

Towns are not (yet) accessible to all

On their websites, towns generally do not take sufficient account of people who have difficulty reading. This becomes clear in a report presented today to Annemarie Jorritsma, chairman of the Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG) (Union of Dutch Towns).

The websites of most towns do not comply with the minimal demands for accessibility and they offer insufficient tools for the visually impaired, low-literate people, dyslectic people and non-native Dutch speakers. On less than 60 percent of the websites can one adapt the letter size. And only eighteen percent offers a reading tool (speech synthesis). These are some of the findings in a report, presented today to Annemarie Jorritsma, chairman of the Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG).

The research report describes the findings of a survey amongst co-workers Instruction & Communication. The survey was part of the initiative 'How do you reach everybody?'. This provincial lecture cycle showed managers and civil servants the importance of accessible information. The meetings indicated that towns lack the sense of emergency and the knowledge to offer information in such a manner that it is accessible for the large groups of civilians with a reading impairment.

A properly accessible website complies with the following requirements:

- Simple use of language, as described by Stichting Lezen & Schrijven.
- Application of the quality and accessibility directives and guidelines (web guidelines and Waarmerk Drempelvrij - Warranty No Threshold ).
- A reading tool (for instance BrowseAloud) for people with reading problems, such as low-literate persons or many dyslectic people.

In the recently agreed 'Nationaal Uitvoeringsprogramma Dienstverlening en e-Overheid' (NUP – National Execution Programme and e-Government), as agreed by all levels, it is stated that by the end of 2010, all websites of governmental organisations will comply with the web guidelines. The accessibility of the digital service to civilians has top priority on the list of 19 NUP basic compliances to be made for better service.