

Objection to Proposed Extension of Dutch Naturalisation Requirement from 5 to 10 Years

To: Relevant Ministry / Parliamentary Committee / Consultation Office

Date: 3 October 2025

Subject: Objection to proposed extension of naturalisation requirement from 5 to 10 years

Dear Sir/Madam,

Introduction

I write as an expat resident in the Netherlands since 2024, currently holding, . During my years here I have integrated into Dutch society, contributed to the economy, paid taxes and social contributions, participated in local life, and built roots through housing, education, and community involvement. I respectfully express strong opposition to the proposal to increase the naturalisation requirement from five to ten years, and I wish to highlight the substantive negative consequences such a change would create for long-term, law-abiding contributors like me.

Key Objections in Summary

- It breaks trust and introduces instability: people make life decisions based on the law as it stands when they relocate.
- It unfairly delays full civic participation—voting and representation—for residents who have already integrated and contributed for many years.
- It weakens the Netherlands' competitiveness for international talent and innovation.
- It exacerbates inequities: those who contribute heavily in taxes and economic activity must wait far longer to access full rights.
- It relies on duration as a proxy for integration; meaningful integration is about participation, language, and community—time alone does not guarantee belonging.

Contributions, Taxation, and Return on Investment

Many expats are net contributors to Dutch public finances. We pay income tax, social security, health insurance premiums, VAT on consumption, property-related taxes where applicable, and a wide range of municipal levies and fees. We also bring international expertise, invest in housing, raise families, support local businesses, and create spillover benefits for the Dutch economy through skills transfer, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Despite this, we remain ineligible for full civic rights until naturalisation, and the proposed ten-year wait would extend this period significantly. This creates a mismatch between the burden we accept and the benefits we can access. Heavy contributors should see a reasonable and predictable path to full civic membership—not a moving target.

Loss of the 30% Ruling and Its Interaction with Naturalisation

The 30% ruling was designed to compensate for relocation costs and to attract skilled workers. As it phases down or ends for many expats, net income decreases and cost of living pressures increase. If naturalisation is simultaneously pushed out to ten years, the result is a prolonged period in which we shoulder full tax and social burdens while lacking full political and civic rights.

- After the 30% ruling ends, expats often face a noticeable drop in net income while continuing to contribute fully to public revenues.
- The previous understanding for many of us was a reasonably timed pathway to citizenship (five years). Doubling this timeline after relocation decisions have been made undermines legitimate expectations.
- Citizenship policy should not be used to offset changes in tax incentives; they are separate policy areas. Reducing a tax benefit should not be accompanied by delaying access to citizenship.

What Expats Lose Without Timely Naturalisation

- Limited Civic Participation: Without citizenship, we cannot vote in national elections or fully participate in shaping the policies that govern our lives.
- Increased Status Fragility: *i*s require renewals and can be vulnerable to administrative issues; citizenship provides long-term security and stability.
- Restricted Professional Pathways: Certain public service and security roles require citizenship, blocking otherwise qualified residents for many years.
- Reduced Mobility Options: Dutch citizenship confers EU citizenship and the associated freedom of movement and work across the EU—benefits not available to non-citizens.
- Family and Children: Prolonged non-citizen status complicates planning and security for families; citizenship often simplifies the legal position of dependents and children raised here.
- Travel and Consular Protection: A Dutch passport ensures streamlined travel and robust consular support; non-citizens remain constrained by their original nationality.
- Sense of Belonging: Citizenship is a strong marker of social belonging and psychological security. Extending the wait delays this sense of being fully part of Dutch society.

Legal, Fairness, and Policy Effectiveness Considerations

- Retroactivity & Legitimate Expectations: Many current expats relocated under the five-year rule. Changing the rules mid-course is widely perceived as unfair.
- Proportionality: Doubling the timeline imposes a heavy burden without clear evidence that it improves integration outcomes.
- International Talent Competition: Skilled workers may choose jurisdictions with clearer, shorter, and fairer routes to citizenship, risking a loss of talent and investment.
- Administrative Burden: Longer eligibility periods increase monitoring complexity, documentation disputes, and processing workload for authorities.

Addressing the Question: "What Do We Gain Once the 30% Ruling Is Gone?"

The end of the 30% ruling should not translate into diminished prospects for full civic membership. Citizenship is not a tax incentive; it is a recognition of long-term commitment and integration. Even without the ruling, expats continue to contribute significantly through taxes, public services usage fees, and economic activity. A timely path to citizenship ensures that those contributions are matched by stable rights, political voice, and long-term security.

- **Separate Policy Domains:** Tax incentives and nationality law serve different purposes and should not be linked in ways that penalise contributors.
- **Stability and Security:** Citizenship ends permit anxiety and strengthens family planning, career mobility, and investment decisions.
- **Integration by Participation:** Language proficiency, steady employment, community engagement, and clean legal records are stronger indicators of integration than calendar years.

Constructive Alternatives and Mitigations

- **Grandfather Clause / Transitional Regime:** Allow current residents who have already been in the Netherlands for a defined period (e.g., three years or more) to naturalise under the existing five-year rule.
- **Tiered or Merit-Based Pathway:** Provide an accelerated route (e.g., six or seven years) for those who demonstrate strong integration and sustained contributions.
- **Integration-Focused Criteria:** Emphasise language proficiency, employment, community participation, and clean records rather than simply time elapsed.
- **Interim Civic Rights:** After five years, grant or expand specific civic rights (e.g., local voting rights where applicable) even if full naturalisation is pending.
- **Scheduled Review:** Commit to a formal policy review after a set period to evaluate impacts on integration, talent attraction, and administrative efficiency.

Conclusion and Request

For the reasons outlined above, I respectfully request that the government reconsider the proposal to extend the naturalisation requirement from five to ten years. The change would penalise long-term residents who already contribute substantially to public finances and Dutch society, risk discouraging integration, and weaken the Netherlands' global competitiveness for talent. At minimum, transitional protections should apply to current residents, and policy should pivot from a strict time-based criterion to an integration-by-participation approach. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Eindhoven

Yours sincerely,

Expat from Eindhoven