

INTERACT – RESEARCHING THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS’ INTEGRATION AS A THREE-WAY PROCESS - IMMIGRANTS, COUNTRIES OF EMIGRATION AND COUNTRIES OF IMMIGRATION AS ACTORS OF INTEGRATION

Co-financed by the European Union

Integration Policy Netherlands Country Report

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INTERACT Research Report 2014/15

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Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of
Integration

Research Report
Country Report
INTERACT RR2014/15

Integration Policy – Netherlands Country Report

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Fenya Fischler, Integration Policies – Netherlands Country Report, INTERACT RR 2014/15, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute, 2014.

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INTERACT - Researching Third Country Nationals' Integration as a Three-way Process - Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of Integration

Around 25 million persons born in a third country (TCNs) are currently living in the European Union (EU), representing 5% of its total population. Integrating immigrants, i.e. allowing them to participate in the host society at the same level as natives, is an active, not a passive, process that involves two parties, the host society and the immigrants, working together to build a cohesive society.

Policy-making on integration is commonly regarded as primarily a matter of concern for the receiving state, with general disregard for the role of the sending state. However, migrants belong to two places: first, where they come and second, where they now live. While integration takes place in the latter, migrants maintain a variety of links with the former. New means of communication facilitating contact between migrants and their homes, globalisation bringing greater cultural diversity to host countries, and nation-building in source countries seeing expatriate nationals as a strategic resource have all transformed the way migrants interact with their home country.

INTERACT project looks at the ways governments and non-governmental institutions in origin countries, including the media, make transnational bonds a reality, and have developed tools that operate economically (to boost financial transfers and investments); culturally (to maintain or revive cultural heritage); politically (to expand the constituency); legally (to support their rights).

INTERACT project explores several important questions: To what extent do policies pursued by EU member states to integrate immigrants, and policies pursued by governments and non-state actors in origin countries regarding expatriates, complement or contradict each other? What effective contribution do they make to the successful integration of migrants and what obstacles do they put in their way?

A considerable amount of high-quality research on the integration of migrants has been produced in the EU. Building on existing research to investigate the impact of origin countries on the integration of migrants in the host country remains to be done.

INTERACT is co-financed by the European Union and is implemented by a consortium built by CEDEM, UPF and MPI Europe.

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Abstract

This paper describes the policy framework regarding the integration of migrants in the Netherlands. The Dutch government has not enacted a specific integration policy but instead has a strategic focus on participation and social diversity in general, with a particular focus on the importance of shared core national values in the integration of migrants. Two particular policy tools are discussed, starting with the compulsory civic integration system, which includes language and cultural elements and is compulsory. Civic integration tests are arranged in the countries of origin and since 2013, migrants have been required to cover the costs of their own courses and examinations. Second, the so-called “participation agreements” are described and discussed, which, in line with the Dutch emphasis on shared national values, aim to enforce acceptance of particular fundamental norms of Dutch society on newcomers. Finally, the report concludes with a brief discussion of the role of domestic organisations in supporting migrants, followed by a succinct overview of the current popular debates concerning migration in the Netherlands.

Key words: integration policy, Dutch migration policy, multiculturalism

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Introduction

According to official statistics from 2014, the largest sources of migration to the Netherlands are European countries, in particular Belgium, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom. Other popular countries of origin include the United States of America, China, Bulgaria, Turkey and France. European and Western countries more generally are by far the largest source of migrants in the past five years. Intra-European migration has predictably been gradually increasing in recent years, especially from the more recent member states such as Romania and Poland (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek 2012). Among the top sending countries, increases in migration flows in this time period are especially apparent from Poland and in a more measured manner from India and Spain (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek 2014).

Historically, the main non-Western migrant groups in the Netherlands have consisted of persons of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam or Antillean origin, with those of Turkish and Moroccan origin often descending from guest workers who travelled to the Netherlands in the 1970s and 1980s. Migration from Surinam and the Antilles is linked to the historical colonial relationship with the Netherlands. The expansion of these population groups is related more to second generation migrants rather than to new migration from the countries of origin (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek 2012: 9-10).¹ Finally, asylum seekers have historically come primarily from Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran (alongside other countries) but numbers are currently relatively low (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland 2013). Integration in terms of education, employment, social integration and other indicators within the Netherlands strongly varies according to the country of origin and whether migrants settle in rural or urban areas (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek 2012: 9-10).

Integration Policy Framework

The Dutch Government has decided to no longer have a specific integration policy in place. This means that there is no specific policy aimed solely at the integration of migrants. Instead, the approach taken does not target specific groups or countries of origin, but rather employs a more strategic general focus on participation and social diversity with the main aim of strengthening the local and federal integration policy through the exchange of information and coordination between stakeholders (see EMN 2013: 29). The public sector must be accessible and effective for all, regardless of the institution in question, and cooperation between various integration stakeholders is seen as crucial to successful integration. In particular, a focus is placed on participation in Dutch society, including shared values, equality, non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all (rather than for migrants only). Shared core values are put forward as essential to successful integration processes. As such it is key that migrants not only know about the “core values of Dutch society” but also that they internalise them (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2013a and 2013b).

The integration agenda of the general integration framework falls along a number of lines with a focus on language and civic integration of new migrants, addressing unemployment, criminality and anti-social behaviour among young migrants, improving the involvement of parents, improved knowledge of social skills, addressing discrimination and forced marriages, and increasing acceptance of homosexuality among ethnic minorities (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid 2013a

¹ Interestingly, in the Netherlands the word “allochtoon” is used to refer to migrants and their children. As such, second generation migrants are still perceived as a distinct category in comparison to those without migrant origins. Officially, the Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek describes an “allochtoon” as someone with at least one parent born abroad (see Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek, “Allochtonen”, available on: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/dossiers/allochtonen/methoden/begrippen/default.htm?ConceptID=37> [Accessed 12 July 2014]).

and 2013b). The Netherlands furthermore implements a ‘civic integration’ process for migrants which is implemented at the local level. As will be explained in more detail below, the municipalities were previously responsible for the implementation of the ‘civic integration’ policy within their localities. However, this will now be carried out centrally, with migrants now made financially responsible for their own civic integration.

From 2014 onwards, the government will be strengthening civic integration requirements in order to increase the “self-reliance” of new migrants by including a “labour market module”. The introduction of a pilot project is also planned for the issuing of so-called “participation declarations” at the municipal level (*participatieverklaring*) which will aim to demonstrate the rights, duties and fundamental norms of Dutch society to newcomers (Rijksoverheid 2013).²

Together with the Social and Economic Council (SER), several hundred migrant youths will also be trained to informally coach young migrants in their local areas (in particular on education and employment choices). In 2014, collaboration with social partners will also be emphasized to increase acceptance of homosexuality among ethnic minorities. The emancipation of LGBT³ people from ethnic minority backgrounds will be stressed (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal 2013a and 2013b).

Policy Implementation

The Department of Integration and Society (“directie Integratie en Samenleving”), under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid), supports the work of the Ministry in several areas in collaboration with relevant departments. The department is responsible for the implementation of the Civic Integration Act (“Wet Inburgering”) and for broadening and strengthening the reach of the official policy framework with reference to migrants in the Netherlands. Other areas of work include more general issues of social diversity, discrimination, and social tensions.

The official mandate of the department also specifically requires the department to ensure good law and policy making in the area of civic integration, discrimination, and diversity; support the development of civic integration exams and a loan system for participants; contribute to addressing language deficiencies of recent migrants; and formulate, collect, and spread strategic knowledge regarding the integration process via monitoring and evaluation efforts. Furthermore, it is in charge of initiating new forms of dialogue with civil society organisations and for the implementation of the European Agenda for the integration of third country nations. Finally, the department is also responsible for the participation of newcomers in society and the labour market via the implementation of participation agreements (Minister van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid 2014).⁴

In order to strengthen coordination and interaction between the various integration stakeholders, the “Shared Integral Approach” (Gemeenschappelijke Integrale Aanpak) was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵ The local implementation authorities no longer employ a specifically targeted policy, however participation and integration are fostered at the local level through a general diversity policy.

Before the amendments to the Civic Integration Act came into force on 1 January 2013, the municipalities were responsible for the civic integration process within their municipalities

² The name of these declarations was changed from “participatieovereenkomst” [participation agreement] to “participatieverklaring” [participation declaration] before implementation. See below for further details.

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

⁴ Now participation declarations, see footnote 2.

⁵ See FORUM, *Gemeenschappelijke Integratie Agenda* (<http://www.forum.nl/integratieagenda>).

(Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 2012: 4).⁶ From 1 January 2013 a new legislative framework came into force regarding civic integration, which has led to changes in education and language policy tools at the municipal level. The financial burden has been shifted to migrants who must now pay for their own courses and examinations.

Policy Tools

Civic Integration

The Netherlands has a system of “civic integration” (inburgering) in place.⁷ Civic integration has been an obligation for all migrants from outside the EU and Switzerland (between 16–65 years old) since 2006 for those applying for residence permits for indefinite periods within the Netherlands.⁸ Failure to do so may result in the loss of one’s residence permit and passing the exam is a requirement for naturalisation (Kingdom of Netherlands 2006). However, starting from 1 January 2013, the Dutch integration framework has been tightened, with migrants required to pay the costs of their own civic integration courses and examinations. Loans are available to cover the cost of these courses, but these must however be repaid in full (including interest). Migrants must undertake the civic integration course within three years of arrival. The new course includes Dutch language classes (writing, verbal, reading, listening skills) and knowledge about Dutch society (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs 2013). The civic integration policy is actively implemented and the government carries out regular monitoring of the integration of various groups within Dutch society (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2012; Huijnk and Dagevos 2012).

The basic “civic integration” exam must be taken in the country of origin in cases in which migrants wish to settle in the Netherlands for a long-term period. This exam can be taken at the Dutch Embassy or Consulate in the country of origin or in a country outside the Netherlands where the person has obtained leave to remain for at least three months. The granting of a temporary residence permit on behalf of the Dutch authorities is dependent on migrants passing this test. This means that migrants must already have a basic knowledge of Dutch language and Dutch society before travelling to the Netherlands. If they fail to comply with this requirement, they may be refused the residence permit. However, when one passes the civic integration exam one receives a permit/special visa which is valid for one year. This document is necessary in the subsequent application for a temporary residence permit (see Rijksoverheid, *Wat is het basisexamen inburgering in het buitenland?*).⁹

⁶ Approximately 90,000 people took part in the civic integration exam between 2007 and 2013 (Leers 2012).

⁷ The following are excluded from the requirement to sit for the civic integration examination abroad:

- a) Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Croatia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Monaco, New-Zealand, Norway, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Czech Republic, Vatican, UK, USA, Iceland, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland;
- b) Turkish nationals or individuals who are seeking family reunification with Turkish nationals in the Netherlands;
- c) non-nationals or family members of non-nationals who are seeking a residence permit for: adoption, employment, self-employment based on an international treaty, exchange, study, au pair, or medical treatment;
- d) family members of non-nationals with asylum residence permits;
- e) non-nationals with the Suriname nationality who have at a minimum completed their primary education in Dutch.

⁸ With the exception of spiritual/religious leaders, those with severe mental or physical disabilities etc.

⁹ For more details on procedure/registration see *Forumulier Aanvraag inburgeringsexamen, Het basisexamen inburgering Buitenland* (The Basic Civic Integration Exam Abroad), available on:

The citizenship exam must be taken by all migrants, including those with asylum residence permits. This is established in the “Wet van 30 November 2006, houdende regels inzake inburgering in de Nederlandse samenleving” (Law of 30 November 2006, concerning civil integration in Dutch society, see Kingdom of Netherlands 2006). The following persons are not required to take the civic integration exam:

- persons with a Dutch passport;
- persons from the EU, the EEA, Turkey or Switzerland;
- persons under 18;
- persons who are over the pension age;
- persons who have lived in the Netherlands for 8 or more years while they were of compulsory school age;
- persons with Dutch diplomas, certificates, or other evidence of training in the Dutch language, and;
- persons who are coming to the Netherlands temporarily for studies or work (i.e. ‘expats’). (see Rijksoverheid, *Inburgering en Integratie: Moet ik als nieuwkomer inburgeren?*)

Participation Agreements

As indicated above, from January 2014 a pilot project will be introduced for the issuing of so-called “participation agreements” (“participatieovereenkomst”) which will aim to demonstrate the rights, duties, and fundamental norms of Dutch society to newcomers. Throughout the second part of 2013, exploratory research was carried out concerning the potential implementation of the participation contract model within the Netherlands with a view to the development of a pilot project. The agreements have been conceived as one tool in the broader integration policy framework and are intended to support existing policy instruments such as civic integration. Conclusions from this initial study showed that the imposition of a binding document as a precondition for residence for EU nationals would not be permissible, and as such, the instrument was reconceived as a “participation declaration” rather than a contract. The declaration would then in principle be a voluntary commitment that allows newcomers to demonstrate their willingness to actively participate in and contribute to Dutch society. The tool is principally aimed at married and family migrants, refugees, EU work migrants, and migrants originating from Turkey and the former Antilles. Skilled migrants are not the primary target of these declarations (Asscher 2013). The participation agreement pilot project will be implemented by the municipalities, alongside the provision of information and advice, language support, and coaching (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten 2014).

(Contd.) _____

<https://www.minbuza.nl/producten-en-diensten/burgerzaken/basisexamen-inburgering-in-het-buitenland/formulier> [Accessed 12 August 2014].

The Role of Civil Society Organisations

There are hundreds of migrant organisations in the Netherlands, some of which are more informal and smaller than others. Many of these focus on a specific group. There are many established organisations targeting immigrants from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, Southern-Europe, and China, as well as refugees and migrants from other countries (van Heelsum 2004). There are also many smaller organisations scattered throughout the Netherlands.

As explained above, the emphasis in the Netherlands lies on ‘participation’ in Dutch society as a whole, rather than on integration as such. An emphasis is placed on cooperation and interaction between various social groups and migrant-focused organisations play a part in facilitating this process. There are hundreds of migrant organisations in the Netherlands covering a range of different activities, including sports, youth activities, student groups etc. Organisations that carry out activities relating to integration focus on education, work, and social participation, among others.

To date there has been no comprehensive research regarding the integration activities of these organisations in the Netherlands, however FORUM is currently working on an overview of migrant organisations in the Netherlands.¹⁰ Broadly, migrant organisations have various purposes, including the provision of services (i.e. recreational activities). The main aims of migrant organisations are centred mostly around advocacy, education and information exchange, the stimulation of discussion, and the exchange of experiences and information.

The Netherlands hosts a variety of migrant organisations, which organise their own organisations in the areas of recreation and sport, the elderly, and students, among others. In addition, several consultative bodies exist such as the “Samenwerkingsverband van Marokkaanse Nederlanders (SMN)” (Group for Moroccan Dutchmen), “Inspraak Orgaan Turken (IOT)” (Turkish Consultative Body), “Surinaams Inspraak Orgaan (SIO)” (Suriname Consultative Body), and the “Inspraakorgaan Chinezen (IOC)” (Chinese Consultative Body).

There are many similar organisations throughout the Netherlands, with different sizes, compositions and missions. However, while no clear survey exists of the integration activities of these organisations at present, it is clear that many of the traditional activities organised by these actors aim to increase the participation of their target population in society and to remove barriers to such participation.¹¹ For example the SMN has various projects, including a programme on preventing forced marriages which it implements in collaboration with the IOT and the “Vereniging Vluchtelingenorganisaties Nederland (VON)” (Association of Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands). This project is funded by the European Integration Fund (EIF) and adopts a local and country-specific approach to the issue (SMN 2013).

Another is example is the “integration tournament” organised by the IOC to increase the participation of Chinese citizens in sports activities (IOC 2010) and the implementation of an intergenerational project in 2005-2007 concerned with the emancipation and integration of Chinese women in the Netherlands (IOC 2005-2007). These are of course only a few examples out of a broad array of relevant integration activities carried out by various associations and organisations.

¹⁰ Information obtained from FORUM-Instituut voor Multiculturele Vraagstukken [Institute for Multicultural Issues]. It is unclear when this study will be completed. There is an existing study from 2004 from the same organisation looking at migrant organisations in the Netherlands (van Heelsum 2004). This study looked at among others the composition and activities of migrant organisations.

¹¹ Information obtained from a FORUM representative via email exchange.

The Integration Debate

Socio-cultural difference and integration has become an increasingly politicised topic which figures prominently in political and popular discourse within the Netherlands (Dagevos, Gijsberts and Huijnk 2014: 11). In 2013 various relevant questions were raised in the Dutch House of Representatives. For example, questions were posed concerning the construction of Mosques, equal opportunity in education, “foreign Islamic interference”, segregated care for the elderly, child abuse in Islamic schools, concerns about the “Islamisation” of Dutch society, religious child marriages, Islamic Anti-Semitism, and the construction of a Turkish *enclave* in Rotterdam (see Rijksoverheid, *Inburgering en Integratie*). It is clear that a large proportion of Parliamentary Questions relevant to migrant communities and integration relate to the Muslim community, which falls in line with anti-Islamic sentiments in the rest of the European continent. Integration also figured prominently in the media throughout the year.

Research has shown that recently concerns about ‘integration’ among the general population have decreased in recent years with the economic crisis becoming the most prominent issue of public concern. Nonetheless, integration has been a high-profile issue on the public and political agenda for some time and it continues to be an important issue on the national agenda today (Peeters 2012). In past years, policy discussions have tended to centre around social and cultural integration, while moving away from debates in the 1980s and 1990s, which more often portrayed integration in the areas of employment and education (Dagevos, Gijsberts and Huijnk 2014: 11).

The perceived overrepresentation of individuals from Moroccan and Antillean backgrounds with regards to anti-social behaviour and criminality is held to be problematic, in addition to their low level of participation in the labour force and high dependency on social welfare. The integration of refugees, specifically of Somali origin is also seen to be a difficult process. Some concerns have been raised concerning the future integration of new migrant groups, including those from the EU (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2013a and 2013b).

However, as discussed above, concerns about particular ‘groups’ of migrants are not reflected in the policy framework, as it does not focus specifically on ‘target’ groups. Instead, it follows a ‘general’ model which seeks to integrate citizens within all sectors of Dutch society.

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INTERACT
Researching Third Country Nationals' Integration as a Three-way Process -
Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of
Integration

Research Report
Country Report
INTERACT RR2014/15

Integration Policy – Netherlands Country Report

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Fenya Fischler, Integration Policies – Netherlands Country Report, INTERACT RR 2014/15, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute, 2014.

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INTERACT - Researching Third Country Nationals' Integration as a Three-way Process - Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of Integration

Around 25 million persons born in a third country (TCNs) are currently living in the European Union (EU), representing 5% of its total population. Integrating immigrants, i.e. allowing them to participate in the host society at the same level as natives, is an active, not a passive, process that involves two parties, the host society and the immigrants, working together to build a cohesive society.

Policy-making on integration is commonly regarded as primarily a matter of concern for the receiving state, with general disregard for the role of the sending state. However, migrants belong to two places: first, where they come and second, where they now live. While integration takes place in the latter, migrants maintain a variety of links with the former. New means of communication facilitating contact between migrants and their homes, globalisation bringing greater cultural diversity to host countries, and nation-building in source countries seeing expatriate nationals as a strategic resource have all transformed the way migrants interact with their home country.

INTERACT project looks at the ways governments and non-governmental institutions in origin countries, including the media, make transnational bonds a reality, and have developed tools that operate economically (to boost financial transfers and investments); culturally (to maintain or revive cultural heritage); politically (to expand the constituency); legally (to support their rights).

INTERACT project explores several important questions: To what extent do policies pursued by EU member states to integrate immigrants, and policies pursued by governments and non-state actors in origin countries regarding expatriates, complement or contradict each other? What effective contribution do they make to the successful integration of migrants and what obstacles do they put in their way?

A considerable amount of high-quality research on the integration of migrants has been produced in the EU. Building on existing research to investigate the impact of origin countries on the integration of migrants in the host country remains to be done.

INTERACT is co-financed by the European Union and is implemented by a consortium built by CEDEM, UPF and MPI Europe.

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Abstract

This paper describes the policy framework regarding the integration of migrants in the Netherlands. The Dutch government has not enacted a specific integration policy but instead has a strategic focus on participation and social diversity in general, with a particular focus on the importance of shared core national values in the integration of migrants. Two particular policy tools are discussed, starting with the compulsory civic integration system, which includes language and cultural elements and is compulsory. Civic integration tests are arranged in the countries of origin and since 2013, migrants have been required to cover the costs of their own courses and examinations. Second, the so-called “participation agreements” are described and discussed, which, in line with the Dutch emphasis on shared national values, aim to enforce acceptance of particular fundamental norms of Dutch society on newcomers. Finally, the report concludes with a brief discussion of the role of domestic organisations in supporting migrants, followed by a succinct overview of the current popular debates concerning migration in the Netherlands.

Key words: integration policy, Dutch migration policy, multiculturalism

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Introduction

According to official statistics from 2014, the largest sources of migration to the Netherlands are European countries, in particular Belgium, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom. Other popular countries of origin include the United States of America, China, Bulgaria, Turkey and France. European and Western countries more generally are by far the largest source of migrants in the past five years. Intra-European migration has predictably been gradually increasing in recent years, especially from the more recent member states such as Romania and Poland (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek 2012). Among the top sending countries, increases in migration flows in this time period are especially apparent from Poland and in a more measured manner from India and Spain (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek 2014).

Historically, the main non-Western migrant groups in the Netherlands have consisted of persons of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam or Antillean origin, with those of Turkish and Moroccan origin often descending from guest workers who travelled to the Netherlands in the 1970s and 1980s. Migration from Surinam and the Antilles is linked to the historical colonial relationship with the Netherlands. The expansion of these population groups is related more to second generation migrants rather than to new migration from the countries of origin (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek 2012: 9-10).¹ Finally, asylum seekers have historically come primarily from Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran (alongside other countries) but numbers are currently relatively low (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland 2013). Integration in terms of education, employment, social integration and other indicators within the Netherlands strongly varies according to the country of origin and whether migrants settle in rural or urban areas (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek 2012: 9-10).

Integration Policy Framework

The Dutch Government has decided to no longer have a specific integration policy in place. This means that there is no specific policy aimed solely at the integration of migrants. Instead, the approach taken does not target specific groups or countries of origin, but rather employs a more strategic general focus on participation and social diversity with the main aim of strengthening the local and federal integration policy through the exchange of information and coordination between stakeholders (see EMN 2013: 29). The public sector must be accessible and effective for all, regardless of the institution in question, and cooperation between various integration stakeholders is seen as crucial to successful integration. In particular, a focus is placed on participation in Dutch society, including shared values, equality, non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all (rather than for migrants only). Shared core values are put forward as essential to successful integration processes. As such it is key that migrants not only know about the “core values of Dutch society” but also that they internalise them (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2013a and 2013b).

The integration agenda of the general integration framework falls along a number of lines with a focus on language and civic integration of new migrants, addressing unemployment, criminality and anti-social behaviour among young migrants, improving the involvement of parents, improved knowledge of social skills, addressing discrimination and forced marriages, and increasing acceptance of homosexuality among ethnic minorities (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid 2013a

¹ Interestingly, in the Netherlands the word “allochtoon” is used to refer to migrants and their children. As such, second generation migrants are still perceived as a distinct category in comparison to those without migrant origins. Officially, the Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek describes an “allochtoon” as someone with at least one parent born abroad (see Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek, “Allochtonen”, available on: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/dossiers/allochtonen/methoden/begrippen/default.htm?ConceptID=37> [Accessed 12 July 2014]).

and 2013b). The Netherlands furthermore implements a ‘civic integration’ process for migrants which is implemented at the local level. As will be explained in more detail below, the municipalities were previously responsible for the implementation of the ‘civic integration’ policy within their localities. However, this will now be carried out centrally, with migrants now made financially responsible for their own civic integration.

From 2014 onwards, the government will be strengthening civic integration requirements in order to increase the “self-reliance” of new migrants by including a “labour market module”. The introduction of a pilot project is also planned for the issuing of so-called “participation declarations” at the municipal level (*participatieverklaring*) which will aim to demonstrate the rights, duties and fundamental norms of Dutch society to newcomers (Rijksoverheid 2013).²

Together with the Social and Economic Council (SER), several hundred migrant youths will also be trained to informally coach young migrants in their local areas (in particular on education and employment choices). In 2014, collaboration with social partners will also be emphasized to increase acceptance of homosexuality among ethnic minorities. The emancipation of LGBT³ people from ethnic minority backgrounds will be stressed (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal 2013a and 2013b).

Policy Implementation

The Department of Integration and Society (“directie Integratie en Samenleving”), under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid), supports the work of the Ministry in several areas in collaboration with relevant departments. The department is responsible for the implementation of the Civic Integration Act (“Wet Inburgering”) and for broadening and strengthening the reach of the official policy framework with reference to migrants in the Netherlands. Other areas of work include more general issues of social diversity, discrimination, and social tensions.

The official mandate of the department also specifically requires the department to ensure good law and policy making in the area of civic integration, discrimination, and diversity; support the development of civic integration exams and a loan system for participants; contribute to addressing language deficiencies of recent migrants; and formulate, collect, and spread strategic knowledge regarding the integration process via monitoring and evaluation efforts. Furthermore, it is in charge of initiating new forms of dialogue with civil society organisations and for the implementation of the European Agenda for the integration of third country nations. Finally, the department is also responsible for the participation of newcomers in society and the labour market via the implementation of participation agreements (Minister van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid 2014).⁴

In order to strengthen coordination and interaction between the various integration stakeholders, the “Shared Integral Approach” (Gemeenschappelijke Integrale Aanpak) was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵ The local implementation authorities no longer employ a specifically targeted policy, however participation and integration are fostered at the local level through a general diversity policy.

Before the amendments to the Civic Integration Act came into force on 1 January 2013, the municipalities were responsible for the civic integration process within their municipalities

² The name of these declarations was changed from “participatieovereenkomst” [participation agreement] to “participatieverklaring” [participation declaration] before implementation. See below for further details.

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

⁴ Now participation declarations, see footnote 2.

⁵ See FORUM, *Gemeenschappelijke Integratie Agenda* (<http://www.forum.nl/integratieagenda>).

(Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 2012: 4).⁶ From 1 January 2013 a new legislative framework came into force regarding civic integration, which has led to changes in education and language policy tools at the municipal level. The financial burden has been shifted to migrants who must now pay for their own courses and examinations.

Policy Tools

Civic Integration

The Netherlands has a system of “civic integration” (inburgering) in place.⁷ Civic integration has been an obligation for all migrants from outside the EU and Switzerland (between 16–65 years old) since 2006 for those applying for residence permits for indefinite periods within the Netherlands.⁸ Failure to do so may result in the loss of one’s residence permit and passing the exam is a requirement for naturalisation (Kingdom of Netherlands 2006). However, starting from 1 January 2013, the Dutch integration framework has been tightened, with migrants required to pay the costs of their own civic integration courses and examinations. Loans are available to cover the cost of these courses, but these must however be repaid in full (including interest). Migrants must undertake the civic integration course within three years of arrival. The new course includes Dutch language classes (writing, verbal, reading, listening skills) and knowledge about Dutch society (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs 2013). The civic integration policy is actively implemented and the government carries out regular monitoring of the integration of various groups within Dutch society (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2012; Huijnk and Dagevos 2012).

The basic “civic integration” exam must be taken in the country of origin in cases in which migrants wish to settle in the Netherlands for a long-term period. This exam can be taken at the Dutch Embassy or Consulate in the country of origin or in a country outside the Netherlands where the person has obtained leave to remain for at least three months. The granting of a temporary residence permit on behalf of the Dutch authorities is dependent on migrants passing this test. This means that migrants must already have a basic knowledge of Dutch language and Dutch society before travelling to the Netherlands. If they fail to comply with this requirement, they may be refused the residence permit. However, when one passes the civic integration exam one receives a permit/special visa which is valid for one year. This document is necessary in the subsequent application for a temporary residence permit (see Rijksoverheid, *Wat is het basisexamen inburgering in het buitenland?*).⁹

⁶ Approximately 90,000 people took part in the civic integration exam between 2007 and 2013 (Leers 2012).

⁷ The following are excluded from the requirement to sit for the civic integration examination abroad:

- a) Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Croatia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Monaco, New-Zealand, Norway, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Czech Republic, Vatican, UK, USA, Iceland, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland;
- b) Turkish nationals or individuals who are seeking family reunification with Turkish nationals in the Netherlands;
- c) non-nationals or family members of non-nationals who are seeking a residence permit for: adoption, employment, self-employment based on an international treaty, exchange, study, au pair, or medical treatment;
- d) family members of non-nationals with asylum residence permits;
- e) non-nationals with the Suriname nationality who have at a minimum completed their primary education in Dutch.

⁸ With the exception of spiritual/religious leaders, those with severe mental or physical disabilities etc.

⁹ For more details on procedure/registration see *Forumulier Aanvraag inburgeringsexamen, Het basisexamen inburgering Buitenland* (The Basic Civic Integration Exam Abroad), available on:

The citizenship exam must be taken by all migrants, including those with asylum residence permits. This is established in the “Wet van 30 November 2006, houdende regels inzake inburgering in de Nederlandse samenleving” (Law of 30 November 2006, concerning civil integration in Dutch society, see Kingdom of Netherlands 2006). The following persons are not required to take the civic integration exam:

- persons with a Dutch passport;
- persons from the EU, the EEA, Turkey or Switzerland;
- persons under 18;
- persons who are over the pension age;
- persons who have lived in the Netherlands for 8 or more years while they were of compulsory school age;
- persons with Dutch diplomas, certificates, or other evidence of training in the Dutch language, and;
- persons who are coming to the Netherlands temporarily for studies or work (i.e. ‘expats’). (see Rijksoverheid, *Inburgering en Integratie: Moet ik als nieuwkomer inburgeren?*)

Participation Agreements

As indicated above, from January 2014 a pilot project will be introduced for the issuing of so-called “participation agreements” (“participatieovereenkomst”) which will aim to demonstrate the rights, duties, and fundamental norms of Dutch society to newcomers. Throughout the second part of 2013, exploratory research was carried out concerning the potential implementation of the participation contract model within the Netherlands with a view to the development of a pilot project. The agreements have been conceived as one tool in the broader integration policy framework and are intended to support existing policy instruments such as civic integration. Conclusions from this initial study showed that the imposition of a binding document as a precondition for residence for EU nationals would not be permissible, and as such, the instrument was reconceived as a “participation declaration” rather than a contract. The declaration would then in principle be a voluntary commitment that allows newcomers to demonstrate their willingness to actively participate in and contribute to Dutch society. The tool is principally aimed at married and family migrants, refugees, EU work migrants, and migrants originating from Turkey and the former Antilles. Skilled migrants are not the primary target of these declarations (Asscher 2013). The participation agreement pilot project will be implemented by the municipalities, alongside the provision of information and advice, language support, and coaching (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten 2014).

(Contd.) _____

<https://www.minbuza.nl/producten-en-diensten/burgerzaken/basisexamen-inburgering-in-het-buitenland/formulier> [Accessed 12 August 2014].

The Role of Civil Society Organisations

There are hundreds of migrant organisations in the Netherlands, some of which are more informal and smaller than others. Many of these focus on a specific group. There are many established organisations targeting immigrants from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, Southern-Europe, and China, as well as refugees and migrants from other countries (van Heelsum 2004). There are also many smaller organisations scattered throughout the Netherlands.

As explained above, the emphasis in the Netherlands lies on ‘participation’ in Dutch society as a whole, rather than on integration as such. An emphasis is placed on cooperation and interaction between various social groups and migrant-focused organisations play a part in facilitating this process. There are hundreds of migrant organisations in the Netherlands covering a range of different activities, including sports, youth activities, student groups etc. Organisations that carry out activities relating to integration focus on education, work, and social participation, among others.

To date there has been no comprehensive research regarding the integration activities of these organisations in the Netherlands, however FORUM is currently working on an overview of migrant organisations in the Netherlands.¹⁰ Broadly, migrant organisations have various purposes, including the provision of services (i.e. recreational activities). The main aims of migrant organisations are centred mostly around advocacy, education and information exchange, the stimulation of discussion, and the exchange of experiences and information.

The Netherlands hosts a variety of migrant organisations, which organise their own organisations in the areas of recreation and sport, the elderly, and students, among others. In addition, several consultative bodies exist such as the “Samenwerkingsverband van Marokkaanse Nederlanders (SMN)” (Group for Moroccan Dutchmen), “Inspraak Orgaan Turken (IOT)” (Turkish Consultative Body), “Surinaams Inspraak Orgaan (SIO)” (Suriname Consultative Body), and the “Inspraakorgaan Chinezen (IOC)” (Chinese Consultative Body).

There are many similar organisations throughout the Netherlands, with different sizes, compositions and missions. However, while no clear survey exists of the integration activities of these organisations at present, it is clear that many of the traditional activities organised by these actors aim to increase the participation of their target population in society and to remove barriers to such participation.¹¹ For example the SMN has various projects, including a programme on preventing forced marriages which it implements in collaboration with the IOT and the “Vereniging Vluchtelingenorganisaties Nederland (VON)” (Association of Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands). This project is funded by the European Integration Fund (EIF) and adopts a local and country-specific approach to the issue (SMN 2013).

Another is example is the “integration tournament” organised by the IOC to increase the participation of Chinese citizens in sports activities (IOC 2010) and the implementation of an intergenerational project in 2005-2007 concerned with the emancipation and integration of Chinese women in the Netherlands (IOC 2005-2007). These are of course only a few examples out of a broad array of relevant integration activities carried out by various associations and organisations.

¹⁰ Information obtained from FORUM-Instituut voor Multiculturele Vraagstukken [Institute for Multicultural Issues]. It is unclear when this study will be completed. There is an existing study from 2004 from the same organisation looking at migrant organisations in the Netherlands (van Heelsum 2004). This study looked at among others the composition and activities of migrant organisations.

¹¹ Information obtained from a FORUM representative via email exchange.

The Integration Debate

Socio-cultural difference and integration has become an increasingly politicised topic which figures prominently in political and popular discourse within the Netherlands (Dagevos, Gijsberts and Huijnk 2014: 11). In 2013 various relevant questions were raised in the Dutch House of Representatives. For example, questions were posed concerning the construction of Mosques, equal opportunity in education, “foreign Islamic interference”, segregated care for the elderly, child abuse in Islamic schools, concerns about the “Islamisation” of Dutch society, religious child marriages, Islamic Anti-Semitism, and the construction of a Turkish *enclave* in Rotterdam (see Rijksoverheid, *Inburgering en Integratie*). It is clear that a large proportion of Parliamentary Questions relevant to migrant communities and integration relate to the Muslim community, which falls in line with anti-Islamic sentiments in the rest of the European continent. Integration also figured prominently in the media throughout the year.

Research has shown that recently concerns about ‘integration’ among the general population have decreased in recent years with the economic crisis becoming the most prominent issue of public concern. Nonetheless, integration has been a high-profile issue on the public and political agenda for some time and it continues to be an important issue on the national agenda today (Peeters 2012). In past years, policy discussions have tended to centre around social and cultural integration, while moving away from debates in the 1980s and 1990s, which more often portrayed integration in the areas of employment and education (Dagevos, Gijsberts and Huijnk 2014: 11).

The perceived overrepresentation of individuals from Moroccan and Antillean backgrounds with regards to anti-social behaviour and criminality is held to be problematic, in addition to their low level of participation in the labour force and high dependency on social welfare. The integration of refugees, specifically of Somali origin is also seen to be a difficult process. Some concerns have been raised concerning the future integration of new migrant groups, including those from the EU (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 2013a and 2013b).

However, as discussed above, concerns about particular ‘groups’ of migrants are not reflected in the policy framework, as it does not focus specifically on ‘target’ groups. Instead, it follows a ‘general’ model which seeks to integrate citizens within all sectors of Dutch society.

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