



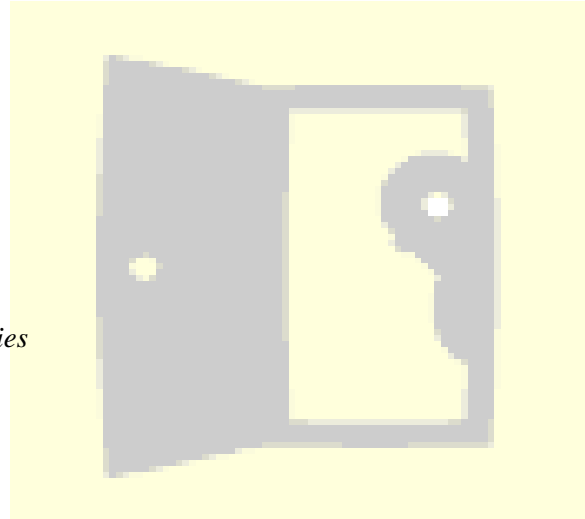
RETURN BROCHURE

Information and tips for prisoners abroad preparing for their return to The Netherlands.

International Office (Bureau Buitenland) of the Dutch Probation Service (Reclassering Nederland)

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IN GENERAL

After staying at a foreign prison, the moment will come that you are released to return to the free society. Then, questions may arise, which we will try to answer in this brochure.

This brochure is specifically meant for (ex-)prisoners that return to the Netherlands, but can also be useful for other persons involved.

During detention, a lot of your own responsibility was taken away; other people thought, decided and acted for you. With your freedom, you also regain your own responsibility. The probation service is willing to give you information and advice in finding solutions to your problems, however, you will have to initiate things yourself! Where possible, also try to involve family and friends; you will be needing them badly, also when you return to the Netherlands.

The probation service generally offers help and counselling to (ex-)prisoners that are returning to society and try to create a new existence for themselves. The probation thus wants to prevent the persons concerned from getting in trouble again and coming into contact with judicial authorities. The International Office of the Dutch Probation Service, specifically helps those who are imprisoned abroad in preparing their return to the Netherlands. **The 'after'care itself is merely a task for the local authorities in the town where you plan to live.** Therefore, you should turn to these authorities after your return to the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is a country with many rules and therefore, a lot of paper work. When necessary, ask for help from an employee of the Dutch Embassy or Consulate or, where available, from a visiting volunteer. Of course you can always write to us as well!



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THE PAPER WORK

The following documents can be necessary (for example for registration with the local authorities or for application for social security):

- An original and valid ID (passport or a European or Dutch identity card)
- A valid residence permit
- An original document with your social security (burgerservice)-number. This can be an official burgerservice-document (can be obtained from the tax department, yearly overview or an ID with burgerservice- number)
- The foreign verdict
- Your release papers from the prison or a declaration of detention with an end date of your detention
- Proof of your registration with the CWI (Centre for Work and Income, previously called the employment agency)
- A health insurance policy
- Proof of your registration with the local authorities
- Recent bank current account statement, preferably from the last three months

Tip:

Check if your documents are still valid. Photo copies are often not accepted.

Keep all your paperwork in a solid binder, keep them in a safe place and make copies!

YOUR WISH LIST

After a short or long stay in a foreign prison, you undoubtedly have a need for information and possibly for help or counselling regarding your return to the Netherlands, finding housing, finding a job or a course, making arrangements for money matters, healthcare and possibly arrangements regarding your children.

To be clear: the probation service does not dispose of houses, jobs, doctors or money.

Other – local - organisations have tasks in that area. The probation service can inform you, point you in the right direction, counsel you and sometimes make contact for you with these organisations.

START TODAY!

Arranging all those things takes time, but you can start preparing now. Do not wait until you are released from prison. You are already on the right track if you have sent in your intake form for information and advice to the International Office. If you did not receive this form from the Embassy or Consulate, ask for it immediately.

Through this form you can give us information on your situation. Based on this information, we can advise you about what you can do during your detention to prepare for your return.

RETURN TO SOCIETY

The conditions under which you return to the Netherlands often depend on the question: “why are you released?” In most cases you will have done your time or you are released early (on probation). Other possibilities are: acquittal, dropping the charges or transferral to a Dutch prison. If the rest of your sentence will be carried out in the Netherlands, you will be counselled and prepared for your return to society by employees of the Dutch prison!

The conditions for your release vary per country. We advise you to consult the employee of the Dutch Embassy, the consulate or the probation service visiting volunteer as early as possible. They will be



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able to inform you specifically. It is important to obtain release papers from the prison. If they do not give them to you automatically, you should ask for these papers. Should they still not provide you with them, you may ask the International Office to send you a declaration of detention.

Keep your release papers or declaration of detention in a safe place, as you will need them when you register with the CWI

It is important that you inform us on the date of your release a.s.a.p. Preferably about three months in advance. We can then see if some arrangements can be made regarding certain problems.

TO WHICH COUNTRY?

The first and most important question is: “am I allowed to (re)enter the Netherlands?” For Dutch nationals this is no problem. For those who do not have the Dutch nationality it is more difficult. If you had a residence permit prior to your detention abroad, there is a good chance that you may come back; however, it depends on many criteria. If you did not have a residence permit, it is more difficult, especially if you come from a country outside of the European Union. The probation service will not be able to help you then. Consult the Embassy about this, timely.

It could be that you can just walk out the door when you are released, but it could also be that you are put on a train or airplane. It is important to know how much money you will need (for public transport in the Netherlands) to travel to your destination and make sure that you have enough money.

Another possibility is that you are transferred to the Netherlands to serve the rest of your time in a Dutch prison. In that case, the Ministries of Justice take care of your transportation.

Also, try to think about what to wear when you are released. What season it is. Do you still have sufficient clothing? Possibly, your friends or family could provide some. If not, talk to someone at the Embassy or a probation service volunteer about this.

Furthermore, ask yourself if you can be stopped at the Dutch airport and summoned to pay some old debts that are still open. Or if you might be arrested because you still have to serve a sentence here. You may consult us. In most cases we can obtain this information for you. Experience, however, has taught us that it is impossible to get a delay.

RETURN FROM BEING AWAY

So now you are free and back in society. Now you have to deal with all kinds of daily problems. We will go into a few of them below. Should you still have questions, after reading this, do not hesitate to contact us.

Housing

If you can go home to your family, parents or partner, you are lucky. Because housing in the Netherlands, especially in the Randstad, is still a big problem. If you foresee that you will have no place to stay after your release from prison, you should register with a housing company as early as possible during your detention. The advantage of this is that you will build up some waiting time; get a higher position on the waiting list. The International Office can help you apply for the necessary forms. Registering during detention is not possible in every city though.

In most towns, allocation of housing takes place based on sent in housing vouchers. These vouchers can be found in free local papers or housing papers. In most cases you will not have housing, directly after your return to the Netherlands. Renting a room may be a (temporary) solution. Possibilities are



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limited, however. What you could do, is authorize someone in the final phase of your detention, to send in the vouchers for you. Signing the contract, however, must be done by you.

Some ex-prisoners – given their history – prefer not to live on their own, but in a group with professional counselling. Possibilities are limited, but ask us and we will see if we can arrange something for you.

If all else fails, emergency reception centres (shelters) could be contacted (municipal or Salvation Army for the homeless). Here too, the International Office can try and mediate for you. But the number of beds is limited, so it is not easy to make a reservation. Of course we can provide you with the addresses.

Registration with the local authorities

The first thing you need to do when you arrive in the town you want to live (again) is to register there (again). Most municipalities, in their official capacity, remove your name from the register after a period of absence exceeding 6 months. You are obliged to register again within 5 days!

Bring your release documents and identification. As long as you are not yet registered, you have no access to any communal provisions.

Finding a job or going to school

Immediately after you have been registered, you will have to go find a job. Unfortunately, in most cases, it will not be possible to arrange something while still in prison abroad. In the Netherlands you can register for employment with the Centre for Work and Income (CWI) (a co-operation between the former employment agency and social services). Documents mentioned under paperwork are necessary for this registration. You could already start to think about in which sectors you would like to be employed.

Mind you: for some jobs, you need to be able to provide a declaration regarding behaviour (VOG) to your employer. A number of countries have a treaty that makes it possible that sentences abroad show up on your criminal record! This may lead to a refusal to issue a VOG. Some successfully build up a 'job history' by working for temp agencies first. These rarely ask for a VOG.

For registration with a temp agency you need:

- Valid identification
- Social Security (burger service)-number
- Bank account number
- Bank card
- Name of your health insurance company
- Curriculum vitae (overview of schools/diploma's and job experience)

Incidentally, the choice will be to go to school. This is possible under certain conditions with for example a ROC (regional training centre), located in all larger towns. Already during your detention, you can make inquiries with the International Office and after your return to the Netherlands with the CWI.

Money

If you cannot immediately find a job, you can apply for social benefits through the CWI. A decision regarding your application will take some time (8 weeks maximum). Therefore, you can ask for an advance.

If you no longer own anything, no clothing, shoes and so on, you can also put in a request for a special benefit. This usually cannot be arranged in advance. You need to apply for this in person.



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In case you have debts, it is possible to participate in a debt restructuring program. Ask for information with the organisation where you apply for a social benefit. In the Netherlands it is virtually impossible to get without a bank account. If you do not have one, get one as soon as possible.

Health

As per 1 January 2006, there is only one kind of health care insurance for everyone called “zorgverzekering”. Basic insurance is merely similar to the former “ziekenfonds”. It is possible to get additional insurance and an excess amount. Children under the age of 18 are included in the insurance at no extra charge.

It is compulsory to have health insurance. It gives you access to a physician, dentist, medication and the hospital.

Imprisonment abroad can be really hard and you may even run the risk of catching a contagious disease. For example; tuberculosis, hepatitis B, HIV. It is advisable, especially when you were imprisoned outside of Western-Europe, to apply for a medical check-up with your general practitioner, or (if you prefer) inquire about the possibilities for this with the GGD (General health service) in your town of residence.

There may also be psychological problems. Nightmares, insomnia, depression. Seek out people you can talk to confidentially. We advise you to talk to your general practitioner (family doctor) about this.

Children

If you have children, there is a chance that you have had to make arrangements for temporary custody. This would be necessary in order to make sure important decisions can be made regarding your children. There is no child support for minors without a guardian and therefore, they have no health insurance.

After your return to the Netherlands, the situation will have to be revised; it is important to contact the authorities as soon as possible.

Finally

What else? You will understand that we have not gotten into every possible subject. On top of that, the advice is limited. Would you like to get some specific advice, please contact the International Office as soon as possible.

We are aware of the fact that, in many cases, we have received some personal and confidential information from you. This is necessary to be able to offer you the best information and advice possible and to work together with other organisations that may be able to help you further.

For your reassurance: all employees at the probation service (including the volunteers) have a requirement of confidentiality to third parties. The probation service has an approved privacy regulation. We keep our records until five to seven years after the last contact. After that, all records are destroyed.

If you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your affairs, you can indicate this to your contact person at the International Office. If you are not satisfied with the response, you may turn to the head of the International Office. If things are still not solved to your satisfaction, you may turn to the (independent)

Klachtencommissie van de Reclassering (complaints committee)

Postbus 8345

NL-3503 RH UTRECHT.



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The International Office can provide you with a brochure on our privacy regulation or the complaints regulation.

As a prisoner abroad, you have been in contact with the International Office. When you have returned to the Netherlands, the local authorities in your residence are responsible for the 'after care'.

Our address

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