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Consul's Corner

Living and Working in Holland



Living and Working in The Netherlands

Moving and relocating to a new country can be a wonderful experience, but can also present challenges as you navigate the rules and procedures of a new place. The following are tips on obtaining a residence permit and the Dutch equivalent of U.S. Social Security, to help you get acquainted with the local system. The Consulate General cannot intervene with Dutch officials on matters regarding immigration or work permits.

Residence Permit

When you arrive in the Netherlands, your first order of business will be to obtain a residence permit. You will need to register with the Alien Police or Alien Services Office (Vreemdelingendienst). Please give them a call before you go to make sure which documents you will need, and don't forget to make an appointment. As a rule of thumb, you will need to present: a valid passport, passport pictures and proof of employment, and any documents for your family members (passports, etc.)

Amsterdam Office: 020.5596300

The Hague Office: 070.3761111

Rotterdam Office: 010.2741317 For more information please visit: <http://www.ind.nl/EN/index.asp>

SOFI Number

SOFI numbers are the Dutch equivalent of a Social Security number. If you are planning to work in the Netherlands and/or obtain tax breaks on childcare, you will need a SOFI number.

In order to obtain a SOFI number you will need to go to the local Tax Service Office or "Belastingdienst." First, you should call and make an appointment. You will need to present a valid passport and a residence permit or an identity card for privileged persons.

Amsterdam Office: Tel. 020 687777, Address: Kingsfordweg 1, 1043 GN Amsterdam. Directions to the Amsterdam office: Take the 12 tram line from Museumplein (US Consulate General) toward the Sloterdijk station. Exit the tram at Kingsfordweg. Turn right onto Kingsfordweg, and walk 1 block. The Belastingdienst is on your right.

The Hague Office: Ph. 070.3304090, Address: Stationsplein 75, 2515 BX S-Gravenhage. If you need directions to any Belastingdienst call this number: 08000543.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.belastingdienst.nl/english/>

Upcoming Consular Outreach Visit to Groningen, June 12

During the last year we have provided Consular services (passport applications, registration of births abroad, and notarial services) outside the Consulate General in Limburg, Rotterdam and Groningen.

We will be coming soon to the following areas:

* Groningen—June 12, 2008 from 5-7 pm

If you would like to attend, please send an email to

USCitizenServicesAMS@state.gov to register, providing your name and contact details, the services required, and number of persons coming to the appointment. We will send you information about the exact location of the event as soon as possible. **Please ensure you have read the requirements for each service and bring all required original documents, as well as a copy of each document.**

*See http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov/hours_of_operation4.html for details related to each service. All payments must be done by credit card – no cash can be accepted. Also, please note that **no visa services will be provided.**

These events are possible due to the support of our hosts. If you are interested in hosting one of these events, please contact us at

USCitizenServicesAms@state.gov.

Please bear in mind that the venue should not be in the greater Amsterdam region. We are looking for a minimum of 20 attendees, sufficient space for meeting with them, a separate waiting area for privacy and access to a copy machine. We look forward to receiving your e-mails!



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**Dutch Daycare Tuition Breaks!**

The following comment is from a locally-resident American who would like to share her child care-related experiences.

My husband and I have been living in the Netherlands since October of 2007. We have two beautiful little girls, one three years old, and the other nine months old. We knew immediately after we learned we would be working in The Netherlands that we wanted our children to attend a Dutch educational institution. We just had no idea where or how to get them registered from the US. We were told to relax and take care of it once we arrived in The Netherlands.

Once we arrived and were settled for a few weeks, I began asking around for local daycare for the girls. I asked our Dutch landlord, whose kids are long since out of University, and I asked a few local women I met in cafes. Everyone had different and varying opinions on different schools, but one thing stood out: the waiting lists were 6 months to one year long and the crèches were very expensive - this from Dutch and expatriates alike.

Since I don't like to be told "no" I decided to hit the road and cold call a few schools in my neighborhood. I hit upon one 2 blocks from our house that happened to have no waiting list for my older child, but a six month wait for the younger. So I jumped on it and signed her up. She started the following month, in December of 2007. I was able to get her into

3 time slots on every Wednesday afternoon and Friday morning and afternoon. The school mentioned they would have more slots opening up in the New Year and they would let me know when more openings came available.

Eventually she was going to daycare 4 afternoons per week, to the tune of €540,- per month. I think that under reasonable circumstances, this is a relatively fair price, if you are paid in Euros. But for us, living with two children, salaries paid in USD, and in a difficult economy, this was too much to pay on a monthly basis, yet we didn't want to sacrifice her social and educational well-being.

I got on the Internet and began hunting for companies that could help us reduce our childcare costs. Here's what I found:

The Dutch Child Care Act of 2005 provides financial assistance to parents for the financing of formal childcare. Employers also contribute to childcare costs via a special levy imposed on them, meaning that the government and employers also contribute to formal childcare costs. Under the Act, an allowance is provided per child, capped at a determined maximum hourly rate. The amount received depends on the costs incurred, as well as the family's income. Certain target groups, under special circumstances, may receive additional support from the local government where they live.

In summary, the Dutch tax office will reimburse families up to 70% of all childcare costs in the event that the both parents are working.

One parent can even be a part-time employee to qualify for the rebate.

You can apply in person for this rebate by visiting the Dutch tax office ("Belastingdienst"), although you will need to speak Dutch to do this. There are also private companies that assist with these issues. After exploring our options we were able to get a significant reduction on our childcare expenses through the Dutch tax office and we can now breathe a sigh of relief!

NEW ELECTRONIC SYSTEM FOR TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION FOR NON - U.S. CITIZENS

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has announced plans for the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). ESTA is an automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Travelers who are citizens of countries participating in the VWP, which includes The Netherlands, will be required to receive an electronic travel authorization prior to boarding a U.S.-bound airplane or vessel. The program will be introduced on a voluntary basis beginning August 1, 2008. On January 12, 2009 the program will become mandatory, and all travellers for business or pleasure will be required to obtain travel authorization before boarding. Prospective travellers will complete an online application. In most cases ESTA will provide an almost immediate determination of eligibility to travel under the VWP. For more information, go to www.cbp.gov/esta

DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER TO VOTE!

Go to the Consulate General's website at:

http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov/voting_information.html