



To the President of the House of Representatives
of the States General
Postbus 20018
2500 EA
The Hague

www.rijksoverheid.nl
www.facebook.com/minbzk
www.twitter.com/minbzk
[www.linkedin.com/company/
ministerie-van-bzk](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ministerie-van-bzk)

Reference

Your reference

Date 23th June 2023
Subject Letter on the process following the apology for the slavery
past

Introduction

This letter is intended to inform your House in greater detail about the process that was launched in response to the apology for the slavery past. It also fulfils the commitment to inform your House about this process before the summer, as made by the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations during a debate on the 25th of January about issuing the apology.

Since the 19th of December, a great deal of attention has been given to the slavery past and its impact throughout society, including in relation to the forthcoming Slavery Past Memorial Year. The government greatly appreciates the efforts of everyone who has worked hard since the apology to make sure that continuous attention keeps being given to the slavery past. We also note that there is increasing acknowledgement and appreciation for those who have often spent years working to raise awareness of the slavery past. It is important that we learn to better understand the past and that we honour those – both today and in the past – who have helped to ensure our current understanding of the slavery past. These will also be important objectives for the government during the Slavery Past Memorial Year and during the many exploratory discussions that we have held with various communities in recent months. The goal is to create and preserve a greater understanding, acknowledgement and awareness of that past across the entire Kingdom, and in relation to other countries to which the Netherlands is connected due to its history of slavery.

In this letter, we briefly review the apology of the 19th of December and the most important aspects of the discussions that the government has held since then. We will also inform you in greater detail about the plans for the €200 million fund.¹ The objective of this process is to ensure that the subsidy scheme for community projects and the Memorial Committee (hereinafter: Committee) are operational by the summer of 2024. To this end, the government envisions a participative process, in which descendants and other parties play a key role in all stages of the establishment of the fund and Committee.

¹ As stated in the government response of 19th of December 2022, this does not concern a budget fund based on Article 2.11 of the Government Accounts Act (*Comptabiliteitswet*).

Finally, we will also inform you about how preparations are progressing for the Slavery Past Memorial Year, the National Museum of Slavery and the reinforcement of anti-discrimination and anti-racism policy.

Review and discussions since the 19th of December

On the 19th of December of last year, the Prime Minister Mark Rutte apologised on behalf of the government for the involvement and role of the Dutch State and its historical, administrative predecessors in the slavery past to the descendants of enslaved people worldwide, and posthumously to their descendants who continue to suffer the consequences of that past today. In the government response to the report of the Slavery Past Dialogue Group, the government announced a €200 million fund. The aim is for these funds to be easily and broadly accessible for projects relating to the transatlantic slavery trade, with specific focus on Suriname and the Kingdom. €100 million of this sum is reserved for a subsidy scheme for community initiatives. The remaining €100 million is reserved for implementing measures related to 'knowledge and awareness', 'acknowledgement and commemoration' and 'impact and psychological processing', which were previously announced in the government response.

In addition, the government has allocated an annual budget of €8 million on a structural basis for the establishment and activities of a Memorial Committee that will eventually have a permanent role in organising a larger, dignified, Kingdom-wide commemoration of the slavery past, which will be organised in partnership with Suriname where possible. The programming and purpose all the above initiatives will be agreed together with descendants and other parties. Earlier this year, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations informed the House about the proposed details of the budget item that the €200 million fund and the Committee will fall under.²

In recent months, the government has held discussions with descendants and other parties in the Netherlands and in Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba, and in Suriname through the Special Envoy for the Slavery Past appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the 15th of July, the government again met a diverse group of descendants and other parties with whom we had spoken during the sessions in the Catshuis prior to the apology and thereafter. The objective was to learn about the meaning behind the apology and to gain a greater understanding of their needs and wishes in relation to the 'filling in the gaps' process. All these discussions left a lasting impression and made it even clearer that the apology was only the first step on a long road towards healing and psychological processing of the past.

While the apology was largely seen as a positive step, many participants felt that this is the first time that there is greater public acknowledgement of the underlying pain and sorrow caused by that past, and that this has received too little attention before now. Those same discussions also confirmed that this history is a story of pride and power, and of the resistance and resilience of the communities who stood firm under appalling circumstances. We are grateful for

² Parliamentary Papers, 2022–2023 Session, 36284, no. 28.

the openness with which the people we spoke to who shared their stories. This openness demands that the government also adopt an open attitude that allows us to come closer together in a spirit of trust.

The discussions were necessary and sometimes hard-hitting. The common thread throughout was the question of how the government will actually put the apology into practice. The following principles, which we will include in the process initiated in response to the apology, emerged from these discussions:

- First of all, the process demands a careful, considered approach. Sufficient attention must be given to the wide range of needs and wishes across the communities. Although this careful approach will take time and will occasionally go against the prevailing logic in government circles, it was consistently mentioned by many participants as an essential precondition for success. As such, the process described below anticipates the active participation of descendants and other parties in all phases of the process. We are simultaneously continuing to develop the details of the other commitments, so that initiatives in the Caribbean region of the Kingdom can also be funded as soon as possible.
- The public debate has deepened and broadened since the 19th of December, whereby the Maroon and Indigenous communities, have emphatically demanded that attention be paid to their position and stories. The government will honour those demands and will explicitly include their voices in this process. The government is aware that, in the public debate on the slavery past, other communities are also demanding that attention be paid to *their* stories as part of our shared past. There will also be space for these stories during the Slavery Past Memorial Year. However, this must not diminish the experience and acknowledgement of the commemoration of the transatlantic slave trade. The objective of the Memorial Year is to raise awareness of the slavery past and to initiate a dialogue about this history throughout society. This is important, but also requires a public dialogue that will continue for years to come. The government expects the Committee to play an important role in the future when it comes to broadening and deepening this dialogue.
- Besides this broader dialogue, it is important that we make concrete progress towards honouring the commitments made by working on a subsidy scheme that is ready by the spring of 2024 and a Committee that can start working in the summer of 2024.
- The initial scope of the funds and the Committee's initial remit will be the transatlantic slavery past. How the Committee will be established and its membership will be determined in the second half of this year in partnership with the NiNsee (National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy), which played a major role in organising the commemoration on the 1st of July. The government and the NiNsee aim to involve a wider range of community stakeholders in this process. The intention is that the membership of the Committee should include a balanced representation from all affected areas. The Committee's remit and its membership will also be discussed during the public meetings that we will organise this autumn.
- When determining the measures, consideration will be given to the differences in tempo between the affected areas and communities. This will allow

everyone to express their wishes and needs in an appropriate and considered manner and will ensure that the existing expertise and plans of these communities are included in the process. We will also give descendants and other affected communities the space to develop their own proposals in their own way and at their own tempo.

- The subsidy scheme for community projects must consider the differences in tempo, approach and organisation, and thus honour the specific needs of various communities. This will help to prevent the level of organisation or access to existing funding being a barrier to participation. Exactly how this can be done, will be explicitly discussed during the public meetings that we will organise this autumn.
- Everything that we learn during the process will immediately be put into practice. For example, the government has raised the subsidies for the Memorial Year by €5.3 million and the Culture Participation Fund has also agreed to provide additional support in both the European Netherlands and all six islands in the Caribbean region of the Kingdom. We will also share a sample application and sample budget, which less experienced applicants can use as a template for their project applications. Part of this sum will also be earmarked for the Caribbean region of the Kingdom. We will include the experience gained with these schemes during the process of establishing the €100 million subsidy scheme. The scheme must be designed so that it is easy to access for a broad group of applicants. A geographical balance must also be achieved in the distribution of funds.

Structure of the 'filling in the gaps' process initiated in response to the apology: €200 million and Committee

On the basis of these principles, we have agreed the following process for allocating the €200 million fund and establishing the Committee.

Details of commitments

Of the €200 million fund, €100 million is reserved for the implementation of the measures related to 'knowledge and awareness', 'acknowledgement and commemoration' and 'impact and psychological processing'. These certainly include the commitments in the government response, such as the scheme for a free name change, the long-term study into the impact of the slavery past, the commitments to the islands when it comes to heritage and cultural management, and reinforcing anti-discrimination and anti-racism policy. These commitments are partly based on recommendations from the Slavery Past Dialogue Group, partly on specific requests from the islands, and partly on the implementation of motions passed by your House.

These commitments should make a substantial contribution to at least one of the three objectives: 'knowledge and awareness', 'acknowledgement and commemoration' and 'impact and psychological processing'. Geographical balance must be maintained in the distribution of funds. Descendants and other parties will also be given an active role in developing the chosen measures.

We will discuss the best way to implement these policy proposals and commitments with descendants and other parties during the coming months. We also aim to agree a process this autumn to put the €100 million of additional spending into practice. We will nevertheless continue to work on implementing the commitments in the government response in the meantime wherever possible. Sufficient account must also be taken of differences in tempo when determining the details of the commitments. We will inform your House about this at the end of this year in a letter explaining the progress that has been made.

Details of €100 million subsidy scheme and Committee

The process for developing the subsidy scheme for community initiatives (the remaining €100 million) and establishing the Committee will consist of the following steps:

Orientation phase: January – June 2023

Since early 2023, the government has held discussions with the objective of developing a better understanding of what the apology entails, and in order to identify the conditions that must be met for the 'filling in the gaps' process. Together with the commitments made in the government response, the input from these discussions will establish prerequisites for developing the process. We spoke with a diverse group of descendants and other parties about these prerequisites on the 15th of June. This proposal was subsequently revised based on the points they raised.

Preparatory phase: summer 2023

(Senior) civil service preparation for community meetings in the Netherlands and on the islands, and ongoing consultations by the Special Envoy for the slavery past in Suriname.

Consultation phase: August – October 2023

Organisation of community meetings across the Kingdom. These will include public meetings throughout the European Netherlands. In the Caribbean region of the Kingdom, we will organise a Caribbean 'Catshuis session' to discuss how the commitments will be honoured with all the islands, as was the case late last year. We will also organise participation meetings on the islands. The exact form will be adapted to each island.

The objective of all these meetings is to talk with descendants and organisations involved with the slavery past and to hear their perspectives on matters, including:

- The objective, criteria and organisation of the subsidy scheme
- The objective, profile and organisation of the proposed Committee

We will also talk with grassroots organisations during these meetings, as their knowledge and experience are indispensable for the process. These are the organisations and initiatives that work with communities every day to tackle the impact of the slavery past. We will also actively involve young people, as these discussions concern *their* future. It is important that we speak with them rather than about them. We will invite representatives of the Indigenous and Maroon communities. We will explicitly include them in the upcoming process so that *their* stories and heroes become part of our shared past and

greater attention is paid to their specific wishes with regards to healing and psychological processing. The objective of the meetings is to give these groups the opportunity to contribute their ideas for the measures to be developed and to promote connections between the groups so that we can develop and implement the process initiated in response to the apology together.

A separate process will take place in Suriname. Consultations with descendants and other parties have already taken place and will be continued. Discussions will also be held with other persons and groups wherever necessary. It is also important to continue consultations and discussions about the perspectives of descendants and organisations involved with the slavery past in relation to the subsidy scheme.

As regards the proposed Memorial Committee and Kingdom-wide commemoration, we will explore opportunities for working together with Suriname based on the additional discussions.

Development phase: October – December 2023

Conclusions will need to be made once a broad range of perspectives have been collected during the consultation phase. These conclusions must be made collectively across the three objectives. In the interests of a careful and effective process, it is desirable that a smaller number of participants are responsible for this phase.

Two (temporary) working groups consisting of government representatives and representatives of civil society organisations will be set up, one for the Committee and one for the subsidy scheme. The guiding principle behind the appointment of these working groups is that there should be a balanced representation from the government and civil society organisations from all groups: from the Netherlands, the islands and, wherever possible, from Suriname. Besides ensuring balanced representation, the proposed members for these two working groups should in principle possess specific expertise about funds, public administration or commemoration. They should also be demonstrably involved in the subject and have broad support from the community. We also aim to achieve a balanced representation from different age groups. The working groups will be appointed at senior civil service level by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in consultation with other departments. The government of the Netherlands will play a facilitating and supporting role during this phase.

The working groups will be chaired by an independent process facilitator and will be responsible for collecting and interpreting the conclusions and results of the consultation phase. They will be disbanded once their work is complete. The results and conclusions of both working groups will be shared with and presented again to the wider public in November and December during two dedicated sessions (one for the Committee and one for the subsidy scheme). This follows on from the more general Catshuis sessions and meeting on the

15th of June. We will share the results of these meetings with the House of Representatives.

Decision-making and development phase: start – spring 2024

We will develop the remaining details of the process based on conclusions from the meetings and the reports of the working groups. The specific of the decision-making process will partly be determined by the input that arises from these phases.

However, the intention is that the subsidy scheme should be launched by the spring of 2024, or earlier, and that the Committee should be operational in July 2024. It is important to note that the feasibility of this date depends on the discussions we will hold this autumn. Ensuring a careful and considered process is the priority. Descendants will be involved with the process of developing the details and establishment of the subsidy scheme and Committee.

We will inform your House in greater detail about the procedures chosen for developing the details of the subsidy scheme and the Memorial Committee in the spring of 2024.

Progress in commitments made in the government response of the 19th of December

The government is also working to develop the commitments made in its response as quickly as possible under the co-ordination of the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. We wish to emphasise that we are focused on the progress to be made during the remainder of this year and in 2024. However, the work of the government will not end after the Memorial Year. After all, the objective is to initiate an ongoing dialogue about our shared history and to take steps together to raise awareness and increase knowledge throughout society, to commemorate and to tackle the impact of the slavery past. In this part of the letter, we wish to inform you about progress made in relation to the following aspects:

- Commitments to the Caribbean region of the Kingdom
- Suriname
- Scheme to allow names to be changed without charge
- Education
- Slavery Past Memorial Year
- National Museum of Slavery
- Anti-discrimination and anti-racism policy

Caribbean region of the Kingdom

At the time the apology was made on the 19th of December of last year, representatives were also present on the six islands of the Caribbean part of the

Kingdom.³ Following the speech by the Prime Minister, a response was issued in relation to the slavery past and its impact on each island. In addition to the measures announced in the government response of the 19th of December, a number of commitments were made to each island.⁴ These were agreed in response to contributions made by the islands to the 'Chains of the Past' report and the resulting discussions. The implementation of these commitments and the measures in the government response, including the subsidy scheme for community initiatives and the Committee, will take place in partnership with the governments of the constituent countries, executive councils of the public entities, civil society organisations and descendants. As indicated in the government response, the intention is that these commitments to the islands will be funded from the €100 million for measures related to 'knowledge and awareness', 'acknowledgement and commemoration' and 'impact and psychological processing'.⁵ The implementation of these commitments is part of the broader discussion with the Caribbean region of the Kingdom, about how the entire package will be implemented as well as their specific needs within that context.

Since December, digital and physical meetings have been held on each island with representatives of governments, civil society organisations and descendants. It is very important that the islands lead the process initiated in response to the apology. They have also indicated the extent to which particular commitments can already be made specific and implemented. However, additional research and discussion on the islands is required for some of the commitments. This may be achieved through participation or the work of an advisory committee. The manner and speed at which the commitments are implemented and points of view are agreed will differ for each island. The government is studying how the work of the various organisations can be supported, with particular attention for grassroots organisations and community engagement. To this end, the government will organise a meeting in the Caribbean region of the Kingdom after the summer, to which stakeholders from all six islands will be invited. This follows on from the meeting in Curaçao on the 23rd of November last year.

On the 13th of April, the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations agreed to inform your House about the discussions with the islands on the development of the measures announced in the government response to the slavery past.⁶ In this letter, we will address the progress and outcomes of the discussions and the implementation of the motions for each island. The government hereby considers the commitment made by the State Secretary to have been honoured.

³ The State Secretary for Justice and Security in Aruba, the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations in Curaçao, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment in Bonaire, the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport in St. Maarten, the State Secretary for Finance in St. Eustatius and the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport in Saba.

⁴ Reference to the letters to the Estates of Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten and the Island Councils of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba.

⁵ The €100 million will also be used to fund the following measures: the scheme to allow names to be changed without charge, the long-term study into the impact of the slavery past and the strengthening of anti-discrimination and anti-racism policy.

⁶ TZ202304-157, dated the 13th of April 2024.

Aruba

On the 19th of December, the Prime Minister of Aruba announced that the government had appointed a working group. The Aruba Slavery Past Awareness Committee has made a swift start to an awareness campaign and is the main partner in the discussions following the apology. The committee includes representatives from the world of science, organisations such as the Aruban National Archives, and organisations in the cultural sector.

The Aruban National Archives has started the process of using handwriting recognition software to make it possible to search the Colonial Archives. This will make an important contribution towards improving the accessibility of the information in the archives and will also make it possible to search more efficiently and effectively for information about enslaved people. This measure, which is one of the commitments in the government response, will be funded from the €100 million that the government has reserved for these commitments.

The need for improved education and educational methods about the slavery past in Aruba prompted the commitment to make sure that the books *Educacion Herencia di Slavitud* (Education on the Legacy of Slavery) and *Slaven zonder Plantage* (Slaves Without Plantation) can be reprinted. These books are intended for use in the education system and will be updated, translated into Papiamentu and made available to schools. Work is also ongoing to have a statue erected in honour of the resistance heroine Virginia Dementricia. The committee is discussing a suitable location with an artist and the government of Aruba. The working group is developing a broader plan in response to the apology based on the discussions that have been held. Despite this progress, the Minister for Finance and Culture used a letter to specify a number of points that require further attention in the process initiated in response to the apology, including the available funds and the National Museum of Slavery. These points are being followed up.

Curaçao

The *Plataforma Sklabitut i Herensha di Sklabitut* (Slavery and Legacy of Slavery Platform) includes representatives of various non-governmental organisations in Curaçao that are involved with the slavery past. They helped to form the recommendations in the 'Chains of the Past' report and are now working with the Curaçaoan Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport on the response to the apology.

The rehabilitation of Tula, a hero of the resistance, has been a long-held wish in Curaçao and was an explicit recommendation in the 'Chains of the Past' report. The government response therefore confirmed that the government of the Netherlands is committed to rehabilitating Tula following the announcement by the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The rehabilitation will take place in Curaçao on the 3rd of October of this year, which is the anniversary of Tula's death.

For the platform, the rehabilitation of Tula is a symbol of the emancipation movement. The platform has developed an extensive programme to take place

around the 3rd of October in response to the commitment. The platform has been awarded funding for this programme.

Bonaire

The Executive Council of Bonaire has given the 1st of July working group the task of raising awareness about the slavery past in Bonaire. The working group has also made a number of recommendations concerning the response to the apology. The Bonaire Dialogue Group has also contributed to the report of the Advisory Committee on behalf of the island. In response to their recommendations, the government has committed to realising a (sur)name memorial to the slavery past. This commitment is part of the commitments and policy measures concerning 'knowledge and awareness', 'acknowledgement and commemoration' and 'impact and psychological processing' for which the government has made €100 million available. The Bonaire Dialogue Group is working to identify the required additional name research and is considering a variety of ideas for the design. They are also discussing the location of the memorial with the Executive Council.

The reprint of *Bonaire, een koloniale zoutgeschiedenis* (Bonaire, a colonial salt history) was recently presented to the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations. It is important that this book, and the associated teaching materials, be made available to schools in Bonaire to raise awareness of the slavery past and colonial past.

The 1st of July working group is currently working with the Bonaire Dialogue Group and the NGO platform in Bonaire to develop a broader plan in response to the apology.

St. Maarten

The Prime Minister of St. Maarten officially appointed the *Advisory Committee on Slavery, Atonement and Reparations* in February 2023. The committee consists of nine members with a variety of backgrounds and expertise in the field of education, science and spirituality, and from the legal, cultural and medical sectors. The committee's remit is to advise the government of St. Maarten about the response to the apology. This will include a public debate. The committee will begin by studying the colonial past and the slavery past within the context of St. Maarten and the impact of that past in contemporary society. The committee will then issue a report, including recommendations. The government believes it is important that St. Maarten is able to complete this process at its own tempo and wishes to work together on the response to the apology once the process is complete.

St. Eustatius

The government has made a commitment to finance a slavery monument or memorial in St. Eustatius and to support the work of the *St. Eustatius Cultural Heritage Implementation Committee* based on their financial and technical needs. Various ideas in response to both commitments have been discussed recently, including a memorial to all Africans who were enslaved and the reburial of ancestors who are buried in St. Eustatius. Representatives of descendants, civil

society organisations and the Public Entity are also developing a plan outlining the desired implementation of the commitments. This measure is one of the commitments in the government response, for which the government has reserved €100 million. The implementation of the commitments must be seen in the context of the wider process of raising awareness of the slavery and colonial past. Various discussions have been held in this regard, including in relation to the decolonisation of various aspects of society. There are various ways of raising awareness, including the further development of teaching materials on the slavery past in St. Eustatius, facilitating a public dialogue and oral history projects.

Saba

Various discussions have been held in Saba with representatives of descendants, civil society organisations and the Public Entity. These resulted in various ideas for implementing the commitments to fund a memorial and to identify opportunities and support for genealogical research for descendants. The implementation of these commitments is part of the broader efforts to raise awareness of the slavery and colonial past. These include facilitating a public dialogue, organising oral history projects, developing teaching materials on the slavery past in Saba and making the 1st of July an official public holiday on the island. All these ideas are now being developed together with the Saba Public Entity and civil society organisations.

Sylvana Simons proposed a motion during the parliamentary debate on the government response on the 25th of January, which was passed. This motion asked the government to facilitate measures to allow individuals to investigate their exact origins with DNA research by non-profit organisations, including Erasmus University. The intent of the motion aligns with the commitments that the government made to Saba on the 19th of December. Implementation of that commitment can serve as a pilot for this initiative.

Overarching topics

Several topics were repeatedly mentioned during the various discussion rounds on the islands, including the preservation, management and accessibility of cultural heritage relating to the colonial and slavery past, access to the national cultural funds on the islands, the available cultural infrastructure and museum facilities. The various ideas expressed in relation to these topics will be included in the individual plans for each island. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will also examine how this can be supported, for example through existing policy initiatives such as the Cultural Covenant or through a partnership with the National Archives and the National Library of the Netherlands in The Hague.

Suriname

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has appointed a Special Envoy for the slavery past to ensure that the process of engaging with Suriname receives the care and attention it deserves. In recent months, the Special Envoy has met with a wide range of representatives and stakeholders in Suriname in close collaboration with the Dutch Embassy in Paramaribo. The Special Envoy for the slavery past has visited Suriname three times since her appointment in March. These meetings

made it clear that the subject is highly emotive and that there are a variety of perspectives, as is the case in the Kingdom.

Explicit attention was paid to the perspectives of the Indigenous Community and the Maroon Community during these discussions, these perspectives, will be explicitly included in the process initiated in response to the apology. During discussions with these communities, it became clear that additional steps must be taken towards healing, that rituals are important and that time is needed. The participants also asked that attention be paid to the disadvantaged position of these communities.

In the interests of maintaining good bilateral relations, the Special Envoy for the Slavery Past also regularly meets with the Surinamese government. This includes meetings with the recently appointed National Co-ordinator, the former minister Silvano Tjong-Ahin, to discuss how the Surinamese government wishes to see the desired integrated and holistic approach take shape and how the Netherlands can contribute to this.

There are many different interest groups in Suriname. The dialogue in Suriname will be continued in the coming months so that as many different perspectives as possible can be heard and as many representatives as possible can be spoken to. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has been invited by the government of Suriname to attend the commemoration in Suriname on the 1st of July on behalf of the government of the Netherlands.

Although her priority is the dialogue in and with Suriname, the Special Envoy for the Slavery Past has also held discussions in the Netherlands in the interests of the wider context and the bonds between the Dutch and Surinamese societies.

Education

The Minister for Primary and Secondary Education will lead the process of identifying the core objectives for primary education and the early years of secondary education for subjects including citizenship, history and the colonial past. This will start as soon as possible. The tasks assigned to those formulating the core objectives explicitly include the instruction that, wherever relevant, proposals must be included to firmly anchor racism, discrimination, anti-Semitism, the colonial past and the history of migration within the curriculum. In line with the core objectives for primary education and the early years of secondary education, exam programmes that will be revised at a later date when revising the entire curriculum are in use in the final years of secondary education. Teachers and other education professionals will be recruited before the summer and will start working after the summer. The objective is to publish the draft core objectives around the summer of 2024.

One of the ambitions in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science's anti-discrimination and anti-racism agenda is that the Ministry should aim for an inclusive range across all its domains. To achieve this, it is important to teach history in its broadest sense, with attention for discrimination, racism, exclusion, inclusion and equality. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is exploring

how this can be put into practice for the slavery past and other areas. The motion proposed by Sylvana Simons stating that the stories of anti-colonial resistance fighters and heroes of the resistance should be made an integral part of education will certainly be included in this process.⁷ The government will inform the House about the implementation of this motion no later than the autumn of 2023.

The government is also committed to increasing the social safety of pupils and students. Tackling discrimination and racism is an important part of this.

Finally, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science is working to implement the motion proposed by Salima Belhaj and others.⁸ This motion asked the government to work together with Suriname to identify how the education policy for young people in Suriname who wish to study in the Netherlands can be adapted to better serve the needs of young people who lack the required financial resources.

Research is ongoing into the experiences of Surinamese students in the Netherlands, how many there are and the greatest barriers they face in partnership with the SUConnect.nl organisation and Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. The organisation also uses its own network to help Suriname students who are looking for an internship or job in Suriname or the Netherlands. Based on the results of the study by SUConnect, for which the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science awarded a subsidy, the organisation can discuss with educational institutions how obstacles that lead to lower study success rates can be eliminated.

Finally, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the Minister for Primary and Secondary Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Surinamese Minister of Education, Culture and Science on the 13th of June. This states how the education systems of the two countries will work together during the coming two years and their priorities during this period. The Memorandum contains four topics that will be developed in detail using a common education agenda. The topics are 1) reinforcing legislation and the legal framework for education in Suriname, 2) improving policy and institutional capacity in Suriname, 3) improving primary education in Suriname and 4) better alignment with the labour market and retaining (academic) talent in Suriname. The Netherlands will help to improve the quality of the education system in Suriname with the knowledge and skills we have in areas where Suriname seeks assistance. The objective is to ensure that the educational collaboration creates opportunities for young people in Suriname to develop their talents, use their knowledge and skills in their own country and to boost the motivation of teachers in their own country. We will determine the specific actions required to achieve these goals in partnership with Suriname.

Scheme for free name changes

The Ministry of Justice and Security is currently developing a temporary scheme to allow descendants of enslaved people to change their names without charge. This may lead to the launch of a permanent scheme. While further developing this

⁷ Parliamentary Papers, 2022-2023 Session, 36200 VIII, no. 142.

⁸ Motion proposed by Salima Belhaj 36284-5.

scheme, a meeting was held with a number of interest groups on the 12th of April. The participants agreed to meet regularly to discuss the progress of the scheme, both before and after it comes into effect. This shared commitment will allow the needs of descendants to be evaluated and any obstacles due to policy/implementation to be discussed. Any problems encountered once the scheme comes into effect can also be discussed.

The temporary scheme will, in principle, remain in effect for a period of five years. The intention is that the scheme will be evaluated after a period of three years and that a decision will then be made about a permanent scheme. This measure is one of the commitments in the government response and will be funded from the €100 million that the government has reserved for these commitments. As part of this scheme, a new reason will be added to the Surname Change Decree (*Besluit Geslachtsnaamswijziging*) for names related to the slavery past. The scheme is based on three principles, namely that the scheme:

- a) should be as straightforward as possible for applicants – there should be no heavy burden of proof and no expert statement regarding the psychological distress experienced etc. should be required.
- b) should minimise distinctions based on the origin of names. People with their roots in former colonies where very incomplete name records were kept should not, in principle, bear a heavier burden of proof than those with their roots in former colonies where name records were more extensive.
- c) can be implemented effectively by the Ministry of Justice and Security's screening authority (*Dienst Justis*). This will involve a feasibility study before the scheme is launched.

The intention is to launch the scheme during the Memorial Year. The decree is expected to be published in the Official Gazette (*Staatsblad*) in early 2024 and to come into effect shortly after.

The scheme will remove various barriers currently experienced by people using the current basis for requesting a change of name due to the slavery past. The first barrier to be removed is the financial cost of €835 associated with a standard name change request. Descendants of enslaved people will be entitled to request a change of name without charge.

The second barrier to be removed is the mandatory evidence of serious physical or mental harm from an authorised psychologist. The scheme to allow names to be changed without charge for descendants of enslaved people will allow applicants to sign a declaration confirming that their name is related to the slavery past.

The requirement to choose a Dutch-sounding surname will also be abolished.

Slavery Past Memorial Year

As you may have read in the government response, community initiatives within and beyond the Kingdom are being supported by the government during the Slavery Past Memorial Year. At the end of last year, two subsidy schemes of €1 million each have been established for across the entire Kingdom by the Mondriaan Fund and the Culture Participation Fund. An international scheme of

€0.8 million that is still in development for initiatives in countries with a connection to the Dutch slavery past has been established as well. It became apparent early this year that there is a great deal of interest in organising cultural, community and educational activities at the Mondriaan Fund and Culture Participation Fund.

Because the government recognises the importance of this broad social movement and supports the establishment of as many good, high-impact initiatives as possible, it has decided to support the schemes for the Memorial Year with a one-off increase of €5.3 million.

This amount will be used for the following purposes:

1. The Mondriaan Fund scheme will be increased by €2 million. This will allow more projects to be funded.
2. The Culture Participation Fund scheme will be increased by €2 million. A percentage of this will be reserved for Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten. Additional measures to improve accessibility will also be implemented in the European Netherlands and the Caribbean region of the Kingdom.
3. The amount available for the international scheme will be increased to €1.6 million. How these funds will be made available is currently being determined.

This will allow more projects to be realised during the Memorial Year. It is important to note that these funds will be allocated in the Spring Memorandum (*voorjaarsnota*). This means they will not affect the €200 million fund.

National Museum of Slavery

A National Museum of Slavery will be realised in Amsterdam. Current and future generations will be able to learn about our colonial and slavery past in this museum. The museum will be based around the transatlantic slave trade and will also cover Indian Ocean slavery. The museum will offer descendants of enslaved people a space for commemoration and contemplation. The museum will develop, promote, gather and exhibit knowledge about our colonial and slavery past. The museum will also foster dialogue about our shared past and its impact on the present.

The National Museum of Slavery will be a Kingdom-wide museum, will tell the story of the entire Kingdom and will work with people and organisations from across the Kingdom. The process of establishing the museum began in 2017 under instruction from the Municipality of Amsterdam. The government of the Netherlands has been involved with the establishment and financing of the museum since 2019.

In the present phase, the Municipality of Amsterdam has commissioned three planners to develop a business plan for the museum, a temporary programming proposal and a location proposal. The planners have been asked to submit these results to the Deputy Mayor for Culture at the Municipality of Amsterdam by the end of 2023. The Executive Council will then make a decision. The Ministry of

Education, Culture and Science is closely involved with this decision-making process.

The proposal is partly the result of a participation programme organised throughout the Kingdom, which included a visit by the planners to the six islands and Suriname in January 2023.

It is important to note that the contribution towards establishing the museum has been funded from the cultural budget of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, which means the €200 million fund will not be affected.

Local impact of the National Museum of Slavery

The government is committed to ensuring that establishment of the Museum of Slavery will also have a local impact. In the Caribbean region, this will take the form of museum facilities, heritage and archives, which will be organised parallel with the establishment of the Museum of Slavery. The resources needed to realise these facilities are subject to discussion but will not come from the budget for the Museum of Slavery in Amsterdam. The government will continue discussions with the islands about the structure of this programme in the coming period because we wish to meet the needs of the Caribbean region as much as possible and to ensure that these are not subordinate to the museum in the European Netherlands.

The motion proposed by Renske Leijten on the responsibility for preserving material and immaterial heritage of the slavery and colonial past in the former colonial areas and the motion proposed by Jesse Klaver on improving museum facilities in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and Suriname during the debate on the government response on the 25th of January were both passed.⁹ As stated above, the content of both motions and specific themes per island will form an integral part of the discussions on the process initiated in response to the apology.

Equal opportunities and anti-discrimination and anti-racism policy

In the government response issued on the 19th of December, we also indicated that the government intends to intensify the fight against discrimination and racism. The measures we will implement to achieve this include the national programme against discrimination and racism, developed under the leadership of the Anti-discrimination and Anti-racism Co-ordinator. The programme was published in September 2022¹⁰ and will be updated in November 2023. The programme is relevant to all parts of society, because we are all responsible for tackling discrimination: citizens, employers, businesses, civil society organisations and the government itself.

To tackle discrimination in the labour market, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is working on various activities to reduce discrimination in recruitment and selection and on the work floor, and to promote equal opportunities through the 2022-2025 Labour Market Discrimination Action Plan

⁹ Motion proposed by Renske Leijten 36284-20 and motion proposed by Jesse Klaver 36284-13.

¹⁰ [National Anti-discrimination and Anti-racism Programme 2022 | Report | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

and the Work Agenda for Improving Inclusion in the Labour Market. The *Monitoring Equal Opportunities in Recruitment and Selection* proposal for a new law is one of these measures. This proposal for a new law, which was recently passed by your House, obliges employers to use recruitment and selection procedures that focus on preventing discrimination. We are also working to support employers by, for example, opening the Diversity at Work help desk, developing an e-learning programme focused on promoting objective recruitment and selection and setting up communities of practice as well as sectoral and regional networks of employers' organisations.

Besides fighting discrimination in the labour market, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is specifically focusing on fighting discrimination based on origin, skin colour and religion, including anti-Black racism. For example, research has been carried out into backgrounds, causes and trigger factors for persons of African origin that may lead to discrimination, as well as research into how to discuss discrimination within organisations. These studies will provide tools to help prevent anti-Black discrimination.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is tackling discrimination in internship placements in secondary, further and higher education with the 2023-2027 MBO (Secondary Vocational Education) internship pact and the manifesto against internship discrimination in higher education. This includes all forms of unequal treatment, discrimination and exclusion due to (personal) characteristics.

Anti-discrimination agencies

The government will also allocate funding for reforming and expanding the anti-discrimination agencies. The government will allocate €2.5 million annually for these agencies as part of the spring decision-making process, which means these funds will not affect the €200 million for projects related to the slavery past.

Reinforcing the anti-discrimination agencies is an important part of the process of intensifying anti-discrimination and anti-racism policy. People who believe they are the victims of discrimination can report this to these agencies and can also seek advice and support. This is an important element of the fight against discrimination. At present, not all anti-discrimination agencies meet the required standards. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations commissioned the Berenschot research agency to identify potential scenarios to help the anti-discrimination agencies improve in these areas. The results of the study were sent to your House on the 31st of March 2023.¹¹^[1]^[1]

We recognise the importance of robust, qualified and versatile anti-discrimination agencies that, besides advice and support, also offer a listening ear, can work together with the police and the Public Prosecution Service in regional consultations on discrimination, can serve as consultation partners for municipalities, civil society organisations and businesses in their regions, and can also offer training and advice. To achieve this, the anti-discrimination agencies must be given responsibility for prevention and their funding must be structured in an alternative manner. The results of the Berenschot report will be used as the

^[1] [Letter to Parliament concerning the report on the Structure, remit and financing of anti-discrimination agencies | Parliamentary Paper | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

starting point for the process of creating a situation where anti-discrimination agencies can function as a central organisation in the local and regional fight against discrimination. All relevant parties will be involved in this process.

A long-term plan will be needed in order to achieve this objective. In the short term, it is important to reinforce the anti-discrimination agencies as much as possible. To this end, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations will immediately begin expanding the remit of the anti-discrimination agencies to include prevention work. The government has assigned additional resources to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in the Spring Memorandum. These funds are separate from the €200 million for projects related to the slavery past and will be allocated to municipalities through specific funding. In addition, the anti-discrimination agencies that are part of the Discriminatie.nl sectoral association will begin working under a common name from the 1st of January. Because this name change represents a major step towards improving the visibility of the anti-discrimination agencies, an advertising campaign will be launched to raise awareness about the change.

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations will inform your House about the measures for reinforcing the anti-discrimination agencies in greater detail in September.

Introduction of equal treatment legislation in Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba
The Constitution, including article 1, applies throughout the jurisdiction of the Netherlands. This includes the Public Entities of the Netherlands. Article 1 of the Constitution serves as the basis for a number of equal treatment acts that prohibit discrimination on the grounds specified in these acts. These were not previously applicable in the Caribbean region of the Netherlands. In the letter sent to your House on the 23rd of January 2023, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations committed to initiating the legislative process required to ensure that the existing equal treatment legislation also applies to the Caribbean part of the Netherlands.¹² As mentioned, this proposal will ensure that equal treatment acts will apply in their entirety in Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (the BES islands).

However, legislation alone is not enough to effectively prevent and fight discrimination. As such, a new anti-discrimination agency will also be launched to allow complaints to be reported without charge and to give help and advice in cases of discrimination. The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights will also be given responsibility for ruling on cases on the three islands. The bill establishing the Anti-discrimination on the BES Islands Act was published for (internet) consultation on the 1st of June 2023.¹³ The consultation is open until the 1st of August 2023.

The specific details of the institutional aspects of the proposal (the structure of the anti-discrimination agency and the authority of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights to rule on cases) are currently being developed. This is taking place

¹² Parliamentary Papers II 2022/23, 36 200 IV, J.

¹³ www.internetconsultatie.nl/gelijkebehandeling/b1

in consultation with the Ministry of Justice and Security, as the intention is that the anti-discrimination agency will be part of a new primary legal assistance service (legal clinic) on the BES islands. The idea is that a 'one-stop shop' should be established for primary legal assistance, including in cases of discrimination. The Institute, Discriminatie.nl and the Ministry of Justice and Security will, of course, be involved with the preparations, as will the public entities themselves as part of the consultation.

The practical preparations required to establish the legal assistance service and to extend the authority of the Institute will be handled during the parliamentary debate on the proposal for a new law, which is expected to take place during 2024. The financial resources that the aforementioned institutions will require from 2024 were allocated in the Spring Memorandum and will thus not affect the €200 million for projects related to the slavery past.

In conclusion

As we present this letter to your House, we have almost reached the grand opening of the Slavery Past Memorial Year. During the coming year, we will contemplate the past and look ahead as we establish the conditions for a shared future. We note that there is a great deal of interest in the activities, meetings and lectures in society and across the entire country. This is an important part of ensuring that our shared past truly becomes a story that we can all accept as our own.

With the process that we have initiated and the progress we are making towards honouring the commitments in the government response, we aim to work with descendants and other parties towards ensuring that the slavery past continues to receive greater attention and to tackle the impact of that past. This demands effort on the part of the government, but also a broader approach in raising awareness, healing and psychological processing that everyone in our society can play a part in. The government wishes to make an important contribution to that process with the steps we are now taking.

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations,

Hanke Bruins Slot

The Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Wopke Hoekstra

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science,

Robbert Dijkgraaf

The Minister of Social Affairs and Employment,

C.E.G. van Gennip

The Minister for Legal Protection,

F.M. Weerwind

The State Secretary for Kingdom Relations and Digitalisation,

Alexandra C.van Huffelen

The State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport,

Maarten van Ooijen

The State Secretary for Culture and Media,

Gunay Uslu