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INTI-PROJECT “INTEGRATION AGREEMENTS AND VOLUNTARY MEASURES”

NATIONAL REPORT:
ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES IN THE NETHERLANDS

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IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES IN THE NETHERLANDS

In this second report we focus on the implementation of the integration policy in the Netherlands, in particular the way the integration courses are applied in practice. Given the central role of the municipalities in the implementation of the integration programmes, we have chosen to focus on the two largest cities in the Netherlands: Amsterdam and Rotterdam. These are so-called gateway cities for international immigration, who receive relatively large numbers of newcomers.

We will pay attention not only to the current implementation of the integration programmes, but also to the policy changes that will be realized in the nearby future. This change means that the distinction between compulsory and voluntary measures will vanish in due course. As regards these future changes we will give attention to the opinions and judgements on the new policy proposals from experts in the field.

This report is based on existing evaluative studies of the current integration programmes and interviews with key-informants from the Ministry, municipalities, educational institutions, NGO’s and independent experts (see Appendix 1 and 2).

1. Integration programmes under the current law (WIN)

The current integration programmes are twofold: programmes for newcomers and programmes for immigrants who are already settled in the Netherlands before the introduction of the Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers (WIN) or the Integration of Newcomers Act (the so-called “old-comers”, as opposed to “new-comers”). The programmes for newcomers are compulsory, the programmes for the settled immigrants are voluntary. These programmes have already been described in our first report1. Here, we only summarize the main characteristics of the two programmes.

1.1 Newcomers: compulsory programmes

The Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers (WIN) or the Integration of Newcomers Act, that came into force in 1998, was designed to enforce the integration policy through a legal obligation.

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Whereas earlier regulations had a voluntary character, from the introduction of the WIN onwards the integration programme is mandatory for newcomers. The target groups are in principle all non-EU foreigners who either are recognized refugees or have a residence permit, including newcomers from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. Exceptions are persons who come to the Netherlands for employment or self-employment or who come on a temporary base.

The primary goal of the compulsory integration programme is the promotion of the self-sufficiency of the newcomers as soon as possible, that is to promote the independent participation in society and in particular in the labour market and the educational system. The programme consists of three parts: (1) an educational part of – on average – 600 hours, including Dutch as a second language, social and vocational orientation; (2) general programme coaching; (3) social counselling.

Municipalities are responsible for the implementation of the WIN, for which they receive funding from the national government. They are compelled to buy integration courses into the so called Regional Educational Centres (ROC’s) which are to be found throughout the country. The Win provides that the municipality supervises compliance with the obligations of the act by the newcomer. The WIN stipulates sanctions for newcomers who fail to meet the obligations (apply for an integration inquiry; cooperate with the integration inquiry; register with the ROC; attend the educational programme or the other parts of the integration programme drawn up specifically for her/him). Sanctions for newcomers who receive national assistance may consist of an administrative measure; for those who do not receive social benefits an executive fine may be imposed.

1.2 Settled immigrants: voluntary programmes

Special regulations (Oudkomersregelingen) exist for immigrants who had already settled in the Netherlands before the introduction of the WIN – hereafter called the “pre-1998 immigrants” – and who are insufficiently integrated into the job market and have insufficient command of the Dutch language. Priority groups are the unemployed and “educators” (parents). Municipalities receive funding from the national government, but they have much more freedom in organizing the integration programmes for these pre-1998 immigrants than for the newcomers (e.g. as regards the choice of the educational institution and the number of hours to be spend in the course; nothing is regulated as to the social and vocational orientation or the follow-up). The main conditions stated in these regulations refer to the content of the
plans that municipalities submit. Only recently, the government has set some additional rules. Now, the municipality has the obligation to enter into contract with the immigrants and to monitor the achievements of the course participants.

2. Implementation and practices of integration programmes under the current law (WIN)

The national government has given the prime responsibility for the implementation of the integration programmes to the municipalities, both for the newcomers and the pre-1998 immigrants. But differences exist as to the degree of involvement of the municipalities themselves in the execution of the programmes. Again, we will distinguish between the newcomers and the pre-1998 immigrants.

2.1 Newcomers: compulsory programmes

In principle the WIN applies to newcomers as described above (see also our first report). In practice three categories of newcomers are to be distinguished (Regioplan 2002).

(1) Migrants, mostly women, who come to the Netherlands for reasons of family formation or family reunification. They come mainly from Turkey, Morocco, Surinam and South-East Asia. The educational level of these immigrants varies from illiterates to academics. They arrive mainly in the large and medium-sized cities. This category includes some two thirds of all newcomers.

(2) Dutch newcomers, coming from the former colony of the Netherlands Antilles. These are mainly singles and single parents. On average, these newcomers are poorly educated. They come mainly to the large cities. This category includes 17 per cent of the newcomers.

(3) Refugees, especially from Africa and the Middle East. They are mostly male, and one third is single. They settle mostly in the medium-sized cities. Their educational level is somewhat higher in comparison to the migrants in the first category. This category encompasses 16 per cent of all newcomers.

Given the central role of the municipality, local differences exist as to the implementation of the WIN. This is evident from the comparison between Amsterdam and Rotterdam. In Amsterdam, the responsibility for the integration programme is classified with the Department of Social Development (Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, DMO), more
precisely, the sector: Education and Integration. In Rotterdam it is divided between two departments: the Department of Education and adult education, and the Department of Social Affairs. This difference seems to be more than just a variation in governmental organization. Rotterdam’s policy strongly emphasizes the labour market aspect of the integration of newcomers. Therefore, the registration of newcomers and the assessment of their integration trajectories comes within the area of responsibility of the Department of Social Affairs – the Department that is also responsible for the reintegration of the unemployed into the labour market and for the social benefits. As the majority of the newcomers in Rotterdam are lowly educated, the primary aim is to develop a trajectory by which the newcomer not only learns the language but also will be better prepared for the Dutch labour market. This so-called dual trajectory is strongly emphasized in Rotterdam. This city experiences an inflow of lowly educated, whilst the more successful immigrants are leaving the city. This also happens in the city of Amsterdam, but segregation seems to be stronger in Rotterdam. According to one of the representatives of the municipality of Rotterdam, this leads to a negative development for the city as a whole, and Rotterdam tries with all its strength to turn this downward spiral. That is also why Rotterdam strongly favours the mandatory character of the current Newcomers Act and – accordingly – the application of the sanctions attached to the not meeting with the requirements on the part of the newcomers. Generally, Rotterdam has a firmer approach than Amsterdam, and tries to reach every newcomer right from the start in order to have him or her to participate in the integration course as soon as possible. Although this is the goal of the national policy at large, differences in the implementation of this policy exist between municipalities. Generally, in Amsterdam the favoured approach is one in which the newcomers are encouraged to take part in the integration courses. The local authorities give first priority to creating the conditions for successful participation. Typical for the Amsterdam policy is the recent founding of an advice group of newcomers (or immigrants that have already followed the integration course) that is going to give voice to the newcomers and to promote their own interests. Sanctions are applied in both cities, but this seems to be done more reluctantly in Amsterdam than in Rotterdam. In Rotterdam, the local authorities want to prevent that newcomers consider the sanctions as a way of buying of the integration course. People then may get a higher penalty or may be cut down in their social benefits. In both cities, it seems difficult to attract the working newcomers to the courses (they may leave the course for a job) and the women who came to the Netherlands as marriage partners or in the framework of family reunification.
The compulsory integration programmes are financed by the national government, based on an estimate of the number of newcomers to be integrated. Due to a decrease in the number of newcomers, the national budget for the newcomers programmes has decreased from €177.6 million in 2003 to €115.4 million in 2004. For Rotterdam this has resulted in a decrease from €12.1 million to €7.9 million. Here, the budget for one newcomer amounts to €6100 for the educational part of the integration course, plus €2300 for social guidance and counselling, which makes €8400 per participant. In 2004, Rotterdam spend €7.1 million on the integration courses executed by the local Regional Educational Centres (*Regional Onderwijs Centrum, ROC*), for a total number of 1245 newcomers. In practice, this number increased to 2100 newcomers – which meant a considerable increase of expenditure.

In Amsterdam €4 million is spend on the assessment procedure of six weeks, including an inquiry and social orientation for the newcomers. In addition, €12 million is available for the Educational Programmes Newcomers (EPN). Roughly speaking, in Amsterdam the integration course for one newcomers amounts to some €9,000, including the costs of salaries of the civil servants and teachers involved. In Amsterdam, a total number of 450 persons in one way or another are involved in the implementation of the integration programme. In 2004 a total number of 2200 to 2400 newcomers entered the integration courses.

This information on the two cities is not entirely comparable – due to differences in the way the integration programmes are organized and financed – but at least the figures give an indication of the time and money spend on the integration of newcomers in each of the two cities.

The ROC’s receive funding on the basis of the accomplishment of the course per newcomer. In the ROC of Amsterdam one trajectory costs on average €5000. The costs depend on the size of the group of newcomers, which in turn depends on their educational levels. This means that the courses vary from €3,000 to €7,000 for the highly and lowly educated respectively. Thus, while the total number of hours for each course participant is the same, the costs vary. Rotterdam does not differ much in this respect. Unlike Amsterdam, in Rotterdam two Regional Educational Centres exist. Roughly speaking, where the one ROC focuses mainly on the lowly educated, the other focuses on the higher educated immigrants. Like in Amsterdam, the ROC’s in Rotterdam spend on average some €5,000 per course participant.
As to the content of the integration programmes in the two cities, the larger part of the programme consists of language training. As prescribed by the WIN, an average of some 600 hours of language training is included in the courses. In practice, the ROC’s differentiate between highly and lowly skilled newcomers, and between immigrants who have or have not been made literate in their own language. Whereas higher educated newcomers may follow the course in a shorter period of time, the lowly educated newcomers have the same amount of hours available but these hours are spread throughout a longer time period – normally a year. The original aim of the WIN is that the newcomers will reach a language level equal to the one that is required for the naturalization test. In practice, many do not reach this level and this applies especially to the poorly skilled newcomers (see below). The highly educated, on the other hand, may reach one or two levels more than the prescribed level of the naturalization test.

The integration course also includes social orientation. Generally, for the lowly skilled this social orientation is intertwined with language learning. For the highly educated, the course includes two parts – language training and social orientation – as intended by the WIN. In the ROC of Amsterdam, it is intended to give the social-orientation training for the poorly educated in their mother tongues. The difficulty here is to find enough teachers in the many languages of the newcomers. In Rotterdam newcomers who are not in a dual trajectory (this is a trajectory focused on Dutch language learning and social orientation on the one hand, and integration into the labor market on the other), are obliged to do some practical training at a social institution. The goal is twofold: better learning the Dutch language and at the same time becoming more familiar with Dutch society. The social-orientation programme in Rotterdam also includes teaching of the “Dutch norms and values”. According to the head of the Integration Department, newcomers have to become acquainted with topics such as: the emancipation of women, differences in religion, homosexuality, education of children, etc. By order of the municipality an educational programme on these topics has been written which may be used by the Regional Educational Centre.

2.2 Settled immigrants: voluntary programmes

In the period 2000 – 2003, a total number of 42,752 pre-1998 immigrants have started with the integration programmes in the Netherlands (that is: in the most important 54 municipalities). A number of 14,935 of them (35%) have successfully accomplished the programme and 9,487 immigrants (22%) have dropped out. Somewhat less than half of the
participants, this is a number of 20,792 course participants (48%), have stayed in the programme.²

As to the budgets, in 2004 the city of Amsterdam has formulated a forecast of 2295 course participants and a budget of €14,688,000. For the city of Rotterdam this prognosis is 1916 course participants and a budget of €12,262,400.

The implementation of the regulations for the pre-1998 immigrants is the responsibility of the municipality, but only in the sense that they provide the funding. Unlike the programmes for newcomers, the national regulations for the integration of settled immigrants gives few directions for the implementation of these programmes. That is: municipalities have more freedom of movement in this field. There is not any prescription as to the organization or institution that is to provide the courses. In practice, however, part of the courses for pre-1998 immigrants is equally provided for by the ROC’s, but another part of the courses is offered by various agencies, like private institutions, welfare organizations (or community centres) and self-organizations of immigrants. In Rotterdam, the implementation of these courses is more centrally organized than in Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, the programmes are realized at a lower political level, that is at the level of city areas.

A variety of programmes exist, each designed for specific target groups and with specifics aims. As prescribed by the national government, two groups stand out: the unemployed and the “educators” (parents). For the unemployed, the integration course is also focused on their labour market participation, whilst for the “educators” the course also – indirectly – aims at improving the educational achievements of the children (by giving support to the parents in education and parental participation at school). Depending on the situation of the course participant, he or she may follow a course that aims at social activation, labour market participation or further vocational training. Recently, some municipalities have entered into contract with employers to promote the course participation of their employees or to organize language training on the spot (for example, the Royal Dutch Airlines and some cleaning companies in Amsterdam).

One of the well-known NGO’s that organizes integration courses throughout the country is the Netherlands Centre of Immigrants (Nederlands Centrum Buitenlanders, NCB). The NCB works both in the field of development of course materials as in the implementation of integration programmes. Currently, this organization operates in 11 municipalities – among others in Amsterdam – and serves some 2200 course participants. After the integration

² Source: http://www.inburgernet.nl. Although the data presented in this section draw on an official source, the numbers appear not to be accurate (absolute numbers and percentages do not correspond).
programmes were left to the market, according to NCB’s director, it became possible to offer courses “close to the people” and in their own social environment. The approach of the NCB is one in which the focus is not only on the course itself, but also on the guidance and support of the participants in terms of their labour market position, their social participation in the neighbourhood (for example, parental participation at their children’s school, neighbourhood safety, etc.) and childcare.

3. Evaluation of current programmes: effectiveness and efficiency

Whilst in the previous section we described the practices of the implementation of the integration programmes, here we will critically assess them. Drawing on evaluative studies and expert interviews, we will analyse the strengths and shortcomings of this programmes.

3.1 Newcomers: compulsory programmes

The WIN has been evaluated as to its effectiveness and efficiency (IBO 2002; Regioplan 2002). It is clear that the compulsory character of the integration programmes that has been introduced with the WIN has led to an increase of participants at the start of the trajectories from 80 to 90 per cent (IBO 2002: 36). These figures refer to the number of newcomers that have been reached by the municipal register and the aliens office. The real participation in the courses or the net reach of the WIN is lower and amounts to some 50 per cent (Regioplan 2002). It should be noted, however, that the majority of the group of newcomers that is beyond reach does not pertain to the target group of the WIN. Therefore, the general conclusion is that the reach of the WIN is satisfactory.

General agreement also exists as to the low drop-out rates from the integration courses. This is evident from evaluation studies and from the interviews with people involved in the implementation of the integration courses. The drop-out rate is about 15 to 20 per cent (Regioplan 2002). Many people involved in the implementation of the integration programmes – and this applies to both Amsterdam and Rotterdam – are not against the compulsory character of the courses or, rather, belief that the obligation is a normal part of the settlement process of newcomers. “Newcomers have rights and obligations”, is the general opinion here. Generally, there seems to exist agreement upon two aspects of the compulsory character of the integration courses. First, it is generally admitted that the compulsory
character of the programme is unnecessary because most newcomers are very motivated or eager to learn the language and to participate in the integration courses. In particular, this is the experience of the ROC’s – both at the level of managers and teachers. Second, it is equally emphasized that the obligation to participate in the integration programme is favourable for women, especially for those immigrant women who otherwise would not have the opportunity to follow a course, because of their limited freedom of movement outside the home. This view seems to be widely shared by various experts from the local government, NGO’s and people involved in the implementation of the integration courses. Once, the newcomers are registered for an integration course, the drop-out rate is low. According to one teacher at the ROC in Amsterdam, the lower educated the newcomer is, the lower the drop-out. It should be kept in mind, however, that this low drop-out rate only applies to the newcomers who indeed register to the course. It does not take into account the many releases that have already been obtained by people before the start.

According to the WIN, the municipalities are legally liable to impose sanctions in case of not-meeting with the requirements by newcomers. The sanction is meant to be a final piece of combating the drop-out, which normally is focused on the prevention of drop-out. In practice, the number of newcomers that blameworthy drops out is small. According to an evaluation study in 2002 (Regioplan), more than 50 per cent of the municipalities do not impose sanctions to this small group. Another study underscores the conclusion that sanctions are scarcely imposed: municipalities hardly use the possibility of imposing sanctions, even in the case of blameworthy drop-outs (IBO 2003: 26). It appears, though, that more recently, the sanctions policy has been implemented more strictly (as seems to be the case in Rotterdam, as described earlier).

General agreement seems to exist on the insufficiency of the 600 hours of the course for the poorly educated newcomers to learn the new language. Especially for those immigrants who did not have any formal education at all in their home country, it is nearly impossible to reach the required language level by the WIN, that is: level two – meaning that newcomers are able to pass the naturalization test. Only a minority is able to reach this level two or higher. This also implies that most newcomers have insufficient language levels to be able to follow the follow-up trajectories as they are designed now (Regioplan 2002).
Other evaluative comments on the WIN refer to the organization of the courses and their contents (Regioplan 2002). These comments may be summarized as follows.

- The integration inquiry insufficiently results in a diversified supply of courses, as advocated by the WIN. The interpretation of the programme is too homogeneous, which is especially to the disadvantage of the highly educated newcomers and newcomers with specific problems.

- The integration programme is properly but one-sidedly designed. In conformity with the WIN, the focus is on language training and social orientation, but the vocational training and the follow-up trajectories are not sufficiently realized for all newcomers as yet.

- The guidance of the newcomers during the course, as prescribed by the WIN, varies strongly according to the municipality.

- The quality of the social guidance varies considerably according to the educational institution.

One of the critiques that can be heard (from several informants and experts) refers to the check on the quality of the integration courses. The ROC’s are paid by the municipalities according to the number of newcomers that follow the course and pass the final test – irrespective of their achieved levels. Some argue that, rather than “measuring” the number of participants, it is the achieved language level that should be taken into account and be the basis for disbursement. According to a ROC manager, the scant attention that is paid to the output of the courses is a remnant of the time that the integration of newcomers was left to private and voluntary initiatives – mainly in the field of welfare and community work. In this view, this voluntary work was less professional and less focused on results in terms of reached language levels. Thus, what could be improved is the monitoring of the results of the integration courses – and not just in terms of mere numbers of participants that have accomplished the course but in terms of achieved language skills.

A related complaint is about the monitoring itself. For every course participant, three people are involved. First, the teacher who teaches the course. Second, the coach who supervises the participant during the entire course. Third, an outside counsellor from the municipality. According to some, the structure of guidance and the entire organization of the courses result in too much of an administration or paperwork.

3.2 Settled immigrants: voluntary programmes
Much less is known about the integration programmes for the immigrants that have already settled in the Netherlands before the introduction of the WIN. This is partly due to the fact that the integration trajectories for these immigrants are voluntary and left to the market, so that the situation is more cluttered. Also, the integration programmes for this category of immigrants is partly financed by generic educational funds (for immigrants and native Dutch alike) and, therefore, it is not possible to sort out separately the specific immigrant programmes.

One of the problems that have been often signalled is the waiting list for the integration courses. This has lead to the introduction of the so-called Task Force Integration in 2000, that aimed at reducing these waiting lists. As a result of the efforts of the Task Force and the organizations involved the number of people that is on a waiting list for more than a year has been reduced from 35 per cent of the waiting list in 2000 to 2 per cent in 2001 (IBO 2002: 27). Yet, the problem of the waiting list has not been resolved. The problem appears to be most pronounced in the large cities, that have long been unable to meet the demand, especially in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

3.3 Local differences

Although the WIN is a national law, the municipalities are the main actors in implementing this law. This leaves room for local variation. The analysis of the implementation of the WIN at the local level, shows that considerable differences exist as to the political philosophy behind the integration programmes in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. These differences directly relate to our central research question concerning the compulsory or voluntary character of the integration programmes. In general terms, the main difference between the two cities may be summarized as follows. Whereas Rotterdam pursues a policy that emphasizes the obligatory character of the integration by newcomers and – accordingly – stresses sanctions for not-meeting the requirements by newcomers, Amsterdam seems to be more inclined to positively encourage the newcomers and – rather than imposing sanctions – tries to develop supportive conditions to facilitate the participation of immigrants in the integration courses.

In a sense, differences between municipalities are more outspoken and influential than differences between the compulsory and voluntary programmes. That is: local political differences seem to be more determinative for the eventual implementation of the WIN than
the differences between the compulsory and the voluntary programmes. Much seems to depend on the way the integration programmes are implemented in practice.

We elaborated on these intercity differences, because a mere analysis of national policies would suggest a homogeneity in the implementation of national policies which in reality does not exist. In fact, there is freedom of movement for the municipalities to implement national laws and regulations in their own manner. Differences in political character of the cities and their local governments result in different approaches in the implementation of the integration programmes. These differences are even more obvious in the views and judgements of the prospective revision of the WIN and its consequences on the local level.

3.4 Evaluation of the integration programmes by course participants

An important source for the evaluation of the implementation of the WIN are, of course, the course participants themselves. This section is devoted to the experiences and evaluations of course participants – both newly arrived and settled migrants, but with an emphasis on newcomers. That is: immigrants who have arrived in the Netherlands from 1998 onwards and who were obliged to follow an integration course, and migrants who settled before 1998 and who participated on a voluntary base. Here we draw upon primary and secondary data sources, that is our own interviews (very limited in number) and two recently conducted studies based on interviews with course participants.

The first of these studies has been carried out in Rotterdam. In this study 31 course participants who recently had completed the integration course have been interviewed (Smit 2004). The aim of this research was to investigate the experiences and judgements of course participants as regards (1) their motivation to participate in the course at the start; (2) their opinion on the contents of the course and the entire process of the integration trajectory; and (3) their view on the ways in which the integration course contributes to their integration. A fourth question was (4) What factors are at play in the judgement of the efficiency of the integration course as it is experienced by the participants. The migrants that were interviewed came from four different countries: the Netherlands Antilles, Turkey, Morocco – the so-called

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3 This study has been conducted by order of the municipality of Rotterdam, and has been carried out by the Centre of Research and Statistics of the municipality of Rotterdam (COS) and the Institute for Sociological-Economical Research (ISEO) of the Erasmus University Rotterdam (Smit 2004).
classical migrants – and migrants from Sierra Leone as representatives of the increasingly larger flow of refugees.

The second study (Brink, Hello, Odé 2004) has been carried out in twenty municipalities in the Netherlands, including two of the four largest cities (The Hague and Utrecht). Here, 38 course participants have been interviewed by telephone. The goal of this study was to gain insight into the importance of counselling during the integration course and the consequences of the possible ending of this counselling as a result of the policy changes to come.

Our own interviews are limited to two migrants (newcomers) and one outside counsellor (herself immigrant), plus more informal conversations with three other migrants. We believe that the earlier mentioned two studies give an accurate and appropriate overview of the migrants’ opinions – an overview that never could have been achieved by a limited number of interviews as originally planned in this project. For methodological reasons, the representativeness of a small number of course participants would be very questionable indeed.

Our analysis of experiences and judgements of migrants on the integration courses are based on the above mentioned sources. Generally, the newly arrived migrants are motivated to participate in the integration courses. They have high expectations of their coming to the Netherlands and believe that learning the language is a prerequisite to realize their ambitions (Smit 2004: 192-8). There is a difference, however, between different groups of immigrants. Turks and Moroccans report not to have any objection whatsoever against the mandatory participation in the courses (ibid: 193-4). They view learning the language as a first step to realize their ambitions and achieving economic independence. They came to the Netherlands which high expectations, partly because they had already some knowledge about the country of destiny based on information from relatives and friends in the Netherlands. Newcomers from the Netherlands Antilles are Dutch citizens and are less motivated to learning the language. They report to be more interested in “real” education and if it were not for the obligation imposed on them, they would have skipped the integration course. Refugees, in casu Sierra Leonean migrants, are more motivated to learn the language, but unlike the Turks

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4 This study was done by order of FORUM, Institute of Multicultural Development. This is an independent national centre of expertise in the field of multicultural development. The research has been carried out by Regioplan, an independent commercial research company specialised in social-economic policy research.

5 Antilleans are more or less familiar with the Dutch language, but this depends on the socioeconomic-class background. Most newcomers are from the lower socioeconomic strata of the islands, especially Curacao, and for them Papiamento is the mother tongue.
and Moroccans, not so much as a necessary step for getting a job or further education, but as a means of getting to know the new society and get into contact with Dutch people.

Newcomers of these three immigrant categories, had all been informed about the integration courses by a letter (in Dutch) from the municipality. A number of them, however, new already beforehand about the courses and had no problem with the letter being written in Dutch. Many of the newcomers either have relatives and friends in the Netherlands or are already acquainted with the Dutch language (like the Antilleans). For the refugees from Sierra Leone, however, this is far less the case. They had no idea beforehand what the course was all about, and they could not count with the support of relatives or friends in dealing with the local authorities and the intake for the course. Most newcomers have experienced the intake inquiry as being “pleasant” and “correct”, but not so the Antilleans. Most of them feel they should not be obliged to follow the integration course ((Smit 2004: 199-200).

Asked for their opinion about the integration course, virtual all course participants judged the teachers and the atmosphere in class very favourably. They liked to be in a group with people from so many countries, in which they all can but communicate in Dutch. Criticism of course participants has to do with the non-authoritarian attitude of the teachers – something most of the newcomers are not used at in their countries of origin. Some belief that a more strict order and discipline in class would have been better (Smit 2004: 101-2).

Many course participants are satisfied with the language classes, but are dissatisfied with the number of hours of the course or the time per week that they may go to school. They feel the courses to be too short to sufficiently learn the language (ibid. 202). This is underscored by information from our own interviews.

An Indonesian woman (47), a newcomer who completed the one-year course, is of the opinion that the hours spend on self-study at school were waste of time, because she could have done this also at home. At school she would expect more teaching by the teachers. She believes that she could have learned more when the hours at school were spend more effectively.

An Egyptian woman (32) has been a dentist in her country of origin. She had two jobs, one in public health and one in a private clinic. She followed her husband to the Netherlands, where he has lived already for some twelve years. She has accomplished
the one year course where she achieved the highest level. She has been very motivated to participate in the course, but the obligatory 600-hours have not been sufficient. Her Dutch language skills are still insufficient to take up her profession again. She is currently in a follow-up course for higher educated immigrants who have worked in medical professions in their country of origin.

Although language classes are viewed as the most important part of the course, other classes include vocational orientation and societal orientation. These vocational and societal-orientation classes are less positively judged than the language classes. Here again, the refugees value the societal orientation different from the other newcomers, because they rely more heavily on the information they get at school, whereas many other newcomers (Turks, Moroccans) have already some knowledge of the country via their relatives and friends, or are already familiar with Dutch society to some extent (Antilleans).

The practical problems that course participants encounter are diverse and vary from personal problems (psychological or emotional or material problems) to problems related to the combination of work and course (tiredness, for example; newcomers with a job may follow a course in the evening). Problems with the combination of course participation and child care are seldom mentioned in the study by Smit (2004: 204), but according to a counsellor and a ROC-manager (interviewed by us) this is one of the main reasons for women not to participate in the course. Course participants expressed the wish to have the possibility to make up for missed classes or periods, or to spread the classes over a longer time period (ibid: 205).

The integration courses are offered to newcomers free of charge. As yet, no costs are involved for participants, but this will change when the new policy will be implemented in the nearby future. Course participants will be responsible for their own integration programme and will have to pay for the course. Newcomers who are actually enrolled in a course or who have recently completed the course often know already what the policy changes will be. Asked for their opinion, it seems that migrants are not so much against the obligation to participate in integration courses, but oppose the idea of having to pay for the course.

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6 This may either mean that they had obtained a release from the local authorities or that they just dropped out of the course.
The two earlier cited women from Egypt and Indonesia, who recently completed the course, agree with the obligation of learning the language. They are of the opinion that if you come to a new country you should learn the language and get to know the society you live in. They agree with the obligation and they do not oppose the sanctions either. Since the municipality offers the course gratis, they feel that the consequence of not complying with the obligation is justified. The Egyptian woman: “My friend told me that maybe, with the new law, newcomers will have to pay themselves. I don’t agree with that. But if I am obliged to learn, and the sanction is a penalty or a cut of your benefit, that’s o.k., because… If I am in the Netherlands and I can’t speak the language, I don’t understand anything, I can’t go shopping on my own.. You need to speak the language, you should get to know the culture… everything of the Netherlands.”

Part of the integration programme consists of outside counselling, meant to support the course participant during the course and to advise them about the follow-up after the course. From the study by Smit it appears that course participants value the counselling less positively than they do the course and the teachers. Many feel they would have wanted much more attention from the counsellors (Smit 2004: 205-6). This conclusion is not underscored by another study. This study (Brink et al. 2004) focuses solely on the outside counselling of course participants (and not on the course itself). From interviews with the counsellors it appears that the needs for counselling differ by migrant group or category of migrants. Generally, refugees need more counselling than other migrant groups. Migrants who come within the framework of family reunification or who come as marriage-partners are less in need of counselling, because they may count with the support of a social network of relatives and friends. In addition, higher educated migrants ask for counselling more than the poorly educated migrants do, although the last category of migrants get much attention from the counsellors. Finally, poorly educated women are among the migrants that need much attention; the absence and drop-out rates among them are relatively high (Brink et al. 2004: 9).

The subjects people came up with during the counselling hours are: study results, language learning, finding a job, finding an adequate follow-up training or education. A more limited number of migrants also spoke to the counsellor about personal problems (e.g. family problems, financial and health problems), and most of them think that these consultations had helped solving their problems (ibid: 12-3).
The main judgements of course participants about the counselling may be summarized as follows.

- The majority of the respondents (nearly 70%) are of the opinion that they have been able to find their way in Dutch society sooner than they would have without the integration programme.
- More than half (nearly 60%) believe that they would have less contact with the Dutch society without the received counselling.
- Nearly two thirds (63%) think that their educational achievements of the integration course have improved by the counselling.
- Virtually all participants find that the counsellor had enough time when they had a meeting.
- The majority (two thirds) think that the information they received from the counsellor has been supplementary to their own knowledge.
- A quarter reported that they would have dropped out of the course if they would not have been supported by the counsellor.
- Half of the respondents do not agree with the statement that they could have successfully followed the course without the support of the counsellor.

Generally, the majority of respondents in this study (80%) is satisfied with the course counselling (others would have had more counselling) and nearly half of the respondents is very satisfied (ibid.: 13-4).

Some of the conclusions of the two studies (Brink et al. 2004 and Smit 2004) diverge and this seems to be due to two facts. First, whereas the study by Smit (2004) has been conducted in one municipality, Rotterdam, the other study (Brink et al. 2004) has been carried out in twenty municipalities in the Netherlands. Second, whereas the first mentioned study pays attention to the entire integration programme, the last mentioned especially focused on the outside counselling.

One of the most mentioned positive effects of the integration course by participants is the increased self-reliance and independence (see Smit 2004: 208-214). Course participants belief that this effect is first and foremost a result of the language course and – to a lesser degree – the societal orientation. Especially Antilleans express their increased self-confidence and – as a result – their increased independence (ibid.: 209). Nonetheless, course participants judge the effects of the course not entirely positively. As regards the effects of the course on their
ambitions in the field of further education and work, participants are not satisfied. This is partly due to high expectations on the part of the course participants, which leads to frustrations when the course does not live up to their expectations as regards work or further education. The course participants themselves believe this to be a consequence of their still poorly developed language skills, but also of the insufficient efforts of the authorities concerned. Also, many course participants feel that the course has not contributed to increasing their social contacts with the native Dutch; most newly arrived migrants live in immigrant neighbourhoods or do live predominantly within their own ethnic community (Smit 2004: 208-214). Note that this contradicts the earlier mentioned findings in the study by Brink et al. (2004) who conclude that course participants express that, without the course counselling, they would have had less contact with the Dutch society.

4. Revision of the WIN in 2005: changes and prospects

Although the revision of the WIN is foreseen in the nearby future, it is not yet current practice. Nevertheless, we shall pay some attention to these future changes, because the intended policy affects the compulsory/voluntary character of the integration programmes – the main focus of our research project. First, we will give a short description of the main changes to come, and second, we will present some of the comments of experts and people involved in the implementation of the integration programmes.

4.1 Future changes of the WIN

The current Integration of Newcomers Act (WIN) is under revision and will be introduced in phases from 2005 onwards. These changes have been described in our earlier report, and may be shortly summarized here. The basic changes involve:

- Greater responsibility of the newcomer for his/her own integration programme.
- The integration programme is financed by the newcomer him/herself.
- Not only the integration of newcomers is compulsory, but also the integration of the immigrants who are already settled in the country (as defined by the WIN).
- The integration starts already in the country of origin, where the immigrant needs to pass a Dutch language test in order to get a visa (MVV) in order to apply for a residence permit once the immigrant has arrived in the Netherlands.
- The organization of integration courses will be entirely left to the market (that is profit and non-profit organizations).
- The role of the municipalities will be limited to providing information and control the integration process.

4.2 Comments on the revision of the WIN

One of the central points of debate is the question whether the revision of the WIN provides an instrument for integration or immigration. According to an important advisory body for the national government, de Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (Board for Social Development), the integration programmes should rather be viewed in the light of integration than immigration policy (RMO 2003). Experts are convinced that the revision of the WIN is first and foremost a means to control immigration, and in particular the immigration from Morocco and Turkey where many marriage partners are sought after. After all, it is a viewpoint that has also been discussed in Parliament, where the responsible Minister admitted – albeit reluctantly – the migration regulatory function of the new integration act. As yet, it is not clear, however, whether the intended integration test in the country of origin is feasible from a juridical point of view.

Several opinions may be discerned as to the question of the compulsory character of the integration programmes that will also be introduced for immigrants who are already settled in the Netherlands before the introduction of the WIN. Some believe that it is too late now to require that the first generation ‘guest workers’ who arrived in the sixties and seventies should be obliged to follow an integration course. Others do not oppose the compulsory character of the measures because they believe that it gives an educational opportunity to people, especially women, who would not have this chance otherwise. Many belief, especially in Amsterdam, that encouraging people is preferred to force them to follow an integration programme.

Another aspect of the new law that is heavily discussed, is whether the expertise and professional knowledge that has been built up till now will get lost when the implementation of the integration programmes will be entirely left to the market. First, it is noticed that there

is a shift from the solution of the problems in the current infrastructure of the integration programmes to an emphasis on the responsibility of the newcomer. Second, it is feared that the professionalization that has taken place and the expertise that has been developed are not guaranteed in the future. Whereas formerly the language courses have been largely organized on a voluntary base in the scene of voluntary associations and community centres, second-language teaching has gradually been recognized as a professional trade for which specific training is necessary. Now, educational and language experts fear that the clock will be turned back when the implementation of the integration courses is left to the market. Although the Minister proposes that a system of certification will be established in order to guarantee the quality of the course providers, in principle everyone who wants to is entitled to offer courses.

Finally, municipalities oppose the idea of being responsible for the enforcement of the law, while at the same time losing their role as principal directors of the integration-programme policy.
Appendix 1: Sources

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Kenniscentrum Integratiebeleid en grote steden: www.integratienet.nl/kcgs

Ministerie van Justitie/ Inburgering: www.justitie.nl/themas/integratiebeleid/inburgering
Appendix 2: List of interviews key informants and experts

(1) Civil servant Ministry of Justice, Directorate for the Coordination of Integration Policy for Minorities

(2) Head of Department Education and Integration, Municipality of Amsterdam,

(3) Adviser Direction Economy, Labour and Education of the Administrative Department, Municipality of Rotterdam

(4) Head of Department of Integration, Municipality of Rotterdam,

(5) Director Regional Educational Centre (ROC) Zadkine, Rotterdam

(6) Director and ADJUNCT director of Education of the Regional Educational Centre (ROC); Albeda, Rotterdam, and the coordinator integration of the same ROC.

(7) Director Education of Regional Educational Centre (ROC), Amsterdam

(8) Teacher of the Integration Programme in the Regional Educational Centre (ROC), Amsterdam

(9) Programme Manager Education and Integration, Municipality of Amsterdam (responsible for the organization of an Advice Group of Immigrants)

(10) Director of the Netherlands Centre of Immigrants (NCB), a national expertise centre for immigrants.

(11) Independent expert and consultant, specialist on second-language teaching.