



**Department of Democracy  
and Governance**

Ministry of the Interior and  
Kingdom Relations

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# circulaire

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

On October 21, 2020, the members of the island council will be elected in public body Sint Eustatius. The measures aimed to keep the coronavirus from spreading have consequences for this election. In this circular, you will read what measures must be taken when preparing for and organizing the election in order to make it safe, from a health perspective, for voters to vote in the polling stations and for electoral committee members to do their work there.

## **2. 1.5 METERS APART IN THE POLLING STATION**

Voters and electoral committee members must keep 1.5 meters apart in the polling stations. In this context, the following applies to the layout of polling stations:

- Organize the polling station in such a way that electoral committee members are able to strictly keep 1.5 meters apart from one another.
  - Place tables and chairs for electoral committee members in such a way that they are able to strictly keep 1.5 meters apart from one another.
  - Place a physical (plastic) barrier (cough guard) in front of the electoral committee members. The guards will serve to prevent droplet infection, provided that the guards are properly positioned and voters do not appear above the guard.
- Organize the polling station in such a way that voters are able to strictly keep 1.5 meters apart from one another.
  - Before polling day, determine the number of persons – electoral committee members, voters who come to vote and voters who may wish to observe the course of events – that can be allowed in the polling station at the same time while keeping 1.5 meters apart.
  - Create fixed walking routes in the polling station and mark them clearly. Designate part of the polling station for voters who wish to observe the voting process and the counting of the votes.
  - Structure the walking routes in such a way that voters are able to pass one another at a distance of 1.5 meters in the various directions. One-way traffic is another option. Use different entrances and exits if possible.
  - Mark the distance of 1.5 meters for the queue waiting in front of the entrance to the polling station.
  - Ensure a smooth flow of people. Prevent people from grouping together, for example by keeping the doors of the polling station open.
  - Ensure that the walking routes for voters in the building where the polling station is located do not interfere with any other users of the building or any other people present in the building. Make arrangements on this with the manager/owner of the building where the polling station is located.

### **3. VENTILATION**

Polling stations must be ventilated. Ventilation refers to both the extraction of dirty air and the supply of fresh air from outside. Consequently, this does not refer to the regular opening of doors and windows – that is airing. An indoor area may be ventilated by leaving windows slightly open, by using mechanical ventilation systems or by opening trickle vents above the windows. A flow of air from one person to another in any area should be avoided. If there are any doubts as to whether the ventilation system present is adequate, advice should be obtained from an independent expert. You may want to discuss with the expert what options are available for properly ventilating the polling station. If possible, regularly air for about 10 to 15 minutes by opening windows and doors opposite each other on polling day. More information is available at <https://lci.rivm.nl/ventilatie-en-covid-19>.

### **4. ACCESS TO THE POLLING STATION**

Given the need to keep 1.5 meters apart in the polling station, an electoral committee member must be present at the entrance to the polling station to ensure that the number of voters in the polling station at any time does not exceed the limit. Where necessary, this electoral committee member will ask voters to wait outside the polling station. People queuing must also keep 1.5 meters apart in compliance with the generally applicable COVID-19 measures (<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/coronavirus-covid-19/nederlandse-maatregelen-tegen-het-coronavirus/>).

#### *Hygiene in the polling station*

- Before entering the polling station and when leaving the polling station, voters must be able to disinfect their hands using hand sanitizer permitted for COVID-19. More information about permitted disinfectants is available at <https://www.ctgb.nl/onderwerpen/coronavirus---desinfectie/vraag-en-antwoord/op-letten-bij-handdesinfectie>. The electoral committee member at the entrance to the polling station will see to it that voters adhere to this measure.
- Sufficient hand sanitizer must be available to electoral committee members and tellers to ensure that they will be able to disinfect their hands throughout the session (voting and counting).
- Electoral committee members verifying the voting passes, written authorizations and identity documents of voters must wear disposable gloves. A regular change of gloves and hand hygiene in between are recommended. If the gloves are damaged, new gloves must be put on immediately.
- The pencils that voters use to complete ballot papers, the polling booths and any other hand contact points that voters may touch in the polling station (such as doorknobs, etc.) must be cleaned at least once every thirty minutes. This may be done using hot water and all-purpose cleaner or ready-to-use disinfectant wipes. It is important that a new wipe is used for every surface. When polling booths are cleaned, it must be checked that the table is dry before another voter completes a ballot paper there. The ballot paper must not become wet; otherwise it might be damaged.

- The electoral committee member that gives out ballot papers will also give every voter a red pencil for completing the ballot paper. As a result, in contrast with regular elections, no pencils will be placed in polling booths.
- The magnifying glass available to visually impaired voters in the polling stations must be cleaned with hot water and all-purpose cleaner or with ready-to-use disinfectant wipes after every use.
- The toilet facilities used by electoral committee members must be cleaned once every four hours. This may be done using hot water and all-purpose cleaner or ready-to-use disinfectant wipes. It is important that a new wipe is used for every surface.
- If any electoral committee members are changed during voting and/or counting, the table, arms of the chairs, the guard and other hand contact points must be cleaned at the time of the change. This may be done using hot water and all-purpose cleaner or ready-to-use disinfectant wipes. It is important that a new wipe is used for every surface.
- The polling station must be thoroughly cleaned after the end of the activities (i.e. after the count has been completed) according to the regular cleaning protocol.
- The person or persons performing the cleaning work must wear disposable gloves. The gloves must be thrown away after cleaning, after which hand hygiene (washing or disinfecting hands) will be applied. For cleaning instructions, see the general hygiene guideline at <https://www.rivm.nl/hygienerichtlijnen/algemeen>.

## **5. HEALTH CHECK**

### *Voters*

- A voter must have the opportunity to do the health check before he or she goes to the polling station to vote. This means that voters must be advised of the health check questions *before* polling day. This may be done upon dispatch of the voting passes and/or upon the dispatch of the lists of candidates. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations has provided you with materials that you may use to inform voters of the health check. The purpose of sending the health check questions is that voters who answer YES to one or more of the questions will not come to vote in the polling station. The information points out to voters the options they have of issuing an authorization.
- The health check questions are available to voters at the entrance to the polling station in the form of a poster. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations will make this poster available. The electoral committee member present at the entrance to the polling station should not actively draw voters' attention to the health check questions.
- If a voter asks the electoral committee to help him or her vote because of a physical disability, an electoral committee member will actively ask the

relevant voter to answer the health check questions. If the voter answers NO to all questions, help may be offered (see below for personal protective measures). If the voter answers YES to one or more of the questions, no help may be offered.

#### *Electoral committee members*

- The public body must perform the health check before electoral committee members and tellers commence their work. If the answer is YES to one or more health check questions, the relevant electoral committee member cannot commence the work. The person concerned must then be replaced.
- If an electoral committee member or a teller develops any symptoms during the day, such as a common cold, a runny nose, sneezing, a sore throat, coughing, shortness of breath, elevated temperature or fever and/or sudden loss of taste or smell, this person must discontinue his or her work immediately and be replaced if necessary.
- Before electoral committee members and tellers belonging to one of the high-risk groups commence their work, you must follow the recommendations available at <https://lci.rivm.nl/kwetsbare-medewerkers>.

### **6. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR ELECTORAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND VOTERS**

- Electoral committee members and voters do not necessarily have to wear face masks during voting, since:
  - voters who come to vote in the polling station have done the health check. The public body performs the health check on electoral committee members before they commence their work;
  - everyone in the polling station must keep 1.5 meters apart;
  - cough guards are placed between electoral committee members and voters.
- By way of exception to this general rule, an electoral committee member and a voter are in fact required to wear face masks if the voter asks the electoral committee to help him or her vote because of a physical disability. In that situation, the electoral committee member offering the help will also wear disposable gloves. A new face mask and new disposable gloves will be used every time a voter is offered help.
- Voters and electoral committee members who choose to do so are permitted to wear face masks and/or gloves in the polling station.
- The distance of 1.5 meters must be kept during the count as well. Wearing face masks and/or disposable gloves during counting is not required, since the risk of the novel coronavirus spreading through surfaces is small (<https://www.rivm.nl/coronavirus-covid-19/verspreiding>).
- Electoral committee members who choose to do so are permitted to wear face masks when counting votes.

- If an electoral committee member wishes to wear disposable gloves when counting votes this is permitted, provided that this does not have any adverse consequences for the accuracy of the count.

## **7. DUTIES OF ELECTORAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Under Section J 12 of the Elections Act, the chairperson and at least two electoral committee members must be present while the polling station is open (i.e. three in total). You are strongly advised to ensure that **at least four electoral committee members** will be present during the upcoming election.

- The duty of the first electoral committee member is to be present at the entrance to the polling station to see to it that the number of voters in the polling station at any time does not exceed the limit and, where necessary, to ask voters to wait outside the polling station (see Chapter 4 of this circular below).
- The second and third electoral committee members sit at the table in the polling station. For a smooth flow of people, it is preferred that both of them perform all duties listed in Section J 25 of the Elections Act (verifying a voter's identity using his or her identity document, receiving his or her voting pass and verifying its authenticity, verifying whether the voting pass number appears in the register of invalid voting passes, and handing the voter a ballot paper). This way, two voters can be allowed to vote at the same time. The electoral committee may also opt to divide these duties between the two members, for example at quiet times (for instance, the first member verifies the identity document and the voting pass, and the second member checks the register of invalid voting passes and hands the ballot paper). However, the latter method does entail a risk of congestion in the polling station once it becomes more crowded.
- The duty of the fourth electoral committee member is to ensure that voters put their ballot papers into the ballot box (the duty referred to in Section J 26(3) of the Elections Act). This member must also ensure that voters observe the distance of 1.5 meters and the hygiene measures, and must clean the pencils and the polling booths every thirty minutes. Furthermore, this electoral committee member will ensure that help is offered when a voter asks for it, with the help offered being subject to the applicable rules, such as performing a health check; see Chapter 5).

The electoral committee will be free to decide that one or more of the fourth member's duties will be carried out by any of the other three members for all or part of the day. The island executive may also decide to instruct a fifth person to carry out the cleaning duties (cleaning the pencils, the polling booths and any template with audio support), who is not necessarily also an electoral committee member, to the extent that the number of persons present in the polling station permits this.

The island executive is free to decide whether every electoral committee member will perform one specific duty during the day (for instance, member A only performs the duty of asking voters, when they enter the polling station, to clean their hands and to keep their distance) or that the electoral committee members may replace one another for one or more, or all, duties during the day.

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In addition to the duties mentioned above, the Elections Act also assigns several other duties to the chairperson of the electoral committee, such as closing the ballot box of a mobile polling station (Section J 4a), maintaining order during the session (Section J 37) and stating that the session will be suspended if any circumstances render the proper conduct of the session impossible (Section J 38). These duties will remain the responsibility of the chairperson of the electoral committee.

#### *Voters who do not observe the rules*

If a voter does not keep his or her distance or does not observe the hygiene measures, the electoral committee may call him or her to account. If all else fails, the electoral committee member present at the entrance to the polling station may ask a voter not to enter the polling station and, if a disturbance is created, the chairperson may ask the voter to leave the polling station pursuant to Section J 35 et seq. of the Elections Act.

### **8. IN CONCLUSION**

I wish you success in organizing the election of the island council in these challenging circumstances. If you have any questions in response to this circular or otherwise, please put them to Hans Klok (+31 (0)6-52809560) or send an email to [postbus.verkiezingen@minbzk.nl](mailto:postbus.verkiezingen@minbzk.nl).

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations,

*drs.* K.H. Ollongren