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Country context paper – The Netherlands

Han Entzinger, Peter Scholten and Stijn Verbeek,
Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR), The Netherlands

Contact: s.r.verbeek@fsw.eur.nl

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Contents

Introduction

This paper reports on the Dutch part of the AMICALL project about “Attitudes to Migrants, Communication and Local Leadership” in Europe. The first part of the paper is about the relevant contextual information.

1. Country context

Introduction

This part of the country paper is about the relevant context in the Netherlands with regard to attitudes to migrants, communication, and local leadership. It offers a broad overview of the Dutch migration profile, of the Dutch migration/integration policy, of what we know about attitudes to migrants in the Netherlands, and of the country's governance structure.

a. Migration profile

a.1. Migration history

This section sketches a brief migration history of the Netherlands (based on Entzinger, 2010). Already in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Republic was a safe haven for Protestants and Jews persecuted elsewhere in Europe. Particularly welcome were those who brought along entrepreneurial skills and a lot of money. In addition, tens of thousands of migrant workers from neighbouring countries came to the Netherlands, to work in agriculture, industry or shipping. Many of them settled for good. In the year 1700, for example, forty per cent of the population of Amsterdam were foreign born. Much of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were characterized by an emigration surplus. Many Dutch left the country for one of the colonies – above all for the Dutch East Indies – or they emigrated to the 'New World'. After the Second World War this pattern reversed once more. Since then, immigrants have been arriving from former colonies, from labour recruitment countries around the Mediterranean Sea, from other countries in Europe, and, increasingly, from all over the world. The recent history of immigration to the Netherlands and the immigrant presence in the country are not drastically different from those in nearby West European countries (Entzinger, 2010).

a.2. Main categories of migrants

What are the main relevant subdivisions, when studying immigrant integration in the Netherlands? Currently, about 11 per cent of the Dutch population of 16.5 million people are foreign born and for that reason can be qualified as immigrants (Entzinger, 2010). One in five persons living in the Netherlands is either an immigrant or a child of an immigrant. The number of residents with 'non-western origins', as official Dutch statistics call them, stands at around 1.8 million, just over one-tenth of the population (see Statistics Netherlands, 2008). Among these 'visible minorities' three communities stand out in size: Turks, Surinamese and Moroccans, each numbering between 300,000 and 400,000. The Turkish and the Moroccan

communities are legacies of the so-called 'guest worker' policies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Most migrants from Surinam arrived in the 1970s, when this former Dutch colony acquired political independence. The end of the Cold War led to a significant growth of East European migrants and of asylum seekers, some of whom later acquired refugee status. Besides, growing numbers of Dutch and foreign residents find their spouses in other countries. In recent years, the number of highly skilled migrant workers has also increased, although many of them do not settle for good. Meanwhile, follow-up migration among the three largest communities, the Turks, the Surinamese and the Moroccans, is continuing, albeit at a much slower pace than before (Entzinger, 2010).

b. Migrant integration policy

b.1. National integration policy

The development of Dutch immigrant integration policy at the national level is marked by discontinuity (Entzinger, 2006). According to Scholten (2011a: 75-76), the Minorities Policy in the 1980s had distinct multiculturalist traits, the Integration Policy in the 1990s had more universalist traits and finally the so-called Integration Policy New Style from the turn of the millennium had distinct assimilationist traits. As Entzinger (2010) argues, the dominant idea became that migrants were to blame for their slow integration, while efforts to step up this process should come from their side. Some lip service was paid to the idea that integration should be two-sided and that the established population should also leave some space to the newcomers, but only few concrete policy measures pointed in that direction. Most of the new measures leave little or no room for a public recognition of the migrants' cultural identity (Entzinger, 2010). The Dutch case seems to be exceptional in the sense that it exemplifies a radical turn from multiculturalism to assimilationism (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008: 339). In fact, although the Netherlands has long been celebrated for its successful multiculturalist policies, nowadays this multiculturalist approach is widely dismissed as a failure in Dutch public and political discourse (ibid.).

b.2. Specific categories of migrants on which the integration policy focuses

Unlike many other immigration countries in Europe, citizenship is not generally considered as the primary distinguishing factor between migrants and the native population (Entzinger, 2010). Rather, ethnic origin tends to be more relevant in the public perception as a means of differentiating between *them* and *us*. The Dutch have even constructed a term for this: the Greek-based word *allochtonen* refers to those people whose ethnic roots lie outside the

Netherlands and who, for that reason, can be differentiated from *autochtonen*, the native Dutch. An interesting, but unresolved question, of course, is whether an *allochtoon* can ever become *autochtoon* and, if so, at what stage in the integration process or even after how many generations (Entzinger, 2010). The statistical category '*niet-westerse allochtonen*' includes both first-generation migrants and persons who were born in the Netherlands, but have at least one parent born in a 'non-western' country, i.e. in Africa, Central and South America, Asia (excl. Indonesia and Japan), or Turkey (Statistics Netherlands, 2008). It should be noted that the term *allochtonen* is not uncontested and controversy surrounding the concept has led several municipalities to abolish the use of the term.

b.3. The MIPEX scale

In the 2011 edition of the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX III), the Netherlands ranks fifth in the overall ranking (out of 31 countries, see the table for the different policy fields) (Huddleston *et al.*, 2011). With 68 out of 100 points, the Dutch policies are described as 'slightly favourable' for integration (ibid.). It should be noted that the MIPEX III data describe the situation in May 2010 and hence were gathered before the inauguration of the new Cabinet.

Table: MIPEX III rankings for the Netherlands

Ranking	**Score (0-100)**	**Rank (1-31)**
Overall	68	5th
Labour market mobility	85	3rd
Family reunion	58	19th
Education	51	10th
Political participation	79	3rd
Long-term residence	68	6th
Access to nationality	66	5th
Anti-discrimination	68	12th

(Huddleston *et al.*, 2011)

c. Attitudes to migrants

c.1. Main known facts about attitudes to migrants

The most important source of information on attitudes to migrants in the Netherlands is the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), a government agency which conducts research into the social aspects of all areas of government policy. The SCP also functions as the Dutch partner of the European Social Survey (ESS). Unfortunately, the Netherlands is not included in the Pew Global Attitudes Project. In 2009, the SCP drew the following conclusion on the perceptions of migrants in the Netherlands:

> "A sizeable group of indigenous Dutch citizens are unhappy about the multicultural society. Based on different trend data, it may be concluded that the negativity was greatest in the turbulent first years of the new millennium, following the international and national events surrounding 9/11 and, within the Netherlands, the rise of the anti-immigration politician Pim Fortuyn and the murder of the filmmaker Theo van Gogh. This is reflected in the generally negative opinions among the indigenous Dutch as a whole, but also in trends in individual opinions: between 2000 and 2005 people began to feel more threatened by the presence of non-Western migrants. More recently, opinions appear to have taken a more positive turn, but this does not alter the fact that a substantial proportion of the indigenous Dutch population hold negative opinions about migrants. No fewer than 40% of the Dutch for example think that there are too many people of a different nationality living in the Netherlands" (SCP, 2009: 28-29).

In general, highly educated indigenous Dutch citizens are more positive in their views about non-Western migrants than those with a lower education level (SCP, 2009: 29).

c.2. Attitudes to particular groups of migrants

According to Entzinger (2010), one of the features that stand out is the growing emphasis on Islam as a major cause of many integration problems. Although less than half of all non-western *allochtonen* in the Netherlands are Muslims, many *autochtonen* now consider Islam and its perceived expansiveness and oppressiveness as the root of all evil. They see the growing presence of Islam as a threat to Dutch liberal and permissive attitudes on issues such as sexuality, equal rights, freedom of religion and freedom of expression (Entzinger, 2010). According to the SCP as well, the views about Muslims are particularly problematic (2009: 29-30). Again, in comparison with the highly educated, low-educated indigenous Dutch

people are substantially more negative and their views have also become more negative recently to a greater extent (SCP, 2009: 29-30).

c.3. Anti-migrant political movements

The Netherlands is an interesting case when studying attitudes to migrants, communication and (local) leadership. One of the reasons for this is the current strength of anti-migrant movements, especially in comparison with the 1980s and the 1990s. As Entzinger notes (2010), since the turn of the millennium the Dutch mind appears to have been closing at unprecedented speed. Influential events in this regard of course were 9/11 and the killings of politician Pim Fortuyn (2002) and film director Theo van Gogh (2004), both of them outspoken antagonists of immigration, in particular from Muslim countries. In the 2009 European elections the anti-immigration and anti-Islam Freedom Party (PVV), led solely by Geert Wilders, became the second largest party of the country (measured by the percentage of votes). Since the 2010 national elections, the PVV has 24 seats in the parliament (*Tweede Kamer*), out of a total of 150. After months of negotiating between the PVV, the VVD (the right-wing Liberal party, 31 seats), and the CDA (the Christian Democrats, 21 seats), a new Cabinet was inaugurated, led by Prime Minister Mark Rutte (leader of the VVD). This Cabinet does not have ministers of the PVV, but since the other two parties do not have a majority in parliament, they depend on the support of the PVV. This makes Geert Wilders one of the most powerful politicians in the Netherlands and limiting immigration is one of the spearheads of the current government's policy.

d. Governance structures

d.1. Different levels of local and regional governance

The three main levels of government in the Netherlands are the national level, the provincial level, and the municipal level. There are 12 provinces and more than 400 municipalities. Since provincial governments concern themselves mainly with areas such as environmental management, spatial planning, and recreation, the provincial level is not very relevant in the field of immigrant integration. The local level, on the other hand, is extremely relevant and perhaps increasingly so (see below). The national government is formally led by the monarch (currently Queen Beatrix), but her role is mainly symbolic (see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011). The parliament (*Staten Generaal*) is made up of two houses: the Senate (*Eerste Kamer*) with 75 indirectly elected senators and the House of Representatives (*Tweede Kamer*, see above) with 150 directly elected members. Elections are held at least every four years. A

distinguishing feature of Dutch democratic politics is the system of proportional representation with – in international comparison – a relatively low electoral threshold. In the House of Representatives, for example, a party obtains a seat if it gets at least 1/150th of all votes. In the current period, no less than ten different political parties are represented in the House of Representatives, with the largest party (VVD) occupying no more than 31 seats. Municipal authorities in the Netherlands deal with many policy fields, like traffic, housing, social services, health care, sports, culture, water supply, and public schooling (ibid.). These activities are funded from both the national government funding and from local tax revenue. The main political actors at the local stage are the Mayor, the Aldermen, and the City Council. The Mayor is formally appointed by the Minister of the Interior, though he or she usually follows the preference expressed by the City Council (the 'local parliament'). The Mayor is the head of the local government, consisting of the Mayor and the Aldermen, i.e. the municipal executive, and he or she is politically responsible for safety and public order in the municipality. The Aldermen are responsible for other policy fields, like economic affairs or education. They are elected by the City Council. The main role of the Council is to check whether the municipal executive follows the guidelines of the local party coalition with the majority of the seats in the council (usually laid down in a local government program) in the formulation and implementation of local policies.

d.2. Relevant powers and capacities of LRAs

In a recent paper on "Agenda-dynamics and the multilevel governance of immigrant integration in the Netherlands", Scholten (2011b) shows that Dutch immigrant integration policies have been both much more dynamic over time and much less coherent at the local level than suggested by the so-called Dutch multicultural model of integration. The discrepancy between the national and local level, as well as the growing differences between Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the largest two cities in the country, reveal an increasingly local dimension of immigrant integration policymaking (Scholten, 2011b: 19). Furthermore, the multi-level governance perspective illuminates how national models are much less monolithic in terms of actual policies. In fact, the Dutch case has revealed many instances of interaction between policy levels, in contrast to a dominant top-down model of policy-making. This seems to support claims of, amongst others, Caponio and Borkert (2010) and Alexander (2007) that there is a specific local dimension of policymaking that is much more responsive to local problem pressure and local political conditions and events than to the more ideologically preoccupied national level (see Scholten 2011b: 20).

d.3. Democratic, consultative and bureaucratic structures at these different levels

One of the main differences between the national and local level of migrant integration policies in the Netherlands is the role played by migrant organisations (see Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008 in their article "Two Worlds Apart: The Divergence of National and Local Immigrant Integration Policies in the Netherlands"). According to MIPEX III (Huddleston *et al.*, 2011: 144), the Netherlands allows and encourages newcomers to improve democratic life, like most long-established immigration countries. At the national level, immigrant organisations can rely on specific funding with a potential for a real impact, through the National Consultation of Minorities, regulated by law. However, this National consultative structure has come under severe pressure, since the current government (led by Prime Minister Rutte) no longer wishes to subsidise the migrant organisations that are part of it. MIPEX is less enthusiastic about the consultative opportunities at the local level, as "local consultation bodies come and go" (ibid.). According to Poppelaars & Scholten, (2008), however, for local integration policies the instrumental use of migrant organisations is still very important, as local governments are oriented towards pragmatic problem coping and building bridges. Although long-term subsidies specifically aimed at migrant populations were abandoned (Association of Dutch Municipalities [ADM], 2003), these organizations still receive subsidies, albeit on a different timescale and under the aegis of general (ethnicity-blind) subsidy criteria. These projects all have in common that they are aimed at very specific (sub) populations in Dutch cities to address specific needs and problems. Clearly, local governments seem to have chosen a different approach to immigrant integration that is often at odds with the "tough on integration" discourse of national policies (ADM, 2003):

> "Municipalities see little points of departure . . . in the national debate about integration. This is because of fact that they often find the sharpness and toughness of the debate too extreme, but also because the local level is concerned with different topics. . . . Most municipalities choose for a more positive approach. There is attention for problems and differences, but in a more preventive way. . . . Thinking in terms of 'us' versus 'them', amplifying the differences between immigrants and natives, is seen as something negative" (ADM, 2003: 7-8).

Summing up: despite the turning points and discontinuity in government policy discourse, more continuity can be observed in terms of concrete policy practices. Although immigrant

integration policy is centrally coordinated by one Ministry, its implementation has been functionally and territorially decentralized among various Ministries, civic organisations, and local governments. These decentralized policy practices do not always seem to be in line with central policy (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008: 342).

Conclusion

Without immigration, the Dutch 'Golden Age' (the 17th century) would have been much less prosperous (Entzinger, 2010). Since the late 1980s the origins of immigration to the Netherlands have become much more diverse than before. One of the special features of the Netherlands is the use of the term *allochtonen*, which is not used in the international academic literature and in other countries (except Belgium). In the past decade, integration policy has embarked on a new approach, one that is much more assimilative than its predecessor. Dutch exceptionalism stems not only from the radical way in which the Netherlands has turned from multiculturalism to assimilationism but also from the limited extent to which the turn in official policy discourse seems to have taken effect in concrete policy practices (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008: 339). The instrumental use of migrant organizations, for example, is still an important problem coping mechanism for local officials in implementing immigrant integration policy (ibid.).

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