If you want to become a Dutch citizen, you must first check to see whether you are eligible for the option procedure because this is the easiest way to become a Dutch citizen. The conditions are listed below. After that we examine the conditions which apply if you want to submit an application for naturalisation as a Dutch citizen.

Becoming a Dutch citizen via the option procedure

In a number of cases you can become a Dutch citizen by making an option statement. This is a quick and easy way of acquiring Dutch nationality. In order to be eligible for the option procedure you must, in all instances, have a valid residence permit. In addition you must be prepared to make the declaration of solidarity at the naturalisation ceremony and, if applicable, renounce your original nationality/nationalities. You can use this procedure if you fulfil one of the following conditions:

- You are an adult (in other words aged 18 or older. If you are younger than 18, you will be considered an adult if you are, or have been, married), you were born in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten as a child of immigrants and you have lived continuously in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten since your birth and you have a valid residence permit.
NB! 'The Netherlands' is taken to mean: The European part of the Netherlands and the public entities of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.
- You were born in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten, you have lived here continuously and legally for at least 3 years, and you have not had any nationality since your birth (you are stateless). You must be able to demonstrate that you are stateless. The term 'legally' means: with a valid residence permit. You are an adult and you have lived legally in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten since the age of 4.
- You are an adult, a former Dutch citizen and you have lived in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten for at least 1 year on the basis of a permanent residence permit or a residence permit for a non-temporary purpose of stay (please refer to the separate publication for former Dutch citizens).
- You have been married to a Dutch citizen for at least 3 years and have lived continuously and legally in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten for at least 15 years.
- You are aged 65 or older and have lived continuously and legally in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten for 15 years.
- You were married to a non-Dutch man before the 1st of January 1985 and lost your Dutch nationality as a result. You can regain Dutch citizenship via the option procedure within 1 year after the dissolution of that marriage. In this case the condition of legal residency in the Netherlands does not apply.
- You are a former Dutch citizen. You have lost your Dutch citizenship by operation of law. If your Union citizenship has also been lost due to that loss and the consequences for you are disproportionate, you may obtain Dutch citizenship back retroactively. In this case, you do not have to make the declaration of commitment at the naturalisation ceremony. Also, the condition of lawful residence in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao, or Sint Maarten does not apply to you.
- You were born before the 1st of January 1985 to a mother who was a Dutch citizen at the time of your birth, while your father was a non-Dutch citizen (option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i).
- You were adopted before the 1st of January 1985 in the Netherlands, the former Dutch Antilles or Aruba based on a legal ruling by a woman who was a Dutch citizen on the day that the ruling came into effect. You were a minor on the day of the ruling in the first instance (option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1j).
- You were born as a child of a person who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired.
- You were acknowledged, before you reached the age of 7, by a person who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired.

- You were acknowledged, as a minor aged 7 or older, but before you became an adult, by your biological father who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired.
- You are, on the basis of a judicial determination, the child of a man who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired.
- You are a child, adopted in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten based on a legal ruling, of a man or woman who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired. You were a minor on the day of the ruling in the first instance.
- Lastly a separate regulation exists for children who were acknowledged or legitimised by a Dutch citizen after the 1st of April 2003 but before the 1st of March 2009. For more information about these options you can contact one of the service desks of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit.

In all the above-mentioned instances you are not allowed to be married to more than one man or woman at the same time. Neither must you have served a prison sentence, received a study order or been ordered to do community service, nor have paid a substantial fine or have had one imposed for a crime (according to Dutch law) during the past 5 years. Neither must there be any criminal case pending against you. See also the section entitled 'Public law transitional regime' (Chapter 2). Under certain conditions underage children may also be eligible for the option procedure if they have been cared for and raised by a Dutch parent for 3 years.

For more information you can contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit. You can read more about the option procedure in Chapter 4 of this publication.

Becoming a Dutch citizen by naturalisation

You can submit an application for naturalisation if you fulfil all the following conditions:

- You are an adult (in other words aged 18 or older. If you are younger than 18, you will be considered an adult if you are, or have been, married).
- You have lived continuously and legally in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten for 5 years or longer. The term 'legally' means: with a valid residence permit. A number of exceptions apply to this rule.
 - You are married to, or the registered partner of, a Dutch man or woman. In that case you can submit an application for naturalisation after 3 years of marriage or registered partnership (including abroad), as well as after 3 years of continuous cohabiting. You can also submit an application for naturalisation if you have legally and continuously cohabited for 3 years with a Dutch man or woman (with both parties being unmarried). In the case of unmarried cohabitation the partners must have cohabited within the Kingdom. In the case of a marriage, the partners may also have lived together abroad. NB! You must continue to live together while your application for naturalisation is being processed and until the decision on the application has been taken.
 - You are a former Dutch citizen: you had Dutch nationality and lost it. In that case you do not need to have lived for a particular period in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten. In some cases you can use the option procedure, for which a separate publication is available (see www.ind.nl).
- You have a permanent residence permit or a residence permit for a non-temporary purpose of stay, such as family reunification. You cannot be naturalised if you have a residence permit for a temporary purpose of stay, for example in order to study or undergo medical treatment.
- You are sufficiently integrated and you can speak, read, write and understand Dutch or Papiamentu (Bonaire) or English (St. Eustatius and Saba). Since the 1st of January 2011 it has been a requirement for your knowledge of the Dutch language or of Papiamentu (Bonaire) or English to be assessed. You can obtain information on this from one of the service desks of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit. You must prove this by taking the naturalisation test.

You may not need to take the naturalisation test if you have certain diplomas or certificates. The same applies to people who are unable to take the naturalisation test due to a serious physical or mental handicap. For more information about exemptions or dispensations in relation to the naturalisation test you can contact one of the service desks of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit. The term 'integrated' also means that you are not allowed to be married to more than one man or woman at the same time.

- Neither must you have served a prison sentence, been ordered to do community service or received a study order, nor have paid a substantial fine or have had one imposed for a crime (according to Dutch law) during the past 5 years. Neither must there be any criminal case pending against you. The term 'substantial fine' means a fine for an amount of \$560 or more. Your application will also be rejected if you have had several fines imposed, or have paid fines, of \$280 or more during the past 5 years, totalling \$840 or more. See also the section entitled 'Public law transitional regime' (Chapter 2).
- You are prepared to make the declaration of solidarity during the naturalisation ceremony. By doing so you state that you know that the laws of the Kingdom of the Netherlands also apply to you. If you do not make the declaration of solidarity, you cannot become a Dutch citizen.
- You are prepared to renounce your current nationality. If you do not renounce your current nationality after you have become a Dutch citizen, your Dutch citizenship may be revoked. In the case of a limited number of nationalities you are, however, allowed to keep your current nationality/nationalities. It is also possible that you will lose your current nationality automatically when you become a Dutch citizen.
- You can check this by contacting the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit. Sometimes you will not need to renounce your current nationality. In that case you will have to demonstrate, when you submit your application for naturalisation, that you do not need to renounce your current nationality. You do not need to renounce your current nationality in, for example, the following instances:
 - Naturalisation as a Dutch citizen results in you automatically losing your current nationality.
 - The legislation of the country of your current nationality does not permit you to lose your nationality (you can see which regulations apply in each country to renouncing nationality at www.ind.nl).
 - You are married to, or you are the registered partner of, a Dutch citizen.
 - You are a minor.
 - You were born in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten and you live there at the moment that you submit your application for naturalisation.
 - In order to renounce your current nationality, you have to pay a substantial sum to the authorities of the country of your current nationality. You must be able to demonstrate this when you submit your application for naturalisation.
 - You would lose certain rights and then suffer serious financial damage by renouncing your current nationality. One example is inheritance rights:
 - You have to fulfil (or buy off) your military service before you can renounce your current nationality. You must be able to demonstrate this when you submit your application for naturalisation.
 - According to the legislation of the country of your current nationality you are only allowed to renounce your current nationality after you have been naturalised. If that is the case you must still renounce your current nationality after your naturalisation.
 - You cannot be obliged to contact the authorities in the country of your current nationality.
 - You have an exceptional reason why you cannot renounce your current nationality. You are a You are the subject of a state which is not recognised by the Netherlands.
 - You are the subject of a state which is a party to the Second Protocol of the Strasbourg Convention.
 - You are recognised as a refugee in the Netherlands, Curaçao, Sint Maarten or Aruba.

You should therefore check in advance what the consequences are of you renouncing your current nationality and whether any costs are involved. To do so you should contact the authorities in the country of your current nationality.

For both procedures the words 'legally' and 'continuous stay' mean that you have always had a valid residence permit since you were allowed into the Kingdom (of the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten). This means that you have always applied for an extension before your residence permit expired. You must also have a valid residence permit during the option procedure and naturalisation procedure.

You can read more about the naturalisation procedure in Chapter 5 of this publication.

4. How does the option procedure work?

The option procedure is a straightforward way to acquire Dutch nationality. If you are eligible for this procedure, you can simply make a statement that you want to become a Dutch citizen. If you fulfil the conditions, the Island Governor will invite you to attend a naturalisation ceremony.

During the naturalisation ceremony attention will be paid to the meaning of Dutch nationality and your solidarity with society. You are obliged to attend the naturalisation ceremony and make a declaration of solidarity there. You will only become a Dutch citizen if you attend the naturalisation ceremony, make the declaration of solidarity and take receipt of your naturalisation certificate.

Who is it for?

Various groups of foreign nationals and former Dutch citizens can use the option procedure. In Chapter 3 you can read about which requirements you have to fulfil. If you live in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten, your underage children can also become Dutch citizens if they fulfil a number of conditions (for example, they must have a valid residence permit). However, you must then provide details of your children in the option statement.

Duration

The option procedure takes approximately 3 months.

Costs

You have to pay for the option procedure, including for any underage children included in your application. This publication does not contain any information about the costs or any exemption from paying fees. If you would like to know in advance what the costs are, please visit www.ind.nl or www.rijksdienstcn.com. The website www.ind.nl also contains information on how you can contact the IND by telephone. You can also contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit. If you wish to contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit by telephone, you should call +599-7158330. You will not be refunded if the option confirmation is refused, or if you later withdraw your option statement.

Procedure

If you want to use the option procedure and you fulfil the conditions, you must make an option statement at the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit. You must also fill in and sign a statement in which you declare that you are prepared to make the declaration of solidarity during the naturalisation ceremony. The Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will investigate whether you have ever been in trouble with the police. Depending on the option category to which you belong, you must also demonstrate that you have always had a valid residence permit.

Renouncing your current nationality/nationalities

If you choose the option procedure, the legislation of the country of your original nationality/nationalities will determine whether you lose your nationality/nationalities.

NB! The obligation to renounce your current nationality always applies to one option category, namely the following. People who have been allowed to live and have their principal residence in the Netherlands since the age of 4 (Article 6, paragraph 1, under e of the RWN) must renounce their nationality when (re)acquiring Dutch citizenship.

Confirmation or refusal of the confirmation

If you fulfil all the conditions for the option procedure, the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will confirm to you in writing that you have become a Dutch citizen. The Island Governor will then invite you to attend a naturalisation ceremony. If you do not fulfil the conditions, you will receive a letter explaining why you cannot become a Dutch citizen. You can lodge an objection to this decision with the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit. The letter will explain how you can do this.

NB! Rather than lodging an objection you can also submit an appeal directly to the Court of First Instance. If you live on Bonaire, you must send the appeal to the registry of the Court of First Instance on Bonaire. If you live on St. Eustatius or Saba, you must send the appeal to the registry of the Court of First Instance on Sint Maarten. If you lodge an objection first, you will only be able to appeal after a decision has been taken on the objection.

The ceremony

Becoming a Dutch citizen is a special event. That is why the Island Governor organises special ceremonies during which attention is paid to the meaning of Dutch nationality and your solidarity with the society you have decided to become a member of. These naturalisation ceremonies are intended for anyone who becomes a Dutch citizen via the option procedure or naturalisation.

You are obliged to attend the ceremony. You will only become a Dutch citizen if you attend the naturalisation ceremony and make the declaration of solidarity there. If you do not attend the ceremony, you will receive a new invitation for a subsequent ceremony. Within 1 year after the decision on your application has been taken, you must attend a naturalisation ceremony and take receipt of the option confirmation after making the declaration of solidarity, otherwise you will not acquire Dutch nationality. If you fail to do so within 1 year, you will have to start a new procedure in order to become a Dutch citizen. You are only not required to attend in very exceptional circumstances. If you think that this applies to you, you should contact the Island Governor.

Underage optants who are aged 16 or 17 years when they are required to make the option statement, are obliged to attend the ceremony and make the declaration of solidarity. Underage optants who are younger than 16 will not be invited to attend the naturalisation ceremony, but can do so if they wish. Their parent or legal representative will be invited to attend and is also obliged to do so. Underage optants like this will only become Dutch citizens if their parent or legal representative attends the naturalisation ceremony and makes the declaration of solidarity.

5. What do you have to do to become a Dutch citizen by naturalisation?

Gather information

You first need to check whether you are eligible for Dutch citizenship. To do so you should read the conditions in this publication. A handy checklist can be found at the end of this publication. You also need to check whether you have to renounce your current nationality if you become a Dutch citizen. If you need assistance, please visit www.ind.nl. You can also contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit.

Collect documents

If you think you meet the conditions for naturalisation, you can contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit to make an appointment. The employee of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will ask you to bring a number of documents with you. Which documents you need depends on your personal situation. You may be asked to bring along, for example, the following documents:

- A valid passport (your own, or that of your partner and your children).
- A valid residence permit (your own, or that of your partner and your children).
- An original birth certificate (your own, or that of your partner and your children). If you or your children were born abroad, you will need to obtain the original birth certificates from your country of birth (and that of your children).
- An original marriage certificate or a certificate of registered partnership (if you want to become a Dutch citizen due to marriage or a registered partnership with a Dutch citizen, and if the marriage took place abroad).
- Proof that you have continuously cohabited with a Dutch citizen for 3 years or longer, if you want to use this as grounds to apply for Dutch citizenship.
- A naturalisation test certificate, or a comparable document.

The translation and legalisation of foreign documents

The Caribbean Netherlands IND unit must be able to read foreign documents (birth certificate, marriage certificate, etc.) and establish their authenticity. That is why the following rules apply:

- If the document has been compiled in a language other than Dutch, English, German or French, you must have a translation made, preferably into Dutch. This translation must be made by a sworn translator. If you have the document translated abroad, the translation must also be legalised.
- The Caribbean Netherlands IND unit may ask you to have the documents legalised in the country they come from. In doing so a check will be carried out to determine whether the document has been issued by the competent authority/authorities.

The translation and legalisation of documents can take several months and you will have to pay the associated costs yourself. For more information regarding the translation and legalisation of documents you can contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague (the Netherlands) (see Chapter 8 for the telephone number).

Complete an application for naturalisation as a Dutch citizen

You will complete the application for naturalisation as a Dutch citizen together with an employee of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit. If your partner also wants to naturalise, he or she must also be present when the application for naturalisation is submitted. If you have underage children who live on Bonaire, St. Eustatius or Saba and who have a valid residence permit, you can apply for Dutch citizenship on their behalf as well. In that case their names and dates of birth must also be included in the application. Incidentally, children aged 16 and 17 must themselves indicate that they agree to an application for naturalisation being submitted on their behalf. They can do so by signing the application and must therefore be present when it is submitted.

Sign the declaration of willingness

In addition to completing and signing the application for naturalisation as a Dutch citizen, you must also fill in a form in which you declare that you are prepared to make a declaration of solidarity during the naturalisation ceremony. When you make the declaration of solidarity you will be stating that you know that the laws of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten) also apply to you. You will make the declaration of solidarity in person and in Dutch. If you do not make the declaration of solidarity, you cannot become a Dutch citizen.

Sign the declaration of willingness to renounce your original nationality

If you become a Dutch citizen you must, in principle, renounce your current nationality. To demonstrate this you must sign a declaration when you submit your application for naturalisation. In this declaration you state that you are going to renounce your current nationality. Children aged up to 16 years are allowed to keep their current nationality if one or both of their parents become(s) a Dutch citizen, unless the legislation of the country of their current nationality/nationalities stipulates otherwise. Children aged 16 or 17 will have to sign a declaration of willingness. You can also indicate that you think that you do not need to renounce your current nationality. The relevant exceptions are detailed in Chapter 3. After signing the declaration you will be obliged to renounce your current nationality after you have become a Dutch citizen. From that moment on you will no longer be able to invoke an exception. It is therefore important that you investigate how to renounce your current nationality, whether any costs are involved and what the consequences are. Before signing the declaration of willingness you should therefore contact the authorities in the country of your current nationality.

Confirm or change your name

It may be that your name has to be confirmed. You are obliged to confirm your name if you do not have a surname or first name (but only one name or several names, whereby there is no difference between your surname and first name(s)).

You can also ask to change your family name. This is only possible in a limited number of cases and only if it is important for your civic integration, for example:

- If your name is difficult to pronounce for Dutch people.
- If you have acquired your husband's name through marriage and you want to change this name into your maiden name.

Interview with underage children

If your children are aged 12 or older, the employee of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit will ask them to express an opinion about Dutch citizenship. Children aged between 12 and 16 years do not have to become Dutch citizens if, in addition to the child itself, one of the parents objects to Dutch citizenship. If only the child or one of the parents objects, the government will decide. Children aged 16 and over will decide themselves whether or not they want to become Dutch citizens.

Pay the costs of the procedure

You will have to pay for the naturalisation procedure. The amount depends on the nature of your right of residence and the question of whether the application is a single or joint application. You will also have to pay for any underage children included in your application for naturalisation.

The amount must be paid when you submit the application for naturalisation. This publication does not contain any information about the costs or any exemption from paying fees. If you would like to know in advance what the costs are, please visit www.ind.nl or www.rijksdienstcn.com. The website www.ind.nl also contains information on how you can contact the IND by telephone. You can also contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit (by telephone). If you wish to contact the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit by telephone, you should call +599-7158330. You will not be refunded if your application for naturalisation is rejected, or if you withdraw your application for naturalisation at a later date.

Assessment of your application

Once the employee of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit has collected all the necessary information, he will carry out an investigation. He will check whether your identity has been sufficiently established, whether you have ever been in trouble with the police, investigate your residence status and whether you have been admitted to the country for the required continuous period. The employee will then send your application for naturalisation, together with all the documents in the dossier, to the IND in the Netherlands. The IND in the Netherlands assesses your application for naturalisation. If your application is successful, a proposal for you to be granted Dutch citizenship will be submitted to His Majesty the King. His Majesty the King ultimately grants Dutch citizenship.

Response to your application

Eventually you may receive two responses to your application to become a Dutch citizen:

1. Your application for naturalisation will be granted and the Island Governor will invite you to attend a naturalisation ceremony. You will acquire Dutch nationality if you are given the naturalisation decision document at the naturalisation ceremony after you have made the declaration of solidarity.
2. Your application for naturalisation is rejected. You will receive a letter explaining why you cannot become a Dutch citizen. You can lodge an objection to this decision with the IND in the Netherlands. The letter will explain how you can do this. If you also applied for Dutch citizenship for your children, this may be refused in certain circumstances, separately from your own application for naturalisation.

NB! Rather than lodging an objection you can also submit an appeal directly to the Court of First Instance. If you live on Bonaire, you must send the appeal to the registry of the Court of First Instance on Bonaire. If you live on St. Eustatius or Saba, you must send the appeal to the registry of the Court of First Instance on Sint Maarten. If you lodge an objection first, you will only be able to appeal after a decision has been taken on the objection.

The ceremony

Becoming a Dutch citizen is a special event. That is why the Island Governor organises special ceremonies during which attention is paid to the meaning of Dutch nationality and your solidarity with the society you have decided to become a member of. These naturalisation ceremonies are intended for anyone who becomes a Dutch citizen via the option procedure or naturalisation. You are obliged to attend the ceremony. You will only become a Dutch citizen if you attend the naturalisation ceremony, make the declaration of solidarity in person and in Dutch, and if the naturalisation certificate is issued to you.

If you do not attend the naturalisation ceremony, you will receive a new invitation for a subsequent ceremony. You must attend a naturalisation ceremony in person within 1 year after signing the naturalisation decision, otherwise you will not acquire Dutch nationality. If you fail to do so within 1 year, you will have to start a new naturalisation procedure in order to become a Dutch citizen.

Neither will you become a Dutch citizen if you do not want to make the declaration of solidarity (in Dutch) at the naturalisation ceremony. You are only not required to attend a naturalisation ceremony in very exceptional circumstances. If you think that this applies to you, you should contact the Island Governor. Underage children who were aged 16 or 17 at the time the application for naturalisation was submitted, are obliged to attend the ceremony and make the declaration of solidarity if they submitted an independent application for naturalisation. Underage children who are younger than 16 will not be invited to attend the naturalisation ceremony, but can do so if they wish.

Their parent or legal representative will be invited to attend and is also obliged to do so. Underage children like this will only become Dutch citizens if their parent or legal representative attends the naturalisation ceremony and makes the declaration of solidarity.

Underage children who are included in an application for naturalisation and who were aged 16 or 17 when the application was submitted, are obliged to attend the naturalisation ceremony and make the declaration of solidarity.

Renouncing your current nationality

If you have attended the naturalisation ceremony and have been naturalised as a Dutch citizen, you must still renounce your current nationality. You must provide proof that you have announced your current nationality. If you fail to do so, your Dutch nationality may be revoked. You do not have to renounce your nationality if you fall into one of the exception categories (see Chapter 3). In addition, the legislation of the country of your current nationality also determines whether you must or can renounce your nationality.

Duration of the proceedings

Approximately 1 year is needed to assess your application for naturalisation as a Dutch citizen.

6. Advantages & consequences

You are about to become a Dutch citizen. It is quite a step and that is why it is good that you know something about the consequences of Dutch citizenship in advance. Your life will change if your application for naturalisation is granted, or your option statement is confirmed. The following are the most important consequences:

- You will be registered as a Dutch citizen in the population records of Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten. You might think that this is a formality, but it is actually very important because the population records are used as a basis for all official documents, such as passports.
- You will be able to apply for a Dutch passport. A Dutch passport means, in any event, that you will be able to travel freely to all countries within the European Union.
- You will be able to vote in elections.
- Your underage children will also become Dutch citizens. This only applies if your children have been included in your application for naturalisation. If your children are aged 12 or older, they must also want to become Dutch citizens.
- You will no longer be a foreign national. Your details will be changed in the foreign nationals register. You must renounce your current nationality. You must, in principle, renounce your current nationality if you are a Dutch citizen. This does not apply if you fall into one of the exception categories (see Chapter 3). If you do not renounce your current nationality despite that being obligatory, your Dutch nationality may be revoked.

NB! If it transpires that you have committed fraud in the process of acquiring Dutch nationality, your Dutch citizenship may be revoked. That can even be done up to 12 years after you have acquired Dutch nationality, even if that means that you become stateless as a result. You may automatically lose your Dutch citizenship if you voluntarily enter the military service of a state that is involved in combat operations against the Netherlands or against an alliance of which the Netherlands is a member.

7. Frequently asked questions

Below you will find a number of questions (and answers) that are frequently submitted to the IND. You can find more questions on the website: www.ind.nl.

When can I apply for a Dutch passport?

You can apply for a Dutch passport after you have attended the naturalisation ceremony, have made the declaration of solidarity and have taken receipt of the option confirmation, or the notification that you have been granted Dutch citizenship. You should bear in mind that the office of the register of births marriages and deaths and the population register [Bureau Burgerlijke Stand en Bevolkingsregister] need some time to amend your details.

What will happen to my children if I become a Dutch citizen?

In principle your (underage) children will then also be Dutch citizens, but this only applies if your children were included in your option statement or application for naturalisation. If they are aged 12 or older, they must declare that they want to become Dutch citizens during the application process. Your children will also have to have valid residence permits.

8. More information

If you have any additional questions after reading this publication, please visit www.ind.nl or contact the Governor's Office [Kabinet van de Gouverneur]. You can contact the IND in a variety of ways.

Internet

IND Caribbean Netherlands unit: www.rijksdienstcn.com (also in Papiamentu)

At www.ind.nl you can find more information about the procedure and conditions relating to residence permits, visas in the Netherlands, and how you can become a Dutch citizen.

Telephone

The Caribbean Netherlands IND unit can be contacted via +599-7158330

The IND can be contacted from Monday to Friday, from 09.00 to 17.00, via 088 043 04 30. You will pay standard rates when using this information number. If you are calling from abroad, you should telephone +31 88 043 04 30. If possible you should have your foreign nationals number (V number) at hand. You can find this on your residence permit.

NB! If the deadline for a decision to be taken on your application has not yet been reached, we will still be processing your application and we will be unable to give you any information about the status.

Social media

The IND is active on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube. If you have a general question, you can submit it to the IND webcare team. They will answer your questions on working days from 09.00 to 17.00.

The social media channels are public, so, in order to protect your privacy, you should mention your V number and other personal information when communicating via these channels. The IND will not respond in detail to questions about your dossier via social media.

More information can be found at www.ind.nl/socialmedia.

Letter or email

General questions

The Immigration and Naturalisation Service

PO Box 17

9560 AA Ter Apel

Email: IND@rijksdienstCN.com.

Alternatively you can submit your question using the email form at www.ind.nl.

Fax: +599-7172772 (attn the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit)

Visitors

If you have any questions you can also visit one of the following service desks of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit:

- Bonaire: Kaya Almrante Pedro, Luis Brion 12 Kralendijk Telephone no.: +599-7158330
- St. Eustatius: Cottageroad z/n, Oranjestad Telephone no.: +599-3183377
- Saba: Cap. Matthew Levenstone Street z/n, The Bottom Telephone no.: +599-4163805

In the Netherlands you can also contact one of the IND service desks. You can find the nearest one at www.ind.nl. Do not forget that you first have to make an appointment.

Complaints

If you want to submit a complaint about how you have been treated by the IND, you can use the complaints form at www.ind.nl.

You can also telephone the IND complaints line. The telephone number is 088 043 04 70.

Legalisation-related questions

For information about legalising documents (birth certificate, marriage certificate) you should call telephone number 1400 (which is the number of the Central Government Public Information Service). Via Internet: www.rijksoverheid.nl.

Processing personal data

The Immigration and Naturalisation Service processes personal data while dealing with your application, notification or application. This means that the IND obtains data from your person and from other organisations or persons if that is necessary. The IND also uses and saves data and forwards it to other organisations. When doing so, the IND observes the rules laid down in privacy legislation.

For example, the IND is required to process data carefully and safely. The law also assigns rights. If you submit a request to that effect you may, for example, view the data which the IND processes about you. You are also entitled to obtain information about why the IND processes this data and who they forward it to. You can read about how the IND deals with your data and which rights you have at www.ind.nl. On the website you can also read about how you can exercise your rights.

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Annex Checklist: Are you eligible?

For the option procedure

You can become a Dutch citizen by making an option statement, if you fulfil one of the following conditions:

- You are an adult (in other words aged 18 or older. If you are younger than 18, you will be considered an adult if you are, or have been, married), you were born in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten as a child of immigrants, you have lived continuously in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten since your birth and you have a valid residence permit.
- You were born in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten, you lived here continuously and legally for at least 3 years, and you have not had any nationality since your birth (you are stateless). You must be able to demonstrate that you are stateless. The term 'legally' means: with a valid residence permit.
- You are an adult and you have lived legally in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten (with a residence permit) since the age of 4.
- You are an adult, a former Dutch citizen and you have lived in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten for at least 1 year on the basis of a permanent residence permit or a residence permit for a non-temporary purpose of stay (please refer to the separate publication for former Dutch citizens).
- You have been married to a Dutch citizen for at least 3 years and have lived continuously and legally in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten for at least 15 years.
- You are aged 65 or older and have lived continuously and legally in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten for 15 years.
- You were married to a non-Dutch man before the 1st of January 1985 and lost your Dutch nationality as a result. You can regain Dutch citizenship via the option procedure within 1 year after the dissolution of the marriage. In this case the condition of legal residency in the Netherlands does not apply.
- You are a former Dutch citizen. You have lost your Dutch citizenship by operation of law. If your Union citizenship has also been lost due to that loss and the consequences for you are disproportionate, you may obtain Dutch citizenship back retroactively. In this case, you do not have to make the declaration of commitment at the naturalisation ceremony. Also, the condition of lawful residence in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao, or Sint Maarten does not apply to you.
- You were born before the 1st of January 1985 to a mother who was a Dutch citizen at the time of your birth, while your father was a non-Dutch citizen (option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i).
- You were adopted in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten before the 1st of January 1985 based on a legal ruling by a woman who was a Dutch citizen on the day that the ruling came into effect. You were a minor on the day of the ruling in the first instance (option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1j).
- You were born as a child of a person who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired.
- You were acknowledged, before you reached the age of 7, by a person who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired.
- You were acknowledged, as a minor aged 7 or older, but before you became an adult, by your biological father who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired.
- You are, on the basis of a judicial determination, the child of a man who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired.
- You are a child, adopted in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten based on a legal ruling, of a man or woman who acquired Dutch citizenship via the option procedure pursuant to Article 6, paragraph 1i or Article 6, paragraph 1j, or who died before citizenship was acquired. You were a minor on the day of the ruling in the first instance.
- If you were acknowledged or legitimised by a Dutch citizen after the 1st of April 2003 but before the 1st of March 2009, you should contact the Governor's Office [Kabinet van de Gouverneur].

In all these instances you are not allowed to be married to more than one man or woman at the same time. Neither must you have served a prison sentence, received a study order or been ordered to do community service, nor have paid a substantial fine or have had one imposed for a crime (according to Dutch law) during the past 5 years. Neither must there be any criminal case pending against you. See also the section entitled

'Public law transitional regime' (Chapter 2).

If you make an option statement pursuant to Article 6, paragraph one, introduction and under e of the Netherlands Nationality Act [Rijkswet op het Nederlanderschap] (RWN) (and were admitted to, and had your principal residence in, the Kingdom from the age of 4), you must, in principle, renounce your current nationality. You must then also sign a declaration of willingness. The obligation to renounce your current nationality does not apply to the other option categories.

For naturalisation

You can submit an application for naturalisation if you fulfil all the following conditions:

- You are an adult (in other words aged 18 or older. If you are younger than 18, you will be considered an adult if you are, or have been, married).
- You have lived continuously and legally in the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao or Sint Maarten for 5 years or longer (with a valid residence permit). NB! Different conditions apply to people who are married to, are the registered partner of, or are cohabiting with, a Dutch citizen.
- You have a valid permanent residence permit or a valid residence permit for a non-temporary purpose of stay.
- You can speak, read, write and understand Dutch, Papiamentu (Aruba and Curaçao) or English (Sint Maarten) and you can provide proof in the form of a naturalisation test certificate at A2 level, or a comparable diploma. As of the 1st of January 2011 it has been a requirement for your knowledge of the Dutch language and of Papiamentu (Aruba and Curaçao) or English (Sint Maarten) to be assessed.
- You are not married to more than one man or woman at the same time.
- Neither must you have served a prison sentence, been ordered to do community service or received a study order, nor have paid a substantial fine or have had one imposed for a crime (according to Dutch law) during the past 5 years. Neither must there be any criminal case pending against you. See also the section entitled 'Public law transitional regime' (Chapter 2).
- You are prepared to make the declaration of solidarity during the naturalisation ceremony.
- You are prepared to renounce your current nationality (this rule is subject to a number of exceptions).

Annex Who does what?

The option procedure

	What do you have to do?	What does the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit do?	What does the Island Governor do?
1	Gather information		
2	Check whether you fulfil the conditions.		
3	Submit documents to the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit.		
4	Make the option statement and possibly fill in other forms (or have them filled)		
5	Pay the costs.		
6		Investigation.	
7		Confirm that you can acquire Dutch citizenship or reject your application.	
8			Invite you to attend the naturalisation
9	Attend the naturalisation ceremony and make the declaration of solidarity (if your application is granted) or lodge an objection (in the event of rejection).		
10	Renounce (if required).		

Naturalisation

	What do you have to do?	What does the Dutch embassy or the consulate do?	What does the IND do?	What does the Island Governor do?
1	Gather information			
2	Check whether you fulfil the conditions.			
3	Take the naturalisation test			
4	Submit documents to the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit and fill in naturalisation application and other forms (or have them filled in).	Fill in forms (together with you).		
5	Pay the costs.			
6		Investigation.		
7	Supplement documents (if necessary).			
8		Send the dossier with the recommendation to the IND.		
9			Assess the dossier and	
10			Submit the naturalisation application to His Majesty the King if the application is granted, or reject the application.	
11				Invite you to attend the naturalisation ceremony.
12	Attend the naturalisation ceremony and make the declaration of solidarity (if your application is granted) or lodge an objection/appeal (in the event of rejection).			
13	Renounce (if required).			

Annex Checklist: Which documents to take with you?

To be filled in by an employee of the Caribbean Netherlands IND unit.

In order to assess your application for naturalisation, the following documents are required:

- a valid passport;
 - of yourself
 - of your partner
 - of your children
- a valid residence permit;
 - of yourself
 - of your partner
 - of your children
- an original birth certificate (if you were born abroad);
 - of yourself
 - of your partner
 - of your children who are being included in the naturalisation application
- an original marriage certificate or a certificate of registered partnership (if you want to become a Dutch citizen due to a marriage or a registered partnership with a Dutch citizen, and if the marriage took place abroad);
- proof that you have continuously cohabited with a Dutch citizen for 3 years or longer, if you want to use this as grounds to apply for Dutch citizenship;
- a naturalisation test certificate, or a comparable document.
- other documents.

The following documents must also be translated and legalised.

Document	Translation	Legalisation
Original birth certificate of yourself		
Original birth certificate of your partner		
Original birth certificates of your children who are being included in the		
Original marriage certificate		
Other documents		
Space for appointment details		
Date		
Time		
Place		
You have an appointment with		
Costs of the application		

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