

My husband and I live in Vienna, Austria and have grandchildren who attend public school in Austria as well as homeschooled grandchildren in the Netherlands.

Our 'Dutch' grandchildren are often like a 'surprise bag' to us - you never know with what knowledge and interests they will confront us next. We enjoy their love to learn and explore and appreciate that they have the possibility to roam in many directions rather than to follow predetermined paths.

Project-oriented learning - multilingual resources and diverse experts:

In the past 12+ years we have become familiar with project-oriented learning. We find this learning method very interesting and positive because our grandchildren learn the interconnectivity between subject areas and that it often is a questions of asking relevant questions over and over in order to get as much insight as possible - this learning journey becomes like a puzzle, which is thoughtfully put together.

Over the years we have seen them working on projects in mathematics (Fibonacci numbers, crystal structures, etc), biology (raising silk worms, frogs, earwigs but also unusual plants like beach oleander or silver trees), history (on ancient Egypt, Roman, Greek etc history) but also on subjects like climate change or chemistry.

These projects are possible because our grandchildren have access to (library) books and internet in many different languages but also to experts in different fields/subjects. For example, our son-in-law is proficient in higher mathematics, their South African grandmother is an art historian, a friend of theirs a specialist in Dutch Medieval literature, etc.

Therefore, it would be disadvantageous to limit their homeschooling resources to the knowledge of one parent and only Dutch resources.

Teaching language - many ways to acquire Dutch:

Our 'Dutch' grandchildren are growing up with 4 languages - their mother- and father tongue (German and Afrikaans) as well as Dutch and English. The opportunity to think and live in different languages right from the start gives them a head start from which they will benefit throughout their lives.

It is of course very important that people learn the language(s) of the country in which they live. However, this can be achieved through a variety of routes that each family should decide for themselves. Therefore, legislation should focus more on reviewing the adequate acquisition of Dutch, but not the means to get there.

Timing - when to teach what:

One of the biggest advantages of homeschooling is taking into account the children's 'clock' - firstly, our daughter and son-in-law can adjust the timing of their teaching to the biological performance curves of our grandchildren. Secondly, they can respond to the specific interests of their four children at any given moment.

By demanding to follow the Dutch curriculum it is expected that windows of interests will be missed, a loss of unique chances. To give you an example - our grandson of 8 is currently interested in Albert Einstein and his theory of relativity since he wants to build a time machine to bring back extinct animals :). That is of interest to him now, but with a high likelihood not in the year it is part of the Dutch curriculum.

Covid-19:

During the lockdown in Austria we have seen that many families struggled to get used to the 'new way of learning', especially since many children were not used to learn independently. We assume that this experience was not that different in the Netherlands. At the same time, the lockdown had no big impact on the learning of our homeschooled grandchildren since they are used to take initiative, set their own goals and live up to them. (However, their social lives were severely impacted to the same extent as every child worldwide.)

Adjustment of bill:

Not every educational path fits everyone - it is the task of the parents and the children to find the right fit not the task of the state.

For families who are willing to put in the work and commitment, homeschooling is a wonderful opportunity to educate young people who are open-minded, curious and know their strengths and interests. The present bill will make this educational path impossible - we urge you to revise the proposal and limit control to a useful minimum.