



VIOLETTA GUL-RECHLEWICZ

REFUGEE CRISIS
AND THE ROLES
OF LEADING NGOs
IN THE NETHERLANDS

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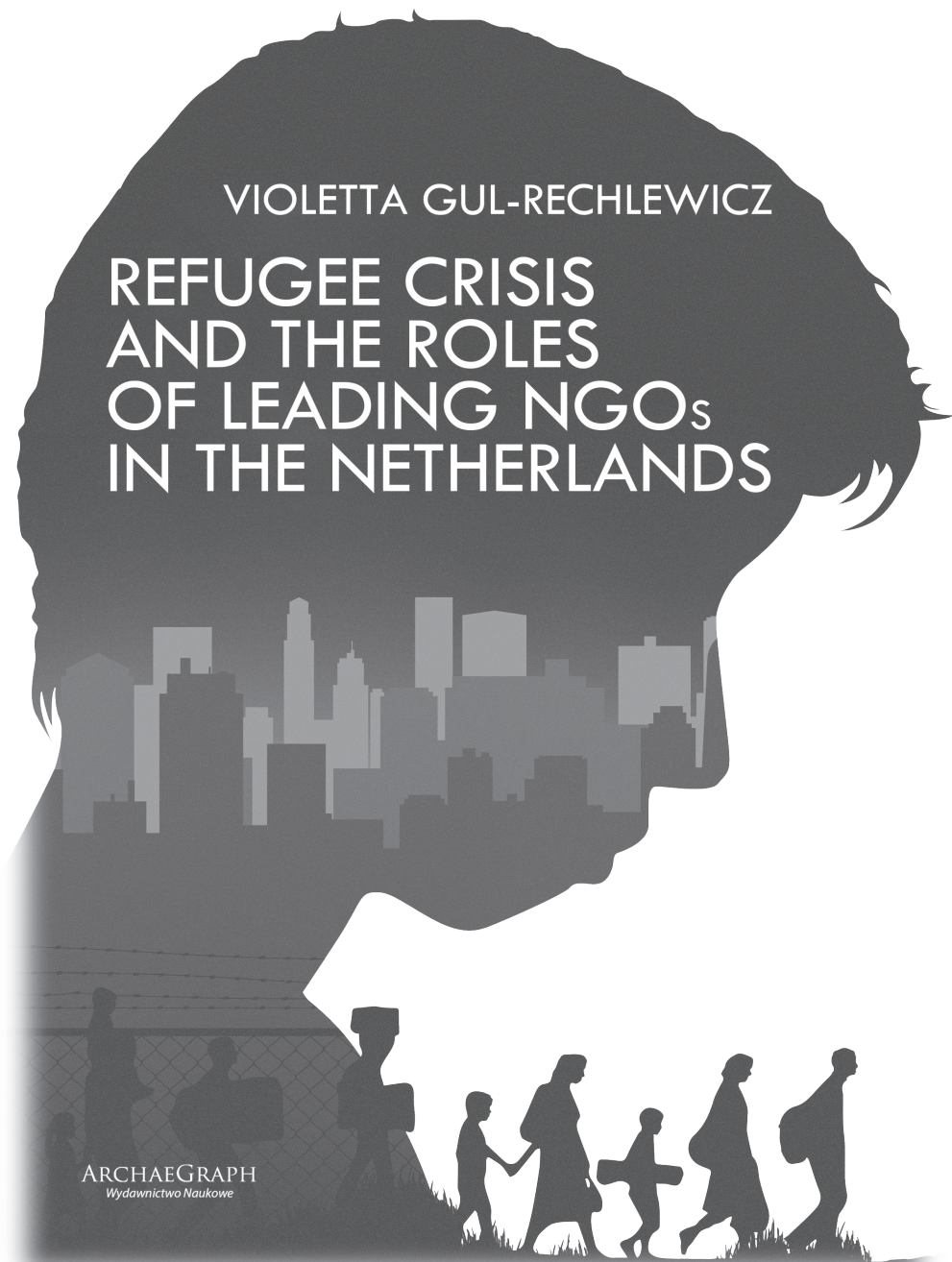
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INTRODUCTION

Western Europe is an area where immigrants and refugees from different parts of the world have been heading for a long time. Some European countries are particularly popular as new places of settlement or refuge from war, religious persecution or political repression. The Netherlands - along with countries such as Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom - is among the states that are particularly attractive to newcomers. Refugees arrived in the Netherlands as early as the 16th century, and since the middle of the 19th century they have been able to settle and work there legally. These opportunities meant that the proportion of people of foreign origin in the Netherlands continued to increase. Especially the 1960s saw an immigration boom related to the Dutch economy's high demand for labour. The number of asylum seekers also increased - in the 1980s, for example, it increased more than fourfold if one compares 1980-1984 with 1985-1989. In the following five years (1990-1994), there was a further increase, this time threefold, and the number of refugees in this period amounted to almost 150 000. In the following years, the above upward trend weakened, but it occurred again during the refugee crisis, which usually dates back to 2015. Its symptoms were already present earlier, manifested, for example, by the uncontrolled influx of migrants to Italy by sea from Libya, Somalia, Eritrea and other African countries. These events were triggered by the so-called Arab Spring - protests against the authorities in Tunisia, Algeria (2010), Egypt, Libya (2011) and many other countries in North Africa and the Middle East, among others. In Libya, there was a civil war that ended with the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime. War also occurred in Syria, where the conflict between anti-government rebels and the forces of Bashar al-Assad continues to this day. As a result of the situation, the local population fled the country on a massive scale, heading for Europe (nearly 5 million people sought refuge outside Syria). However, as is known, refugees from the area now represent a small percentage

of asylum seekers in Western European countries, including the Netherlands. This is because the refugees have been joined by mainly economic migrants from countries not affected by war and conflict, but more or less politically and economically unstable, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Albania, Kosovo. The predictions, including from the Netherlands, clearly indicate that migrants from Africa and the Middle East will continue to migrate to the Western European countries that are attractive to them, this phenomenon will not be short-lived, and the newcomers - having been granted asylum status - will seek to bring their families. As European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stated at the end of 2017, migration will be a challenge for an entire generation of Europeans¹. The European Commission underlines that, despite the achievements of the past three years, there is still a great deal of work to be done by European governments, including reforming the Common European Asylum System and strengthening partnerships with third countries. According to the Commission, issues such as: solidarity among Member States on the proportional distribution of the burden of migration; making the European Border and Coast Guard Agency fully operational to enable an effective system for the management of the Union's external borders; discouraging illegal migration; and breaking up the migrant traffickers' business model by creating legal migration alternatives to risky journeys. The Commission points out that managing migration is also a major financial challenge, requiring increased resources for this purpose.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Western European countries play an important role in solving migration problems and supporting immigration and refugee policy. As far as the third sector actors are concerned, the Netherlands boasts of a centuries-old tradition in this regard. Its citizens - compared to citizens in the rest of Europe - are among the most involved in all kinds of associations, foundations, societies, and these organisations are dynamically functioning and growing. One important area of their activity is the comprehensive assistance to immigrants and refugees. Leading actors in this field include Pharos, Johannes Wier Stichting, Steungroep Vrouwen Zonder Verblijfvergunning, Stichting LOS (Landelijk Ongedocumenteerden Steunpunt: National Support Point for Undocumented Migrants), as well as

¹ Future of migration policy, https://ec.europa.eu/poland/news/171207_migration_pl [access: 08.10.2022].

the VluchtelingenWerk Nederland and Stichting Vluchteling, which are the specific focus of this monograph.

The main objective of this monograph is to present and analyse the refugee assistance activities of Dutch NGOs, of which VluchtelingenWerk Nederland is the largest advocate of migrants' rights. It is important to present the overall work of this institution on behalf of refugee and migrant arrivals seeking asylum in the Netherlands.

The book consists of four chapters. The first, entitled *The Netherlands as a Country of Immigrants and Refugees. Selected Problems*, briefly outlines the major stages in the formation of the Netherlands as a refugee country with a particular focus on the period after the Second World War, especially the most recent times. For many years, the Netherlands has been witnessing a continuing debate - as described in the chapter - concerning immigrants and refugees; a debate revolving continuously around the principles of their admission, the need for integration, and the obstacles standing in its way. It is significant in this respect that the Netherlands did not have a consistent immigration and refugee policy for a long time and was not officially recognised as an immigration country by those in power. When an immigration policy was pursued, it was characterised by considerable variability, however, taking a stricter course towards immigrants and refugees in recent years. The chapter also details the figures for the influx of refugees into the Netherlands in recent years, as well as the projections in this regard. The problem of the Muslim minority in the Netherlands is also addressed here, as it is precisely immigrants and refugees from the Islamic world that arouse the strongest emotions - not only in the Netherlands, but also in other countries in Western Europe that receive migrants. Research and analyses show that the traditional and popular image of the Netherlands as a tolerant society that is open to foreign cultures is not entirely accurate, although it does correspond to reality.

The second chapter, entitled *The Netherlands in the Face of the Refugee Crisis*, addresses the Dutch response to the so-called refugee or migration crisis (Dutch Vluchtelingencrisis, Migratiecrisis). The Dutch case shows the great challenges faced not only by the political institutions of European countries, but also by their societies, which tend to be divided on the refugee/migrant issue. As the chapter shows, despite the relatively quick and efficient response of the Netherlands to the refugee crisis, the fact that knowledge of what to do about the influx of migrants does not always translate into actual action on the part of the political actors and the institutions that

support them has once again become apparent. The third chapter, entitled *Refugees and NGOs in the Netherlands*, first addresses the issue of the role of NGOs in the co-governance of the state under democratic conditions. It draws on the opinions of researchers relating to the functioning of democracy in its aspects linked to the activities of civic bodies, among other NGOs. Another issue is the activities and role of these organisations in supporting refugees, whereby it can be stated that these activities are still accompanied by the idea of multiculturalism, despite its erosion in recent years. There is also a noticeable upward trend in the establishment of new NGOs and the development of existing ones. In the Netherlands, as already mentioned, there is a rich tradition of philanthropy and association for various purposes. Among other things, the chapter attempts to give a historical overview of this tradition.

The last chapter, entitled *VluchtelingenWerk Nederland as the Leading Organisation Supporting Refugees in Holland*, is devoted exclusively to an analysis of the activities of this institution. It outlines the history of its foundation and development, since it is important to note that, although VluchtelingenWerk Nederland's origins date back to 1954, at that time it was a start-up organisation which only in 1979 - after many changes and mergers - transformed into the entity in its present form. It is noteworthy that VluchtelingenWerk Nederland is the only Dutch organisation of its type to serve as a consultant to the UN Social and Economic Council. This is a strong indication of its rank both in its home country and abroad. The chapter discusses the main focus of VluchtelingenWerk's activities, as well as its understanding of integration and the place of refugees in Dutch society. The influence of VluchtelingenWerk Nederland on the 2010 amendment of the Aliens Act clearly demonstrated the organisation's authority, as it managed to push through changes in Dutch law that were favourable to newcomers. VluchtelingenWerk also cooperates with foreign affiliates, exchanging knowledge, information and experience.

The presented monograph is based on an analysis of the literature on the subject, as well as reports, statistics, official documents and NGO materials. It also draws on selected author's own publications on migration issues. The work references Dutch and world literature, including authors such as Leo Lucassen, Jan Lucassen, Friedrich Heckmann, Rinus Penninx, Giovanna Zincone, Peter Scholten and others. As for Polish researchers, works by Aleksandra Grzymała-Kazłowska, Magdalena Lesińska, Ewa Leś, Patrycja Matusz-Protasiewicz, Łukasz Zweifel, among others, were cited. The author also draws on direct experience, gained during the research visit

to the Netherlands in 2016 - 2017. The region of Brabant (Brabant Centraal, Noord Brabant) was mainly studied in relation to the VluchtelingenWerk Nederland branches operating in the area.

THE NETHERLANDS AS A COUNTRY OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES. SELECTED PROBLEMS

1.1. MIGRATION TO THE NETHERLANDS - A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Persecution, political motives, hope for a better future are the most important reasons why people leave their homeland. For centuries, people have emigrated to other, often remote, and culturally different countries. The Netherlands is one of the places in the world where refugees are part of its history. They have been coming to the Netherlands for centuries, representing a larger or smaller community seeking asylum in the country. The Second World War only temporarily reduced their influx. Since the end of the Second World War, there has been an endless exodus of refugees settling or trying to settle in the Netherlands.

In this country with a centuries-old tradition of immigration, there were more foreigners living in the years 1580-1800 than there are today². In 1600, for example, 63% of all migrants to the North Sea region chose the Netherlands as their destination country. In 1650, 86% were willing to settle, and in 1700 82%. This noticeable, however small, decrease in 1700 was due to the political and economic strengthening of other European powers (e.g., England) at that time, which constituted a kind of “immigration”

² J. Lucassen, *Immigranten in Holland 1600-1800. Een kwantitatieve benadering*, CGM Working paper 3, Amsterdam 2002, pp. 20-22.

competition for the Netherlands³. The time when the number of those leaving the country outstripped the number of those immigrating was between 1870 and 1960, and this is the only such period in Dutch history, which is worth noting. After that time, up to the present day, there has been a steady inflow of foreigners into the Netherlands, albeit with varying degrees of intensity. Among the immigrants, a large number are refugees, for whom the country has been a refuge for centuries.

The history of refugees seeking safety in the Netherlands dates back to the second half of the 16th century and is linked to the outbreak of the uprising in the Netherlands. At that time, the first large group of people from the south arrived in the northern provinces of the country, Protestants were fleeing the repressions of the Spanish King Philip II, and without any major problems they assimilated with the local population. Similarly, the Huguenots fleeing France, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantua by King Louis XIV of France in 1685, successfully found their way in their new homeland, bringing with them “[...] a certain good-naturedness, courtesy, cheerfulness, which was highly appreciated [...]”⁴. During the Spring of Nations (1848-1849), the Netherlands was the destination of also Germans, Belgians, British, Russians, and Poles. Those also had no difficulty in adapting to the new conditions, except for a part of the German community coming from Westerwald⁵. Thanks to the introduction of the Foreigners Act in 1849 (the first legal act of its kind), newcomers could legally settle and work. The largest influx of refugees, however, occurred during the First World War, although it should be noted that before that war the Netherlands had been inhabited by, among others, Belgians, who, according to official statistics, numbered about 140,000 people. By 1914, they already constituted a community of more than a million people, alongside Jewish refugees from eastern Europe who arrived four years later, as well as Russians, Poles, Romanians, and Austro-Hungarians. The Jewish community also settled in the Netherlands during the Nazi persecution of the 1930s. Together with them, there were also socialists and communists fleeing persecutions⁶.

³ More in: J. Lucassen, R. Penninx, *Nieuwkomers, nakomelingen, Nederlanders. Immigranten in Nederland 1550-1993*, Spinhuis, Amsterdam 1994.

⁴ P. Zumthor, *Życie codzienne w Holandii w czasach Rembrandta*, przeł. E. Bakowska, PIW, Kraków 1965 r., pp. 231-233.

⁵ Ch. Weijts, *Duitse import, kroeg en kerstboom*, <http://mareoline.nl/2003/13/133.html>, [access: 14.04.2021].

⁶ *Jodse vluchtelingen Nazi regime*, <http://www.vijfveeuwenmigratie.nl/term/joodse%20vluchtelingen%20naziregime/volledige-tekst> [access: 14.04.2021].

Between 1945 and 1970, a large group of refugees came from European countries under communist regimes. Thus, after the end of the war, the Netherlands received Poles (including Polish soldiers⁷), Hungarians in 1956 and Czechoslovaks after the Prague Spring in 1968. Among the ones, who came in 1968 were also those who did not come from Eastern Europe, but other, often remote parts of the world. In addition to the Portuguese, who left their country in response to colonial policies, were also Turkish Christians fleeing oppressive regimes, Iraqi Kurds, Ugandans, Chileans, Vietnamese and Argentinians. The really heavy stream of refugees occurred in the 1980s with the arrival of Tamils in the Netherlands seeking refuge because of the ongoing civil war in Sri Lanka (1984). This critical year marked the beginning of an immigration boom in the Netherlands, due to the unprecedentedly large number of new arrivals. In addition, the large number of refugees caused (especially in Amsterdam and The Hague, the main reception cities) a lot of chaos in the reception and accommodation of refugees. The rapidly growing number of asylum applications meant that they could not be processed quickly enough, and the problem was that the local foreigners' services were not able to register everyone in time, and that the local refugee employment departments were not able to provide them with immediate accommodation, among other things. As a result, there were serious abuses in reception and accommodation facilities⁸.

The arrival of the Tamils gave rise to a strong influx of successive flows of refugees. Not only did the number of foreigners increase year by year, but also - and this should be emphasised - their national and cultural representation. Between 1983 and 1993, refugees of more than 50 nationalities applied for asylum in the Netherlands, of which one third came from Africa (Somalis), a quarter from the Middle East (Turks and Iranians) and a quarter from Eastern Europe (mainly the former Yugoslavia) and other parts of the world. It is true that not all asylum applications were granted, but a negative decision did not always result in the applicant leaving the Netherlands or being expelled from the country. In practice, some applicants remained in the Netherlands due to the rejection of their home country or the low priority for the police in deporting such migrants. Thus, of those who were

⁷ They belonged, among others, to the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade of Stanisław Sosabowski and the 1st Armoured Division of Stanisław Maczek (see more: R. Żelichowski, *Stosunki polsko-holenderskie w Europie pojętanskiej*, ISP PAN, Warszawa 2014, pp. 223-225).

⁸ J. Jansen, *Bepaalde Huisvesting. Eengeschiedenis van opvangen huisvesting van immigranten in Nederland, 1945-1995*, Leiden 2006, p. 116.

refused asylum, some remained in the Netherlands illegally, while others travelled to other countries⁹. Between 1980 and 1984, 11,000 asylum seekers were recorded in the Netherlands, between 1985 and 1989 the number was already 46,000 and between 1990 and 1994 it reached 150,000 arrivals, of whom more than 50,000 arrived in the year 1994 alone. At the end of the 1990s, the number of refugees in the Netherlands stood at a total of 21,210. Asylum was granted to some 40,000 immigrants from Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iraq and Somalia¹⁰.

After 2001, as a result of the tragic events linked to the attack in the United States, but also in the Netherlands itself¹¹ the rights of refugees and asylum seekers to settle in the Netherlands began to be restricted, which practically led to a decrease in the number of successful asylum applications¹². This situation lasted until 2014, i.e. until the increase in emigration from Syria, Afghanistan and Eritrea.

The Migration Present. Today, more than 65 million people have been forcibly removed from their homelands, which is more than ever before¹³. More than 21 million of them are refugees, mainly from Somalia, Afghanistan and Syria. In 2015, the total number of asylum applications in the European Union was over 1.25 million, of which almost 442,000 concerned residence in Germany, over 174,000 in Hungary and over 156,000 in Sweden. In 2016, the number of applications decreased significantly, mainly as a result of the EU agreement with Turkey (18 March 2016) and the closure of borders on the so-called Balkan route to Western Europe. Between 2014 and 2015, the number of asylum applications to the Dutch authorities more than doubled compared to previous years, placing the Netherlands among the most popular European countries for refugees. In 2014, the number of asylum seekers was

⁹ Ibidem, p. 117.

¹⁰ E. Dourlijn, J. Dagevos (ed.), *Vluchtelingen groepen in Nederland. Over de integratie van Afganse, Iraakse en Somalische migranten*, Social en Cultureel Planbureau, Den Haag 2011, pp. 35-41.

¹¹ V. Gul-Rechlewicz, *Nauka, polityka, Integracja. Kontrowersje wokół holenderskiej polityki imigracyjnej*, Kielce, 2015, pp. 71-72.

¹² R. Weiler, M. Wijnkoop, *Jullie hebben de klok, wij hebben de tijd 60 Jaar vluchtelingen bescherming: de Nederlandse praktijk en VluchtelingenWerk als maatschappelijke beweging*, https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/sites/public/Vluchtelingenwerk/migrate/pdfbibliotheek/Artikelen/2011_10_01_Artikel_Vluchtelingenwerk_Jullie_hebben_de_klok_wij_hebben_de_tijd.pdf?phpMyAdmin=7w5ZyEx7eG8GI5V6d7lLiau64Ca&phpMyAdmin=d103b040da-aa28b558cce86d2a2af0e [access: 12.08.2021].

¹³ The data included in this subsection are partly drawn from research conducted by the author between 2013 and 2015.

29,890, and in 2015 it doubled to reach 59,100¹⁴. The vast majority of those applying for residence in the Netherlands at that time were men (about 70%), of whom 20% were minors. The group of arrivals was joined in the meantime by another wave, of which - that time - the majority were women (approx. 60%)¹⁵. From January 2013 to October 2016, permission to stay in the Netherlands was granted primarily to refugees from Syria (42 %) and Eritrea (21 %) . They were immediately followed by so-called stateless persons (11%) represented mainly by Palestinians living in camps for Syrian refugees¹⁶.

As highlighted above, the number of asylum seekers in 2016 went down significantly compared to 2015, at 31,642. This trend, however, is subject to a certain, perhaps temporary, fluctuation. For if we compare the number of asylum applications submitted in the first six months of 2016 and 2017, one can clearly see an increase in the applications submitted in 2017 compared to the previous year. Indeed, the number of applicants in 2017 changed dramatically, reaching 17,433 asylum seekers compared to 2016, when the number of applications submitted amounted to 12,345¹⁷. However, it should be stressed that if we consider only 2017, the downward trend seems unquestionable with regard to the applications submitted, since their number - as indicated by the statistics - is successively decreasing with each month¹⁸. In the period from 1 June 2016 to 30 June 2017, the number of all refugees applying for asylum was 36,730, of which there were 16,849 first-time applicants, 1,894 second-time applicants, those joining their families 17,987, and unaccompanied minors 1,690. In the above mentioned period, the largest number of the first-time applications were made by Syrians (40%), Eritreans (9%), Moroccans (5%), Algerians (4%), others (36%) and stateless

¹⁴ *Totale instroom 2015 was 59 100*, <https://www.coa.nl/nl/actueel/nieuws/totale-instroom-2015-was-59100> [access: 17.12.2021]; www.rijksoverheid.nl [access: 17.12.2021].

¹⁵ *From Refugees to Workers, Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States*, Volume II: Literature Review and Country Case Studies, Bertelsmann Stiftung 2016, p. 93.

¹⁶ *Welke landen staan op de lijst van veiligelanden van herkomst?*, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/vraag-en-antwoord/lijst-van-veilige-landen-van-herkomst> [access: 18.07.2021].

¹⁷ *Asylum Trends, Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands*, Immigratie-en Naturalisatiedienst, Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, 06.2017, p. 4., https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT_June_2017.pdf [access: 03.08.2021].

¹⁸ *Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands. Recent trends*, Ministry of Security and Justice Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), INDBusiness Information Centre (BIC), Den Haag 2016; https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT_December_2016.pdf [access: 03.08.2021]; *Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands. Recent trends*, Ministry of Security and Justice Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), IND Business Information Centre (BIC), Den Haag 2017; https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT_June_2017.pdf [access: 03.08.2021].

persons (6%); the second time, Afghans (24%), Iraqis (10%), Iranians (7%), Armenians (4%), Somalis (4%) and others accounting for 51%. Asylum-seeking family members who joined their relatives were mainly people from Syria (71%) and Eritrea (11%). Iraqis also made up 1%, followed by stateless persons (11%), other nationality groups (4%) and unidentified (2%). Unaccompanied minors were Eritreans (55%), Syrians (7%), Moroccans (5%), Algerians (4%), Afghans (4%) and others comprising 25% of all minors arriving in the Netherlands over the period analysed¹⁹.

1.2. REFUGEES IN THE NETHERLANDS - FORECASTS

Refugees in the Netherlands have been part of the population for a long time and will probably, as estimates show, remain so. Statistical forecasts (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) predict that migrants from the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa will continue to try to enter the Netherlands (and other highly developed countries) in the coming decades. A significant number of these people will try to obtain asylum status and then bring their family members and spouses (partners). Some migrants will return (or migrate again), but it is assumed with considerable probability that a large proportion will remain in the Netherlands. In January 2016, the largest refugee groups in the Netherlands originated from Afghanistan (44,000), Iraq (56,000), Iran (38,000), Somalia (39,000) and Syria (44,000). At that time, there were also around 8 000 people from Eritrea²⁰. About a quarter of the Afghans, Iraqis and Iranians residing in the Netherlands were born here. Of the recent arrivals with Eritrean or Syrian origins, 40% are under the age of twenty²¹. It is worth mentioning here that according to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), refugee minors are entitled to receive education. The same rights and provisions concerning compulsory education and qualifications apply to all persons between the ages of 5 and 18²². This means that every child should receive an education as soon as possible, wherever they are. The European directive states that asylum seekers should

¹⁹ *Asylum Trends, Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands*, Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst, Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, June 2017, p. 4. https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT_June_2017.pdf [access: 03.08.2021].

²⁰ C. van Duin, L. Stoeldraijer, J. Ooijevaar, *Bevolkingstrends, Bevolkingsprognose 2014–2060: veronderstellingen migratie*, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek 2015/06, passim.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² *Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly*, 20 November 1989. (Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) of 23 December 1991), Article 28.

have access to education within three months of their asylum application²³. In the Netherlands, refugees may temporarily stay in municipal crisis centres, e.g. in adapted sports halls, usually used in the event of accidents or disasters. The provision of emergency assistance generally involves a period of stay at the centre for a maximum of 72 hours, after which refugees are transferred to the reception centres of the COA (Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers, Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers), where they can start their school education.

According to a new CBS forecast, the Dutch population will continue to grow in the coming decades, probably reaching more than 18.4 million inhabitants by 2060. It is expected to amount to 18 million in 2031. In the future, the Netherlands is expected to have a higher proportion of older people and people with a migrant background. The population is growing due to a higher number of people coming to the Netherlands than those leaving it, and also because of rising life expectancy. In the next few years, according to CBS, more children will be born in the Netherlands, but - as it is emphasised - this will not offset the increasing number of deaths on the other hand²⁴.

It is assumed that year-on-year the number of migrants may fluctuate considerably. In the short term, therefore, there is considerable uncertainty in immigration and emigration patterns. Births and mortality rates appear more predictable in the short term, but, notably, the uncertainty in the projections increases in the long term. Further population growth is likely to continue at least until around 2040. In subsequent years, the population may both grow and decline. According to CBS projections, it will probably oscillate between 17.2 and 19.7 million inhabitants in 2060. Over the last twenty years, the population of the Netherlands has increased by 1.5 million, of which 86% is of migrant origin. International labour migration and educational migration (migration for higher education), especially from EU countries and Asia, have contributed to the current state of affairs and have increased significantly over the last decade. Many asylum seekers in the Netherlands have arrived here in recent years due to the refugee crisis. In contrast, migration from traditionally most popular countries such as Morocco, Turkey and Suriname has decreased²⁵.

²³ European Commission, Common European Asylum System, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, EU 2014.

²⁴ *Prognose: 18,4 miljoen inwoners in 2060*, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2017/51/prognose-18-4-miljoen-inwoners-in-2060> [access: 19.12.2021].

²⁵ Ibidem.

The high birth rate immediately after the Second World War and in the 1950s and 1960s is the result of the current high number of older people. In addition, as already mentioned, life expectancy has increased and is expected to increase further. The proportion of people aged over 65 is expected to increase from 18% of the population in 2017 to 26% from 2040 onwards. 14% of people over 65 have a migration background, in 2060 this is expected to be 28%. The number of people aged between 20 and 65 will remain at around 10.1 million for the time being, before falling to around 9.6 million in 2040 and rising to 9.8 million in 2060. In conclusion, in the coming decades, the population will only grow as a result of migration and the number of residents with a Dutch origin will decrease. In 2017, 23% of the Dutch population had a western or non-western migrant background, and this figure is expected to reach 34% by 2060. Currently, more than half of people with a migrant background were born in the Netherlands, and this trend will continue in the future²⁶.

1.3. IMMIGRATION POLICY OF THE NETHERLANDS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The Netherlands was already considered as an overpopulated country in 1967²⁷, but over the following decades it has generally practiced an ‘open door’ policy towards immigrants arriving in large numbers, including – especially recently – refugees. The latter constitute a significant number of foreigners living in the Netherlands. While it is easy to understand the Dutch tradition of willingness to help those in need, which has been going on for centuries and which deserves to be acknowledged, the somewhat careless attitude of those in power towards immigration and integration policy may raise doubts. In the literature on the subject, this carelessness is frequently highlighted, which has been evidenced by the analysis, inconclusive in its assessments, of the socio-political discourse related to state policy towards foreigners living in the Netherlands²⁸. The often

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ G. Zincone, M. Bruquetas-Callejo, B. Garc es-Mascare nas, R. Penninx, P. Scholten, *The case of Netherland*, in: G. Zincone, R. Penninx, M. Borkert (ed.), *Migration Policymaking in Europe. The Dynamics of Actors and Contexts in Past and Present*, IMISCOE Research, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2011, p. 129.

²⁸ E.g. A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen in Nederland. De vluchtelingenstroom in integratieperspectief*, In opdracht van het ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, Rotterdam 2016; R. Dekker, P. Scholten, *Tsunami of tragedie? Media aandacht en beeldvorming rond het vreemdelingenbeleid*, WODC en Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam 2015;

critical, sometimes harsh language used by some political, scientific and journalistic circles suggests that the changes in immigration policy in this country, occurring more or less every decade, are not evolving in a direction that would satisfy everyone. And this does not only refer to clashing political factions or expert groups, but also to those who have practically no influence on these policies, i.e. immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The latter, in the view of NGOs among others, deserve special attention, as they may - depending on the effectiveness of actions taken by the ruling institutions - constitute a force enriching the country or, on the contrary, escalating the problems. For many years, the Dutch 'no-policy' approach to regulating the status of newcomers was based on a strategy of temporary residence, especially in the 1960s and 1970s²⁹. This situation was only changed by the report of the Advisory Council for Government Policy (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR), which concluded that such reasoning was unfounded and even harmful. The majority of immigrants, contrary to what was previously thought, decided to stay permanently in the Netherlands³⁰. The lack of a clear and carefully planned policy for the ethnic minorities has resulted in their increasing isolation and consequently in their unwillingness to integrate into Dutch society. In addition, according to WRR, the overly liberal strategy towards newcomers promoted by policy makers has led to high unemployment in this group and a low level of education³¹. It seems, therefore, that the so-called Minority Policy dominant in the 1980s was also unsuccessful. The changes introduced in 1980, 1981 and 1983, which were supposed to improve the lives of immigrants, turned out to be insufficient³². Although the actions of the government of that time significantly modified the previous policy towards newcomers, they did not bring about any spectacular changes, but gave rise to new solutions.

H. Entzinger, *The rise and fall of multiculturalism: The case of the Netherlands*, in: C. Joppke, E. Morawska (ed.), *Toward assimilation and citizenship: Immigrants in liberal nation-state*, Hampshire 2003.

²⁹ The temporary stay of immigrants was linked, among other things, to a 1970 government document that explicitly defined the "non-immigrant nature of the state". See: R. Penninx, *Etnischeminderheden. A/Rapport aan de regering. B/Naar een algemeen etnisch minderhedenbeleid?*, Staatsuitgeverij, Den Haag 1979, p. 156.

³⁰ L. Rietbergen, *Migratie en vestiging in Nederland: Bronnen overzichten geselecteerde bibliografie Werkuutgave*, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 75-77.

³¹ R. Penninx, *Etnischeminderheden...*, p. 156; L. Rietbergen, *Migratie en vestiging in Nederland...*, passim.

³² G. Zincone, M. Bruquetas-Callejo, B. Garc es-Mascre nas, R. Penninx, P. Scholten, *The case of Netherlands...*, pp. 132-133.

The policy of the 1990s, especially of the first half of the 20th century, although different from the previous one, was to a large extent of a similar, also supportive, character. Once immigrants started to be recognised as a permanent part of Dutch society³³, which was a major change in the way of thinking until then, their education was addressed first, including raising awareness about socio-political participation. At the same time - which seems to disturb this order a bit - the financing (from the state budget) of learning the languages of ethnic minorities (i.e. Turkish and Arabic), which in effect, paradoxically in relation to earlier assumptions, resulted in the lack of satisfactory results in the use of the Dutch language (one of the most important pillars of integration) mainly by Turks and representatives of the Arab community³⁴. However, a completely new issue in the political debate about immigrants at that time was the Islamic theme. For the first time, a well-known politician criticised Islam regarding the Muslim minority in the Netherlands. The then opposition leader Fritz Bolkestein (of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy; Volkspartij voor Vrijheden Democratie, VVD) did not hesitate to use strong words about Islam, claiming that it posed a threat to liberal democracy and was an obstacle to the integration of immigrants. Criticising the government, Bolkestein raised the issue of integration policy, which in his view should be pursued more boldly³⁵. This strong opposition vote, which shattered the existing order, started a new chapter in the Dutch debate on immigrants, especially those with a Muslim background.

At the same time, the Dutch refugee policy, which had been conducted in a soft manner for years, also became more restrictive. Since 1993, the number of successful asylum applications has decreased. One of the reasons for this decision has been the desire to stop the influx of refugees from Germany, who were not allowed to stay in this country³⁶. Once again, a kind of paradoxical

³³ See Ministry of the Interior Report: Regerings standpunt ten aanzien van het rapport Alloctonenbeleid, Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, Tweede Kamer 1989-1990, 21472, no 2.

³⁴ I. Magnee, *Holenderskie getta*, „Wprost”, nr 18/2004 (1118).

³⁵ H. Tepper, *Toespraak Frits Bolkesteint Luzern met kritiek op het Nederlands integratiebeleid 6 september 1991*, <http://www.henktepper.nl/2016/09/05/toespraak-frits-bolkestein-te-luzern-met-kritiek-op-het-nederlandsintegratiebeleid-6-september-1991/> [access: 07.09.2021]; R. Witte, *Al eeuwenlang een gastvrijvolk, Racistisch geweld en overheids reacties in Nederland (1950-2009)*, Amsterdam 2010, pp. 100-101.

³⁶ In 1993, Germany changed its asylum policy. This happened when the number of asylum seekers reached a critical level (53,000 people) in that year. See more: R. Kopmans, *Good intentions sometimes make bad policy: A comparison of Dutch and German integration policies*, in: F.E. Stiftung (ed.) *Migration, Multiculturalism and Civil Society*, Friedrich, Berlin 2007, pp. 163-168.

has been the increase in the number of immigrants (this time illegal), largely refugees, who were refused the right to stay in the Netherlands³⁷. Criticism of the policy towards immigrants and refugees reached its peak. Not only were the mistakes made over the years in this policy pointed out, but also the loss of control over it. Representatives of Islamic diasporas allegedly resisting integration were also criticised. Some scholars (e.g. Jan Rath) criticised them particularly strongly, calling Muslim immigrants “incapable of integration”³⁸.

The way of discussing migration is changing to a large extent - political correctness is soon to be replaced by a new type of discourse called by Baukje Prins “new realism”³⁹.

1.4. BETWEEN ACCEPTANCE AND DISCRIMINATION: THE CASE OF THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

The immigration and integration policy of the Netherlands has, as previously indicated, undergone significant changes over the decades. Although for a long time it was perceived in the perspective of multicultural success, at some point it changed direction, emphasising the integration of newcomers with a strong focus on their obligatory adaptation to the Dutch system of norms and values. It has thus become one of the most unstable policies towards ethnic minorities in Europe, and as can be assumed, departing to some extent from the idea of multicultural coexistence. At the same time, it has turned out that alongside tolerance and acceptance towards migrants, also the occurrence of intolerance and discrimination can be observed. It is worth analysing this problem from the point of view of the minority of Islamic origin living in the Netherlands. Analyses show that it is this part of society that feels discriminated against in practically all sensitive areas, suffering injustice and unequal treatment in the fields of education, housing and the labour market. In this case, Muslim immigrants are discriminated against both by their employers and by their co-workers with non-Muslim backgrounds. Annual reports on the attitudes of Western societies towards the Islamic issue (e.g. Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination

³⁷ R. Kopmans, *Good intentions sometimes make bad policy...*, pp. 163-168.

³⁸ J. Rath, R. Penninx, K. Groenendijk, A. Meijer, *Nederland en zijn islam. Een ontzuilende samenleving reageert op het ontstaan van eengeloofsgemeenschap*, Het Spinhuis, Amsterdam 1996, passim (esp. p. 60).

³⁹ B. Prins, *The standpoint in question: Situated knowledges and the Dutch minorities discourse*, Utrecht University, Utrecht 1997, p. 83.

Survey Muslims - Selected findings published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights; European Islamophobia Report published by SETA, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, and others) indicate unequivocally a deepening problem related to the lack of acceptance of Muslim minorities by European societies. Also in the Netherlands, which until recently was known for its openness and tolerance towards foreigners, relations between the host society and immigrants (recently also refugees) have clearly been disturbed. Research carried out by, among others, the above-mentioned institutions points to a dangerously persistent trend of xenophobic attitudes among native Dutch people, often manifesting themselves in aggression, especially towards immigrants of Islamic origin⁴⁰.

Most Dutch people believe that the proportion of foreign residents is too high in the Netherlands. This follows from a survey conducted in 2014 by Ipsos, which interviewed 1,136 Dutch citizens over the age of 18. 55% of the surveyed considered the number of immigrants to be too high, with the choices: number too high, too low, acceptable. More than a quarter of respondents found the percentage acceptable, and 2% found it too low. When asked to assess the number of foreigners living in their neighbourhood, only 24% said the number was too high, and 59% said it was acceptable. Moreover, 46% of immigrants in the Netherlands are viewed 'negatively', and only 10% 'positively'.

Among the most discriminated people in the Netherlands, which may be surprising given the now mythical image of a tolerant society, are LGBT people and ethnic minorities, mainly Muslims. Compared to other European countries, Dutch attitudes of intolerance towards minorities rank at 3.5 on a scale of 1 to 5. Surveys indicate that 22% of those surveyed have such attitudes, but, as it must be emphasised, 68% of native Dutch citizens do not accept such attitudes. On the other hand, 54% feel that members of minority groups are more discriminated against today than they were twenty years ago⁴¹. This can be explained by the fact that nowadays more people of LGBT backgrounds do not hide their orientation and that there are more immigrants (refugees) visible on city streets than decades ago. All this means that discriminatory behaviour is more likely to occur. According to research carried out by the Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP),

⁴⁰ European Islamophobia Report 2016, SETA, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, Istanbul, Washington, Cairo 2016.

⁴¹ J. den Ridder, I. Andriessen, P. Dekker, *Nederlanders dubel over discriminatie*, „Burgerperspectieven” 2017/2, Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, as of 29.06.2017, p. 36.

there is also a lot of scepticism in society about the perception of discrimination - a lot of people think that some behaviours that are considered discriminatory are not discriminatory at all. This may be a reason for concern, as it creates space for some to become less sensitive to discrimination and for others to become more psychologically resistant to such behaviour. At the same time, there is a widespread view that Muslims in particular are often overly sensitive to “discrimination”, which they may misinterpret, e.g. as unequal treatment when rejecting an asylum seeker’s application or when the appropriate services check the identity of an immigrant⁴². In order to accuse someone of discriminatory behaviour under Dutch law, a person has to prove unfair and unlawful treatment on the part of the accused and to show grounds for this action relating to a negative perception of the complainant’s identity or their belonging to a certain group. If at least one of these two elements is missing, there are no grounds for a charge of discrimination. On the other hand, it must be emphasised that the discriminated persons often conceal this fact, so it is not easy to precisely determine the actual level of intensity of this phenomenon in the Netherlands on the basis of surveys. The issue of discrimination is increasingly perceived as a serious problem by Dutch society. While in the years 2008-2013 there was relatively little discussion of the problem yet, the years 2014- 2016 showed a change in this regard. Perhaps Geert Wilders, among others, the leader of the anti-immigration party PVV, with his now-famous slogan “Minder Marokkanen” (“Fewer Moroccans”), contributed to the rise in racist sentiment, for which he received a final court sentence in 2016.

The biggest current social problems that the Dutch are facing is functioning in society within the “samenleven” paradigm (living together) and the associated issue of integration of immigrants. Concerns of the Dutch relate to individualism, egoism, culture, intolerance, disrespect and discrimination. Problems related to immigrants themselves (especially refugees) refer to their integration, understanding of Islam, adaptation to European norms and values, and concerns about the Islamisation of the country. These issues are indicated less frequently today than in 2015, but more frequently than in 2008-2014⁴³. Dutch perceptions of migration and the integration of newcomers as primary social problems⁴⁴ increased with

⁴² Ibidem, p. 49.

⁴³ J. den Ridder, I. Andriessen, P. Dekker, *Nederlanders dubel over...*, p. 16.

⁴⁴ H. Schmeets, M. van Hoof, *Ontwikkelingen in ervaren nationale problemen, 2010–2014*, Bevolkings trends no. 6, CBS, Den Haag 2016.

the arrival of more refugees. Research shows that fear is caused, among others, by the fundamental, as pointed out by the respondents, cultural differences, norms and values of immigrants, which conflict with those of the Dutch⁴⁵. As a result, the Dutch end up being aggressive towards the newcomers, and this anger is sometimes expressed also in public, e.g. in Internet forums or at the reception places for refugees, i.e. in municipalities where they are accommodated. The worsening atmosphere of resentment and intolerance towards immigrants (also refugees waiting for asylum) is mainly fuelled by fear and anxiety over terrorist attacks. All this contributes to the deteriorating relationship between the Dutch and immigrants, including those who already represent the next generation of foreigners living in the Netherlands. In March 2017, Anousha Nzume published a book entitled *Hallo Witte Mensen (Hello White People)*⁴⁶ in which she addressed the racism and discrimination that she believes is present in the Netherlands, highlighting the existing privilege of being 'white'. In response to this publication, considered controversial and harmful by some circles, Jan Dijgraaf published a book *Hallo zwarte mensen (Hello Black People)*⁴⁷, analogically referring to the previous one and pointing out, among other things "the privilege of being black". Nzume's book, as well as the interviews she later gave, were heavily criticised by "white" Dutch people - who were outraged by what they perceived as a pejorative term - and started a debate about the difficult mutual relations and unresolved problems between native Dutch people and immigrants, especially those of a different skin colour⁴⁸. It is worth adding that the ongoing discourse, which is based on the fundamental problem of the condition of multicultural society in the Netherlands, was already started by Philomena Essed in the 1980s, whose attempts, however, were ostracised by the leading media, and eventually she was forced to withdraw from the battle for equal rights⁴⁹. The Netherlands is currently witnessing a new trend that is slowly moving away from the political correctness of the past. This is manifested by the revealing of 'white spots' in Dutch history, in this case the unequal

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ A. Nzume, *Hallo witte mensen*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2017.

⁴⁷ J. Dijgraaf, *Hallo zwarte mensen*, V.O.F. Butticken, Eesterga 2017.

⁴⁸ Nzume criticises not only the declared racists, but also the left-wing liberal "whites" who, in her opinion, think they are colour blind (Dutch: "mensen die we met gemak racist noemen, maar ook bijlinkse, liberale witte mensen die denken kleuren blind te zijn"), in S. Nourhussen, Racisme is voor niemand gezond, on 22.04.2017, <https://www.trouw.nl/samenleving/racisme-is-voor-niemand-gezond-aac08e61/> [access: 21.10.2021].

⁴⁹ See more in: P. Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*, Sage Publications 1991.

treatment of the country's inhabitants on the basis of their origin and the colour of their skin.

1.5. MINORITY PROBLEMS AND MEASURES AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION

According to The European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), which has studied levels of trust and discriminatory behaviour over the past five years towards Muslims living in EU Member States, the level of hostility towards minorities with an Islamic background varies between the countries surveyed. The Netherlands is an infamous example in this regard, with 49% of its North African Muslim residents experiencing discrimination. By comparison, 33% of Muslims in Italy have experienced hostility from native Italians, 31% in France and 20% in Spain. Muslims in the Netherlands most often feel excluded on the basis of ethnicity (42%), religion (30%) and skin colour (9%)⁵⁰. Despite clear signs of unconstitutional behaviour towards Islamic minorities living in European countries, FRA director Michael O'Flaherty, an Irish human rights specialist, says it would be wrong to conclude that Muslims are poorly integrated into European society. On the contrary, he believes that representatives of Muslim minorities "trust democratic institutions more than most native inhabitants". However, as he notes: "every case of discrimination and hate crime complicates their integration and makes it difficult to find a job"⁵¹. The research, covering 15 selected EU⁵² countries, indicated that indeed, despite discrimination, 76% of respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in. At the same time, 31% of Muslim jobseekers said they have experienced harassment in the past five years, while 16% say they have been unlawfully detained by the police, with around half of respondents linking this to the colour of their skin or to their clothing "not

⁵⁰ E. van den Berg, *Moslims in Nederland voelen zich het meest gediscrimineerd van heel Europa*, WNL, 21.09.2017, <https://wnl.tv/2017/09/21/moslims-nederland-voelen-zich-meest-gedis-crimineerd-heel-europa/> [access: 19.11.2021]; *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey Muslims – Selected findings*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017.

⁵¹ C. de Gruyter, *Moslims in Nederland ervaren discriminatie meer dan elders in EU*, NRC. NL, 20.10.2017 <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/09/20/in-nederlandis-vooral-het-geloof-reden-voor-discriminatie-13105344-a1574230> [access: 19.11.2021].

⁵² More than 10, 500 first- and second-generation Muslims in fifteen European Union countries have been surveyed on their level of trust in the institutions of the constitutional state in which they live and their perception of discrimination. The results of the survey indicated a level of greater trust on their part in the police, the judiciary and national parliament compared to the rest of the population in the country. See: C. de Gruyter, *Moslims in Nederland ervaren discriminatie...*, op.cit.

meeting” European standards. It is worth adding that Muslims from North Africa and South Africa suffer more from discrimination or hatred than their co-religionists from Turkey, the Middle East or Asia⁵³. In the above-mentioned studies, the Netherlands compare much less favourably with other EU countries (especially those with multicultural backgrounds)⁵⁴.

It is important to note that anti-immigration behaviour, which leads to the exclusion and marginalisation of the Muslim minority, while at the same time acting as kind of a barrier to their integration, today are increasingly the subject of attention of politicians, researchers, publicists and also so-called ordinary people. If we assume, in opposition to the aforementioned Michael O’Flaherty, that the integration of ethnic minorities, especially of Islamic origin, has failed and that this is in part due to intolerant attitudes towards the Muslim community in the Netherlands, the question is how did all this happen? Is this a new phenomenon or an old one, hidden behind the rhetoric of political correctness? It seems that the issues of assessing the condition of the Dutch multicultural society in relation to attitudes of tolerance/intolerance towards ‘aliens’ await thorough analysis. A serious problem related to discrimination is the high unemployment rate, especially among the four refugee groups that have been staying in the Netherlands for some time – refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia⁵⁵. Especially in the first years of their stay in the Netherlands, the labour market participation of these immigrant groups is very low. Also in the following years, the labour force participation of refugees in comparison to native Dutch citizens and other immigrants remains much to be expected⁵⁶. At the end of 2015, the WRR (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid, Research Council for Government Policy) compared the above four refugee groups with each other and with the native Dutch with no immigrant origin on the basis of a number of socio-economic indicators such as labour market participation, social security and poverty⁵⁷. The research showed all four groups of immigrants in an unfavourable light, although it also revealed that in terms of the factors

⁵³ C. de Gruyter, *Muslims in Nederland ervaren discriminatie...*, op.cit.

⁵⁴ *Nederlanders dubel over discriminatie*, „Burgerperspectieven” 2017/2, Sociaal Cultureel Panbureau, 29.06.2017, https://www.scp.nl/Nieuws/Nederlanders_dubbel_over_discriminatie [access: 22.10.2021].

⁵⁵ Ministerie van Sociale Zakenen Werkgelegenheid, *Monitor Arbeidsmarkt*, Oktober 2016, pp. 5-13.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 11-13.

⁵⁷ Persbericht WRR-Policy Brief NR. 4, *Geen tijd te verliezen: van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten*, 16.12.2015. See also: SCP, *Jaarrapportintegratie 2013*; CBS, *Jaarrapportintegratie 2014*.

taken into account there were large differences between, for example, refugees from Iran and Somalia. This negative trend of low labour force participation of refugees has also been confirmed by other studies. Refugees, irrespective of the time since their arrival, rely heavily on state support and those refugees who are employed have the lowest income compared to other migrants and the native Dutch⁵⁸. In turn, women of refugee backgrounds are less economically independent compared to women from other backgrounds, e.g. of all Somali women, less than 3% are employed⁵⁹.

What factors determine the disadvantaged position of refugees in the labour market? The Research Council for Government Policy (WRR) has identified several of these that were considered particularly relevant. These include: bad work experiences, lack of appropriate social relationships, “lost time” during the asylum procedure, efforts to reunite with family in the time after obtaining the status of asylum seeker, mental health and discrimination⁶⁰. WRR also mentions a number of factors that are directly related to education. Diplomas from some of the refugees’ countries of origin are not recognised in the Netherlands, and it is not uncommon for the level of education acquired there to differ from the local standard. Therefore, competences obtained by a refugee in the country of origin offer fewer employment opportunities than to those with a Dutch education⁶¹. Regarding the point of view of minorities threatened by discrimination, it can be stated that for example Turks, Moroccans and Surinamese living in the Netherlands feel that the Netherlands is becoming less and less open for them and that they are not treated in the same way as native Dutch people. Interviews with Turkish and Moroccan youth show that since September 11, 2001, the situation of the Islamic minority has definitely deteriorated. According to young Turks and Moroccans, Muslims are becoming less and less accepted and are increasingly stigmatised as ‘the other’ in public debate. In addition, they believe that the terrorist attacks that have taken place in various European countries have not contributed to the positive image of Islam in the Netherlands. There is also a loss of solidarity with this group of people and growing intolerance towards them, which causes tensions in Dutch society. In part, this is directly related to the presence of increasingly diverse cultural

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁹ To a lesser extent, although it is also the case for Iranian women; see: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2016, p. 72.

⁶⁰ G. Engbersen, J. Dagevos, R. Jennissen, L. Bakker, A. Leerkes, *Geen tijd verliezen. Van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten*, WRR, Den Haag 2015, p. 15.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 14.

groups in the Netherlands and the resulting problems with their integration⁶². The exclusion experienced by foreigners can paradoxically lead to a stronger sense of connection with one's own ethnic group. Turkish and Moroccan Dutch - as they are commonly called - should feel equally Dutch as well as Turkish or Moroccan⁶³. However, these young people, representing the largest ethnic groups in the Netherlands, indicate that they identify themselves more as Turks or Moroccans than as Dutch⁶⁴. These attitudes are due to the fact that they do not have a sense of belonging to Dutch society and are never, as they say, "Dutch enough". Feeling unaccepted by the native Dutch⁶⁵, they therefore identify themselves with Turks and Moroccans, thus strengthening their sense of identity. The Dutch Moroccans often treat their ethnic identity as a stigma, because the word "Moroccan" is mainly associated pejoratively in Dutch society, arousing strong negative associations such as nuisance, crime and Muslim terrorism. As both Turkish and Moroccan young people believe that they experience unequal treatment and are perceived as inferior citizens by native Dutch people⁶⁶, their identification with Islam is strengthened as a response to exclusion. Islamic identity for many young Dutch Turks and Moroccans is most important, as it brings the answer to the question "who am I?" and strengthens their self-esteem. It also enables them to feel solidarity with the wider global Islamic community, which is a source of strength.

Although Mark Rutte's government is introducing new laws to fight discrimination based on skin colour, ethnic origin and religion, these measures are not effective enough, according to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). The Commission, in fact, takes a negative view of the contribution of the Dutch government elite to the fight against discrimination, raising questions such as the lack of concrete and decisive action by the state in terms of national policy, and even blames the decision-making bodies for shifting the responsibility

⁶² J. den Ridder, I. Andriessen, P. Dekker, *Nederlandersdubbel over...*, op.cit.

⁶³ *Integratie in zicht? De integratie van migranten in Nederland op achter reinennaderbekeken*, W. Huijink, I. Andriessen (ed.), Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, pp. 20-22, Den Haag, December 2016.

⁶⁴ WRR, *Identificatie met Nederland*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2007, pp. 48-49.

⁶⁵ R. Kist, *Het rapport Marokkanen en Turken ervaren de meeste discriminatie*, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2014/01/24/het-rapport-marokkanen-en-turken-ervaren-de-meeste-1337977-a255430> [access: 13.06.2021].

⁶⁶ *Ben je nu Marokkaan of Nederlander?*, <http://www.uva.nl/content/nieuws/persberichten/2014/11/%E2%80%98ben-jc-nu-marokkaan-ofnederlander%E2%80%99.html> [access: 22.08.2021].

for its effects to local governments that have not always been able to cope with problems such as growing Islamophobia and racist behaviour over the years⁶⁷. The seriousness of the situation is evidenced by the growing cooperation of foundations, associations, institutes, etc. that join together to fight against discrimination and xenophobia in the Netherlands, creating, among other things, information websites with contact numbers for those affected by exclusion, campaigning against actions targeting ethnic minorities (especially Muslims), initiating research and publishing the results, which allows to assess the scale of this worrying phenomenon⁶⁸.

In recent years, social campaigns and citizen initiatives have been launched in the Netherlands in response to the increasing extent of Islamophobia and discrimination against people of Muslim origin. An anti-discrimination plan was also put forward, the implementation of which began in September 2015. Research and association activities have highlighted issues of racism and ethnic exclusion (e.g. Control Alt Delete, Subcutaneous, Comitee 21 maart and other initiatives). Public debate, social media and other communication channels refer to examples of discrimination. This can lead both to more practices being recognised as discriminatory, but also to greater clarity in perceiving the phenomenon and distinguishing what is and what is not discriminatory. It is important to note that much of the communication is carried out through social media on the Internet and therefore discriminatory statements are easier to document than, for example, those that take place in the street.

It can be concluded that almost all Dutch political parties are striving hard to implement the constitutional right to equal treatment. The 55 Plus Party defends the rights of the elderly, the recently formed political group Denk promotes equal opportunities for minorities and fights racism. The Art. 1 Party, founded by Sylvane Simons, which has similar objectives (the party refers in its name to the 1st article of the Constitution) originates from the latter party. In the parliamentary elections in March 2017,

⁶⁷ The European Islamophobia Report published by SETA, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, in 2016 shows an increase in incidents of visible against which resentment towards Muslim communities living in the Netherlands. In 2016 alone, there were 49 Islamophobic incidents in the country, which occurred mainly in mosques and reception centres for asylum seekers. Also, the periodic statements published in 2016 in relation to anti-discrimination legislation indicate a 45%-increase in the number of reports related to anti-Muslim behaviour. See more in: European Islamophobia Report 2016, SETA, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, Istanbul, Washington, Cairo 2016.

⁶⁸ http://www.art1.nl/categorie/24-Radicalisme_en_extremisme, http://www.art1.nl/categorie/106PROGRESS_Effectively_monitoring_discrimination [access: 19.10.2021].

in addition to pressing issues such as pension policy, labour, migration, health care, and others, income inequality came to the fore as the flagship programme element of many political groups, together with the fight against discrimination and exclusion in favour of equal opportunities for Dutch residents - in accordance with the first article of the Constitution, which states: "All who reside in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in similar cases. Discrimination on the basis of religion, belief, political opinion, race, sex or any other ground is not permitted" (Dutch: „Allen die zich in Nederland bevinden, worden in gelijke gevallen gelijk behandeld. Discriminatie wegens godsdienst, levensovertuiging, politieke gezindheid, ras, geslacht of op welke grond dan ook, is niet toegestaan")⁶⁹. However, surveys show that Dutch citizens believe that discrimination in the labour market is widespread and that it is at a much higher level than in other EU countries, especially considering the last years. According to Harry van Dalen, this perception is rather indicative of the general pessimism that prevails in the country and has nothing to do with existing evidence on the issue⁷⁰.

Summarizing the issue of discrimination of migrants, especially Muslim - it can be said that on the one hand there is a certain level of awareness about discrimination in the Netherlands: discrimination and racism are spontaneously mentioned as a social problem; there is a feeling that discrimination has increased, but in most cases it is considered negatively and undesirable. A large part of society, including political parties and NGOs, is also making efforts to prevent discrimination and unequal treatment. On the other hand, there is the already mentioned considerable scepticism in society about the experience of discrimination: 72% of people believe that some events or social relations are wrongly called discrimination. This is not helped by a general lack of clarity as to what exactly discrimination is; how it should be understood⁷¹.

⁶⁹ Grondwet voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (2008), Art. 1.

⁷⁰ H. van Dalen, *Waarom waant Nederland zich Europees kampioen discriminatie?*, <http://www.mejudice.nl/artikelen/detail/waarom-waant-nederland-zicheuropees-kampioen-discriminatie> [access: 15.02.2021].

⁷¹ Ibidem.

THE NETHERLANDS IN THE FACE OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS

2.1. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHENOMENON

Asylum Applications: Quantitative and National Aspect. The Netherlands, as a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights (Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, ECHR), is committed to protecting those fleeing war, violence, inhumane and degrading treatment. According to the above, to fulfil its obligations towards those in need, the Dutch government should give them support and all due help. In 2014-2015, refugees on an unprecedented scale - especially refugees from Syria - sought refuge in Europe, also set their course for the Netherlands. The country has not had such a large number of asylum seekers in 20 years. Consequently, in mid-September 2015, Klaas Dijkhoff, Secretary of State for Security and Justice, sent an urgent request to all Dutch municipalities to introduce appropriate interventions in urban settings that would help accommodate crowds of asylum seekers. In response, the reception centres of the Central Agency for Reception of Asylum Seekers (Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers, henceforth referred to as COA) placed in large sports facilities and field houses halls started preparations for the reception of refugees. From mid-September to the end of January 2016, 141 municipalities accomplished their task with, which is worth emphasizing, the generous support of volunteers and residents who, as part of the civic initiative, helped refugees adapt to their new environment⁷². However, in some municipalities, there were protests by the

⁷² V. Wijkhuijs, M. van Duin, *Vluchtelingencrisis 2015: Lessen uit de crisisondopvang*, Instituut Fysieke Veiligheid, Arnhem 2017, passim.

local population against accepting refugees and these were not isolated cases. Protesters usually argued that the municipality's decision on the reception of newcomers was too hasty and that too many refugees were admitted⁷³.

In 2014-2015, the number of asylum applications more than doubled compared to previous years, placing the Netherlands among the most popular European countries with refugees. In 2014, the number of applicants was 29,890, and in 2015, it was 591,003⁷⁴. The vast majority at that time, about 70%, were men, of whom 20% were minors. Shortly, women joined the group of newcomers. This time, they constituted the majority (approx. 60%)⁷⁵.

According to the statistical data provided by Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst (IND) the number of asylum applications filed in the Netherlands in 2015 - not much different from the previously mentioned - was about 58 880⁷⁶. Among them are resubmitted applications (previously rejected) and those that are part of the family reunification program. The latter, covering the period 2010-2014, increased by 40% compared to previous years. Among the refugees who applied for asylum in the Netherlands in those years were the citizens of Syria and Eritrea (90%)⁷⁷.

More than half of the newcomers originating from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Somalia managed to join their own families. Among them, the Iranians made up the relatively largest group, that is, 30%, at that time. Considering the years 2013-2015, of all refugees who came to the Netherlands, there were 60% Syrians with full families, while, as is worth emphasizing, 20% of them were still living alone. In this classification, Eritreans were relatively the worst, as only 20% of them reunited with their families during that period⁷⁸. The changes occurred fairly quickly, considering 2016 and the first quarter of 2017, when the number of Eritrean refugees joining their relatives increased significantly. At that

⁷³ Ibidem, pp. 27, 30, 35 and other; see also: https://www.ad.nl/buitenland/protesten-tegen-vluchtelingen-steeds-sterker_a08e0346/, <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2008802-het-protest-tegen-de-opvang-van-vluchtelingen.html>, https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/protest-tegen-asielzoeker-wordt-groter-en-grimmiger_a4230546/ [access: 22.11.2021].

⁷⁴ *Totaleinstroom 2015 was 59 100*, <https://www.coa.nl/nl/actueel/nieuws/totale-instroom-2015-was-59100> [access: 17.12.2021], following: www.rijksoverheid.nl [access: 17.12.2021].

⁷⁵ *From Refugees to Workers, Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States*, Volume II: Literature Review and Country Case Studies, Bertelsmann Stiftung 2016, p. 93.

⁷⁶ *Asylum Trends, Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands*, Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst, Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, June 2017, p. 4.

⁷⁷ *Jaarrapport Integratie 2016*, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, Den Haag/ Heerlen/ Bonaire, 2016, p. 40.

⁷⁸ Ibidem, p. 41.

time, it exceeded the total number of refugees from this country who applied for asylum in the Netherlands for the first time⁷⁹. In the second quarter of 2017, another 1,050 Eritreans came to the Netherlands, of which 685 reunited with their families. For comparison, under the already mentioned program, in total, 2,525 people came to the Netherlands from Syria. Outside of this group, another 785 people started the asylum application process in this country. The total number of refugees in the second quarter was 3,850, while there were 4,095 of those who joined their relatives later⁸⁰. The year 2015 was characterized by the largest (58,880)⁸¹ number of asylum applications submitted by refugees⁸², compared to previous years. Already in the first three quarters of 2015, up to 70% of these applications were approved. It is also important that some of the rejected applications were re-submitted, and most of them were successful, thus eventually the number of positive decisions reached the level of 75-80%⁸³. From January 2013 to October 2016, most refugees from Syria (42%) and Eritrea (21%) obtained permission to stay in the Netherlands at the first stage. They were followed by the so-called stateless (11%), mainly Palestinians living in Syrian refugee camps. Compared to 2014, there was a decrease in the number of asylum seekers among Somalis (5%), Afghans (5%), Iranians (4%), Iraqis (3%) and 9% of the diverse refugee groups of a total of 42 different countries⁸⁴.

In 2016, the number of asylum seekers, as highlighted above, decreased significantly compared to 2015, reaching 31,642 people. However, this tendency temporarily fluctuated to a certain extent. Taking into account asylum applications in the first six months of 2016 and 2017, it is easy to observe an increase in the number of applications submitted in 2017 compared to 2016. The number of applicants in 2017 changed radically, reaching 17,433 asylum applicants compared to 2016 when the number

⁷⁹ *Meer nareizigers uit Eritrea*, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2017/29/meer-nareizigers-uit-eritrea> [access: 18.08.2021].

⁸⁰ Ibidem.

⁸¹ *Asylum Trends, Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands and Europe*, Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst, Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, December 2015, p. 4.

⁸² The largest number of applicants so far (around 52,500,000) was in 1994, which was the result of tragic events in the Balkans. See: Press release by COA, 12-01-2016. <https://www.coa.nl/nl/nieuws/totale-instroom-2015-was-59100> [access: 21.03.2021].

⁸³ A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen in Nederland. De vluchtelingenstroom in integratieperspectief*, In opdracht van het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, Rotterdam 2016, p. 6.

⁸⁴ Ibidem, p. 8.

of applications filed reached 12,345⁸⁵. However, it should be emphasized that if we take into account only 2017, the downward trend seems to be obvious concerning the submitted applications, because their number - as shown by the statistics - is gradually decreasing each month⁸⁶.

Table 1. Total number of refugees applying for asylum in the Netherlands in January-June 2016 and 2017 (first-time applicants, repeat applicants, family reunification and unaccompanied minors)

Month	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Total
Number of refugees applying for asylum in 2016	3422	2566	1774	1418	1561	1604	12345
Number of refugees applying for asylum in 2017	2690	3423	3302	2800	2800	2359	17433

Own source based on: *Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands*, 2016, op.cit. and *Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands*, 2017, op.cit., p. 4.

In the period from 1 June 2016 to 30 June 2017, the number of all refugees applying for asylum amounted to 36,730, of which there were 16,849 first-time applicants, 1894 repeat applicants, 17,987 who joined their families, 1,690 unaccompanied minors⁸⁷. Most first-time applicants were among Syrians (40%), Eritreans (9%), Moroccans (5%), Algerians (4%), others (36%)⁸⁸ and stateless (6%). Regarding repeat applicants, Afghan people constituted 24%, Iraqis 10%, Iranians 7%, Armenians 4%, Somali 4% and others 51%⁸⁹. The asylum seekers' family members who have joined their relatives were mainly people from Syria (71%) and Eritrea (11%). Iraqi people constituted 1%, followed by stateless peoples (11%), other ethnic groups (4%), and people of unidentified nationalities (2%). Among unaccompanied minors were Eritreans (55%), Syrians (7%), Moroccans (5%), Algerians

⁸⁵ *Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands*, Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst, Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, czerwiec 2017, p. 4, <https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT June 2017.pdf> [access: 03.08.2021].

⁸⁶ *Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands. Recent trends*, Ministry of Security and Justice Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), IND Business Information Centre (BIC), Den Haag 2016; <https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT December 2016.pdf> [access: 03.08.2021], p. 4; *Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands. Recent trends*, Ministry of Security and Justice Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), IND Business Information Centre (BIC), Den Haag 2017, <https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT June 2017.pdf> [access: 03.08.2021], p. 4.

⁸⁷ *Welkelandensta... op.cit.*, pp. 4-7.

⁸⁸ For a complete overview of all ethnic groups seeking asylum in the Netherlands: *ibidem*, p. 7.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*.

(4%), Afghans (4%) and others, including 25% of all minors who came to the Netherlands in the analyzed period⁹⁰.

In August 2022, altogether 3,640 asylum seekers arrived in the Netherlands. This is 1,000 more than in the previous month. In addition, 1,040 following family members arrived, 570 more than in July 2022. In total, 34,860 asylum seekers and following relatives entered the country in 2021. The number of asylum migrants peaked in 2015, when the war in Syria caused a large influx of refugees. Subsequently, the number of following family members peaked in the last quarter of 2016 and the first two quarters of 2017⁹¹.

The Problem of Economic Migrants. Taking into account the first half of 2017, the nationality of asylum seekers in the Netherlands changed significantly. This was due to several factors. One of them is a ministerial note introducing a correction to the list of the so-called safe countries, since the Netherlands, as one of the most attractive countries in Europe, continuously records a strong influx of foreigners from many parts of the world. Among those arriving in Holland, some leave their homelands for purely economic reasons. Not being refugees, because the countries they came from are not war-torn (nor do they generate oppressive activities that violate the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms), they are making efforts to obtain asylum by submitting relevant documents. Due to this fact, the list of countries recognized as safe in the Netherlands has been updated (practically extended)⁹². Among the 68 safe countries, there are, among others, the Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia), the Maghreb countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria) and several others, such as in Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Georgia or Ghana⁹³.

The expansion of the list of safe countries was due to the change in the direction of an immigration policy aiming to limit the influx of migrants mainly resulting from the crisis in North Africa. Some of the added countries,

⁹⁰ Ibidem, p. 8

⁹¹ *How many asylum seekers enter the Netherlands?*, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/dossier/migration-and-integration/how-many-asylum-seekers-enter-the-netherlands-> [access: 18.07.2021].

⁹² Countries considered safe are those which are free from human rights violations, persecution based on race and religion, torture, and inhuman treatment. As of July 18, 2017, the list includes 68 so-called safe countries. See more: Welkelanden staan op de lijst van veiligelanden van herkomst ?, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/vraag-en-antwoord/lijs-van-veilige-landen-van-herkomst> [access: 18.07.2021].

⁹³ Ministerie van Veiligheids Justitie, K.H.D.M. Dijkhoff, *Uitbreiding lijst veiligelanden van herkomst vijfde tranche*, of 24.04.2017, Den Haag.

such as Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica, with the status of a safe country, were placed on this list, subject to the possibility of granting asylum to citizens of these countries in the event of possible persecution due to their LGBT status. In such a case, they would be subject to the accelerated asylum procedure despite the fact that the country from which they came had been classified as safe⁹⁴. Consequently, referring to the latest data⁹⁵, in June 2017, Syrians (17%), Eritreans (6%), Iraqis (5%) and Moldovans (5%) applied for asylum status for the first time. Concerning the latter, it is worth noting that approx. 19% of the refugee applicants come from the list of safe countries, e.g., Morocco (4%), Turkey (4%), Georgia (3%) and even Guinea (5%)⁹⁶.

In June 2017, among those who reunited with their families, there were mainly residents of Syria (63%), Eritrea (15%) and 9% of those without citizenship of any country, the so-called stateless persons⁹⁷.

The procedure for granting asylum to refugees from countries recognized as safe⁹⁸ is also an important issue as in the case of some countries, especially Iran, Afghanistan, or Iraq, not all applications were rejected. Refugees from threatened areas were granted asylum. The asylum-seeking procedure for nationals of countries such as Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia - also on the list of safe countries - is usually accelerated and results in the rejection of the application and an order to leave the Netherlands immediately and not enter the Netherlands; and other European Union countries for two years⁹⁹.

The Dynamics of the Phenomenon and Forecasts for the Coming Years. Since the scale of migration is largely determined by the sociopolitical situation in the world, it is difficult to forecast its range and size. However, the Dutch Central Statistical Bureau estimated the increased influx of refugees resulting in 60,000 new asylum holders in the next four years, i.e., until 2020¹⁰⁰. The forecasts initially showed an upward trend, as evidenced by the number

⁹⁴ Ibidem.

⁹⁵ Figures obtained on August 5, 2017

⁹⁶ *Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands. Recent trends*, Ministry of Security and Justice Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), IND Business Information Centre (BIC), Den Haag 2017; https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT_June_2017.pdf [access: 03.08.2017], p. 5.

⁹⁷ Ibidem.

⁹⁸ See: *Welkelanden staan op de lijst van veiligelanden van herkomst?* <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/vraag-en-antwoord/lijst-van-veilige-landen-van-herkomst> [access: 18.07.2021].

⁹⁹ More in: *Vrijheidsbeperkende locatie*, <https://www.dienstterugkeerenvertrek.nl/VertrekuutNederland/Verblijfslocatiesvoorvreemdelingen/vrijheidsbeperkendelocatie/index.aspx> [access: 05.08.2021].

¹⁰⁰ A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen...*, op.cit., p. 3.

of asylum applications submitted in 2015¹⁰¹. However, they did not translate into the situation regarding the presence of refugees in the Netherlands (for the first quarter of 2017). Actually, in 2016, the number of asylum seekers decreased by half and amounted to 31,600. This was due to the change in the classification by the Dutch government of countries considered safe¹⁰², which decreased the number of asylum seekers in 2015 from 70% to 54% in 2016¹⁰³.

The above data also appear to be compatible with the figures from Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers sources (henceforth referred to as COA), which indicate the need to reduce the number of places in refugee centres to 31 thousand. Due to the decline in the asylum applicants, the number of reception centres was reduced to 65, and the remaining 45 centres are to be gradually closed. As of 18 April 2017, the number of asylum seekers was 22,800 at 48,700 places available in the centres (COA)¹⁰⁴. These were mainly people who joined their families and those who applied for asylum for other reasons. Some places in the centres were vacated by refugees whose applications were successful and those who were rejected. According to COA forecasts, there will be a further decrease in temporary accommodation for potential asylum seekers in the future. At the same time, however, reception centres expect a possible new influx of people in need in the future¹⁰⁵. It is assumed that the applicants will next use the family reunification program, which will automatically translate into an increase in the number of refugees per balance in the near term. It is also worth adding, following Leerkes and Scholten, that the unpredictable situation in the Middle East may generate a new influx of refugees. According to Dutch researchers, the influx of potential immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa in the coming decades maybe caused by structural changes, i.e., economic and demographic trends

¹⁰¹ The total influx of refugees to the Netherlands in 2015 was 58,900 people, including both single and multiple asylum seekers and those who joined their families.

¹⁰² *Welkelandenstaan op de lijst van veiligelanden van herkomst?*, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/vraag-en-antwoord/lijt-van-veilige-landen-van-herkomst> [access: 18.07.2021].

¹⁰³ *Presentatiejaarcijfers COA, IND en DT&V*, z dn. 10.04.2017, <https://www.coa.nl/nl/actueel/nieuws/presentatie-jaarcijfers-coa-ind-en-dtv> [access: 02.08.2021].

¹⁰⁴ *Opvangcapaciteit COA vooreind 2017 naar 31.000 plaatsen*, as of 26.04.2017, <https://www.coa.nl/nl/actueel/nieuws/opvangcapaciteit-coa-voor-eind-2017-naar-31000-plaatsen> [access: 02.08.2021].

¹⁰⁵ *Nieuwe prognose: behoefte aan opvangplekken voor asielzoekers stijgt fors*, <https://www.coa.nl/nl/nieuws/nieuwe-prognose-behoefte-aan-opvangplekken-voor-asielzoekers-stijgt-fors> [access: 12.08.2021].

that take place in this area and therefore may create emigration pressures from this region, especially from Cameroon, Nigeria, and Ghana¹⁰⁶.

2.2. POLITICAL DISCOURSE AS REFLECTED BY THE PRESENCE OF REFUGEES AFTER 2000

The first decade of the 2000s was characterised by a change in the direction of Dutch immigration policy from integrationist to assimilationist. Paul Scheffer's essay *Multicultural Drama (Dutch Het multiculturele drama)*¹⁰⁷ published in 2000, largely captured the mood of Dutch society, highlighting the recklessly pursued policy of great openness towards 'strangers' over the years and, at the same time, the lack of expected results in terms of the integration of newcomers. This period was also marked by tragic events (the murders of the politician Pim Fortuijn and the filmmaker Theo van Gogh)¹⁰⁸, which, as it seems now, ended once and for all not only the political correctness of the Dutch, but also the period of unreflective tolerance towards foreign culture. Han Entzinger concluded this period with the statement: "the silent majority is tired of multiculturalism"¹⁰⁹, which in the following years, had practical implications, among others, for state policy towards immigrants. Recalling the discourse of those years, it is worth mentioning the four most important issues in the debates of the time, i.e. the failure of integration and the country's immigration policy; the threat to democracy posed by Islam, especially its fundamentalist faction; accusing the political elite (also the academic community) of contributing to the failure of integration by hiding the real problems behind a mask of political correctness and pointing out the common victim of this policy - the Dutch society (i.e. the Dutch electorate)¹¹⁰.

The doubts mentioned above are still repeated today in an unchanged form as a series of accusations against the past years, as well as the current situation related to the refugee crisis. Despite the passing of time they seem to be still relevant and alarming at the same time, because the anti-immigration

¹⁰⁶ A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen...*, op.cit., p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ P. Scheffer, *Het multiculturele drama*, NRC, [access: 29.01.2000].

¹⁰⁸ R. Penninx, *After the Fortuyn and van Gogh murders: in the Dutch integration model in disarray?*, p. 9, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238512248_Dutch_Integration_Policies_after_the_Van_Gogh_Murder [access: 12.08.2021].

¹⁰⁹ H. Entzinger, *The rise and fall of multiculturalism: The case of the Netherlands*, in: C. Joppke, E. Morawska (ed.), *Toward assimilation and citizenship: Immigrants in liberal nation-states*, Palgrave, Hampshire 2003.

¹¹⁰ R. Penninx, *After the Fortuyn and van Gogh murders...*, op.cit., p. 9.

(anti-refugee) climate is not conducive to constructive dialogue and leads to an escalation of e.g. xenophobic behaviour. Populists are playing on the emotions and dissatisfaction of a part of society, and there are parties that can justifiably be questioned as to whether they are genuinely seeking a suitable and feasible solution to the problems generated by immigrants, or whether they are stirring up anxiety and uncertainty about the future, and giving rise to racist attitudes using emotions. Today in the Netherlands, according to Fennema, the “sorcerer’s apprentice” (nid. tovenaarsleerling), is Geert Wilders, leader of the anti-immigration Freedom Party (Partij voor Vrijheid, PVV)¹¹¹. According to some, the loser in the parliamentary elections of 2017 in the Netherlands, according to others - in relative perspective - the winner¹¹². However, one thing is certain: Wilders’ party gained five more seats compared to the previous election, while the party of current Prime Minister Mark Rutte (leader of the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy VVD) lost eight seats. The biggest loss, however, was to the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA), which obtained only nine seats in the Second Chamber, while losing twenty-nine of them compared to the previous legislature (in 2012 the party obtained 38 parliamentary seats). It should also be noted that the Labour Party is a party with a high proportion of ethnic minorities in its ranks compared to other leading parties, which indicates, the party’s inherent nature¹¹³. However, it is worth mentioning that the party has recently stopped providing automatic support for all immigrants, which is a turning point in its way of thinking to date¹¹⁴. This was demonstrated by Ahmed Aboutaleb (Mayor of Rotterdam and member of the Labour Party), who, regarding immigration policy in the country, stated

¹¹¹ M. Fennema, *Geert Wilders. Tvenaarsleerling*, Prometheus, Amsterdam 2016, passim. The Freedom Party was founded in 2005 by Geert Wilders, who remains the party’s leader and central figure. In the 2006 elections, the party entered the Parliament, winning 5.9% of the votes and thus 9 seats in the Second Chamber of Parliament. The PVV achieved its greatest success in 2010, winning 24 seats and thus becoming third force, alongside the centre-right People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie) and the social democratic Party of Labour (Partij van de Arbeid), in the Second Chamber. The PVV also brought its representatives into the First Chamber.

¹¹² Ch. Graham, *Who won the Dutch election and what does it mean for Geert Wilders and the far-right in the Netherlands and Europe*, „The Telegraph”, 16.03.2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/16/won-dutch-election-does-mean-geert-wilders-far-right-netherlands/> [access: 23.07.2021].

¹¹³ Ch. Alberts, *De PvdA – blues – Een pijnlijke conclusie bij het afscheid van de Kamerleden. Slechts twee geprezen om hun kwaliteit en als volksver tegen woordiger*, The Post, 23.03.2017, <http://politiek.tpo.nl/2017/03/23/de-pvda-blues-een-pijnlijke-conclusie-bij-het-afschied-van-de-kamerleden/> [access: 18.08.2021].

¹¹⁴ *PvdA wijst migranten als automatische bondgenoot af*, 20.06.2017, http://www.telegraaf.nl/binnenland/28437482/_PvdA_wijst_migranten_af_.html [access: 25.07.2021].

that “solidarity does not mean even more uncontrolled migration” (Dutch ‘Solidariteit betekent niet: nog meer ongecontroleerde migratie’)¹¹⁵. Wilders’ ‘victory’ is certainly a confirmation of considerable public support for this politician and means that his party will probably be present in parliament in the years to come. At the same time, for the “emergence of new barbarism and fanaticism,” some Dutch people blame the elites who – recalling Paul Scheffer – “have no right to complain when they clearly disregarded the cultivation of their own tradition”¹¹⁶. Elites have also been accused of over-mythologising the Dutch model of multiculturalism, which Schnabel has called a “multicultural illusion”¹¹⁷. Perhaps discrimination against ethnic minorities, under the guise of tolerance and openness towards the ‘other’, will soon become the next topic that Dutch society will have to deal with in the near future. The consequence of the events of the last few years and the direction of the policy towards immigrants (especially refugees) is a loss of trust in the state, both on the part of native Dutch citizens and residents with an immigrant background. This state of affairs generates frustration on both sides. The situation related to the refugee crisis seems to further deepen the divide in society, which has split into two groups: those who are open-minded and still tolerant of newcomers and those who loudly voice their concerns, manifesting their disagreement with, in their view, the violation of democratic values by the ‘old’ immigrants and the new wave of refugees entering the country en masse. In the difficult debate also participate non-governmental organisations that for years have been trying to help immigrants and refugees, regardless of the changing governmental policy or the negative attitude of part of the society towards the newcomers (as is the case at present). These supposedly non-political institutions, which are professional experts, seem to be critical of the government’s actions, pointing out mistakes or shortcomings in its immigration policy. On the other hand, some of their suggestions regarding the refugee crisis may seem highly controversial to a part of public opinion in the Netherlands (e.g. VluchtelingenWerk Nederland argues that the Netherlands should take in more refugees than it currently

¹¹⁵ Ahmed Aboutaleb: *Solidariteit betekent niet: nog meer ongecontroleerde migratie*. Nederland heft recht op centrum rechts cabinet, 03.06.2017, <http://politiek.tpo.nl/2017/06/03/ahmed-aboutaleb-pvda-solidariteitbetekent-nog-meer-ongeccontroleerde-migratie/> [access: 21.07.2021].

¹¹⁶ More in: R. Hartmans, *Paul Schefferen het multicultureledebat*, <https://www.w.groene.nl/artikel/paul-scheffer-en-het-multiculturele-debat> [access: 12.07.2021].

¹¹⁷ P. Schnabel, *De multiculturele samenleving is een illusie*, 17.02.2000, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/magazine/de-multiculturele-samenleving-iseen-illusie-a561959/> [access: 16.07.2021]. See also: P. Schnabel, *De multicultureleillusie: een pleidooi voor aanpassingen assimilatie*, Utrecht 2000.

does). The issue of immigrants - especially refugees - raises extreme emotions in the Netherlands today. On the one hand, the government is pursuing a socially divisive policy towards ethnic minorities, while on the other hand - despite the critical assessment of the ruling elite on this issue - there is the unchanging stance of non-profit organisations towards refugees.

It is worth recalling some opinions relating to the immediate prospects for the integration of refugees and immigrants into Dutch society. According to Alexander Rinnooy Kan, a researcher at the University of Amsterdam, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment (Sociale Zakenen Werkgelegenheid) Wouter Koolmees (in office since 2017) will strengthen the inclusion process of immigrants in the area of the labour market, which is the main determinant of the level of integration of newcomers. The researcher emphasises the willingness of many Dutch people to help refugees, while hoping that the existing polarisation in this regard will not divide society. Kan also points to international rankings of social cohesion, in which the Netherlands is expected to be highly ranked¹¹⁸. At the same time, there is dissatisfaction among some groups in the Netherlands regarding asylum seekers. The researcher believes that the Dutch society needs to rebalance in this respect, pointing out that the local communities, including the municipalities that manage the integration policy of newcomers, are crucial for the integration of new citizens. Jan Jaap de Ruiter, an Arab scholar at Tilburg University, draws attention to the lack of agreement between party groups on the refugee issue and the increased activity of religious groups. This researcher points to the so-called Trump effect, which led to Wilders' success and may make these parties even more active in the next years¹¹⁹. De Ruiter also stresses that the voice of the moderate Muslim community is weak, but believes that it will be heard in the near future. The debate on migrants and refugees is becoming more heated and, he predicts it is likely to intensify. In his view, the level of mistrust towards the ruling elites is also growing¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ A.R. Kan, *We kunnen 'enmoeten het vraagstuk rondom integratie en opvang vluchtelingen oplossen*, <https://www.kis.nl/artikel/wat-worden-de-maatschappelijke-trends-en-themas-van-2018> [access: 10.09.2021]. In contrast to this position, cf.: H. van Dalen, *Waaromwaant Nederland zich Europees kampioen discriminatie?*, <http://www.mejudice.nl/artikelen/detail/waarom-waantnederland-zich-europees-kampioen-discriminatie> [access: 15.02.2021].

¹¹⁹ J.J. de Ruiter, *Zo wel politieke partijen als religieuze groepen gaan meer lawaai maken*, <https://www.kis.nl/artikel/wat-worden-de-maatschappelijke-trends-en-themas-van-2018> [access: 21.12.2021].

¹²⁰ A mainstream group representing the Muslim diaspora with figures such as Enis Odaci can contribute to softening the political debate and perhaps prevent Salafist positions. Cf. *Enis Odaci in 'Het Vermoeden'*, <https://www.nieuwwij.nl/nieuws/enis-odaci-het-vermoeden/> [access: 21.12.2021].

In turn, Naima Azough, former Member of Parliament, Special Rapporteur on Extremism and member of the Advisory Council of the KIS, points out that the Dutch are increasingly turning to alienation. People are choosing to focus more on themselves or their group, as well as on their own goals and interests, both individually and at group level. This is not a new trend, but Azough believes it will increase in the coming years. The differences between groups (left and right, urban and rural, indigenous and bicultural) are becoming clearer. This phenomenon can be seen in a positive light, among other things because taboo subjects are increasingly discussed openly. On the other hand, society is becoming increasingly polarised and the view of socio-political events is presented in black and white. It is therefore a challenge to analyse problems from the point of view of the so-called “centre”, which seems to be ignored by the conflicting parties. However, such an attitude is needed, as various forms of extremism can only lead to the aggravation of problems¹²¹. A similar view is taken by Glen Helberg, a Dutch psychiatrist and activist, who emphasises the emotional attitude of the Dutch towards immigrants and refugees¹²². The Dutch are faced with the dilemma of multicultural coexistence; with the choice between investing in each other and rejecting such an attitude. Abdulwahid van Bommel, theologian and writer, also points to this problem by calling on Dutch society not to give in to isolationist tendencies. The researcher also stresses the need for a correct interpretation of “democratic constitutional state” and “Islam”, as both systems of beliefs and values are in constant movement, have their own dynamics. Therefore, mutual trust and respect, as he emphasises, should be a priority for all culturally diverse groups. What is good for one should also be good for the other, so shared responsibility would be an appropriate motto for the coming years, following the principle of “invest in each other and get to know each other” (Dutch: “investeer in elkaaren leer elkaar kennen”)¹²³.

¹²¹ N. Azough, *We komen meer voor onze ideeën op, maar de bruggen bouwen staat onder druk*, https://www.kis.nl/artikel/wat-woorden-de-maatschappelijketrends-en-themas-van-2018?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=171219NieuwsbriefKIS&utm_content=171219NieuwsbriefKIS&utm_source=171219NieuwsbriefKIS [access: 21.12. 2021]

¹²² G. Helberg, *Ook „wit” moet naar zich zelf gaan kijken*, https://www.kis.nl/artikel/wat-woorden-de-maatschappelijke-trends-en-themas-van2018?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=171219NieuwsbriefKIS&utm_content=171219NieuwsbriefKIS&utm_source=171219NieuwsbriefKIS [access: 21.12.2021].

¹²³ A. van Bommel, *We staan nu 'echt voor de keuze: wel of niet in elkaar investeren*, https://www.kis.nl/artikel/wat-woorden-de-maatschappelijke-trendsen-themas-van-2018?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=171219NieuwsbriefKIS&utm_content=171219NieuwsbriefKIS&utm_source=171219NieuwsbriefKIS [access: 21.12.2021].

2.3. POLICY DIRECTIONS TOWARDS REFUGEES AND THE REACTION OF THE DUTCH SOCIETY

New Challenges for Immigration Policy. It is assumed that a significant proportion of refugees seeking to stay in the Netherlands permanently will contribute to increasing the number of immigrants in the country. This fact presents the state with the challenge of integrating new citizens into Dutch society. The state integration policy, as already indicated, has undergone significant changes in recent years. On the one hand, these changes can be considered a positive trend and associate it with the evolution of this policy, aimed at improving the state in terms of immigration and integration and on the other hand, as the lack of an idea and a long-term plan regarding the state's strategy in terms of the expectations of both immigrants and the host society.

According to the ethnic minorities policy, in order to shape the process of integration of migrants, all its stages are important, from the initial phase of crossing the border by refugees/immigrants and their accommodation in assistance centres for people in need (COA) to obtaining asylum and the stage of their permanent stay in the Netherlands, learning to co-create a society (integrate socially), or return - when it is possible - to their countries of origin. All these stages are extremely important both for refugees and for the Dutch themselves.

In connection with the above, the conclusion is that the Dutch immigration policy must adapt to the new geopolitical conditions and the related categories of migrants, not forgetting at the same time a strategy towards immigrants that would also be a kind of "universal" policy for all foreigners coming to the Netherlands. Permanent components of the immigration and integration policy are learning the Dutch language at all levels and for all age categories of immigrants, and a strong emphasis on involving newcomers in the labour market. These issues are clearly emphasized in the ministerial note of 27 November 2015 (Integratie en Participatie Vergunninghouders, Ministerie van SZW; SZW – Sociale Zakenen Werkgelegenheid), in which the obligation to participate in the labour market - including training - becomes an interpretation of the level of immigrant integration, which does not diminish the issue of the development of housing for immigrants (the issue of the reception of newcomers). In the said document, Minister Lodewijk Asscher (SZW) also stresses this problem, which has a significant

impact on the inclusions of newcomers, pointing at the same time to the need to improve investments in this field¹²⁴.

The Dutch "samenwerken / samenwonen" ("we work/live together") and all kinds of other forms of mutual functioning within one society are indicated as a sine qua non condition for multicultural co-existence. Hence, help for immigrants on the labour market from industry organizations (e.g. LTO - Land enTuinbouwOrganisatie Nederland, TLN - Inbreng Transport enLogistiek, BDO¹²⁵, FME - Feature Manipulation Engine, MKB – Midden en Kleinbedrijf), municipalities or non-governmental organizations (especially UVW – Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen and VWN - VluchtelingenWerk Nederland) is fully justified.

This common interest applies to each of the following entities: immigrants because their activation on the labour market is related to them becoming independent; municipalities whose budget is naturally relieved due to the limitation of the number of unemployment benefits (in this case for residents of immigrant origin); economy, which is supplied with additional capital human, new jobs; after all, society itself, which gains image, according to "samenwerken / samenwonen", in terms of shaping the policy of the local municipality/region/country.

Old and New Integration Policy. As already indicated, integration policy in the Netherlands has been changing approximately every ten years. The change we are witnessing now, i.e. in the time of the refugee crisis, requires discussion due to its nature and the challenges it poses. This is because up until now the integration policy has largely focused on the subsequent generation of immigrants who came to the Netherlands in the 1960s. and the 1970s, i.e., Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilles. The inclusion of citizens of immigrant roots covered mainly spheres related to the labour market, education, and housing, and was initially based on integration from the group's point of view, later, the responsibility of each member of a given diaspora for themselves. Consequently, from 2010, every refugee was obliged to choose an integration course and finance it yourself. In the case of a possible loan drawn for the training, to be reimbursed after successfully passing the asylum procedure.

¹²⁴ *Kamerbrief Integratie en participatie van vergunninghouders*, Ministerie van Sociale Zaken, of 27.11.2015, p. 2.

¹²⁵ The name BDO comes from the initials of the co-founders of the organization (1973). They were: Binder Hamlyn from Great Britain, Dijkers & Co from the Netherlands and Otto & Co from Germany.

It is worth noting that the integration policy in the Netherlands has decentralized over the past decade. Emphasis was placed on integration in the area of the so-called metropolitan policy with a priority over citizenship, integration, social cohesion, and neighbourhood policy. The government's withdrawal from the decision of financing local integration policy because - which was the leading argument - the unjustified duplication of costs allocated to the integration of immigrants led, according to Leerkes and Scholten, to dismantling the state's integration policy over the past decade¹²⁶. Bearing in mind the above, it is worth considering whether the "mainstream" of the current state policy and its constituents, "decentralization" and "individualization" are strong foundations for the integration of new citizens who, especially in recent years, are refugees. The very issue of well-planned institutionalization as part of integration policy, which is repeatedly emphasized, is not enough to achieve success in terms of the integration of newcomers. In the field of integration policy of the state, it is necessary to take into account the main sectors related to the integration of newcomers, i.e. housing, labour market, language learning, and broadly understood education. The condition of these sectors is particularly important when considering asylum seekers from Africa¹²⁷.

Institutions Involved in Receiving Refugees. An important role in the initial accommodation of refugees in asylum seeking centres is the already mentioned body responsible for the reception of refugees and then involving them in the process of integration, Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers (COA) which cooperates with institutions such as Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst (IND), Vreemdelingenpolitie, Koninklijke Marechaussee, or Dienst Terugkeeren Vertrek (DT&V), working for refugees. Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst, an agency of the Ministry of Security and Justice (Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie), is responsible for the implementation of immigration policy in the Netherlands. For example, it examines the applications of foreigners who are trying to obtain the right of residence. Additionally, it is in charge of border control and the naturalization of foreigners. Koninklijke Marechaussee, a police authority of military nature controlled by the Minister of Defence (one of the four organs of the Dutch armed forces), primarily monitors the legality of foreigners' residence in the Netherlands; Dienst Terugkeer en Vertrek is in charge

¹²⁶ A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen...*, op.cit., p. 22.

¹²⁷ R. Dekker, P. Scholten, *Tsunami of tragedie? Media aandacht en beeld vor mingrond het vreemdelingenbeleid*, WODC en Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 2015, passim.

of persuading, if possible, foreigners to return to their countries of origin; Afdeling Vreemdelingenpolitie Immigratie en Mensenhandel (henceforth referred to as AVIM) together with Koninklijke Marechaussee are responsible for monitoring the stay of foreigners in the Netherlands, especially those leaving the centres for asylum seekers (AZC). A positive decision on granting asylum to refugees obliges AVIM to issue relevant residence permits to those concerned. In the case of rejecting the asylum application, AVIM must ensure that the foreigner leaves the country¹²⁸. Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers (COA) is also a partner of Leger des Heils (Salvation Army, one of the many organizations that fulfil its Christian mission also abroad), Stichting Nidos (an independent organization supporting underage refugees), UAF (assisting educated refugees, helping them find themselves - adequately to their skills - in the labour market or, if necessary, take a university course in the Netherlands), VluchtelingWerk Nederland (caring for the interests of refugees) and asylum seekers; helping them primarily - e.g. through legal assistance - to find themselves in a new environment, both in temporary camps and in final places of residence) and De Vrolijkheid (involving refugee children in camps in creative activities to help develop their talents and deal with stress¹²⁹.

The above institutions working for refugees specialize in a wide range of areas. However, the effects of their work on the integration of refugees and the real prospects of their inclusion are not always satisfactory. An example can be day-stay centres for asylum seekers (COA), which, due to numerous duties related to the reception of refugees, do not demonstrate due diligence in the matters of their integration. As indicated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, cooperation between such organizations as UWV, VNG, VW and educational institutions - including COA - and their immediate activation in reception centres is another area for improvement¹³⁰.

Refugee Centres and Local Communities. The policy towards refugees is challenging already in its initial phase - as mentioned before - at the stage of placing newcomers in the centres. There is a need for action leading to changing the perception of refugee centres (AZC) from negative to positive. The solution could be to reach an understanding between visitors and inhabitants of the municipalities where the centres are located. It is argued

¹²⁸ COA partnership organizations at: <https://www.coa.nl/over-coa/keten-en-samenwerking-partners> [access: 29.06.2021].

¹²⁹ More at: <https://www.legerdesheils.nl/>, <https://www.nidos.nl/>, <https://www.uaf.nl/>, <https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/>, <https://vrolijkheid.nl/wat-we-doen/waar-werken-we/>, [access: 01.07.2021].

¹³⁰ A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen...*, op.cit., p. 24.

that the area of the centres should be reduced and that the centres themselves should be moved to different locations. Smaller centres, in small and medium-sized municipalities, provide better opportunities for refugees to stay in contact with the local community, they prevent isolating the newcomers in ghettos, and thus facilitate their integration. This unique "tradition" of placing refugees in the suburbs dates back to the 1990s. However, back then, the asylum application rejection rate was disproportionately higher than it is today. Therefore, it seems logical to adapt the asylum policy to the present conditions, especially in a crisis.

To avoid unrest in local communities, experts postulate earlier information and consultation campaigns regarding the construction or adaptation of existing facilities for purposes related to refugee accommodation. The benefits should be mutual, and the message should be transparent and coming from the communities of local entrepreneurs, schools, and cultural institutions. Leerkes and Scholten even point to the financial benefits associated with the local labour market, emphasizing, for example, job vacancies at building the refugee centre itself, but also subsequent works connected with its maintenance, etc. and for the asylum seekers¹³¹. This indicates that already at the stage of AZC centres it is necessary to implement an integration policy at the local level, which will bring potential benefits to not only refugees but also the inhabitants of a commune¹³².

The Concerns of the Dutch Society. The issue analyzed by Dutch researchers is the need to create, to counterbalance some media messages, positive references for refugees. A good solution could be specifying the problem and "showing the face" (Dutch "geven van een gezicht") of volunteers working in the centres and the refugees themselves with their stories in the background. Such a message will develop empathy towards the newcomers instead of escalating the problem, as shown by the research. In practice, there is a lot of negligence in the policy towards refugees. And this group of immigrants is the most serious cause of concern when it comes to the issue of multicultural co-existence. The yearly "Burgerperspectieven", published by Sociaalen Cultureel Planbureau monitor, shows data demonstrating that fears related to refugees occupy the first two

¹³¹ Ibidem, p. 20.

¹³² More in: P. Dekker, R. Van Dijk, P. Van Houwelingen, W. Mensink, Y. Sol, *Vluchtelingen grootste zorg*, „Burgerperspectieven” 2015/4, Den Haag: Sociaalen en Cultureel Planbureau, passim.

places on the list of problems the Dutch face¹³³. First positions were occupied by issues related to social co-existence, norms and values (Dutch "samenleven en normen en waarden"), among which, apart from moods of dissatisfaction caused by the lack of mutual respect, social polarization, indifference and selfishness, there is also great anxiety and a sense of injustice due to some changes, especially those having a multicultural background, but also related to European integration. The Dutch worry about the insufficient integration of immigrants, the loss of national autonomy and identity, an increase in crime rates, and a lack of a sense of security¹³⁴. Compared to 2014, there has been an increase in the percentage of the main concerns of the inhabitants of the Netherlands over 18 years of age related to the deterioration of social co-existence (including co-existence within a multicultural society) and immigration and integration problems. As far as the former issue is concerned, the results are as follows: in 2014-2015 - 17%, 2016 - 16%, 2017 / first quarter - 20%, and the latter: in 2014-2015 - 13%, 2016 - 24% and 2017 / first quarter -18%¹³⁵.

2.4. MAJOR OBSTACLES AND DIFFICULTIES IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS OF REFUGEES

Asylum Procedure and Integration of Newcomers. In the case of refugees, the mechanism for granting asylum status is important in the transition stage. Errors made during the initial stage may result in negative consequences¹³⁶. The asylum procedure raises several prospective concerns related to the issue of integration of newcomers. From the very beginning, asylum seekers have limited economic and social rights, as well as opportunities for social contacts. There is also room for improvement in the verification of refugees to grant them asylum status or to reject their application and thus send them back to their country of origin¹³⁷. In addition, the duration of the asylum process and the accompanying uncertainty make potential asylum seekers resistant to subsequent integration processes. The duration of this procedure

¹³³ P. Dekker, J. Den Rider, P. van Houwelingen, *Samenleven en immigratiebelangrijke zorgpunten*, in: „Burgerperspectieven” 2017/1, Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, pp. 14-15.

¹³⁴ Ibidem, p. 32.

¹³⁵ Ibidem, p. 15.

¹³⁶ A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen...*, op.cit., p. 22.

¹³⁷ Ibidem.

is to some extent justified, although it is too long, as it depends on the number of submitted applications, which are too many in the analyzed period.

It is also important what happens during the asylum procedure. On the one hand, e.g. day centers (Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers, COA) for refugees together with third sector organizations (e.g. Stichting VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, Stichting de Vrolijkheid, De Stichting voor Vluchtelingstudenten UAF and others) emphasize the need to start the integration process already at the first stage of seeking asylum. All projects are involved here: from those of a cultural nature, where children, young people, and their parents are involved, focusing on the ability to be flexible in a new environment, to projects aimed at making residents of temporary accommodation centres (AZC)¹³⁸ aware of the scope of their rights during the application stage¹³⁹. On the other hand, as Lerkees and Scholten indicate, attention is drawn to the unnecessary government actions that do not help and even hinder the potential integration of refugees. The changes referred to here, introduced in 2015 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid), mean the withdrawal of funding for Dutch language education from the state budget for unverified refugees staying in the centres¹⁴⁰. This measure, according to the researchers, may increase anxiety among asylum seekers and therefore have a negative impact on the process of their integration into the new society. The direction of changes seems to be misconceived because from the perspective of the benefits of integration, the process of learning Dutch should start as early as possible, i.e., in this case already in refugee centres. Also, because learning a foreign language is a time-consuming process, it is worth taking advantage of the often lengthy period of waiting for refugees to obtain asylum to develop language skills. However, if there is a high probability that applicants will not be entitled to asylum, it is proposed to use this time, for example, to learn English. Such solutions have already brought tangible benefits in many specific cases¹⁴¹.

The opportunities for refugees to participate in the labour market are also heavily restricted during the asylum procedure, which is known

¹³⁸ From the beginning of March 2017, there were 24,872 people in the centres for refugees, of which about 8,000 are minors, more in: *Welke stappen door loopt een asielzoeker in Nederland?*

¹³⁹ *Werkenopleiding*, <https://www.coa.nl/nl/asielopvang/werk-en-opleiding> [access: 23.06.2021]. See also: A.M.E. van der Vuurst, *Publiekewaarde(-ring). Samenwerkingbijdagbesteding in asielzoekerscentra. Master thesis bestuurskunde*, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam 2015, pp. 12-14.

¹⁴⁰ More in: Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, Onderwerp Start integratie in opvanglocaties, Den Haag 25.10.2015.

¹⁴¹ A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen...*, op.cit., p. 22.

to be an important area of immigrant integration. During the verification process, refugees are either deprived of the opportunity to work for formal and legal reasons, or - assuming that the asylum procedure lasts more than six months - have the right to obtain employment, but only for a limited time, which is a maximum of 24 weeks of work during the year and only after obtaining the appropriate permission from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid)¹⁴². An important issue raised by experts and concerning the asylum policy is also, apart from permitting the refugees to do paid work, the possibility of their internships in various sectors of the economy¹⁴³. The skills acquired at this level of integration are a valuable asset at the next stages of the inclusion of foreigners, thus helping them find their place in the labour market and adapt to a new environment. The so-called task groups, such as Taskforce Werken Integratie Vluchtelingen (TWIV) already initiate, implement, and carry out predefined tasks in the area of integration of newcomers¹⁴⁴. Dutch experts have been considering strengthening the role of this kind of institution, emphasizing the need to perform an in-depth analysis of the usefulness of refugees in the labour market, especially in terms of professional skills¹⁴⁵. What the researchers point out is the need to eliminate weekly limits that reduce the earnings of employees. It is also necessary to draw attention to the need for joint participation in the labour market in line with the paradigm of a multicultural society (i.e., "multiculturelesamenleving").

Uncertainty of Tomorrow, Individualisation and Decentralization, Difficulties in Learning the Language. The problem of integration is, as mentioned previously, the lack of certainty of both refugees and asylum seekers, who even after successfully going through the asylum procedure, are granted permission to stay for only five years. It is worth emphasizing, however, that it is possible to apply for the extension of the permission for a specified

¹⁴² See: *Mogen asielzoekerwerken?*, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/vluchtelingen-werk-en-integratie/vraag-en-antwoord/mogen-asielzoekers-werken> [access: 12.06.2021]. *Vergunning en buitenlandse werknemers*, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/nieuw-in-nederland/vergunningen-buitenlandse-werknemers> [access: 12.06.2021]. See also: Monitor Arbeidsmarkt, April 2017, Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid en Vluchtelingenwerk, VluchtelingenWerkNederland, [https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/sites/public/u895/vluchtelingen in dienstnemen def.pdf](https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/sites/public/u895/vluchtelingen%20in%20dienstnemen%20def.pdf) [access: 12.06.2021].

¹⁴³ See: *Informatie voor werkgevers. Over stages, werkervaringsplekken en betaald werk door asielzoekers en statushouders*, Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, [access: 23.03.2017].

¹⁴⁴ *Taskforce Werken Integratie Vluchtelingen*, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2016/05/20/taskforce-werk-en-integratie-vluchtelingen> [access: 13.06.2021].

¹⁴⁵ A. Leerkes, P. Scholten, *Landen...*, op.cit., p. 19.

period. Thus, a person with asylum status becomes uncertain of tomorrow, which consequently results in their lack of willingness to integrate with the Dutch society. Suggestions for changes in the asylum procedure concern, among others, the separate treatment of refugees from Syria and Somalia, for example, subjecting them to separate, faster legal solutions enabling them to obtain a permanent residence card in a short time. Another proposal is to "reward" those asylum seekers who successfully find their place in the Dutch labour market and meet other integration requirements¹⁴⁶.

Integration policy, which has undergone significant changes over the years (the last decade is particularly important), today demonstrates the tendency of strong individualisation and decentralization. On the one hand, this means transferring the responsibility for their integration to the immigrant (including financing integration courses), and on the other hand, taking into account the personal situation of the immigrant, their desires, and professional opportunities. As far as refugees are concerned, the problem becomes more complicated because while an immigrant - as if by definition - has the motivation to integrate, a refugee is left alone in this respect. Is the integration policy suitable for their integration and does it have appropriate instruments to receive such crowds of people in need? Positive responses to these questions raise serious doubts in Dutch scientific circles today¹⁴⁷.

At the same time, for example, good relations of some non-governmental organizations and municipalities are put forward, which, based on cooperation with the government, and strictly with the executive body of the DUO government administration (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs) at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Culture en Wetenschap), support immigrants on their way to integration by providing them, *inter alia*, with assistance ranging from educational information, training, examinations to the financing of schools for immigrants¹⁴⁸. DUO is also responsible for monitoring compliance with the law of refugees and immigrants¹⁴⁹ in matters of compulsory completion of language courses and knowledge of the culture and labour market in the Netherlands. In the case of non-compliance with the applicable legal rules, foreigners should return to the state the funds originally allocated to the courses.

¹⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 21.

¹⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 24.

¹⁴⁸ Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, Ministerie van Onderwijs, Culture en Wetenschap, <https://www.duo.nl/organisatie/over-duo/wat-doen-we.jsp> [access: 17.07.2021].

¹⁴⁹ DUO deals with the integration of those immigrants who came to the Netherlands to marry a Dutch citizen of an ethnic origin.

It is worth noting the number of those who took the obligatory integration training and passed the final exam (the so-called *inburgeringsexamen*)¹⁵⁰. Of all foreigners who completed the course in 2013-2016, only 40% obtained the relevant certificates¹⁵¹. It follows unequivocally that the Integration Act (*Wet Inburgering*) does not function as expected, and those to whom it applies, refugees and immigrants, are not sufficiently encouraged by the state to take integration issues into their own hands¹⁵². As emphasized by Dorine Manson, the chairperson of the non-governmental organization *VluchtelingenWerk Nederland* in 2010-2018, penalties imposed by the state for not completing the course demotivate and discourage refugees from integrating into Dutch society. Moreover, it seems, as she suggests, that they are punished twice: for the first time, due to difficulties in obtaining a residence permit (too long legal procedures¹⁵³); the second time, a high amount of money (sometimes many thousands) in euros, which must be returned to the state for failing to comply with the obligation to complete the integration course within the required three years¹⁵⁴.

The report on the state of integration of foreigners based on the 2013 Integration Act, drawn up in January 2017, clearly indicates that the assumptions of the policy towards immigrants, especially refugees, are already not good at the beginning, which in practice results in incorrect actions on the part of entities responsible for their integration. It turns out, referring to the Report, that most immigrants¹⁵⁵ need more support and more complete information at the beginning of the integration program from the institutions they are subject to. Problems include the lack of transparency in the

¹⁵⁰ The examination is usually at the end of an integration training to check that immigrants are aware of the customs and practices of the country where they chose to stay either permanently or temporarily.

¹⁵¹ H. Salm, *Bijna helft migranten haalt inburgering examen niet op tijd*, „Trouw de Verdieping”, 15.04.2017, https://www.trouw.nl/samenleving/bijna-helft-migranten-haalt-inburgeringsexamen-niet-op-tijd_a3034e4f/ [access: 17.07.2021].

¹⁵² P. Antenbrink, I. Boers, J. Burgerti in., *Algemene Rekerkamer, Inburgering. Erste resultaten van de Wet inburgering 2013*, Den Haag, January 2017.

¹⁵³ Refugees who received a temporary residence card can apply for a permanent residence permit after five years or under the Family Reunification Act. Since March 2017, 9,753 people have been waiting for a permanent residence permit in refugee centres. More in: *Welke stappen ...*, op.cit.

¹⁵⁴ Ibidem. See also: J. Terpstra, *Hoe kan ik die boete nog betalen? En wanneer moet ik dan studeren?*, „Trouw de Verdieping”, dn. 05.04.2017, https://www.trouw.nl/samenleving/-hoe-kan-ik-die-boete-nou-betalen-en-wanneer-moet-ik-dan-studeren-_afc075d7/ [access: 17.07.2021].

¹⁵⁵ The Report uses the word “inburgeraar” (integrating/participating in the integration process), which means a person usually from outside the EU, applying for permanent residence, being a participant or a potential participant of the program integrative. See: <http://anw.inl.nl/article/inburgeraar> [access: 17.07.2021].

educational market, which makes it difficult for interested parties to choose the appropriate training. Additionally, the quality of the educational program is not assessed/tested. On the other hand, it is also worth mentioning that penal sanctions imposed on an immigrant who did not complete the required course are difficult to enforce, which leads to their demoralisation and lack of respect for the law in force in the Netherlands¹⁵⁶. On 23 June 2017, a new law was introduced that aims to change the existing assumptions in the field of immigrant integration. It was implemented throughout 2017¹⁵⁷.

Educational Policy towards Refugees. The process of integrating refugees depends on many factors. It is not only cultural but also social and economic determinants that have a special influence on the inclusion of refugees. The Dutch advisory body Onderwijsraad (Education Council) first of all points to problems in the field of education policy for refugees. According to the Council, the newly arrived have limited access to schools, courses and training. The quantity and quality of the training offered is insufficient¹⁵⁸, and the lack of availability of the educational offer is present at all levels of education. In addition, there is also a lack of support from the interested parties themselves, i.e., parents and children. The uncertainty of tomorrow linked to the question of not being granted asylum (or permanent residence), the problems of not being able to reunite with the family (too long procedures related to family reunification policy) result in a lack of willingness to integrate in the new country. Furthermore, the financing of education is not always clear and reliable in the long term. The problem is also the relocation of refugees, connected with a kind of obligation to settle in the place chosen by the municipality¹⁵⁹ and the fact that it is too late for them to obtain Dutch citizenship, which in effect prevents integration into the host society. The lack of properly prepared expertise and quality-compliant educational

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.rekenkamer.nl/publicaties/rapporten/2017/01/24/inburgering> [access: 17.07.2021]. See also: P. Antenbrink, I. Boers, J. Burgerti in., Algemene Rekenkamer, *Inburgering ...*, op.cit., pp. 57-70.

¹⁵⁷ Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden, Jaargang 2017, 285, *Wet van 23 juni 2017 tot wijziging van de Wet inburgering en enkele andere wetten in verband met het toevoegen van het onder deel participatie verklaring aan het inburgerings examen en de wettelijke vast legging van de maatschappelijke begeleiding*, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-2017-285.html> [access: 31.07.2021].

¹⁵⁸ *Vluchtelingen en onderwijs. Naar een efficiëntere organisatie, betere toegankelijkheid hogere kwaliteit*, <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/publicaties/2017/vluchtelingen-en-onderwijs.-naar-een-efficiëntere-organisatie-betere-toegankelijkheid-en-hogere-kwaliteit/item7508> [access: 12.02.2021].

¹⁵⁹ The accommodation of refugees is decided directly by the municipalities, not the persons concerned.

material (i.e. outdated tools, methods, tests) is also a major problem for the integration of refugees. The educational base is also inadequate, making it impossible to teach the Dutch language effectively and to run workshops to help the victims overcome the trauma of the war.

In summary, according to Dutch experts, refugee education does not work in four areas. The first relates to the too frequent relocation of refugees within the asylum procedure (children have to start getting to know the school and the pupils again, which often causes frustration), the second relates to the insufficient knowledge that is taught to pupils, the third relates to the too large groups of refugees per teacher in charge, the fourth relates to the excessive dispersion of educational centres in the country, which results in the teaching staff having to travel long distances. This failure to educate immigrants Onderwijsraad puts it bluntly: "Erwordt, kortom, teveel geïmproviseerd", or "in short, there is too much improvisation"¹⁶⁰. In her opinion, the priority should be to increase access to education at all stages, investing in skills (abilities) of new members of the of society with an adequately guaranteed access to the best educational materials, and to encourage cooperation. The idea of "samenleven/samenwonen", which has already been mentioned many times, is the basis for this.

Settlement stability and educational opportunities are for refugees a motivating factor and the first stage of their willingness to integrate. The Council therefore calls for the creation of regional network structures in the area of education in order to exchange knowledge and experience, consult each other in the field of planning (between municipalities, educational institutions, and other stakeholders), with the municipality as the decision-making body. The municipality would remain the decision-making body. The Council believes that the government should address a coherent national vision on refugee education based on science and best practice. It should prevent tensions at the central and local level between the government and educational institutions (i.e., education partners). In addition, the Council draws attention to the need for better funding of training and greater predictability of training, and the need for stronger involvement of national partners such as COA (Centraal Orgaanopvang Asielzoekers), LOWAN

¹⁶⁰ *Vluchtelingen en onderwijs. Naar een efficiëntere organisatie, betere toegankelijkheid hogere kwaliteit*, <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/publicaties/2017/vluchtelingen-en-onderwijs.-naar-een-efficiëntere-organisatie-betere-toegankelijkheid-en-hogere-kwaliteit/item7508> [access: 12.02.2021].

(Landelijke Onderwijs Werkgroep voor Asielzoekers en Nieuwkomers) and Inspectie van het Onderwijs (Education Inspectorate)¹⁶¹.

Issue of Housing Shortage for Refugees. In addition to the labour market, the possibility of owning (or renting) accommodation is also a factor of integration. The problem of a shortage of housing developments for immigrants and especially for refugees is currently widely analysed and discussed in the Netherlands. It is known that the amount of social housing in the Netherlands, with the exception of a few regions, is relatively limited¹⁶². Some sources point to the possibility of building prefabricated houses¹⁶³ for refugees as a temporary solution. Such rapid housing developments and proximity to the labour market would partly solve the problem of the reception of new arrivals. Although the market for social housing for people with residence permits is insufficient in relation to existing demand, the number of people waiting in temporary camps (refugee centres - AZC) is constantly decreasing. In the second half of 2016, as many as 22 thousand asylum seekers were allocated social housing, which makes the number of those entitled to accommodation much higher than in the previous period¹⁶⁴. In the first six months of 2017, individual municipalities provided social housing to 13 thousand asylum seekers. The 2016 housing deficit caused the accommodation backlog to generate a higher number of approximately 19,000 waiting people. In the second half of 2017, municipalities planned to place 10,000 more asylum seekers in social housing. This lower number of people waiting was due to the reduced number of residence permits issued and the number of refugees arriving in the Netherlands in 2017¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶¹ Ibidem.

¹⁶² *Tot 1 juli wachten nog 19000 vluchtelingen op huis*, on 27.02.2017, <https://www.cobouw.nl/bouwbreed/nieuws/2017/2/tot-1-juli-wachten-nog-19-000-vluchtelingen-op-huis-10167812> [access: 31.07.2021].

¹⁶³ R. Sporken, *Voerendaal mag extra woningen bouwen voor opvang*, De Limburger, of 19.02.2017, <http://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dm-f2017021900036534/voerendaal-mag-extra-woningen-bouwen-voor-opvang> [access: 02.08.2021]; C. Rosman, *Sobere 'containerwoning' als nood opvang voor vluchteling*, Algemeen Dagblaad, 04.02.2016, http://www.ad.nl/buitenland/sobere-containerwoning-als-noodopvang-voor-vluchteling_a7829037/ [access: 02.08.2021]; *Volgende week akkoord over 3500 prefab woningen en omgebouwde kantoren voor vluchtelingen*, on 25.11.2015, <https://vastgoedjournaal.nl/news/19874/volgende-week-akkoord-over-3500-prefab-woningen-en-omgebouwde-kantoren-voor-vluchtelingen> [access: 31.07.2021].

¹⁶⁴ *Tot 1 juli wachten...*, op.cit.

¹⁶⁵ *Hoe worden asielzoekers met een verblijfs vergunning verdeeld over gemeenten?*, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/vraag-en-antwoord/verdeling-vergunninghouders-over-gemeenten> [access: 01.08.2021].

Until 16 July 2017, the accommodation of refugees who had received a residence card was handled by an institution called Platform Opnieuw Thuis (POT) serving municipalities and housing associations (Dutch *woning corporaties*)¹⁶⁶. After two and a half years of activity, due to structural changes, the control over POT was transferred to the Ministry of Security and Justice¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶⁶ In the Netherlands, housing associations have been operating since the 19th century, albeit in a modified form, to support underprivileged groups (from the working class in Arnhem in 1853 to immigrant communities today) by renting flats/houses (today called social housing). Initially, these associations operated without government support but later received it. For comparison, in 2016, from the social housing pool provided by the associations, 40,289 refugees with the right to stay received their own accommodation. 14% of all social housing units on the Dutch property market are inhabited by asylum seekers. Read more in: *Tot 1 juli wachten...*, op.cit.

¹⁶⁷ More in: *Gemeenten van de Toekomst neemt informatie over van Platform Opnieuw Thuis*, <https://www.gemeentenvandetoekomst.nl/themas/sociaal-domein/artikel/gemeenten-van-de-toekomst-neemt-informatie-over-van-platform-opnieuw-thuis/> [access: 01.08.2021].

REFUGEES AND NGOS IN THE NETHERLANDS

3.1. THE ROLE OF THIRD SECTOR ENTITIES IN THE CO-GOVERNANCE OF THE STATE

The theory of democracy and numerous contemporary concepts constituting its development have always been the basis for the continuous discourse on the participation of citizens in public life and the co-governance of social systems with the participation of civil society organizations. For example, according to Hirst, the improvement of democracy requires relieving the state of the excess of tasks assigned to public institutions, which at the same time cannot affect the access to public services and their quality¹⁶⁸. Referring to the theory mentioned, Eva Sørensen maintains that in a longer perspective, empowering civic actors in social systems may result in strengthening their role as partners in solving problems and social challenges, and thus strengthening ideas of democracy. The concept of associative democracy (with an emphasis on activities of associations) presumes the presence of entities such as civic advisory and consultative bodies in the governance structure. Sørensen, however, draws attention to the possible risk of such a misinterpretation of this kind of cooperation. In her opinion, functional democracy needs to complement not replace representative democracy, and this requires keeping the balance between the two dimensions: functional and representative democracy. Moreover, as she points out, misunderstood civic participation can result in weakening

¹⁶⁸ G. Smith, S. Teasdale, *Ekonomia społeczna, przedsiębiorstwo społeczne i teoria demokracji stowarzyszeniowej*, „Ekonomia Społeczna” 2011, nr 2, Kraków 2011, p. 2.

political authority and undermining its credibility. Therefore, it is believed that the resolution of disputes should be primarily based on the legitimacy of electoral power involving representative authority¹⁶⁹. One of the options for resolving the dilemma related to direct participation in local governance is Schmitter's stance. As the author argues, the direct influence of civic organizations on decisions is acceptable only when traditional mechanisms of representative democracy fail. This means that democratically elected institutions have a hegemonic role in the formulation and execution of major policy responsibilities. In the course of their implementation, self-governing civic organizations may become involved if they do not question the electoral legitimacy of public authorities. The literature on the subject also notes that the cooperation of the state and grassroots organizations has its limitations, as both policy and its evaluation belong to the public sector (formulating principles of cooperation and decision making, as well as supervision and result verification). Otherwise, this would mean the state's evading responsibility for specific areas of life, which would mean that these areas of social services would lose the character of public goods (public interest goods) to which all citizens are entitled. However, this does not mean that in these phases of relations the cooperation of the state and citizens is impossible. On the other hand, the level of policy co-creation may generate new challenges related to conflicts of interest of public administration and grassroots organizations, and thus necessitate the existence of specific requirements and standards.¹⁷⁰

The process of co-governance in terms of the country's social policy should be considered in two dimensions. The first means broadening the participation of citizens in making decisions on public matters, the second increasing their participation in the provision of social services. Interest in the so-called "third wave of democracy", i.e. participatory democracy, dates back to the 1980s, which witnessed a specific reconstruction of the welfare state, weakening the role of the state as the main "provider" of social services, and at the same time increasing citizens' interest in creating social policy. State institutions were supposed to support the development of non-state forms

¹⁶⁹ E. Les, *Uczestnictwo społeczne w erze niepewności*, „Społeczeństwo obywatelskie. Badania. Praktyka. Polityka” 2014, j. 1, Warszawa 2014, p. 11. See: E. Sørensen, *ActiveDemocracy: A Post-Liberal Model of Democratic Government?*, in: *What Constitutes a Good Society?*, B. Greve (ed.), London and New York 2000, passim.

¹⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 12. See: P.C. Schmitter, *Participation in Governance Arrangements*, in: *Participatory Governance: Political and Societal Implications*, J. R. Grotte, B. Gbikpi (ed.), Opladen 2002, passim.

of institutional activities within the social sphere¹⁷¹. Non-profit organizations play an important role in this area. Through interventions (indirect and direct) for the benefit of those in need, they teach the correct interpretation of the idea of democracy and civil society. In the concept of civic democracy, the role of social organizations should not be limited only to expressing the interests of members of the organization or putting pressure on authorities to advance them. These organizations should also influence the implementation of individual policies. This is because the control of the implementation of social policy belongs to the sphere of democracy, just like the first dimension of the political process, that is, initiating, formulating, programming, and making decisions¹⁷². It is worth highlighting that social organizations are an important carrier of social reforms and constitute a mechanism for the broader participation of citizens in the modern governance system. Incidentally, the European literature on the subject devotes a lot of space to participatory reforms¹⁷³.

The results of the research also show that civic participation in public life is growing. As Pestoff notes, the participation of citizens and non-profit organizations in the provision of social services takes on a new dimension, and citizens can choose a "provider" of social services from among a larger group of "suppliers" of these services¹⁷⁴.

In any modern civil society with an established democracy, there are three sectors: 1) state or public, which performs the functions of redistribution of goods, carried out according to specific criteria, based on the principle of egalitarianism and the principle of security, 2) business and entrepreneurship - constituting a private sphere, based on production, satisfying material needs, working for profit, 3) social sphere, addressing personal needs according to moral values and principles. Its purpose is the common good and social solidarity¹⁷⁵. With the dynamic increase in the number of various types of associations, foundations, and many other

¹⁷¹ See more in: P. Hirst, *Associative Democracy. New Forms of Economic and Social Governance*, Cambridge 1994; G. Peters, *Alternative Models of Governance: The Changing State of Public Service*, Berlin 1994; E. Sorensen, *Active Democracy: A Post-Liberal Model of Democratic Government? What Constitutes a Good Society?* ed. B. Greve, London-New York 2000; J. Rifkin, *Europejskie marzenia*, Warszawa 2004; V. A. Pestoff, *A Democratic Architecture for the Welfare State*, London-New York 2009, passim.

¹⁷² E. Les, *Uczestnictwo społeczne w erze...*, op.cit., p. 21.

¹⁷³ V. A. Pestoff, *A Democratic Architecture for the...*, pp. 271-273.

¹⁷⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁷⁵ M. Szewczyk, *Instytucjonalnie uwarunkowane lokalne aspekty subsydiarności*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Zakładu Europeistyki” 2006, nr 1, Rzeszów 2006, p. 196.

social initiatives, new terminology started to appear. Apart from the term "social organizations", used until recently, terms such as non-governmental organizations, the non-profit sector, and the third sector gained popularity. These terms implicate the independence of these entities from the state administration (government) and their lack of profit-oriented (non-profit) orientation. "Public benefit institutions", not an uncommon term, implies the activity undertaken for the broadly understood common good, e.g. the sphere of health care, education, social welfare or the promotion of various types of initiatives. On the other hand, the term "third sector" indicates that the segment of public benefit institutions is separate from both the state and the private segment¹⁷⁶. Non-governmental organizations are entities with diverse statuses and structures. They constitute a link between the state and society in a democratic system while playing an important role in the process of addressing social needs. Promotion of pluralism and diversity of social life, as well as the recognition of individual and social needs in a small group, in a special atmosphere of kindness and solidarity, are among the tasks assigned to third sector organizations which, due to the nature of these considerations, deserve special attention.

Thus, the self-organization of the public sphere is one of the elements of participation in the civic community of democratic countries. Its components, formed on the initiative of citizens, are unions, associations, and organizations whose tasks are to express and represent the interests of specific social groups. In order to extend the scope of self-organization activity, a broad range of possibilities, forms, and mechanisms of direct pressure on governing entities from the affiliated citizens is vital. These entities, on the other hand, by monitoring their development and being simultaneously involved in the creation of legal, political and financial norms, have the opportunity to support them continuously.

3.2. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN REFUGEE SUPPORT

The issues of integration and prevention of social exclusion of immigrants and refugees are one of the areas of the European Union policy. Apart from state institutions, non-governmental organizations operating in all countries of the European Community deal with these issues. Also in the Netherlands,

¹⁷⁶ D. Sarzała, *Rola stowarzyszeń i organizacji pozarządowych we współczesnym społeczeństwie obywatelskim*, „Doctrina. Studia Społeczno-Polityczne” 2012, nr 9, Siedlce 2012, p. 264.

these organizations, working for the integration of new citizens, fighting any forms of their exclusion, provide a framework for aid activities concerning the state's strategy towards ethnic, national, and religious minorities living in the country. The involvement of Dutch non-governmental organizations is part of the basic framework that defines the profile of their activities aimed at helping with the integration of immigrants to the greatest extent possible.

Both local organizations and those established by immigrants supporting the state in the field of immigration policy invariably include the idea of multiculturalism, somewhat tarnished by the events that took place in recent years (including the refugee crisis) in bridging activities. The aim of the organizations established by immigrants is also to strengthen community bonds and cultivate traditions in individual ethnic groups, presenting them in the general debate on integration. In this sense, it is worth recalling that the idea of integrating foreigners with the host society does not intend to promote multiculturalism itself. Integration of immigrants, within the framework of new social structures, assumes their active support by the host state/society (with respect to cultural identity of beneficiaries). At the same time, it implies the necessity of their participation in public life and their acceptance of the norms and customs of the country in which they settle.

Today, integration as an ideological trend is part of a broader concept of active social policy, the program orientation of contemporary European countries that promotes the idea of multicultural coexistence. The activities of both state bodies and institutions supporting the state, i.e., various forms of non-governmental organizations, currently focus on intensifying efforts to counteract the social marginalization of immigrants and strengthen their integration. It seems that neither social speeches promoting (or not) the idea of multiculturalism nor the strategy of ruthless assimilation (the position of the Minister for Integration and Immigration Rita Verdonk in 2003-2007)¹⁷⁷ – which incidentally does not arouse the interest of immigrant organizations yet increasingly appears in the political projects of many countries – have a significant impact on the activities of non-profit organizations. These relatively free-from-pressure non-governmental formations invariably carry out their assistance and integration missions. However, there is a problem with the European funds allocated to the activities of these formations. Their lack or insufficient quantity may effectively stop the work of third- sector entities.

¹⁷⁷ More in: V. Gul-Rechlewicz, *Nauka, polityka, integracja. Kontrowersje wokół holenderskiej polityki imigracyjnej*, PU Compus, Kielce 2015, pp. 73-74.

Centralization of immigration policy from the point of view functioning of the European Union may therefore limit the influence of aid organizations on shaping the immigration and integration policy. These organizations, dependent on external financial resources, in fact, become subcontracting entities, the so-called rule-takers, not partners of the administration, i.e., rule-makers (analogically). It is worth remembering, however, that the main advantage of a democratic society is "a self-fulfilling man, an autonomous citizen [...], participating in various forms of economic, cultural, domestic, and associative activity, available in the local environment, unrestricted by any pressure from the state authority"¹⁷⁸.

The idea of integration activities provided by broadly understood non-governmental organizations focuses on an attempt to enable the newcomers to bond with the host society. In the first stage, individual ethnic communities integrate, and next, they are encouraged to actively participate in the multicultural community. This type of participation is important from the point of view of the socialization of immigrants in a culturally different society and, if necessary, the ability to communicate with representatives of public institutions. A separate aspect concerning aid provision, especially in the time of mass migrations from North Africa, are refugees and the problem of their adaptation in the country, which gave them shelter. Despite the growing concern over the refugee issue, non-governmental organizations operating, for instance, in the Netherlands, consistently play the role of builders of intercultural relations in the country. They maintain interpersonal relations, build social capital while serving the key functions of socializing immigrants and stimulating their activity in the public sphere.

Many non-profit organizations are working for the benefit of migrants in Europe and around the world. The number of these organizations is increasing each year. Their location depends to a large extent on where the immigrants settle or, in the case of refugees, on the places of their temporary stay. Therefore, these organizations operate wherever there are migrants in need of support and help. Many of these types of entity also operate outside Europe, for example, in Asia or Africa, offering a wide range of assistance activities for migrants. An important part of their work is cooperation within established missions. One of the patrons acting as this kind of cooperator is the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees of the United Nations

¹⁷⁸ N. Niewiadomska, *Finansowanie sektora organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce: Funkcjonowanie instytucji non profit w oparciu o normy i standardy Unii Europejskiej*, Nowa Ruda 2005, p. 61.

(UNHCR). More than 75% of its partners, operating all over the world, are local non-governmental organizations. They provide expert knowledge about what is happening in a given area and provide quick support in situations that require immediate action. Layton-Henry identified five essential functions that non-profit organizations working for immigrants perform. The first function deals with the links between the immigrants' country of origin and the host country (supports the immigrant in the initial phase of their stay); the second one takes care of the adaptation of immigrants in a culturally new environment (is responsible for their socialization); the third, unites the arrivals and represents them simultaneously in the public sphere in the relation between the immigrant and the host state/society; the fourth maintains ties with the country of origin and organizations of a given ethnic and national group existing in other countries; the fifth is responsible for the development of culture and language connecting a given community¹⁷⁹. The last function is the reason for accusations, often made by the state, against the newly arrived communities, especially of Muslim origin, of insufficient willingness to integrate with the native inhabitants of the country. These accusations are mainly directed at religious organizations whose activity is outside the main political stream and may therefore remain beyond the control of the authorities. Entities of this type are also often accused of being self-isolated and undemocratic¹⁸⁰. The above-mentioned functions performed by nongovernmental organizations can be supplied with full assistance offered to immigrants, e.g. in finding employment by facilitating, for example, access to job vacancies, material support or assistance in the area of education (e.g., language learning) and knowledge about the culture of the host country. All these activities indicate the role of third sector organizations, which cannot be overestimated. They make up for the flaws in the state aid system addressed to migrants, especially to a specific group, i.e. refugees.

3.3. PHILANTHROPIC TRADITIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Philanthropy, defined as private action for the public good, has a long tradition in the Netherlands, and non-governmental, community-based

¹⁷⁹ M. Lesińska, *Inkluzja polityczna imigrantów we współczesnej Europie*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2013, p. 97.

¹⁸⁰ P. Scheffer, *Druga ojczyzna. Imigranci w społeczeństwie otwartym*, transl. E. Jusewicz-Kalter, Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2010, pp. 530-532.

initiatives have left a lasting mark on the Dutch institutional landscape. The first projects concerned the so-called "Hofjes", nursing homes surrounded by gardens. They probably existed already in the Middle Ages and certainly functioned in the years 1500 - 1800¹⁸¹. Although in a different form, Hofjes still have their tradition in the Netherlands, confirming the past and current philanthropic activity of the Dutch. They, in turn, are currently demonstrating the greatest commitment in Europe in the field of subsidizing non-profit organizations and to a large extent serve in their ranks¹⁸². It is estimated that 85% of the country's population transfers their financial resources to support third sector institutions, and most citizens are members of more than one charity¹⁸³. Dutch non-governmental institutions helping people belong to the most numerous and active in Europe. These highly developed support structures, largely supported (also financially) by the state, function in the most favourable conditions for this type of entity in this part of the continent. On a global scale, the Netherlands boasts the largest sector of non-profit organizations of various kinds. They are financed mainly from taxes and insurance social (e.g. schools, hospitals, institutions related to social assistance, etc.)¹⁸⁴. The history of Dutch foundations, as indicated previously, goes back several centuries and it is associated primarily with the charity activities of churches¹⁸⁵. Before World War II, the functions of helping the poor and needy were the responsibility of social initiatives supported by the government only when it deemed such support necessary. After the war, as a result of the need to expand social welfare structures to reduce poverty, the state took on the burden of some initiatives of philanthropic institutions and, from the 1950s, began to subsidize them regularly. In fact, they became semi-governmental organizations¹⁸⁶. Government funding strengthened the existing institutions and provided an impetus to emerging institutions, which in turn translated into broadening their activities in various sectors, leaving the state the classic scope of care within the social policy (i.e., social, health, educational, etc.),

¹⁸¹ *Giften, Nalatenschappen, Sponsoring en Vrijwilligerswerk*, Th.N.M. Schuyt, B.M. Gouwenberg, R.H.F.P. Bekkers (ed.), Reed Business Education, Amsterdam 2013, passim.

¹⁸² R.H.F.P. Bekkers, *Regional difference in Philanthropy*, Paper presented at the 41st Conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit and Voluntary Action. 15 November 2012, Indianapolis.

¹⁸³ *Giften, Nalatenschappen, Sponsoring...*, op.cit.

¹⁸⁴ H.K. Anheier, S. Daly, *The politics of foundations. A comparative analysis*, Abingon Routledge 2007, p. 237.

¹⁸⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁸⁶ L.M. Salomon, S.W. Sokolowski et al, *Global Civil Society, Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector*, Bloomfield, Kumarian Press, 2004, pp. 146-162, <http://ccss.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/08/Global-Civil-Society-I.pdf> [access: 11.08.2021].

which then, over the next thirty years, returned to some extent to non-profit organizations. Developing this area of benefits by philanthropic institutions, according to Gouwenberg, was caused by drastic cuts and changes in the public expenditure of the state¹⁸⁷. Many of these organizations, once established on private initiative, are now largely dependent on the distribution of government subsidies, which could indicate that this dependence - as already mentioned - places them rather in the role of a subcontractor, not an equal partner¹⁸⁸.

Dutch researchers incl. Penninx, Lucassen, Scholten, and Duyvendak argue that the key feature of Dutch society is the national tendency of institutional cultural pluralism and the cultural emancipation of ethnic minorities. In their opinion, these two issues constitute the basic determinant of the integration of foreigners with Dutch society, which takes place in political and legal, socioeconomic and sociocultural areas¹⁸⁹. Regarding the areas of immigrant inclusion mentioned above in the Netherlands, there are organizations whose tradition of philanthropic activity dates back to the 16th century. Many of them are strongly involved in helping ethnic minorities.

In summary, the development of the non-profit sector in the Netherlands in retrospect features three basic characteristics. The first is related to the unusually large number of philanthropic foundations developed over the years; the second involves extended activities of these institutions and their diversification; the third is related to the fact that, due to the diversified nature, the primary role of entities in the non-profit sector, providing social services to the poorest, has expanded to include many other aid activities.

3.4. THE ACTIVITY OF DUTCH NGOS ON THE BEHALF OF REFUGEES

There are four types of organizations that act as facilitators of the participation of ethnic groups in public life. They are: 1) formal organizations of the host country (associations and non-governmental organizations immigrants, churches, human rights organizations); 2) informal host country organizations (groups and ad hoc organizations formed as society's response to the immigrants); 3) formal organizations of the immigrants' home country

¹⁸⁷ Ibidem, p. 237.

¹⁸⁸ M. Lesińska, *Inkluzja polityczna imigrantów...*, pp. 98-99.

¹⁸⁹ J. W. Duyvendak, P. Scholten, *Deconstructing the Dutch multicultural model*, „Comparative European Politics” 2012, Vol. 10, 3, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., op.cit, pp. 266–282.

(official representations, such as embassies and consulates or representations of political parties and trade unions); and 4) immigrant associations, i.e., all groups and formations involving foreigners operating in the host country¹⁹⁰. Each type creates organizational forms of cooperation between immigrant communities and the host society or country of origin¹⁹¹.

The Netherlands, as a country with a rich association tradition, actively supports third sector entities that operate there under the most favourable conditions in all of Europe. The scope of activities of non-governmental organizations is very wide, from measures focused on environmental protection, protection of human and animal rights, efforts to make information on international security available, to issues related to the broadly understood rights of ethnic and national minorities, including refugee rights. In the Netherlands, there are several non-governmental organizations committed to identify and address the needs of this group. The leading ones include: INLIA, Pharos, JohannesWierStichting, Steungroep Vrouwen Zonder Verblijfvergunning (SVZV), Stichting LOS (Landelijk Ongedocumenteerden Steunpunt: National Support Point for Undocumented Migrants), The Foundation for Refugee Students University Assistance Fund (UAF), VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, Stichting Vluchteling, The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration. Their activities include the so-called street counselling and assistance to immigrants with different legal statuses (e.g., INLIA), safeguarding human rights in the healthcare sector (i.e., sensitising health professionals to the rights of patients from culturally different backgrounds, e.g., Johannes WierStichting), helping immigrants with an irregular legal status residing in the country (including consulting and advising in this area and organizing information campaigns, e.g., on the situation of immigrants), working for improving conditions of their lives (e.g., SVZV, Stichting LOS), supporting foreigners through international protection, assisting them in taking up study in the Netherlands, and even providing financial support to those in need (UAF)¹⁹².

StichtingVluchteling, deserving a brief description, is one of the most important non-governmental organizations mentioned above. Its origins go back to World War II. Reactivated in the 1950s by Cees Brouwer and Gerrit

¹⁹⁰ B. Schmitter, *Immigrations and associations: Their role in the socio-political process of immigrant worker integration in West Germany and Switzerland*, „International Migration Review” 1980, no 14(2), passim.

¹⁹¹ M. Lesinska, *Inkluzja polityczna imigrantów...*, pp. 96-97.

¹⁹² A. Maciejko, Z. Rejmer, *Przewodnik po www poświęconych migracji i międzykulturowości*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 47-48.

Jan van Heuven Goedhart, then under the name Commissieter Bestudering van het Vluchtelingenvraagstuk in Nederland 1952, it helped refugees on an ad hoc basis. In 1976, it went through restructuring, and turned into Stichting Vluchtelingenhulp. After further changes in 1981, it changed the name to the Stichting Vluchteling (SV, Foundation for Refugees), which is still used. This thriving non-profit organization cooperates with, among others, the IRC (International Rescue Committee) network¹⁹³ founded in 1933 by Albert Einstein. The main aim of the Stichting Vluchteling is to provide both immediate and long-term help to refugees; people fleeing war, persecution, and natural disasters¹⁹⁴. In the case of long-term crises, the foundation offers help to people in refugee camps, providing preventive medical care, specialized vocational training, and microcredit for small business start-ups. Article 3.1 of the Association Articles, as amended in 2015, precisely describes its missions: “The Foundation aims to help people survive and supports victims of conflicts or natural disasters. It seeks solutions to improve their future. It focuses its help on refugees and displaced people. It provides help regardless of religion, race, or nationality”¹⁹⁵.

The actions of SV are, in a way, an example of the functioning of several other Dutch non-profit institutions that fit into the philanthropic landscape of the multicultural Netherlands. The organization's activities are bidirectional. They involve providing information on the needs of refugees and displaced people through their representation in the public forum and collecting funds for the benefit of victims. The SV strategy includes 1) strengthening the emergency response fund and the Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit; 2) work for the protection of refugees around the world (including the European Union); 3) systematic investment activities for the benefit of those in need in terms of funds received from different entities including regular donors; 4) enhancing cooperation with IRC within integration activities in the area of a strong international network while maintaining national independence and the possibility of quick intervention in one's own country; 5) strengthening the humanitarian sector in the Netherlands and good

¹⁹³ StichtingVluchteling also cooperates with many other formations of a similar nature, incl. with Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties (SHO) and Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA).

¹⁹⁴ SV provides immediate assistance in the form of medical care, tents, drinking water, basic sanitary facilities, emergency equipment). The priority is to help children, especially those who are malnourished. Long-term support consists in helping those in need when they return home after the end of the conflict in their countries. The Foundation builds schools, health centres, and works on mine clearance villages and farmland etc.

¹⁹⁵ *Strategisch Meerjarenplan 2016-2018*, StichtingVluchtelingen, pp. 2-3.

relations with the public sector with particular emphasis on the knowledge-based debate covering the problems of refugees. Stichting Vluchteling is an example of a non-profit organization cooperating in its field with many similar formations, incl. Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties (SHO) or Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA), which it belongs to as a member. The latter organization is worth mentioning, as it encompasses twelve non-governmental organizations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented by the spokesman. Stichting Vluchteling is keeping on its mission due to the continuous crisis in some countries, including Turkey (the problem of Syrian refugees), Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Chad, and Kenya.

In addition to organizations with several years' experience in helping refugees, there are other newly formed organizations. One of them is Stichting Rumi. This new non-governmental initiative for immigrants and refugees, especially from the Middle East, was registered on January 17, 2017, at The Hague¹⁹⁶. The Foundation aims, under its statute, to promote the participation of immigrants (refugees, asylum seekers) in public life, to promote their emancipation and integration with the host society. It also provides them with care, including offering various forms of their education. The Foundation believes that every foreigner receiving help and support can start the so-called "second life" in a new homeland. As the organization stresses, its bottom line is humanitarian values. It helps all refugees (and immigrants) who need this help, regardless of their religion or beliefs. The mission of the foundation is, first of all, to eliminate the differences between refugees and immigrants and the Dutch society, hence its involvement in various forms of training (workshops) aimed at supporting foreigners in the field of the ability to make new contacts for, inter alia, developing competences, e.g. in the labour market¹⁹⁷.

Non-profit organizations, as has been emphasized before, also provide aid to those foreigners who have settled in the Netherlands. In this case, the action aims mainly at integrating the immigrant communities with the host society. Large urban agglomerations such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, or The Hague, are an example of successful projects in this field, effective cooperation between minority organizations and city authorities. As part of the concept of integration and cooperation through the development of civil society structures, the authorities of these cities very actively support

¹⁹⁶ *Wie is Rumi*, <http://stichtingrumi.nl/home/stichting-rumi/> [access: 12.06.2021].

¹⁹⁷ *Misseenvisie*, <http://stichtingrumi.nl/over-ons/missee-visie/> [access: 12.06.2021].

the presence and activities of non-governmental organizations aimed at the integration of ethnic minorities. These organizations have the full right to, among others, participate regularly in the debates of the city authorities, and their representatives participate in local committees, councils, and other advisory and consultative bodies, which gives them an opportunity to influence decisions relating to immigrants both directly and indirectly. Participation in such bodies is a sign of integration and reflects the fundamental democratic principle of participation and civic responsibility.

It is worth emphasizing that Amsterdam's policy towards ethnic minorities living in the city, which has been changing over the decades, is aimed at working out the best form of their integration. Today, we can already see the effects of these activities, defining, according to them, an integrated society as one that primarily takes an active part in public life. Civic participation protects immigrants against exclusion and social polarization. It also strengthens social cohesion. The prointegration activities in Amsterdam involve broadening knowledge about the citizens and ethnic diversity of the city, strengthening social capital, promoting tolerance for diversity, and counteracting radicalization. One of the many projects that have been carried out is initiated in Amsterdam and now being continued in the form of other similar projects, is the "Platform AmsterdamSamen" (PAS) program, the successor of which has been, among others, a project with a meaningful name "We Amsterdammers". Both were based on independent initiatives undertaken by residents and their implementation of projects in the field of cooperation and mutual tolerance. There was cooperation with both the central administration of the city and the authorities of individual districts. Muslims in this project were a distinguished group because, for example, the media presented Islam and Muslim culture with particular care, not producing stereotypes and building resentment or fear. Most of the projects in the past and now focus on strengthening social cohesion, emphasizing above all the multicultural character of the city¹⁹⁸.

To promote active citizenship (i.e. participation in cultural, social, and political life), which is an essential element of many projects, representatives of ethnic minorities are encouraged to participate in non-profit institutions. It is important to remember that, very often, poor knowledge of the Dutch language, as well as cultural and religious differences,

¹⁹⁸ D. Laws, J. Forester, *Conflict, Improvisation, Governance: Street Level Practices for Urban Democracy*, New York and London 2015, p. 41.

significantly decrease immigrants' trust in public institutions. Hence, thanks to the bottom-up approach of local organizations (public benefit organizations), addressed to both individuals and immigrant formations (important participants of the city's social life), the chance of activating this social group and thus integrating it is better.

All these activities of non-governmental organizations are focused on projects promoting the integration of aliens with the Dutch society. One of its elements is the ability to function in the so-called world of institutions represented by offices, places of employment, schools, health care facilities, banks, post offices, etc. In this respect, institutions of the third sector benefit with great success with the help of volunteers who have been growing in the Netherlands every year for years¹⁹⁹. It should be noted that during the refugee crisis in 2014-2015, the number of volunteers doubled compared to previous years²⁰⁰.

In order to address the needs of immigrants refugees and asylum seekers, Dutch non-profit institutions offer a wide range of assistance to newcomers. They do it regardless of their age, gender, skin colour, education, religion, or worldview. Refugees originating from Muslim countries are given special care, as they find it hardest to adapt to Western standards of living. The priority of this type of organization, in addition to providing immediate help, is also long-term support for refugees, especially in terms of their integration with the Dutch society. Some of the organizations have for years acted as respected consultative bodies issuing opinions on the results of the immigration and integration policy pursued by the state. They play a similar role in international institutions dealing with refugees.

3.5. IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS AS A LINK ASSISTING IN THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATING ETHNIC MINORITIES

The process related to the integration of immigrants can be considered both from the point of view of the state (its institutions), the immigrants themselves, and non-governmental organizations (native and immigrant) helping immigrants find their place in a culturally alien society. Immigrant

¹⁹⁹ *Danken succes Volle allochtonen hun success aan vrijwilligers werk?* https://www.movisie.nl/sites/default/files/alfresco_files/Danken%20succesvolle%20allochtonen%20hun%20succes%20aan%20vrijwilligerswerk%20%5BMOV-517039-0.1%5D.pdf [access: 18.07.2021].

²⁰⁰ It is actually a paradox, because on the one hand, there are more and more people willing to help refugees, and on the other hand, the number of their opponents is growing among the Dutch.

integration processes cover several levels. The first is related to existential problems such as home, work, or education. It also concerns the acceptance of newcomers by the host community. The second is the institutional level, unified, structured in the sense of operating in the sociocultural environment. It includes the so-called general public institutions of the host society (national and local), including education, employment, health, or, more broadly, the entire political system. The third, emphasized in this study, are non-profit institutions that help immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Some of these institutions consist of immigrants themselves (these are most often entities operating in the field of culture and religion), others are established by indigenous communities. They focus on the integration of newcomers into the host society. The mechanisms operating at these levels are undoubtedly different, but their results are closely related. Institutional arrangements have a considerable impact on the functioning of smaller organizations, including immigrant organizations. Integration processes, from the point of view of the immigrants themselves, take place primarily at the local level. Being different from the point of view of, for example, the area of integration (labour market, education, housing, civic participation), nevertheless, they affect the overall immigration policy of the state. Therefore, it seems that the government's strategy should support bottom-up local activities, especially those provided by non-profit organizations. Integration policy is then effective when it covers all the levels mentioned above: individual, institutional, the level of immigrant organizations and associations created by the native society to help foreigners. A particularly important role is played by immigrant formations whose initiatives relate to specific integration activities, e.g. educational projects, for example encouraging ethnic minorities to take a language course or participate in projects related to the labour market or the participation of immigrant women in public life.

Non-governmental partners, both on the part of the host society and minority groups, are extremely important in making direct recommendations concerning the implementation of a specific policy, influencing the political climate, and participating in shaping a strategy enabling mutual acceptance regardless of ethnic, cultural, or religious background. Organizations fight against the exclusion of ethnic minorities, discrimination, and xenophobia, emphasize the need for active socio-political participation by immigrants, mutual understanding and respect for culture and customs, and the habits of the "other", including the acceptance of democratic norms and values. The development of immigrant

associations and organizations in European countries was a gradual process. Their characteristics, goals, and scope of activity, role, and position depended on the phases of migration processes in Europe²⁰¹. Immigrants successively created a formal framework for their institutions. They started with discussion circles, grouping especially at religious and cultural centres and schools. The associations gathered immigrant communities, creating the positions of minority communities, and representing them to the authorities. They acted as consultative bodies at all levels (local, regional, and national), creating an institutional network, the form and development of which depended, among other things, on the level of decentralization of the state, the size and population density of immigrant communities, the level of political culture, and the existence of corporate and consultative traditions of the state. The longest tradition of this type of institution, as pointed out, is, among other countries, just in the Netherlands²⁰². In Dutch cities, a close relationship is now visible between the degree of community of a given immigrant group and political participation and the level of trust of its members in local political institutions²⁰³. These useful channels of participation and mutual contacts, exchange of opinions, and developing the ways of reaching agreements between local authorities and immigrant communities are today, despite the migration problems faced by Europe, undoubtedly one of the most important factors stabilizing the socio-political system of multicultural societies, including the Netherlands. It is worth adding that already in the 1960s, Amsterdam strongly supported the activities of immigrant organizations, in the beginning, Surinamese, by subsidizing the renting of offices and the day-to-day activities of organizations that at that time were focused on supporting the learning of the mother tongue or religious activities.

Currently, the way of supporting immigrant organizations has changed and is based on the project financing principle, which should reflect the city policy. In 2009, for example, as many as 79 immigrant organizations organized 478 actions, most of them financed by the city's funds on the issues of health and emancipation of women (mainly Muslim). Religious organizations operating in the Netherlands have the right to apply for co-financing of your projects from the city budget. Some bodies, for example mosques, have set up separate associations to separate religious activities from other forms of

²⁰¹ M. Lesińska, *Inkluzja polityczna imigrantów...*, op.cit., p. 97.

²⁰² Ibidem, p. 100.

²⁰³ Ibidem, p. 97.

social activity, including integration activities. This allows them, for example, to enter competitions organized by local authorities and thus obtain funds from the municipal budget for specific purposes. An example of such an entity is the association "Ibno Khaldoun" operating in Amsterdam at the Al Kabir mosque²⁰⁴. As mentioned, cities in the Netherlands are slowly moving away from permanent financing of immigrant organizations in favour of the projects they present, which, when evaluated on an ongoing basis, are to fit into the assumptions of the integration policy with an emphasis on building intergroup relations.

The shaping of the character of Dutch society was influenced by the tradition of pillarization, i.e. the separation of society into groups (religious: Protestant and Catholic, and sociocultural: socialist and liberal), dating back to the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, and functioning in the Netherlands until the second half of the twentieth century²⁰⁵. Each of the pillars had its own complete institutional structure in the fields such as politics, education, health, recreation, and sport. The participation of the Dutch in all these pillars was aimed at exercising power based on the fair distribution of goods, the pursuit of economic development, and social stability²⁰⁶. The traditional social division in the Netherlands finally ended in 1970. However, as Vink points out, this did not mean abandoning the philosophy of pillarization in general. The following years indicate the construction by the authorities of states of integration strategy in the spirit of this very idea, as the policy towards immigrants, was then based on the assumptions of the long-term functioning of various cultural and religious groups²⁰⁷. However, it is worth noting that some researchers (incl. Rath, Penninx, and others) identify the problem of the limited impact of pillarization on the formation of new segments. The Islamic pillar (as compared to Catholic or Protestant), according to them, has never been

²⁰⁴ P. Matusz-Protasiewicz, *Sposób kształtowania relacji międzygrupowych na poziomie lokalnym, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem społeczności muzułmańskiej na przykładzie Antwerpii (Belgia) i Amsterdamu (Holandia). Doświadczenia z badania CLIP 2009-2011*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 48-49.

²⁰⁵ Pillarization is perceived by researchers in various ways and located in different time frames (cf e.g. Ch. Hampden-Turner, A. Trompenaars, *Siedem kultur kapitalizmu. USA, Japonia, Niemcy, Francja, Wielka Brytania, Szwecja, Holandia*, transl. D. Gostynska, Dom Wydawniczy ABC; Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2000, pp. 253-254; A. Lijphart, *The politics of accommodation: pluralism and democracy in The Netherlands*, Berkeley 1968, p. 188).

²⁰⁶ M. Wintle, *Pillarization, consociation and vertical pluralism in the Netherlands revisited: A European view*, „West European Politics” 2000, vol. 23, no 3, pp. 139-152.

²⁰⁷ M. Vink, *Dutch multiculturalism: Beyond the pillarisation myth*, „Political Studies Review” 2007, no 5, pp. 337-350.

taken seriously into consideration²⁰⁸. Bartels presents a different point of view, pointing to the initiative on the part of the Dutch government (in 1980), which financed the construction of Muslim schools, ethnic organizations, the press, television stations, and mosques from the state budget. This move by the state, according to the researcher, indicated acceptance of the creation of a new pillar²⁰⁹. At the same time, it is important to consider issues related to the problem of civic participation of ethnic minorities, including the Muslim population in the Netherlands. The Netherlands was one of the first European countries to guarantee immigrants passive and active voting rights in local elections in 1985. This gave ethnic minorities the opportunity to represent their communities first, in local authorities, and then (after 15 years) also in national governments²¹⁰.

Until 1970, ethnic minorities in the Netherlands were represented mainly by religious institutions or organizations that also fulfilled a protective role. Change of policy toward ethnic groups in the 1980s (Ethnic Minorities Policy) resulted in the active involvement of immigrant communities, which began to create their associations, thus becoming representatives of specific ethnic groups in the country that had a real impact on shaping immigration and integration policy. This policy aimed to ensure that every Dutch inhabitant, regardless of their cultural background (both individually and as a group), had the same position and development opportunities as the rest of society²¹¹. An example of an organization with the role of a consultative body for the authorities was the Draft Minorities Memorandum, which also successfully cooperated with other organizations in the Netherlands, including care institutions²¹². A turning point in developing ethnic organizations was the set-up of the National Advisory and Consultation Body (LAO) in 1985, which then represented the most important immigrant organizations. After several years of operation, that is, in 1997, LAO transformed into the National Consultation Body for Minorities (LOM). In practice, however, the advisory role of this organization became limited and reduced

²⁰⁸ J. Rath, R. Penninx, K. Groenendijk, A. Meijer, *Nederland en zijn Islam. Een ontzuilde samenleving reageert op het ontstaan van een geloofs gemeenschap*, Amsterdam 1996, p. 18.

²⁰⁹ E. Bartels, *Verscheidenheid en geschiedenis van moslims Religie in Nederland. Perspectief-overzicht-debat*, Utrecht 2008, p. 223.

²¹⁰ P. Matusz-Protasiewicz, *Sposób kształtowania relacji międzygrupowych na poziomie lokalnym...*, op.cit., pp. 135-140.

²¹¹ R. Urbanus, *Reacties op de ontwerp-Minderhedennota. Een analyse van de commentaren op de ontwerp Minderhedennota*, Leiden 1983, p. 12.

²¹² P. Scholten, *Framing Immigrant Integration: Dutch Research-policy Dialogues in Comparative Perspective*, Amsterdam University Press 2011, pp. 97-100.

to consultative activity²¹³. Similar changes concerning the minority organizations operating in the Netherlands took place several times, e.g. after the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

There are hundreds of different immigration organizations in the Netherlands, less formally anchored or more formally anchored. They consist of people coming mainly from Turkish, Moroccan, and Surinamese backgrounds. There are also representatives of southern Europe, China and, as far as refugees are concerned, the whole world. There are many small unions and associations of a similar nature in this group, scattered throughout the country. The main goal of these institutions, apart from implementing the idea of integration, is primarily cooperation between various social groups of people and established immigrant organizations. These, in turn, demonstrate a high degree of diversity and social activity. These include sports, youth, and student organizations aimed at activating the elderly, women, and representatives of professional circles. They care for the integration of ethnic minorities through education, work, civic participation, and other elements of co-existence in society essential for integration. Immigrant organizations meet many social expectations. They focus on different areas, including advocacy or exchange of experience or knowledge. They also play an informative role. Among them, there are consulting bodies, such as: Samenwerkingsverband van Marokkaanse Nederlanders (SMN), Inspraakorgaan Turken (IOT), Surinaams Inspraak Orgaan (SIO), Inspraakorgan Chinezen (IOC), and others²¹⁴. The link between organizations of various sizes, structures, and missions throughout the Netherlands is the desire to include as many people as possible interested in working for these institutions and the tendency to remove restrictions in this regard.

It is worth mentioning a few examples of projects implemented by immigrant third- sector entities. The previously mentioned organization Samenwerkingsverband van Marokkaanse Nederlanders (SMN) includes in its program, for example, the prevention of forced marriages in Muslim circles. The project adapted in 2013 by SMN runs in cooperation with Vereniging Vluchtelingenorganisaties Nederland (VON) (Association of Refugee Organizations in the Netherlands) and is financed by the European Integration Fund (EIF). Another example is the so-called "Integration tournament", a project introduced by the Inspraakorgaan Chinezen (IOC)

²¹³ Ibidem.

²¹⁴ *Integration Policy Netherlands Country Report*, Fenya Fischler, INTERACT Research Report 2014/15, MPI, London 2014, p. 11.

in 2010 to increase the participation of Chinese minority communities in sports activities, and thus encouraging them to be more active as part of the promoted healthy lifestyle. It is also worth referring to the earlier, intergenerational in its mission undertaking (in the years 2005-2007) by the same organization which concerned the emancipation and integration of Chinese women²¹⁵. One of the most interesting projects was to provide a group of young active Muslims from various organizations with training as part of the "Network of Key Figures". Importantly, this project managed to activate even the most radical Muslim organizations, such as the orthodox El Tawheed mosque or the Turkish organization Milli Görüş, which significantly contributed to easing the tensions within this diverse ethnic group. Another example is the initiative of the Moslim Jongeren Amsterdam association, strongly supported by the Amsterdam authorities, focusing on many debates on Islam and topics related to the functioning of Muslims in the Netherlands²¹⁶.

The most organized Muslim ethnic group is the Turkish people (40% of the Islamic population in the Netherlands). The most important organization in this community, the Turkish Islamic Cultural Federation (TICF), founded in 1979, works with the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which employs imams working in more than 200 Turkish mosques²¹⁷. The aforementioned Turkish formation Milli Görüş, active in the Netherlands, is perceived through the prism of orthodox Islam that combines elements of Turkish nationalism. This organization supervises about 30 mosques and 60 youth and women's organizations²¹⁸. Moroccan organizations that cooperate with mosques and religious institutions have similar characteristics. The Moroccan minority creates foundations and associations that maintain regular contact in the field of cooperation with the government of Morocco. The most important of these is the Union of Moroccan Organizations in the Netherlands (Unie van Marokkaanse Moslim Organisaties in Nederland, MMON)²¹⁹.

²¹⁵ Ibidem.

²¹⁶ P. Matusz-Protasiewicz, *Sposób kształtowania relacji międzygrupowych na poziomie lokalnym...*, op.cit., p. 53.

²¹⁷ T. Sunier, *Turkse islam: Handboek Religie in Nederland. Perspectief-overzicht-debat*, Utrecht 2008, p. 228.

²¹⁸ K. Pędziwiatr, *Od islamu imigrantów do islamu obywateli. Muzułmanie w krajach Europy Zachodniej*, Nomos, Kraków 2005, p. 106.

²¹⁹ Ł. Zweifel, *Dynamika zmian społecznych w Holandii i ich odzwierciedlenie w systemie politycznym w XX i XXI wieku*, Edycja – Książki Naukowe i Specjalistyczne, Katowice 2013, p. 112.

The participation of immigrants in the public sphere through associations or organizations is, on the one hand, a step to overcome social isolation for this group and, on the other hand, a chance for their indirect participation in creating laws. The role of formations whose members are representatives of ethnic minorities is very important in the integration process, especially when it comes to countries boasting a tradition of multicultural coexistence. However, the problem may be the issue of a paradox of this co-existence in the spirit of integration, because on the one hand, the goal of immigrant organizations is to care for their own culture, language, and traditions (which carries the risk of being closed in their own social circle), and on the other hand, activities aimed at ensuring adaptations to the new, culturally different world for them.

VLUCHTELINGENWERK NEDERLAND AS THE LEADING ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING REFUGEES

4.1. THE FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF VWN

Stichting Nederlandse Federatie voor Vluchtelingen hulp (SNFV, the Dutch Refugee Aid Federation), the organization from which the currently functioning VluchtelingenWerk Nederland²²⁰ emerged after many transformations, was established in the Netherlands on May 14, 1954, as the parent body (patronage) for private and church organizations helping refugees. After two years, i.e. on November 9, 1956, the SNFV took refugees from Hungary into independent care²²¹. It is worth mentioning the year in which the organization was founded, as it was then that the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and as mentioned before, Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart held the office at that time. Before the foundation of the SNFV, an international organization called Internationale Vluchtelingen organisatie was involved

¹ The information presented in this chapter was obtained in November 2016 based on documents, reports and reports as well as in-depth interviews with employees of VluchtelingenWerk Nederland branches in Brabant, integration schools for refugees (in Breda, Eindhoven, Tilburg), as well as reception centres for people applying for asylum (Asielzoekerscentrum, AZC in Velp and Eindhoven). Materials on the activities of refugee centres were collected thanks to the possibility of conducting interviews with VWN, AZC and COA coordinators and consulting volunteers and refugees in the above-mentioned departments. The more recent data from 2017 comes from materials provided by VluchtelingenWerk, including the foundation's website.

²²¹ <http://hetutrechtsarchief.nl/onderzoek/resultaten/archieven?mivast=39&mizig=210&miadt=39&miaet=1&micode=1552&minr=38181768&miview=inv2&milang=nl> [access: 17.06.2021].

in helping refugees in the Netherlands. The organization has had its representative office there since 1945. In 1958, the Stichting Nederlandse Federatie voor Vluchtelingen hulp became a part of a federation called Federatie en de Stichting Universitair Asyl Fonds²²². It is also worth noting that the structure of the latter included the Stichting Admiraal de Ruyterfonds, a formation founded on the initiative of the Hungarian priest István L. Tüski, living in the Netherlands, who in 1953 established a Reformed Church in this country. His foundation, together with four churches, helped Hungarian refugees at that time²²³. Stichting Nederlandse Federatie voor Vluchtelingen hulp was founded by Catholic and Protestant refugee relief organizations, the Jewish Joods Maatschappelijk Werk Foundation (JMW), the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid), and committees of refugees of various nationalities, which were, in a way, pioneers of future refugee organizations in the Netherlands. At the initiative of UNHCR, the United Nations announced the Year of Refugees, which was to be celebrated every 10 years. This fact led in 1966 and 1976 to the establishment of foundations to collect funds for the victims. For this purpose, the Stichting Nederlandse Federatie voor Vluchtelingen hulp established in 1966 a foundation called Stichting Nederlands Comité voor Vluchtelingen hulp (Dutch Refugee Aid Foundation), which, like similar organizations, provided financial support to refugees from all over the world. In 1976, Stichting Vluchteling (Foundation for Refugees), a foundation providing constant help, was set up.

Initially, refugees from areas such as the Eastern Bloc or the Middle East received help, but the military coup in Greece in 1967, which temporarily put an end to democracy in this country, resulted in extending support to refugees from countries belonging to NATO. A military coup in Chile that resulted in the collapse of Salvador Allende's democratically elected socialist government marked a new chapter in the history of the foundation in 1973. As a result, the Chilean Refugee Reception and Support Committee (Het Comité voor opvangen begeleiding van Vluchtelingen uit Chili) was established, and over time similar committees cooperating with each other were created. Moreover, the Federation felt obliged to reorganize and create a more effective structure in response to the situations that arose.

²²² http://hetutrechtsarchief.nl/onderzoek/resultaten/archieven/?bouwdossiers&mi_vast=39&mizig=210&miadt=39&miaet=1&micode=1552&minr=38181826&miview=inv2&milang=nl [access: 19.10.2021].

²²³ *Hungarians in the Netherlands. Short survey and history*, <http://www.federatio.org/history.html> [access: 12.07.2021].

In this way, two organizations emerged subsequently. They were Voor Vluchtelingen (VV) and Stichting Release Nederland. Both organizations were members of the National Welfare Council (Nationale Raad voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn) and were subsidized by the ministry responsible for social work (MaatschappelijkWerk). The boards of both units cooperated, which resulted in the establishment of the Co-operation Committee for Refugees (Samenwerkingscommissie voor Vluchtelingen) to better implement common interests. The Chilean Refugee Reception and Support Committee continued to exist and then, after lengthy negotiations, merged with SKV. As a result of the merger, SKV changed its name to Stichting VluchtelingenWerk Nederland (SVN).

In October 1979, the two organizations working for refugees, VV and SVN, merged. Consequently, one strong unit was created called the Nederlandse Vereniging Vluchtelingenwerk, NVV (Dutch Association for Refugees, today's VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, VWN). According to the association's statute, the highest body was the General Assembly, which was composed of both natural and legal persons. The Main Board appointed committees from among its members, whose task was to prepare relevant documents for the meetings. The Legal Committee (Juridische Committee) also had an important role as it supervised the process of decision-making relating to immigration and refugee law. There was a following division of tasks: the chairman was responsible for the communication with the press, the vice-chairman was in charge of circulating information, and the secretary dealt with the staff. In addition to the treasurer, the Committee also included a member of the Management Board for Legal Protection (Rechtsbescherming of Juridische Zaken) and a member of the Reception and Integration Board (OpvangenIntegratie of Welzijn). The Executive Board established a national agency in Amsterdam and regional offices in three parts of the Netherlands: west, south, and northeast. The national agency created departments that dealt with tasks for which two additional members of the Management Board were appointed. These members sat in the Central Division of Legal Protection (Centrale Afdeling Rechtsbescherming (CAR) and the Central Department of Reception and Integration (Centrale Afdeling OpvangenIntegratie, CAOI).

Initially, the activities of the VluchtelingenWerk association helped refugees find suitable accommodation and cover the costs of their stay. Then the organization unified the direction of its activities and ultimately dealt only with Vietnamese refugees, invited by the Dutch government.

For others, the so-called "uninvited" refugees, the government started creating new reception centres. Due to the changes, resulting partly from the pressure of the Ministry of CRM (since 1982 of WVC), the VluchtelingenWerk office was reorganized. The Central Departments (Centrale Afdelingen) whose divisions were under the supervision of the Management Board replaced the existing units. The sectors of legal protection (ie Rechtsbescherming, CAR), reception and integration (Opvangen Integratie, CAOI) and information departments became separate units. The central departments were partially divided according to the scope and type of work carried out. The legal sector of the association, CAR, cooperated with the Legal Committee (Juridische Commissie), and at the same time coordinated work related to refugees within the statutory tasks. The scope of work of the CAOI sector (closely cooperating with other units) included: education and training, housing, sociocultural activities (also subject to the sociocultural sector, Sociaal-culturele activiteiten, SKA), work with women, learn Dutch, and help refugees in finding employment. SKA also stimulated independent refugee organizations and provided training in management and language learning. In 1989, VluchtelingenWerk established an employment agency (Emplooi) to improve the situation of refugees on the Dutch employment market. On the other hand, the Education and Training Department offered training programs to the association's employees and volunteers. As part of the organization activities, Regional Offices (western, south, and north-east) locally took care of the recruitment and then training of volunteers. There were task groups that focused on the reception of asylum seekers. In 1994, the offices replaced central departments. Although the Association - as shown above - went through multiple reorganisations, its purpose and tasks remained essentially unchanged. The difficult 1990s of the twentieth century due to the massive influx of refugees to the Netherlands (chaos, problems with examining asylum applications, etc.), mainly from the war-torn former Yugoslavia, increased the activity of VluchtelingenWerk, which supported organizations such as IND and COA. One of the activities of VWN was to provide advisory services to asylum seekers. Due to many years of experience in this field, municipalities entrusted this task to the foundation. The introduction of the new act on foreigners (WIN, April 1, 2001), resulting in the simplification of the asylum procedure by, for example, shortening the waiting time for decisions determining the refugee status, had a significant impact on the scope of works of VWN.

As a result of reorganization activities on the part of COA, AZC, IND (introducing, among others, clusters throughout the Netherlands to intensify the work), VluchtelingenWerk also undertook the task of rebuilding its structures once again. Ultimately, 29 regional offices were established. There were also reorganisations in terms of tasks within the National Bureau in Amsterdam (Landelijk Bureau in Amsterdam). As a result of the changes, the work for refugees gained a new corporate identity. This resulted in the adoption of a new name by the organizations. This name, i.e. VluchtelingenWerk Nederland (VWN) has been in use since then. Additionally, the organization introduced the positions of general manager and managing director to the management board. Those changes led to the election of a new Council of the Association (nid. Verenigingsraad). The former council comprised representatives of the various groups working on refugee issues, regional platforms, representatives of national legal entities, and a work council, whereas the new council consisted only of regional departments delegates.

To sum up, since the policy toward refugees faced many complex problems over the years (including changing the government's strategy towards newcomers), Vluchtelingen WerkNederland was also forced to accept many changes. Compared to the problems of other organizations that experienced difficulties in the field of, e.g., cooperation - also with the ministries responsible for the policy towards refugees - since its creation, i.e., since 1979, VluchtelingenWerk has repeatedly adapted to the changing conditions of operation. In 2008, VluchtelingenWerk Nederland assumed the honourable office of a consultant to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), thus strengthening its position also internationally. This unique distinction is awarded to organizations that demonstrate expertise and activity in the field of helping refugees. It is worth emphasizing that among all, quite popular in the Netherlands organizations of a similar nature, VluchtelingenWerk Nederland is the only advisory body of this kind operating at the United Nations.

4.2. PRIORITIES OF VWN'S CURRENT ACTIVITIES

VWN is the largest aid organization in the Netherlands which provides refugees with help in many different dimensions and shapes the asylum policy of the country. With the help of volunteers whose numbers are still

growing²²⁴, the foundation helps refugees find their place in a new, often difficult, reality. VluchtelingenWerk supports both individual refugees and asylum seekers, as well as specific groups of people in need. It focuses mainly on guiding and advising refugees in matters related to the asylum procedure, helps them adapt to their new place of residence, integrate with the local community, supports them in looking for a job, encourages education, and acts as an intermediate step in contacts with institutions such as Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen (UWV, Institute for Implementation of Employee Insurance)²²⁵ or housing cooperatives. The purpose of the foundation, whose activity covers almost all municipalities in the Netherlands (VWN local branches are located in 289 municipalities out of 300 existing in the country), is to help refugees successfully go through the asylum procedure and to integrate relatively quickly with Dutch society. Moreover, refugees with the right of residence can seek legal advice at the nearest branch of VluchtelingenWerk. They are also provided with assistance in establishing contacts with municipal authorities or representatives of financial institutions or other institutions.

One of the primary tasks of the VluchtelingenWerk is the relocation of refugees. Possible solutions in this area are discussed at meetings, conventions, conferences, and congresses, of which the foundation is the organizer or co-organizer. Examples include the international conference organized each year by VWN, the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations, or two-day meetings in The Hague for non-profit organizations, government units, and UNHCR. The purpose of these events is to deal with problems related to the relocation of refugees and their subsequent integration into the host society. The VluchtelingenWerk is an ardent advocate for accepting more refugees by the Netherlands²²⁶. As the organization claims, this call for support arouses large media interest (e.g. NOS, Radio1, Journaal, and BNR Newsradio - leading Dutch TV and radio stations), as well as some political parties (e.g. Groen Links, Socialistische Partij, SP)²²⁷. Effective integration of refugees into Dutch society, acknowledged by the foundation as a common good, as well as full independence of refugees, should rely on the principles

²²⁴ In 2015, 11,000 volunteers worked on behalf of VluchtelingenWerk throughout the Netherlands, and in 2016 - 13,500. In 2015, there were 837 permanent employees of the foundation, and in 2016 - 1,130 (B. van den Berg, *Het jaarverslag 2016* ..., op.cit. p. 33).

²²⁵ *Wat is UWV*, <https://www.uwv.nl/overuwv/wat-is-uwv/index.aspx> [access:23.07.2021].

²²⁶ B. van den Berg, *Het jaarverslag 2016*..., p. 5.

²²⁷ *Hoe vluchteling – vriendelijkzijn de partijen*, <https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/rekenopmij/overzicht-partijen> [access: 11.08.2021].

of freedom, security, and knowledge of norms and values of the Dutch society²²⁸. According to Dorine Manson, the current director of VWN, opening up to refugees is the best decision the Netherlands can make in the current situation, i.e. when almost 60,000 of them are applying for asylum in the country, even assuming that some of them might leave the Netherlands in the future.

As more asylum seekers have arrived in the Netherlands in recent years, their prospects of getting a paid job and full participation in society are not very good. In the advisory report that is consistent with the expertise of VWN, the Education Council (Onderwijsraad) analyzes, among other things, the question of how education can help refugees, especially children and adults without basic qualifications, enter the path of integration. The Council and VWN call for greater attention to be paid to education, which should fit more closely into the asylum policy, and thus for more effective regulations in the field of education of newcomers. According to the Council and VWN, refugees will continue to immigrate to the Netherlands, sometimes their numbers might be unexpectedly large, and the education system - as shown by reports and analyzes - is not adequately prepared for this. Although many education facilities have become available for refugees in recent years, some problems seem to have remained unsolved. Refugees still have restricted access to schools and courses. Moreover, the quality of the educational could be much better.

As indicated, one of the main issues raised by VWN in 2016 and 2017 was a refugee reception policy. According to the organization, the Netherlands and the European Union should invite more refugees and provide them with favourable conditions for settling in European countries. The Foundation emphasizes that the state should offer care especially to those who experience specific difficulties and obstacles, including sick, disabled, single women, and children, and those who do not feel safe in temporary accommodation (refugee camps). VWN has called for an accelerated introduction of the asylum procedure for such people. VWN has raised the issue at several international

²²⁸ „Vluchtelingen moeten succesvol deel gaan uit maken van onze samenleving. Dit is goed voor hen en voor ons. [...] Het is in het belang van de vluchtelingen, maar ook in het belang van de samenleving, dat zij in vrijheid en veiligheid, met respect voor onze warden en normen, zo snel mogelijk een nieuw en zelfstandig bestaan kunnen opbouwen Refugees must become a successful part of our society. It is good for them and us. [...] It is in the interest of refugees, but also of society, to start a new and independent life feeling a sense of freedom and security as soon as possible, respecting our values and standards”. (Manifest *Samenmaken we het verschil in 2016*, VluchtelingenWerkNederland, Amsterdam 2016).

conventions, including Geneva and New York. The organization also intensifies its efforts to increase media coverage of the most acute problems. Unfortunately, VWN has failed to convince the Dutch government to invite more refugees than is currently the case. Foundation's calls to ignore the agreement with Turkey ("Turkije-deal") and instead create safe routes for refugees did not receive the Dutch government's or EU's approval. Mark Rutte's government tightened immigration regulations and remained in the position of closing the external borders of the European Union to refugees²²⁹.

VWN has also repeatedly raised the problem of "active waiting" of asylum seekers, i.e. the need for their participation in Dutch society while still under the asylum procedure. Such participation would foster the future integration of refugees and provide a solid basis for it. Learning the Dutch language as quickly as possible, as proven by VWN, is at the forefront of the arrivals integration program. In this case, the Dutch government took a similar position and finally decided that refugees could start learning the language and work as volunteers at centres for asylum seekers. Volunteers provide additional support to organizations for refugees, including VWN. Their active assistance in the field of integration contributes to the independence and involvement of asylum seekers (immigrants) in Dutch society. It is worth emphasizing that VWN has negotiated an increase in financial resources for refugees. In 2016, the government allocated EUR 2,370 for each refugee as social support. During the following year, the policy direction remained the same. In addition, since January 1, 2017, under the Act on Civic Integration (*de Wet inburgering*), municipalities have been obliged to support refugees as part of social services.

It should be noted that the organization raises the problems of individual refugees or certain specific groups of refugees. For example, it was critical of the requirement for newcomers already residing in the Netherlands to present documents showing family ties with those applying for the right to stay to reunite with their relatives, benefiting from the family reunification program. This is especially true for refugees from Eritrea, as contact with the country's authorities, as VWN claims, can be extremely dangerous for them. This is because the Eritrean authorities impose severe punishments on those who leave the country illegally. After the foundation drew the attention of the authorities to this serious matter, the Ministry has

²²⁹ T.S. Smitt (ed.), *Buiten de muren van Fort Europa, VluchtelingenWerk Nederland over migratie deals en asielprocedures buiten de UE*, VWN 2017.

adjusted its policy by changing the restrictive program requirements. An example of addressing the problem is the support of VWN in 2016 for many Eritrean and Somali refugees whose nationality was questioned by the Immigration and Naturalization Office (IND). The information provided by VWN proved that the Office based its decisions on incomplete knowledge and incorrect assumptions. Thanks to the VWN intervention, refugees were granted a residence permit and protected against possible repercussions from the country of origin²³⁰.

It is worth noting that the Foundation tries to offer refugees the best possible support from specialists. That is why full-time employees (lawyers, sociologists, psychologists, and others) and volunteers undergo training and internships organized by VWN to improve their skills and knowledge of the asylum procedure and the situation in the countries of origin arrivals (especially in terms of security) and their rights. In 2016, the Foundation website, designed to meet the needs of refugees, was visited more frequently than ever before, demonstrating the need for this type of initiative²³¹. The site is intended not only for asylum seekers but also for employees, volunteers and other people who help refugees. It provides information on different matters, including security in the countries of origin of the refugees, the asylum policy of the Netherlands and the integration of immigrants.

4.3. REFUGEES - PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Integration of immigrants has always been one of the central assumptions of the immigration policy of the Netherlands. The activities of organizations supporting refugees and asylum seekers also aim, in addition to immediate aid, at their quickest integration. The VluchtelingenWerk Foundation is an example of an institution that adheres to the Dutch principle of "multicultural co-existence". The organization manifesto, "Samenmaken we het verschil in 2016!" ("Together, we create diversity in 2016!")²³², calls for strengthening cooperation through coordinated actions of citizens, government authorities, enterprises, media, social institutions, as well as refugees and asylum seekers themselves, calls for strengthening cooperation through coordinated actions of citizens, government authorities, enterprises,

²³⁰ Summary Annual Report 2016, Dutch Council for Refugees, Amsterdam 2017, pp. 1-4.

²³¹ In 2016, in this way (through the so-called "helpdesk") the foundation handled 25% more enquiries than in the previous year.

²³² The Manifesto *Samenmaken we het verschil in 2016*, VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, Amsterdam 2016. See also: B. van den Berg, *Het jaarverslag 2016...*, op.cit., pp. 3.

media, social institutions, as well as refugees and asylum seekers themselves. The slogan 'Inclusion instead of exclusion, investing instead of rejection' (Dutch 'Insluiting in plaats van uitsluiting; investeren in plaats van afweren')²³³ closely follows the Dutch philanthropic traditions. This slogan reflects the belief that refugees are an inherent part of the Dutch society and will always be so, and the role of the foundation is to create opportunities for them to rebuild their lives, learn a new language, find employment, and form new friendships. More than four hundred companies that have expressed their willingness to cooperate with the organization by offering help to refugees, focusing on specific proposals, ideas, donations, organizing internships, and offering jobs remain in constant contact with VluchtelingenWerk. In addition, many Dutch citizens from different professional backgrounds cooperate with the foundation and offer refugees various forms of assistance. Among them are, for example, theatre-makers, artists, and language teachers. During the past four years, the number of volunteers working for VluchtelingenWerk has almost doubled, whereas donors increased by 35%. These facts show how many people in the Netherlands – despite a clear division into supporters and opponents of receiving refugees – have a positive attitude towards them. VluchtelingenWerk, while expressing its beliefs and attitudes, points to the rejection by the European Union of developing a refugee-friendly immigration policy, which, among other things, would enable the underprivileged to reach their destination safely, not putting their lives at risk. According to Dorine Manson, apart from other states, this destination is the Netherlands, whose open and tolerant society is ready to offer refugees support and assistance²³⁴.

VluchtelingenWerk understands a creative approach to the presence of refugees as providing comprehensive care to the arrivals and preventing them from ever being on the margins of Dutch society. The foundation is working towards this goal by appealing to the inhabitants of the Netherlands to establish contacts with refugees (e.g., to learn about their history), show them kindness and acceptance, create a space for socio-economic initiatives and jobs for them²³⁵. However, as VluchtelingenWerk states, it is the ruling

²³³ B. van den Berg, *Het jaarverslag 2016...*, op.cit., pp. 3.

²³⁴ "[...] maar ook door hen te laten voelen dat ze welkom zijn, dat wij als maatschappij voor hen open staan, en dat wij naast hen staan" ("[...] but also by making them feel welcome and feel that we as a society are open to them and stand by them") – an excerpt from the foreword by Dorine Manson in the annual report on the activities of VWN (B. van den Berg, *Het jaarverslag 2016...*, op.cit., p. 3).

²³⁵ *Samenmaken we het verschil in 2016...*, op.cit. .

elite that is responsible for the effects of the refugee integration process. According to the foundation, it depends on them whether integration activities will prove effective or generate new problems. VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, as a leading non-governmental organization with a long tradition, is recognized by the authorities, and its opinions, including critical ones, on the government's refugee policy are usually considered and analyzed.

VWN assumes that refugees want to become Dutch citizens and believes that, due to this, they will find employment sooner. The organization does not accept the bill that lengthens the current 5-year waiting period for naturalization (granting citizenship) to 7 years. This period is considered by VWN as too long and discouraging from integration. The Foundation believes that refugees should be naturalized as soon as possible to become full members of society. As Dorine Manson says, the refugees found themselves in the Netherlands because their life and health were at risk, and now it is up to the Dutch authorities to take the next step - to ensure them appropriate rights and a chance for future life²³⁶. The priority, according to VWN, should be enabling refugees to participate in all important areas of socio-political and economic life. Immediate changes should mainly affect the processing of asylum applications in such a way that they are processed more quickly, carefully, and fairly. The priority is also to provide refugees with accommodation in all Dutch municipalities (the demand is mostly about increasing financial outlays for housing investments). VluchtelingenWerk also draws attention to the need for greater involvement of the Netherlands in helping refugees in the international arena because, as it argues, "pragmatism, purposefulness, and optimism are necessary for this matter. Only in this way, can refugees become a part of our society, at the same time being able to rely on us"²³⁷. Motivation is a constant factor determining integration, mentioned in VWN's expertise. The more motivated a refugee is, the easier it is for him to achieve success in his new homeland.

Research has shown that refugees are making little progress in key areas of integration, including in the labour market. And it is the labour market that is one of the basic areas of integration that strongly affects the assimilation process of refugees. However, compared to the Dutch and other groups

²³⁶ VluchtelingenWerk Integratie Barometer, een onderzoek naar de integratie van vluchtelingen in Nederland, October 2014, pp. 71-72.

²³⁷ „Nieuwe wegen bewandelen: pragmatisch, doelgerichten optimistisch. Alleen zo kunnen vluchtelingen volwaardig deel uitmaken van onze samenleving. Vluchtelingen die naar Nederland komen, kunnen op ons rekenen” (*Samenmaken we het verschil in 2016*).

of immigrants, refugees remain largely unemployed. If they are in employment, their incomes are still lower compared to other groups of inhabitants. They are also beneficiaries of social institutions to a large extent, living close to the poverty threshold than the rest of the country's inhabitants. 78% of refugees have an income much lower than the average salary in the country, 26% of them live at the poverty line, and 46% work less than 12 hours a week²³⁸. As a result, refugees become beneficiaries of social assistance, which makes this group dependent on welfare, which in turn contributes to increasing the degree of their frustration. VWN sees the need for the government to create a separate policy on refugees, as they are a distinct group of immigrants who should be provided with separate mechanisms enabling their faster integration, e.g. by assisting them in seeking employment. According to the foundation, refugees will find employment faster if municipalities offer help and additionally provide them with the possibility of internships and training. In summary, the government should work more closely with (support) active local centres and institutional partners to improve the situation of refugees.

Since the beginning of 2015, the law has obliged refugees to take after 3 years of study six exams in reading, listening, writing, speaking, social studies on Dutch society and knowledge of the labour market (until 2015, there had been no exam in the knowledge of the labour market). They should find a language course on their own. According to VWN, these restrictions make refugees feel insecure. The newcomers are aware of the difference between being a temporary resident of the Netherlands and its citizen, but the feeling of uncertainty results in the reluctance to make permanent bonds with the Netherlands and, as VWN claims, it does not help in their integration.

According to VWN, there is an urgent need for demonstrating solidarity with refugees, especially since many of them are expecting help. Dorine Manson emphasizes that the policy of the Dutch government is contrary to the idea of humanitarianism, which has been the bottom line of organizations such as VluchtelingenWerk. To quote Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart ("Alleen als een vluchteling vrienden om zich heen heeft,

²³⁸ *Op de arbeidsmarkt*, <http://www.werkwijzervluchtelingen.nl/feiten-cijfers/arbeidsmarkt.aspx> [access: 22.08.2021]. Research on the degree of integration from 2014 (Integratie-Barometr 2014) indicated an increase in the number of employed refugees during the last two years, which, paradoxically, did not translate into an increase in the income of this group of immigrants. It turned out to be significant that the employed refugees most often worked in small businesses, with a twelve-hour employment period per week, which turned out to be insufficient to ensure financial security for themselves and their families.

als hij zich lid van zijn nieuwe gemeenschap voelt, zal hij zijn huis beschouwen als een echt thuis”²³⁹), Manson stresses the still valid and extremely important message of the first United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It is the fact that in the Netherlands there are clear differences between supporters and opponents of accepting refugees, not only nationally (e.g. the already quoted position of the anti-immigration party of Geert Wilders) but also at the local level of individual municipalities (no unanimous position on building refugee centres in close proximity).

4.4. SELECTED PROJECTS BY VLUCHTELINGENWERK NEDERLAND

Thousands of children temporarily staying in asylum seekers' centres, often growing up there, are traumatized by tragic war events and, in addition, by uncertainty about the future in a new environment for them. Actions of VWN supporting this group of people in need aim to help them overcome stress, increase self-confidence, and allow them to adapt to an unknown culture. Projects implemented by the foundation, also in 2016 and 2017, are part of several successful initiatives (already completed, under implementation, or still developing). One of them, dedicated to young refugees (aged 4 to 17) staying in AZC centres, under the name "Eigen-Wijs," ("Own") is a continuation of previous similar projects (including "Tell me more" and "Samenspel" - "Let's play together "). This project is based on three important pillars: music, access to information and knowledge sharing. For children staying in reception centres, the key is to relax and feel safe. Hence, as part of the initiative, the foundation organizes interactive music lessons in the centres, which prepare children to perform at the regional level and, finally, to take part in a public performance at the national theatre, accompanied by a professional symphony orchestra. Thanks to programs focusing on obtaining information (acquiring knowledge), young refugees not only learn about the asylum procedure or their rights in a new country, but also learn to fulfil their needs and gain confidence. For this purpose, specially trained VWN educators organize information and training classes in the form of games, lectures, films, and workshops²⁴⁰.

²³⁹ Eng.: "Only if the refugees have friends around them if they feel they are members of their new community, will they consider their home a real home".

²⁴⁰ An example of promotional activities related to the project are films intended for the youngest, posted on the Internet cf. e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ryCZs4AfBe> [access: 22.10.2021].

The website created by the organizations (www.tell-me.nl) includes all the relevant information concerning refugee issues, stay in AZC centres, an asylum procedure in the Netherlands, rights and obligations of applicants. The initiative aims to empower children of refugees seeking asylum. One such pilot program is, for example, "Kind Specifieke vervolgings gronden". As part of this and other projects, children and adolescents establish mutual relationships; in the case of difficult and irritating questions, they learn how to contact experts (also through the Internet and telephone). Examples of such initiatives are "De Kindertelefoon" (a form of the so-called helpline) and "Time4you", which enable children and young people to have personal contact with specialists and trained volunteers. They are obliged to assist them in any way possible and, if necessary, refer to an appropriate specialist or institutions.

The organization is involved in several projects aimed at fostering the promotion of mutual understanding between refugees and the local community. Therefore, it organizes meetings (e.g. in AZC) so that both groups can get to know each other better and thus understand and accept each other. VWN also organizes cyclical information meetings for experts, which are devoted to problems related to providing help to the youngest refugees. These sessions are intended mainly for lawyers and scientists, but also government representatives and community organizations. Thus, VWN is building a platform for the exchange of knowledge and views on sensitive areas of refugee policy that, according to the foundation, require debate or improvement.

The nationwide VluchtelingenWerk project called Vluchtelingen Investeren in Participeren (VIP) operates in over fifty Dutch municipalities. This is another initiative of the foundation to accelerate integration and provide refugees with knowledge of full and sustainable participation in Dutch society, especially in the labour market. To start actively participating in it, the refugee has to learn the Dutch language, get to know the Dutch culture and the local community, pass an integration exam, become familiar with the realities of the labour market, and be able to look for employment. VWN undertakes several activities that enable refugees to obtain the above competencies - it cooperates with employers, trainers, institutions (schools, local governments), teaches how to make conscious choices, and take advantage of the opportunities available in the labour market. The basic tasks carried out by the association within the project include: conducting

training, during which refugees acquire basic skills that "fit" them into the Dutch labour market (e.g. by participating in workshops and visiting places of potential employment - "Working visits"); providing care from a coach (volunteer) who will work with a refugee in terms of their individual development based on their personality traits, work experience, level of education, etc.; engaging employers (in business) in permanent cooperation on the line offering employment - refugee to recruit full-time employees or interns (including meetings with labour market experts, training for companies, etc.); presenting the government (also local government) with the foundation's point of view on the integrated solutions concerning refugees, thanks to which they would not have to rely on subsidized state aid, and as a result, become more independent. In summary, the project, as VWN states, will help refugees make the right decisions about employment and have an impact on their careers, and thus will allow them to find employment on the Dutch labour market faster.

One of the most important initiatives of VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, which is to help the Dutch get to know "the real face of a refugee" is the project "Bekend maakt Bemind" ("known means liked"). The foundation organizes many meetings for refugees and the local community (including students, media representatives, politicians) to help break stereotypes and prejudices against asylum seekers who by telling their stories, sharing personal and traumatic experiences, become closer and easier to understand to those who listen. Therefore, these meetings are a way to overcome barriers and serve to build mutual understanding. Another equally important project by VWN is the "Projecten Terugkeer" ("Return Projects") for these immigrants whose applications have been rejected and not allowed to stay in the Netherlands, which is usually not easy due to the long time spent in this country. Refugees who have not been allowed to stay in the Netherlands face many obstacles that hinder their return to their home country. The most frequent reasons for their concerns are a feeling of shame when confronted with their families; a sense of failure since the years spent in the Netherlands may be seen as lost in such a situation; loss of identity document; financial problems. Therefore, the Foundation helps these people prepare for their return to their countries of origin, helping them make the most likely conscious decision, at the same time easing the emotional burden resulting from this. These actions are undertaken as part of two projects: "Een Nieuw Hoofdstuk" ("New Chapter") and "Met Opgeheven Hoofd" ("Head up"), and run at twenty regional support centres throughout

the Netherlands, operating on uniform principles. Since VluchtelingenWerk Nederland is one of the largest refugee organizations in Europe, the foundation shares its knowledge and many years of experience with other thriving twin associations in other countries. Being a strong proponent of international solidarity and responsibility, the foundation creates the so-called "NGO twinning" to help and support asylum seekers within international projects. Through training and knowledge exchange based on long-term relationships, the foundation is working towards strengthening foreign organizations (e.g. local associations in Turkey, the Balkans, Greece, Italy) as part of the most important initiatives implemented internationally. VWN projects are subsidized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken), the EU and NUFFIC. Most of the organizations VluchtelingenWerk works with are designated by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), which is a pan-European alliance of 96 NGOs dealing with displaced persons, promoting fair and humane practices toward the exiles, and monitoring the states' policies on refugees.

4.5. MOST IMPORTANT RESULTS

Among the successful projects recently completed by VluchtelingenWerk are Euro-Wijzer, Start Baan, and Werk-Woorden. The first one, completed in 2017, was aimed at helping refugees become financially independent and preventing them from becoming indebted (in the long run); the second, lasting three years, allowed 789 refugees to obtain employment, which, as VWN states, confirmed the effectiveness of investing in newcomers; the third, related to the practical learning of the Dutch language, allowed refugees (with the help of individual trainers) increase their independence, and thus strengthen their participation in the Dutch society. Thanks to three funds: the Refugee Fund (Vluchtelingenfondsen), the Support Fund (Draagvlakactiviteitenfonds, DAF), and the Refugee Project Fund (Fonds Vluchtelingenprojecten), the VluchtelingenWerk Nederland helps directly and indirectly to its charges. With the aid of Vluchtelingenfondsen, the association supports refugees in providing finance for their stay in the Netherlands. The expenses include travel costs, high residence fees, and service costs (e.g., during the asylum application procedure) if, for some reason, they are not covered by the municipality or COA. The DAF fund finances the activities of third parties (individuals and organizations) who are actively involved in helping refugees, e.g., bringing a refugee's

family member to the Netherlands, while the Fonds Vluchtelingenprojecten fund is used by refugee organizations that undertake, among other things, initiatives for the integration of refugees, which comprise, for example, debates on the promotion of the integration of Burundian refugees, training for the equality of women in Afghanistan, meetings on the integration and emancipation of Iranian and Kurdish women.

Every year, by the UNHCR agency, 500 refugees cross the Netherlands borders, taking advantage of its invitation. These are people who not rarely had to stay in refugee camps for several years. Thanks to VWN, some of them receive shelter, benefiting from the direct help of municipalities, which means that they do not stay in other refugee centres. According to the foundation, most of the participants are very satisfied with this form of support. However, those who have to stay in AZC centres for some time, are covered by programs that help them break barriers of isolation and successfully enter the phase of integration into the new society. The VluchtelingenWerk strongly emphasizes its influence on the Foreigners Act of 2010. Strong criticism from the organization resulted in amending several important points of the act, including providing medical advisers with more authority to accelerate expert's evaluation, and thereby shorten the asylum procedure. As a result of VWN's initiative, questioning children during the family reunification procedure had been forbidden in favour of DNA testing. Another initiative of the association is the ban on returning refugees to Greece as the first country they went to, where they would legally undergo the asylum procedure in the centres designated for them. Since refugee centres in Greece raised many doubts, VWN and the European umbrella organization have filed a complaint to the European Commission against this country. As a result of these actions, 1,900 asylum seekers were allowed to stay in the Netherlands to undergo the asylum procedure. Yet another example of the results that VWN has achieved is finding thousands of Dutch language teachers willing to devote their time to the foundation over the past few years by giving lessons in refugee homes and teaching them practical language skills. It is also worth mentioning an important initiative of the foundation, which, by conducting campaigns and writing petitions since 2013, has significantly reduced the possibility of imprisoning refugees (which is especially important in the case of minors). Its most convincing argument was that applying for asylum is a right, not a crime. Although adult refugees are still subject to detention, their term was significantly shortened, and the campaign "Geen kind in de cel" ("No child in the police cell") was a success VluchtelingenWerk.

The Netherlands considers the year 2016 as a successful period. During this period, five regional foundations were operating in 289 Dutch municipalities. More than 58,000 refugees were provided with assistance, being part of integration and family reunification (almost 10,000 people benefited from this assistance). More than 10,000 inquiries were made to volunteers and VWN employees about asylum-related issues on the website run by the organizations. The Foundation organized a week-long vacation for more than 700 refugee children and their parents; more than 40,000 people attended the Open Day for Asylum Seekers (Open AZC dag). VWN was able to effectively help the refugees thanks to the support of private donors and companies, generous financial aid from the National Postal Lottery (Nationale Postcode Loterij) and government grants²⁴¹.

4.6. ACTIVITIES OF THE VWN ZUID-NEDERLAND REGIONAL OFFICE

Being one of the five segments of the national foundation VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, VluchtelingenWerk Zuid-Nederland creates and strengthens at the same time a support base for refugees residing in the southern Netherlands (in the regions of North Brabant and Limburg). This local organization has been operating under the name VluchtelingenWerk Zuid-Nederland for a short time, since October 1, 2016. It was created as a result of the merger of three independent VWN branches: VluchtelingenWerk Limburg, VluchtelingenWerk West-Oost Brabant, and Bommelerwaard (VWWOBB). The VWN was to unite the efforts of individual subsidiaries, increasing their efficiency through, among other things, levelling the internal differences between the offices and due to external factors, including a significant fluctuation of the arriving refugees. The systemic reorganization is to simplify the implementation of the common goals of the foundation. Among other things, the merger aims to reduce the susceptibility to possible threats, improve the quality of work, and simplify the cost management of joint subsidiaries.

The activity of Vluchtelingen-Zuid is traditionally limited to helping refugees integrate into the labour market and the place of settlement, i.e. it supports the improvement of their professional skills and enables

²⁴¹ Jaarrapport 2016, VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, 06.04.2016; VluchtelingenWerkJaarverslag 2016, B. van den Berg (ed.), VWN April 2017.

them to acquire knowledge to increase their chances in a new country, and on the other hand, it makes potential employers aware of the advantages and added value that the newcomers may bring to the workplace. It also offers legal assistance in matters related to the duration of the asylum procedure and to their stay. Moreover, it initiates meetings with members of the local community to foster intercultural relations. Working towards assisting refugees in finding employment, Vluchtelingen-Zuid organizes workshops to show them standards, laws, and customs prevailing in the Dutch sector employment. Moreover, it helps to find apprenticeships, internships, and ultimately jobs. In this regard, the foundation implements four projects: "Ruim Baan voor Vluchtelingen", VIP ("Vluchtelingen Investeren in Participeren"), VIA ("Vluchtelingen Inburgering en Arbeid") and IDZ-UDZ ("In de zorg, uit de zorgen")²⁴².

The first project, carried out in Limburg, is in the form of a workshop and covers refugees aided by individual coaches. The exceptional character of this training is that it combines proven methodologies (for comparison, the "Startbaan" project)²⁴³ aiming at familiarizing with the labour market those refugees who are not well-educated and do not have professional experience. The purpose of the action plan is to integrate the assimilation of refugees into the labour market and their social participation. The project "Ruim Baan voor Vluchtelingen" aims to balance the distribution of refugee workers in the market and enable those who already have work permits to pursue their careers or continue education as soon as possible. Another project (VIP) involving employers, coaches and local authorities is a workshop-based, twin of the flagship project of the VluchtelingenWerk Nederland foundation, which prepares 1500 participants of the project to start work. The VluchtelingenWerk Zuid Nederland project is co-financed by the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (Asiel, Migratie en Integratiefonds, AMIF) and Rabobank. The third initiative (VIA), implemented jointly with Breda's authorities, serves those refugees who were granted a residence permit in the Netherlands at a time when they were not yet subject to the Dutch labour market examination. As mentioned, since January 1, 2015, in addition to the language part that assesses listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills, as

²⁴² *Samenvatting maatschappelijke business case arbeidstoeleiding door VluchtelingenWerk Limburg: Wat levert de arbeidstoeleiding door VluchtelingenWerk Limburg de samenleving op?*, Uitgevoerd door Pimbaa Onderzoek & Advies, Hertogenbosch, augustus 2015.

²⁴³ *Afgerond project Startbaan: wat hebben we bereikt?*, <https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/wat-wij-doen/onze-projecten/project-startbaan> [access: 03.07.2021].

well as knowledge of Dutch culture (eg, Kennis Nederlandse Maatschappij), there has also been an exam covering knowledge of the labour market in the Netherlands (the so-called Orientatie op de Nederlandse Arbeidsmarkt, ONA)²⁴⁴. Foreigners who take part in workshops organized as part of the VIA project learn the rules and principles governing the Dutch labour market and, with the help of volunteers, prepare for a specific profession (e.g. apprenticeships) gaining at the same time the experience needed for their future jobs. The fourth project (IDZ-UDZ), whose implementation time was planned for the years 2016-2019, was based on the international partnership cooperation between the Dutch, Belgian Limburg, the Aachen region and the province of Liege. This initiative is, on the one hand, the foundation's response to the mass influx of refugees to the Netherlands, on the other hand, a response to the demand of this most populous region in Europe for employees in the sector of care (e.g. residential care homes for the elderly or disabled pensioners, etc.). The population of this region is 3.9 million, of which elderly people constitute a large group.

The cooperation established under the mentioned initiative is to help both the inhabitants of the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion (the area between the Aachen Region, Liege Province, the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Belgian Limburg and southern and central Dutch Limburg), as well as refugees seeking work in the Netherlands. Organizations involved in the project pay great attention to the obstacles that refugees themselves consider as major. It is also of critical importance how the group is perceived. The emphasis is therefore not only on changing the mentality of refugees but also, taking into consideration the above-mentioned employment opportunities, changing the attitudes of people in need of care or organizations providing this type of service. Additionally, the project aims to create a positive image of a refugee in Dutch society. Another project worth mentioning is "Actueel Vluchtelingenkinderen doen mee", which aims to educate refugee children on social participation. The project (largely funded by Kansfonds, an organization that annually supports over 500 similar initiatives), covering the years 2016-2017, took place in Breda, Tilburg and Eindhoven. It was initiated to address the need to help the youngest refugees who often live in poverty in the first years of stay in the Netherlands. This is because the financial situations of their families are not easy, due to the small income, as well as the need for future repayment of loans, which the newcomers are

²⁴⁴ *Examendoen*, <https://www.inburgeren.nl/examen-doen.jsp#> [access: 18.06.2021].

granted to cover the expenses of managing their households in new places of residence. Low income often imposes a greater burden on refugees than the inconvenience of having to leave their homeland. Thanks to the project (its two modules: "Cursus Budgetteren" and "Cursus Omgaan met Geld"), refugees learn about the threats resulting from their children growing up in poverty, participate in training courses instructing how to deal with the situation, and seek institutional support. The youngest refugees learn about social participation from volunteers actively participating in classes that teach creativity and openness to the "new". As part of the "Actueel Vluchtelingenkinderdoenmee" "Vluchtelingewerk-Zuid Nederland granted aid to 60 households participating in the project, and provided all-year support to 90 adolescent refugees. Another important project is "Actueel - Start met Participeren". It is a target-oriented project to help this group of refugees that significantly differ in terms of culture from the local community. This pilot program, implemented in cooperation with the municipality of Horst aan de Maas in Limburg, started in 2016 and focused on helping refugees in four closely related critical areas of integration: knowledge of the culture of the country they came to, learning the Dutch language, knowledge of the education and labour markets. Apart from acquiring language competence, which is the basis of communication and further doings, the main goal of the project is education allowing refugees to become fully independent. With the aid of motivational training and training that helps to understand such abstract concepts as values, norms and culture, foreigners are expected to assimilate more fully to the new environment and make conscious decisions about their future.

Another initiative of VWZuid, "Blik op de Toekomst", aims to support those refugees who, after a decision of the authorities refusing them their right to stay in the Netherlands, are unable or do not want to (the problem of people illegally staying in the country) accept the situation. In addition, as the foundation points out, the tightened asylum law makes it more difficult for refugees who are waiting for decisions to look into the future with optimism due to the growing number of dismissed applications, which significantly affects the process of their integration. "Blik op de Toekomst" is therefore a program within which VWZ helps to see the prospects for the development in a new country and independently and consciously make decisions to return to the home country. It is worth mentioning one of the several projects implemented by the foundation called "Afgerond - Inburgering in bedrijf". Thanks to this initiative, refugees are offered

employment in the areas of Tilburg, Breda, and Eindhoven. This project aims to prepare refugees to participate in the labour market according to the methodology developed previously (the so-called Stagecarrousel), according to which employees get accommodation in those regions of the Netherlands where there is a demand for a specific type of work²⁴⁵.

The range of activities of VluchtelingenWerk Zuid Nederland covers a few essential issues: legal protection for asylum seekers and for those who have already obtained a residence permit; assistance in the integration process and participation in a new environment; support in the field of linguistic and cultural education (knowledge about the Dutch society); providing information services to asylum seekers and those who have applied for it; giving advice and assistance to those refugees whose applications have been dismissed and they have to return to their countries. In addition, the foundation takes steps to ensure refugees medical and psychological care, accommodation, access to a fair and carefully conducted asylum procedure (by international Convention), and prepares them for independent living and full participation in the Dutch society, not only through access to education, the labour market, housing, social services, and cultural institutions, but also through political participation²⁴⁶.

The foundation's great asset is, it should be emphasized, the aid of a large number of volunteers who, thanks to training, are knowledgeable about the asylum procedure, methodology of counselling, and are familiar with administrative and organizational matters. Volunteers with long work experience may take additional training courses to acquire knowledge of the law and coaching techniques. It is also worth mentioning the valuable support for volunteers provided by departments of the national office of the foundation (Landelijk Bureau), whose employees answer questions related to legal and social issues concerning refugees.

²⁴⁵ Jaarverslag 2016 VluchtelingenWerk Zuid-Nederland, Regiokantoor Noord-Brabant; Regiokantoor Limburg end Jaarrapportage 2016 VluchtelingenWerk Zuid-Nederland, VWN, Regiokantoor Noord-Brabant; Regiokantoor Limburg.

²⁴⁶ *Van aankomst naar toekomst*, Beleidsplan VluchtelingenWerk Zuid-Nederland, VWN, verkorte versie (web), Meerjarenplanbeleidenvisie 2016-2020.

CONCLUSION

The Netherlands is one of the leading European countries to which refugees are heading - especially in recent times. Although the traditional image of the Netherlands as a country characterised by unlimited tolerance and openness to other cultures, religions and customs is only partly true, the country nevertheless provides an example of a largely successful handling of migration management and refugee influxes. Traditional Dutch attitudes and values are evident in the refugee relief efforts undertaken by numerous non-profit organisations, the most prolific of which is VluchtelingenWerk Nederland. Those involved in the foundation's activities, both its full-time staff and volunteers, share the values of Dutch culture, focused on the one hand on assistance, rational and dynamic action, and on the other hand on the idea of all Dutch people working together and contributing to a common success. It is significant that between 2014 and 2015, the height of the refugee crisis, the number of volunteers associated with refugee relief efforts doubled. The philosophy of VluchtelingenWerk and other NGOs supporting immigrants and refugees is also taking the direction outlined above. These bodies rightly argue that migrants deserve special attention because, depending on the measures taken by the government, they can become a force enriching the country or, on the contrary, generating and escalating problems. For many years, Dutch NGOs have been trying to help migrants and refugees on various levels (training, workshops, language courses, assistance with association, gaining confidence in the institutions of the host country, developing attitudes of civic participation, etc.) and to contribute to integration in every way possible, regardless of changing government policies in this regard or the negative attitude of part of society towards newcomers. They also speak out publicly on migration issues, often while being critical of government policy, but at the same time serving as an advisory voice. These organisations can be said to support the ideas of multiculturalism

and integration, which to a large extent serve as important guidance for them. In their optimism, some proclaim that the Netherlands should accept more refugees than before (this is the position of VluchtelingenWerk, among others). They also take action against discrimination and xenophobia in the Netherlands through, among other things, information and counselling for those affected by exclusion, campaigns against actions against ethnic minorities (especially Muslims), organising research work on these issues. Foundations, associations, institutes also develop mutual cooperation, often transforming and merging. However, the fact is that the above attitudes and activities reflect the beliefs and sentiments of only a part of Dutch society, in which, as research shows, there has been an increase in attitudes of resentment, intolerance, xenophobia towards newcomers, especially Muslims, and opposition to politicians in favour of migration. It is significant that - one can assume - about half of all Dutch people believe that there are too many foreign residents in the Netherlands, but at the same time - noteworthy - the majority does not accept discriminatory behaviour. However, it should also be borne in mind that some behaviour which is not perceived by the Dutch as a sign of discrimination, for some members of minorities is clearly seen as such, which complicates an already difficult situation. The refugee crisis has further exacerbated the pre-existing division of Dutch society into supporters and opponents of migration. Migration and the integration of newcomers are now the most frequently mentioned social issues by the Dutch, and some of them hold the belief that the norms and values of immigrants are contrary to those of the Dutch. Such attitudes are not new, they date back at least to the 1990s, when, among others, Frits Bolkenstein (incidentally, Geert Wilders' mentor) saw Islam as a threat to liberal democracy and an obstacle to the integration of immigrants, and sociologist Jan Rath regarded Muslim immigrants as incapable of integration. The situation became even more complicated after the murders of van Gogh and Fortuijn, and Han Entzinger could now say that the hitherto silent majority was tired of multiculturalism. There were numerous voices speaking of the failure of the integration policy so far and accusing the government of hiding the real problems in the name of political correctness and mythologising the Dutch model of multiculturalism, which sociologist Paul Schnabel called the multicultural illusion. The growing anti-immigration sentiment among the Dutch in recent years is reflected in the result of the 2017 parliamentary elections, which brought Geert Wilders' PVV party to a second result and an increase in seats held from 15 to 20. Wilders' party now holds 17 seats in the Dutch parliament.

While anti-immigration attitudes are on the rise in Dutch society, the belief that the Netherlands is becoming less and less open to them is reinforced in immigrant communities, especially Muslim ones, which is linked to the perceived unequal treatment and declining acceptance of these population groups. The experience of exclusion from Dutch society, on the other hand, has the effect of increasing foreigners' sense of belonging to their own ethnic group, which clearly distances them from integration.

Therefore, if NGOs want to maintain their current tackling of migration issues, they need to fight on two fronts: on the one hand, to try to gain wider support for integration from Dutch society and, on the other hand, to increase integration efforts from immigrants and refugees themselves. For the only sensible direction towards integration would seem to be a parallel effort on both sides, a mutual attempt to bring the host society and the migrants closer together. One can speculate that Dutch NGOs are trying, within the limits of their capacities, to pursue just such a scenario of integration activities and, in doing so, that they are making a great effort to achieve this goal. The future will show the result of these efforts. However, one can justifiably fear that - both in the Netherlands and in other European immigration countries - it will be very difficult, though not impossible, to realise a model integration that assumes the distinctiveness of ethnic and national minorities while at the same time accepting their basic values, especially democratic ones. The work devotes a great deal of focus to traditional Dutch values and attitudes for good reason, as it is in their promotion that a remedy for progress in integration can be seen. Immigrants and refugees who would like to see the Netherlands as their new home should seek to understand and put these values into practice. These values, it can be assumed, have largely been successfully tested during the centuries-long history of the Netherlands, showing in particular that it is possible to be very different and yet live and work together, setting and achieving useful goals for everyone. The Dutch, on the other hand, should help the newcomers to understand their values and, in particular, to understand that their acceptance and practical implementation does not mean losing their own identity. The native Dutch should also, it seems, accept that if the newcomers accept the values in question, the latter should be treated equally with citizens of local origin. This mutual goodwill is difficult to create, but attempts in this regard should be made by both sides, because if integration fails and assuming that assimilation of migrants is impossible - only separation, segregation, exclusion and discrimination will remain.

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TABLES

Table 1. *Total number of refugees applying for asylum in the Netherlands in January-June 2016 and 2017* (first-time applicants, repeat applicants, family reunification and unaccompanied minors).

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