

In The Netherlands a lot happened in 2023. Valuable examples are the 'Beleef Cittaslow' month, the 'Cittaslow Sunday market', the 'rainbow week' and 'cooking with the mayor'. Visitors were given a varied programme to get to know and to experience Cittaslow. Most important for the Dutch network is its revitalisation: we set up a coordinating committee within the network and we created VITA.

Why is VITA created? The international Cittaslow audit is based on 72 benchmarks. That is a real lot of information, which makes it somewhat difficult to keep track of all the benchmarks. The Dutch Cittaslow network wanted to translate the philosophy of Cittaslow in order to make Cittaslow more approachable and verifiable. The most important requirements for the translation were that all the original Cittaslow benchmarks have to fit in and it needs to be easily understandable, easy to control and easy to keep track of all the core values. Together we established a clear mission, vision and core values. That is how the Dutch VITA was born.

Mission: Who are we? The Dutch Cittaslow municipality is focused on a future-proof environment with a variety of amenities that enhance the quality of life for its community. As a municipality, we facilitate and initiate in the areas of social connection, local entrepreneurship, sustainability and historical and cultural heritage with an eye for quality. We renew, with respect for the existing in a high-quality and diverse landscape that is (even internationally) easily accessible by road, water and rail.

Vision: Where are we heading? The Cittaslow municipality wants to be a vibrant, safe and social environment for living and working, where every resident, entrepreneur and visitor feels at home. An active community for all generations where leisure and recreation are in balance, emphasizing and promoting the quality of life.

Core values: Verbindend, Identiteit, Toekomstbestendig and Ambitieuus: VITA.

Verbindend (Connecting): The municipality is a symbol of connection. Not only geographically, where we are literally a connecting country. But also on a social level. By facilitating and initiating connection (for example through sports, recreation, events and public facilities), we are hospitable, serviceable and accessible. This benefits social cohesion, as well as the quality of life for our residents, entrepreneurs and visitors.

Identiteit (Identity): Each municipality has its own identity. We share the common Cittaslow philosophy, but each of us in an own authentic way. Our identity relies on integrity. We treat everyone, whether a resident, entrepreneur or visitor, equally. With respect (time and consideration) and according to the standards of the oath we have all taken. Transparency and authenticity are values that we can include in our own identity. An open government that stands and goes for its residents, entrepreneurs and visitors.

Toekomstbestendig (Future-proof): Everything we do, build and devise now fits within future-proof frameworks. Not only legal requirements play a role in this, but also our intrinsic love for the green and rural environment of the Dutch Cittaslow municipalities. We will continue to cherish this environment and all the cultural history that comes with it. Only in a future-proof way can we guarantee the existence of these Cittaslows. We are future-proof on all fronts. We not only deal with our environment in a loving manner, but also with each other. We invest in sustainable relationships within the community, vital employees and a future-proof organization. In this way we preserve our local identity, authenticity and family culture.

Ambitieuus (Ambitious): We continue to build, work and improve to keep our municipality vibrant, attractive and active. We continue to adapt and innovate to stay in touch with our residents, entrepreneurs and visitors. It is our ambition to facilitate and initiate a good quality of life for them. We support the local economy as well as local initiatives and associations. The focus is on balance. This provides a counterbalance to the hectic pace of society. To continue to realize the ambitions of everyone in the Netherlands, there is attention and sufficient time and rest. Only in this way can we continue to deliver and guarantee top performance for our communities.

The Dutch VITA:



The 10 Dutch Cittaslows: Alphen-Chaam, Borger-Odoorn, Echt-Susteren, Eijsden-Margraten, Gulpen-Wittern, Heerde, Midden-Delfland, Peel en Maas, Vaals and Westerwolde.

