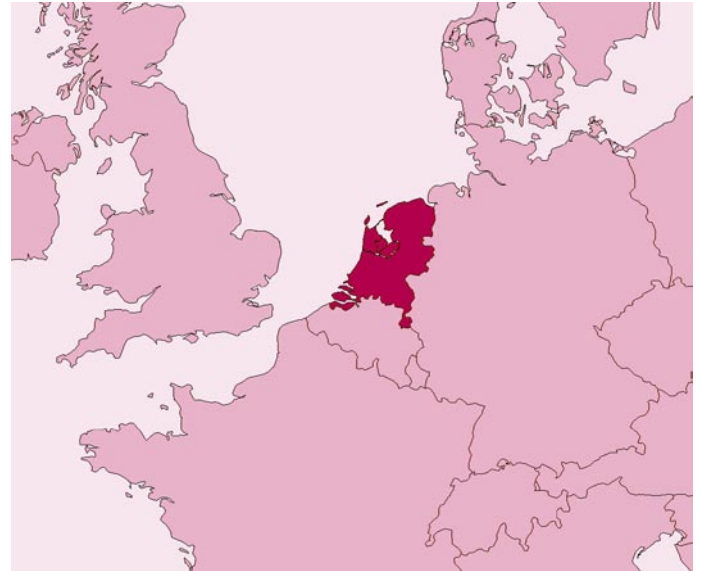


# Netherlands

The Netherlands has a long history of immigration. Both refugees and economic migrants have come to the country in large numbers. Currently almost 20% of the Dutch population are immigrants or children of immigrant parents.

For a long time the Dutch took pride in the fact that many people came to their country because of its relative tolerance towards other cultures and religions. Immigrants who came after the Second World War, as guest workers or from former colonies, were initially encouraged to maintain their own cultures, even after it became clear they would stay in the Netherlands permanently. Access to citizenship was easy, and the pressure to assimilate was low. For immigrants who were not proficient in Dutch, many government services and documents were provided in their mother tongues.

However it soon became clear that the former guest workers and, to a lesser extent, migrants from the former colonies were economically marginalised. Many policies were enacted to improve their position, but to little avail. With the new century



## Background Information

**Capital:** Amsterdam

**Seat of Government:** The Hague

**Official Languages:** Dutch, Frisian (regional)

**Area:** 41,528 km<sup>2</sup>  
(for comparison, Germany: 357,027 km<sup>2</sup>)

**Population (2007):** 16,366,134 (CBS)

**Population density (2006):** 484 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (CBS)

**Population growth (2006):** +1.5% (CBS)

**Foreign nationals as percentage of population (2006):** 4.2% (CBS)

**Alloctonen<sup>1</sup> as percentage of population (2006):** 19.3% (CBS) (non-Western<sup>2</sup>: 10.5%)

**Labour force participation rate (2006):** 75.7% (OECD)

**Unemployment rate:** 3.9% (2006), 4.7% (2005), 4.6% (2004) (OECD)

**Religions (2006):** 27% Roman Catholic, 17% Protestant, 6% Islam, 1% Hindu, 48% not religious (WRR)

came a very turbulent time for Dutch multiculturalism, which had attempted to accommodate immigrants as culturally distinct groups. Many wonder whether the Netherlands has left the multicultural track and is now pursuing a fierce form of assimilation.

Since 1998 several new immigration and integration laws have been introduced. Without exception they have made Dutch immigration and integration policies stricter. More so than in other European countries, cultural belonging and cultural difference remain important concepts in policies and political debates. Immigrants and their descendants continue to be viewed as culturally distinct groups, but whereas early integration policies aimed at maintaining cultural diversity, this diversity is increasingly seen as something that obstructs integration into Dutch society.

## Historical Trends in Immigration and Emigration

Since the middle ages, the relative freedom and wealth of the Netherlands have drawn a significant number of immigrants. Between 1590 and 1800 the estimated foreign-born population in the Netherlands was never less than 5%.<sup>3</sup> Among the immigrants were many Huguenots – Protestants from France - and Jews from Southern and Eastern Europe. In the 19th century the foreign-born population declined, reaching about 2% in

1880. From 1870 until just after the Second World War, there were more people leaving than entering the country, despite some ongoing immigration. Most emigrants went to the U.S., Australia and Canada, or to South Africa and the Dutch colony of Indonesia. After the Second World War, the government encouraged emigration because it feared that the high birthrate would create unemployment. As a result, more than half a million people emigrated.

Postwar migration was dominated by immigrants from the (former) colonies and from guest worker recruitment countries. The Dutch colonial empire began to fall when Indonesia claimed its independence in 1945, leading to the immigration of two large groups of persons: Dutch-Indonesian repatriates and Moluccans.<sup>4</sup> In the two decades after independence, 300,000 repatriates arrived, of whom more than half was Eurasian. Moluccans came to the Netherlands as part of a deal with the Dutch government, which had promised them an independent Moluccan state on the island Ambon. Because Indonesia was not willing to create such a free state, 12,500 Moluccans came to the Netherlands to wait for its creation. To this day there is no free Moluccan republic, and the Moluccans have stayed in the Netherlands.

In 1975 the left-wing Den Uyl government decided to grant independence to another Dutch colony: Suriname. News of this decision led to a surge in migration, because many Surinamese feared that an independent Suriname could not maintain its wealth and stability. The introduction of mandatory visas for Surinamese who wished to enter the Netherlands led to a second peak in emigration around 1980, as many feared that entry would become more difficult.

The last Dutch "overseas territories" are the Netherlands' Antilles and Aruba, and these small Caribbean islands are another important source of migrants. Like wealthy Surinamese, wealthy Antilleans have a history of studying in the Netherlands. When the economic situation on the islands became very precarious in the 1990s, more and more lower class Antilleans, especially from the island of Curacao, moved to the "mother country." These newer, less-qualified Antillean migrants often do gain a foothold, and there has thus been more return migration to the islands in recent years.

Like many other Western European countries, the Netherlands started to recruit guest workers in the 1960s, first from Southern Europe, and later from Yugoslavia, Turkey and Morocco. Guest workers from Southern Europe often returned to their home countries - especially after Spain and Portugal joined the EU - and those who remained in the Netherlands often married Dutch women. Return migration to Turkey and Morocco was less common because the economic and political situation in these countries remained poor and re-entering the Netherlands or other European countries became more difficult for non EU-citizens. After the recruitment stop in 1974, many guest workers decided to prolong their stay in the Netherlands and were joined by their families. The process of family reunification peaked around 1980. Initially this process was met with resistance from the government and society, because of the housing shortage the Netherlands was facing. Nevertheless, in the early 1980s family reunification regulations were loosened. Since the end of recruitment, the size of the Moroccan and

Turkish origin populations has increased tenfold. This is due to family reunification and family formation<sup>5</sup> on the one hand, and childbirth on the other.

Family migration remains the main source of settlement migration to the Netherlands, accounting for almost 40% of all immigrants.

In recent years there has been a significant overall decrease in immigration. In 2003, emigration exceeded immigration for the first time since 1984. In that year, only 317 more people left the country than entered it; in 2006 this number had risen to 31,320. The cause of declining immigration is hard to pinpoint, but the stricter asylum and family migration policies implemented in 2001 and the poor economic climate are likely causes.

In terms of emigration, ethnic Dutch make up a large proportion of those leaving the country. Those emigrating tend to do so for economic reasons, but also in response to the country's high population density and recent political upheavals. Popular destinations for Dutch emigrants are Germany, Belgium, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, with retirees also heading to Spain, France and Italy.

## The Immigrant Population

In contrast to most countries, statistics on the immigrant population in the Netherlands are not based on nationality or country of birth, but on ethnicity. The Dutch government distinguishes between *allochtonen* and *autochtonen*. *Allochtoon* is the manufactured opposite of the Greek term *autochthon*, which means "native." *Allochtonen* are officially defined as persons who were born outside the Netherlands or who have at least one parent who was born outside the Netherlands. A further distinction is made between Western and non-Western *allochtonen*. Western *allochtonen* are people from Europe (excluding Turkey), North America, Oceania, Indonesia and Japan; non-Western *allochtonen* are defined as people from Turkey, Africa, Latin American and the rest of Asia.

Many statistics differentiate between *allochtonen* and *autochtonen* (and often further differentiate between individual ethnic groups). Most statistics, and research based on them, focus in particular on the non-Western group, as they are seen as the ones with the most disadvantaged position in Dutch society. In everyday usage the term *allochtonen* only denotes the non-Western group, and more specifically Turks and Moroccans. There has been some discussion about extending the definition of *allochtoon* to include people with foreign-born grandparents, which would enable a longer-term tracking of the population of immigrant origin. Some politicians and *allochtonen*, on the other hand, have argued the term should be abolished, because it creates a continuing distinction between those who are ethnic Dutch and those who are not.

The different statistical categories provide a variety of ways to depict the share of immigrants in the population: 19.3% of the population is *allochtoon* (10.6% non-Western), 9.8% is foreign born and 6.2% of the population does not possess Dutch citizenship. The impact of the different definitions on determining the most significant countries of origin is relatively small: Turkey, Morocco, Germany, Belgium, the UK, Poland and the former Yugoslavia are well represented in each case (see, for example, figures 1 & 2).

In addition to the groups originating from (former) colonies

**Figure 1: Allochtonen by country of origin in 2007 (top 10)**

Country of Origin	Total	1st Generation
1. Indonesia	389,94	126,048
2. Germany	381,186	101,221
3. Turkey	368,6	195,113
4. Suriname	333,504	186,025
5. Morocco	329,493	167,893
6. Dutch Antilles & Aruba	129,965	78,907
7. Belgium	112,224	36,126
8. (Former) Yugoslavia	76,465	52,857
9. U.K.	75,686	42,604
10. Poland	51,339	34,831
Total allochtonen	3,170,406	1,601,194
Total non-Western allochtonen	1,738,452	1,014,476

Source: CBS

**Figure 2: Foreign nationals by citizenship in 2006 (top 10)**

Citizenship	Incl. dual nationals	Excl. dual nationals
1. Turkish	359,143	98,92
2. Moroccan	313,921	86,229
3. German	106,601	58,503
4. British	84,774	41,508
5. Belgian	56,281	25,994
6. Italian	37,935	18,502
7. Polish	31,787	15,202
8. French	30,463	14,73
9. (Former) Yugoslavian	28,027	5,306
10. Spanish	27,795	16,851
Total	1,704,846	691,357

Source: CBS

and guest worker recruitment countries, three neighbouring countries are present in the top 10 *allochtoon* groups: Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom. Combined, people born in EU countries as well as the children of people born in EU countries make up 26% of the *allochtoon* population. The presence of over 330,000 Surinamese is notable, especially in comparison to the total population of Suriname (currently about 500,000). With 45,000 persons, Moluccans are also a significant group, but they are not among the ten largest. Especially the inflow of asylum seekers has led to a diversification of the Dutch immigrant population; from 1971 to 1998 the number of nationalities in the Netherlands rose from 28 to 110.

The immigrant population tends to live in urban areas. A total of 29% of allochtonen (or 39% of all non-Western *allochtonen*)

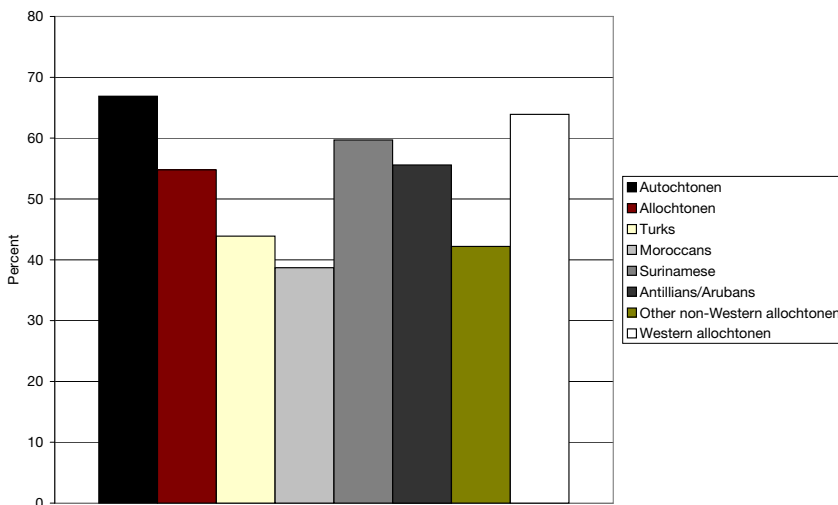
live in the four largest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht), as compared to 13% of the Dutch population. In Amsterdam and Rotterdam, *allochtonen* make up almost half of the population. Some smaller municipalities have a high concentration of certain groups as well, mostly as a consequence of the industries that employed guest workers. There is not only a high degree of concentration but also of segregation: many immigrants live in neighbourhoods with a low percentage of *autochtonen*, and this segregation has increased over the last years. Of the four largest cities, Amsterdam has the lowest segregation index: 36.3 in 2004. This means that to get an even spread of non-Western *allochtonen* across Amsterdam, 36.3% of them would have to move to another neighbourhood.<sup>6</sup> The Hague has the highest segregation index: 51.1 for Turks alone. Segregation is lower among migrant groups who have received asylum in the Netherlands, because they were deliberately housed across the country (see below).

Non-Western *allochtoon* groups are generally in a disadvantaged socio-economic position. Of the four largest non-Western immigrant groups, the Turks and Moroccans are the most disadvantages: they exhibit low labour market participation, high unemployment and welfare dependency rates and relatively poor school results, even among the second generation. In 2006, only 38.7% of Moroccans and 43.9% of Turks aged 15-64 had a job (see figure 3). Unemployment<sup>7</sup> was 17.2% among Moroccans and 15.1% among Turks, about four times the level among autochtoon Dutch: 4.3% (see figure 4). Almost 30% of Turks and Moroccans receive social security benefits, compared to 13% of the autochtoon Dutch population.

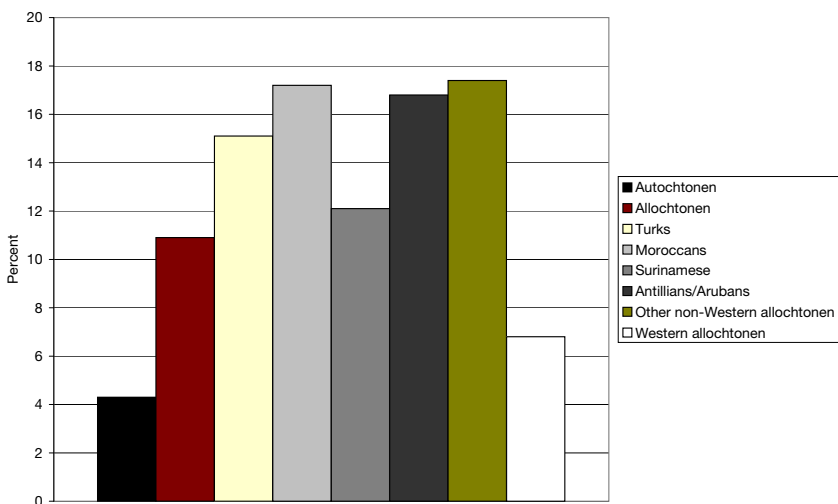
In the current political debate, Moroccans and Antilleans in particular are seen as a source of problems in Dutch society. For example, police statistics show that over 10% of Antillean and Moroccan boys aged 12-17 have been suspected of a crime, compared to only 2% of *autochtonen* and 5.2% of Turkish boys. Of men aged 18-24, 17.8% of Moroccans and 13.0% of Antilleans have been a suspect in a crime, compared to 3.8% of the *allochtoon* Dutch population.<sup>8</sup> Though police statistics are problematic for several reasons, including racial profiling<sup>9</sup> by the police, they are often referred to in debates surrounding the immigrant population.

The Surinamese are in a much better socio-economic position and have managed to improve their standing over the years. The position of the Antilleans has deteriorated since the inflow of many lower class Antilleans, because the latter are poorly educated and often have problems with the Dutch language.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, on average, the position of Antilleans is more advantageous than that of Moroccans and Turks.

Although the level of education among second-generation immigrants shows a significant improvement compared to their parents, it is still behind that of *allochtoon* Dutch children. The drop-out rate for non-Western *allochtoon* children is twice that of *allochtoon* Dutch children. Approximately 50% of autochtoon youngsters are enrolled in university-level (hogeschool or universiteit) education, compared to only 25% of Turkish and Moroccan and 35% of Antillean and Surinamese children. However, there has been great improvement on the part of Turkish and Moroccan children; in 10 years' time, their rate of participation in higher education has increased by ten percentage points.

**Figure 3: Employment rates of various immigrant groups in 2006**

Source: CBS

**Figure 4: Unemployment rates of various immigrant groups in 2006**

Source: CBS

The political participation of immigrants has also increased significantly. Though the percentage of voters is lower among immigrants than among *autochtonen*, there are a fair number of *allochtoon* politicians. Out of the 150 members of parliament eleven are of non-Western *allochtoon* descent. The cabinet includes one member of Turkish and one of Moroccan origin. Since the 2006 local elections, 302 councillors (or 3%) belong to a non-Western *allochtoon* group.<sup>11</sup> This amounts to an under-representation of about two thirds, but it is a good record compared to the scarcer political presence of immigrants in neighbouring countries. Half of the 302 *allochtoon* councillors are of Turkish origin, which amounts to an under-representation of less than half.

## Citizenship

In 1985 the Netherlands introduced a new citizenship law that replaced an older law from 1892. The new law facilitated access to citizenship for second generation descendents of immigrants. Dutch-born children of immigrants can opt for Dutch citizenship between the ages of 18 and 25. The third generation (second generation born in the Netherlands) automatically receives Dutch citizenship at birth.

Immigrants can naturalise after five years of legal residence, or three if they are married to a Dutch citizen. Until 2003 the naturalisation requirements were minimal: applicants had to show that they had no serious criminal record and complete a modest oral exam to test their Dutch language ability. This exam usually involved a civil servant asking the candidate to state their name, place of birth, address and year of immigration in Dutch. The low threshold to naturalization was a deliberate choice. The government believed that it was important for the immigrant population to be given equal rights, and awarding citizenship was a good way of ensuring this. In addition, it was believed that naturalisation would strengthen integration. In the 1980s and 1990s the government organized campaigns to encourage immigrants to naturalize.

Migrants who are not naturalized have several rights that other countries usually reserve for citizens. Since 1985 non-citizens have been allowed to work in the civil service, with the exception of the police force and the army. After five years of legal residence, non-nationals have the right to vote in local elections. Nowadays many municipal councils have members with an immigrant background, not all of whom are Dutch citizens.

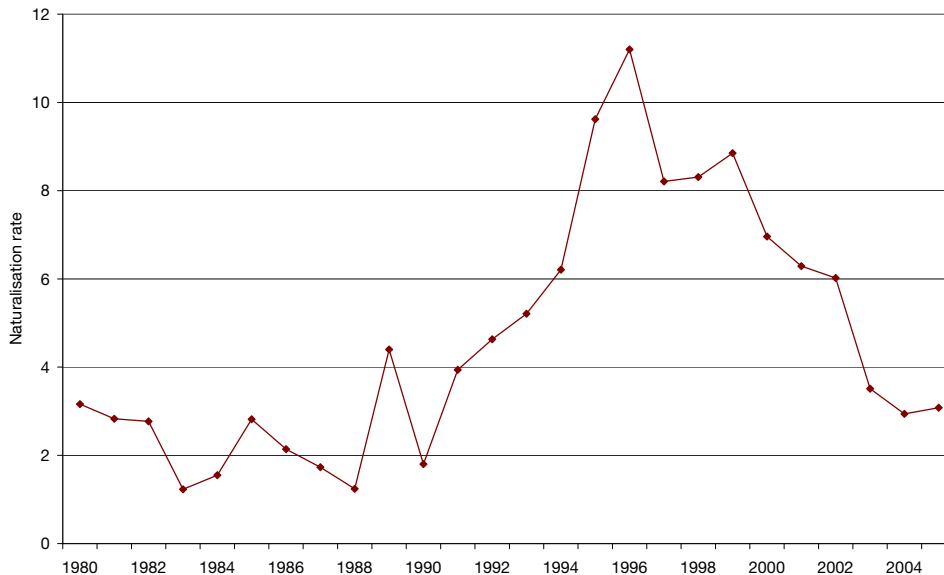
In January 1992 dual citizenship was introduced, which led to an increase in naturalizations. This measure was also of great symbolic value, judging by the fact that many Moroccans<sup>12</sup> obtained Dutch citizenship after the measure was implemented. Dual citizenship was highly contested, and in October 1997 the obligation to renounce prior citizenship was reinstated, causing a drop in the naturalization rate<sup>13</sup> from a peak of 10.9% in 1996 to 8.2% in 1998 (see figure 5). There are several exemptions to the renunciation obligation, and the law is not applied very rigidly. Dual nationality is still often granted. The number of dual nationals has continued to rise from 600,000 in 1998 to over one million in 2006.<sup>14</sup>

In accordance with the stricter approach toward immigrant integration in general, citizenship requirements have been tightened. Granting citizenship is no longer seen as a means of facilitating integration, but more as a reward that should only be given to people who have proven that they have integrated successfully. To test the level of integration of citizenship applicants, a formal naturalisation test was introduced in 2003. This



test is much harder than the previous oral test. It is a written exam that tests both the applicant's language proficiency and his/her knowledge of Dutch culture and society. The introduction of the test led to a further decrease in naturalisations. In 2005 the naturalization rate was 3.1%.

**Figure 5: Naturalisation rate (1980-2005)**



Source: CBS

## Integration Policy

Until the 1970s, the Netherlands lacked an integration policy, as it was believed that most migrant groups, especially the guest workers, would eventually return to their countries of origin.<sup>15</sup> Given this “myth of return”, it was considered unnecessary to integrate these migrants fully into Dutch society; thus the government aimed only to provide them with good living conditions. Guest workers were allowed to make use of all of the regular provisions of the welfare state. Additionally, special cultural and social facilities were set up for them, and their children had special classes in order to preserve their mother tongue. All measures were aimed at making the transition back “home” as smooth as possible. Indeed, the immigrants themselves were also convinced that their stay in the Netherlands would not be permanent.

This provision of support for cultural maintenance fitted with the Dutch principle of “sovereignty in one’s own circle”, which was part of the system of “pillarisation” (*verzuiiling*).

This Dutch political system took hold in the first half of the twentieth century and accorded each religious faith, and later the secular socialist and liberal groups, their own “pillar”. The pillars had an elaborate infrastructure that encompassed most of public life. All pillars had their own unions, newspapers, sport clubs, undertakers and, for the Christian groups, schools.<sup>16</sup> Because there was no majority, the groups always needed to consult with each other and eventually compromise on political matters, with the elites of the pillars carrying out the negotiations. The heyday of pillarisation was from approximately 1920 until

1960. The Netherlands has rapidly secularised since the Second World War, but the structures of pillarisation are still in place, which means that a lot of government funding and many consultative bodies are based on religious and ethnic background.

As time passed, it had become clear that immigrants were in a disadvantaged position: they lived in segregated neighbourhoods and faced a high level of unemployment. In response to this situation, the first integration policies were developed in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, the ethnic minority policy was introduced. The later infamous credo of this policy was “integration while preserving migrants’ own identities.” The maintenance of immigrant cultures, in line with the system of pillarisation, was no longer seen as a means of facilitating their return to their countries of origin, but as a road to emancipation like the one the Catholic minority had taken in the decades before. There was generous state support for immigrants’ social and cultural life; there were consultative councils for ethnic minorities at the local and national level; mother-tongue teaching was introduced in primary schools; and the first Muslim and Hindu schools were erected.

Aside from stimulating integration through cultural activities, the policy aimed at equality before the law and equal opportunity in the labour market, housing market and education.

In the 1990s, the focus of integration policy shifted from cultural preservation to labour market integration and equal opportunities, as the socio-economic position of the four main immigrant groups (Turks, Surinamese, Moroccans and Antilleans) remained disadvantaged and minority youth were over-represented in crime statistics. Mother-tongue teaching was limited and made extra curricular, and the importance of education and learning Dutch were stressed.

The change in integration policy was part of a larger change in discourse on state policy from the rights of citizens to the duties of citizens. In the 1980s and 1990s the welfare state was facing a crisis: the number of people on welfare had become too large relative to the working population. A disadvantaged socio-economic position was seen less and less as a consequence of a lack of opportunities and more as a result of lack of action on the part of the disadvantaged individual. This new emphasis on people’s own responsibilities also spread to the field of integration. In the course of the 1990s and 2000s, a lack of integration (especially non-proficiency in Dutch) was increasingly attributed to a lack of effort on the part of immigrants.

In a 1989 report, the scientific council for government policy (WRR) had recommended language training programmes for newly arrived immigrants to prepare them for their future stay, but it was not until 1998 that the law on the civic integration of newcomers (*Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers*, WIN) came into effect. According to the law, all new immigrants – with the ex-

ception of students and temporary workers – had to take 600 hours of language and societal orientation classes, which were followed by assistance in starting an education or finding employment. The program was meant to help immigrants find their way in Dutch society and become self-supporting. Citizens of the European Union, the EEA<sup>17</sup>, Switzerland and the United States who came for reasons other than marriage or family reunification were exempt from the obligation. If immigrants did not comply, their social security could be cut or they could be fined. Although the program still exists, participation is no longer obligatory (see ‘current developments’). The Netherlands was the first country to introduce such a mandatory program, and several countries have since followed its lead.<sup>18</sup>

### Fortuyn and his political legacy

There have been some anti-immigrants parties in the Netherlands over the years, but fewer than in other European countries. Whereas the *Front National* in France and the *Vlaams Blok* (now *Vlaams Belang*) in Flanders have received a significant numbers of votes for some time now, such parties remained marginal in the Netherlands until rather recently.

There were, however, some prominent critics of multiculturalism in the early 1990s, such as Frits Bolkestein, the leader of the right wing liberal party<sup>19</sup> *Vereniging voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (Organisation for Freedom and Democracy, VVD). Many people expressed their annoyance with the poor Dutch proficiency of many of the former guest workers and their families, as well as the behaviour and alleged delinquency of their children. But besides Frits Bolkestein and some of his fellow party members, politicians paid little attention to these complaints.

After the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, a new political climate emerged. There were many xenophobic incidents: people pulled down women’s headscarves and spat in their faces, insulted co-workers from Islamic countries and, in one incident, a Molotov cocktail was thrown into a mosque. At that time, a new politician entered the public arena: Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn was fairly well-known for his column in the right-wing magazine *Elsevier*, which he used to agitate against immigrants and what he regarded as lenient government policies. He had been active in several political parties before becoming the leader of the *Leefbaar Nederland* (Liveable Holland) party. Instead of using the nuanced discourse of the political establishment, Fortuyn expressed himself boldly, calling Islam a “backward religion”, and saying that the “leftwing church” had pampered immigrants at the expense of native Dutch. He also argued that the Netherlands should close its borders to all immigrants, including refugees, until those already present were fully integrated. This was received by many as a welcome reaction to years of political correctness regarding immigrant issues. It was – and is – often said that Fortuyn ‘said what people had been thinking all along’.

After in an interview with a major newspaper (*de Volkskrant*) in which Fortuyn had argued that the equality section of the constitution should be revoked<sup>20</sup>, the *Leefbaar Nederland* party leadership fired him. This led him to found his own party: the *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* or LPF.

Fortuyn’s political career came to a tragic and abrupt end when he was assassinated on 6th May 2002, one week prior to

the general elections. It was the first political assassination to take place in the Netherlands in centuries. Initially, many feared that an immigrant might have shot him and that this could lead to large-scale unrest. It soon turned out that the shooter was a white environmental activist.

In the elections the *Christen Democratisch Appel* (CDA, Christian Democrats) won the most seats, but even without its leader the LPF came in second with 26 seats, representing 17.6% of all votes. These two parties along with the VVD formed a short-lived coalition government that managed to push through several changes in the area of immigration and integration. Among others, the ministerial position for Integration and Metropolitan issues was reformed into a ministerial position for Integration and Immigration and placed within the Justice department, a move that linked immigration and immigrants to crime.

In the 2003 elections the LPF lost most of its seats; however, the discourse against immigrants in general – and Muslim immigrants in particular – remained fierce. The new minister of integration Rita Verdonk (VVD) presented many new measures that all aimed at restricting the entry of new immigrants and at forcing immigrants living in the Netherlands to integrate. In November 2004 an extremist young Muslim murdered filmmaker Theo van Gogh<sup>21</sup>, increasing feelings among the general public that Muslims immigrants were not integrating. In retaliation, several mosques were set on fire.

Following the 2007 elections, the LPF no longer has any seats and Verdonk is no longer minister (the VVD is no longer in the coalition), but there is another contender for Fortuyn’s heritage: Geert Wilders. He has made himself a name with extremist statements about Muslims, warning about a “tsunami of islamization” hitting the Netherlands and, in August 2007, suggesting a complete ban on the Koran because it is a “fascist book.”. In the 2007 elections, his *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Freedom Party, PVV) was given nine seats in parliament.

### The end of multiculturalism?

In 2003 a temporary parliamentary committee was installed to investigate the effects of integration policies of the past thirty years. The unofficial goal was to investigate what ‘went wrong’, because especially after Fortuyn it was generally felt that things had. In January 2004 the committee presented its report entitled ‘*Bruggen bouwen*’ (Building Bridges). Its main conclusion was that many immigrants had integrated successfully *despite* the integration policies. The committee stated that newcomers should achieve proficiency in Dutch and observe the norms and values as laid down in laws, but it also recommended that discrimination and prejudice among allochtonen and autochtonen alike should be combatted. Unfortunately, not much was done with the report.

Despite a change in rhetoric since Fortuyn, there have been few fundamental changes to integration policies. Ethnically-based activities are still subsidised, though mother-tongue teaching in state schools has been completely abolished. There is still state support for Muslim and other denominational primary and secondary schools and for religion-based broadcasting corporations (including two Islamic and a Hindu one) that air programs on the public channels. Also, the range of

ethnic consultative bodies was expanded in 2004 to include a Muslim council (*Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid*, CMO) and a Chinese council.

Although the Dutch government only pursued an explicitly multicultural policy, (in which cultural diversity was institutionalised in areas such as education and public broadcasting in accordance with the pillarisation system - see above) in the 1980s, cultural belonging is still an important factor in integration policies and the surrounding debate. However, Dutch society's views of immigrants' cultures have changed: they are no longer seen as enrichment but as something that can hinder integration, and that therefore warrant special attention. Most of the current debates surrounding immigrants and integration centre on Muslims. There is a widespread fear that Muslims are not adapting to Dutch norms, like tolerance toward homosexuals and the equality of men and women. Culture is seen as something that holds people back, and civic integration courses are thus aimed at correcting this by assimilating people into Dutch culture.

## Immigration Policy

Immigration policies have also been modified in recent years. The most significant change has been the introduction of a new aliens law (the '*VreemdelingenWet 2000*', VW 2000), which came into effect in 2001. This law brought about major changes in refugee and asylum procedures (see below), but another major aim was to discourage immigration for the purpose of family formation, especially from Turkey and Morocco, and to prevent fake marriages. A Dutch citizen or resident must have an income of at least 100% of the minimum family income (or 120% in case of non-permanent residents), an employment contract for at least one year and be at least 21 years of age. The spouse who comes to the Netherlands also has to be at least 21. Since 1998 the spouse must wait outside the Netherlands for her/his permit. An exception is made for spouses from the US, Japan, Switzerland, Australia and EU member states. These exceptions are based on bilateral treaties, but they also reflect the fear that people from other countries are more likely to be economic immigrants who use marriage as a way to enter the country.

## Irregular Migration

An estimated 112,000 to 163,000 people are living in the Netherlands without authorisation, of whom 65,000 to 91,000 originate from non-European countries.<sup>22</sup> Part of this irregular population is made up of people who did not leave the country after their application for asylum was turned down. Others have entered through illegal channels or overstayed their tourist or worker's visas.

An estimated 10% of the resident group of irregular migrants comes from Morocco. Other important countries of origin are China, Turkey, the former Soviet republics and the former Yugoslavia, with each accounting for roughly 5% of the total. Most live in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and to a lesser extent in The

Hague and Utrecht. Many irregular immigrants work in agriculture: in the greenhouse districts in the mid-west or on farms in the south-east. Especially Poles and Bulgarians in particular are known to work in these industries. Additionally, many Poles are employed in the construction industry which, like the agricultural sector, suffers from a lack of available Dutch workers.

Irregular migration is not an important topic in the Dutch immigration debate, but there have been several periods in which irregular migrants have received a lot of media attention. For example, the presence of a large community of irregular migrations was brought to public attention in 1992 when a plane crashed into two high-rise buildings the Amsterdam-Bijlmermeer, because the large number of irregular Ghanaian migrants residing in the buildings made it hard for authorities to determine the number of victims.

In the late 1990s there were many awareness-raising protests by so-called "white illegals" (*witte illegalen*), people who were living in the Netherlands illegally but who were employed and paid taxes. Although several hundred of these "white illegals" were later granted residence permits, the 1998 Linking Act (*koppelingswet*) restricted the ability of irregular migrants to continue to pursue regular employment. The act linked the databases of several government institutions (tax authorities, immigration services, municipalities), so as to exclude irregular immigrants from public services and prevent them from being issued a social security number (a prerequisite for regular employment, social security benefits and subsidised housing). Exemptions to the law allow children under 18 years of age access to education and people with "imperative" medical needs access to treatment.

A further control measure focuses on employers. The police perform regular inspections in sectors that are known to employ irregular migrants, such as agriculture and food services. Employers who are caught employing irregular migrants are fined.

Though staying in the Netherlands without authorisation is not a crime, irregular migrants who end up in police custody can be detained in deportation centres if the authorities believe that they can be deported in the near future.

## Refuge and Asylum

For many years the Netherlands had a relatively high number of asylum seekers.<sup>23</sup> The post-Second World War refugee wave started with soldiers from Eastern European countries such as Poland, who had helped liberate the Netherlands and who decided to stay when their countries of origin came under communist regimes. They were later joined by compatriots fleeing those regimes as well as refugees from around the world. Currently, the major refugee communities are from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and Bosnia.

Refuge and asylum in the Netherlands is currently governed by the Aliens Act of 2000 (VW2000). Under this act, asylum seekers can be granted refugee status if they meet the criteria of the Geneva Convention, on humanitarian grounds, or if they are the dependent partner or minor child who fled together with or within three months of a principal applicant. Additionally, the

Netherlands accepts approximately 500 refugees a year who have been selected for resettlement from UN refugee camps.

People granted refugee status receive a residence permit which is valid for one year and is renewable. After three years, refugees are eligible for a permanent residence permit. To decrease the previously long processing times, the VW2000 introduced a 48-hour assessment. Within 48 working hours from application, a first decision is made on whether or not a person can be considered for refugee status.

During the application process, asylum seekers are housed at special reception centres scattered throughout the country, where they can wait for the outcome of their application and appeals. Asylum seekers get a small weekly allowance and are not allowed to work for more than 12 weeks a year. Critics say that this has created a culture of dependency which hinders refugees in their later integration. People who are granted refugee status are housed throughout the country to spread the costs of reception across municipalities and prevent concentration. Every municipality has to reserve a share of its social housing for refugees. It is estimated that almost two-thirds of the refugee population lives outside the large urban centres. However, many try to move to the cities eventually, to join compatriots or because they believe that they will have more opportunities there.

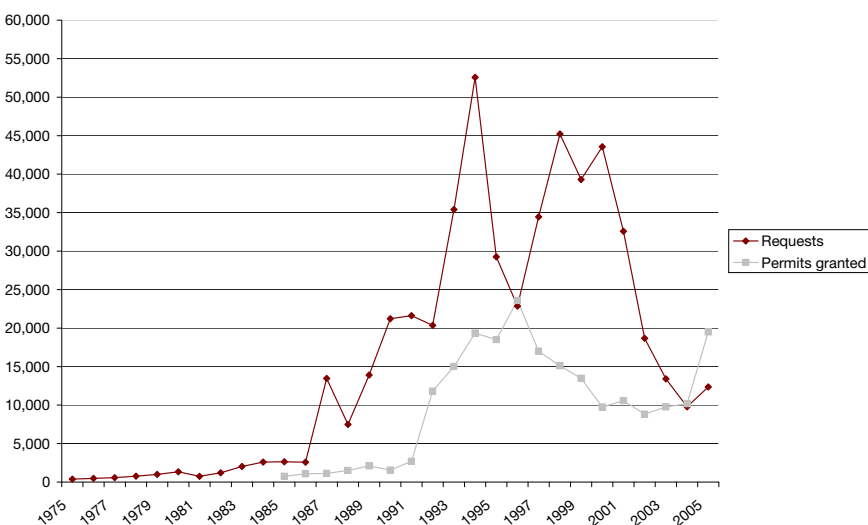
The VW2000 is the latest in a series of measures aimed at lowering the number of asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands. In the second half of the 1980s, the number of asylum seekers started to increase rapidly. In 1980, 1,330 people claimed asylum from within the Netherlands; in 1990, this number had risen to 21,210. However, the rise in applications did not mean a rise in the number of refugee permits granted. From 1987 to 1996, 40% of claimants were granted a permit (see figure 4). When later UN high commissioner for refugees, Ruud Lubbers, was prime-minister of the Netherlands (1982-1994), several measures were implemented to limit access to asylum. The number of resettlers from UN refugee camps was maintained at around 500, but for those who come to the

Netherlands by themselves a selection system was developed in order to separate the “real refugees” from migrants seeking a legal means of entry for other purposes (e.g. economic migrants). That system was not very successful in lowering the inflow of asylum seekers; their number peaked in 1994 at over 50,000 (see figure 6).

The VW2000 tried to deter asylum seekers by rejecting within 48-hours many “undeserving” applicants, by limiting the grounds for refugee status and by introducing temporary permits. After the implementation of the VW2000, applications dropped from 43,560 in 2000 to 9,780 in 2004. It is hard to tell whether this is a direct consequence of the policy, and even harder to say whether it will have a lasting effect. The declining economic conditions in the country might have also deterred asylum seekers. Since 2004, there has once again been an increase in applications to 14,465 in 2006.

The Netherlands used to have no strict removal policy for asylum seekers whose applications had been turned down. It was the unsuccessful claimant’s own responsibility to leave the country. Many people who were denied refugee status stayed on without a legal residence permit; often they continued living in the asylum seeker centre or in housing provided by the municipality. There have been long discussions about what to do with the approximately 26,000 people who claimed asylum before 2001 and have remained in the Netherlands despite having not received a permit. Part of this group is still awaiting an appeal. The rest has lost all appeals but has not left the country. In 2003 an amnesty was announced for people who have been waiting for the result of their first application for five years or more. Partly due to the high number of government changes in the first half of the 2000s, it took a long time before the government presented a definitive amnesty law. In the spring of 2007, the new, more left-leaning government passed an amnesty law for all asylum seekers who claimed asylum before 2001 but had not left the Netherlands since and had not committed any serious crimes. Approximately 25,000 to 30,000 people will be granted a permit as a result of this law. About 1,500 requests have been denied because the applicants are accused of committing war crimes, crimes in the Netherlands, or because they lied about their identity.

**Figure 6: Asylum claims and permits (1975-2005)**



Source: CBS

## Current Developments

In recent years several new laws have aimed at restricting low-skilled and family migration and furthering the integration of immigrants already living in the Netherlands. Though left-wing parties – *GroenLinks* (Greens Party), *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party) – have objected to several of these plans, it is clear that there is a consensus on forced integration that was unimaginable ten or fifteen years ago. It took politicians a long time to implement the first law on civic integration, but there is now an almost parliamentary-wide consensus that im-



migrants can – and should – be obligated to learn Dutch and accept certain liberal-democratic values.

The scope of the civic integration courses has widened. As of March 2006, migrants who want to come to the Netherlands to live with their spouse have to do a “civic integration test abroad” (*inburgeringsexamen buitenland*). Applicants for a residence permit on family formation grounds have to complete a test at the Dutch embassy in their country of residence. The exam is conducted using a phone that is connected to a computer. Like the naturalization and the normal civic integration exam, this one contains questions about language and Dutch customs. As part of the study material, applicants have to buy a video entitled “Coming to the Netherlands”, which includes images of gay men kissing and topless women lying on the beach. This video was very controversial when it was introduced, because it seemed to be designed to provoke Muslim migrants and because not everybody considers homosexuality and topless sunbathing to be core Dutch values.<sup>24</sup> In 2006, 90% of applicants passed the test, but the number of applicants for family formation has dropped significantly. Some politicians have suggested that the requirements for the test should be harder.

Since 2007 new immigrants no longer have an obligation to attend a civic integration course; however, they must pass a civic integration exam to be eligible for a permanent residence permit. In a further development, civic integration duty (*inburgeringsplicht*) has been applied to immigrants who arrived in the Netherlands before 1998 (*oudkomers*). The extended integration obligation is mostly aimed at people on welfare and spiritual leaders such as imams. The then-minister of integration (*Verdonk*) wanted to make the course mandatory for all *oudkomers*, including those who have Dutch citizenship. However, the advisory council on migration issues advised against this because it would have meant an unacceptable differentiation among Dutch citizens. People who have at least eight years of formal education in the Netherlands are also exempted. The civic integration exam must be passed within five years after an *oudkomer* has been summoned by the municipality. If s/he fails the test s/he can be fined. Finally, immigrants are now required to pay for the integration courses themselves, although loans are available from the municipality. Until 2007 the entire course was paid for by the state. Although they have yet to be realised, there are plans to follow up the civic integration courses with an internship, job or volunteer work. This is meant to increase the participation of immigrants in society in one form or another.

Dual citizenship is also under discussion once again. In 2007 a new government came into office, consisting of the Christian-Democrats, the left-leaning Christian Union and the Labour Party. Even before cabinet members had been named, right-wing M.P. Geert Wilders filed a motion against two Labour Party members, Nebahat Albayrak and Ahmet Aboutaleb, dual citizens of Turkey and Morocco, respectively. Wilders argued that, because of their dual citizenship, they could not be loyal to the Netherlands and were therefore not suitable to be members of government. In newspapers, he stated he would prefer to ban Muslims from being cabinet members. None of the other political parties supported Wilders’ motion, but several have argued that dual nationality should be discouraged. Restrictions on dual nationality have already been debated, but it is

possible that politicians no longer dare to speak out against it, for fear of being associated with Wilders.

In September 2007 the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) published a report on Dutch Identity (*Identificatie met Nederland*). The council argued that dual citizenship should be allowed in the case of both immigrants and Dutch emigrants. It also recommended that the term *allochtoon* be abolished, because it continues to define people of immigrant descent as not belonging to the Netherlands (*niet van hier*).

## Future Challenges

Now that the economy is improving, it is a matter of time before the possibility of allowing labour migration will be discussed again. The discussion was opened in 1998 but was quickly halted again by the economic downturn. The question is whether the government would opt once more for a guest worker type program or accept that temporary immigration often becomes permanent and adopt corresponding immigration and integration policies.

The Fortuyn era has caused a lot of turbulence. Many second-generation *allochtonen* found it hard to see how negatively many Dutch looked upon immigrants. The new government has to find a way to reunite *autochtonen* and (especially second-generation) *allochtonen*. More efforts must be made to combat discrimination in the labour market, clubbing scene<sup>25</sup> and police force.

Politicians must set a good example and stop dwelling on Islam and all its perceived dangers to society, without discouraging open and critical debate on what it means to be a multicultural society. In 2006, then-minister Verdonk launched a publicity campaign to show how people from different cultures can work together productively and harmoniously. There are also many grassroots activities and many prizes for the best integration initiative on the local and national level. These activities cannot rectify the disadvantaged position of immigrants, but they do help provide a more positive environment and nurture mutual understanding.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> An *allochtoon* is a person who was born outside the Netherlands or who has at least one foreign-born parent.
- <sup>2</sup> Dutch statistics differentiate between Western and non-Western immigrants. Western immigrants come from Europe (excluding Turkey), North America, Oceania, Indonesia and Japan. Non-Western immigrants come from Turkey, Africa, Latin American and the rest of Asia.
- <sup>3</sup> See Lucassen and Penninx (1997).
- <sup>4</sup> Moluccans are one of Indonesia's many ethnic groups. They live on the Moluccan Islands in western Indonesia. Moluccan soldiers fought with the Dutch army against Indonesian independence.
- <sup>5</sup> Family reunification occurs when children and spouses who were left behind at the time of migration come to join the principal migrant. Family formation occurs when a migrant comes to the Netherlands because of his/her marriage to a resident.
- <sup>6</sup> See Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP) et al. (2005).
- <sup>7</sup> Unemployment is defined here as a percentage of labour market participation: it is the share of people who are active on the labour market but are not currently employed.
- <sup>8</sup> See Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (SCP) et al. (2005).
- <sup>9</sup> Racial profiling occurs when a person is treated as a suspect based on his ethnicity, nationality or religion, instead of on evidence of criminal behaviour.
- <sup>10</sup> Their mother tongue is "papiamentu," a mixture of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and African languages.
- <sup>11</sup> See Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek (2006).
- <sup>12</sup> Before the implementation of the dual citizenship measure, Moroccans were able to obtain dual citizenship, because Moroccan citizenship can never be renounced. It can only be revoked following a conviction for treason or a similar crime.
- <sup>13</sup> The naturalization rate is the number of naturalizations divided by the number of foreign nationals, i.e. the naturalization potential.
- <sup>14</sup> See CBS (2006).
- <sup>15</sup> Indonesian immigrants were an exception, as the government realised early on that their stay would be permanent. As part of an effort to assimilate them, social workers were assigned to help the families integrate into Dutch society.
- <sup>16</sup> The Netherlands has a complicated school system. There are state schools (openbare scholen) that are entirely subsidized by the government and special schools (bijzonder onderwijs), which are based on religious belonging. The latter are entitled to the same funds as state schools plus additional funds from parents. They have the right to refuse students because they are not of the right religion. Freedom of education is part of the constitution (Section 23).
- <sup>17</sup> The abbreviation EEA stands for European Economic Area. Countries included in the EEA are Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
- <sup>18</sup> For a further discussion of mandatory integration courses in the Netherlands and their introduction in other European countries, see Joppke, C. (2007): "Do Obligatory Civic Integration Courses for Immigrants in Western Europe further Integration?" focus Migration Policy Brief Nr. 8.
- <sup>19</sup> "Rightwing" and "liberal" might seem to be a contradiction in terms for British or American readers, but in the Netherlands it is not. The Netherlands has two political parties that call themselves liberal: one is the VVD, and the other is the D66 (Democrats '66). The former is generally more conservative but mainly liberal when it comes to economic issues. The latter is more liberal in the area of social policy.
- <sup>20</sup> He believed freedom of speech to be of greater value, and told reporters that if the equality section hindered this, it should be revoked.
- <sup>21</sup> See also Michalowski, I. (2005): "What Is The Dutch Integration Model, And Has It Failed?" focus Migration Policy Brief Nr. 1. [http://www.focus-migration.de/What\\_Is\\_The\\_Dutch\\_In.1196.0.html?&L=1](http://www.focus-migration.de/What_Is_The_Dutch_In.1196.0.html?&L=1)
- <sup>22</sup> See Engbersen et al. (2002).
- <sup>23</sup> "Asylum seekers" are people who come to the Netherlands to seek asylum. If their claim is accepted, they receive a residence permit. People whose claims are accepted are referred to here as "refugees."
- <sup>24</sup> The Netherlands has an Orthodox Christian minority that also believes that homosexuality is against the will of God.
- <sup>25</sup> The labour market and the clubbing scene are the focal points in Dutch discussions on discrimination. There have been many problems with people

being banned from nightclubs due to their ethnic background, especially in the case of Moroccan youth. Former minister Verdonk was invited by an organization of nightclub owners to visit their clubs so that she could see that everything is under control. Several cities are monitoring discrimination in the clubbing scene and have hotlines for youth who wish to register a complaint.

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