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## EUDO CITIZENSHIP OBSERVATORY

### *NATURALISATION PROCEDURES FOR IMMIGRANTS THE NETHERLANDS*

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EUDO Citizenship Observatory  
**Migration Policy Group**  
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# Naturalisation Procedures for Immigrants

## The Netherlands

Anita Böcker, Ricky van Oers

### Introduction

This report describes the administrative procedures and practices for naturalisation in the Netherlands, focussing on the following aspects:

1. Promotion: i.e. do authorities encourage foreign residents to apply for naturalisation or help applicants to meet the legal conditions;
2. The formal application and decision-making process;
3. The legal conditions (requirements and exemptions), and the formal discretion left to the authorities to interpret these conditions;
4. Documentation: how can applicants prove that they meet the legal conditions;
5. Acceptance rate and rejection grounds;
6. Appeal possibilities;
7. Costs for applicants.

It should be noted, firstly, that this report concentrates on the procedure for acquiring Dutch nationality via naturalisation. This mode of acquisition of Dutch nationality will generally be used by first generation immigrants, who have been living in the Netherlands for at least five years. Acquisition of Dutch nationality via option, a faster and easier procedure for acquiring Dutch nationality opened up to spouses of Dutch nationals, elderly immigrants, as well as immigrants of the second generation, will not be considered. Secondly, this report concentrates on procedures and legal conditions. It does not analyse the effects of legal and administrative obstacles on naturalisation rates or immigrants' willingness to apply for naturalisation.<sup>1</sup>

The data for this report were gathered through desktop research. The gathering of data ended in December 2012.

### 1. Promotion activities

There have been no state-run or state-funded naturalisation campaigns in the past ten years. The national government does not run or fund promotion activities to encourage foreign residents to apply for naturalisation. It also does not organise or fund courses for naturalisation applicants who are required to pass a language and integration test. However, local governments do provide information or counselling services, and the IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) of the Ministry of the Interior provides information in various ways. In December 2011, the IND sent a letter to all foreign residents who obtained a residence permit under the 2007 regularisation scheme for failed asylum seekers, to inform them that they might become eligible for naturalisation in June 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of the effects of changes in citizenship law and policies on naturalisation rates, see the EUDO citizenship country report on the Netherlands: Ricky van Oers, Betty de Hart & Kees Groenendijk (2012), *Country Report: The Netherlands* (revised October 2012), <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/CountryReports/Netherlands.pdf>.

### ***Information and counselling services***

There are no government web pages that are promotional in the sense that they encourage foreign residents to apply for naturalisation. However, the IND has created web pages with information about naturalisation (procedure, requirements).<sup>2</sup> The IND has also made an information brochure about naturalisation and other modes of acquisition of Dutch citizenship. Other brochures provide information on the integration examination, the passing of which is a requirement for naturalisation; the naturalisation ceremony and what it means to become a Dutch citizen (rights and duties attached to it); and the so-called ‘declaration of solidarity’ (*verklaring van verbondenheid*), which applicants are required to make during the naturalisation ceremony. The latter brochure is available in various languages (Dutch, English, French, German, Spanish, Turkish, and Arabic). The other brochures are only available in Dutch. All these brochures can also be downloaded from the website of the IND.<sup>3</sup>

Applications for naturalisation have to be filed with the local government (municipality) of the place of residence of the applicant. The local governments provide information about the requirements, necessary documents, costs and potential consequences for the applicant. They provide information on their websites<sup>4</sup> and in individual information sessions with applicants. Some local governments have their own leaflets or brochures for applicants. For example, the municipality of Alkmaar has a leaflet, entitled *Voor advies over het aanvragen van de Nederlandse nationaliteit nemen wij graag de tijd* [‘We gladly make time for advice on applying for Dutch citizenship’].<sup>5</sup> Other local governments have information packages which applicants can obtain on demand.<sup>6</sup> Application forms are not distributed to applicants. A local government official completes the application form with or for the applicant (see section 2).

### ***Naturalisation ceremonies***

Since 2006, all local governments are required to organise naturalisation ceremonies for newly naturalised Dutch citizens. They are required to organise at least one ceremony each year, on December 15. The government designated this day as National Naturalisation Day. The number of ceremonies organised each year by individual municipalities varies. Large municipalities organise ceremonies more often than small ones. On December 15, however, the ceremony often has a special festive touch.

Newly naturalised citizens are obliged to attend a naturalisation ceremony. At this ceremony they are required to make the so-called ‘declaration of solidarity’ (*verklaring van verbondenheid*). They have to swear or promise (in Dutch) that they respect the constitutional order of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, its freedoms and rights, and that they will faithfully fulfil their duties as a Dutch citizen. This declaration was introduced in 2009. At the end of the ceremony, the newly naturalised citizens receive a certificate stating that they have become a Dutch citizen.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.government.nl/issues/nationality>;  
[http://english.ind.nl/residencewizard/verblijfwijzer\\_mijnsituatie.asp?proc=komen&lang=en&duur=1&procedure=Obtaining+Dutch+nationality](http://english.ind.nl/residencewizard/verblijfwijzer_mijnsituatie.asp?proc=komen&lang=en&duur=1&procedure=Obtaining+Dutch+nationality).

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.immigratiedienst.nl/Brochures\\_en\\_Formulieren/index.aspx](http://www.immigratiedienst.nl/Brochures_en_Formulieren/index.aspx).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.amsterdam.nl/immigratie/immigratie/> (Amsterdam);  
<http://www.rotterdam.nl/product:naturalisatie> (Rotterdam);

[http://www.nijmegen.nl/digitalebalie/pdc2.asp?req=toon\\_product&productid=182](http://www.nijmegen.nl/digitalebalie/pdc2.asp?req=toon_product&productid=182) (Nijmegen).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.alkmaar.nl/gemeente/webcms/site/gemeente/product/puza/files/p\\_28228.pdf](http://www.alkmaar.nl/gemeente/webcms/site/gemeente/product/puza/files/p_28228.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., the website of the city council of Vlaardingen,  
[http://www.vlaardingen.nl/default/loket/levenreizenenpapieren/naturalisatieaanvraagnederlandsenationaliteit/id\\_41746](http://www.vlaardingen.nl/default/loket/levenreizenenpapieren/naturalisatieaanvraagnederlandsenationaliteit/id_41746).

These ceremonies and the declaration of solidarity are meant to enhance the significance of Dutch citizenship for new Dutch citizens. Beside the declaration of solidarity, the ceremonies must contain a few other elements, including a speech by the mayor or a municipal official, but the local governments are free to decide on the further contents of the ceremonies themselves. Commonly during these ceremonies the (deputy) mayor or an alderman gives a speech, there is some form of reception, and the newly naturalised citizens receive the booklet entitled *Welkom* (Welcome) and/or other small gifts. Sometimes, a photo is taken of the new Dutch citizens or one of them may give a speech. Sometimes, the Dutch national anthem is sung.

It should be noted that some new citizens experience the ceremony as patronising. The majority of the respondents in an evaluation study were on the whole positive about the ceremony; about three in four respondents stated that the ceremony made them feel welcome, but especially well-educated new citizens were less positive. Most municipalities said they were (very) satisfied with the ceremony in general, and with aspects such as the organisation of the ceremony, the atmosphere, and the response of participants in particular.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Formal application and decision-making process

Applications for naturalisation have to be filed with the local government (municipality) of the place of residence of the applicant. The local government (Department of Civil Affairs) receives the application, it completes the application form for the applicant, and it checks whether the application is complete.

The local government first informs the applicant about the integration requirement, about all other requirements, the required documents, and the naturalisation fee. In this (information) stage of the procedure, the applicant does not yet have to pay a fee and the local government does not yet open a file. If the applicant does not (yet) fulfil all the requirements for naturalisation or if he/she cannot (yet) provide all the necessary documents, the local government must advise the applicant against filing an application. If the applicant nevertheless wants to file an application, the local government must accept this but may request the applicant to sign a declaration that he/she was informed by the local government about its negative advice. It is probably due to this information stage that only a few applications for naturalisation are refused on the ground of insufficient information or documentation. In the years 2005-2009, a total of 460 applications were refused on this ground.<sup>8</sup>

The local government reviews the application. It checks whether the personal data submitted by the applicant match the data in the municipal population register, and whether the requirements for naturalisation are met. It then sends the application file (application form and documentation) together with its advice ('no objection' or 'objection') to the IND.

The IND decides on whether to reject or accept the application. It assesses the application and the municipal advice. If the applicant fulfils all requirements at the time of submitting his/her request, but not anymore by the time the IND decides on the application, the application will be rejected. If the application is rejected or suspended, the applicant will receive a written notice from the IND, stipulating the reasons.

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<sup>7</sup> H. Wubs et al. (2010), *Evaluatie van de naturalisatieceremonie*, Den Haag: WODC, <http://english.wodc.nl/onderzoeksdatabase/evaluatie-naturalisatieceremonie.aspx?cp=45&cs=6799>. For a description by a journalist who went through the naturalisation procedure herself, see <http://crossroadsmag.net/2006/08/the-steep-and-thorny-way-to-naturalisation-day/>.

<sup>8</sup> IND (2011), *Tendrapportage Naturalisatie VI. Aanvragen en verkrijgen van het Nederlanderschap door naturalisatie en optie. Ontwikkelingen in de periode 2005-2009*, Den Haag: IND, p. 25.

If the application is granted, the IND submits the case to the Queen. (Naturalisations take place by Royal decree.) The Queen will sign the proposal to grant the applicant Dutch citizenship. The IND notifies the local government, and the latter will invite the applicant to a naturalisation ceremony (see section 1 above). Attendance at the naturalisation ceremony is compulsory. The applicant does not become a citizen until after having attended the naturalisation ceremony and having made the ‘declaration of solidarity’ (see section 1 above). The local government reports back to the IND about the fulfilment of these requirements. The new citizens receive a certificate stating that they have become a Dutch citizen only at the end of the ceremony. Those who do not attend the ceremony will be invited to a subsequent ceremony. The applicant must attend a ceremony and make the ‘declaration of solidarity’ within one year after the decision on his/her application. Otherwise, he/she will have to start up another naturalisation procedure.

Article 9, paragraph 4 of the Dutch Nationality Act (Rijkswet op het Nederlanderschap) stipulates that once the fee for naturalisation has been paid, a decision has to be made within one year. The procedure can be extended twice for six months. Delays are more likely to occur before the application procedure than during the procedure, because the local government will advise the applicant against filing an application if he/she does not (yet) fulfil all the requirements for naturalisation or if he/she cannot (yet) provide all the necessary documents. According to the most recent annual reports of the IND, 95 per cent of all applications are decided upon within the statutory term.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Requirements, exemptions and discretion

In deciding whether or not an applicant meets the requirements, the local government and the IND have practically no formal discretion. The Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act (*Handleiding Rijkswet op het Nederlanderschap*) contains more than 500 pages of detailed instructions and models. This section gives an overview of the requirements and exemptions, and the discretion left to the IND and the local government by the Manual.

#### ***The applicant must be of age***

The Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act stipulates that the local government must check the applicant’s age on the basis of data registered in the municipal population register (*gemeentelijke basisadministratie*).

#### ***The applicant must have a valid residence permit for a non-temporary purpose***

The Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act states which residence permits may and which may not be accepted.

#### ***The applicant must have lived in the Netherlands for an uninterrupted period of five years with a valid residence permit<sup>10</sup>***

The Manual for the application of the Dutch Nationality Act stipulates how the local government must determine whether this requirement is met. The Act and the Manual contain the following exemptions to the five-year residency requirement:

<sup>9</sup> IND (2010), *De IND belicht. Jaarresultaten 2009*, Den Haag: IND.

<sup>10</sup> The new coalition government (formed by the liberal-conservative VVD party and the social-democratic PvdA party) which was installed in November 2012, intends to increase this residency requirement from five to seven years and to remove all exemptions.

- The five-year term does not apply to an applicant who held Dutch citizenship in the past but lost it.
- The five-year term does not apply to an applicant who is married to or is the registered partner of a Dutch citizen; he/she can apply for naturalisation after three years of marriage or registered partnership (possibly abroad) and uninterrupted cohabitation.
- The five-year term does not apply to an applicant who during his/her adulthood was adopted in the Netherlands by a Dutch citizen.
- The five-year term is reduced to a three-year term if the applicant has cohabited in the Netherlands with a Dutch citizen (both partners unmarried) for an uninterrupted period of three years.
- The five-year term is reduced to a three-year term if the applicant is stateless.
- The five-year term is reduced to a three-year term if the applicant as a minor was acknowledged or legitimised by a Dutch citizen.
- The five-year term is reduced to a two-year term if the applicant has legally resided in the Netherlands for a total period of ten years, the last two of which uninterruptedly.

The Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act provides detailed rules with regard to all these exemptions. The IND and the local governments thus have practically no discretion in applying these exemptions.

***The applicant must be sufficiently integrated in Dutch society and be able to read, write, speak and understand Dutch***

The Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act stipulates that the applicant must provide proof in the form of a civic integration diploma. The Manual also contains detailed rules with regard to exemptions and exceptions. There are two kinds of exemptions from the requirement that the applicant provides proof of his/her knowledge of the Dutch language and society in the form of a civic integration diploma:

- exemptions for persons whose knowledge of the Dutch language and society can be assumed to be sufficient, e.g. because they obtained a secondary school diploma in the Netherlands;
- exemptions for persons who cannot be expected to fulfil this requirement due to mental or physical impediments or illiteracy.

The Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act provides detailed rules with regard to both kinds of exemptions.

The INTEC country report on the Netherlands reported that this requirement is applied strictly. There are only a limited number of officially recognised diplomas that entitle the applicant to an exemption, and the original diploma must be presented in order to be taken into account; no exceptions are permitted to this rule. The second exemption is also difficult to obtain.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Tineke Strik, Maaike Luiten & Ricky van Oers (2010), *Country Report: The Netherlands. The INTEC project: Integration and Naturalisation tests: The New Way to European Citizenship*, Nijmegen: Centre for Migration Law, pp. 100-101, <http://www.ru.nl/law/cmr/projects/intec/>. See also Ricky van Oers (2006), *De naturalisatietoets geslaagd? Een onderzoek naar de toestand-koming en effecten van de naturalisatietoets*, Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers, pp. 68 ff.



***The applicant must be prepared to renounce his/her current nationality***

The Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act specifies how this refusal ground should be applied. The Manual also contains detailed rules with regard to the following exemptions:

- The applicant will automatically lose his/her current citizenship because of his/her naturalisation as a Dutch citizen.
- The law of the applicant's country of citizenship does not allow renunciation.
- The law of the applicant's country of citizenship allows renunciation only after the applicant has been naturalised as a Dutch citizen (however, the applicant then has to do so).
- The applicant was born in the Netherlands and is still living there at the time of his/her application for naturalisation.
- As a minor, the applicant lived in the Netherlands for a period of five consecutive years.
- The applicant is married to or is the registered partner of a Dutch citizen.
- The applicant has a refugee status.
- In order to renounce his/her current citizenship, the applicant will have to pay a large sum of money to the authorities in his/her country of citizenship; the Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act provides detailed rules with regard to the amount of money.
- By renouncing his/her current citizenship the applicant would lose certain rights (e.g. inheritance rights), which would cause you serious financial losses; the Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act provides detailed rules with regard to the amount of the losses.
- The applicant is not allowed to renounce his/her current citizenship until he/she has fulfilled his military service.
- The applicant cannot be expected to contact the authorities in his/her country of citizenship.
- The applicant's country of citizenship is not recognised by the Netherlands.
- The applicant's country of citizenship is party to the Second Protocol to the Convention on reduction of cases of multiple nationality and military obligation in cases of multiple nationality.
- The applicant has special and objectively assessable reasons for not renouncing his/her nationality; the Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act stipulates that if the applicant proves that he/she has special and objectively assessable reasons not to renounce his/her original citizenship, the head of the IND must refer the case to the Minister.

***The application is rejected in case of serious suspicions that the applicant constitutes a threat to public order, public decency or the safety of the Kingdom***

The Manual for the Application of the Dutch Nationality Act specifies in a detailed manner how these grounds for refusal should be interpreted and applied. However, it also states that in a concrete individual case, there may be very specific and exceptional facts or circumstances which may necessitate a deviation from the guidelines. The assessment of such conditions is carried out by the IND. Thus, there is some discretion for the IND. It should be noted that the public order requirement for naturalisation is more stringent than the public order requirements of the aliens law.

#### 4. Documentation

Applicants must include the following documentation in their application:

- a valid residence permit for a non-temporary purpose;
- a civic integration diploma or comparable diploma;
- a valid passport;
- a legalised birth certificate.

The passport has to come from a passport issuing office of the applicant's country of citizenship. Applicants with an asylum residence permit and stateless applicants are allowed to submit a refugee or alien's travel document. The birth certificate has to come from the applicant's country of birth. The applicant does not have to submit this documentation anew if he/she was already registered in the municipal population register with a birth certificate which meets the current requirements with regard to legalisation.

If the applicant applies for naturalisation on the basis of a three-year marriage to a Dutch citizen), he/she also has to submit a marriage certificate. This has to come from the country where the marriage was contracted; if the marriage was contracted abroad, the certificate must be legalised.

In addition to the above documentation, the applicant has to sign a declaration that he/she has not been in trouble with the law and that he/she is not married to another person than registered in the municipal population register. If an applicant declares that he/she has been in trouble with the law or that he/she is married to more than one person, the local government will inform the applicant about the potential consequences for the decision on his/her application.

The applicant must also sign a declaration that he/she is prepared to renounce his/her current citizenship once he/she has acquired Dutch citizenship. Some countries require their citizens to obtain permission before they can adopt another citizenship. If this applies to the applicant, he/she should preferably hand in the document proving this permission together with his/her application for naturalisation.

#### 5. Acceptance rate and rejection grounds

In the years 2007-2009, 94 per cent of the applications filed in the Netherlands were granted, less than 6 per cent were rejected.<sup>12</sup> The most common grounds for rejection are that the applicant does not fulfil the residency requirement or that he/she is considered to represent a threat to public order. The latter grounds for rejection became more important in the years 2005-2009. The justification of 'insufficient integration' became less important. In the years 2005-2009, less than 3 per cent of the rejections were based on lacking documentation.<sup>13</sup>

In the years 2005-2009, only 1 to 2 per cent of the rejections were based on the applicant's not having fulfilled the renunciation requirement. It should be noted that only a minority of all applicants are required to renounce their current nationality. About 65 per cent of all applicants can retain their current nationality. In most cases this is because the nationality law of

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<sup>12</sup> IND (2011), *Trendrapportage Naturalisatie VI. Aanvragen en verkrijgen van het Nederlanderschap door naturalisatie en optie. Ontwikkelingen in de periode 2005-2009*, Den Haag: IND, p. 24. Applications for naturalisation can also be filed in the Dutch Antilles and Aruba. These applications (5 to 10 per cent of all applications in 2005-2009) are more often rejected.

<sup>13</sup> IND (2011), *Trendrapportage Naturalisatie VI. Aanvragen en verkrijgen van het Nederlanderschap door naturalisatie en optie. Ontwikkelingen in de periode 2005-2009*, Den Haag: IND, p. 25.

the applicant's country of origin does not allow renunciation (about 20 per cent of all applicants in the years 2005-2009), because the applicant is married to a Dutch citizen (also about 20 per cent of all applicants) or because the applicant has a refugee status (about 15 per cent of all applicants). Another 20 per cent of all applicants automatically lose their original nationality upon naturalisation. This means that only 15 per cent of all applicants are required to take steps to renounce their current citizenship. Of those applicants, 1 per cent are rejected because of the renunciation requirement.<sup>14</sup>

## 6. Appeal possibilities

The General Administrative Act (*Algemene Wet Bestuursrecht*) applies to naturalisation decisions. This implies that first instance is an administrative review by the authority that has made the decision, i.e. the IND. The applicant has to lodge his/her objection within six weeks after the decision has been taken. The IND has to decide within six weeks. The latter term can be extended with another six weeks if the IND wants to hear the applicant about his/her objection. In case the objection is found to be well-founded, the IND will grant the applicant's request for naturalisation. In the years 2006-2010, a total of 2100 objections were found to be well-founded; this number corresponds to approximately 2 per cent of the total number of naturalisations in these years.<sup>15</sup>

It is possible to appeal the decision on the objection to the District Court. The appeal must be lodged within six weeks of the decision on the objection. The court may quash the decision, but it cannot substitute the decision. The IND will have to take a new decision. Further appeal is possible at the Administrative Law Division of the State Council. The Minister of Justice can also appeal. The appeal must be lodged within six weeks of the decision of the court.

There are no possibilities to appeal against civic integration exam results.

## 7. Costs for applicants

As of January 1 2012, the standard fee for naturalisation is € 798. The fees for naturalisation are determined each year anew. In 2010, they were raised by 50 per cent. Until 2010, there were reduced fees for applicants with low incomes. In 2010, these reductions were replaced by reductions for stateless applicants and applicants with an asylum permit.<sup>16</sup> Only Moluccans<sup>17</sup> who have acquired a special legal status are exempted from paying a naturalisation fee. As of January 1 2012, the fees for other applicants amount to:

one person	€ 798
joint fee for married or cohabitating couples	€ 1,019
reduced fee for stateless applicants and applicants with an asylum residence permit	€ 593
reduced fee for stateless couples and couples with asylum residence permits	€ 815
co-naturalisation of minor child	€ 117

<sup>14</sup> IND (2011), *Tendrapportage Naturalisatie VI. Aanvragen en verkrijgen van het Nederlanderschap door naturalisatie en optie. Ontwikkelingen in de periode 2005-2009*, Den Haag: IND, p. 25, 39-40.

<sup>15</sup> IND (2011), *Tendrapportage Naturalisatie. Ontwikkelingen in de periode 2006-2010*, Den Haag: IND, p. 54.

<sup>16</sup> IND (2011), *Tendrapportage Naturalisatie. Ontwikkelingen in de periode 2006-2010*, Den Haag: IND, p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> Former inhabitants of the Moluccas, one of Indonesia's archipelagos.

### ***Additional costs***

Additional costs are incurred by the language and integration requirement (see section 3 above). Most applicants who do not possess a Dutch secondary school diploma are required to have passed a language and integration test. The test is the same as the test which has to be passed as a pre-requisite for permanent residence. It can take different forms. The exam fees range from € 81 for an exemption test for applicants who are already proficient in Dutch (the level of this test is higher than that of the normal test) to more than € 1,300 for applicants who choose to take the practical part of the exam in the form of assessments.<sup>18</sup> Applicants who choose to follow a course will also have to pay a course fee. There are no free tests or assessments which are meant specifically for naturalisation applicants. Neither are there publicly-run or subsidised courses specifically aimed at naturalisation applicants. However, until January 2013, local governments pay the courses and the exam fees for many immigrants who are required to pass a language and integration test.<sup>19</sup> As from January 2014, the local governments will no longer receive funding from the central government to cover these costs. New immigrants will be required to pay for their integration courses and tests themselves already as from January 2013. If they cannot, they will have to apply for a loan.<sup>20</sup>

The renunciation requirement may also incur additional costs. The amount of these costs varies depending on the country of origin. The same applies to the costs of obtaining foreign documents and having them legalised.

### **Conclusion**

Over the past two decades, the conditions for naturalisation have become more restrictive. Since the 1980s, Dutch citizenship law has been influenced by integration policies and ideologies. At first the so-called ‘ethnic minorities policy’ exercised a liberal influence on citizenship law, because it was assumed that a strong legal status would facilitate immigrants’ integration processes. Later on, the influence of integration ideologies and policies became more restrictive, as a strong legal status and especially naturalisation came to be seen as something that has to be ‘deserved’. The EUDO citizenship country report on the Netherlands describes and analyses the changes in Dutch citizenship law and their effects on naturalisation rates.<sup>21</sup>

The present report has focused on the administrative procedure for naturalisation. Does the procedure pose important obstacles to naturalisation? Judging from the rejection rates, it does not. Only a small percentage of all applications are rejected. Moreover, few rejections are based on lack of documentation or information. The information stage of the procedure appears to work quite well. The requirements themselves may pose serious obstacles. However, for applicants who meet the legal conditions, the procedure in itself appears to be less of an obstacle. The detailed instructions for local governments also appear to work quite well. They help to achieve uniformity in the application of requirements and exemptions. The local officials who

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<sup>18</sup> Tineke Strik, Anita Böcker, Maaike Luiten & Ricky van Oers (2011), *The INTEC Project: Synthesis Report. Integration and Naturalisation tests: The new way to European Citizenship*, Nijmegen: Centre for Migration Law, <http://www.ru.nl/law/cmr/projects/intec/>.

<sup>19</sup> Tineke Strik, Anita Böcker, Maaike Luiten & Ricky van Oers (2011), *The INTEC Project: Synthesis Report. Integration and Naturalisation tests: The new way to European Citizenship*, Nijmegen: Centre for Migration Law, <http://www.ru.nl/law/cmr/projects/intec/>.

<sup>20</sup> Wet van 13 september 2012 tot wijziging van de Wet inburgering en enkele andere wetten in verband met de versterking van de eigen verantwoordelijkheid van de inburgeringsplichtige, *Staatsblad* 2012, 430.

<sup>21</sup> Ricky van Oers, Betty de Hart & Kees Groenendijk (2012), *Country Report: The Netherlands* (revised October 2012), <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/CountryReports/Netherlands.pdf>.

are responsible for receiving and reviewing applications for naturalisation have almost no discretion, at least formally.

It should be noted, however, that there is informal discretion particularly in the information stage of the procedure. The research for this report was limited to formal discretion, and anyway we have not found other research on how local governments carry out their tasks in interaction with applicants in practice. However, it is questionable whether all local governments have adequate knowledge of all requirements and exceptions. Some applicants may be wrongly advised not to apply, or wrongly informed that they have to renounce their current nationality.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For an example, see Betty de Hart (2012), *Een tweede paspoort. Dubbele nationaliteit in de Verenigde Staten, Duitsland en Nederland*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p. 178. One of De Hart's interviewees reported that she was told that she had to renounce her Serbian citizenship. She was not informed, however, of the exemption for applicants who would have to pay a large sum of money to the authorities in their country of citizenship. She heard about this exemption only after she had filed her application. When she still requested an exemption, she was told that she should have done so immediately when submitting her application.

