

# Press Release

The Hague, 22 June 2005

## Thursday 8 September 2005: International Literacy Day

**Within the Netherlands the theme for this year's International Literacy Day, an initiative of the UN organisation UNESCO, will be the necessity for a broad approach to the problems surrounding literacy. This day has been observed since 1966.**

**In our country there are 1.5 million people who have difficulty reading and writing as a result of which they are unable to function optimally either at home or at work.**

**On Thursday 8 September 2005 attention will, in a variety of ways, be drawn to the approach being taken to tackle the problem of low literacy skills in the Netherlands. In addition, in the days around 8 September, various bodies will be organising activities illustrating the broad approach being adopted to alleviate this problem.**

International Literacy Day will start with a visit from a delegation of the Board of the *Stichting Lezen & Schrijven* and State Secretary Rutte, from Education, Culture and Science, to the offices of refuse collector Van Gansewinkel Groep in Rucphen, Brabant. Van Gansewinkel is one of the companies devoting time and effort to raising the level of literacy skills on the work floor.

Subsequently, the group will return to The Hague where, at the end of the morning, the National Literacy Prizes will be presented in the central hall of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. These prizes will be awarded to projects and activities which have, in some special way, contributed to the teaching of literacy skills.

In the afternoon, a symposium will be held in South Holland's County Hall; the symposium will be on the subject of cooperation between governments (provinces and councils), educational institutions and the business world in respect of the teaching of literacy skills.

Other activities planned in the week of International Literacy Day include: On 5 September, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and *Stichting Lezen & Schrijven* are jointly organising a conference about the 'Knowledge Economy, ICT and Literacy Teaching'. The topic being dealt with is the importance of developing reading, writing and ICT skills for the business world and the knowledge economy.

There will be two special publications, firstly a newspaper about literacy teaching entitled '*Startkrant*', this publication is aimed at those who have difficulty reading and, therefore, uses simple language. Secondly, a text book about illiteracy for older primary school pupils and those in the first year of secondary school.

The organisation and publicity surrounding International Literacy Day is in the hands of CINOP and *Stichting Lezen & Schrijven*.

*Stichting Lezen & Schrijven* was launched in May 2004 and its objective is to embed the teaching of literacy skills in an innovative and targeted way throughout society within the next five years. The Foundation hopes to help prevent and reduce illiteracy and semi-literacy by initiating concrete projects and bringing public and private organisations together. H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands is chair of the *Stichting Lezen & Schrijven*.

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**Note for the editorial board, not for publication:**

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