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RE Progress slavery past

Our reference
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Introduction

This Cabinet is giving further substance to the steps that have been taken since the apologies for the slavery past in order to strengthen awareness, recognition and attention for the impact of the slavery past. With this letter, I inform the Honourable House of the progress of these efforts, and I thereby honour the commitment made to the Honourable House. I also inform you of the progress of the follow-up processes in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and Suriname. I do so also on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, the State Secretary for Education and Emancipation and the State Secretary for Kingdom Relations and Effective Government.

Progress policy intensifications

Knowledge of our shared history in primary and secondary education

The goal of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) was for all school pupils to have more and broader knowledge of the shared history. Many steps have been taken to this end. In 2025, the definitive draft core objectives for the learning area People and Society were delivered. These provide, more specifically than the current core objectives, that pupils must acquire knowledge of the colonial and slavery past and its enduring impact. These core objectives are currently being laid down in laws and regulations and are expected to enter into force on 1 August 2027. In addition, in 2025 contracts were awarded for the development of a guide on the colonial and slavery past, and for the training of guest speakers to give guest lessons. The guide is expected to be delivered at the end of this year. Furthermore, this year a contract is awarded for making source material accessible. The aim of this is to support teachers and developers of teaching methods in their uncertainty about how to conduct the broad discussion about the slavery past in the classroom. The research report on the stories of anti-colonial freedom fighters and resistance heroes in primary and secondary education in the European Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom has also been delivered. This gives effect to the Simons motion[1]. The research is enclosed with this letter. We are examining whether the recommendations can be considered in future policy.

[1] Parliamentary Papers, Parliamentary Year 2022-2023, 36200 VIII, no.142.

Multi-annual research and international knowledge sharing

National Research Agenda Research Programme

The Ministry of OCW and the Dutch Research Council (NWO) are investing in research into the often lesser-known consequences of the Netherlands' colonial history of slavery through a thematic programme within the National Research Agenda. Following a global call in 2025 to civil society and research parties, NWO supported consortium formation by organising a Sandpit workshop. In this workshop, the selected participants jointly developed a research proposal on site. In April 2026, funding was awarded to one project that will stimulate scientific and applied research on this theme in the coming years. The NWA project *Slavery past present: Dutch slavery and colonialism and their present-day impact* examines the continuing effects of slavery and colonialism and explores possibilities for redress from the perspectives of descendants of enslaved people and Indigenous communities in and from Suriname, the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, South Africa, Indonesia and the European Netherlands.

Practice-oriented Slavery Past Research Programme

Together with the National Taskforce for Applied Research SIA, part of the Dutch Research Council, and descendants of those reduced to slaves, a research subsidy of €1.4 million is being developed. From 2027 on, the scheme will enable educational institutions to conduct, in an accessible manner, practice-oriented research into issues relating to the slavery past and its enduring impact.

International knowledge cooperation Dutch slavery past

At the request of OCW, the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) is working with local coordinators in Suriname, South Africa and Indonesia on research into the Dutch slavery past and its enduring impact. Local researchers and the research needs of these countries are a central focus. The programme has a phased roll-out per country. In 2025, the KITLV entered into a cooperation agreement with the Anton de Kom University of Suriname for the duration of the programme. OCW has made €924.000 available up to and including 2027. Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten, supported by OCW, are working together on the Shared Chair Impact Slavery Past.

The research programme is housed at the educational institutions of the Caribbean Higher Education Council of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (CHECK). Following the preparation in 2024, the implementation phase runs up to and including 31 December 2027. The chair examines the social, cultural, educational and intergenerational enduring impact of the slavery past.

Insight into impact on health and well-being

The Ministry of VWS is working to raise awareness of and counter the impact of the slavery past on care and welfare. The research 'Health Effects of Slavery' by Dr Alana Helberg-Proctor of the University of Amsterdam, shows that the slavery

past has an impact on the mental and physical health of descendants of those reduced to slaves and on healthcare. The report was shared with the Honourable House on 13 February 2026[2]. In response, VWS, together with parties in the care and welfare domain and descendants of those reduced to slaves, develops concrete interventions[3]. In March 2026, a think tank was launched with descendants of those reduced to slaves, who have expertise in various relevant fields.

National Slavery Museum, knowledge centre and heritage
The National Slavery Museum contributes to the social recovery and to countering the enduring impact of the slavery past. The Minister of Education, Culture and Science has informed the Honourable House about the progress[4]. Investment is also being made in the preservation and development of museums and archives, and the conservation of cultural heritage. On 26 November 2025, His Majesty the King opened the Suriname Museum, making new sources and stories about the various communities accessible to a broad public. On 22 November 2025, the Slavery Past Awareness sub-scheme of the Mondriaan Fund was published in the Government Gazette. This enables institutions, individual artists and independent curators in the European Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom to implement plans that contribute to awareness. In other countries of origin, the International Cultural Policy can support such artistic expressions.

Protection against Discrimination on the BES Act
In 2023, the government at the time decided to extend equal treatment legislation to the BES islands. On 1 January 2026, the Protection against Discrimination Act entered into force on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius (Bulletin of Acts and Decrees 2025, 389). This Act introduces equal treatment legislation and an anti-discrimination facility. Residents can go to Lokèt Hurídiko on Bonaire and the Legal Desk on St. Eustatius and Saba for free information, advice and support in relation to discrimination and legal questions. The Netherlands Institute of Human Rights will be given the task of issuing opinions on the islands, in accordance with the 2023 decision. Citizens can request the Institute to assess whether there is discrimination in their situation.

Public communication anti-discrimination facilities
As part of the system review of the anti-discrimination facilities, the Cabinet is working on broad public communication efforts to make it easier to report discrimination. Part of this is a campaign with media deployment, which is currently being developed. The campaign helps people to find Discriminatie.nl, so that people who experience discrimination receive appropriate support and discriminatory behaviour can be tackled more effectively. In this regard, BZK is working with Discriminatie.nl, the national association of anti-discrimination facilities, and partners who represent different target groups.

[2] Parliamentary Papers, Parliamentary Year 2025/2026, 36 284, no. 62.
[3] Parliamentary Papers II, 2024/25, 36284, no. 39.
[4] https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/582932ba-f501-4c7f-922f-a1067fd553b4/

More insight into the impact of the slavery past
In December 2024, the Verwey-Jonker Institute and Movisie, commissioned by SZW, launched a knowledge synthesis in equal cooperation with the initiators of the *Zwart Manifest*. This maps out the enduring impact of the trans-Atlantic colonial and slavery past on contemporary racism and discrimination in various domains of Dutch society. The knowledge synthesis consists of a research report[5] (commissioned by SZW) and a teachers' guide[6] (supported in part by SZW). Both of which were delivered in September 2026. The guide developed by Nederland Wordt Beter offers teachers tools to work in the classroom on recognising and countering institutional and other forms of racism, and making it open to discussion.

A broadly supported social norm against racism and discrimination
At the end of July, Tabula Rasa, commissioned by SZW and BZK, issued an opinion on the feasibility of having social and private organisations propagate a social norm against racism and discrimination. By the end of this year, an organisational consultancy assignment will be commissioned to advise on the practical implementation of the recommendations. Based on this, the Cabinet will decide on the next steps.

Supporting municipalities in recognition and awareness
The Ministry of SZW has expanded and continued the Slavery Past Learning Network for municipalities, led by Radar Advies. Participating municipalities work on recognising, acknowledging and commemorating the slavery past, exchange experiences and learn from academic and civil society experts. During the first phase, various thematic meetings were organised about the history and the role of the Netherlands, the impact on anti-Black racism, cooperation with civil society organisations, contested heritage, dialogue and recovery. This resulted in knowledge exchange, concrete knowledge products[7] and cooperation between municipalities. The knowledge products are also available to municipalities that are not participating in the network. Various municipalities have used a decentralisation grant to translate this knowledge into concrete local activities. In a more in-depth follow-up, the first group receives support in the development of municipal policy on countering the enduring impact of the slavery past. In addition, a new group started in May 2026.

Free name change
Since 1 July 2024, the temporary scheme for a free name change for descendants of those reduced to slaves has been in effect in the European Netherlands. The scheme lowers financial barriers and contributes to recognition and recovery, because descendants can bring their family name into line with their history and

[5] https://www.verwey-jonker.nl/publicatie/de-doorwerking-van-het-nederlands-trans-atlantisch-slavernijverleden
[6] nederlandwordtbeter.nl/docentenhandreiking/
[7] www.rijksoverheid.nl/themas/migratie-en-reizen/discriminatie-en-racisme/slavernijverleden/plannen-kabinet-bewustwording-slavernijverleden/leernetwerk-doorwerking-slavernijverleden

identity. The scheme will be evaluated in 2027. During the committee debate of 11 June 2025, the Honourable House requested information regarding rejections. According to Justis, a total of 307 applications were submitted between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2026: 226 applications were granted, 39 applications were not taken into consideration, 4 applications were rejected and 38 applications are still in consideration. Applications are not taken into consideration if they are incomplete and the missing information is not provided within the set period, or if the applicant is not authorised to submit the request.

Free name change BES
In the letter to Parliament of 11 February 2025, completion of the implementation on Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius was expected by the end of 2026 at the latest. This has proved more complex than anticipated, partly because implementation structures in the Netherlands must be made suitable for the local context. According to the current planning, the scheme will start in mid-2027. On these islands, too, a free name change will remain possible for a period of five years, as is the case in the European Netherlands.

Action agendas Caribbean part of the Kingdom
In the summer of 2025, the local governments of Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten submitted their action agendas to BZK. Funding was subsequently allocated for their implementation. The agendas give effect to the commitments made as part of the apologies of 19 December 2022, with multi-annual projects focused on recognition, remembrance and countering the enduring impact. The implementation will continue through the third quarter of 2029. The agendas and the allocation of funding were developed in consultation with designated official representatives from the six local governments. We remain in regular contact with them regarding progress and any need for additional support. Some examples of these projects are the following. On Aruba, archive staff of the National Archives are following an archival training programme that will be completed this year. On Bonaire, the Canon of Bonaire has been launched, with topics put forward by the community. On Curaçao, the digitisation of almost 600 linear metres of colonial archival material is being initiated. On the Windward Islands, work is also underway on genealogical research into origins and the development of heritage centres.

Suriname
The dialogue about the slavery past is an important part of the relationship between the Netherlands and Suriname. A historic moment was the meeting during the state visit on 1 December 2025, at which representatives of descendants of those reduced to slaves, indigenous communities and Maroons accepted the King’s apologies and his request for forgiveness. This meeting was preceded by a *Gran Krutu* supported by the Netherlands: a consultation of traditional authorities, serving as the culmination of several *gran komparsis* and *krutus.* During these consultations, the communities concerned jointly formulated their response to the King’s apologies in 2023. The meeting during the state visit began with a ceremonial part, including attendance at a libation, followed by a dialogue with the King. This dignified and impressive meeting came about thanks

to joint efforts by the Netherlands and Suriname. In 2026, the Netherlands and Surinamese authorities are working with the communities concerned on the allocation of €66.6 million: €33.3 million for social initiatives and €33.3 million for policy intensifications at the government level. Regarding the policy intensifications, the Netherlands and Suriname are working, in good consultation, to determine the modalities for the allocation of these funds, in line with the objectives of the fund and Surname's policy priorities. The aim is to arrive at concrete allocations in the coming months.

Assignment of Nationality Agreement Suriname
On 23 June last, the Honourable House enquired about the Assignment of Nationality Agreement of 25 November 1975. A treaty between the Netherlands and Suriname that regulated the nationality aspects upon the independence of Suriname. As equal treaty parties, the Netherlands and Suriname can, at any time, discuss about its parameters and application. This treaty otherwise has no direct link with the slavery past dossier.

Progress subsidy scheme for social initiatives
On 1 July 2025, the subsidy schemes for social initiatives concerning the trans-Atlantic slavery past for the European Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom were published. They were opened on 11 August. The first application periods for categories 3 and 4, the medium-sized and large projects, are closed[8]. The remaining application periods run up to and including 2028. The great interest underlines the need for initiatives for awareness, recognition and dialogue about the trans-Atlantic slavery past and its enduring impact. It also confirms the active role of communities and social organisations in keeping alive this history and making its enduring impact visible. Furthermore, on 1 April 2026, independent Advisory Committees were set up for both schemes. They advise Policy Implementation (UvB) of SZW on medium-sized and large project applications that do not, in substance, appear to sufficiently correspond to the objectives as set out in the scheme. The prescribed interim evaluations have been initiated. The results are expected in mid-October 2026 for the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and in mid-January 2027 for the European Netherlands. The conclusions will be used to further develop and, where necessary, amend the schemes. I will inform the Honourable House in due course of the conclusions and any resulting amendments.

Subsidy scheme Suriname
On 19 November 2025, the first decision on the subsidy programme for social initiatives concerning the trans-Atlantic slavery past for Suriname was published in the Government Gazette[9]. On 29 June 2026, a supplementary decision followed, with further information on the submission of applications. The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) implements the scheme on behalf of the Minister of

[8] Parliamentary Papers II 2024/25, 36 284, no. 44

[9] Decision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of 11 November 2025, no. BZ2521269 (Subsidy Programme Social Initiatives Trans-Atlantic Slavery Past for Suriname 2026–2030), Government Gazette 2025, 39224.

Foreign Affairs[10]. The first two rounds for project applications will take place in September and October 2026[11].

Slavery Past Memorial Committee
The Slavery Past Memorial Committee has formally existed since 6 January 2025. The past year the Committee and the professional working organisation were further developed, with locations in The Hague, Curaçao and St. Eustatius. for the second consecutive year, the National Commemoration of the Slavery Past on 1 July was organised under the responsibility of the Committee, in close cooperation with NiNsee. The Committee also contributed to local and community-specific commemorations and other activities focused on the slavery past and its enduring impact, both in the European Netherlands and in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. Besides a number of staff changes, representation within the Committee has been further expanded. Open vacancies are being filled through the appointment procedure established for that purpose. Aruba has nominated a member for the first time. Discussions are held with the Republic of Suriname about possible representation within the Committee.

Looking to the future
Since the apologies, intensive work has been done to strengthen awareness, recognition and attention for the enduring impact of the slavery past. The measures from the Cabinet response form an important foundation for this. The Cabinet considers a lasting investment in knowledge, awareness and better understanding of the enduring impact to be necessary. In addition, the annual commemoration and celebration of Keti Koti on 1 July remains important for recognising and commemorating our shared history and its enduring impact. As part of its assignment, the Memorial Committee, with social partners, is currently researching the possibility of making the date of 1 July a national holiday in the Kingdom in relation to the slavery past. The House of Representatives will be informed, in the course of 2027, of the research results and the assessment by the Cabinet. Finally, on 10 June last, the Honourable House adopted the Bamenga et al. motion[12] on including Keti Koti in the flag instructions for buildings of the Central Government. The Honourable House will be informed of the progress in the spring of 2027.

In conclusion
The results show that hard work has been done in various fields to make our shared history and its significance for the present visible. The Cabinet remains committed to the careful implementation of the measures that have been initiated

[10] This gives effect to the Van Baarle motion 20361, no. 229 on the appointment of an implementing body for social initiatives in Suriname.
[11] Decision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of 22 June 2026, no. BZ2629274 (Subsidy Programme Social Initiatives Trans-Atlantic Slavery Past for Suriname 2026–2030), Government Gazette 2026, 22907.
[12] Parliamentary Papers II 2025/26, 30 950, no. 549, motion by Members Bamenga, Ceder and Van Baarle on including Keti Koti in the flag instructions for buildings of the Central Government.

DG Public Administration & Democratic Rule of Law
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and to further increasing social awareness of the colonial past and the slavery past and its impact on the present. In this way, we are giving concrete, step-by-step substance to the responsibility that the government has assumed, together with the communities and other parties involved.

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations,

Pieter Heerma