

Press release

Rotterdam, 4th September 2006

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN 'LEER LEZEN EN SCHRIJVEN' (LEARN TO READ AND WRITE) KICKS OFF

The national campaign 'Leer lezen en schrijven' was launched today in the Euromast in Rotterdam. This campaign targets the 1.5 million low-literate people amongst the Dutch population. Goal is to motivate these people to attend a course in reading and writing. The campaign has been developed by McCann-Erickson at the request of Stichting Lezen & Schrijven and will be seen and heard on TV, radio, the Internet, posters, trams and lorries and in dailies and magazines.

Also today, the start of the Rotterdam version of the campaign, which, amongst others, can be seen on Roteb cars and in the shopping alley.

The 1.5 million low-literate people have so much difficulties with reading and writing, that they cannot function in society in a fully-fledged manner. They cannot read prescriptions of medicines or a newspaper, they cannot fill out forms. The subtitles of a film are beyond them and they do not know the pleasure of reading a book. One million of these low-literate people are of Dutch origin, half a million have foreign roots.

The familiarity with this problem is still quite low. Research conducted by TNS-NIPO at the request of CINOP, indicates that not even 10 percent of the population spontaneously indicates of being aware of this problem. Today is also the first day of Literacy Week. As of today, tackling low-literacy is the core theme for a week, with the objective to acquire more familiarity.

As of this week, the campaign 'Leer lezen en schrijven' can also be seen in Amsterdam, Haarlem, Schiedam, at the Tax department, at Schiphol and at companies such as BP, Rabobank and van Gansewinkel. The campaign is set-up in such a way that besides the regional boards, as many schools, towns and companies can hook up. The campaign will run for several years.

Margreet de Vries, director of Stichting Lezen & Schrijven: 'The first thing the foundation aims at with this campaign is to get a lot more people to attend a course in reading and writing. At this moment, the number staggers around 5.000 attendants a year. The foundation also hopes that the campaign will make the subject more familiar amongst people, making sure it leaves that taboo atmosphere. As such, it will be easier for low-literate people to admit their problem and do something about it.'

The campaign has to contribute to the acquisition of the objective of the Department of Education (OCW). In the plan launched last year 'van A tot Z betrokken' (involved from A to Z), policy makers of OCW vented the ambition to expand the number of course attendants to 12.000 per year.

Central in this campaign are the personal and motivating stories of former low-literate people who act as Literacy ambassadors. For people who take the step to attend a course, this often means much more than merely tackling their linguistic arrears: they regain their confidence and they have the feeling of 'being with it

again'. All in all, no less than 30 Literacy ambassadors will be active. They will wear white T-shirts and as such express the core messages of the campaign.

Note for the editors, not for publication:

For more information, please address
Stichting Lezen & Schrijven, Diana Klever, [REDACTED]
McCann Erickson, Gé Key, [REDACTED]

For more information about Literacy Week: www.lezenenschrijven.nl