

# Support Fund for the Reception and Integration of immigrants and their Educational Support

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## The situation in the Netherlands

In the past few years the Dutch discussion about integration has taken on a new form, in response to international and national developments. The Dutch government believes that the worlds of native and non-native citizens have become too segregated in the Netherlands and that this has led to an increasing sense of unease.

The government has expressed its view in the Memorandum On Integration Policy 2007-2011, which has as guiding principle: Be A Part Of Society! In this memorandum, the government points out responsibilities as well as obligations. For the next few years the focus will be on safety, addressing citizens with regard to common interests, rights and obligations (reciprocity), and active citizenship.

The government realises that part of the problem regarding the issue of integration has to do with the chemistry between citizens. There is not much the government can do to change this. All it can do is offer opportunities and remove obstacles to those who are prepared to accept their own responsibility. For this reason the government intends, over the next few years, to improve the conditions for active citizenship, social emancipation and social integration in numerous fields. These measures are set forth in the action plan in the Memorandum On Integration Policy 2007-2011 (see appendix). The action plan describes the twelve fields in which measures will be taken.

One major priority is to improve and enhance the scope of civic integration. Furthermore, the Netherlands has made an extra effort in the past five years to emancipate and integrate women from ethnic minorities. In part because a large section of this group participates little in Dutch society and in part because they may play a crucial role in the emancipation and integration of their families.

Below we will discuss how civic integration and special attention for the participation of women from ethnic minorities are shaped.

## Current situation regarding the civic integration in the Netherlands

There have been many developments in the past few years. We will set forth the existing situation, based on three key questions that are essential for developing a government policy:

1. How do we pay attention to the diversity within the various groups of newcomers?
2. How can we effectively and efficiently realise activities aimed at civic integration?
3. How can we ensure that newcomers continue to participate in the future as well?

### 1. How do we pay attention to the diversity within the various groups of newcomers?

#### *History of civic integration in the Netherlands*

The history of legislation and activities in the field of civic integration may be briefly summed up as follows:

- Prior to 1995 a wide range of activities was offered at a decentralised level. Schools and voluntary organisations in particular offered courses and civic integration programmes. The central government did not set explicit requirements or exit terms for these activities.
- In 1995 the Civic Integration of Newcomers Act ("WIN") entered into force. New immigrants were obliged to follow a civic integration course. This course included language instruction and orientation on Dutch society and was concluded with a test (the "Profile Test"). The test provided an indication of the acquired exit level of the Dutch language skills. The target level was a language skill at A2 level, according to the CEFR<sup>1</sup>, but no mandatory exit level. These activities were funded by the central government.
- As from 2006 immigrants who wish to come to the Netherlands have to pass a mandatory Dutch language test in their own country before they are allowed to come to the Netherlands. The test is taken in electronic form and requires a basic level of Dutch language skills (A1, according to the CEFR and basic knowledge of Dutch society.
- In 2007 the Civic Integration Act ("WI") entered into force. This act prescribes an obligation to integrate for both new immigrants and immigrants who have already lived in the Netherlands for some time. The act prescribes a basic level of language skills of A2 (new immigrants) and A1 (reading and writing) and A2 (speaking, listening and conducting conversations) for migrants who have lived in the Netherlands for some time. Immigrants who fail to comply with these requirements will be offered a civic integration programme. The activities are coordinated by the local authorities and funded by the government. The government had a civic integration examination developed. Testing is coordinated and registered centrally.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Common European Framework of Reference

<sup>2</sup> There is an ample budget available for executing the trajectories each year. Major difficulty is finding sufficient newcomers for the civil integration programme; there is no centralised registration of acquired language levels, nor are residents labelled as newcomer in the municipalities in which they live.

*Three alternatives for civic integration*

The government's aim is to adjust the civic integration programme as much as possible to the competences, knowledge, experiences and future (intended situation or profession) of the immigrant.

The notion behind developing various programmes is that Dutch society should profit from the immigrant's wishes and abilities to all possible extent. Highly educated immigrants should be given the opportunity to work at an advanced (professional) level. Highly ambitious immigrants will have a stronger motivation to learn hard in order to realise their ambitions.

Three alternatives are currently offered<sup>3</sup>:

- I. The civic integration examination: adapted to newcomers with very little education and varying knowledge of Dutch society (new and 'long stay' immigrants);
- II. The state examination NT2: this examination focuses on being able to function in the labour market and has two variants: programme I for newcomers (with secondary vocational education + perhaps working experience in their native country) and programme II for highly educated immigrants (advanced vocational education/university level).
- III. Vocational training qualification: intended for immigrants who never completed their secondary (vocational) education in the Netherlands and for immigrants who completed vocational education + have working experience in their native country, especially if the diploma is not recognised in the Netherlands and additional instruction is desirable. (Younger school dropouts, but also 'second generation and longer stay' immigrants)

## 2. How can we effectively and efficiently realise activities aimed at civic integration?

In the Netherlands (as well as in other countries) a lot of experience has been gained in the past decades with language programmes for adult immigrants, specifically in and aimed at the work place. These experiences have provided useful insight for developing efficient and effective civic integration programmes, such as:

- the content of language and knowledge classes must be functional;
- the chosen subjects must be related to a specific goal;
- the classes must be rich in context;
- the methodology must offer ample room for practical exercises;
- all activities (language teaching, gathering knowledge, gaining practical experience, training and orientation) must form an integrated package, and must be harmonised as regards organisation and content.

These insights form the basis for both the civic integration examinations and for many civic integration programmes that are developed and put into practice in the Netherlands.

<sup>3</sup> Not all local authorities apply the three alternatives optimally. The advantage of offering suitable civic integration programmes is still being expounded.

### *The civic integration examination*

The principal issues when developing the civic integrations examination were to stimulate participation in society and to better adapt to the intended situation of the immigrant. Adaption to the intended situation is realised by working with profiles.

The following profiles exist:

- Profile Work for immigrants who intend to work;
- Profile OGO (Upbringing, Health and Education) for immigrants who will primarily be concerned with raising children.<sup>4</sup>

Participation is stimulated by prescribing a specific civic integration programme that addresses the situation represented by the profile. The newcomer is tested on these specific, practical situations.

Participation is stimulated by the way the examination – which comprises an (electronic) element and a decentralised element – is set up.

The decentralised element offers the possibility to compile a file containing evidence of participation in Dutch society. Another possibility is to make assessments, or a combination of making assessments and compiling a file.

This decentralised testing means that the immigrant can be introduced to numerous situations and persons in society already during the civic integration programme. This allows the newcomer to gather knowledge and to practice his language skills in real-life situations. At the same time, society has the opportunity to become acquainted with the newcomer and to inform him about how Dutch society, in all its facets, actually operates.<sup>5</sup>

### *The civic integration programmes*

In cities where many immigrants live, more women than men participate in civic integration programmes. Female participation has been a spearhead of Dutch politics and the government's policy for some years.

In order to give an impression of the activities that are organised in preparation of the civic integration examination, we give a description of the programme for the OGO Profile (Upbringing). This programme is attended mainly by women.

The mandatory civic integration programme Upbringing of the examination comprises 23 practical situations that are relevant for people concerned with raising children.

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<sup>4</sup> Two new profiles, Participation in Society and Entrepreneurship are in preparation.

<sup>5</sup> Note that involving enterprises, organisations and government bodies at local level can be hard. Not every one of these entities is prepared to offer assistance for practising the language and for gathering information. Fortunately, however, positive examples are increasingly found.

The situations are divided over three domains/topics:

1. Citizenship (10 situations). E.g.: applying for a passport, renting a house, taking out insurance, opening a bank account.
2. Looking for work (3 situations). E.g.: searching for openings, requesting information about a vacancy, having a job interview.
3. Upbringing, health and education (11 situations). E.g.: visiting a GP or the child health centre, talking with the primary school teacher about one's child, visiting the dentist with one's child, joining a library or sports club.

The civic integration activities are always aimed at a specific situation. For instance the practical situation: *talking with the primary school teacher about one's child*.

The activities will include:

- preparation for this type of talk (offering a context);
- discussing experiences and existing knowledge (making use of what the newcomer already knows or is able to do);
- learning the relevant vocabulary and sentences for this conversation (learning the proper language for this situation);
- practising the conversation in a class situation (finger exercises);
- practical execution (a test conversation with the teacher);
- gathering evidence for the examination file (final practical assignment).

As a result the preparation for the civic integration examination will seamlessly cross to the final examination itself. The fact that the programme is aimed at the future or (with regard to long stay immigrants) the existing situation ensures that the newcomer is highly motivated and that the speed of learning is high and the results are good. The higher the degree in which the activities are integrated in the programme, the more effective and efficient the civic integration investment proves to be.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. How can we ensure that newcomers continue to participate in the future as well?

In the existing situation the change from the civic integration programme to a real and especially long-term participation in society does not always turn out to be successfully made.

It is certainly the case that the explicit profiles of the civic integration examination help the immigrant to get on the right track to realise his goals faster. He acquires knowledge and language skills that are specifically aimed at his own (desired) future situation. However, this does not guarantee that every newcomer will find a work experience place, training place or paid job.

Immigrants following the Work profile are usually transferred to reintegration and mediation organisations and sometimes have to follow a long and arduous route before they finally find a job. For higher educated immigrants and refugees specialised programmes exist, as well as

<sup>6</sup> Currently, the quality of the civil integration programmes the local authorities purchase from third parties is a point of worry in the Netherlands. No universal instrument to test the quality of programmes, educational methods and teachers currently exists.

specific reintegration and participation programmes that may be followed after the civic integration is completed. Local authorities face the challenge to offer a comprehensive approach in order to prevent that a newcomer ends up at the employment office after he has completed the civic integration trajectory. We are highly interested in the experiences and practices of the other EU Member States with respect to this last link towards long-term participation.

#### *Women who wish to enter the labour market*

The development in the Netherlands of initiatives aimed specifically at women is rather interesting. Not only do the civic integration programmes turn out to be mainly attended by women, but many, especially younger, women show a growing ambition – both during their integration and thereafter – to not only raise their children but also to eventually find work. They often express the wish, as soon as the home situation allows this, to actively participate in society. This wish is partially motivated by economic necessity; often, the partners of these women are unemployed. But apart from this necessity there is certainly a growing need for personal development and more independence. A number of women also express a wish to follow a vocational training.

On the other hand demand for employment is growing. Due to the ageing population there threatens to be a shortage of workers in the foreseeable future. This is another reason why the Dutch government is eager to stimulate and make it easy for non-native women to enter the labour market.

#### *Tools for the participation of women*

It is found that an effective tool for making the step to finding a job easier is stimulating volunteer work. By supporting women in finding volunteer work, they are given the opportunity to get used – in a less formal situation and often also working fewer hours – to the implications of working. This turns out to be an ideal intermediate step for women from ethnic minorities who want to do more than bringing up the children and become an employee and fully-fledged participant in the labour market.

Projects for women education and participation turn out to be highly successful. The participants are trained to become “neighbourhood contact women”; in this position they make contact with other women from ethnic minority groups in their own neighbourhood who have not yet been “activated”. They accompany women to language courses and activities that will result in (more) social participation and in becoming more independent in society. The training for certified neighbourhood contact woman is a firm step for these women towards a permanent job and additional (vocational) training. This approach is currently brought to the attention of the local authorities as an initiative to increase participation – especially in the labour market – of women from ethnic minority groups that is likely to succeed.

## Points of discussion after comparison with the Spanish policy framework

1. The first thing we note about the Spanish policy framework is that a clear choice has been made for a strong focus on “reception” and “education”. The budget is spent mostly on education.

In the Netherlands education is also regarded as the vehicle for emancipating the second generation and following, but less prominently so than in Spain. In the Netherlands the emphasis is more on pre and early school education, with the focus on children with a language deficiency and preventing school dropout.

We are interested in hearing what specific results have been obtained in Spain as a result of this strong emphasis on education. What can we learn from this?

2. The discussion regarding the coordination and execution of the policy is highly recognisable. In the Netherlands frameworks for emancipation, integration and civic integration are adopted nationwide, whereas the execution takes place at local level. With respect to the actual filling in, covenants are often concluded between the government and the local authorities. There is a risk (which has actually occurred) that separate agreements are made with municipalities on different subjects. Despite interdepartmental cooperation it continues to be difficult to prepare an integrated plan for integration with municipalities based on clear financing. This is caused by the fact that various policy topics (e.g. civic integration, reintegration, emancipation, education) are the responsibility of various departments and that they involve different budgets.

It is endeavoured, based on the emancipation policy for women from ethnic minority groups, to create an integrated programme, in cooperation with the municipalities. Headed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and in cooperation with the Ministries of Social Affairs and Employment, the Directorate General for Housing, Communities and Integration; the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, the municipalities execute the programme “Thousand-And-One Strengths”. This programme bundles various forces in order to create a continuous chain aimed at the participation of women from ethnic minority groups. Directed by the municipalities, separate projects are brought together, causing them to move up from civic integration to participation/volunteer work to labour participation (if necessary through reintegration trajectories). The ministries involved make extra funds available to the municipalities and adapt their policies to this programme.

Another measure through which the government wishes to induce the municipalities to adopt an integrated execution of the integration and participation policy is by implementing a participation budget (starting in 2009). This budget consolidates the funding for civic integration, reintegration and adult education, allowing the municipalities to offer their clients integrated, tailor-made solutions without having to consider different funding mechanisms.

3. We note that only a small amount of the Spanish integration budget is spent on activities that are specifically aimed at women. What are the views of the participants in the Peer Review on the focus on women in the Dutch policy?

## Other questions/comments

- What exactly is meant in the Spanish policy framework by 'reception'? Does this include civic integration trajectories, with such components as language and knowledge of society? An explicit definition of the concept would be helpful here.
- What is the exit level of the language instruction? Is it sufficiently high to allow the immigrants to participate in society?

## APPENDIX 1

### MEMORANDUM ON INTEGRATION 2007-2011: MEASURES AND ACTIONS GOVERNMENT INTEGRATION POLICY ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS

1. **Improving and extending the reach of civic integration by a “Deltaplan” for civic integration**
  - Simplified regulation, giving up the fine distinction between various categories of newcomers, as this has made it more difficult to enact the Civic Integration Act.
  - Better adaptation of trajectories and programmes to varying capacities and ambitions of newcomers.
  - Civic integration to focus on participation. Combining civic integration with work and language instruction, volunteer work, upbringing support. Involving non-native citizens in civic integration.
  - Increasing the didactic qualities of civic integration programmes by introducing science-based didactic innovations.
  - Increase the reach through extra funding.
  
2. **Education, vehicle for emancipation of the second generation**
  - Improving the quality and increasing the reach of pre and early school education. Aim is to reach 100% of target group in 2011.
  - Extending the number of “broad schools”. Setting up broad schools in each of the 40 identified problematic neighbourhoods. Important for developing knowledge of the world. A key factor in language development, and for being successful at school.
  - Extra language instruction in intermediate classes and increasing the expertise of teachers as regards language methods for students with a language deficiency.
  - Increased attention for preventing school dropout in the OCW project “School Dropout Prevention”.
  - Implementation of transfer of citizenship and social integration in education.
  
3. **Increased labour participation**
  - Labour participation of non-Western, non-native citizens, presently 51%, must increase at least to such extent that the difference with native citizens in 2011 is reduced.
  - Jobs for people who have difficulties entering the labour market. Most non-Western, non-native people who are currently unemployed belong to this group.

- Fighting discrimination on the labour market, together with social partners. Introducing a “discrimination monitor”. An information campaign is scheduled for next year.
- Improving job application skills and the skills to prepare oneself for the labour market. To be addressed both in vocational education and in the reintegration trajectories.
- Agreements at local/regional level between municipalities, enterprises, educational institutions and employment finders on how to get non-native people to work.
- Government policy on diversification, with the action plan Integrated Diversification Policy and stimulating diversification policies at enterprises and institutions by way of a nationwide diversification network policy.
- Stimulating entrepreneurship (at present there are some 70,000 non-native entrepreneurs), by way of the action plan New Entrepreneurship.

#### 4. Citizenship, contact, and dialogue

- Soliciting and supporting active citizenship based on diversity.
- Increasing the transfer of citizenship and social integration in education.
- Further outlining the Responsible Citizenship Charter (BVK).
- Stimulating cooperation between non-native and native citizens in shared projects.
- Stimulating interest in and knowledge of Dutch history and culture among non-native citizens.
- Stimulate contact through sport, with the programme ‘Involving non-native youths through sports’.
- Supporting 500 sports clubs to increase participation of non-native youths in organised sports.
- • Maintaining contact with ethnic and religious umbrella organisations.

#### 5. Fighting racism and discrimination

- Nationwide network of anti-discrimination measures.
- Statutory task for municipalities to offer citizens access to anti-discrimination measures.
- Information campaign to inform citizens about the possibilities for reporting discrimination.
- Integrated action plan for fighting racism.

## 6. Women: activation; fighting honour-related violence

- Concluding agreements with municipalities to support local initiatives to teach ethnic women to stand up for themselves and for their personal development.
- Offering support to ethnic women, via Deltaplan "civic integration", with respect to upbringing and labour participation, via dual trajectories.
- Involving 50,000 non-native women in volunteer work through the "Thousand-and-One Strengths" project.
- Reducing honour-related violence through framework programme "On the right side of honour".
- Bringing about a change of mentality and behaviour regarding honour-related violence in cooperation with ethnic minority organisations.
- Implementation of Multi-Ethnic Policing to deal with honour-related matters.

## 7. Prevent segregation; community approach

- Improving living, learning, working, safety, and integration in neighbourhoods that house many different ethnic majorities and circumstances that prevent development: the community approach.
- Reducing segregation by ensuring more variety in housing, through urban restructuring. Funds will be made available to the municipalities.
- More possibilities for low-income groups to find housing in neighbouring municipalities.
- Regulating the settlement of low-income groups in problematic neighbourhoods.

## 8. Youth: action plan 'Diversity in youth policy'

- Increasing the reach of youth affairs institutions among ethnic youths.
- Increasing the know-how of professionals in dealing with ethnic youths.
- Disseminating youth work methodologies designed for ethnic youths.

## 9. Specific programmes for Antilleans and Moroccans

- Taskforce for improving the local approach as regards Antillean youths who cause problems.
- Acquiring know-how and approaches that really work against Antillean and Moroccan youths.
- Continuation of firm repressive action against youths who cross the line.

- Introducing an approach that is more geared towards the specific characteristics of Antillean and Moroccan youths and rehabilitation of perpetrators.
- Cooperation with the Antillean authorities to contain the ongoing migration of problems.

#### 10. Fighting polarisation and radicalisation

- Implementing the "Action Plan Polarisation and Radicalisation".
- Isolating, containing and reversing polarisation and radicalisation at an early stage.
- Increasing defiance against radical messages and embedding groups who are susceptible to radicalisation in society.
- Strengthening the competences of professionals and administrators who work with youths.

#### 11. New immigrants from Eastern Europe

- Development causes worries; should be closely monitored.
- Discussing the civic integration of Eastern European employees with employers.
- Acquiring more information through research.
- Position will be made clear by mid-2009.

#### 12. Cooperation with municipalities

- Since mid-2008, the government and municipalities have a shared agenda regarding integration policy.
- This agenda provides an analysis and vision on integration, contains a specification of priorities for policy and sets forth the common position in matters such as dealing with migrant organisations, subsidy policy, dealing with segregation.