



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2019 edition

State of Consular Affairs

for the Netherlands and Dutch
nationals worldwide



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Introduction

What we mean by ‘worldwide’

The Netherlands is committed to providing effective consular services for the Netherlands and for Dutch nationals worldwide. This ambition was set out in the coalition agreement.

worldwide (*adjective, adverb*) extending or reaching throughout the world

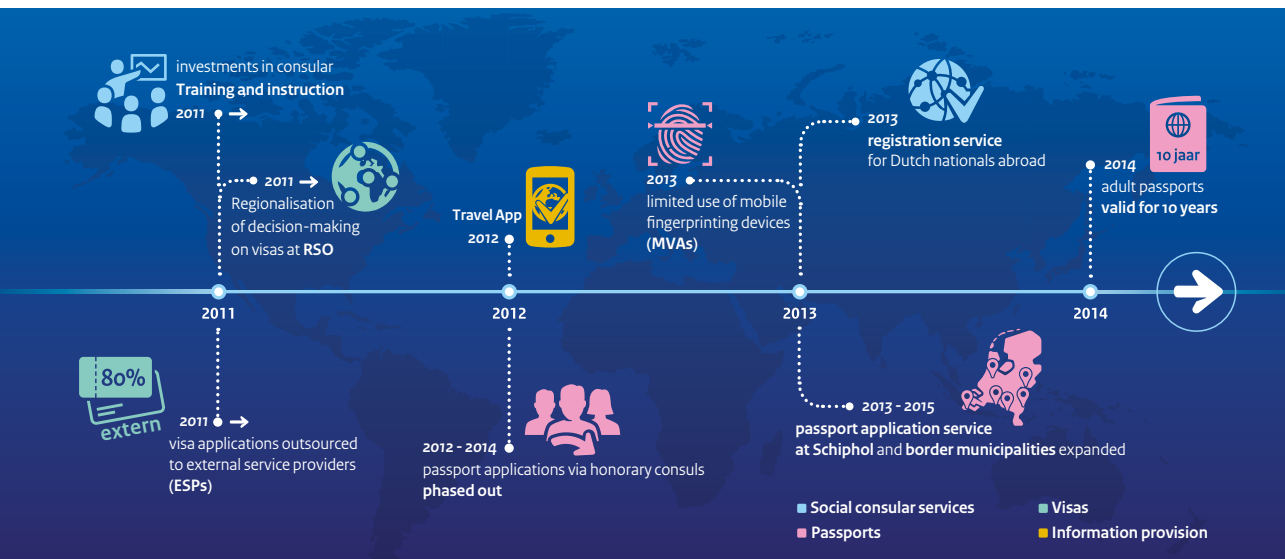
This definition succinctly describes our public task, and the challenges it involves: extensive and far-reaching. The task at hand is to provide services for Dutch nationals abroad and foreign nationals wishing to travel to the Netherlands.

More than 1 million Dutch nationals live and work worldwide. Each year, the Dutch make around 25 million trips abroad, and hundreds of thousands of visa applications are submitted by non-Dutch nationals, including foreign tourists, business travellers and students who wish to come to the Netherlands. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which bears primary responsibility for the processes that make this possible, works with partners within central government and with various other stakeholders to provide an effective service throughout the world for all these global citizens. We are available 24/7 and are always connected.

Providing consular services also entails information provision, assistance for Dutch nationals in emergencies, civil affairs and services for non-Dutch nationals (see the table on page 10). In the first edition of *State of Consular Affairs* (then known as *Trends in Consular Affairs*), published in 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs set out in a products and services catalogue the consular services the government provides. It explained what the government can and can't do, and what responsibilities travellers have themselves. The framework within which consular work is carried out is defined by the 2018 edition of *State of Consular Affairs* and the ensuing debate in parliament. It determines what the government can do for Dutch nationals abroad and for non-Dutch nationals who wish to travel to the Netherlands, as well as the focal points and limits of the services we offer.

The consular world is dynamic and continues to develop as we achieve progress and results. The 2019 edition of *State of Consular Affairs* explains which steps have already been taken and which will follow, in the interests of further improving our consular services. It explains where our focus lies and where adjustments are required. We have explicitly drawn on input from stakeholders via internet consultation and customer surveys and evaluations.

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) has conducted a retrospective independent evaluation of the developments the consular service has undergone. The resulting report, entitled ‘Citizens first? Consular services on the move, 2011-2018’ (*‘De burger centraal? De consulaire dienstverlening in beweging 2011-2018’*), which has been submitted to the House of Representatives, recognises and values the effectiveness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ approach to modernisation and the results so far achieved. There is clearly still work to be done, but implementation is in line with the vision and is heading in the right direction

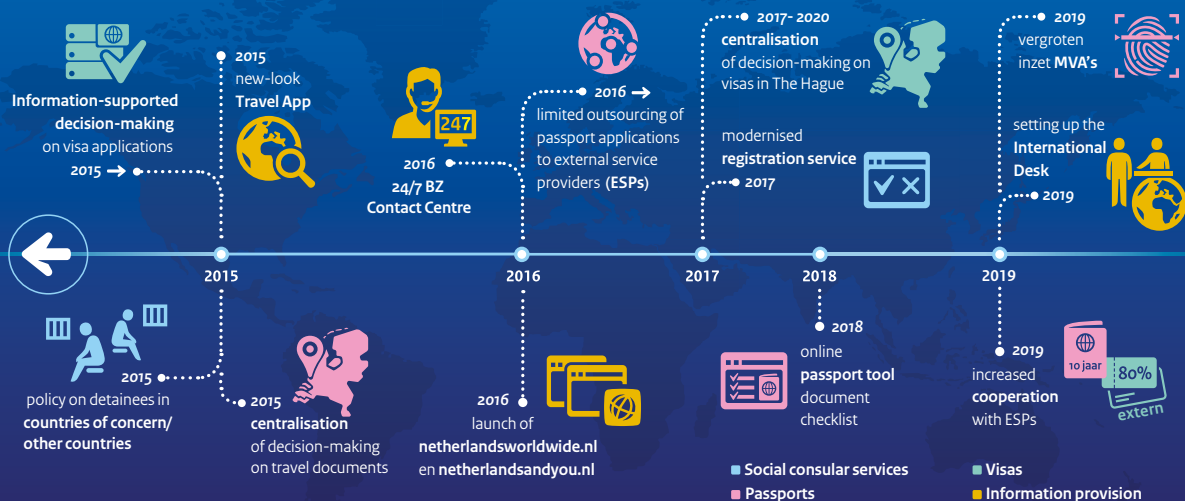


Changing context since 2011



The IOB's recommendations will be taken into account as this process continues. Appendix 1 contains an overview, including responses to specific recommendations made by the IOB. These recommendations were also taken into account when compiling this State of Consular Affairs.

The above infographic, taken in part from the IOB report Citizens first? Consular services on the move, 2011-2018', summarises the changes to the context since 2011 and the impact this has had on consular services.



Changing context since 2011

 **European and international developments**

 **citizens' expectations**

 **spending cuts and a more compact civil service**

Guide

This State of Consular Affairs builds on the 2018 edition, focusing on innovation and policy priorities, reporting on results, drawing on input from stakeholders and following up on evaluations, pledges, and requests from parliament.

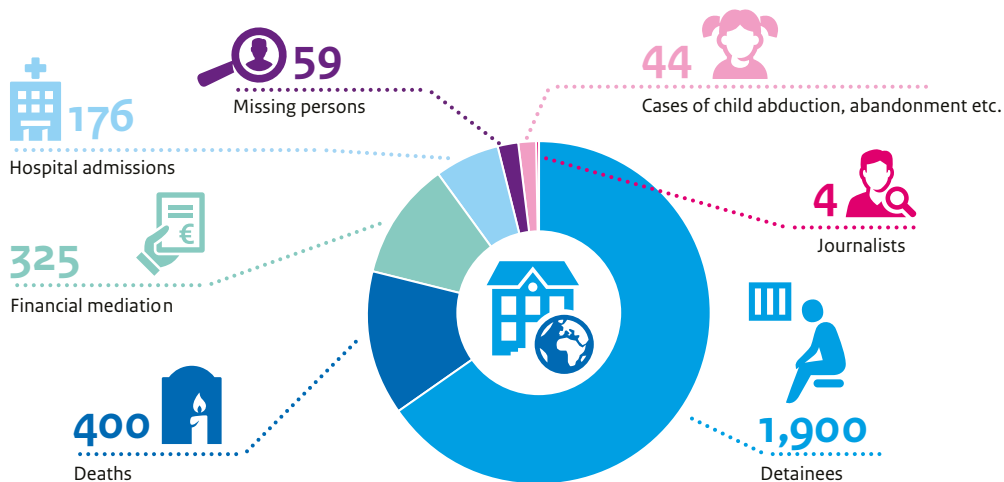
Based on the four pillars of our consular services (see the table below), themes will be discussed that require special attention in the light of recent innovations and developments. State of Consular Affairs is published annually, from 2020 this will happen just before the summer.

Consular services			
<i>Information</i>	<i>Assistance for Dutch nationals in emergencies</i>	<i>Civil affairs</i>	<i>Services to non-Dutch nationals</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/7 BZ Contact Centre • Travel advice • Travel App • Information service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis and disaster response • Consular assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel and identity documents • Emergency documents • Legalisations, official documents and consular declarations • Facilitating voting abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-stay visas (Schengen visas) • Authorisation for temporary stay • Civic integration exams
International Desk			

Providing consular services | 2018

ASSISTANCE TO DUTCH NATIONALS

2.908  Assisted in *emergencies* abroad
by our *embassies*
and *consulates*:
Dutch nationals



Figures for various
**PRODUCTS
AND SERVICES**

Travel advice consulted
More than **2,3 million**
Times



Approx. **47,500**
individual registrations with
the **information service**



250,000
Active **travel app**
users



EVENTS AND INCIDENTS

Including



9-25 February

Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang



21 March

Intelligence and Security Services Act referendum
(2,300 votes from abroad)



29 July

Terrorist attack in Tajikistan



5 August

Earthquake in Lombok



Throughout 2018

Forest fires in Greece, Portugal and California



ISSUES IN FOCUS



Forced marriage
campaign

Applications for Dutch
travel documents via **external
service providers** or using
**mobile applications
workstations**



Presentation of
State of Consular Affairs

Consular services brought
in line with the **General Data
Protection Regulation (GDPR)**



Continued
digitalisation for a
more efficient service

Approx. **124,000**
passports issued



Around **680,000** short-stay
visa applications processed
for foreign tourists, business
travellers and students



Launch of
Launch of digital visa application
form and launch of new

Travel App



Approx. **650,000**
direct **interactions with
customers** via the
24/7 Contact Centre





Information provision

Introduction

The guiding principle behind the services we provide is clear: people are expected to take responsibility themselves and be self-reliant. To help them do so, the government is on hand to provide the information they need for support.

Fast-moving technological advancements and digitalisation change the way information can be provided and the expectations and wishes of Dutch nationals and other customers. As a result we are constantly assessing options for the further development of information provision.

This chapter offers an insight into information provision, as well as results achieved and plans for further improvements.

Continuing to develop information channels

Central government attaches great importance to ensuring that information can be obtained in a user-friendly and easily accessible manner all over the world. This is why a range of channels are available to help people find information on consular services. Online, people can visit the websites netherlandsworldwide.nl and netherlandsandyou.nl. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs can also be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week by phone, email and Twitter through the 24/7 Contact Centre. Coinciding with the publication of this edition of State of Consular Affairs, we have launched the option of getting in touch via WhatsApp to make access to information even easier.

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Later this year we will be launching 'live-chat' via the website. All these channels allow the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be contacted in ways that are convenient to the public.

In 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched a permanent customer satisfaction survey, in line with the recommendations of the IOB report. The most recent results, for the first quarter of 2019, are summarised in the infographic below.

Customers are asked to complete a survey after using a consular service. More than 40% of customers do so. This means we have feedback from over 20,000 customers on the services provided by missions. Feedback is analysed and used to determine which areas should be prioritised by consular information officers and/or on the website. This way, customers are explicitly involved in the continued development of services. The average score for the services provided is 8.7 out of 10. We can be proud of that. However, it is important that we keep meeting changing needs and remain committed to improvement.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



1 January 2019 - 31 March 2019

5,013 respondents - 45.4% response

Customer satisfaction survey - applications for documents Q1 2019

8,7

Average score
for the application process

4,7/5

Front desk scored highest

4,4/5

Score for phone contact up by 0.2

4,5/5

Only 2.9% negative responses for email

84,1%

accessed information easily or
very easily

This group of respondents obtained the information they required and answers to questions about products without much difficulty

Only 4.5% of respondents in Q1 said they had difficulties accessing information.
11.5% were neutral

Information

on the website

76.1% of respondents gave the website a good score, and were satisfied or very satisfied with how easy it was to find and understand information

However, 55.1% of the remaining 23.9% of respondents said they were not satisfied with the ease of finding information on the website.

Travel time

for an appointment

59.8% of all respondents found the travel time for submitting an application somewhat, fairly or very problematic.

This group gave a slightly lower score than people who had no objection to the travel time: 8.5/10 vs 9.0/10.

WHAT DO OUR
CUSTOMERS
SAY?



“ Application was processed quickly and professionally. Great ”

“ It's ridiculous there is still no European passport directive. ”

“ The person I spoke to was friendly and efficient. ”

“ It took me half a day to apply for a document. That's too long. ”

In 2018 the 24/7 Contact Centre handled approximately 650,000 customer enquiries. As well as questions for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Contact Centre also receives questions about products and services for which other parts of central government are responsible (e.g. driving licences, DigiD, old-age pensions or taxes). In the future, these questions will be answered by the International Desk.

Establishing the International Desk

The International Desk will be based on the infrastructure provided by netherlandsworldwide.nl and the 24/7 BZ Contact Centre. We are working to strengthen this basis in order to make more products and services available to the target group abroad. New services have also been introduced over the last year.

To provide a baseline measurement for the new desk a survey was conducted in 2018 among Dutch nationals abroad on their experiences with the services provided by the Dutch government overall.¹

Respondents were critical (giving an average score of 5.6 out of 10), and made it clear that a great deal of improvement was required. This applied to both information provision and communication (information role) and the ease of applying for and arranging specific products and services (transaction role). These are ongoing processes, carried out in conjunction with existing initiatives such as www.mijnoverheid.nl.

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The first steps toward improving information provision have already been taken. People inquiring about most products and services provided by central government are now simply referred to the relevant organisation. To improve access to services, we are mapping existing customer demand and the services currently offered, together with all the relevant government organisations. This will allow us to determine how a product or service can be offered by the International Desk on a permanent basis. The impact analyses for the first round of products and services should be completed later this year. Follow-up steps can then be taken for services to Dutch nationals.

Considerable progress has been made on discussions with the Road Transport Agency (driving licences), Social Insurance Bank (pension payments), Educational Executive Agency (DUO) (diplomas) and Logius (DigiD). In practice, however, these impact analyses and follow-up steps are proving to be less straightforward than anticipated, for example because many organisations do not have the required data about the target group abroad. Where data is missing, additional action will have to be taken to gain an overview of the situation. Pilots are also planned for issuing driving licences and, potentially, other services. To gauge customer opinion, the first sounding board meeting was held in June 2019 with organisations representing the interests of the Dutch community abroad. It proved constructive. The goal of this event – the first edition of the Global Forum for Dutch Citizens – was to

¹ See Parliamentary Papers, 32 734, no. 34, 31 January 2019.

find out more about the experiences of Dutch nationals worldwide and ask for their input. The parties agreed that in addition to the annual dialogue they would maintain close contact throughout the year to report any issues with consular services and ask for feedback on the plans for products and services.

Revising the policy framework on travel advice

One crucial part of information provision is the travel advice issued for all countries. Central government wants Dutch nationals to be well prepared for their trips abroad and kept abreast of relevant information when they are out of the country. Accordingly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively works to provide information to Dutch nationals on the security situation abroad by issuing reliable and up-to-date travel advice. The ministry's online travel advice sets out the security risks to Dutch nationals travelling abroad, using text and internationally recognised, colour-coded maps. The advice is independent, neutral and free from political influence. The safety of Dutch nationals is the top priority. We work closely with other government partners, such as the Municipal Health Service (GGD) and Customs Administration, on issues including health. As of 2019 we will also be joining forces with these partners on public campaigns and outreach.

| 18 | In 2018 a user survey was conducted into the customer-friendliness of the current travel advice pages. Given the results of this survey, and in the light of the results of the 2019 consular public consultation and feedback from travel industry stakeholders, the decision was taken to revise travel advice policy. The main points that emerged from the user survey concerned the speed with which travel advice was updated, a wish for more country-specific information and a clearer layout. In making these changes the IOB's recommendations were also taken into account, as was input from the Dutch travel industry.

Updating travel advice more frequently

The travel advice unit is now available 24/7, meaning that travel advice can – if necessary – be updated at any time of the day or night. The criteria for and approach to updating travel advice have also been amended. The speed at which news travels via social media and other channels means faster action is now required. At all times, however, accuracy must take precedence over speed.

More country-specific information and a clearer layout

All travel advice has been reviewed to include more country-specific information. Where necessary, more attention has been focused on specific security information for certain areas. More specific information will be added in consultation with the mission in the area in question. The layout has been made more user-friendly and, at the request of the House of Representatives, travel advice for 'favourite' countries in the Travel App will be updated even if the App is not active.

European travel advice

EU member states may issue different advice for the same countries. This can be confusing for travellers and travel organisations. In practice, major differences in travel advice are rare. In essence, member states warn of the same security risks. Travel advice issued by different European countries can differ for the following reasons. First, issuing travel advice is a national competence for all member states. It is not an EU competence. Member states that issue travel advice do so on the basis of their own legislation, estimations, intelligence and risk assessments.

Secondly, member states use different formats, classifications and wording in their travel advice. Finally, each member state has its own procedure and each state's travel advice has different consequences for travellers and travel organisations. Accordingly, differences between travel advice and between the associated consequences are inevitable.

The importance of consistent travel advice is recognised within the EU, and the Netherlands regularly calls for closer cooperation. Progress is being made in this respect. When a crisis arises, for example, countries immediately consult with each other on the content of travel advice. This is done locally, via telephone consultation between the head offices and via the joint Consular Online (COOL) platform. Partly in response to a request made by the House of Representatives, the Netherlands is advocating further intensification of cooperation on travel advice.

As yet, however, there is insufficient support for joint European travel advice. Political responsibility for the content of travel advice still rests at national level. Agreeing on joint advice would be a much more lengthy process. Plus, some member states do not issue travel advice for all countries.

Nonetheless, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to emphasise the importance of offering consistent travel advice across the EU. The subject will be raised again when the new European Commission takes office.

The Netherlands will of course attach strict criteria to the introduction of joint travel advice, should we move closer towards it. There must be guarantees as to the quality of the advice and the speed with which it is made available. It must also be free from political influence. After all, the safety of Dutch nationals is always the main priority.

Old version

Travel advice for Montenera Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Last updated on: 19-03-2018

Still valid as of: 01-07-2018

The state of emergency that was declared in Montenera as of 6 March 2018 has now been lifted. Social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter are now working again.



Montenera (fictional example)

✓ Please note:

You are responsible for your own safety, and for deciding whether or not you travel. Read the entire travel advice.

Most recent developments

The state of emergency that was declared in Montenera as of 6 March 2018 has now been lifted. Social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter are now working again.

✓ General

Protests may occur in Montenera. These may give rise to violence. Traffic is chaotic.

✓ Unsafe areas

There are security risks associated with travel to Montenera. In some areas there are still mines.

✓ Crime

The number of robberies in Montenera is rising. Women travelling alone are at risk of being assaulted.

✓ Local laws, rules and customs

When travelling, you will encounter other laws, rules and customs.

✓ Make sure you can be contacted in emergency situations

Leave your contact details with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

✓ Health

Check whether you need to take any precautionary measures to protect your health, e.g. vaccinations.

✓ Natural disasters

Montenera has two rainy seasons. It can rain extremely hard in these seasons, which can lead to flooding.

✓ Travel documents and visas

Check which travel documents you need and the requirements they must meet.

✓ Travel smart

Being properly prepared for your journey can prevent problems. problemen voorkomen.

New version

Travel advice for Montenera Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Last changed on: 31-05-2019

Still valid as of: 03-07-2019

The security situation in Montenera has improved. The Monteneran government has taken measures to allow normal daily life to resume. This means that the colour of the travel advice has changed from 'orange' (only travel when strictly necessary) to 'yellow' (some security risks). See 'Security risks' for more information.



Montenera (fictional example)

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Travel checklist for Montenera

Avoid being caught unawares while travelling. Use the travel checklist!



Traffic safety

Click here for more information on traffic in Montenera. Mandatory to be at airport 3 hours before departure.



Tips from the embassy

Each country has its own laws, rules, customs and special circumstances. These may be very different to the Netherlands. Click here for specific tips from our embassy in Montenera.



Security risks

There is a risk of terrorist attacks in Montenera. Land mines are still in place in the north and east of the country.



Health

Find out about possible epidemics in Montenera and recommended vaccinations.



Emergencies

Contact details for emergency services and the embassy, and tips on what you can do in an emergency.





Assistance for Dutch nationals in emergencies

Introduction

The term ‘consular assistance’ refers to the help offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Dutch nationals who are experiencing problems abroad and who cannot arrange assistance independently. It is provided upon request. In such cases the embassy and Ministry communicate exclusively with the Dutch national in question or their designated contact person.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expects Dutch nationals wishing to travel or stay outside the Netherlands to be self-reliant and to take responsibility for themselves. This means that it is people’s own responsibility to ensure that they are well informed, properly prepared and insured against unforeseen circumstances. Consular assistance is only given if the problem falls under the embassy’s remit. Examples of situations in which consular assistance is justified include: crisis situations as a result of war or a natural disaster, robbery, a missing person incident, death, hospital admission, murder, forced marriage, imprisonment or kidnapping (including child abductions).

The type and level of consular assistance currently offered is based on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ many years of experience in this area. Like many other countries, the Netherlands has no national legislation on consular assistance and the form it should take. It is up to the government to determine the form and level of consular assistance it is offering, with due regard for the principle of good governance. The guiding principle is the right to equal treatment. In some more complicated consular cases, however, a more tailored approach may be required and is thus legitimised, for example because of specific circumstances, the ongoing situation and/or the persons involved.

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The next section examines cases that are complex from a consular point of view, and look at the parameters within which consular assistance is provided. Cases of this kind are regularly raised in exchanges with the House of Representatives. We pledged that the next edition of State of Consular Affairs would continue to address those cases. They concern, specifically, cases of Dutch nationals missing abroad and assistance to vulnerable persons and detainees abroad.

Consular assistance when a Dutch national is missing abroad

Each year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs receives several dozen reports of missing Dutch nationals abroad. The person who is reported missing may not, however, be missing because something bad has happened. When there is a suspicion that someone is missing abroad and it is reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, certain procedures are followed. The first step is for family and friends in the Netherlands to file a report with the Dutch police. This is important as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no authority to conduct judicial enquiries. The police will send a request for assistance to the country in question via an international organisation such as Interpol, or contact the local investigation services directly. In other countries, just like in the Netherlands, the police are usually responsible for investigating urgent missing persons reports. The main responsibility for locating missing Dutch nationals abroad and bringing them to safety therefore lies with the local authorities

in the country concerned. The local police and authorities are also responsible for following up missing person cases correctly.

A tailored approach

As no two missing persons cases – and no two countries – are the same, a tailored approach is almost always required, both in the Netherlands and in the country in question. One of the first steps the Dutch government takes is to establish contact with the local authorities, via the Dutch embassy in the country in question (or the embassy in whose district the country falls). The Dutch government may, in consultation with the Public Prosecution Service and Dutch police, offer Dutch assistance. For example, by offering to share police expertise and capacity in the interests of the investigation. It is up to the local police to decide whether they wish to make use of this offer.

The embassy can also urge the local authorities to intensify or extend an investigation if it is felt that the investigation is not thorough enough or is going to be stopped too soon. Ultimately, however, this decision lies with the local authorities.

A staff member at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serves as a fixed point of contact for family and friends in the Netherlands, informing them of any developments in the country and, if necessary, discussing the most appropriate approach depending on the specific circumstances. Family and friends in the Netherlands can also be advised on other actions they could take, including in the country in which the person has gone missing.

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Vulnerable persons

The 2018 edition of State of Consular Affairs examined this special category of consular assistance. Vulnerable persons include: victims of forced marriage and abandonment; psychologically distressed individuals and vulnerable Dutch nationals being held in foreign prisons.

These individuals may be vulnerable due to a range of factors including age, health issues, addiction and discrimination. Vulnerable Dutch nationals abroad in emergency situations require additional attention as it must be assumed that they are generally not (wholly) self-reliant. For example, in the case of forced marriage and abandonment it will for obvious reasons often not be possible for the person concerned to appeal to friends and family for help. Minors are not expected to be self-reliant. A tailored approach is required for each individual case to offer vulnerable individuals the consular assistance they need.

Vulnerable Dutch detainees abroad do not necessarily always require additional guidance or support. If the custodial institution in which they are being held is aware of their situation and/or a social safety net is in place, the standard assistance available to all detainees may suffice.

Forced marriage and abandonment

What is forced marriage?

‘Forced marriage’ is when a marriage is carried out against the will of one or both parties, as a result of pressure, threats and/or violence.

Forcing someone to marry is a criminal offence in the Netherlands.²

What is abandonment?

Abandonment refers to a situation where a spouse or family sends one or more family members abroad against their will and leaves them there for a long period of time.³ In many cases, the victim’s travel document and/or residence permit is taken away to prevent their return to the Netherlands. While abandonment is not, in itself, a criminal offence, it may result in offences being committed e.g. when abandonment constitutes a serious threat to a minor’s development.

Policy priority and tailored approach

Intensifying efforts to tackle forced marriage and abandonment is a priority within Dutch consular policy. Dutch victims of forced marriage and abandonment are one example of vulnerable groups abroad for whom the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is intensifying consular assistance and adopting a more tailored approach. In such cases, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers consular assistance in close coordination and collaboration with the National Expertise Centre on Forced Marriage and Abandonment (LKHA).

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Integrated approach to forced marriage and abandonment

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is committed to the ongoing improvement of its consular assistance to victims of forced marriage and abandonment abroad. In the interests of achieving a uniform and appropriate approach to forced marriage and abandonment, the ministry is working to raise awareness of the issue across the consular domain: from embassy front office staff to 24/7 BZ Contact Centre staff.

The ministry is also actively involved in the central government-wide approach to combating harmful traditional practices, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. In this context the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and

² Some forced marriages are informal marriages that are not valid under Dutch law.

³ In many cases this concerns Dutch nationals with a migration background who were sent back to and abandoned in their ‘country of origin’.

Sport, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), the municipality of The Hague and the LKHA, is currently investigating the options for structural contributions to an LKHA emergency fund to provide extra assistance for victims abroad. The House of Representatives will be informed in greater detail of any developments in this respect in the next progress report on the programme on domestic violence ('Geweld hoort nergens thuis') headed by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Minister for Legal Protection.

Finally, the Ministry on Foreign Affairs is committed to an integrated approach to combating forced marriage and abandonment. To this end, the ministry maintains a permanent dialogue with the other parties, including the LKHA (victim support) and the National Centre of Expertise on Honour-based Violence (police) to improve our approach in specific cases and cooperate more closely where possible.

In April 2019 the House of Representatives submitted a number of motions calling on the government to step up efforts to combat cases in which a husband or wife holds their spouse captive by refusing to cooperate in ending a formal or informal marriage contracted in the Netherlands or abroad. While this can occur in combination with a forced marriage – a criminal offence in which a marriage is carried out against the will of one or both parties – it is decidedly a different situation.

| 26 | In 2019 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will explore how best to integrate the approach in cases in which husbands or wives are held captive with the existing approach to forced marriage as a consular policy priority, all within the framework of the interministerial approach to combating harmful traditional practices. The results will be available in the fourth quarter of 2019.

Campaign

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also working to make the consular services it offers in this regard more visible and more accessible via an annual publicity campaign in cooperation with the LKHA. Each year in the summer holiday period a special campaign will be run to inform possible victims, members of the public and professionals of the risk of forced marriage and abandonment and of the support available from the LKHA (via 'Safe at Home' (Veilig Thuis)) and the 24/7 BZ Contact Centre. As of the 2019 summer campaign, launched concurrently with State of Consular Affairs, it will also be possible to have contact via WhatsApp. This is seen as a low-threshold way of raising the issue.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also working with other ministries on a government-wide campaign to prevent forced marriage and abandonment. This campaign is coordinated by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Its launch is planned for 2020. The House will be informed in detail in the next progress report on the programme on domestic violence ('Geweld hoort nergens thuis'), headed by the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Minister for Legal Protection. Appendix II contains annual figures on consular assistance provided to Dutch victims of forced marriage and abandonment abroad.

Persons with psychologically distressed behaviour

Dutch people travelling or living abroad may display psychologically distressed behaviour – just as they might in the Netherlands. There is a growing group of people who suffer from dementia, depression or other mental health issues, are homeless, or do not have access to the correct medication for their psychiatric disorders. They may be in a desperate situation. As explained in the previous edition of State of Consular Affairs, the task and added value of consular assistance in such cases lies primarily in providing information and communicating with the relevant parties.

In principle, this category of person, like other Dutch nationals, should have a specific request for consular assistance. As communication with psychologically distressed people can sometimes be difficult, it can be problematic to find out what help they are requesting. If the person does not want to be helped, there is little the government can do, even if the family has asked for assistance. There are legal limits to the consular assistance that can be offered, determined by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the right to self-determination of the person in question.

A tailored approach

Most people travelling abroad are, fortunately, properly insured. They will only require limited consular assistance. Helping distressed individuals who require assistance but are not properly insured is often a long drawn-out process. Every case is different and will require a tailored approach. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will first try to refer the person to local help, as local authorities abroad bear primary responsibility and are the only ones in a position to take direct action, if required. The ministry also regularly mediates with healthcare organisations in the Netherlands and/or friends and family to see if the costs of repatriation can be covered. Practical measures can also be put into place to repatriate the person in question. If it can be established that the person in question would benefit from treatment in the Netherlands, but no party is willing to fund their return journey, there is a moral dilemma: how far does the government's duty of care extend? Moreover, care is not always guaranteed in the Netherlands, for example if the person in question is no longer registered with a municipality.

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It was apparent from the internet consultation that people believe the government should play a role both in supporting vulnerable individuals abroad and in assisting their return to the Netherlands, if required. These complex issues, and possible ways of expanding consular assistance to people with psychologically distressed behaviour, will be looked at in greater detail over the next year. We will consult with Dutch representations worldwide and with organisations in the Netherlands that work with this target group. It is crucial that we align consular assistance with the efforts of these Dutch organisations.

Finally, we will strive to align policies on this subject with other countries that are confronted with similar cases. The House of Representatives will be informed of the progress made in the 2020 edition of State of Consular Affairs.

Provision of consular assistance to Dutch detainees abroad

In appendix II⁴ we report on the total number of Dutch detainees abroad and the number of detainees in each country as of the reference date of 1 January 2019 (annual report on providing assistance to detainees abroad). In order to implement the motion submitted by MP Alexander Pechtold, this report will no longer be sent to the House of Representatives separately but will be included each year in the State of Consular Affairs.

In 2018 there were more than 1,900 Dutch detainees abroad. The numbers in the report relate to cases of Dutch detainees abroad known to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, i.e. Dutch detainees who have sought consular assistance from the ministry. The ministry does not keep a record of detainees who do not wish to receive consular assistance. Accordingly, they are not included in these statistics.

In some cases, detainees are released without the Ministry of Foreign Affairs being immediately informed. As these cases are officially still active, the Dutch nationals in question will be incorrectly registered as detained abroad even if that is no longer the case.

The downward trend in the total number of Dutch detainees abroad known to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which began in 2013, continues. The number of Dutch nationals arrested abroad each year remains largely unchanged, at approximately 1,350 new reports of arrests. The reason for the downward trend in the number of Dutch detainees abroad is unclear, but it is likely to be caused by a range of factors including an increase in the number of detainees returning to the Netherlands under the WETS and WOTS,⁵ and shorter sentences being imposed or served. The fact that the number of arrests reported is constant while the number of detainees on the reference date has fallen suggests that the average length of detention per arrest has dropped. Another possible explanation is that fewer Dutch nationals in foreign prisons are applying for consular assistance. However, the actual cause is unclear as these cases are not registered.

Appendix II provides a summary of the number of Dutch detainees detained abroad in the period 2011 to 2018.

⁴ Annual report on Dutch detainees abroad, implementing the motion submitted by Mr MP Alexander Pechtold in 2011 (32 500-V, no. 137).

⁵ Criminal Judgments and Probation Decisions (Mutual Recognition and Enforcement) Act (WETS) and Enforcement of Criminal Judgments (Transfer) Act (WOTS).

Providing grants for assisting detainees abroad

In addition to assisting detainees abroad by deploying staff and financial resources, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also provides a grant to independent organisations' activities in the same field. These activities constitute a core part of the assistance given to individual detainees, in both financial and practical terms. See appendix II for information on how budgets are divided under current grant decisions.

The current three-year grant period will end on 31 December 2019. In mid-2019 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will publish a new multi-year grant policy framework for assisting Dutch detainees abroad as of 2020.

Central to the grant framework are grants for resocialisation and psychosocial care. Other areas eligible for grants are additional legal assistance and a magazine for Dutch detainees abroad.

In 2018 the Dutch Probation Service's International Office was awarded a grant by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under this framework for the resocialisation of all Dutch detainees abroad and for the social care of Dutch detainees in countries of concern. In 2018 Probation Service volunteers paid 4,114 visits to 1,162 detainees in 63 countries (both countries of concern and other countries). These visits are in addition to those organised by the ministry's mission network.

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In 2018 the Epafras Foundation received grants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (under the BZ grant framework) and the Ministry of Justice and Security for the pastoral care of Dutch detainees in countries of concern and for the publication of a magazine for all Dutch detainees abroad.

In 2018 this organisation's local volunteers visited more than 500 Dutch detainees in more than 40 countries of concern. These visits were in addition to those made by consular officers from the ministry's mission network and volunteers working with the Probation Service's International Office in countries of concern. Epafras Foundation volunteers also visited Dutch detainees in other countries. These visits were funded by other means, not from the ministry grant. Four editions of the 'Comeback' magazine were published in 2018.



Civil affairs

Introduction

Around one million Dutch nationals live abroad. Sometimes they require the services of Dutch government organisations. For example, they may wish to renew a Dutch passport or identity document that is about to expire, apply for an emergency travel document if theirs has gone missing, or arrange to vote in Dutch elections from abroad.

Consular services are focused on matters where the provision of services by central government is part of its public task or has added value. This includes issuing travel and identity documents. The section below looks in more detail at the mobile consular teams that are deployed worldwide in order to offer an additional way of applying for Dutch travel documents, at expanding the number of locations where external service providers (ESPs) are active (thereby improving services for customers at missions and at other locations) and at the possibilities for voting from abroad.

Travel and identity documents

Over the next few years, the government wishes to bring its travel and identity document services closer to Dutch nationals abroad and to digitalise these services as far as possible without compromising security and quality. In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working to digitalise travel and identity document applications as much as possible, work more with ESPs and increase the use of mobile fingerprinting devices (MVAs). A fully digital application procedure, whereby applicants are no longer required to appear in person, is not an option at this time due to the level of reliability and security of the technology available.

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In the 2018 edition of State of Consular Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided extensive information on the passport tool. This tool, developed together with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the National Office for Identity Data, meets the needs of both citizens and government. For applicants, this tool makes it clearer which documents need to be submitted when applying for a passport or identity card at a Dutch mission abroad or at a Dutch border municipality. This has resulted in fewer incomplete applications, meaning that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can deal with applications more quickly and Dutch nationals abroad receive their passport or identity card sooner.

Currently, the ministry is working to gradually introduce a digital application procedure for passports and identity cards for Dutch nationals abroad. The first phase – making it possible to complete the application form entirely online – will be tested in 2019. The next step would be to make it possible to submit the online application form and requested supporting documents digitally. Sending applications to the back office digitally could cut processing times further.

Dutch nationals abroad who wish to apply for a passport or identity card can submit their application to the consular section of a Dutch embassy or consulate-general or at a Dutch border municipality. In order to help Dutch nationals closer to where they live, the ministry is working with External Service Providers (ESPs) to expand the network of locations where Dutch nationals can apply for a passport or identity card. Since the publication of the previous edition of State of Consular Affairs, ESPs have begun providing passport or identity card application services in London (UK), Chicago (US) and Edmonton (Canada), in addition to Edinburgh. Next year, Perth (Australia) and Birmingham (UK) will be added to the list (around January 2020 and June 2020, respectively).

Embassies and consulates-general sometimes organise consular services sessions at external locations to accommodate Dutch nationals who live a long way from an embassy, consulate-general or ESP office. On these occasions the mobile fingerprinting device (MVA) can be used. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working to expand the use of the device and is encouraging embassies and consulates-general to hold sessions outside the mission so that customers can submit their applications closer to home. If a mission does not have the staff levels or time to travel with the device once or twice a year, a mobile consular team from The Hague can do this for them.

In 2019 the use of these mobile options was stepped up a gear. These efforts will continue in 2020.

EU regulation on biometric identity cards

For Dutch nationals abroad who are unable to submit their passport application in person due to medical reasons, applying for a Dutch identity card is currently an alternative. This is because no fingerprints are registered. The applicant must provide a doctor's certificate and the applicant's identity must be verified by alternative means, for instance by a local authority or a notary. Around 1,000 Dutch identity cards are issued in this way each year.

However, this will no longer be an option when the EU regulation on strengthening the security of identity cards comes into force. Under the regulation, EU member states must store two fingerprints on identity card chips and applicants must appear in person to provide them.⁶ This means it will no longer be possible to issue identity cards to applicants who cannot travel to submit their application for a compelling (usually medical) reason. Alternative solutions are currently being explored, together with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, so that we can continue to provide this group of Dutch nationals abroad with a valid travel document in a customer-friendly and cost-efficient way.

⁶ See also the letter to the House of Representatives of 30 April 2019 from the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations on the outcomes of the trilogue on the EU regulation on strengthening the security of identity cards (Parliamentary Papers 25 764, no. 119).

Studies

In order to be able to further improve travel and identity document services, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are together carrying out two studies. One is an international comparative study into the passport application processes in other countries. This study looks at which innovative elements of the application processes in other countries can be used in a Dutch context. The second study looks at the advantages and disadvantages of not requiring the necessary biometric information to be collected at the same time as the application is submitted, so there is more flexibility as to when the applicant must appear in person. As soon as the studies are completed, the outcomes will be submitted to the House of Representatives.

To further encourage knowledge sharing between different countries on travel document services, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations are organising an international meeting of experts on this topic, to be held in September 2019. Around a dozen EU countries will share developments and experiences. The aim is to learn from one another and to create a network that can eventually contribute to the further improvement of the travel document application process.

Total number of travel documents issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018



Voting while abroad

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs works hard to ensure all voters abroad can vote in European Parliament and Dutch parliamentary elections. This includes providing information, counting postal votes and forwarding ballot papers and other necessary documents. For the European Parliament elections on 23 May 2019 the ministry actively worked to improve voter registration, increase turnout and answer questions from voters worldwide. In addition, postal vote polling stations were also trialled in major EU capitals for the first time. There were eight postal vote polling stations in total (located in Berlin, Canberra, Jakarta, London, Madrid, Paris, Rome and Washington DC) and embassies counted 19,477 valid votes. This was around 55% of all postal votes from abroad. The remaining Dutch voters abroad sent their ballot papers to the postal vote polling station in The Hague either directly or via the embassy in the country where they live.

An upcoming amendment to the Elections Act will increase the statutory time limit for processing postal votes. This will mean a further reduction in the value and necessity of postal vote polling stations at embassies because voters will have more time to send their postal votes from around the world to the central postal vote polling station at the municipality of The Hague. In the light of this change to the law, the ministry will review the benefit of polling stations at embassies, taking into account the experience gained during the recent European Parliament elections.



Services to non-Dutch nationals

Introduction

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for issuing short-stay visas to people planning on visiting the Netherlands. It is responsible for ensuring a careful balance between facilitating the smooth entry of individuals into the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which is important for economic interests, and ensuring security in the Schengen area through the effective use of visas. Last year the ministry processed 680,000 short-stay visa applications from non-Dutch nationals. Of these, 582,000 were granted.

In recent years, the numbers of visas issued annually has gone up by 10% each year. To respond to the growing volume of applications and, at the same time, offer a faster and better service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working on smart changes to the process involving digitalisation and modern technologies, with increased investment in staff and resources. In 2017 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began the multiannual Front Office Back Office 2020 (FOBO 2020) programme. It is now clear that this programme will continue into 2021. This programme will allow us to offer customers a faster, better service, increase the quality of decision-taking on visa applications and reduce the costs incurred by central government. Before old IT systems can be replaced, investments must first be made, however.

For the time being, the current systems will need to continue functioning optimally, while coming under increasing pressure due to the rising number of visa applications.

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Sufficient budget and staff capacity are needed in order to maintain functionality and prepare for a smooth transition to the new IT systems.

At EU level the ministry is pushing for Schengen visa policy to be updated and is building support for the Dutch viewpoint on consular modernisation.. The Netherlands is working closely with like-minded member states to achieve the aforementioned goals. This chapter sets out the Dutch agenda with regard to EU visa policy, the developments relating to modernisation and the contribution to accelerated procedures where economic interests are at stake.

EU visa policy (Schengen visa policy)

Modernisation of the Visa Code (Schengen visa policy)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs bears responsibility for making and implementing policy on short-stay visas. Schengen visa policy is developed as part of EU legislation and aims to promote and simplify legal cross-border travel and combat illegal immigration to the Schengen area. It also contributes significantly to making the Schengen area more secure. The Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) sets out the guiding principles in this regard.

The Visa Code allows nationals of non-Schengen countries with a visa valid for up to 90 days travel to all countries in the Schengen area. The Visa Code describes the procedures and requirements for issuing a transit visa or a visa which allows a stay of up to 90 days in the Schengen area.

In March 2018 the European Commission put forward draft legislation for a new Visa Code. The Council of Ministers officially approved the new Visa Code on 6 June 2019, and it is expected to come into force in early 2020. The new legislation aims to better facilitate bona fide, regular travellers via digital applications and external service providers, which will have a positive impact on the economy. At the same time, it also aims to better equip visa policy for security and migration-related challenges by obtaining a clearer picture of applicants and explicitly linking visa policy and cooperation on returns.

The new Visa Code contains a significant number of important changes, which the Netherlands has pushed for in recent years and which align with the modernisation agenda, where the Netherlands is several steps ahead of Schengen-wide efforts:

- **Decision-making by central authorities**

Under the current Visa Code, responsibility for decision-making on applications lies with the consular section of the mission in the country where the visa applicant lives. Under the new Visa Code, decisions can also be taken by central authorities, provided that sufficient knowledge of the local context in which the application was submitted is ensured.

In late 2017 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began gradually centralising the decision-making process in The Hague.

By 2020, regional back offices (the RSOs) will gradually have been transferred to the Consular Service Organisation (CSO) in The Hague; a central back office where decisions are taken in cooperation with other partners in the visa system. The new Visa Code embeds this new approach into existing Schengen agreements.

In 2018 the Netherlands conducted an exploratory study into the retention of local knowledge. Part of this involved examining the best way of organising and retaining local knowledge so that decision-taking officers have access to relevant, balanced and up-to-date knowledge about an applicant's country of origin and the specific issues that need to be considered with regard to visa applications from that country.

On the basis of that study, the decision was made to appoint local intelligence officers (LIOs) for several regions. These LIOs will focus solely on facilitating, organising, gathering, validating and providing access to local knowledge.

They do this in addition to the efforts undertaken by the mission network, which is normally responsible for such activities. LIOs act as a liaison between the mission – which remains responsible for providing local knowledge – and the decision-taking officers working at the RSOs or CSO. The first LIOs began work in February 2019.

- **Linking visa policy and return policy**

In accordance with the coalition agreement, the Netherlands advocates strong links between visa policy and return policy and, in recent years, has pushed to include these in the Visa Code.

In the new Visa Code, a distinction is made between the visa issue requirements for applications submitted in third countries that do not cooperate sufficiently in the return of nationals illegally residing in EU territory, and the requirements for applications submitted in third countries that do. This means that, if the level of cooperation is insufficient, a decision can be made to increase the decision period, stop issuing multiple-entry visas and raise visa fees. If a country cooperates satisfactorily in the return of its nationals, visa fees may be reduced, the decision period may be shorter and the validity period of multiple-entry visas may be longer. Such positive measures are valid for up to a year but can be extended.

- **Possibilities for cooperation with ESPs expanded**

Under the current Visa Code, visa applications must – in principle – be submitted to a mission’s consular section in person. Working with an ESP is only permitted as a last resort. However, in this regard, the Visa Code no longer reflects current practices within the Schengen area, where the use of ESPs has become the norm. The new Visa Code sets out that member states are no longer obligated to offer applicants the option of submitting visa application at a mission if they work with ESPs. Certain categories of applicants will, in principle, still be able to apply directly to missions however. They include diplomatic passport holders and witnesses travelling to the International Criminal Court (ICC). During negotiations on expanding the scope for working with ESPs, the Netherlands’ approach centred on the principle of ‘outsourcing by default’, whereby implementing tasks are carried out externally as much as possible. In addition, this aligns with the Netherlands’ guiding principle: putting customers first while also protecting Dutch economic interests.

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- **Digitalisation**

The new Visa Code provides for the possibility to submit and sign applications digitally, provided digital signatures are recognised by member states. This means that the new Visa Code allows the Netherlands to more fully meet its goal of delivering consular services in a way that is ‘digital by default’.

Besides increasing the number of places where visa applications can be submitted, the Netherlands also wants to make the application process better for customers by digitalising it and offering electronic payment options. Since September 2018 it has been possible to complete the visa application form digitally. In addition, a start is being made on digitalising visa dossiers. It is not yet possible to make visa applications fully digital, however, since fingerprints must be taken from applicants in person. Despite this, we are already seeing the benefits of the digital application form, as the quality of information being provided is markedly better as a result.

- **Abolishing the requirement to appear in person and harmonising multiple-entry visa procedures for regular travellers**

Regular travellers receive a multiple-entry visa that is valid for between one and five years, depending on how often they travel and whether previously issued visas have been used correctly. This is known as the ‘cascade model’. This prevents visa shopping. The issue of multiple-entry visas rather than single-entry ones also boosts trade and the economy. In the context of local Schengen cooperation, missions can propose deviating from standard rules if the local situation gives cause for this. This could, for example, be justified if there are more, or fewer, migration and security risks than in other countries. The cascade model, as described in the Visa Code, applies primarily to Dutch visa issuing policy for high-risk and medium-risk countries. Several countries, such as China and India, have been identified by the Netherlands as ‘promising’ in line with the report *‘Toegangswaarde-maatschappelijke baten en kosten van het Schengen-visumbeleid voor Nederland’*⁷ (‘The value of entry – the social benefits and costs of Schengen visa policy for the Netherlands’) by SEO Amsterdam Economics.

Applicants from these countries must be given as much support as possible, so the Netherlands’ issuing policy with regard to these categories can deviate from the cascade model. That is to say, applicants from these countries are more likely to receive a visa that is valid for between one and five years on their first application.

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- **Extending the visa application period**

The application period for a Schengen visa is being extended from three months to six months before the intended departure date. One exception, in which the period is being extended even further to nine months prior to a trip, is being made for seafarers (see ‘Sectoral approach and development of target group policy’ below). This is in line with the Netherlands’ wishes, given the importance of the extension to Rotterdam’s position as a major sea port and to relieve the burden on our border posts. This extended period allows crew members of cruise ships (who are usually on board a vessel for between eight and nine months) to apply for a visa so they can sign off in a Schengen country once their contract has ended.

- **Increasing standard visa fees**

Visa fees will be increased from €60 to €80, with some exceptions. Visa fees have not risen since 2006. This means that currently the fees do not cover the costs for the Netherlands. The reason for the increase is to make it possible for member states to deploy extra resources to process the increasing number of visa applications more efficiently and quickly, to improve detection of security and irregular migration risks, to improve hardware and software and to maintain a broad consular network. As indicated in the letter of 20 April 2018 to the House of Representatives⁸ (BNC file: Regulation on amending the Visa Code), the Netherlands will use these additional resources to ensure the quality and integrity of the visa process.

⁷ Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 2018-2019, 19 637, no. 2425.

⁸ Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 2017-2018, 22 112, no. 2547.

- **Visa application decision period**

Under the current Visa Code, the standard time limit for deciding on visa applications is 15 days. This general 15-day rule was upheld in the new Visa Code, after lobbying by several countries, including the Netherlands.

In exceptional cases, the decision period can be extended to a maximum of 45 days.

- **Exception for airport transit visa obligation for Caribbean visas or residence permits**

Until now, third-country nationals with a Caribbean visa or residence permit have required an airport transit visa when changing planes in the Netherlands. The visa (also referred to as an 'A' visa) does not allow them to enter the Netherlands or another Schengen country. In other words, they cannot leave the airport. With the entry into force of the new Visa Code, this category of traveller will no longer require an airport transit visa, in accordance with the wishes of the Netherlands and the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom.

Visa Information System (VIS)

The updates to the Visa Code are a first step in the efforts to modernise visa policy. The second step is the modernisation of the Visa Information System (VIS). VIS is an EU database containing all Schengen visa applications.

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In May 2018 the European Commission published a proposal to improve VIS. Changes are necessary in order to respond more effectively to security and migration issues and to better protect the EU's external borders. Ways of doing this include automatic checks of all EU security and migration databases; storing information on long-stay visas and residence permits (at present, only information on short-stay visas is stored, leading to information gaps); reducing the minimum age for fingerprinting from 12 years to 6 years; and improving access for enforcement agencies and Europol.

Negotiations on this topic between the new European Parliament and the Council of Ministers will potentially start this autumn.

New visa sticker

The visa sticker affixed in an applicant's passport is the end product of the visa issuing process. Although the Netherlands is keen to consider issuing visas digitally and this topic is being discussed in Brussels now, it is important to keep updating the physical visa sticker. Currently, the third generation of this Schengen visa sticker is in use. However, fraudsters are becoming increasingly skilled at copying the sticker's carefully developed security features. A new visa sticker is therefore being introduced this year with additional security measures and features. Third-generation stickers can still be used up to and including 31 December 2019.

The Netherlands' position on EU visa policy

With regard to EU Schengen visa policy, the Netherlands maintains a strong but fair line in Brussels in relation to dialogues on visa roadmaps with candidate countries, such as Turkey and countries in the Western Balkans, and in relation to visa action plans with EU neighbours (Eastern Partnership countries and southern neighbours): 'strong' in terms of enforcing all the requirements set out and reducing risks of illegal immigration and/or asylum and security; 'fair' in terms of approving visa facilitation or liberalisation if the EU deems the agreed requirements to have been met.

Visa facilitation

The Netherlands is working hard on cooperation with regard to agreements with other third countries about asylum, migration and return. This can sometimes include agreements on visa facilitation as part of a 'more for more' approach. At the same time, the Netherlands supports the EU's position of introducing visa restrictions if results are not forthcoming, particularly if there is a lack of cooperation on return ('less for less'). The entry into force of the new Visa Code early next year (see above) will embed this in EU visa legislation.

Visa liberalisation

The Netherlands also considers visa liberalisation for other third countries an effective instrument to encourage cooperation on important issues and to strengthen trade, diplomatic and human ties.

The Netherlands considers the suitability of visa liberalisation on a case-by-case basis, as well as whether the necessary requirements have been met and whether there are any additional risks with regard to illegal immigration and/or asylum and security. In all cases, the Netherlands explicitly keeps the option of applying the suspension mechanism (or 'emergency brake') open if visa liberalisation unexpectedly leads to undesired effects and the suspension of visa exemption is thought to be an effective measure. Applying the 'emergency brake' makes it possible to temporarily re-introduce visa requirements in the event of a sudden increase in illegal immigration and/or asylum applications and/or security risks. On 31 May 2019, at the request of the House of Representatives, the government submitted a request to the European Commission for the re-introduction of visa requirements for Albanian nationals, in light of the problems with crimes committed by Albanians in the Netherlands. Furthermore the Netherlands is committed to ensuring that more scope is created expressly for member states to provide input and be involved in preparations for the European Commission's annual report as regards the suspension mechanism.

Sectoral approach and development of target group policy

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers an accelerated procedure for short-stay visa applications if they serve a particular economic or other interest to the Netherlands. Through the Orange Carpet and Blue Carpet programmes the Netherlands offers a fast track for such short-stay visa applications. The Orange Carpet programme was developed in 2007 as a tool to offer fast-track visa processing for bona fide travellers and to facilitate economic diplomacy. The Blue Carpet programme was introduced in 2009 to facilitate visa applications by seafarers (to allow them to sign on or off, to work and/or to attend a course in the Netherlands). This has led to a decrease in the number of visa applications submitted upon arrival and has thereby reduced the burden on border posts.

Given the dynamic nature of seafaring, it is not always easy for seafarers to apply for a visa in good time. Fast processing of visa applications submitted by seafarers is important given that crew changes and sailing routes are often only known at short notice.

In accordance with the Netherlands' wishes, attention has been paid to the unique position of seafarers, and the challenges they face, in the new Visa Code (see the 'EU visa policy' section above).

The report '*Toegangswaarde-maatschappelijke baten en kosten van het Schengen-visumbeleid voor Nederland*'⁹ ('The value of entry – the social benefits and costs of Schengen visa policy for the Netherlands') by SEO Amsterdam Economics shows that visa policy boosts the Dutch economy by more than €300 million a year. The report shows that business travellers are more profitable financially than other types of traveller. SEO has also identified nine promising countries where Dutch visa policy is particularly beneficial: Turkey, India, Russia, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Kuwait and Oman.

The rise in the number of applications, combined with the fact that certain groups of visa holders boost the Dutch economy, means that it is in the country's interest to identify additional target groups that can be assisted by central government. This also helps identify options for additional tailored programmes, for instance for specific sectors and startups. This aspect is currently being explored in more detail and is also a focus of the internet consultation.

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With a view to better facilitating the visa application process for business travellers from promising countries, the network of locations where they can submit their applications has been significantly expanded by concluding new contracts with ESPs in countries and cities where this will offer the greatest added value. These ESPs are in addition to existing locations, meaning applicants no longer need to travel as far to submit their applications and can make use of the extra services that ESPs offer, such as longer opening hours.

⁹ Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives, 2018-2019, 19 637, no. 2425.

Appendix 1

Response to the IOB's
recommendations

On 17 April 2019 the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) published the report ‘De burger centraal, de consulaire dienstverlening in beweging 2011-2018’ (‘Citizens first? Consular services on the move, 2011-2018’). It is an evaluation of the years 2011 to 2018. The IOB looked at policy and implementation in the following areas: general consular assistance, consular assistance for Dutch prisoners abroad, travel advice, crisis preparations, travel documents and visa issue. It then set out its findings and recommendations. The response to the IOB’s main findings was sent to House of Representatives by letter of 19 June 2019.¹⁰

This appendix to State of Consular Affairs provides a more detailed response to the specific recommendations given in the IOB’s report and sets out how and to what extent the recommendations have been incorporated into further policymaking and policy implementation.

Recommendations by chapter

Chapter 1 - Consular services on the move: a reconstruction

Recommendation	Response
Where possible, frame policy objectives in terms of key performance indicators, so that policy success can be measured.	This recommendation will be adopted as far as possible. A range of existing initiatives relating to key performance indicators will be brought together. This presents a challenge with regard to formulating a coherent set of indicators, extracting the accompanying data from various systems in a consistent manner and embedding these indicators in new systems that are yet to be developed. These plans are set out in the DCV information plan.
Reflect critically on the use of terminology from free-market thinking in the consular services domain.	There is no reason to adopt this recommendation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and central government place great emphasis on customer satisfaction. The customer is therefore the central focus of consular services, and only in the positive sense. The focus on customer satisfaction is not a manifestation of free-market thinking, but a result of the wish to offer the best service possible.

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Chapter 2 - The financial side of consular services

Recommendation	Response
No recommendations.	No response.

¹⁰ Letter to the House of Representatives of 19 June 2019 on the policy response to DCV’s IOB evaluation.

Chapter 3 - The consular information and communication strategy

Recommendation	Response
Shift the focus from developing individual information and communication channels to creating an integrated multi-channel strategy.	This recommendation has been adopted and is being implemented. A new information and communication strategy is being developed, focusing on cohesive information provision via a range of channels.
Continue to focus on customers' needs and satisfaction in order to improve services.	This recommendation supports previously implemented policy. User surveys are carried out on a regular basis and cover areas such as travel advice, the Travel App and the Information Service. A semi-permanent feedback option has also been added to the website, asking 'Was this information useful to you?'. In addition, customer satisfaction is always monitored after a consular product has been provided at a mission. This quantitative and qualitative feedback is systematically analysed and used to improve services.
Look for different ways of communicating to shape expectation management, aimed at various target groups, so that the limits of service provision are communicated as clearly as possible.	This recommendation has been adopted and has already been implemented. The 2018 edition of State of Consular Affairs, as well as travel advice, points out what the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can and cannot do for Dutch nationals requiring assistance abroad. In addition, steps are being taken to develop a 'customer promise' that clearly sets out what customers can expect in terms of service. This will be published online.

Chapter 4 - Travel advice

Recommendation	Response
Operationalise the quality requirements for travel advice: manage on the basis of these and make them more widely known.	This recommendation will be adopted and will receive the necessary attention in travel advice.
Approach travel advice pragmatically; this will help ensure it is published on time.	Several changes have been made to the procedure for updating travel advice, so that it can now be amended and published more quickly.
Replace non-consular officers responsible for travel advice with a consular officer working at the 24/7 BZ Contact Centre.	This recommendation will not be adopted. At present, the relevant policy departments at the ministry are responsible for the content of travel advice. When travel advice needs to be amended, it is the relevant policy department that does this. It is therefore sensible to keep the current system. If the department's setup changes in the future, this system may be amended.
Ensure better coordination and less 'noise' in the communication process between embassies (notably those in high-risk areas) and DCV when it comes to amending travel advice.	Coordinating with embassies is standard procedure when amending travel advice. For travel advice for high-risk areas, additional attention will be paid to this issue. At future conferences, there will be a focus on embedding cooperation on travel advice more structurally.

Chapter 5 - General consular assistance

Recommendation	Response
Develop a comprehensive training package incorporating COMMA and other interactive and physical learning methods, such as regional conferences and video conferences between DCV and the missions. Tailor courses to the various consular roles and ensure that staff can actually take part in them.	<p>This recommendation, in part, confirms existing policy. The ministry has its own online consular e-learning programme, COMMA, which offers a comprehensive training package.</p> <p>All staff who carry out consular tasks have access to COMMA. As COMMA is developed further, new ways of promoting the programme's use will be considered. More attention will be devoted; to the use of physical learning methods.</p>
Provide honorary consuls with clear instructions and basic consular assistance training.	Steps will be taken to investigate whether a special module for honorary consuls can be developed as part of the COMMA e-learning programme.
Involve embassies and other relevant stakeholders in the search for a systematic solution for providing consular assistance in complex cases, such as for psychologically distressed people.	A study is currently under way – with input from embassies and stakeholders – into the best way to assist psychologically distressed people, and the ministry's expectations and role in this. This recommendation has been adopted and is being implemented.
Develop generous frameworks for complex consular cases, which allow scope for a human-centred approach. Ensure that tools exist to make this possible and that everyone is aware of them.	This recommendation has already been followed up. Current policy offers scope for a tailored approach in complex consular cases. In addition, part of the policy process involves assessing whether policy in specific areas needs to be developed in more detail. Policy and policy instruments will be outlined in the BZ Operational Procedures Manual (HBBZ).
Create a 24/7 point of contact for non-urgent questions from embassies in individual consular cases.	This recommendation will not be adopted. Urgent questions concern the entire consular domain, such as travel documents, visas or consular assistance. These subjects cannot be covered by a single point of contact. A staff member is always on duty to answer urgent social consular questions. In light of the sporadic nature of urgent questions about travel documents or visas, the staffing arrangements and costs involved in appointing separate on-call members of staff to deal with these issues cannot be justified.

Chapter 6 - Consular assistance for Dutch detainees abroad

Recommendation	Response
Reconsider the 'one visit from a consular officer per term of imprisonment' policy in countries that are not countries of concern.	This recommendation is already being followed up. In 2019, a study will be carried out into several aspects of the assistance provided to Dutch prisoners abroad. In 2020 an assessment will be made as to whether this assistance needs to be adjusted.
Share the COMMA module on consular assistance for Dutch detainees abroad with volunteers and honorary consuls who visit these detainees, or provide another form of training.	It will be investigated whether volunteers and honorary consuls can be given access to COMMA.
Ensure the country list is monitored on an annual basis and report any relevant information in State of Consular Affairs.	This recommendation will be adopted in part. If there are clear signals about significant developments, immediate steps will be taken to determine the need for a change of approach. The situation will be monitored every four to five years. Monitoring by an external party is planned for 2019.

Chapter 7 - Consular crisis preparation

Crisis response

Recommendation	Response
Keep the number of members of the Rapid Deployment Consular Support Team (SCOT) at or above current levels and continue its professionalisation, paying particular attention to composition, training, materials and the deployment procedure.	This recommendation will be adopted.
Create more capacity at the line ministry for the organisation of crisis management exercises. Develop tabletop exercises that could serve as a good alternative for semi-live exercises.	Responsibility for crisis management exercises lies with the Security, Crisis Management and Integrity Department (VCI). Together with VCI, we will assess whether current staffing levels leave scope to organise more semi-live exercises. In addition to the semi-live exercises, tabletop exercises will be made available in the second half of 2019.
Ensure that missions devote sufficient attention to instructions, security plans and sharing information on consular crises. More contact between DCV and the missions could help in this regard.	DCV and the missions are in close contact regarding the issue of consular crises, as well as during actual ones. Staff members working on travel advice or crises will increase their contact with the missions with regard to security plans and evacuation plans. This recommendation will therefore be adopted.
Create a comprehensive training programme bringing together different learning methods in a logical way and whereby staff can receive crisis training tailored to their role. In addition to maintaining and expanding existing tools like COMMA, crisis management exercises and regional conferences, consider the systematic introduction of additional learning methods, such as bilateral contact between DCV and the missions.	This recommendation will be adopted. The existing comprehensive e-learning package, COMMA can serve as a basis. In addition, bilateral contact will receive more attention.
Evaluate the Information Service (and its positioning) and look for a long-term solution in terms of informing Dutch nationals in crisis situations as efficiently and effectively as possible.	This recommendation will be adopted.

European cooperation

Recommendation	Response
<p>In terms of practical cooperation, focus initially on small-scale, informal initiatives and involve both small and large member states. These initiatives can be expanded at a later point in time.</p>	<p>This recommendation is already being followed up. The ministry plays a leading role in a number of Consular Cooperation Initiatives (CCIs) in areas such as a forced marriage and abandonment, international child abduction and prison conditions. These are areas where, depending on the country, several EU member states (and other partner countries) often face the same problems. CCIs allow the ministry to form practical collaborative partnerships in this regard. They are also discussed in meetings of the Working Party on Consular Affairs (COCON) in Brussels, at which additional possibilities for cooperation with EU member states and other partner countries are explored.</p>
<p>Strengthen Dutch influence on EU policy through instruments like the secondment of ministry staff with consular expertise to EU bodies.</p>	<p>In the past, ministry staff with consular knowledge have been seconded to EU bodies; this practice will be continued.</p>

Chapter 8 - Travel documents

Recommendation	Response
<p>Expand the number of ESPs processing travel document applications and use mobile fingerprinting devices more flexibly.</p>	<p>The expansion of ESP locations is now fully under way. After a pilot in Edinburgh, the ministry has now opened ESP locations in London, Chicago and Edmonton and is due to open ones in Perth and Birmingham.</p> <p>In addition, it is working to expand the use of mobile fingerprinting devices and is encouraging embassies and consulates-general to accept passport applications at locations outside the mission.</p> <p>For missions without the staffing levels to travel with the mobile fingerprinting device once or twice a year, a mobile consular team from the region or from The Hague can be deployed in order to ensure that Dutch nationals abroad can apply for a travel document closer to home.</p>
<p>Investigate whether it is possible to resume application services at a number of honorary consulates for children under 12. No biometric equipment will need to be installed since children under 12 are not required to provide fingerprints.</p>	<p>This recommendation will not be adopted. Discontinuing the passport services offered by honorary consuls was not only related to issues with biometric equipment, but also to the desire to make the passport application procedure more uniform, supervised and cost efficient. As an alternative to applying via an honorary consul, it is now possible to submit an application in the Netherlands (at border municipalities, Schiphol Airport or the municipality of The Hague), the number of ESPs is being increased and mobile fingerprinting devices are being used more systematically.</p>
<p>Make the application procedure as digitalised and as fast as possible.</p>	<p>A significant part of this recommendation has already been implemented. The ministry is currently working on the phased implementation of a digital application procedure for Dutch nationals abroad. The first phase – making it possible to complete the application form entirely online – will be tested in the course of 2019. The next step would be to make it possible to submit applications and supporting documents digitally. A fully digital application procedure, whereby applicants would no longer need to appear in person, is not an option at this time due to the level of reliability and security of the technology available.</p>

Chapter 9 - Regulating the movement of persons

Knowledge

Advice	Response
Uphold embassies' active role in the visa procedure in countries with a high visa application denial rate or where political and economic circumstances can change quickly. This active role could involve inputting applications in the visa system and adding substantive information for the decision-taking officer in The Hague.	<p>This recommendation is already being implemented. In order for the right decision to be taken on a visa application, knowledge about the context of the place where the application was submitted is crucial. This requires embassies in countries with a high visa application denial rate or where the political and economic situation can quickly change to play an active role.</p> <p>In 2018 DCV carried out a study into how local knowledge was being shared with decision-taking officers in The Hague, and the best way to preserve this knowledge. On the basis of this study the following choices have been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missions' tasks and responsibilities regarding local knowledge will be made clearer and more official. • Local Intelligence Officers (LIOs) will be appointed whose full focus will be on facilitating, gathering, validating and providing access to local knowledge. • Steps will be taken to identify high-risk missions and work with them to strengthen the local knowledge position in accordance with a data-driven approach. • Selected staff members will be trained in conducting interviews. • The tool used to share local knowledge will be made more relevant and user-friendly.
Give embassies back their role in conducting interviews and establish a protocol that sets out the circumstances in which interviews are required.	<p>This recommendation has already been followed up. DCV has drawn up a framework for conducting interviews. In addition, interview training will begin in June for the first small group of front-office and back-office staff. After this training, an assessment will be made of whether the framework is workable and whether a protocol can be drawn up to help determine if an interview is required. This 'pilot' will be used to decide whether further rollout in the autumn is possible.</p>

Advice	Response
<p>Invest in other ways in local knowledge that is relevant for decision-taking and ensure this knowledge is shared adequately with decision-taking officers. This could be done by making staff members at missions responsible for this, or by setting up a separate knowledge unit within the CSO.</p>	<p>The creation of LIOs means that DCV has dedicated capacity at its disposal to explore how the required cooperation between missions and the CSO can be structured most effectively. In addition to ensuring relevant information is added to the country app, this includes ensuring the mission is well prepared for Schengen cooperation meetings and organising regular LIO-led briefings.</p> <p>This recommendation has been followed up in part, but will be the subject of additional attention.</p>
<p>Invest in decision-taking officers by establishing a training programme focusing on legislation, document fraud and country/regional knowledge. The training programme should include a visit to the embassies in the relevant countries.</p>	<p>A strategic personnel plan (SSP) will be drawn up for the CSO which takes these elements into account. We will also take steps to match the required knowledge with the required recruitment of new staff members who correspond to the profile of the 'decision-taking officer of the future'. This recommendation will therefore be followed up.</p>
<p>Assess the quality of decisions more.</p>	<p>This recommendation will be adopted. The quality of the decisions taken on visa applications is essential and is the subject of particular attention during visits by the Inspection, Risk Analysis and Advisory Unit (ISB) and Consular Advice Team (CAT). The necessary attention is paid to the quality of decisions within the relevant courses and training programmes too.</p>

Procedure

Slow down the centralisation process until the Application Assessment Database (BAO) and the preservation of local knowledge have progressed further.	<p>This recommendation will not be adopted. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs shares the IOB's opinion that local knowledge must be preserved when decisions are made remotely. However, this applies not only in a centralised context, but also in a regionalised one.</p> <p>This is why priority has already been given to this issue and LIOs, who focus fully on facilitating, gathering, validating and providing access to local knowledge, have been appointed.</p>
Ensure ESPs continue to be closely monitored in the centralised context when the RSOs (which previously coordinated monitoring tasks) cease to exist and the number of ESPs continues to increase.	This recommendation will be adopted. Over the coming two years, DCV intends to establish monitoring teams and frameworks and carry out or commission such monitoring. In addition, the ESPs themselves provide data which gives the Ministry of Foreign Affairs insights into quality and compliance with agreements relating to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and data security. The monitoring teams will ensure that we have an additional method of checking the accuracy of the data provided.
Include Orange Carpet visa applicants in the BAO to ensure better monitoring of implementation and effectiveness of the Orange Carpet programme.	DCV is working to make the Orange Carpet lists more uniform and to modify the system to ensure that current Orange Carpet lists can be used to create automated alerts via the BAO. This recommendation has therefore been adopted.

Appendix 2

Consular data

Information provision

24/7 BZ Contact Centre

2018 annual review				
calls received	508,478	7.8% fewer than in 2017		
emails received	121,245	3.4% fewer than in 2017		
total number of contacts	629,723			
Top 10 countries from which calls were made			target	
United Kingdom	39,082	accessibility	91%	90%
directly on +31 247247247	32,917			
United States	31,787			
India	20,885	average score in customer satisfaction survey: 8.7/10		
Spain	16,691			
Turkey	16,479			
South Africa	16,029			
Australia	13,249			
Canada	12,339			
France	11,612			
Top 5 subjects				
Passport ID card	22%			
Schengen visas	22%			
Other	7%			
Authorisation for temporary stay (MVV)	4%			
Legalisation	4%			

Travel advice

Unique number of visitors by month in 2018

January 2018	210,360
February 2018	137,465
March 2018	195,629
April 2018	169,017
May 2018	211,272
June 2018	192,481
July 2018	227,639
August 2018	243,506
September 2018	182,599
October 2018	184,673
November 2018	173,231
December 2018	214,295
Total	2,342,167

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Unique number of visitors by year

2014	633,353
2015	1,688,038
2016	2,428,464
2017	1,735,434
2018	2,342,167

Number of updates to travel advice

2014	507
2015	804
2016	592
2017	546
2018	511

Travel App

Number of times the Travel App was downloaded in 2018 by month

	Apple	Android	Total
January	1,968	6,957	8,925
February	665	1,761	2,426
March	728	1,895	2,623
April	704	1,881	2,585
May	830	2,418	3,248
June	698	2,201	2,899
July	1,089	3,329	4,418
August	1,379	4,662	6,041
September	593	1,593	2,186
October	909	2,474	3,383
November	566	1,768	2,334
December	1,026	2,807	3,833
	11,155	33,746	44,901

Number of times the Travel App was downloaded 2015-2018

2015	36,733
2016	51,059
2017	56,125
2018	44,901

Information service

Information Service subscriptions/registrations in 2018 by month

	Total
January	4,431
February	3,204
March	4,027
April	3,815
May	4,015
June	4,266
July	5,601
August	5,494
September	4,368
October	4,418
November	3,419
December	3,205
Total	50,263

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Assistance for Dutch nationals in emergencies

Consular assistance¹¹

Category	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Consular advice or help	284	337	246	240	320	319	327
Death	296	375	567	323	318	373	405
Deprivation of freedom	13	11	5	13	29	44	24
Detainee	1562	1526	1370	1420	1384	1365	1481
International Child abduction	18	4	2	1			
Investigation	74	66	63	61	36	24	20
Medical assistance	170	134	115	126	128	136	207
Missing	26	44	32	44	33	30	58

¹¹ Source: Kompas.

Forced marriage and abandonment

Reports

Cases of forced marriage or abandonment are reported by victims themselves, or by members of the public who are aware of the situation. Reports are made not only to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also to organisations such as the National Expertise Centre on Forced Marriage and Abandonment (LKHA), Veilig Thuis ('Safe at Home'), the Dutch police's National Centre of Expertise on Honour-based Violence and civil society organisations with a role in identifying such issues, like Femmes for Freedom. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in close contact with all of these organisations and is committed to an integrated approach to forced marriage and abandonment.

Confirming cases of forced marriage or abandonment

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the LKHA then determine on the basis of thorough investigation whether the situation constitutes a case of forced marriage and/or abandonment abroad. The victim must either be a Dutch national, a holder of a Dutch refugee or alien's passport, or a holder of a valid Dutch residence permit.

Below are the figures for 2018, detailing cases of forced marriage and/or abandonment confirmed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the LKHA.

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- Forced marriage:
 - In 2017, 3 cases of forced marriage were identified.
 - In 2018 this figure rose to 6, representing an increase of 100%.
 - Of the 6 cases identified in 2018, 5 victims have now returned to the Netherlands with help from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the LKHA. The sixth victim did not want to be helped to return.
- Abandonment:
 - In 2017, 16 cases of forced marriage were confirmed.
 - In 2018, this number fell to 15, representing a fall of 6%.
 - All victims in the 15 cases confirmed in 2018 have now returned to the Netherlands with help from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the LKHA.

Consular assistance for Dutch detainees abroad

Total number of Dutch detainees abroad in 2011-2018

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	At the close of 2018 (reference date 1-1-2019)
Total number of Dutch detainees on the reference date of 1 April in the year in question:		2,532	2,333	2,242	2,266	2,033	1,997	1,917	1,930
Women	327	332	284	267	248	213	207	174	193
Men	2,006	2,194	2,046	1,962	2,001	1,820	1,790	1,743	1,737
Gender unknown	10	6	3	13	17	0	0	0	0
Dual nationality	816	773	659	597	562	407	364	383	388
In prisons in Europe	1,379	1,518	1,572	1,400	1,482	1,322	1,308	1,300	1,340
In pre-trial detention	761	921	325	325	317	332	332	325	264
Released on bail	57	55	40	42	41	34	18	9	15
Under house arrest	18	17	18	15	10	5	4	2	3
Released conditionally	124	117	85	73	66	47	40	22	17
Drug-related offence	1,703	1,658	1,435	1,354	1,260	1,151	1,018	923	1,081
Drug-related offences (percentage)	73%	65%	62%	58%	56%	57%	52%	48%	56%

Consular assistance for Dutch detainees abroad in 2018¹²

In the table below, countries that are not countries of concern are coloured

Country	Mission	Total number of detainees	Men	Women	Drugs related	Dutch nationality	Dual nationality
Argentina	Buenos Aires	9	5	4	8	6	3
Armenia	Tbilisi	1	1	0	0	1	1
Australia	Sydney	10	8	2	7	9	1
Austria	Vienna	13	11	2	5	10	1
Bangladesh	Dhaka	1	1	0	0	1	0
Belarus	Warsaw	1	1	0	0	1	1
Belgium	Brussels	98	98	0	22	91	8
Benin	Cotonou	1	1	0	0	1	0
Bolivia	Lima	3	3	0	2	3	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sarajevo	1	1	0	0	1	1
Brazil	Brasília	5	4	1	4	5	0
Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	4	4	0	3	4	0
Brazil	São Paulo	21	16	5	16	21	2
Bulgaria	Sofia	8	8	0	5	8	3
Burkina Faso	Bamako	1	1	0	0	1	0
Cambodia	Bangkok	3	3	0	0	3	0
Canada	Ottawa	2	1	1	2	2	0
Canada	Toronto	4	2	2	3	3	1
Canada	Vancouver	2	2	0	0	0	0
Cape Verde	Dakar	7	6	1	5	7	4
Chile	Santiago de Chile	7	6	1	1	6	2
China	Guangzhou	5	5	0	2	3	2
China	Beijing	4	4	0	1	4	0
China	Shanghai	6	2	4	0	5	0
Colombia	Bogotá	14	10	4	12	13	4
Costa Rica	San José	2	1	1	2	2	1

¹² Source: Kompas

Country	Mission	Total number of detainees	Men	Women	Drugs related	Dutch nationality	Dual nationality
Croatia	Zagreb	4	4	0	2	2	1
Cuba	Havanna	5	4	1	1	3	0
Cyprus	Nicosia	3	3	0	2	3	0
Czech Republic	Prague	4	4	0	1	4	3
Denmark	Copenhagen	12	12	0	3	12	1
Dominican Republic	Santo Domingo	55	40	15	51	51	15
Ecuador	Lima	5	2	3	5	4	2
Egypt	Cairo	12	11	1	9	12	8
Ethiopia	Addis Abeba	1	1	0	0	1	1
Finland	Helsinki	8	7	1	7	7	0
France	Paris	232	203	29	176	219	17
French Guiana	Cayenne	32	27	5	27	32	0
Georgia	Tbilisi	3	3	0	1	3	1
Germany	Dusseldorf	409	376	33	208	318	108
Ghana	Accra	2	2	0	1	2	1
Greece	Athens	12	10	2	9	11	6
Guadeloupe	Port of Spain	1	1	0	0	1	0
Hungary	Budapest	11	11	0	7	7	2
Iceland	Oslo	3	2	1	3	3	0
India	Mumbai	6	6	0	2	6	0
India	New Delhi	2	2	0	1	2	1
Indonesia	Jakarta	5	5	0	5	5	1
Iran	Teheran	3	3	0	1	3	2
Iraq	Baghdad	1	1	0	0	1	0
Iraq	Erbil	1	1	0	0	1	0
Ireland	Dublin	2	1	1	1	2	1
Israel	Tel Aviv	1	1	0	1	1	0
Italy	Milan	5	4	1	4	4	1
Italy	Rome	11	8	3	6	6	0
Japan	Tokyo	5	5	0	4	5	1
Kenya	Nairobi	1	1	0	0	1	0

Country	Mission	Total number of detainees	Men	Women	Drugs related	Dutch nationality	Dual nationality
Lebanon	Beirut	2	2	0	2	2	0
Luxembourg	Luxembourg	16	16	0	7	16	3
Malta	Valletta	6	5	1	3	5	1
Mexico	Mexico	1	1	0	0	1	0
Moldova	Chisinau	1	1	0	0	1	0
Morocco	Rabat	34	34	0	18	34	30
Nepal	New Delhi	2	2	0	0	2	0
New Zealand	Wellington	7	7	0	4	6	1
Norway	Oslo	14	14	0	11	14	2
Pakistan	Islamabad	1	1	0	0	1	0
Panama	Panama	5	5	0	4	4	2
Paraguay	Buenos Aires	3	3	0	3	3	0
Peru	Lima	30	28	2	27	30	7
Philippines	Manilla	9	9	0	3	9	1
Poland	Warsaw	6	6	0	4	4	2
Portugal	Lisbon	18	17	1	13	8	3
Romania	Bucharest	5	5	0	3	5	3
Russia	Moscow	1	1	0	1	1	0
Rwanda	Kigali	1	1	0	0	1	1
Senegal	Dakar	1	1	0	0	1	0
Serbia	Belgrado	3	3	0	1	3	0
Singapore	Singapore	1	1	0	1	1	0
Slovakia	Bratislava	2	2	0	2	2	0
Slovenia	Ljubljana	3	3	0	0	1	0
South Africa	Cape Town	1	1	0	1	1	1
South Africa	Pretoria	1	1	0	0	1	0
Spain	Madrid	241	220	21	132	145	35
Surinam	Paramaribo	25	20	5	15	25	0
Sweden	Stockholm	18	13	5	11	18	0
Switzerland	Bern	14	13	1	10	12	4
Syria	Damascus	1	0	1	0	1	1

Country	Mission	Total number of detainees	Men	Women	Drugs related	Dutch nationality	Dual nationality
Tanzania	Dar es Salaam	1	0	1	1	1	0
Thailand	Bangkok	23	20	3	5	22	2
Trinidad and Tobago	Port of Spain	7	3	4	7	5	0
Tunisia	Tunis	4	4	0	2	4	2
Turkey	Ankara	26	22	4	14	26	23
Turkey	Istanbul	47	42	5	37	46	28
Ukraine	Kiev	1	1	0	0	1	0
United Arab Emirates	Abu Dhabi	2	2	0	1	2	0
United Arab Emirates	Dubai	5	5	0	2	5	2
United Kingdom	London	172	161	11	62	136	7
United States	Chicago	3	3	0	0	3	1
United States	Miami	32	29	3	16	22	4
United States	New York	23	23	0	17	18	7
United States	San Francisco	11	11	0	1	11	6
United States	Washington	3	3	0	1	2	0
Uruguay	Buenos Aires	1	1	0	0	1	0
Venezuela	Caracas	4	4	0	1	4	1
Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City	2	1	1	0	1	0
		1930	1737	193	1081	1611	388

Numbers of detainees in 2018, by country

In the table below, countries that are not countries of concern are coloured

Country	Number	Country	Number	Country	Number
Germany	409	India	8	Nepal	2
Spain	241	Canada	8	Ghana	2
France	232	Bulgaria	8	South Africa	2
United Kingdom	172	Chile	7	Iraq	2
Belgium	98	New Zealand	7	Ireland	2
Turkey	73	Cape Verde	7	Vietnam	2
United States	72	Trinidad and Tobago	7	Lebanon	2
Dominican Republic	55	United Arab Emirates	7	Slovakia	2
Morocco	34	Poland	6	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1
French Guiana	32	Malta	6	Syria	1
Peru	30	Indonesia	5	Benin	1
Brazil	30	Ecuador	5	Tanzania	1
Surinam	25	Romania	5	Belarus	1
Thailand	23	Cuba	5	Ukraine	1
Portugal	18	Panama	5	Rwanda	1
Sweden	18	Japan	5	Uruguay	1
Italy	16	Czech Republic	4	Armenia	1
Luxembourg	16	Venezuela	4	Bangladesh	1
China	15	Croatia	4	Burkina Faso	1
Colombia	14	Tunisia	4	Israel	1
Norway	14	Georgia	3	Senegal	1
Switzerland	14	Bolivia	3	Ethiopia	1
Austria	13	Slovenia	3	Russia	1
Denmark	12	Cambodia	3	Pakistan	1
Egypt	12	Paraguay	3	Moldova	1
Greece	12	Iceland	3	Mexico	1
Hungary	11	Iran	3	Kenya	1
Australia	10	Cyprus	3	Guadeloupe	1
Argentina	9	Serbia	3	Singapore	1
Philippines	9	Costa Rica	2		
Finland	8			Total	1930

WETS and WOTS

The Ministry of Justice and Security is responsible for implementing the Criminal Judgments and Probation Decisions (Mutual Recognition and Enforcement) Act (WETS) and the Enforcement of Criminal Judgments (Transfer) Act (WOTS). At our request the Ministry of Justice and Security provided the following information on incoming and outgoing transfers under the WETS/WOTS for the purposes of this report:

	Incoming	Outgoing
WOTS	52	4
WETS total	294	72
Wets- Cadre decision 947	20	45
WETS- Cadre decision 909	274	27

Sources: *International Transfer of Criminal Judgments Division (IOS)/Ministry of Justice and Security and the North Holland International Legal Assistance Centre (IRC)*

Grants for assisting Dutch detainees abroad

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Objective	Budget 2017-2019	Grant funds awarded
Resocialisation	1,875,000	1,875,000
Social and psychological care	1,425,000	724,905
Psychological care 2018-2019 ¹³	500,000	496,975 ¹⁴
Legal assistance	1,300,000	810,442 ¹⁵ 324,696 ¹⁶
Magazine	300.000	292.133
Transition grant for the Epafras Foundation	--	476,875 ¹⁷
2018 Conference in Budapest	--	15,850 ¹⁸

¹³ Repeat publication of grants framework for 'psychological care' only, Government Gazette no. 44085, 2 August 2017

¹⁴ Grant amount awarded for 2018 and 2019 only.

¹⁵ Grant amount awarded for 2017, 2018 and the first half of 2019.

¹⁶ Grant amount awarded for 2019 only.

¹⁷ Incidental grant amount for the period from 1 April 2015 up to and including 31 December 2017.

¹⁸ Awarded incidentally.

Services to non-Dutch nationals

Visa

In 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received and processed more than 680,000 visa applications. Of these, more than 580,000 were successful.

Applications for a short-stay visa (KVV) made in 2018 by purpose of stay

KVV purpose of stay	Number
Tourism	330,154
Commercial	135,188
Family visit	123,893
Professional reasons	60,866
Invitation	14,009
Culture/exchange	7,510
Sports event	5,486
Official/political	4,256
Other*	3,104

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* KVV applications for the following purposes of stay fall under 'Other': special grounds, transit, humanitarian reasons, medical treatment.

Top 5

Top 5 countries for visa applications in 2018	Number
1. India	80,250
2. China	75,209
3. Turkey	71,863
4. Russia	45,407
5. Philippines	42,341

Increase in number of applications

More than 680,000 applications for short-stay visas for the Netherlands were submitted in 2018, representing an increase of 9.6% on 2017. As reported in the previous edition of State of Consular Affairs, we expect to see a sustained increase in the number of visa applications until 2030.

2013

		Business applications		Refused	
Country	#applications in 2013	total	%	total	%
India	34,383	19,847	57.72%	1,877	5.5%
China	45,571	22,774	49.97%	1,147	2.5%
Turkey	48,024	11,913	24.81%	2,560	5.3%
Russia	74,098	20,089	27.11%	1,212	1.6%
Philippines	22,921	19,331	84.34%	715	3.1%

2014

		Business applications		Refused	
Country	#applications in 2014	total	%	total	%
India	38,198	22,414	58.68%	1,849	4.8%
China	48,204	23,974	49.73%	1,086	2.3%
Turkey	49,280	11,773	23.89%	2,395	4.9%
Russia	74,891	17,860	23.85%	1,805	2.4%
Philippines	24,621	20,158	81.87%	216	0.9%

2015

		Business applications		Refused	
Country	#applications in 2015	total	%	total	%
India	44,721	24,316	54.37%	2,071	4.6%
China	59,510	25,166	42.29%	2,617	4.4%
Turkey	57,939	12,047	20.79%	2,825	4.9%
Russia	51,878	13,093	25.24%	1,395	2.7%
Philippines	27,530	22,396	81.35%	448	1.6%

2016

		Business applications		Refused	
Country	#applications in 2016	total	%	total	%
India	56,821	23,137	40.72%	3,751	6.6%
China	58,358	27,705	47.47%	2,297	3.9%
Turkey	66,811	12,688	18.99%	4,536	6.8%
Russia	43,177	12,338	28.58%	1,161	2.7%
Philippines	29,535	24,488	82.91%	519	1.8%

2017					
		Business applications		Refused	
Country	#applications in 2017	total	%	total	%
India	70,140	32,532	46.38%	5,057	7.2%
China	64,284	27,647	43.01%	1,943	3.0%
Turkey	73,537	14,129	19.21%	6,512	8.9%
Russia	52,464	13,083	24.94%	1,293	2.5%
Philippines	36,908	29,656	80.35%	595	1.6%

2018					
		Business applications		Refused	
Country	#applications in 2018	total	%	total	%
India	80,244	37,072	46.20%	7,182	9.0%
China	74,408	29,476	39.61%	2,287	3.1%
Turkey	71,846	14,560	20.27%	8,527	11.9%
Russia	45,400	11,972	26.37%	1,404	3.1%
Philippines	42,338	32,317	76.33%	1,841	4.3%

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Authorisations for temporary stay (MVVs)

In 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued over 57,000 authorisations for temporary stay (MVVs), representing a decrease compared to 2017 when more than 63,000 MVVs were issued. This can largely be attributed to the fall in the number of successful applications for MVVs in connection with family reunification.¹⁹

Civic integration exam abroad

In 2018, 7,475 candidates took one or more parts of the civic integration exam abroad. This represents a small increase on the figures for 2017 (7,341).²⁰

Top 5 nationalities in 2018	Number	Percentage
1. Moroccan	1,071	17%
2. Philippine	351	6%
3. Thai	325	5%
4. Indonesian	312	5%
5. Brazilian	276	4%

¹⁹ Source: Report on the immigration system, January-December 2018, Ministry of Justice and Security.

²⁰ Source: 2018 Civic Integration Examination Abroad Monitor, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

Appendix 3

Consular consultation
report 2019

Consular services

Central government offers assistance to Dutch nationals abroad and foreign nationals wishing to travel to the Netherlands. Accordingly, consular services provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are potentially relevant to any Dutch national travelling or living abroad and any non-Dutch national wishing to travel to the Netherlands. With its consular products and services, central government is there to help more than 1 million Dutch nationals living abroad plus more than 19 million Dutch nationals who travel abroad each year.

That is why it is important to know how customers rate the services provided. As part of the annual internet consultation we ask customers for their ideas on policy. Input from the consultation is used to improve consular services and further develop consular policy.

Members of the public can react and share their opinions with central government at www.internetconsultatie.nl. The consultation is open to anyone with knowledge of and ideas about consular services. The response served as input for this consular policy document.

Responses from the public

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The consultation was open to responses from 3 June 2019 to 17 June 2019. 66 people provided feedback, most of whom stated that they lived abroad. Judging from the information provided by respondents, most responses came from people without a professional background in consular services.

Questions

The internet consultation was divided into 5 consular themes with 6 questions about each theme. Respondents could choose which themes they wanted to answer questions about.

1. visas
2. consular assistance to psychologically distressed people
3. provision of information
4. travel advice
5. other consular issues.

A short introduction was given to each of the five themes.

General observations

Many of the responses were based on people's own experiences with consular services provided by embassies/consulates in specific countries. Accordingly, respondents' assessment of consular services was coloured by this experience. It is clear that members of the public have an opinion about the services offered. They are also increasingly aware of the services available abroad and of the limitations we face. Dutch nationals abroad have noticed the changes that have taken place in the mission network.

The vast majority of the responses we received concerned the provision of information. This could be explained by the fact that most of the responses came from Dutch nationals living abroad.

Theme 1 Visas

Issuing visas to non-Dutch nationals wishing to travel to the Netherlands is an important part of consular services.

To make sure the process run smoothly, the Netherlands offers a fast track for short-stay visa applications that are deemed to be of economic or other importance to the Netherlands (Orange Carpet and Blue Carpet programmes).

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The Orange Carpet programme is a fast-track service for bona fide travellers. The Blue Carpet programme was set up to process visa applications made by seafarers (to allow them to sign on or off, to work or to attend a course in the Netherlands).

The report entitled '*Toegangswaarde – maatschappelijke baten en kosten van het Schengen-visumbeleid voor Nederland*' ('The value of entry – the social benefits and costs of Schengen visa policy for the Netherlands') by SEO Amsterdam Economics concluded that the number of visa applications is growing, and that certain groups requiring visas have more to offer the Dutch economy than others. Accordingly, the first question in the internet consultation related to which sectors, target groups and regions should receive special attention within our visa policy. There were a range of responses, most of which related to the category of business visa applications. Specific target groups mentioned in this connection included innovative entrepreneurs and employees who would be working in the Netherlands for a limited period. Moreover, a number of respondents said that they wanted to see special treatment for Dutch nationals' family members requiring a visa. Above all, respondents wanted the option of a fast-track application process.

The second question relating to issuing visas touched on the scheme designed to attract young, innovative startups to the Netherlands. We asked: What can the Ministry of Foreign Affairs do to help startups with applications for short-stay visas?

Most responses focused not so much on visa policy or the visa process, but more on promoting start-up policy and facilitating/guiding startups in general (and not necessarily in the context of the

ministry's work). For example, funding startups, relaxing and expanding policy on longer stays in the Netherlands and improving information provision.

At the same, it is clear that applicants who are applying for a short-stay Schengen visa for the purposes of an exploratory visit to the Netherlands would benefit not only from quicker processing times but also from effective marketing of the fast-track procedure. It would also be helpful if they could be provided with good information and connections for their visit. The more general responses regarding start-up policy will be shared with the relevant experts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy.

Theme 2. Consular assistance for psychologically distressed people

Respondents agreed that the Dutch government should support Dutch nationals abroad who display distressed behaviour. These people may find themselves in a desperate situation. One person suggesting standardising the service, along the lines of the consular assistance provided to Dutch prisoners (registration and monitoring the situation via annual contact). Many respondents advised offering support at local level, for example referring people to local care or support agencies, offering interpretation services and contacting organisations and family members in the Netherlands. A number of respondents felt that embassies should be equipped with the expertise to help these people, for example employing a social worker at missions in countries where large numbers of Dutch nationals live. Several respondents made the useful suggestion of engaging the help of local Dutch volunteers.

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Most people also felt it was the government's job to repatriate psychologically distressed individuals to the Netherlands (if desirable/necessary).

Theme 3. Information provision

Of the 66 people who completed the internet consultation, 60 responded to the question as to which channels (24/7 BZ Contact Centre, WhatsApp, chatbox, Travel App, websites) were most useful for information provision and whether they had any suggestions for improving the service. In general, people seemed satisfied with the available ways of contacting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some respondents were unaware that the ministry can now be contacted 24 hours a day.

A high proportion of respondents (21) said their preferred means of communication was WhatsApp. This confirms the power of this form of communication and the ease with which people can contact each other. As this edition of State of Consular Affairs is published, WhatsApp is being launched as a means of contacting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 24/7. Many respondents cited the websites and chat feature as their preferred means of getting in contact.

The chat feature will be introduced later this year, so it was good to see that people are keen to use it.

A small number of respondents suggested that Facebook Messenger or Skype would be a good way of contacting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently in the process

of updating its channel strategy. We often receive requests to add Facebook. We may therefore decide to do so. Some respondents also suggested using password-protected websites which would require log-in codes, would be available in English and were clearly linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Any developments in this respect will take into account the statutory frameworks and the protection of privacy and data.

People also mentioned the option of using the embassy's website to share information with Dutch nationals living abroad. We would note that not every embassy has its own website. It was also seen as a missed opportunity that the 24/7 BZ Contact Centre has no decision-making capacity and can only refer callers. Respondents wanted to see some sort of guarantee at the moment they send an email that their question would be answered within 48 hours. They may have been thinking of external service providers, as the 24/7 BZ Contact Centre already strives to respond to emails within 48 hours.

Theme 4. Travel advice

Of the 34 respondents who answered the question on the new-style travel advice, approximately 39% (13) said they preferred the new look. 30% (10 respondents) said they never used travel advice, had no opinion or had never heard of it.

| 76 | Two respondents felt that there should be joint EU/Schengen travel advice. The Netherlands shares this view and is actively working towards this goal. Although travel advice is now more detailed, 14% (5 respondents) felt that it should include more specialised information, e.g. on visas or vaccinations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not authorised to advise on the vaccinations or visas required for specific countries, as this does not fall under its responsibilities. The decision was therefore taken to make this information available via a link to the website of the competent authority. Other respondents had comments about technical or other issues.

Theme 5. Other consular matters

In total, 54 respondents answered the question on which other consular matters they thought needed our attention. These included passports, DigiD, citizen service number (BSN), old age pensions (AOW) and dual nationality and concerned both information provision and problems encountered in applying for or arranging products and services at the responsible government bodies. The comments and suggestions made reflect the findings of the 2018 Kantar Public survey on information provision and the services provided to Dutch nationals by the Dutch government, commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

These points have already been taken into account in the International Desk project, and will be continue to be as it develops.

Appendix 4

White paper

As promised in the first edition of State of Consular Affairs (then known as Trends in Consular Affairs), published in 2018, an annual summary will be published in the form of a white paper. The white paper identifies the obstacles encountered by customers, drawing on the results of public consultations, targeted customer research, feedback from the 24/7 BZ Contact Centre, input from the Global Forum for Dutch Citizens and questions from members of the public.

The themes highlighted in last year's white paper are still relevant. We are working hard to address them and are making progress, but solutions are often far from simple. One of the reasons for this is that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not bear primary responsibility for all issues. Various different ministries are responsible for the government products that Dutch nationals abroad want or need. The progress that has been made has been described earlier in this edition of State of Consular Affairs.

Theme	Details	Course of action
Passport services	A recurrent problem for Dutch nationals abroad is that the passport application process worldwide is inconvenient, impractical and costly.	Over the next few years, Government aims to bring its travel and identity document services closer to the public and to digitalise these services as far as possible without compromising security and quality. In this connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to be committed to digitising the application process for travel and identity documents wherever possible, expanding on existing partnerships with external service providers (ESPs) and increasing the use of mobile fingerprinting devices. For more details see the chapter on Population Affairs in this edition of State of Consular Affairs.
Nationality	Inquiries are regularly received from all over the world about the implementation of existing nationality law, specifically on dual nationality. Due to policy changes and the effects of court judgments, the rules on nationality are dynamic	This means Dutch nationals abroad will continue to approach the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with questions on this issue. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will maintain close contact on this matter with the Ministry of Justice and Security, which bears primary responsibility for legislation on Dutch nationality. Recent developments in national and European case law and the implementation of the ambitions set out in the coalition agreement are important factors to consider in this respect.

Theme	Details	Course of action
Driving licences and DigiD	<p>Inquiries are regularly made about renewing or applying for a Dutch driving licence from abroad.</p> <p>Dutch nationals abroad complain that they have lots of problems obtaining a DigiD and keeping it functioning.</p>	<p>After consultation with the Road Transport Agency we have posted country-specific information on driving licences on netherlandsworldwide.nl. A pilot project is also being prepared for a different application and issuing process for applicants outside the EU.</p> <p>We are working with Logius to find a solution to this problem. DigiD is one of the products that will fall under the International Desk.</p>
Brexit	Many Dutch nationals have contacted the Ministry with queries about Brexit.	We expect to continue to receive questions from Dutch nationals abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and elsewhere. There was a peak in requests in connection with the impending Brexit date. The Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Tax and Customs Administration will continue to provide information and advice to the best of their ability.
Visa and admission policy	<p>Many hundreds of queries are submitted regarding other countries' admission policies (the speed of procedures, refusals at borders and denied visa applications).</p> <p>In a few dozen cases the Dutch government has been asked to be more lenient in issuing visas to foreign nationals for business, study or other purposes.</p>	<p>The Dutch authorities may contact other countries to request in broad terms that they do not unduly restrict international movement. However, the power to take decisions on individual cases lies with the country in question.</p> <p>The follow-up to the SEO Amsterdam Economics report will explore the scope for further visa facilitation arrangements for specific sectors and groups of applicants.</p> <p>In an extension of Orange Carpet policy, we will be looking at how innovative entrepreneurs and startups can be facilitated should they wish to pay an exploratory ad hoc visit to the Netherlands</p>

Publication information

Photograph credits

Central Government Multimedia Library, ANP Photo (Bart Meet), Shutterstock

Design

Kris Kras context, content and design

Printed by

Xerox, The Hague

July 2019

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Published by:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Postbus 20061 | 2500 EB The Hague

July 2019