

Stance

I fully oppose the implementation of the proposal to increase citizenship time from 5 to 10 years (or from 3-5 years in special cases).

Supporting Arguments

I use the term "immigrants" to include all non-Dutch born people, including expats and refugees.

Stress and Instability

People who only live in their country of citizenship their whole lives do not understand the severe stress and instability that come with being on a temporary visa and not having citizenship or rights in the country you have moved to and now call home. Many of us move to the Netherlands from unsafe or unstable countries for job opportunities. If we are laid off, become sick, or our temporary contracts not renewed, then it puts us in difficult and stressful situations where we have to work out our visa situation immediately (within 3 months) or be forced to return to our home countries. We don't have the luxury to choose a healthy work culture, a job we're excited about for the role or the mission of the organization, or even a competitive salary. We simply have to take ANY job that will sponsor our visas to be able to stay in the place we've built our lives.

Dangerous Home Countries

Many of my friends would be imprisoned or killed if they returned home, due to their political activities here that are openly against their home countries' political regimes.

Knowledge Migrants

Prolonging the citizenship period to double (10 years) is creating untenable instability for immigrants. This will certainly dissuade Highly Skilled Migrants with no ties to the Netherlands from moving here for work because they have better long term options in comparable Western European countries like Germany, Sweden, and France, where immigrants are eligible for citizenship in 5 years and can hold dual citizenship. The Netherlands needs knowledge migrants to fuel the economy and continue innovation.

Integration

Finally, the stated reason for this increase is better integration. Time lived in a country does not alone equate to more and better integration. Integration must be intentional and assisted by the Dutch government and communities in which immigrants live. Living in small-town Gelderland, I have repeatedly been refused support from language services (for example Taal Maatjes en

Taal cafes) because I am not a refugee. Many friends have waited over a year to be contacted by our Gemeentes regarding language integration and support. A year is far too long to wait to start learning Dutch and adjusting to culture and life in the Netherlands. For immigrants living outside of the Randstad, Dutch is required for daily life.

Government

For comparison, in Canada, where I have also lived as an immigrant, immigration resources are free and proactively communicated. I received an extensive Welcome to Canada booklet which laid out foundational concepts to me, for example: my rights, how emergency services worked, Canadian culture, and employment basics. I was put in contact with the local immigrant services office in the city I moved to which had regularly scheduled language classes, workshops, and events and offered free 1:1 support in topics like resume writing and job searching. Nothing like this has been provided to me in the Netherlands, and I've had to figure out everything myself. Moving to a new country is extremely difficult: You must find housing, start a new job, make friends, learn the language, and learn how life works. The government should make it easy and accessible for people to integrate.

Society

Integration is not just a burden on the migrant and the government, society also plays a role. Countless times Dutch individuals have simply walked away from our interaction rather than patiently speak with me in my imperfect Dutch, including corporate and volunteer situations. My immigrant friends have also repeatedly experienced this issue. We want to increase our fluency, but if our neighbors and colleagues will not speak to us, then we cannot. It is important that the Dutch people too welcome immigrants and help them integrate into the community.

Transition

If this law will be put into effect regardless, then I propose adding a transitional period for immigrants who have already moved to the Netherlands.

It is unethical to have this law apply immediately without a transitional period. Many of us moved here planning to become citizens in 5 years, knowing we would have that stability. We chose the Netherlands over other countries that offered similar terms for citizenship. It would be a stab in the back to the people who already moved here under the old law not to allow us to retain the existing terms of citizenship because in that case we may not have chosen the Netherlands. (I certainly would not have.) Please start the new citizenship term only for people who move here after the new law comes into effect.