

Additional rental costs

Many additional housing costs are not covered by the basic rent. These costs are, however, strictly regulated in the Netherlands. Many tenants (especially expats) are not sufficiently aware of the laws. Read more to learn about your rights with regards to these costs and what to do if you are being overcharged. Should you need any support, assistance or information please contact the Wijksteunpunt Wonen in your neighbourhood.



Service costs

(servicekosten) are housing costs not covered by the basic rent. Such costs can include furniture, fixings, gas, water and/or electricity. Landlords must follow the housing laws with regards to the amount of service costs they can legally charge. For instance, tenants can only be charged annually a maximum of 20% of the purchase price for non-durable goods (like rugs, doormats, pots, pans, and small household appliances). Furthermore, tenants only need to pay this amount for goods which are no older than 5 years. For goods over 5 years old, the maximum charge is 20% of their second hand value. For durable goods (like stoves,

heaters, boilers, fridges, etc.) the maximum annual charge is 10% of the purchase price. After 10 years the goods need to be re-appraised. Unfortunately many tenants are overcharged for such items. The *wijksteunpunten wonen* (tenant support agencies funded by the Amsterdam council) come across many cases where expat tenants are being grossly overcharged, especially on furnishings, often by many hundreds of euros per month. If you have any concerns or questions about these costs and live in Amsterdam you should contact the *wijksteunpunt wonen* in your neighbourhood. It can offer confidential assistance, free of charge.

Other things to look out for

There are several other issues concerning additional housing costs to be on the look out for. They are:

ALL-IN-PRICE:

The lease should clearly differentiate between the basic rent (*kale huur* or *netto huur*) and the service costs (*servicekosten*). If this differentiation is not clear and one unspecified sum is mentioned, the lease is considered an "all in" contract. This is not allowed and the rent can therefore be significantly lowered.

ADVANCE PAYMENTS:

Service costs for items such as utilities (gas, water and electricity), furnishings, cleaning costs and administrative costs are legally considered as advance payments. This means that, at the end of each year, these advance payments should be balanced with the actual costs (and provided to the tenant). If the landlord and the tenant disagree about the amounts, they can present their case to the *Huurcommissie* (tenancy tribunal) or the *Kantonrechter* (district court) at any time and the payments may be lowered if necessary.

FINAL CALCULATION:

At the end of each year the landlord must provide an annual final calculation (*eindafrekening*). This should include an itemised list of the actual costs and the advance payments made by the tenant. Every item, like electricity, gas, furnishing, cleaning etc. must be clearly listed. Costs and payments are then balanced. Sometimes the tenant will need to pay extra but sometimes they will get money back.

TERMS AND DEADLINES:

Monthly advance payments can be legally challenged at any time. The deadline for the final calculation of service costs (such as furnishings) is July 1st of the following year. For example, the final calculation for 2009 should be provided before July 1st, 2010. The landlord cannot raise the monthly service cost until the tenant has received this calculation. Service costs can only be disputed up until two years after the calculation deadline. After this date the service cost payments can no longer be disputed.





Wijksteunpunt Wonen

WHO DOES THE WIJKSTEUNPUNT WONEN WORK FOR?

The Wijksteunpunt Wonen helps tenants, resident groups and people looking for housing. Some Wijksteunpunten also help owner-occupants.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

The Wijksteunpunt Wonen's services are free of charge.

WEBSITE

More information is available on our Dutch-language websites:

- **www.wswonen.nl** – The Wijksteunpunten Wonen website: Free and confidential tenant support. (Dutch website, but able to offer assistance in English)
- **www.huurders.info** – A website dedicated to tenants' rights. (Dutch, with some information in English)

MORE INFORMATION

- **www.huurcommissie.nl** (Dutch website of the tenancy tribunal)

HOW TO CONTACT THE WIJKSTEUNPUNTEN WONEN

The Wijksteunpunt Wonen contact information is available on the www.wswonen.nl website. You can call and make an appointment or visit during their walk-in times, please bring your lease. You can also ask questions via the website.

