



## Tips and style guide internet consultation 2020

We would like to call on you to respond in large numbers to the public Internet consultation. It is important that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) gets a good and broad picture of the objections that the bill raises among home educators. It should be made clear that this bill is impractical.

In this guide we first share our suggestions for the tone and style of writing, the points that you can raise in your response to the internet consultation (NVvTO points) and some practical tips.

### **Are you considering relocating to the Netherlands? Are you already home educating your children in the Netherlands? Here are some suggestions.**

The language requirement would prohibit non Dutch speaking residents (temporary or not) to home educate their children. Tell our lawmakers how your plans would be altered were this bill to pass. How important is home education for you? Would you still consider/keep living in the Netherlands? Would this have an effect on your career path? How would this affect your company as they cannot send home educating employees to the Netherlands? How do you feel about the discriminatory nature of language as a barrier to home educating your children? Indicate how home education can enable continuing educational development and cultural connections of a child, especially for the families of mixed cultural heritage or those engaged into employment that requires international relocations. Give examples that show how connections within Dutch society and relevant knowledge of Dutch language and culture are developed without attending a school.

### **How to write a convincing response for a Dutch internet consultation?**

It is our experience that we get the furthest with reasonable and substantive arguments: it is the tone that makes the music. Hence our following tips.

- Think in advance how you want to come across (content, tone, etc.).
- Speak from your expertise as a homeschooler (s). Show that you know what you are talking about.
  - Speak in the "I" or "we" form. I think it is important that..., I believe that..., I have the feeling that..., my experience is..., we as parents find... etc.
- Choose your arguments. Think of the points in the bill you would like to respond to and why.
  - You don't have to respond to everything. Think about which changes / new requirements you object the most.
  - Once everyone submit their points a more objective overall picture of responses to the bill emerges,
  - The list of substantive points of the NVvTO can be found below.
- Give your opinion clearly. Be real. Be polite. Stay calm. It is important that your message reaches the readers without getting lost between reproaches, anger or a nasty tone. After all, you want to make your point.
  - Do not complete the internet consultation when you are very angry or disappointed.
  - That is not to say that you should not show emotions, but do it in proportion and link your emotion to your underlying need or desire. So that it doesn't scream the content of your point.
- Do not personally attack people (officials, politicians, secretary of state). That detracts from the contents of your responses.
- Realize that your response is not an isolated one. The impression that your comments make influence the image of the home education community as a whole.



- Highlight the positive sides of home education. Mention examples of participation in the society, continuing education in a school or university or starting to work after home education.

Check for spelling and grammar.

### **Selection of concerns**

We have summarised the bill and the corresponding references to other laws. The summary is available at (<https://www.thuisonderwijs.nl/home-education-bill-2020/summary-bill-2020/>) in case you want to learn more about the bill.

The NVvTO has made a selection of points of concern. These points have arisen from the member meetings and the online member poll that we held last March. Some new points, not yet known at that time, are included as well. Please note this list is a preliminary summary of concerns and does not include more specific arguments that NVvTO will include in its official response.

- Home education remains accessible only based on the exemption given on the grounds of objection to the orientation ('richting') of the education. Homeschooling remains prohibited after attending school.
- An education plan needs to be submitted for an assessment by the School Inspection Office 30 weeks before the 5th birthday of your child in order to receive a 'statement of no objection'.
  - If the School Inspection Office objects to the plan, home education is not possible.
  - If 'statement of no objections' is received it is followed by a compulsory conversation with the Compulsory Education Officer ('leerplichtambtenaar or LPA') with the parent and the child. Without this conversation, home education is not possible.
- In the calendar year your child reaches the age of 12 you and your child are required to have a second conversation with the Compulsory Education Officer. During this conversation they want to hear the child.
- The School Inspection Office visits the house in the first year and then at least once every 4 years to assess whether it provides a socially, psychologically and physically safe learning environment.
  - The inspector of education has an alert function and can start a follow-up investigation if shortcomings in regulatory compliance are suspected.
  - It is not specified whether an appointment is made in advance. The inspector asks for permission to enter the house. If you refuse, your exemption will expire.
- Primary education has to work towards the educational core goals set by law, 'kerndoelen'. Core goals can only be adjusted in case of pressing objections or (health) limitations. The secondary education should work towards a job market qualification ("starkwalificatie").
- The child has to take a test at 6 and 9 years of age and a final test at 12 (max 14) years of age.
- An education-tracking-system should be used for at least math and Dutch.
- Every year (from the age of 4) the parent submit an education plan, containing:
  - how the requirements are met,
  - the child's progress,
  - the pedagogical-didactic competence of the parent and
  - how it is maintained,
  - the location of the education.
- Home education must predominantly take place at home.
- The language of instruction is Dutch.
- Only one parent provides the education and the child should not receive structural education from friends or hired persons.
- The parent who provides the education must demonstrate B2 / 3F level of proficiency in Dutch (approximately a college entry level).
- The parent who provides the education must be able to demonstrate his / her pedagogical-didactic competence ('bekwaamheid') and continue to work on it.



- The requirements for home education are more restricted than those for other forms of education not funded by the government.
- Children placed under supervision are excluded from home education.
- In the event of a negative opinion on the educational plan, parents will be given the opportunity to adjust the plan. Appeals and objections are open against the judgment. No further details of this are known.

In addition to the objections to the bill itself, NVvTO has objections on the process of how this bill came to be. The representatives of Dutch home educators were not involved in the process until September 2019. At that moment the concept of the bill was ready and discussions were held off. This is uncommon in Dutch law making practice. Normally stakeholders are consulted during the drafting process.

As a result the home education stakeholders were not adequately involved in the process and their contributions had not been sufficiently heard and taken into account. While the internet consultation is not the appropriate channel to voice those objections, NVvTO will bring them up in the follow-up process.

### **Practical**

The internet consultation could be found here: <https://www.internetconsultatie.nl/richtingbezwaren>

To add your response to the internet consultations go to 'reageren op consultatie'. Then a new web-page appears where you can give a response in two ways.

- You can type your response directly in the window.
- You can include your response as an attached .pdf document by clicking the button 'direct naar document toevoegen'.

Responses are not processed anonymously. It is possible to choose whether or not you want to make your response public.

We hope that you want to send in a response to this bill and encourage as many people as possible to do the same. Though children under 16 are not allowed to send in their own submission, we recommend adding essays, remarks, drawings etc from your children to your own submission.

You can also ask if your parents, a music or sports teacher from your child, or anyone else who has a heart for home education would like to respond to this bill.

The NVvTO is preparing a response to the bill as an organisation and will share it once it is ready. Members have been involved in the discussions during the Zoom meetings and other online channels.

Finally, we would appreciate it if you share a copy of your response with us, so that we can also get an overview of the responses without depending on the information from OCW. You can send this to [secretaris@nvvto.nl](mailto:secretaris@nvvto.nl).

### **Good luck!**

If you have questions, you can send us an email at: [secretaris@nvvto.nl](mailto:secretaris@nvvto.nl).