



# WRR-Policy Brief 4<sup>1</sup>

## No time to lose: from reception to integration of asylum migrants

*By focusing simultaneously on housing, language acquisition, training and work, public authorities will minimise the amount of valuable time lost in integrating asylum migrants.*

*Authors: Godfried Engbersen (WRR), Jaco Dagevos (SCP), Roel Jennissen (WODC), Linda Bakker (SCP/EUR) and Arjen Leerkes (WODC), with the assistance of Jeanine Klaver and Arend Odé (Regioplan)*

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## Colophon

WRR-Policy Briefs are short publications which reflect on a current policy theme on the basis of the WRR's scientific knowledge.

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## SUMMARY

In 2015, the public debate was dominated by moving images of migrants making their way to Europe and by the concerned reactions of European citizens to the asylum issue.

Attention is currently focused mainly on the problems relating to the local reception of new groups of asylum seekers. At the same time, however, policymakers face a second fundamental challenge, which is the question of how to facilitate the integration of asylum seekers who have been granted a residence permit into Dutch society. This policy brief focuses on this category of asylum seekers, who are referred to as permit holders. The key question is how we can accelerate the process of integration of permit holders. Just one in three permit holders between the ages of 15 and 64 living in the Netherlands have a paid job and many are permanently dependent on social assistance benefits.<sup>2</sup> This represents a waste of human capital and places an unnecessary strain on the country's welfare system. It is therefore important to make integration a key objective from the start of the asylum procedure, which, in turn, implies two things:

1. The need for an accurate and rapid asylum procedure in which greater attention is devoted to the labour potential of permit holders and their opportunities in the labour market in the Netherlands.
2. The need for an approach in which language acquisition, schooling, securing housing and finding work occur simultaneously rather than sequentially. With such an approach, permit holders will be able to support themselves and make a contribution to the receiving society sooner, which will in turn fortify public support for the asylum policy.

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2. Letter of 27 November 2015 from the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment to the President of the House of Representatives of the States-General. Integration and participation of permit holders.

Reference: 2015-000298184, p. 5.

# 1

## FROM RECEPTION TO INTEGRATION

The arrival of large numbers of asylum seekers in the Netherlands is not a new phenomenon. Refugees have been seeking protection and shelter in this country for decades. As figure 1 shows, there are large fluctuations in the numbers of asylum seekers from one period

to another (Van Duin et al. 2015). The peaks are mainly a consequence of conflicts in other regions of the world. Substantial numbers of asylum seekers came to the Netherlands in the 1990s, most of them from the former Yugoslavia and from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. For example, the Netherlands received more than 50,000 asylum applications in 1994. Between 1998 and 2000, the annual number of applications fluctuated around 40,000.

After a relatively quiet period, since 2014 the number of asylum applications has again risen sharply (mainly from persons from Syria and Eritrea). Slightly more than 43,000 persons requested asylum in this country in 2015.<sup>3</sup> A large majority of these asylum seekers will ultimately be granted a residence permit:<sup>4</sup> in the first three quarters of 2015, 70% of all asylum applications were granted.<sup>5</sup>

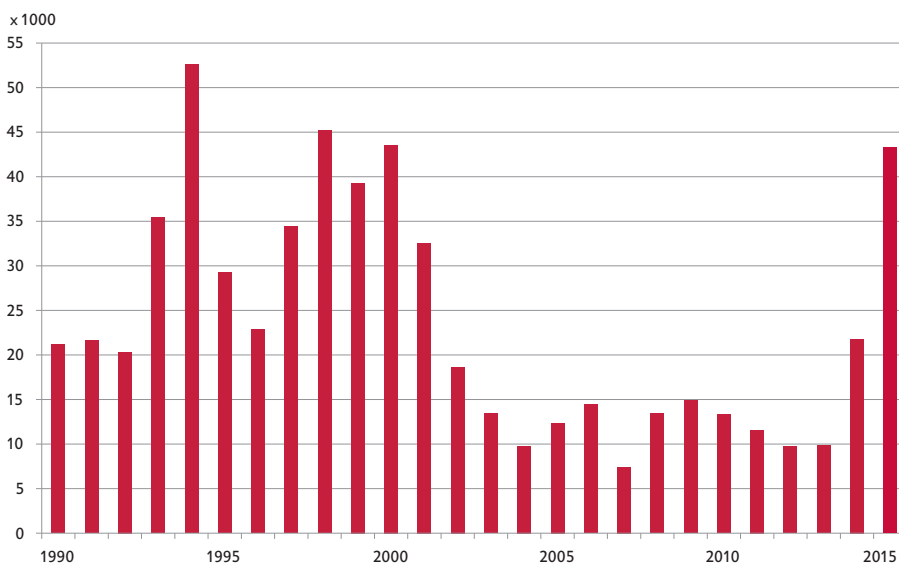
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3. This figure refers to asylum applications in first instance.

4. This refers to both applicants granted asylum status on the grounds of sub-section a of Article 29, first paragraph, of the Aliens Act (*Vreemdelingenwet, Vw*) 2000 and applicants granted subsidiary protection status on the grounds of sub-section b of Article 29, first paragraph, of the Aliens Act 2000. The so-called 'a-ground' applies for individuals with a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group (including sexual orientation) or political opinion. These persons are also known as Convention refugees, to whom the prohibition of refoulement (Article 33 of the Geneva Refugee Convention) applies. The 'b-ground' relates to people who are in need of international protection or are exposed to a genuine risk of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment on return to their own country. This is also referred to as subsidiary protection of nationals of non-EU countries and stateless persons and is based on the Qualification Directive (Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004) and Article 3 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (*Europees Verdrag tot bescherming van de rechten van de mens en de fundamentele vrijheden, EVRM*). The fundamental right created by Article 3 of the EVRM is absolute. Subsidiary protection is not a ground for protection that also arises from the Refugee Convention, as this suggests. Subsidiary protection is specified as a ground for protection in Article 3 EVRM and in the Qualification Directive.

5. This concerns what are called 'first instance positive decisions'. The final percentage will be higher because of successful appeals to negative first instance decisions. The figures for 2015 come from Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>.

Figure 1 - Asylum applications in the Netherlands, 1990-2015\*



\* Source: Statistics Netherlands (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek*, CBS). From 2007, only asylum applications in first instance. The figures for the period 1990-2006 include both first-time and repeat asylum applications

Clearly, therefore, this is not the first time that the Netherlands has been confronted with a large influx of asylum seekers. For a better understanding of the problems, it is useful to review the response to sudden surges in the number of asylum seekers in the past, since many of the current concerns and policy issues also applied on those occasions. Then, too, tent camps were set up, emergency housing was built and integration policy was formulated. Accordingly, in this policy brief we start by reviewing and analysing the fortunes of the asylum migrants who came to the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s (chapter 2).

The discussion of that subject focuses on three major topics. First, the position of permit holders in the *labour market*, with an analysis of the development of their labour market position over time. We also address the subject of *crime*. In recent months many citizens have expressed concerns that the arrival of asylum migrants will make their communities less safe. We therefore examine the level of representation of permit holders in the registered crime figures.

Finally, we look at the *dynamics* within the permit holder population. Do the members of that population stay in the Netherlands or do they (or some of them) leave the country again? This is another recurring question in the public debate.

In a nutshell, the three questions are:

1. What is the labour market position of permit holders?
2. To what extent are permit holders involved in crime?
3. Have permit holders remained in the Netherlands or have they left again after some time?

The choice of these three questions means that we have limited the scope of our study. For example, we do not address the subject of displacement in the labour market, which occurs if permit holders perform work that was previously done by domestic workers. Pressure on wages ensuing from a larger supply of working immigrants can also be regarded as displacement (SER 2014: 99). The common view is that immigration has little effect on the wages and employment of native workers (Hüttl and Leandro 2015).<sup>6</sup> We also do not discuss the issue of religion or the possible relationships between asylum migration and terrorism and radicalisation. These are also subjects about which we have no precise data. This policy brief is mainly concerned with the issue of *integration*. We do not address the reception of refugees in the Netherlands (or in their regions of origin) or the return of rejected asylum seekers.

Secondly, we examine the *present* situation (in chapter 3) on the basis of a study conducted for The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) by Regioplan between October and December 2015. For the study, an investigation was conducted in eleven municipalities that are engaged with the integration of permit holders (Regioplan 2015). They are Alkmaar, Amersfoort, Amsterdam, The Hague, Deventer, Eindhoven, Goes, Heerenveen, Nijmegen, Rotterdam and Zwolle. The investigation contained two key clusters of questions.

1. What is the municipality's policy with regard to providing housing for permit holders and facilitating their integration in the labour market? What bottlenecks do municipalities face and what local solutions are being devised to address them?
2. Has the presence of permit holders led to problems with public order, including crime? What local solutions are being developed to address them?

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6. That impression is confirmed by recent estimates from De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB 2105), which assumes 60,000 asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016 and 40,000 in 2017. According to the central bank, the macro-economic impact on the existing population will be relatively small.

We then draw conclusions from the past and the present that are relevant for the integration of permit holders (chapter 4) on the assumption that Europe will continue to be confronted with asylum migration in the years to come. It is difficult to predict the scale of that migration, but a number of future trends and developments can be identified. The number of asylum seekers is likely to remain high in the short term. In Syria, the country of origin of most asylum seekers, the war is continuing. The tensions in the rest of the Arab world and in parts of Africa and Central Asia are also structural in nature, thus creating and prolonging migration flows. The majority of the displaced persons will receive shelter in their own region, while a relatively small proportion will arrive in Europe and some of them will be granted asylum in the Netherlands.<sup>7</sup>

Receiving countries must also be prepared for changes in the EU's asylum policy and the possibility of more stringent asylum policies in the neighbouring countries. The large increase in the number of asylum applications in the Netherlands in 1994 was probably the result of the tightening up of asylum policy in Germany.<sup>8</sup> It is not inconceivable that the same thing will happen again in view of the enormous numbers of migrants that Germany currently has to cope with. The Netherlands must be prepared for developments of this nature.

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7. In 2013, approximately 51.2 million people were on the run worldwide. In that year, approximately 17.9 million of them crossed an international border. Accordingly, the number of displaced persons within their own country was substantially greater, at roughly 33.3 million (UNHCR 2013). The vast majority of people who flee their own country seek protection in neighbouring countries. Only a small proportion seek shelter in another region (Europe, North America or Oceania). Between 1991 and 1995, for example, 750,000 Liberians sought refuge in Ivory Coast and Guinea, while only about 20,000 Liberians applied for asylum in North-West Europe in that period (UNHCR 1997). In the 1990s, most Afghan refugees sought a safe haven in the neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan, while the majority of the people who have fled the civil war in Syria since 2011 have also sought refuge in their own region. At the end of May 2015, more than 3.8 million Syrian refugees were living in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. In the period from April 2011 until the end of May 2015, the number of asylum applications from Syrians in Europe rose to 'only' just over 250,000 (UNHCR 2015), of whom the Netherlands accounted for approximately 13,200.
  8. Research by Jennissen and Van Wissen (2015) supports this assumption. As a result of the so-called *Asylkompromiss*, which was passed by the German *Bundestag* on 26 May 1993, the number of asylum requests in Germany fell sharply. Subsequently, the number of applications for asylum started to rise in the Netherlands. Again in 1994, the first year of the new Aliens Act, which largely corresponded with the *Fremdengesetz*, the number of asylum applications initially remained high in the Netherlands, a situation that only changed in the second half of 1994 when the asylum procedure in the Netherlands was tightened up with the introduction of registration centres, where an initial segregation was made between asylum seekers whose applications were likely or unlikely to succeed. Furthermore, at the beginning of 1995 the terms 'safe countries of origin' (Bulletin of Acts, Order and Decrees. 1994, 894) and 'safe third countries' (Bulletin of Acts, Orders and Decrees. 1995, 43) were successively inserted into the Aliens Act (see Article 32 of the Aliens Act 2000) (Sprangers et al. 2009; Wijkhuijs et al. 2011).

## 2

### LESSONS FROM THE RECENT PAST

There are some similarities between the current groups of refugees (mainly from Syria and Eritrea) and the refugees who arrived in the Netherlands in the second half of the 1990s (from the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Somalia). For example, today's Syrians

are comparable with the Iraqis in the 1990s. The differences in socio-economic conditions between Syria today and Iraq in the 1990s are not very great. As in the 1990s, there are also many migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa coming to the Netherlands. Although there are differences in the countries of origin (there are now more asylum seekers from Eritrea and fewer from Sierra Leone and Liberia, for instance), these groups of asylum migrants in the two periods are relatively similar in socio-economic and socio-cultural terms.

Naturally, there are also differences between the migrant groups of then and now. In the first place, many of the asylum migrants in the earlier period were from European countries, principally the former Yugoslavia. Secondly, the migrants coming from non-European countries were fleeing for different reasons than they are now. In the 1990s, a relatively large number of the people who fled had been involved in political actions against the sitting dictators in the Arab world. Many of these individuals were members of the upper stratum of society and were relatively well-educated and wealthy compared with the rest of the population. Today's asylum migrants from the Arab countries could rather be classified as 'targets' or 'victims'.<sup>9</sup> By targets we mean that they are members of social or cultural groups that are the object of violence by the (pseudo) state or other social or cultural groups. The violence is targeted more at the group as a whole. By victims we mean asylum migrants who have been suffering from the general violence of war which makes it impossible for them to live in safety. With this shift in migration motives, asylum migrants now seem more representative of the average citizens in their country of origin. A third difference is that the current stream of refugees, particularly those from the Arab countries, is seen as a potential threat to national security because of the possibility that there might be terrorists amongst them (Croes and Jennissen, *not yet published*). A final difference is that the percentage of young adult males is larger today than in the earlier period.

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9. See Zolberg et al. (1989) for a further explanation of the classification of refugees as *targets* and *victims*, as distinct from a third class of refugee, 'activists'.



Despite these differences, there are many lessons to be drawn from the problems associated with asylum in the 1990s. Applying insights gained from that episode could lead to better integration of the current and future streams of asylum seekers. To that end, we examine the labour market position of permit holders, their involvement in crime and the extent to which they leave the Netherlands.

## 2.1

### WORK

#### *At a serious disadvantage in the labour market*

Recent figures for Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali refugee groups show that many permit holders are at a major disadvantage in the labour market (see table 1). The situation is most favourable for Iranians, whose

labour participation rate is at the same level as the rates for Surinamese and Antilleans. Nevertheless, many Iranians are also dependent on social assistance benefits. The position of Somalis is extremely weak; only a quarter of them have paid work, while more than half of them depend on social assistance benefits and live below the poverty line. Two-thirds of Somali children grow up in a poor household. Afghans and Iraqis occupy a position between the Iranians and Somalis, although it has to be noted that their position in terms of work and income is weaker than that of Turks and Moroccans.

The differences between the refugee groups can probably be explained in part by differences in their level of education. Relatively speaking, Iranians are the best educated and Somalis the least well educated. In terms of education, Afghans and Iraqis fall between the other two groups (Hessels 2005; Vogels 2011; Bakker et al. 2014).

Little is known about Eritreans and Syrians in the Netherlands. According to recently published data (CBS 2015), at the end of 2014 half of the Eritreans and more than 60% of the Syrians were receiving social assistance benefits.<sup>10</sup>

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10. In these figures, persons are identified by nationality. Data about socio-economic indicators are usually based on the so-called 'country of birth' criterion, as in table 1.

Table 1: Indicators of the socio-economic position of migrant groups, in percentages

	Net participation in the labour market* (2012)	Persons with a social assistance benefit (September 2013)	Persons in a poor household (2011)	Children in a poor household (2011)
Afghans	42	26	32	42
Iraqis	39	37	36	45
Iranians	60	24	19	17
Somalis	26	53	53	67
Turks	52	10	20	26
Moroccans	46	15	23	30
Surinamese	61	9	10	12
Antilleans	57	13	16	17
Non-Western immigrants, total	53	13	19	25
Native Dutch	70	2	5	7

\* Net participation refers to the proportion of the total population aged between 15 and 64 with a job for twelve or more hours a week. The table shows the percentage of social assistance recipients at individual level. If the partner in a two-person household has no income, in the statistics the partner is regarded as a recipient of social assistance benefits. Poverty data in the table are based on the 'not-much-but-sufficient' criterion (Soede and Vrooman 2010).

Source: SCP, Annual Integration Report 2013; CBS, Annual Report on Integration 2014

### *Slowly gaining ground, but not entirely*

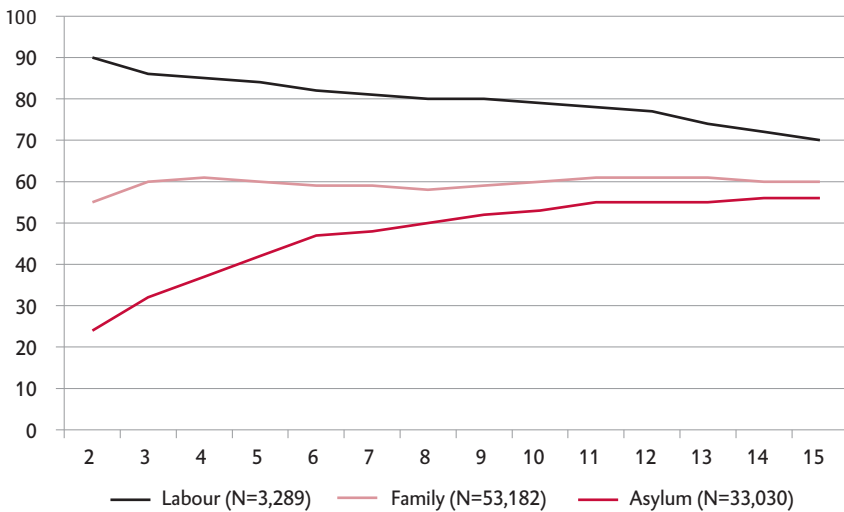
A unique cohort study was recently carried out into the position of all registered asylum migrants in the Netherlands who were granted a residence permit between 1995 and 1999 and stayed in the Netherlands until at least 2011.<sup>11</sup> The study was based on a sample of more than 33,000 asylum migrants. The asylum migrants in this cohort were from Iraq (23%), Afghanistan (19%), the former Yugoslavia (18%), Iran (10%), Somalia (3%), the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa (8%) and other non-Western countries outside Africa (19%). The study shows that the arrears faced by many asylum migrants in the labour market is particularly great in the early years of their stay. The labour participation rate among asylum

11. The WODC will publish this cohort study in 2016. The analysis of the labour market position also appears in Bakker (2016). Persons who died or emigrated during this period were disregarded. The study covered individuals who were aged between 18 and 54 at the time of their registration in the Municipal Personal Records Database (*Gemeentelijke Basisadministratie*, GBA) (in other words, from the moment they were granted asylum status), as well as any partners and children who had joined them in the Netherlands within a year. All of the members of this group were able to participate in the Dutch labour market throughout the period covered by the study. See Jennissen and Oudhof (2008) for comparable findings.

migrants increases the longer they live in the Netherlands and then comes close to the level of family migrants from non-Western countries. However, the gap with non-Western labour migrants remains substantial. Family migration covers family reunification, family members accompanying the principal migrant and migration for family formation. Labour migrants are persons who come to the Netherlands to work.

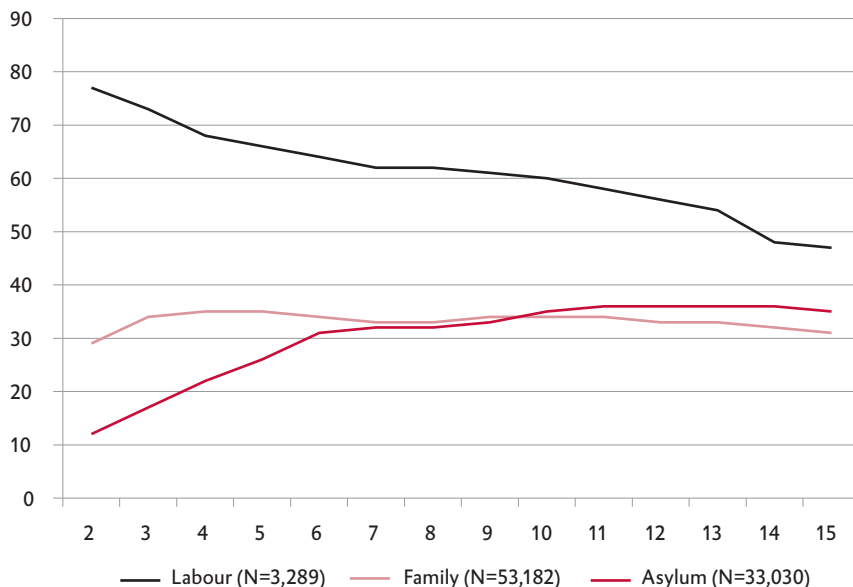
Figure 2 shows the labour market participation rate among permit holders who have been living in the Netherlands for fifteen years. After two years in the Netherlands, a quarter of the asylum migrants have a paid job of more than eight hours a week. The figure for non-Western labour migrants is 90%, while 50% of family migrants from non-Western countries have paid work after two years in the Netherlands. Over a period of fifteen years, however, the gap between asylum migrants and the other categories narrows. After five years, 50% of asylum migrants have a job. That figure rises to 57% after fifteen years, so that the remaining gap with family migrants is minimal. At the same time, the labour market participation rate of labour migrants declines over that period, so that the discrepancy between them and asylum migrants also shrinks.

Figure 2 – Working persons (more than eight hours a week) per migration motive, cohort '95-'99 in %, by years of residence in the Netherlands



Source: The Dutch System of Social Statistics (*Stelsel van Sociaal-statistische Bestanden, SSB*)<sup>22</sup>

Figure 3 - Working persons (more than thirty hours a week) per migration motive, cohort '95-'99 in %, by years of residence in the Netherlands



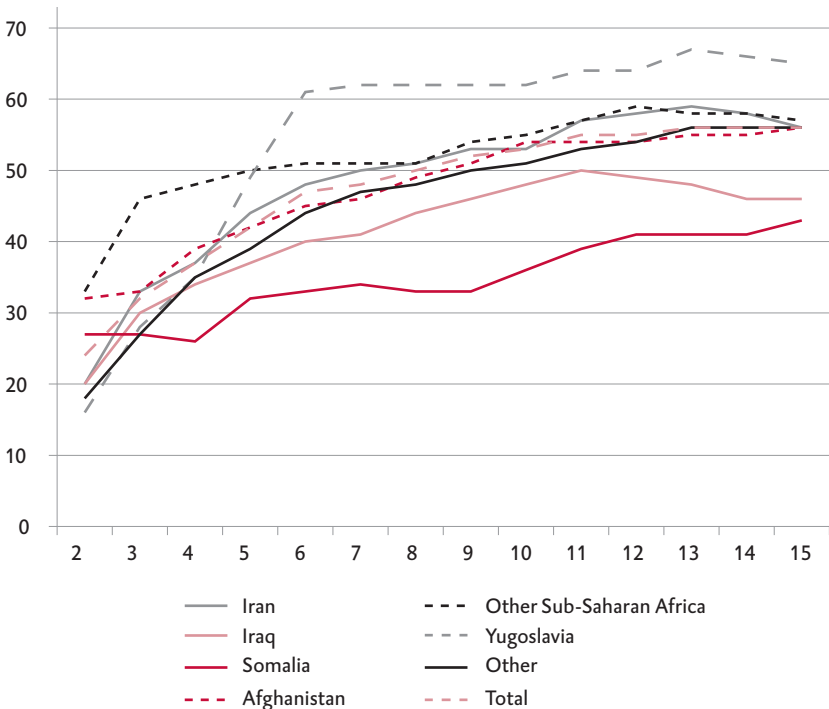
Source: SSB

The trend is similar if we look at the percentage of full-time jobs (more than thirty hours a week) (see figure 3). After ten years in the Netherlands, the proportion of asylum migrants with a full-time job is slightly higher than among family migrants. After fifteen years, roughly a third of the asylum and family migrants have a paid job of at least thirty hours.

12. The SSB contains data at micro level pertaining to the total population of persons living legally in the Netherlands. For example, the SSB contains data about origin, socio-economic indicators, age and gender. The CBS defines labour migrants (see [www.statline.cbs.nl](http://www.statline.cbs.nl)) as persons who come to the Netherlands for the purpose of working, including work as a salaried employee or as a self-employed person. The migration motive 'family' relates to family reunification, family members accompanying the principal migrant and migration for the purpose of family formation. Family reunification is defined as the settlement in the Netherlands of persons from families that already existed prior to the immigration, where one of more family members will be living with family members who had come to the Netherlands previously. Accompanying family members are family members of a migrant with a migration motive other than 'family' who immigrate in the same year as the migrant. Family formation relates to the settlement in the Netherlands of persons who come to the country to marry, form a partnership or cohabit with a partner who is already living in the Netherlands, with whom the person concerned has never previously cohabited.

The labour market position varies significantly depending on the country and region of origin. But, as figure 4 shows, there are no success stories to report for any of the groups. Of all groups by country of origin, the participation rate after fifteen years of residence is highest amongst migrants from the former Yugoslavia (65%) and lowest among Somalis (43%). The other groups are clustered around the average of 55%, with the exception of Iraqis, whose labour participation rate is declining again after rising steadily for ten years.<sup>13</sup> The Iranians in the cohort covered by the study do not perform better than the groups of Iraqis and Afghans.

Figure 4: Working persons (more than eight hours a week) per country of origin (asylum migrants), cohort '95-'99 in %, by years of residence in the Netherlands



Source: SSB

13. The figures for participation rates presented here are better than those for the refugee groups in table 1. The reason for this is that the figures in table 1, which relates to all migrants (regardless of the registered migration motive), also include a relatively large number of wives of asylum migrants (the migration motive of this group is often family migration) whose labour participation rate is low.

## Determinants

The problematic labour market position of many asylum migrants can be explained by common factors such as a low level of education, a lack of work experience and the absence of relevant social networks, but factors connected with migration itself, the asylum procedure and the policy on civic integration for permit holders also play a role:<sup>14</sup>

- *The asylum procedure.* Many asylum migrants have to wait a long time before they are granted asylum status and can regain control over their lives (Bakker et al. 2014). For example, asylum seekers are only allowed to work if the asylum application has been under consideration for at least six months, regardless of whether the application is being dealt with in first instance or on appeal. They are also first required to apply for a work permit. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work for more than 24 weeks a year.<sup>15</sup> The Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs refers in this context to ‘lost time’ (ACVZ 2013).
- *A hectic period.* The initial period after asylum migrants have been granted asylum status is ‘hectic’. After a certain period of time,<sup>16</sup> they move into a new home and start making preparations for their civic integration course, schooling or looking for work. For many permit holders, this initial period is also devoted to arranging the reunification of their family. The application to allow these ‘dependants’ to join them has to be submitted within three months of the granting of residence status and it takes time and effort.
- *Mental health.* Mental health problems can arise from traumatic experiences that an individual might have suffered in his or her country of origin, but also from the history of their escape and the length of time they have spent in asylum centres. Persons with poor health have fewer prospects of finding work (Bakker et al. 2013).
- *Where a person’s schooling was completed.* There are fewer work opportunities for people who completed their education in their country of origin rather than in the Netherlands. One reason for this is that diplomas from some countries of origin are not recognised. Following a course in the Netherlands takes time and could be a contributing factor to the low labour participation rate in the initial period. However, schooling in the Netherlands greatly enhances the prospect of participation by refugee groups (Kanas and Van Tubergen 2009; Hartog and Zorlu 2009; Bakker 2016).

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14. See Klaver et al. (2007); Klaver and Van der Welle (2009); Bevelander and Lundh (2007); Kanas and Van Tubergen (2009); De Vroome and Van Tubergen (2010); Dourleijn and Dagevos (2011); Dagevos (2011); Bakker et al. (2013).

15. As soon as asylum migrants are granted residence status, they are free to participate fully in the Dutch labour market.

16. It can take a long time after residence status has been granted before permit holders have their own accommodation.

- *Proficiency in the Dutch language.* Language and civic integration courses help to improve the proficiency of asylum migrants in the Dutch language, which increases their chances of finding paid work. New migrants are encouraged to integrate in the society within three years.<sup>17</sup> Successful civic integration is a requirement for the conversion of a temporary residence permit into a permanent residence permit after five years.
- *Age.* Many asylum migrants come to the Netherlands as (young) adults, for whom it is more difficult to learn Dutch and to follow extensive schooling in the Netherlands.
- *Discrimination.* There has been no specific research into discrimination against refugee groups, but one can assume that they, like other migrants, have fewer opportunities of finding work because of their origin (Andriessen et al. 2010; Andriessen and Dagevos 2014).

We draw the following conclusions regarding the labour market position of asylum migrants:

1. Many permit holders are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market.
2. They face a difficult start and are slow to make up the arrears in relation to migrants who come to the Netherlands for other reasons.
3. The often lengthy asylum procedure has a negative effect on their ultimate labour market position.<sup>18</sup>
4. The level of education (and particularly securing a Dutch diploma) is important for the labour market position of refugees.

## 2.2

### CRIME

#### *Representation in crime figures: higher in absolute terms*

There are concerns about the involvement of asylum migrants in crime. But how realistic are those concerns? The cohort study also

provides some insights in relation to that question. For the study, data were matched with the *Herkenningsdienststelsel* (HKS), a database in which the Dutch police register persons between the ages of 12 and 60 who have been officially reported as a suspect in the commission of a crime. There is a lot to be said for classifying the persons in this database as

17. Permit holders are reimbursed the amount of the loan they take out for the civic integration course if they successfully complete the course within the prescribed period.

18. The negative effect of the lengthy asylum procedure on the labour market position is mainly indirect via the poorer mental health of asylum migrants whose asylum procedure has taken longer (see Bakker et al. 2013 and Laban et al. 2008). Experience also shows that the longer a person does not work, the poorer their prospects on the labour market become. The literature on unemployment shows that long-term unemployment impairs a person's chances on the labour market in two ways. The longer persons remain out of work, the greater their loss of skills, and employers often regard long-term unemployment as a sign that they will be relatively unproductive (De Graaf-Zijl et al. 2015).

registered 'offenders', a classification that accords more closely with their actual status than the term 'suspect'. Individuals who have been acquitted by the courts should be removed from the database. However, since we cannot be certain that this actually happens and cases disposed of by the Public Prosecution Service (for example, settlements) are not removed from the database, we nevertheless refer to 'suspects' (Jennissen et al. 2009).

The comparison we have made relates to the following groups of migrants:

- asylum migrants who came to the Netherlands between 1995 and 1999;
- other non-Western migrants who came to the Netherlands between 1995 and 1999;
- other non-Western migrants: these are all non-Western migrants (first and second generation) minus the cohort that came to the Netherlands between 1995 and 1999.

We first review the results without taking account of differences in the composition of the groups (such as the proportion of young men). We then correct for these differences to see whether the original impression is confirmed. If, after correction, the registered crime rate among asylum migrants is higher than among the native Dutch population, it means that attributes other than those included in the analysis play a role in explaining the higher crime rate among asylum migrants. This is important for policy purposes, since there are then reasons to assume that factors relating specifically to the group have an impact on the chance of members of that group appearing in the registered crime figures.

In figure 5, the registered crime rates of the individual migrant groups are compared with the crime rate among the native Dutch (which is fixed at 1). The figure shows that in 2001, 2006 and 2012 permit holders were three times as likely to appear as suspects in the police statistics as native Dutch persons.

As the period of residence increases, the over-representation of permit holders in the registered crime figures increases slightly. The crime rates among asylum migrants are higher than for the other non-Western migrants who arrived in the Netherlands in the period from 1995 to 1999. The latter category includes mainly Turkish and Moroccan family migrants. The difference between asylum migrants who came to the Netherlands between 1995 and 1999 and the total group of non-Western migrants (first and second generation minus the immigration cohort in 1995-1999) in terms of registered crime is relatively small.



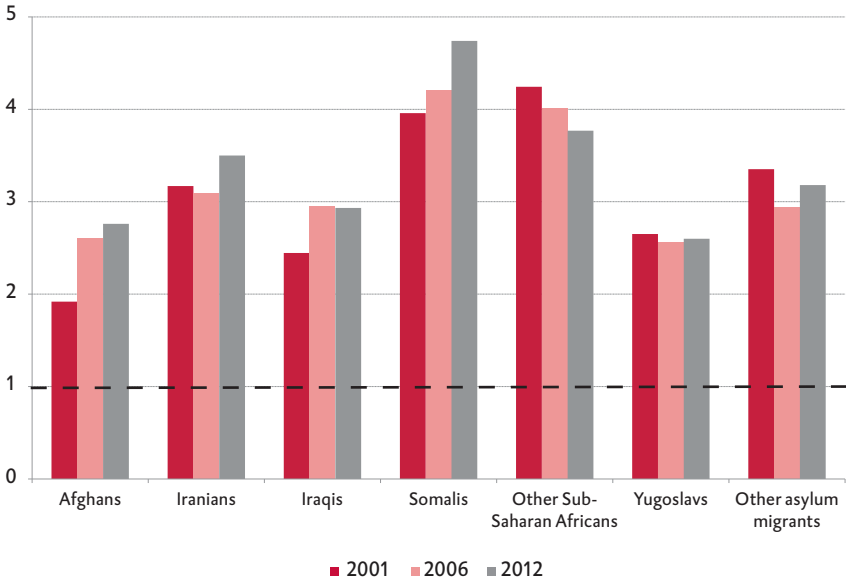
Figure 5 - Representation of non-Western migrants (cohort '95-'99) and other non-Western migrants (first and second generation) in relation to native Dutch (=1) in the registered crime figures, 12 to 59 years of age



Source: SSB and HKS

There are significant differences between groups from different countries of origin. In 2012, in relative terms Somali asylum migrants were suspected of a crime almost five time more often than native Dutch. Among migrants from the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, the over-representation is below the average for the group of asylum migrants as a whole. Among Afghans and Somalis, there has been a trend towards increasing over-representation in the registered crime figures the longer they stay in the Netherlands (see figure 6).

Figure 6 - Representation of permit holders (cohort '95-'99) in relation to native Dutch in the registered crime figures, 12 to 59 years of age



Source: SSB and HKS

### *Comparison with an equivalent group: lower in relative terms*

The data presented above took no account of differences in the composition of the individual groups. We know, however, that young, single men receiving social assistance benefits and living in large cities are relatively frequent offenders (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1983; Gould et al. 2002; Borghans and Ter Weel 2003). Figure 7 shows the relative probabilities<sup>19</sup> of being registered as a suspect of a crime after correction for the characteristics of *gender* (by including only men in the analysis), *age*,<sup>20</sup> *cohabitation with a partner*, receipt of a *benefit*, the *household income* and the degree of *urbanisation* of the place of residence.<sup>21</sup>

The results clearly show that asylum migrants were *not* suspected of a crime more often than ‘comparable’ native Dutch citizens in 2006 and 2012; in other words, after correction for the aforementioned characteristics. In fact, asylum migrants are under-represented in the figures compared with the native Dutch. In most cases, this under-representation in the figures for crime suspects is statistically significant. On the other hand, the groups ‘other non-Western migrants’ who came to the Netherlands between 1995 and 1999 and ‘other non-Western migrants (first and second generation)’ are clearly over-represented in the statistics for crime suspects.

To sum up, asylum migrants are not suspected of crimes more often than native Dutch persons with similar demographic and socio-economic profiles. However, because individuals with particular characteristics (young, single, male) are over-represented among asylum migrants, the group scores higher in the police statistics. This is a relevant finding for policy makers. It therefore seems that specific ethno-cultural factors play a subordinate role in the explanation of registered crime.

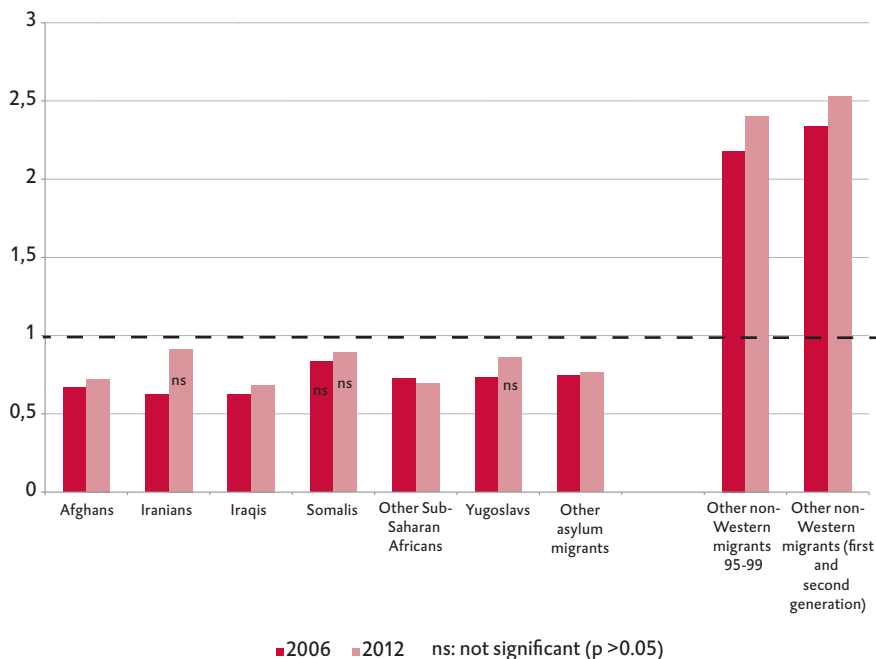
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19. Relative probability shows the likelihood of being suspected of a crime and not being suspected of a crime in relation to a reference category with the same values for the other background characteristics included as independent variables in a logistic regression model. The value for the reference category is always ‘1’. In this analysis, the reference group is native Dutch persons.

20. The analysis was confined to adults, so that the outcomes would not be affected by cases disposed of by *Halt* (*Het ALternatief*, a Dutch organisation to prevent and combat juvenile crime) involving minors. Since a *Halt* sentence can only be imposed once, the differences between groups from different countries of origin would be exaggerated if minors were also included in the analyses.

21. Schooling is not included in this analysis because it is often not known what schooling migrants have had. In order to take some account of the fact that certain persons are still receiving schooling after the age of eighteen (third-level education) and could perhaps therefore have a relatively lower income, we also included the interaction variable ‘household income x age’ in the analysis.

Figure 7 - Relative probabilities in relation to native Dutch of being or not being suspected of a crime, after correction for a number of characteristics, males between 18 and 45 years of age



Source: SSB and HKS

The large majority of the asylum seekers arriving in 2015 are from Arab countries and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. With the help of the research carried out by Blom and Jennissen (2014), we can also say something about the nature of the crimes of which asylum migrants are suspected. They are principally non-violent property crimes (such as shoplifting). In contrast, drugs- and weapon-related crimes are committed far less frequently in relative terms by asylum migrants (see also Althoff et al. 2006; De Boom et al. 2006; De Boom et al. 2010).

The following conclusions can be drawn about the representation of asylum migrants in the crime figures:

1. Because of the large number of young, single men among asylum migrants, the registered crime rate among this group is higher than among the native Dutch population.
2. Asylum migrants are not suspected of a crime more often than native Dutch persons with a similar demographic and socio-economic profile.
3. Asylum migrants are suspected mainly of property crimes, such as theft, and less often of drugs- and weapons-related offences.

## 2.3

### DEPARTURE

#### *Coming and going*

It is known that some asylum migrants hope to remain permanently in the country that grants them asylum. Others would like to return to their home country as soon as it is at

all possible (Klinthäll 2007). However, the situation in the country of origin often precludes their return (Black et al. 2004; Leerkes et al. 2014). In addition, some refugees also leave the Netherlands for another country, such as the UK or Canada. According to the *Integration Barometer* of the Dutch Council for Refugees (*Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland*), 33% of all asylum seekers who were granted a residence permit in the period from 1998 to 2007 were no longer listed in the population register in the Netherlands on 1 January 2008 (Klaver and Van der Welle 2009), which implies that a substantial minority had left the Netherlands. There are no reliable statistics available yet about the departure of recent permit holders.

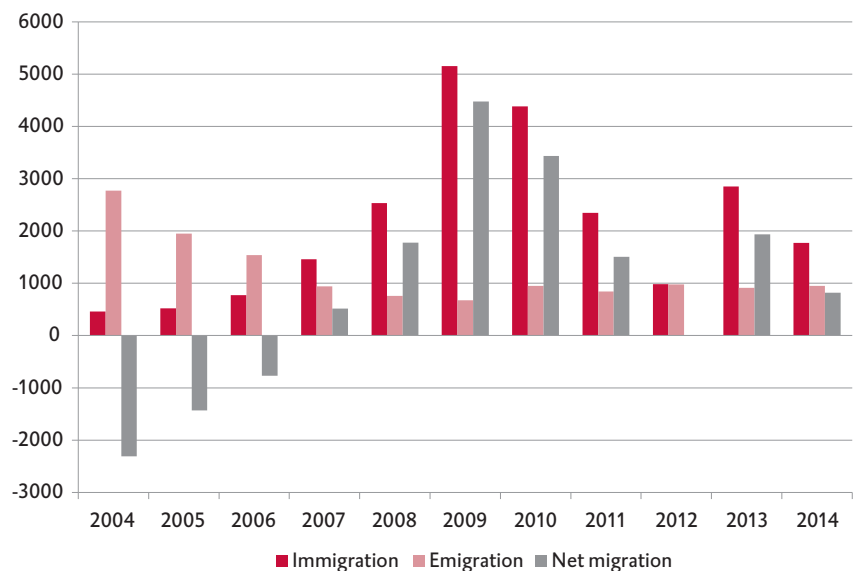
There are, however, figures for immigration and emigration, which also show a fairly large dynamic. They show that a significant proportion of the refugees who come to the Netherlands leave again, either to their country of origin or to another country. Unfortunately, it is impossible to make a distinction in those figures between those who return to their own country and those who move to a different country. Figures 8 to 11 show that the emigration from the Netherlands of persons from Iraq, Iran and Somalia in the period from 2004 to 2007, and of Afghans from 2005 to 2009, exceeded the immigration. It is known that the Somalis emigrated mainly to the UK during this period. Subsequently, there have been a number of peaks in immigration for the different groups of refugees. In 2014, the numbers of Iraqis and Afghans entering and leaving the country were practically identical. The immigration figure was only still significantly higher than the emigration figure for Iranians.

Figure 8 - Immigration, emigration and net migration of Iraqis



Source: CBS, 27 October 2015

Figure 9 - Immigration, emigration and net migration of Somalis



Source: CBS, 27 October 2015

Figure 10 - Immigration, emigration and net migration of Afghans



Source: CBS, 27 October 2015

Figure 11 - Immigration, emigration and net migration of Iranians



Source: CBS, 27 October 2015



## Resources

There are various explanations for the departure of permit holders from the Netherlands. First, some permit holders return to their country of origin when they feel that the local political and economic climate has improved sufficiently (Black et al. 2004; Klinthäll 2007).

Second, their departure can be connected with their degree of success in the labour market in the Netherlands. The existing research has yielded conflicting insights on this point. On the one hand, various studies have found that many of those who left were relatively well integrated in *socio-economic terms*. For example, migrants with a job are more likely to leave the Netherlands than migrants without work (Jennissen and Oudhof 2008). A Swedish study, which looked specifically at permit holders, showed that those in the highest income group and with the highest level of education leave most often after a period of time (Klinthäll 2007). One explanation for this is that work experience, income and education are important resources for those wishing to emigrate. On the other hand, the reason for leaving can actually be the inability to find a (suitable) job (Casserino 2004). In other words, departure can be the result of 'success' or of 'failure'.

Third, socio-cultural integration, such as contact with the native Dutch population and identification with the Netherlands, usually lead to a diminished inclination to leave the country (De Haas and Fokkema 2011; De Vroome and Van Tubergen 2014). Because socio-economic and socio-cultural integration often go hand in hand - and possibly have contradictory effects - the question that remains is what their *combined* effect is (see also De Vroome et al. 2012).

There are two conclusions that can be drawn on the subject of whether permit holders stay or leave:

1. The category of permit holders is highly dynamic. A substantial minority leave the Netherlands after a time.
2. Policy that focuses on improving the socio-economic integration of permit holders can have two contradictory effects: (i) it can lead to stronger socio-cultural integration and therefore reduce the chance of departure; (ii) it equips people with more resources and therefore increases the chance that they will leave.

## 2.4

### CONCLUSIONS

There are three particularly important lessons to be learned from the recent past:

1. Many permit holders are in a disadvantaged position in the labour market. They face a difficult start and are only slowly bridging the gap with migrants who come to the Netherlands for other reasons.
2. The demographic composition of the category of permit holders (a relatively large number of young, single men) brings with it security risks. But the registered crime rate among permit holders is lower than among native Dutch persons with the same profile.
3. The category of permit holders is highly dynamic. A substantial minority leave the Netherlands again after some time.

These three aspects are partially interconnected. A weak labour market position and dependence on social assistance benefits can contribute to greater involvement in crime. The analyses presented here show, for example, that in relative terms men who depend on benefits appear more than twice as often in the statistics for crime suspects. Moreover, a weak labour market position can act as a stimulus both to stay in the country and to leave.

## 3

### LESSONS FROM THE PRESENT<sup>22</sup>

The most important lesson from the recent past is that it takes a long time for permit holders to establish a foothold in the labour market in the Netherlands. It is therefore important to accelerate and improve the process of integration of permit

holders in Dutch society. This aspect is expressly acknowledged by the government, which has said that “(...) the core of the asylum policy is to guide permit holders as quickly as possible from the COA shelters to a place in Dutch society, and offer them access to integration and work as soon as possible.”<sup>23</sup>

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22. This section is a lightly edited version of a report written by Arend Odé and Jeanine Klaver of Regioplan.

23. House of Representatives of the States-General. Session year 2015-2016. Letter from the Minister of Housing and the Central Government Sector. Immigration Policy. 19 637. No. 2053. See also the letter to the House of Representatives from the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of 27 November, explicitly stating that the aim of government policy is the rapid integration of and active participation by permit holders (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid 2015).

The investigation about the integration of permit holders conducted between October and December 2015 in eleven municipalities shows how difficult this task is.<sup>24</sup> The investigation centred on two clusters of questions:

1. What is the municipality's policy with regard to providing housing for permit holders and facilitating their integration in the labour market? What problems do municipalities face and what local solutions are being devised to address them?
2. Has the presence of permit holders led to problems with public order, including crime? What local solutions are being developed to address them?

In this section we outline the most important findings from the study. The study is not representative for the Netherlands, but it does give a clear impression of the nature of the problems that municipalities face and the types of solutions they propose.

## 3.1 HOUSING

### *Avoid concentration and create public support*

Pursuant to the Housing Act, the central government has made agreements with the municipalities on the number of permit

holders they have to house. The target for the second half of 2015 was almost 15,000 persons. In the first half of 2016, the government has instructed municipalities to provide housing for a total of 20,000 permit holders, to be allocated pro rata to the number of inhabitants. These numbers are far higher than in previous years and are leading to delays in the provision of shelter by municipalities, which is in turn causing problems with the relocation of permit holders from the central asylum centres. Many asylum migrants who have already been granted asylum status are still staying in the central shelters. At the end of 2015, the backlog in the planned housing of permit holders by municipalities came to almost 16,000.

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24. The municipalities investigated by Regioplan were Alkmaar, Amersfoort, Amsterdam, The Hague, Deventer, Eindhoven, Goes, Heerenveen, Nijmegen, Rotterdam and Zwolle. Policymakers, representatives of implementing organisations and employees of social institutions were interviewed, as well as representatives of a number of national organisations, including the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (*Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten*, VNG/ *Platform Opnieuw Thuis*), the Dutch Council for Refugees, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (*Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers*, COA), the employment-agency group Randstad Uitzendbureaus, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (*Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid*, SZW) and the Foundation for Refugee Students (*Stichting voor Vluchtelingenstudenten*, UAF).

The problems with the housing of permit holders are due to a number of factors:

- the tightness in the local or regional housing market, due in part to the shrinking supply of social housing;
- the time-consuming process of verification by municipalities of personal details;
- the presence of many groups that are difficult to place, such as large families and unaccompanied minor asylum seekers;
- the existence of other special target groups with precedence for housing, such as homeless persons and persons living in women's shelters;
- the straitjacket of rules that constrain initiatives to expand the housing stock (relating to aspects such as management and essential facilities);
- the lengthy waiting lists to receive rent allowance as a result of measures taken to combat the improper use of allowances, which delay the process of housing asylum seekers because some social housing is unaffordable without an allowance.<sup>25</sup>

The principal bottleneck at the end of 2015 is finding housing. Once it has been found, there are subsequently no significant local problems, such as nuisance, according to the municipalities in the investigation. The municipalities mention a number of factors for successfully providing adequate housing and facilitating the integration of permit holders. They are:

(1) limiting the numbers of asylum seekers to be placed in a location; (2) small-scale housing (no large residential complexes); (3) distributing asylum seekers sufficiently over different neighbourhoods; and (4) keeping local residents informed and involved in plans for the arrival of permit holders (see box 1). Some municipalities also employ specific methods of counselling to help permit holders acclimatise more quickly to the local community (see box 2).

**Box 1: The 'Welcome to the neighbourhood' project**

In Zwolle, various locations throughout the city have been designated for the housing of special target groups, including permit holders. This approach to reception in the community has been adopted with the approval of all the relevant stakeholders and the active participation of residents, all of whom were actively involved in the plans from an early stage. The participating parties have made agreements on the results to be achieved in terms of aspects such as the number of properties to be provided for the reception in the community scheme, the concentration and distribution of facilities within the municipality, measures to enhance the quality of life and the creation of public support. The relevant policymakers say the approach has been successful.

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25. To resolve this problem the COA has started a pilot project in which applications for rent allowance are arranged centrally for permit holders.

These factors are also regarded as important for creating public support. Many respondents stressed that most of the concerns about potential problems with integration arise from the recent opening of large-scale emergency shelters for asylum migrants who are still waiting to learn whether they will be granted residence status. According to the respondents, up to now there has been no public opposition to the housing of permit holders.

**Box 2: The 'Refugees for refugees' project**

The idea behind the 'Refugees for refugees' project in Rotterdam is to enable refugees who have already been living in the city for some time to act as 'buddies' to help newly arrived permit holders. The buddies provide the newcomers with personal assistance in everyday affairs during the civic integration programme (practising the language, helping them to settle in, etc.). The newcomers therefore receive additional assistance in the process of integration. The municipality refers to a peer-to-peer approach. The intention is that eventually subsidised programmes will be organised for eighty people every year. The city has reserved funds in its own budget to provide training for the volunteers taking part in the project.

***New forms of (temporary) housing***

Municipalities say that the regular supply of social housing will soon be insufficient to meet the demand created by the substantial increase in the number of asylum seekers. It will therefore be necessary to find innovative solutions to increase the housing stock. Municipalities would also like to learn more about the profiles of these new residents sooner so that they can already match groups of individuals while they are in the central asylum centres if adults will later have to share accommodation.

There are already various national initiatives designed to help local authorities, for example by expanding the possibilities for the temporary renting of properties. These include the temporary letting of rental houses that are for sale or the introduction of new forms of temporary letting. Initiatives are also being taken to encourage permit holders to share a dwelling with others. Another strategy is the municipal self-care arrangement, under which municipalities receive an allowance for up to six months to provide temporary accommodation for permit holders who have not yet been allocated housing.

With these and other measures the central government wants to be able to abandon the precedence currently granted to permit holders under the Housing Act,<sup>26</sup> since there will be a far greater supply of suitable housing for this group. Many of the municipalities that were investigated can go along with this – partly with a view to ensuring public support in the future. Displacement of local residents by permit holders in the social housing sector is regarded as undesirable. Many municipalities are in fact already engaged in creating temporary solutions of this type (see box 3).

However, it is clear that creating extra (temporary) housing is no easy task. Municipalities stress that converting offices or care complexes into housing is both expensive and time-consuming. It is also clear that the integration of the newcomers proceeds more smoothly if:

- they are sufficiently dispersed across different neighbourhoods (no concentration);
- there is a 'smart' mix of permit holders and other groups of residents (no separate facilities);
- there is intensive supervision (especially in the case of shared accommodation).

#### Box 3: Examples of new types of housing

- Housing association De Key is developing 550 container homes in Amsterdam, for mixed use by permit holders and students.
- In Nijmegen, clustered dwellings are being developed for a hundred single, male permit holders and twenty students in a former student complex.
- The municipality of The Hague is drafting a plan to convert the former premises of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment into accommodation for permit holders. Other groups will also be housed in the building, which will also have space for business start-ups.

Almost all of the respondents in the investigation rejected the idea of large-scale locations that are not physically embedded in a district or neighbourhood and are only intended for permit holders. They also suggested that an austere regime of temporary housing could lead to the social exclusion of this group. In particular, they advise against housing families in austere accommodation for lengthy periods. Such facilities must be temporary. However, municipalities can imagine that – in view of the scale of the challenge facing them – they will have to make some concessions on the aforementioned conditions of dispersed and small-scale reception of permit holders.

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26. For a complete overview of measures that have been taken, see the letter from the Minister of Housing and the Central Government Sector of 2 October 2015, Immigration Policy, House of Representatives, session year 2015-2016, 19 637, no. 2053; the letter from the Minister of Housing and the Central Government Sector of 27 November 2015, Housing of permit holders, House of Representatives, reference: 2015-000708166.

## 3.2

### FACILITATING INTEGRATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Municipalities recognise that finding work is very important for rapid integration. At the same time, there is a widely-shared awareness that a substantial group will not be able to find work, at least for the time being and without assistance. The distance to the Dutch labour

market is too great for these permit holders. However, local authorities, with a few exceptions, do not have separate policies for this group. In practice, municipalities make do with the use of regular instruments.

Permit holders are often considered difficult to employ because they are not proficient in Dutch. Municipalities therefore usually wait for the newcomers to complete their civic integration course before focusing on other aspects of their integration. The result of this ‘sequential’ approach is that a lot of time passes before attention is devoted to providing them with active assistance in finding work. Furthermore, the civic integration programmes seldom if ever include activities designed to increase their long-term prospects in the labour market. For example, there is often no connection between language courses and the local labour-market policy.

The integration process in fact already stalls even before asylum seekers can be housed in the municipalities. The application procedure for residence status is often a lengthy one and the granting of residence status is by no means a guarantee of early relocation. Municipalities regard this a further bottleneck. Another factor is that permit holders are housed throughout the country, with little or no account being taken of their prospects on the labour market. In other words, no attempt is made to match demand and supply in the labour market in the decisions made on where they will move to.

We can identify five distinct factors that hamper the effective integration of permit holders into the labour market in current policy practice:

1. Time lost as a consequence of the lengthy asylum procedure and the period spent waiting for relocation to the municipality (a lengthy period of enforced inactivity).
2. The sequential structure of municipal integration policy (first complete the civic integration course and then address other aspects of integration).
3. The absence of a link between the civic integration course and other aspects of integration (there are scarcely any dual learning-and-working programmes).
4. Small and medium-sized municipalities lack sufficient mass to adopt policies targeted specifically at permit holders.
5. Imperfect matching of demand and supply in the labour market as a result of the policy of dispersing permit holders throughout the country.

Every municipality that was consulted for this investigation also drew attention to the disappearance of municipal control of the process of integration, which not only deprives them of the possibility of using combinations of instruments that link language acquisition to gaining work experience, but also has a number of negative side-effects:

- many permit holders delay starting their integration because they have three to five years to comply with the obligations;
- permit holders do not always choose the best or most effective language course for maximising their chances of further integration;
- there are sometimes waiting lists for language courses and permit holders therefore have to wait a long time before they can enrol.

A final aspect that demands attention is social support. Many municipalities find that the existing subsidy for every permit holder required to follow a civic integration programme is insufficient to provide proper assistance for refugees.

### *Different integration routes*

A number of municipalities are developing new initiatives to guide permit holders to a job from an early stage, preferably while they are still awaiting relocation to the municipality or as soon as possible after they have settled there. Alternative routes are also feasible to improve the prospects on the labour market of permit holders for whom direct matching with a job is unlikely. There are various distinct groups for whom diverging routes to integration into the labour market would apply. At the same time, there are some refugees for whom there will be no prospect of participation in the Dutch labour market because of their lack of qualifications and social and medical problems. The perspective of social participation is also important in order to prevent their social exclusion. Below we outline four routes.

#### *Route 1: direct placement services*

There is a small group of permit holders whose qualifications, work experience and command of English would allow them to enter the Dutch labour market immediately. Nevertheless, many of these newcomers are still unable to find work quickly. Municipalities point out that there is room for improvement in the information provided by the central asylum centres to municipalities. With systematic registration and early notification of details of the educational background and work experience of permit holders, municipalities would be able to contact employers in the region sooner about the possibilities for placing permit holders (see box 4).



An important requirement for producing a successful match is that not only candidates, but also outstanding vacancies, are effectively screened.<sup>27</sup> These can be vacancies for jobs, but also for work experience places. Amsterdam, for example, has launched a small-scale pilot project with permit holders who have been allocated to the municipality, but are still living in a central asylum centre. The aim of the project is to match the permit holders with employers in the region, specifically in relation to vacancies that have proved difficult or impossible to fill.

**Box 4: Matching permit holders to employers**

In Eindhoven, the municipality, the COA, the Dutch Council for Refugees and the Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body (*Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen, UWV*) have started gathering specific information in the asylum centres about the level of education, work experience and language proficiency of permit holders. An attempt is made to bring permit holders with appropriate profiles into contact with interested companies as quickly as possible. If necessary, the process of verifying diplomas starts immediately. Quite a large number of companies have already shown interest in the scheme and expressed their willingness to offer work to permit holders, not necessarily in the form of paid jobs, but also work experience places and internships.

**Route 2: support for higher and secondary vocational education**

From some permit holders, investment in a specific course in the Netherlands (in higher or secondary vocational education) would significantly improve their long-term prospects in the Dutch labour market. It is vital that these individuals receive proper guidance in choosing a course and during their studies. Naturally, their proficiency in Dutch will have to be a consideration, so that language does not form an obstacle to their schooling. A number of initiatives have been taken in this regard:

- for a number of years the UAF has been providing support for refugee students with a higher education in the form of language and transition courses, financial assistance and counselling during their studies and in making the transition to the labour market;
- the universities (*wetenschappelijk onderwijs, wo*) and universities of applied sciences (*hoger beroepsonderwijs, hbo*) have taken steps to improve the match between their programmes and the backgrounds of refugee students, for example by establishing a preparatory year for non-Dutch speakers and setting up buddy programmes;
- at secondary vocational level (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs, mbo*), there are combination programmes in which language training is linked to a vocational course. The Netherlands Association of Vocational Education and Training Colleges (*MBO Raad*) collects and disseminates good practices.

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27. In this context, see also the advisory report 'Lost Time' by the Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs. The Hague, March 2013.

One issue that needs to be addressed is the question of how to resolve the problems with the accreditation of diplomas. In practice, the status of European Platform-Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation (EP-Nuffic)'s recommendations is not always clear, so that they are not always followed and refugees have to enter a programme at a lower level.

The financing of schooling can also form a barrier. Permit holders who wish to study can apply for a student grant up to the age of thirty, but older refugees who wish to study often depend on the possibilities offered by municipalities for people to retain their benefits while studying. In practice, municipalities take very different approaches to offering this possibility. They can, however, expressly choose to do so (see box 5).

**Box 5: Specific policy framework for permit holders**

Amsterdam has pursued a specific policy for refugees for a number of years. Every new permit holder follows a three-month language and orientation programme (*Taal en Oriëntatie voor Vluchtelingen*, or TOV for short). Refugees with a higher education also have the possibility of following a course via the UAF. The assistance provided by the UAF is financed by the municipality, which also permits refugees who are not entitled to a study grant to retain their benefits while studying. Amsterdam also plans to introduce a combined programme of civic integration and vocational education at the level of the first and second years of secondary vocational education. It will be a continuous course, linked to the TOV programme, commencing immediately after the permit holder settles in the municipality. The refugees will complete the combined programme after three years. The vocational courses will only be given in professions that are relevant for the labour market. This initiative is targeted at a large group of new permit holders.

**Route 3: labour market activation**

There is a substantial group of permit holders who are at an even greater disadvantage in the labour market. For various reasons, matching them directly with work is not an option. Various activities are required to activate these newcomers and facilitate their integration if they are to have any prospect of finding paid work. Some refugees also have socio-psychological problems that need to be addressed since they form a barrier to finding work.

There are various ways in which municipalities can improve their efforts to facilitate the integration of members of this group into the labour market:

- municipalities can assume an executive role in the civic integration of permit holders by providing advice about programmes and monitoring their progress, so that the integration process can be linked more closely to activating permit holders and facilitating their integration into the labour market;
- municipalities can experiment with the use of dual programmes, whereby the permit holder personally finances the language component of a programme with a government loan;

- municipalities can hire specialised account managers with a smaller case load to act as intermediaries between the permit holder and interested employers;
- municipalities can provide counselling for permit holders on the work floor, for example by providing a job coach who can help in resolving specific problems or conflicts;
- municipalities can collaborate at regional level, if necessary also with specialist organisations such as the Dutch Council for Refugees.

Some municipalities are already investing additional funds in programmes for asylum seekers with residence status. They include Amsterdam, with its language and orientation programme for all new permit holders (see box 5) and Amersfoort (see box 6). The hope is that these additional funds will accelerate the process of integration of permit holders and hence reduce the risk of their becoming dependent on social assistance benefits.

**Box 6: Consolidation of civic integration and career advice**

The municipality of Amersfoort has delegated responsibility for providing counselling and career advice and for the civic integration programme to NVA (*Nederlands spreken Voor Anderstaligen*, Dutch for Non-Native Speakers), a regional centre for permanent civic integration. This means that the municipality has outsourced the labour market integration component of its policy for permit holders to NVA. NVA employs seven professional career counsellors. The counselling is provided parallel to the civic integration programme (activities are offered simultaneously, but are geared to the language teaching), so that permit holders can gain work experience while still following the civic integration programme. NVA provides guidance for approximately a hundred persons every year.

**Route 4: social participation**

Not all permit holders will ultimately secure a place in the Dutch labour market. Some will not be able to find a job, while others, for various reasons, will not look for paid work. Many municipalities are particularly concerned about this group because of the serious risk that people without a paid job will not properly integrate. These permit holders rely to a great extent on the local social policy. In addition, there are funds available by virtue of their statutory task of providing social supervision. The performance of that task is usually delegated to the local branches of the Dutch Council for Refugees.

A majority of the municipalities said that they do not have sufficient resources to adequately help this group of asylum seekers move forward. Respondents also stressed that they do not really have a clear picture of these permit holders. This group is generally reached with general measures, but several respondents wondered whether such measures are targeted enough to really meet the needs of the group. Although there are extra funds available for the purpose of providing social supervision, they are not regarded as adequate.

Many municipalities therefore supplement that budget from their own funds. In the administrative agreement concluded between the central government and the municipalities on 27 November 2015 in response to the increased number of asylum seekers, the subsidy per permit holder was increased from € 1,000 to € 2,370 for 2016 and 2017. These are one-off payments to the municipalities.<sup>28</sup>

Accordingly, the plans recently announced by the government partly address the aforementioned problems.<sup>29</sup> The government will invest more in social counselling, thereby also providing an extra stimulus for the integration of permit holders. The government also intends to implement the ‘participation declaration’ nationwide, as an element of the mandatory civic integration course, thus giving the municipalities another executive task to perform.

The evaluation of the pilot project with the participation declaration demonstrated that this policy enables municipalities to improve the integration of permit holders in various ways, for example by actively bringing them into contact with local civil-society organisations, such as welfare institutions and voluntary organisations, and with relevant suppliers of language courses (Witkamp et al. 2015). This depends, however, on municipalities organising local initiatives that promote participation to supplement the mandatory elements of the participation declaration that apply nationally, in particular the requirements that permit holders sign the declaration and follow a course on Dutch standards and values.

### 3.3 PUBLIC ORDER AND CREATING PUBLIC SUPPORT

The issue of crime was scarcely mentioned during the interviews at local level. None of the municipalities investigated regarded nuisance caused by permit holders as a structural or unmanageable problem.

Respondents referred to (very) rare incidents.

This is understandable in light of the earlier analysis (see section 2.2): the numbers of permit holders in municipalities are still small in relation to the total populations. Reference was also made to the fact that permit holders, in contrast to most other non-Western migrants, are seldom concentrated in a single area.

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28. See <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/11/27/kamerbrief-over-bestuursakkoord-verhoogde-asielinstroom>.

29. Letter of 27 November 2015 from the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment to the President of the House of Representatives of the States-General. Integration and Participation of permit holders. Reference: 2015-0000298184.

Municipalities draw attention mainly to the need to create public support for the housing of permit holders. They are evidently acutely aware of the threat of discontent among residents in neighbourhoods with a rapidly growing population of asylum migrants. In some municipalities, in particular the initial reception of asylum migrants has caused anxiety.

That was the case in Rotterdam, for example, where the arrival of a large group of asylum migrants in temporary shelters triggered quite a passionate response. The municipality stresses that this was due to a number of factors: the large number of persons, the residential concentration of the group and the speed with which the emergency shelter had to be arranged. Rotterdam has not experienced any significant problems with regard to the small-scale and less concentrated housing of permit holders.

## 4 NO TIME TO LOSE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCELERATING THE INTEGRATION OF PERMIT HOLDERS

The Netherlands faces the challenge of guiding the growing group of permit holders to a place in society as quickly as possible. The analysis of the recent past reveals two important reasons for that: (1) the low participation rate of permit holders in the labour market; and (2) the fact that many of them will remain

in the Netherlands for a lengthy period.<sup>30</sup> The analysis of the recent past further shows that the labour participation rate is particularly low during the initial period of their stay in the Netherlands. There is room for improvement in that regard.

At the end of November, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment sent a letter to parliament setting out proposals for measures designed to promote the rapid integration and active participation of asylum seekers.<sup>31</sup> The recommendations in this policy brief follow the same line. They advocate a greater role for municipalities, improvements in the implementation of existing measures and the adoption of additional measures.

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30. Countries like Germany (Thränhardt 2015), Sweden (Bevelander and Pendakur 2014) and the UK (Phillimore 2011; Bakker 2016) are also struggling with the integration of asylum migrants into the labour and housing markets.

31. Letter of 27 November 2015 from the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment to the President of the House of Representatives of the States-General. Integration and participation of permit holders. Reference: 2015-0000298184. See also the letter from the Minister of Housing and the Central Government Sector of 27 November 2015. Housing of permit holders. House of Representatives, reference: 2015-0000708166.

Some of the measures outlined below are already being implemented in practice. They mainly concern housing and facilitation of integration into the labour market. There is no need for a new approach towards combating crime among permit holders. It has to be recognised that – given the relatively large proportion of young men among them – the crime rate among permit holders is higher than among the average inhabitants of the Netherlands, but it is not necessary to adopt specific policies to address the crime rate among permit holders. The regular policing policy is sufficient.

### *Role of municipalities: more control*

With the new policy on civic integration (since 1 January 2013), the role of the municipalities in directing the process of integration disappeared. Municipalities have transformed their integration policies into general policies and budgets for the integration of specific groups have disappeared (Scholten 2015). Municipalities observe that permit holders are late in starting the process of civic integration and that there is now scarcely any investment in dual or combined programmes of learning and working. The role of the municipalities should be strengthened in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of integration programmes.

Their role should be expanded in a number of ways. An important first step is for municipalities to gain an insight into the characteristics and aspirations of permit holders, which they can then use to provide specific advice to permit holders about integration and the language course they should follow. The municipality would then periodically monitor their progress. Secondly, the participation declaration is going to be made a mandatory element of the civic integration exam under the Civic Integration Act. This will create opportunities for establishing contact with permit holders who have moved into the municipality. The evaluation of the pilot project with the participation declaration showed that participating municipalities can use this policy to improve the integration of permit holders (Witkamp et al. 2015). Thirdly, in the coming years additional funds will be made available to municipalities to provide social counselling for permit holders, which could also help to strengthen the role of the municipalities. Fourthly, municipalities can play a role in designing dual programmes of learning and working by securing the involvement of local employers. Finally, municipalities can play a more active role in helping particularly disadvantaged groups to gain access to the labour market.

A more active role for the municipalities reflects the trend towards decentralisation and constitutes acknowledgement of the fact that it is the municipalities that are feeling the effects of the current asylum problems most severely. It is therefore logical that they should assume greater control. That does not imply any lessening of the permit holders' personal responsibility. They have the same duties as other citizens to endeavour to support

themselves. Other parties also have a role to play, including the central government, employers, educational institutions, housing associations, civil-society organisations (including the Dutch Council for Refugees), the COA, refugee organisations and volunteers.

### ***No time to lose (1): make use of the period spent in the asylum centres***

Asylum seekers could already engage in activities that will help in their future participation in society during the period they are awaiting a decision on whether they qualify for a residence permit (ACVZ 2013). Adults who are awaiting their residence permit are already allowed to start learning Dutch with the help of volunteers. Policymakers are currently (end of 2015) reviewing whether the possibilities for learning Dutch during the asylum procedure can be expanded. In view of the importance of proficiency in Dutch for schooling and work, this is an important objective. The asylum applications of a large proportion of the current asylum seekers will be granted, which justifies early investment in learning the Dutch language. There are a great many volunteers who are willing to help permit holders to learn the language. They could perform a great service by teaching asylum seekers the basic principles of the Dutch language during the asylum procedure.<sup>32</sup>

It is also worth considering amending the conditions under which refugees without residence status are allowed to work and expanding the possibilities or the room for municipalities to experiment in that regard (Municipality of Amsterdam 2015: 3). What is proposed is both shortening the period of six months before a work permit will be issued and increasing the current maximum period of 24 weeks that a refugee without asylum status is allowed to work.

Asylum seekers are allowed to perform voluntary work during the asylum procedure. Organisations that wish to employ their services can apply to the UWV for a permit to perform voluntary work. This possibility could be more widely publicised. The period that permit holders, i.e., asylum seekers with a residence permit, have to remain in the central asylum centres could also be employed more effectively. Early identification of their level of education, mental health, work experience and their likely route to participation (see section 3.2) could be conducive to their rapid integration.

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32. Underage asylum seekers are entitled to schooling from three months after they have been granted asylum until such time as an expulsion order is issued against them or their parents. They should receive schooling under similar conditions as children from member states (ACVZ 2013).

### ***No time to lose (2): accelerate the process of housing permit holders***

Integration begins with housing. Permit holders with their own home are better able to concentrate on schooling, work and integration. The task, therefore, is to expand the housing stock as quickly as possible. This will call for innovative solutions. In addition to forms of independent housing, various types of temporary and shared accommodation will be required. The experience gained with the construction of dwellings for temporary labour migrants will be useful in that respect.

Housing on a small scale, dispersal of permit holders and a good mix of residents are important principles for effective integration in a neighbourhood.<sup>33</sup> Municipalities should also engage residents with the plans for their neighbourhood by keeping them informed from an early stage and assigning them a role in the plans. It is also important to prevent displacement of residents by permit holders in the social housing sector. This is important for generating public support, especially with growing numbers of permit holders in the near future.

### ***No time to lose (3): choose a parallel approach***

Another way of sustaining the pace of the integration process is to formulate approaches in which learning the language, receiving schooling and searching for work occur simultaneously rather than after each other. A parallel approach is clearly preferable to a sequential approach. The municipality of Amersfoort combines civic integration and assistance in finding work (see box 6). Amsterdam allows permit holders to study and follow the civic integration programme at the same time. This is a double-edged sword: the language is learned more quickly and the process of integration is accelerated.

### ***No time to lose (4): regularly screen the data on social assistance benefits***

Every effort should be made to prevent the number of permit holders receiving social assistance benefits from rising too far. Nevertheless, given the weak labour market position of some of the permit holders, the number of new claimants of social assistance will rise substantially. Permit holders are entitled to social assistance benefits. They have the same rights and obligations as native Dutch citizens, and are thus also subject to the assessments and obligations arising from the Participation Act, such as the requirement to apply for jobs or training and the assessment of their personal assets and the partner's income. Because many permit holders will be dependent on social assistance benefits, it is worth considering conducting periodic analyses of the database of recipients of social assistance benefits in

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33. Genderhof in Eindhoven recently received the inspiration prize Flexwonen 2015 from minister Blok. Genderhof is a complex shared by a number of target groups (senior citizens, EU labour migrants, permit holders and students).



order to establish how many permit holders are finding work and whether there are any discrepancies between that group and other groups of migrants and native Dutch claimants. If fewer permit holders are leaving the welfare rolls, it could be a reason to formulate specific policies for permit holders.

### ***No time to lose (5): encourage the earning of a Dutch diploma***

The recognition of diplomas is not without its problems. Educational institutions do not always accept recommendations and permit holders often have to enter a programme at a lower level. The first step, therefore, is a rapid procedure for the recognition of diplomas. Some educational institutions are also taking initiatives to improve the fit between the teaching and the background of permit holders by offering a year-long preparatory course during which the students improve their knowledge of the Dutch language and prepare for the course they will start in the following year. Some municipalities also allow permit holders who are not entitled to a study grant to continue receiving social assistance benefits while they are studying, which means that permit holders over the age of 30 receive financial support while they are following a course. The activities developed by the municipality of Amsterdam in this context (see box 5) could serve as a model for other municipalities.

### ***No time to lose (6): take into account the availability of work***

The current policy of dispersing permit holders leads to an imperfect matching of demand and supply in the labour market.<sup>34</sup> In principle, permit holders are dispersed throughout the Netherlands without regard to whether there is any work available for them locally. It is worth considering improving the match between permit holders and regional labour markets (see box 4 about Eindhoven). Bevelander and Lundh (2007) have shown for Sweden that asylum migrants have a greater chance of finding paid work if they are living in areas with low unemployment and relatively strong demand for unskilled workers.

### ***No time to lose (7): bring relevant parties together***

The present challenge is to develop functional networks that consolidate the expertise required to help permit holders find work or equip them for the labour market in an efficient manner. The policy measures that are needed should fall within the framework of general policy: not policies for specific target groups, but ‘targeting within universalism’. The situation in Eindhoven (see box 4), where the municipality, the COA, the Dutch Council for Refugees and the UWV have joined forces, is a good example of what we envisage. The method they employ is a way of improving the match between supply and demand

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34. See also the appeal by Hans Sondaal (acting chairman of the ACVZ) in *Het Financieel Dagblad* on 14 September 2015, <http://fd.nl/opinie/1118397/geef-vreemdeling-een-woning-in-een-regio-waar-werk-is>.

in the labour market. This is relatively problematic for permit holders because of their disadvantaged position in the labour market, the absence of functional networks and the ‘trepidation’ of employers. Projects in which job hunting and headhunting converge are therefore promising: employers reporting vacancies, a UWV office or an employment agency putting forward candidates and a facilitating party. The municipality could perform the latter role.

Persons from a permit holder’s own ethnic group and (emerging) refugee organisations can also assist in the implementation of integration policy and in creating support in the local population. However, that will probably require some investment, since those organisations will require some financial assistance if they are to be able to play a role in the successful integration of the group. In Rotterdam (see box 2) refugees are employed as ‘buddies’ to help other refugees in the civic integration process.

The *community* - churches and civil-society organisations, for instance – also has an important role to play in the reception of asylum migrants. These organisations can make a significant contribution in the integration process, for example by providing assistance in the civic integration programme. Various projects have been launched around the country with volunteers teaching Dutch to permit holders. Business organisations (such as the Chamber of Commerce and regional and local branches of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (*Verbond Nederlandse Ondernemingen - Nederlands Christelijk Werkgeversverbond*, VNO-NCW) and employment agencies could also conceivably be involved in labour market projects. In short, there are numerous parties that could play a role in creating effective and practical networks.

None of these recommendations can be implemented from one day to the next. There is, however, no time to lose. Many citizens are concerned about the large influx of asylum seekers. And many citizens are willing to help in efforts to accelerate the pace of integration of permit holders. It is crucial to take full advantage of this positive sentiment, since public support for the asylum policy will depend heavily on the extent to which permit holders are able to support themselves and make a contribution to Dutch society.

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## APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

### **Asylum seeker**

A person who has made an application for admission as a refugee.

### **Asylum migrant**

An asylum seeker, permit holder or invited refugee who is entered in the municipal register of births, deaths and marriages.

### **Permit holder**

An asylum seeker whose request has been granted and who has been granted (legal) residence status.

### **Refugee**

A non-Dutch national who has come to the Netherlands and of whom it has been established on the basis of the Geneva Convention on Refugees of 1951 that he or she has a valid fear of persecution in the country of origin because of religious or political persuasion, nationality, race or membership of a particular social group.

### **Non-Western migrant**

Migrant whose country of origin is one of the countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia (excluding Indonesia and Japan) or Turkey.

Source: CBS, <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/bevolking/links/2012-bt-btmve-begrippenlijst-buitenlandse-migratie.htm>

## APPENDIX 2: ABBREVIATIONS

ACVZ	Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs
CBS	Statistics Netherlands
COA	Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers
EP-Nuffic	European Platform - Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation
EUR	Erasmus University Rotterdam
EVRM	European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
GBA	Municipal Personal Records Database
Halt	Dutch organisation to prevent and combat juvenile crime
Hbo	Universities of applied sciences
HKS	Dutch police database in which persons are registered between the ages of 12 and 60 who have been officially reported as a suspect in the commission of a crime
Mbo	Senior secondary vocational education
NVA	Dutch for Non-Native Speakers
SCP	The Netherlands Institute for Social Research
SER	The Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands
SSB	The Dutch System of Social Statistics
SZW	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
TOV	Language and orientation programme for refugees
UAF	University Assistance Fund, Foundation for Refugee Students
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UWV	Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body
VNG	Association of Netherlands Municipalities
VNO-NCW	Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers
Vw	Netherlands Aliens Act
Wo	University education
WODC	Ministry of Security and Justice's Research and Documentation Centre
WRR	The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy