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8 September 2023

In the previous newsletter we already looked back on the commemoration of the slavery past, with the King's speech in the Oosterpark marking the start of the Slavery Past Memorial Year. A moving and historic moment, in which the King repeated the government's earlier apology and asked for forgiveness. The previous newsletter appeared when the summer was about to start.

However, the next week saw the collapse of the government. Understandably, people are wondering how this will affect the activities relating to the slavery past dossier. The slavery past of the Netherlands, as well as its aftermath, is of major public concern and also has a major impact. As a result, the content of the process will therefore continue unabated even under the outgoing government. The elaboration of the programme will carry on and the consultations for that purpose, such as ministerial steering groups, will not cease. The next meeting between the cabinet members involved and direct stakeholders has been scheduled for December, at which progress and follow-up will be discussed. We will subsequently send another progress report to the House of Representatives. At this stage, we cannot yet predict what course the new government will set out in the new coalition agreement.

In the past summer months, work continued on laying the necessary foundations for further steps in the implementation of the Slavery Past Programme.

In addition to the collapse of the government, there has also been a development within the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK). Minister Hanke Bruins Slot was nominated on the 4th of September for the post of caretaker Foreign Affairs Minister, which she has meanwhile assumed. She succeeds Wopke Hoekstra, who has been nominated as the new Dutch EU Commissioner in Brussels. Minister Hugo de Jonge will take over the duties of Hanke Bruins Slot as Minister of BZK. Following the departure of Minister Hanke Bruins Slot, State Secretary Alexandra van Huffelen will become the coordinating official for giving follow-up to the apologies for the slavery past. In recent weeks, the State Secretary intensively discussed the Slavery Past Programme with all the parties involved, both on the Caribbean islands and in the Netherlands. She will take this knowledge and experience on board in her role as coordinating official. This important dossier on the slavery past will therefore remain in the spotlight and the change of government will not affect the content of the programme. The Minister of BZK will retain his commitment and responsibility to this dossier under his own portfolio, which includes the fight against racism and discrimination.

In addition to these developments, this fifth newsletter will set out the timetable for the Slavery Past Programme in the next few months. Although this information was shared earlier in the progress letter to the House of Representatives of the 23rd of June 2023, this summary will remind us of the main priorities in the forthcoming period.

The ongoing dialogue with the communities and society as a whole is again a key element. By now, we have engaged an agency which will help us organise and intensify these important consultations. Initially, the discussions will be aimed at giving substance to the Memorial Committee and the Memorial Fund.

In this newsletter, we will introduce the people involved in this process.

We will also look back on the presentation of the essay bundle entitled *Doorwerkingen van het slavernijverleden* ('Reverberations of the slavery past') commissioned by the State Committee against Discrimination and Racism, and on the ceremony marking the Day of the Freedom Struggle (*Dia di Lucha pa Libertat*).



Look ahead

From the autumn of 2023 to the spring of 2024, work will be carried out on:

1. The scheme for community initiatives (€100 million available on a one-off basis for the entire Kingdom and Surinam);
2. The Memorial Committee (€8 million structurally available for the entire Kingdom);
3. The policy reinforcements (€100 million available on a one-off basis for the entire Kingdom and Surinam).

The timetable in this context is as follows:

October 2023

Caribbean part of the Kingdom

1st and 2nd of October: Catshuis session for the Caribbean. A 'Caribbean Catshuis session' will be organised in collaboration with various stakeholders in the Caribbean. These two days, which will be attended by the State Secretary for Kingdom Relations and Digitalisation, will revolve around the follow-up given to the apology of the 19th of December 2022, whereby we will look back on the recent period as well as look ahead together. Discussions will focus on the substantive parameters for the Memorial Committee, the scheme for community initiatives and the policy reinforcements. The invitations to this meeting have been sent by now.

European Netherlands

Start of dialogue sessions in European Netherlands: the series of six dialogue sessions will begin in the Netherlands. This involves discussions held at various locations in the Netherlands in order to identify parameters for the Memorial Committee and the scheme for community initiatives.

November 2023

Caribbean part of the Kingdom

Continuation of discussions in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom.

European Netherlands

Continuation of the dialogue sessions in the European Netherlands in order to identify parameters for the Memorial Committee, the scheme for community initiatives and the policy reinforcements.

December 2023

European Netherlands

Catshuis session for the European Netherlands, giving follow-up to the session of June 2023 in the Provincial Government Building. At this session, we will share and assess the conclusions of the dialogue sessions with the earlier group of guests (direct stakeholders in the programme and descendants).

Progress letter to the House of Representatives: conclusions of the dialogue sessions and outline of the further process. In that process, we will be mindful of the promise that the scheme for community initiatives will be in place by the spring of 2024. The Memorial Committee will be in place by the summer of 2024.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will obviously be involved in the above elaborations as well. They will customise the procedure for Surinam and the dialogue in that country. These results will also be taken into account in the conclusions and red lines.

Dialogue Sessions on Slavery Past

This autumn, we will organise six to eight dialogue sessions all over the country. In order to find out what the Slavery Past Memorial Committee should look like,

and what shape the (€100 million) scheme for community initiatives should take.

It is essential that the greatest possible number of people and organisations can take part in this process. This is why we asked a specialised and independent agency to organise these various dialogue sessions. Several agencies were asked to submit a quotation for this contract, after which we applied a number of selection criteria to choose an agency. The decisive elements for this choice were the way in which the agency put the team together and its experience in setting up dialogues that have a major social impact.

The agency we selected is called TrueTalk. The core team they will deploy for this assignment consists of eight persons with different backgrounds:

- Bart van de Ven
- Mercedes de Miranda
- Kenneth Erselina
- Gilberto Morishaw
- Shantie Singh
- Rebecca Streng
- Laura Kahnt

This week, TrueTalk started holding exploratory discussions with direct stakeholders. They are mapping out what descendants and other stakeholders find important when organising the dialogue sessions. This includes questions such as: How can we engage as many people as possible in dialogue? What subjects do we want to address? At what locations will we do this, and how do we make participation in these discussions as accessible as possible for everyone? If you have any ideas or questions in this regard, we would love to hear from you. Please send us an email on dialogsessies@truetalk.nl.

Essay bundle on reverberations of slavery past

On 3 July 2023, the State Committee against Discrimination and Racism presented the Speaker of the House of Representatives with an essay bundle it had commissioned. The State Commission had asked ten academics to write an essay about the extent and manner in which the transatlantic slavery past can still have an impact. The aim was to gain a better understanding of these potential reverberations and thus have greater insight into the past as the cause of present issues.

The bundle is available free of charge and can be downloaded via a link on our website:

<https://www.staatscommissietegendiscriminatieenracisme.nl/onderzoek/publicaties/publicaties/2023/07/03/index>



Celebration of the Day of the Freedom Struggle

On Thursday 17 August, the then Minister of BZK, Hanke Bruins Slot, attended the Tula lecture in the Mauritshuis in The Hague. This lecture is organised annually by the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy (NiNsee).

The enslaved Tula rose up against slavery on 17 August 1795, and paid for his revolt with his life. In 2010, he was already proclaimed a national hero on Curaçao. In line with the government's promises after the apology of 19 December 2022, Tula will be rehabilitated on 3 October 2023.

The speaker that evening was Suzy Römer, a former Minister on Curaçao and two-times President of the erstwhile Netherlands Antilles. Ms Römer spoke about the political structure of Curaçao and the other islands and the reverberations of the slavery past on these islands. She also explained Tula's history and his impact on the growing revolt against slavery after his death. Her lecture, entitled "*Tula: De onsterfelijke rebel*" ('Tula: The immortal rebel'), was a powerful call to continue Tula's legacy in the present age. During the subsequent round of questions, an interesting debate arose about the involvement of young people in fighting the reverberations of the slavery past. This is a subject that still needs careful consideration.

Also on 17 August, Roald Lapperre, the Director-General for Kingdom Relations at the Ministry of BZK, attended the celebration of the Day of the Freedom Struggle (*Dia di Lucha pa Libertat*) on Curaçao. On this occasion, various cultural expressions were staged to illustrate Tula's revolt.

Conclusion

If there is any particular subject which you would like to see addressed in this newsletter or which you would like to discuss with us, please let us know. You can contact us via: PostbusProgrammaSlavernijverleden@minbzk.nl