



Citizenship in The Hague : summary

Why the use of Citizenship?

In the past few years the term 'integration' has had a negative press. On hearing the word integration many people think of the new inhabitants of the city of The Hague who should adapt themselves to the existing and established society. The term 'citizenship' however makes everything equal. This It paints a better picture because after all we are all citizens. We all want a clean, beautiful and safe city to live in.

We have opinions that we want to express. We all want a city where we can have a good working and home life. Therefore the task of citizenship is for everyone.

The local government wants to stimulate its citizens to take responsibility for the quality of housing and community life in our city. Social networks such as colleagues, neighbours, clubs and other organisations play an important role in this. They help us to find a new home, a job, a partner and help us to fill in our free time. The wider this social network, the more opportunities a person has to fully participating in society. We therefore stimulate encounters, dialogue and collaboration between our inhabitants.

What is citizenship?

Citizenship is about being social responsible and taking social responsibility. An inhabitant of The Hague is owner of his street and of his neighbourhood. He realizes that a beautiful city is not a gift but something that you build together every single day.

Citizenship is also about adhering to the rules and laws of the city. You receive education, you work or you contribute in other ways to the city. For example, by raising your children to the best of your ability, by volunteering at activities in society or by following a social training scheme.

Many people leave it at that. But if everyone acts this way we will remain enclosed in our own little circles. In short, this applies to migrants who travel between the coffee house and their place of worship. This also includes the highly educated inhabitant, entrenched in his own elite sub-culture. They are missing unique chances to meet other types of people and of contributing to the city. Good citizenship means 'working together to give The Hague its colour and shape'.

Social ties are an important part of citizenship. This should build bridges between the inhabitants themselves, but also between inhabitants and neighbourhoods, and the local government. Taking responsibility should be central to this. The local government stimulates ideas and plans of its inhabitants and financially supports them.

What are the plans of the local government?

- Invest in people: taking care of education, work, naturalisation and the development of people. We take specific measures for vulnerable groups. Everyone should be able to contribute to the city.
- Invest in equal chances, rights and obligations: preventing discrimination, explaining laws and rules, sharing the work, trainee places and housing fairly and making up for short falls.
- Invest in commitment: stimulating encounters and cooperation in the city.
- Invest in discipline: setting limits and maintaining them. Dealing firmly with hooliganism, intolerance and unaccepted behaviour.

The more people getting involved with their (local) environment, with creating a more habitable and connected city and the more people getting involved in the public debate, the better. Therefore, the local government will facilitate inhabitants who are committed to this.



Citizenship Fund

A Citizenship Fund was established in 2007 with a total budget of 1 million Euros per year. Every inhabitant of The Hague who has a plan to make the city a better and more beautiful place can make a claim to this Fund. The Citizenship Fund will give subsidies to inhabitants and organisations for their ideas and plans on the subject of encounters, dialogue and coordination. Voluntary organisations and groups of a minimum of ten people can present their plans to the Fund. The plan must contribute to strengthening social ties and encounters between city dwellers of different cultural groups. The goal is that inhabitants of The Hague start meeting each other and start undertaking activities together more frequently. There is a maximum of €25,000 available for each good plan. The Citizenship Fund is not intended for the purpose of organizing neighbourhood parties or for the maintenance of voluntary organisations.

What type of ideas can I present to the Fund?

Encounters between inhabitants within the neighbourhood or city must be a part of the plan. Think about a sports competition between neighbourhoods or between different groups from the area, the combined management of a play area or a 'various cultures trip in your own neighbourhood', where all sorts of organisations open their doors to interested parties.

The plan must be carried out by or with inhabitants of The Hague. The organisations or originator must be prepared to work on the execution of the plan. When assessing the plan, strengthening of social ties and suitability to the area, amongst other things, will be taken into account. The official language must be Dutch.

Results

The city council is annually informed about the achieved results. The results of the policy are being monitored via the City Survey. In addition the approach to Citizenship will be evaluated by an independent external commission in 2009. With these measures we want to determine if the policy is successful. The success of the policy must be shown through better service to its citizens and more involvement amongst citizens themselves but also between citizens and their neighbourhoods and citizens and the local government.

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