



An Investigation into the local Practices concerning the Integration of Refugees in Maastricht

A report for the PREMIUM excellence program of Maastricht University

Harres Yakubi

Mercedes Quammie

Sarai Suárez Louzao

Vienna Kooijman

February – June 2017



Maastricht University

Executive Summary

The national integration policy in the Netherlands has gradually shifted from a multicultural to a nationalist approach, however several studies have identified a divergence between national integration policy and the implementation on the municipal/local level. The NIEM project aims to evaluate the integration of refugees in 15 EU member states by assessing the coverage of a range of indicators within the national policy of each member state. With this report we aim to supplement the work of NIEM in the Netherlands by investigating the implementation of policies for the integration of refugees on the local level. Specifically we used a mixed methodology consisting of desk research alongside 15 semi-structured interviews to refugee integration practices in Maastricht within the areas of housing and education. We aimed to answer three research questions: what barriers to integration currently exist in Maastricht? (1); what are possible solutions to these issues? (2); are there best practices implemented in Maastricht that could be adopted by other cities? (3)

Among the major barriers to integration in education were recognition of qualifications; privatization of language and integration (*inburgering*) courses; and a lack of cultural sensitization training for teachers/administrators. For housing the major barriers to integration included possible tension due to high need for social housing within the local population; difficulty accommodating large families; and financial issues. Although the study placed focus on integration in housing and education, one general issue to integration on the whole that was consistently raised is the lack of central coordination of the integration process resulting in limited communication among stakeholders. In addition to barriers to integration, several best practices arising out of Maastricht are identified.

INTRODUCTION

The present report has been produced in the frame of an extracurricular honors program at Maastricht University: the PREMIUM program, under the supervision and guidance of the Maastricht Center for Citizenship, Migration and Development. MACIMIDE is the focal point in the Netherlands of the NIEM project; this initiative, established by the Migration Policy Group (MPG), uses a set of comprehensive indicators to capture the integration of beneficiaries of international protection across 15 EU member states. Where MACIMIDE focuses on using indicators to evaluate Dutch policies for national level integration, our report investigates the local level implementation of such national policies, specifically within the municipality of Maastricht.

Firstly, we aim to present the current barriers to integration in Maastricht in two main areas: education and housing. Secondly, we highlight some of the best practices that are being implemented in Maastricht. Our findings are based on the results of 15 semi-structured respondent and stakeholder interviews conducted in the Netherlands. Interviewees were sourced using a combination of desk research and snowball sampling.

Historical evolution of Dutch integration policies

From both a descriptive and conceptual standpoint, gaining a coherent understanding of integration can be problematic. The IOM defines integration as “the process by which migrants become accepted into society” and goes on to emphasize the importance of both the host society and the migrants in the process (IOM, 2011, pg.51). However, the definition of integration does not elaborate on how such a process should be executed and indeed there are different approaches to guide national policies on strategies by which ‘successful integration’ can be achieved. Historically, there have been two major approaches guiding integration policies, applied by different countries or, in the case of the Netherlands, in different periods of time.

Put very simply, on one hand, taking an approach of multiculturalism to integration involves considering the differences between cultural groups within society and targeting tailor-made programs and policies towards specific groups. On the other hand, through the lens of assimilation we would view group specific measures as divisive, instead we would aim for migrants to integrate into the existing society and culture. Broadly speaking, we might cite policies in Canada and Sweden since the 1970s as belonging to the former approach and policies

in France as an example of the latter approach (Castles & Miller, 2003).

Up until the 1990s, the Dutch integration policy favored an approach of multiculturalism, with measures being highly accommodative of the differences between various migrant groups (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). During the 90s however, severe politicization of the issue gave rise to a more assimilative approach. Migrants began to be framed as individual citizens of the Netherlands, rather than members of diverse cultural minority groups. While the national policy currently reflects this new approach, Dutch municipalities have been slow to adapt. This disconnect has resulted in a divergence of national policy and local implementation.

The evolution of integration policies in the Netherlands began in the 1970s, when the government - advised by the Scientific Council for Government's policy¹ - developed an 'Ethnic Minorities Policy'. This policy aimed to achieve the equality of ethnic minorities in the socio-economic domain, inclusion and participation in the political domain, and equity in the domain of culture and religion within constitutional conditions (Bruquetas-Callejo et.al, n.d.). At the same time, anti-discrimination practices and legislation were reinforced, financial resources were devoted to education and in 1981 regular migrants were allowed full access to social housing.

The turn of the millennium gave rise to a revision of policy towards the assimilative approach, as signaled by Entzinger (2003). Based on the idea of 'clash of civilizations', the aim of the new policy was to preserve national norms and values and gain more social cohesion. From 2002 onwards, the Integration Policy New Style (IPNS) was implemented. This policy placed emphasis on the idea that immigrants should adapt to Dutch culture and society and it introduced a tool known as 'early integration of new migrants'. This tool established that newcomers were required to pass an exam that proved their language skills and knowledge about Dutch society before they could enter the Netherlands, therefore serving as both a tool for integration and for migration control (Bruquetas-Callejo et al, n.d.).

At present, the integration policy of the Netherlands is based on the Agenda for Integration which was launched in May 2013. The three main points of the Dutch Agenda for Integration are: participation and self-reliance, setting limits and educating, interaction with others and internalizing values². The approach does not target specific groups or countries of

¹ Its Report 'Ethnic Minorities' (1976) "pleaded to fully recognize that a number of immigrant groups had settled permanently in the Netherlands and to start an active policy aimed at the integration of what is called 'ethnic minorities' in society" (Bruquetas-Callejo et al., n.d.).

² Parliamentary Papers II, 2012-2013, 32824, no. 7.

origin, but rather employs a more strategic general focus on participation and social diversity.

Different approaches to framing integration are not simply conceptual; varying ideological frameworks have huge practical impact on the day-to-day integration experiences of migrants within a host society. Therefore, when exploring the integration of refugees within Maastricht, it is important to not lose sight of how national government policies of integration affect implementation at lower levels.

Policy developments regarding the integration of refugees

The increased influx of asylum-seekers in 2015 led to developments in the area of integration of refugees; as a result of the establishment of a temporary ‘Ministerial Committee on Migration’, several measures were taken in the dimensions of labor market integration, education and housing.

In the field of labor market integration, the main development has been the creation of a ‘Taskforce for the Employment and Integration of Refugees’. The Taskforce aims to increase labor market participation and integration of refugees through screening, matching, integrating and improving the information exchange.

In the field of education, the ‘Taskforce for the Higher Education of Refugees’ has been established, who envisage promoting entry and counselling refugees in higher education. This Taskforce brought together different agencies involved with access to education, such as: VluchtelingenWerk, the Association of cooperating Dutch Universities (VSNU)³, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum-seekers (COA), the Dutch Association of Universities of Applied Sciences⁴ and the University Assistance Fund (UAF)⁵. Special efforts have also been devoted to language learning: several programs have been launched that are not specifically aimed at migrants, but may indirectly contribute to their integration into Dutch society (EMN, 2015). Furthermore, the Dutch Language Requirement Act (*onderdeel van de*

³ VSNU: *Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten* (organization that includes cooperative Dutch universities). VSNU serves the interests of the universities towards the cabinet, the politics, the government and civil society.

⁴ The Dutch Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (*vereniging hogescholen*) is an interest and employers’ association from the Dutch universities of applied sciences that are funded by the government. The affiliated universities of applied sciences are committed to the quality of education and practical research.

⁵ UAF: organization for refugees with a higher education level. UAF supports high-educated refugees during their realization of a suitable position in society. UAF guides them during their education and their search for a job that matches with their capacities.

participatieverklaring) was adopted in 2015, which stipulates that a social assistance benefit can be reduced if the recipient does not have a satisfactory proficiency of the Dutch language.

In the field of housing, the ‘Platform Home Again’ (*Platform Opnieuw Thuis*) was established. This organization is the result of a partnership between several departments of the central government, the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG)⁶, the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO)⁷, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum-Seekers (COA) and the association of housing corporation ‘Aedes’. The task of this organization is to encourage the process of housing status-holders⁸ in accordance with Section 28 of the Housing Allocation Act 2014⁹ and to support municipalities in housing status-holders. In addition, the government signed an agreement with municipalities and provinces on the allocated time period to house all status-holders. Under this agreement, it was established that the central government, municipalities and housing associations should create housing facilities for 14,000 refugees.

NIEM

The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) is a 6 year transnational project aimed at evaluating and improving refugee integration in 15 EU member states (including typical destination and transit countries)¹⁰. The project is a European funded program¹¹ of applied research, which seeks to establish a biennial, comprehensive evaluation of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in order to provide evidence on gaps in integration standards, identify promising practices and evaluate the effects of legislative and policy changes¹². In its implementation, focal research partners are identified within each country (a list

⁶ The Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG, *Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten*) serves the interests of municipalities, performs common services for municipalities and provides their members with a platform.

⁷ The Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO, *interprovinciaal overleg*) serves the interests of provinces in Den Haag and Brussel. IPO has an extended network and maintains contact with amongst others the cabinet, the parliament, the ministries, the European Union and social organizations in the areas where the provinces are active.

⁸ ‘Status-holders’ shall be considered as the individuals that have been granted a residence permit after submitting an asylum request. The Netherlands applies a single status asylum system which means that all asylum permits are subject to the same rights, no matter what ground they have been granted on.

⁹ Section 28 of the housing allocation act 2014 requires ministers to make regulations for a scheme that would enable local authorities to apply to ministers for additional discretionary powers to target enforcement in areas subject to poor housing conditions in the private rented sector.

¹⁰ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden

¹¹ Within the European Union-Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)

¹² A comprehensive description of the NIEM Project can be found in the website “Forintegration.eu”, available at: <http://www.forintegration.eu/>.

of most of the research partners involved can be found in the methodology section, Table 1).

NIEM uses a framework of 150 indicators, that can be divided between policy, legal and outcome indicators. This framework is used to assess integration in four main areas, namely: general conditions; legal integration; sociocultural integration; and socio-economic integration. General conditions includes issues such as the impact of reception on integration and the management of integration. Legal integration deals with issues such as residency, family unity & reunification and access to nationality. Children's education, language learning and participation fall under the sociocultural category, while housing, employment, higher education, health and social security fall under socio-economic integration.

An interview with a member of the NIEM project revealed that, while NIEM is aware of potential criticisms and shortcomings of employing such indicators, this methodology remains the most comprehensive way available to cross-compare integration policies between countries (member of the NIEM project, 18.05). This comparison uses EU standards on integration of refugees (such as the European directive on reception or recognition of qualification) as its normative benchmark.

Interest for local governments

NIEM calls for participation of different stakeholders: governments, local authorities, social partners and NGOs, as well as refugees themselves. The indicators require analysis of different types of evidence, including national statistics, quantitative and qualitative research, independent evaluation, internal audit and self-assessment. At the same time, one of the shortcomings of the project is the difficulty to assess the involvement of civil society and informal practices, as the indicators are meant to capture national measures on integration. However, civil society and local governments will be able to use it as a political instrument in order to assess the efforts deployed by central governments to coordinate the different actors and to provide them with any kind of support in the development of their activities. As outlined by the interviews, the indicators are restricted to look at legal framework and national policies, and in that respect the questions are posed to the central governments: "are you doing enough to coordinate with civil society and the local level? Do you support them to complete their means?" (member of the NIEM project, 18.05)

On the other hand, to turn the results and evidence of NIEM into tangible and concrete

improvements of integration of refugees in the partner countries, each project partner establishes national coalitions. These national coalitions, involving representatives of public institutions, local government, academia, NGOs, migrant organizations and refugees themselves, will be aimed at: promoting NIEM and its outcomes in each participating country; tightening relations between key stakeholders, experts and practitioners; and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and advocating for their mainstreaming in participating countries.

The current study

While the national government has a coordinating role in the field of integration policies, municipalities play a crucial role in fostering integration of refugees, especially in the field of social assistance. Moreover, within the national legislative framework, municipalities have the freedom to shape their policies regarding integration. Given this divergence between national policy and local implementation, this report aims to supplement the work of NIEM by very specifically focusing on the implementation of integration policies at the local level. With this report, we wish to go a step further and capture the practicalities of integration in two key areas: education and housing. For practical reasons, the scope of this study is limited to Maastricht, however we hope that similar studies on the implementation of integration policies at the local level will be conducted in other regions in the future.

According to the NIEM indicators, housing and higher education fall under socio-economic integration, while children's education and language learning fall under socio-cultural integration. Under the areas of housing and education, we cover all of the aforementioned facets, however we consider language learning and children's education through the prism of educational integration. In fact, one of the reasons the focus is placed on the areas of education and housing, is because these dimensions of integration can have cross-cutting implications on other dimensions. For example, language learning is, at its most basic level, a function of socio-cultural integration (as is seen by NIEM). However, it is also key to acquiring employment and therefore could be considered under socio-economic integration.

Within the educational integration of refugees, we explore areas related to primary schools, secondary schools, universities, recognition of prior qualifications and language learning. At a schooling level, the integration of refugee children into primary schools provides a fundamental platform for the child to feel part of that culture. Nesse (2008) finds that learning

about social roles, facial expressions and gestures in school is integral for the cultural and social integration of the child. It can also provide an indirect means for parents to become more culturally integrated in society by attending after-school activities or simply helping out at schools. However, beyond simply attending schools (primary and secondary), the emphasis must be placed towards the adaptations that are made in order to facilitate the integration process. Many children may have suffered trauma and therefore will require extra psychological support, and language barriers may make it difficult for young people to keep up in class without receiving additional support (Bodewig, 2015).

Within education we also explore the importance of programs designed to support refugees in learning the Dutch language, which is seen by many experts as a fundamental foundation to any successful integration practice (Valenta & Bunar, 2010; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002). Learning the native language can create a feeling of belonging, can be used to create social ties and can provide opportunities for employment. We also note the importance of recognizing qualifications and skills as important to integration. As stated previously, many refugees are highly skilled and can make important contributions to society, however these contributions cannot be actualized if measures are not in place to allow refugees the opportunity to continue education in their field and subsequently work in their field. This prevents refugees to feel undervalued and shunted into employment which does not match their experiences or interests, instead it provides an opportunity for refugees to feel as though they can make a worthwhile contribution to their new host society.

Within the housing integration of refugees, we explore areas related to access to housing, conditions of housing, tensions between ‘native’ and refugee populations and financial inclusion. Philips (2006) argues that the housing experiences of refugees importantly shape their feeling of safety and belonging and have a bearing on access to healthcare, education and employment. We look at housing integration as the ability to access appropriate quality and affordable housing, which allows refugees a platform to contribute to society. Since refugees normally require financial support to rent (at least initially), they usually require assistance from social housing. In this sense, focusing on housing integration will also consider existing tensions between ‘native’ population groups, who are entitled to social housing, and refugees, who are at times vulnerable only by virtue of being a refugee. Feelings of hostility and non-acceptance will have negative effects on the sense of security that a home is intended to provide. Finally, the practicalities of

housing integration are best captured at the local level and given the time/location constraints of our study, we decided that this was an important area to explore further.

Our research focused on answering three broad questions regarding refugee integration in housing and education in Maastricht: what barriers to integration currently exist? Are there potential solutions/best practices and what makes them successful? Are there best practices in Maastricht that can be adopted by other cities?

METHODOLOGY

Our sample consisted of NGOs, government bodies, educational institutions, housing corporations, civil society and individuals (see Table 1). We gathered our sample initially by conducting desk research to narrow down the important and relevant actors, then in some instances, interviewees recommended other stakeholders and made introductions. In total we conducted 15 face-to-face interviews, of which one was via skype and the others in person. We used semi-structured guides to have the flexibility to explore areas openly and in detail. Our interview guideline was based on the indicators developed by the NIEM project. The adaptation of these indicators to a local level posed numerous challenges that were overcome through the semi-structured format of the interviews. The indicators can be found in the Appendix.

One potential limitation of this study is that the sample did not include private sector actors, however, since this study did not focus on areas of integration where the private sector includes major stakeholders (for example employment), to include the private sector organizations was not seen as relevant. On a more critical point, it is to be acknowledged that the aim of this research was to identify the main stakeholders involved in the integration of refugees in Maastricht, its coordination mechanisms and its overlaps. In methodological terms, this implies that our main unit of analysis were organizations involved with the integration of refugees. However, a further stage would involve interviewing refugees of these integration measures and policies themselves. Whilst we conducted three interviews with refugee university students, we recognize that both the limited size of this sample and the fact that all the interviewees were university students, does not allow for our findings to be representative to integration of refugees as a whole. Further interviews or focus group discussions with refugees would have given an important insight into the practicalities of how integration measures impact on our key target group.

Table 1

List of interviewed organizations and stakeholders

Organization	Type	Role
Gemeente Maastricht	Local Government	Implementing integration policies and programs
VluchtelingenWerk	NGO	Provider of integration courses, guidance and support for refugees
Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF)	NGO	Guidance and support (including financial) for highly skilled refugees to find education or employment
Central Agency for the reception of Asylum-seekers (COA)	Independent Administrative body	Responsible for reception and housing of refugees
Maastricht University	Educational Institute	Provider of integration courses, provider of higher education
Leeuwenborgh	Educational Institute	Provider of integration courses; provider of vocational education and training
International Schakel Klas/ Eerste Opvang Anderstaligen (ISK/EOA)	Educational Institute	Transition school for non-Dutch speaking migrants under 18
Refugee Project	Civil Society	Initiative for social integration of refugees
NIEM Project, Migration Policy Group	Think Tank	Developing the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism, which is the methodological framework used in this research
Buddy Program	Civil Society	Initiative for social integration of refugees
MATCH Project	Civil Society	Initiative for social integration of refugees
Woonpunt	Housing Corporation	Provider of social housing
Servatius	Housing Corporation	Provider of social housing
Anonymous	Individual	Refugee University Student
Anonymous	Individual	Refugee University Student
Anonymous	Individual	Refugee University Student

ASYLUM-SEEKER PROCESS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Reception

Upon arrival in the Netherlands, asylum-seekers are required to report themselves at the report

center in either Ter Apel or at Schiphol. The IND¹³, a division of the Ministry of Security and Justice, is responsible for the admission of asylum-seekers and for processing asylum-applications. The asylum-seeker will stay a couple of days in the central shelter location, where the rest- and preparation-period starts (this period lasts minimally six days). The immigration police registers asylum-seekers and will do identity research. A nurse will also look for possible medical or psychological problems that might make questioning by the IND more difficult. An asylum-seeker will also meet his or her lawyer and be informed about the procedure, along with the rights and duties he or she has. The stay in a central shelter location has a maximum duration of four days.

The reception of asylum-seekers (who are at least 18 years of age or accompanied by other family members) falls under the authority of the Ministry of Security and Justice, but this task has been delegated to COA (the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum-seekers), which is an independent administrative body responsible for the reception, supervision and departure (from the reception center) of asylum-seekers.

Asylum-application

After the period in a central shelter location, an asylum-seeker moves to a process shelter location. After the rest and preparation period, this is the location where the regular asylum-seeking procedure starts and which normally takes eight days. During this time the IND will question the asylum-seeker about his or her identity and journey. The policy is that a stay in the process shelter should not exceed 12 days.

When the regular asylum-seeking procedure has finished, the asylum-seeker moves again. In case the IND decides that further investigation is necessary, the asylum-seeker will be forwarded to the prolonged asylum-procedure. This procedure normally has a maximum duration of six months, but can be prolonged by the IND for several reasons. An asylum-seeker whose application has been rejected can go in appeal as well. In both cases the asylum-seeker stays in an AZC (asylum-seeker center) for the rest of this procedure. From this moment on, he or she receives living money and there will be services to cook by themselves. When an asylum-seeker has to leave, he or she has an additional four weeks of rightful stay in an AZC. Status-holders

¹³ IND: Immigration and Naturalization Services. The IND evaluates all residence requests from individuals who want to live in the Netherlands or want to become a Dutch citizen.

(thus, those who have received a residence permit) will stay in an AZC for a little while as well, until they have been assigned a house.

Assignment to municipality

The Ministry of Interior determines how many refugees need to be housed by every municipality. This depends on the amount of residents within a municipality. Municipalities have to offer housing to refugees within three months, otherwise the Provincial States can impose sanctions. The municipality informs COA about the houses in the city/town that are available and consequently these houses are included in a national database.

COA looks for status-holders that are suitable for the vacant houses and presents it to them. From the perspective of the status-holder, the fast integration and (thus) the fast housing of status-holders should always be the focus during the matching. Regarding the placement of status-holders, the objective is to provide housing in the same municipality in which they were placed during the asylum procedure. To improve the integration, the chance of employment or education and the already existing network they have built up, will be taken into account during the coupling whenever possible. While personal wishes are not taken into account when making a decision, work, education, first degree relatives and medical circumstances are. All this information will be used to create a personal profile for each status-holder. This profile, together with the related information, is shared in a system called the '*Taakstelling Volg Systeem*'. The responsibility of COA regarding housing of refugees ends when the refugees are coupled to their respective municipalities. From that moment on, municipalities are in charge of providing suitable accommodation. For Maastricht, they do so through an agreement with three social housing corporations: Woonpunt, Servatius and Maasvallei. These social corporations will analyze the profile of the refugee and they will offer the most suitable accommodation, which the refugees are required to accept unless any exceptional circumstance justifies a refusal. In some cases, the possibility of receiving a credit for home furnishing exists. Some municipalities provide it as a loan, while others provide this as a gift.

Integration exam

All refugees are required to pass the integration exam within three years. If a person is illiterate, he or she is given an extension of two years to pass the exam. Integration courses are offered by

private providers and consist of Dutch language lessons, as well as the rules and regulations regarding living and working in the Netherlands. The integration process can be completed in one of two ways: by taking an integration exam or the state exam NT2.

The integration exam tests six different competences, namely: reading, listening, writing, speaking, knowledge of the Dutch society and orientation on the Dutch labor market. The state exam NT2 is generally chosen by individuals aiming to pursue higher education, such as vocational training, university of applied sciences or university. For this exam a higher level of Dutch language is required as well as knowledge of the Dutch society and orientation on the Dutch labor market.

Since 1 July 2015, all individuals obliged to participate in the integration process are entitled to loan a maximum of EUR 10,000 with DUO¹⁴ which can be used to pay for integration and language courses. Upon successful completion of the integration exam they qualify for a remission of their debt (the loan will be turned into a gift). Failure to pass the exam without valid reasons however, may result in a fine.

FINDINGS

General

Issues regarding integration

One frequently recurring gap that was identified by several stakeholders is the fact that there is not one organization that comprehensively coordinates respective spheres of integration. This ironically means that the implementation of the integration process is in fact rather disintegrated. This however seems to pose a bigger problem for integration in education than in housing for two main reasons.

Firstly the process of assigning refugees to housing does not vary widely from the process used for other groups in need of social housing. For education on the other hand, there are numerous discrepancies between the education levels of refugees and in the standard of education in the countries of origin as compared to the Netherlands. Therefore the process is extremely complex and a relatively new domain to be navigated by Dutch organizations.

¹⁴ DUO: *Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs* (education implementation services). DUO arranges financial aid for students and teachers, they collect tuition fees and debts, they arrange the recognition of qualifications/certificates and they organize the integration exams.

Furthermore, for housing (in Maastricht) there far fewer actors involved than for education; essentially integration of refugees in housing involves six organizations in total: the municipality, COA, VluchtelingenWerk¹⁵ and three housing corporations. For education however, there are a great deal more.

The lack of formal coordination of the integration process has given rise to some related issues, such as a limited communication, collaboration and knowledge exchange among actors. This has been noted to be especially problematic during the transition from the AZC to assigned housing. There is limited communication and no formal handing-over procedure for each refugee's files from COA to the municipality, hence valuable knowledge of the refugees' background, skills and capacity may be lost during the transition. This also makes it difficult if not impossible for COA to follow-up on refugees' progress after leaving the AZC.

Another issue stemming from the lack of formal coordination of integration is the lack of follow-up and monitoring of refugees and their progress. On the one hand, COA is only involved in counselling when the asylum-seekers or refugees are under its responsibility in the AZC, but then there is no possibility of further assistance. On the other hand, while guidance and support from VluchtelingenWerk is available to refugees for up to six months after receiving their refugee status, there is no organization which is actively checking in with refugees to follow-up on their progress. Furthermore, even the six-month-period of support has been noted as problematic, since its recent reduction from a two-year-period of support. It was noted that six months is certainly not enough time for refugees to become fully self-sufficient (*zelfredzaam*), which is the long term aim of the integration policy. However, in order to prove that this period is not long enough, VluchtelingenWerk would have to be willing to let refugees fail, simply to prove this point. Naturally they are not willing to do this and instead continue to offer assistance after the six-month-period when needed, meaning that this assistance is funded by VluchtelingenWerk itself.

Another general barrier to integration that was consistently raised, is that a vast majority of the programs targeted towards improving refugee integration are aimed at those who need them the least, which are young males. For example, programs for integration in education are targeted almost exclusively towards young, highly educated refugees, whereas the ones most in

¹⁵ VluchtelingenWerk serves the interests of refugees and asylum-seekers from the moment they enter the Netherlands up to and including the integration in Dutch society. Their vision is to provide the refugees with more legal and social security, as well as having the Netherlands contribute more to solving the refugee crisis.

need of education and least likely to obtain gainful employment are older, less educated refugees who are targeted by fewer programs. Similarly, the Refugee Project (see further) noted that their efforts generally reach those refugees who need them the least, that is young males. Women and older refugees who are most in need of social activities and integration are less likely to be reached by them.

One final salient point that was raised with regards to refugee integration in general was the fact that the target group for these policies, programs and processes, the refugees themselves, are rarely included in the discussion of how to improve integration. While Dutch integration policies aim towards self-sufficiency (*zelfredzaamheid*), the target population of the policies are given very little say in the matter and have very little control over what happens to them. Interviews with one refugee student in particular brought to light feelings of being subjected to following a path that was chosen for them without being given the ability to choose the direction in which their life will go.

Best practices

One best practice arising out of Maastricht are the various student/local initiatives that have been founded for the purpose of improving the social integration process for refugees. The Refugee Project is a student-led initiative that aims at helping refugees integrate socially with students and locals. They facilitate activities such as food sharing, music, sport, language learning and so on. Similarly, the Buddy Program couples refugees with local citizens in order to improve the integration process. The buddies can help the refugees with their Dutch language skills, their knowledge of Dutch society and Dutch culture, but also in case they need guidance through all the different organizations in the Netherlands or help with rent or health insurance. According to the people who initiated the Buddy Program, trust is the most important aspect. If there is trust, there is a feeling of safety and if there is a feeling of safety, integration will be further improved. Lastly, the MATCH project aims to increase the involvement of students with the city through projects that help vulnerable groups in society and in exchange, the students receive reduction in their rental expenses. Students are involved in improving the social integration and language skills of refugees.

Education

Access to education

Children who are under 18 years of age have the legal right to be registered at a school or institution as mentioned in the 'Leerplichtwet 1969'. Since 01/08/2007 this law implies that all individuals until the age of 18 must obtain a starting qualification, which means having at least a level 2 diploma of vocational training or having at least a diploma of secondary education 'havo' or 'vwo' (the two highest forms of secondary education out of three). This is also known as the qualification requirement and is aimed at preventing early dropouts. The starting qualification is described as the minimal level of education that is required to have a realistic chance on the Dutch labor market.

In the European Directive it is mandated that asylum-seekers under 18 have the right to education within three months of submitting their asylum-request. This directive is designed to accelerate the integration process. In case a minor asylum-seeker's request has been denied, he or she is only allowed to continue his or her education program at the institution where he or she was registered according to applicable rules and regulations during his/her rightful stay. This process is based upon current international law.

Educational institutions make sure that there is an offer that is suitable for people with foreign languages. Municipalities are tasked with ensuring the availability of class locations in primary and secondary education for asylum-seekers. Municipalities also have the legal responsibility of providing an offer of early or pre-school education to children (which is not restricted to asylum seekers), who have (a risk of) a delay in their language development. Early-school education is aimed at four and five year olds, whereas preschool education is aimed at children who are two and a half years old. Combined, the idea is that asylum seekers with a delay in language are able to learn the Dutch language quickly and therefore integrate quicker. Accordingly, asylum-seekers with a delay in language are able to learn the Dutch language quickly; their children can attend early and preschool education programs, while the parents can attend language classes themselves. This also allows for parents to avoid arranging childcare at a point when they will not have a regular income. Through adult education there is also an educational offer for adults who, in addition to the integration requirement, wish to improve their language abilities.

Targeted matching of status-holders with appropriate and available offers of educational programs and the demand/needs on the labor market is very important. In order to do so, the educational achievement, past work experience and skills of refugees should be identified and assessed. For adult status-holders who arrive in the Netherlands without (proof of) certificates or who come from an ISK¹⁶, an intake or competences study is necessary. When status-holders have already obtained education certificates in their country of origin, they can show the competences and qualities they possess through a procedure that recognizes qualifications. This is done by an organization called *Stichting Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven* (SBB) for vocational training programs and by the organization *EP-Nuffic* for education programs at universities and universities of applied sciences. This recognition intends to support the chance of fast integration and economic self-reliance (*zelfredzaamheid*), by helping to ensure that status-holders can seek out appropriate work/education opportunities. Acknowledgment of qualifications and recognition of competences is made part of the integration package.

Issues regarding education

From our interviews, we identified the existence of problems regarding communication between the different stakeholders involved in the integration process of refugees. This concern was brought up during several interviews, indicating that there is a lack of coordination and information exchange between different organizations; i.e. there is no designated organization that is responsible for a smooth transmission of information about a particular refugee. COA explained that they are developing personalized profiles of refugees with information including education, work experience and highest level of Dutch language obtained (COA, 15.05). However, the challenge remains in finding a uniform way to communicate this information. As a COA employee said: "sometimes it is difficult to know who the contact person is there [in the municipality], who will receive the information, who would do the counselling further... so that you can have a call, or a warmer handing over [of the information] so that there is no redundancy".

Furthermore, there is a substantial problem regarding the recognition of qualifications. In

¹⁶ ISK: *Internationale Schakel Klas* (international transition class). ISK is an international linking school committed to teaching students Dutch while continuing their education in a variety of other subjects. Every class works to enhance students' Dutch language comprehension and literacy. The ultimate goal is for students to smoothly transition into the Dutch school system and culture.

case refugees wish to pursue further education (given that they have received a residence permit), they have to meet the same requirements for their prior education as any other Dutch citizen. There are three potential problems in this scenario: refugees often do not have their certificates with them; they cannot obtain the required certificates; or the level of their education in the country of origin does not match the same education level in the Netherlands. When refugees are confronted with the fact that their prior education, which might have been at university level in their country, is just near the level of vocational training in the Netherlands, they are naturally often angry and have to reconsider their employment options. They often have to lower their expectations and this always turns out to be a disappointment (Leeuwenborgh, 12.05). Thus, the recognition of qualifications is problematic, making it harder for refugees to pursue further education. The same holds for gaining work experience: employers ask refugees to show them the required certificates, for example in case refugees want to do an internship for a program on the level of vocational training that is combined with language classes.

Since the Dutch education system is very rigid and strict, teachers do not always have the possibility of providing the right kind of coaching that students might need. As said in an interview with ISK: “if you do not fit into the system, the problem is yours”. Another interview with a current refugee student at Maastricht University revealed the same issue; in some cases students are obligated to work because of certain rules and regulations and therefore they are not allowed to pursue further education if they wish to. The rules and regulations are set and you cannot ‘disobey’, as the room for making exceptions is very limited. For example, when students are at an ISK, they are in a stage of their lives where they are still trying to figure out their own identity and they are therefore more prone to experience problems. This, in addition with leaving one’s origin country and having to adapt fairly quickly to a whole new country, language and culture, in addition to adhering to the strict rules and regulations, might put the students at great risk for developing (mental health) problems.

Another problem is the offer of language courses. A few years ago the municipalities were responsible for offering language courses, but this responsibility has been transferred to privatized organizations. Previously, when the responsibility was still with the municipality, every ten weeks there was an assessment of the amount of people that were enrolled in the classes and of their progress. Now that the responsibility is with DUO, such assessments no longer exist. People tend to think that they will be able to pass the integration exam by studying

for just a few months. By the time they realize that this is not possible, and DUO has not been keeping track of their progress from the moment that their three-year-period to prepare for the integration exam begins, the damage has already been done. Additionally, institutions that offer language courses do not know how many people they can expect. When the municipality was in charge of language courses, data was collected and available to inform these institutions on the amount of refugees arriving and therefore the number of expected participants.

In general, there is a need for more information geared towards teachers regarding the experiences of trauma from the students, as well as around cultural differences. However, as was mentioned in the interview with ISK, it is very difficult to find the right kind of person to facilitate the training of teachers in these topics. ISK prioritizes that students feel safe in the school and aims to treat them in a way such that students enjoy being at school. To find a facilitator to train the teachers is problematic, because schools need to make sure that correct and meaningful information is provided to both teachers and students. In order to coherently confront and explain cultural differences, the facilitator would need to talk to the refugees as well. Institutions need to be careful that this facilitator does not take advantage of this position and provide the wrong kind of information to the students, as they are already in a difficult stage of their lives (ISK, 12.05). Thus, it is very difficult to find the right person to inform teachers as well as students about issues such as cultural differences.

An additional problem exists regarding the employment of teachers in schools: schools (and other employers) are only allowed to give yearly contracts three times in a row. After that, the contract must be made permanent or they have to be fired as they cannot be employed by that school again for a period of at least six months. As the amount of refugees is never constant, it is not feasible for schools to provide every teacher with a permanent contract after three years. In addition, there are not a lot of teachers that have received a degree in adult education. In the instance of teachers who have graduated in teaching at primary schools; they cannot be hired to teach adults, because of certain rules and regulations. Schools adhere to these rules because they wish to keep their quality mark (*keurmerk inburgering*), which is a recognition for their work and success rates in integration. This, in addition with the problem of permanent contracts, makes it very difficult for schools to provide the right kind of teaching with the right amount of teachers.

Potential solutions

The lack of coordination amongst the different organizations that are involved in the integration process of refugees needs to be resolved as soon as possible. Refugees that arrive in the Netherlands often have to deal with experiences of trauma, might have witnessed war crimes, and have had to leave an entire livelihood behind. Often refugees are very angry when they arrive in the Netherlands and are subsequently confronted with complicated and excessive rules and regulations. On top of this, refugees will also be facing the challenges of coping with previous experiences and attempting to adapt to a new environment. The existence of an organization akin to an information desk which would be responsible for inter-organizational coordination and providing smooth exchanges of information relating to refugees could potentially resolve this issue. This would prevent refugees from repeating their story and would also ensure that the required documents are located at the appropriate organization. Furthermore, it would also support refugees in attempting to engage in important developmental pursuits, such as in further education. In doing so, it is hoped that the stress levels experienced by refugees during this transition period will be reduced.

Since there are a lot of organizations that aim to make sure that the refugees integrate in the best way possible, it would be a good idea to raise awareness within the refugee community about all the initiatives that are being carried out. For example, the buddy program in Maastricht couples a refugee to a local citizen to form a trustful relationship, according to the initiators of this program this forming of a trustful relationship is the most important aspect behind the initiative. However, a downside to the buddy program is the inability of the program to reach those who might need a buddy the most. The initiators of the project informed us that they would like to see a change in the privacy rules that prevent outreach directed towards isolated refugees. A possible suggestion is to obtain a signature from refugees to approve (or refuse) the sharing of their personal information, such as an address or telephone number, in order to inform them about available and local initiatives that are specifically aimed at supporting the integration of refugees. At present, the 'hard to reach' group consists of those who have low educational attainment, limited work experience and no certificates. Efforts should be directed at engaging this group, as they are people who would in fact benefit the most from initiatives that support integration.

Another initiative that enhances integration of refugees in the Netherlands is a tailor-

made program that combines education with work experience; students learn the Dutch language for one to two days a week and gain work experience during the other days of the week. Through the social immersion that arises from employment in a local enterprise, Leeuwenborgh expects the refugees to obtain better language skills than would be acquired by going to class five days a week (Leeuwenborgh, 12.05). At the same time, work experience naturally will improve their chances on the labor market. Another problem that has been uncovered from interviews is that some employers in Maastricht will refuse to speak Dutch. In the fear that their local dialect will be lost, such employers will opt to converse in this dialect, thus hindering the process by which refugees learn the Dutch language. Consequently, this means that the schools lose contracts with certain companies that gave refugees the opportunity to do an internship, and it becomes more difficult to find a suitable company within a realistic distance.

Best practices

Although there is no formal structure for communication among the stakeholders involved in refugee integration, Maastricht University facilitates a monthly meeting of stakeholders involved in refugee integration in education, they also coordinate promoting events: the sharing of knowledge among actors; awareness of the challenges faced by refugees; and progress made towards integration. Additionally, COA has introduced a program to prepare for integration (titled: “*Voorbereiden Inburgering*”) in the AZC. Under this program, asylum-seekers who have received a positive decision are invited for advice sessions by case managers regarding obtaining essentials such as a BSN¹⁷ and a DigiD¹⁸. Language courses up the A1 level are also provided, as well as courses on ‘orientation on the Dutch labor market’ and ‘knowledge of Dutch society’ (obligatory components of the integration exam as well).

Housing

Access to housing and assignment process

Municipalities are given responsibility for the housing and integration of refugees. The municipality of Maastricht has performance agreements regarding the housing of special target

¹⁷ BSN: *Burgerservicenummer* (social security number). The BSN is a unique personal identification number for every individual that is registered in the *Basisregistratie Personen* (basic register of persons).

¹⁸ DigiD: a DigiD is used to login on websites from the government and health care institutions.

groups (including status-holders) with the three main housing corporations that operate within Maastricht (Woonpunt, Servatius and Maasvallei). The municipality largely hands over responsibility to find appropriate housing - within a set time-frame - for all refugees to the housing corporations.

After an asylum-seeker, who is staying at the AZC, is given a positive decision regarding their claim, the first step is to have a preliminary interview with the AZC in which specific questions are asked: is there any reason that he/she should be connected to a certain area because of first degree family relations? Does the person have a working contract in place? Are there medical or study reasons to be housed in a specific region? According to COA, these factors are equally important in the assignment process and they are currently trying to dig into more detailed information ('soft factors') such as: what kind of experience does somebody have? And: what would the person like to do in the Netherlands regarding study/working? After the assignment process is completed, the municipality to which the refugee is assigned, is expected to find suitable and affordable accommodation within 10 weeks; this is the process that is then delegated to the social housing corporations. While our interviews revealed that no sanctions are imposed on housing corporations in the event that they fail to find housing within the given time-frame, sanctions are imposed on the province. This implies that pressure is put on social housing corporations to satisfy requirements. Therefore, we identify social housing providers as operating at the frontline of the implementation of housing integration in Maastricht and our interviews with two of Maastricht's three operating providers give key insights on the process of integration within this area.

Issues regarding housing

- Issues in the provision of housing

A key potential obstacle to the integration of refugees in Maastricht is the balance between the numbers of refugees and scarcity of social housing. Put simply, limited availability of social housing within an area can create competition between the native population and refugees, which leads to tensions, polarizations and fractious relationships in the community. Maastricht is a region with high levels of poverty and unemployment and the municipality noted that this leads to complaints from Dutch citizens. As an employee from Woonpunt stated, social housing exists to rent at an affordable rate and to help everybody who is not capable of renting at market prices.

This means that the providers are expected to support vulnerable groups of the native population, including people with drug addictions, alcohol problems and physical/mental disabilities, while also supporting refugees. Politically, it can be problematic to prioritize refugees over other vulnerable segments of the native population. The interview with Woonpunt also revealed that waiting lists for housing in Maastricht are currently four to five years. Given that refugees are ordinarily placed within a much shorter time-frame than this, tensions inevitably exist. This demonstrates how issues around access to social housing can become a barrier to other forms of socio-cultural integration; in this case the acceptance of refugee populations by segments of the native population who also are in need of social housing.

A common problem is in accommodating refugee families of five people or more. Families of origin countries of refugees are typically larger than those of European families and therefore housing corporations do not normally have large houses available. Such problems are usually resolved in a makeshift way by children or family members sharing rooms.

Another identified issue is the provision of housing for refugees with disabilities or other requirements. Housing associations are given a requirement of housing roughly 300 refugees in a year, however they are not informed on the specific requirements of those refugees, nor are they informed of the sizes of the families. Consequently, housing associations are not always able to provide houses that are appropriately sized or equipped.

The municipality reports that, in general, there are no substantial obstacles to the access of housing and that in general the process runs smoothly. This is not a given factor and demonstrates an important relationship between the municipality of Maastricht, housing corporations and other involved actors. In 2016, it was reported that four districts in the Limburg province did not meet their requirements regarding the housing of refugees, but Maastricht did.

- Transition from AZC to housing

The current study focuses on the housing integration of refugees. However, it is not possible to completely isolate the integration of asylum-seekers from their integration once they are given refugee status. Indeed, if we look at integration as a holistic process, then it is one that begins the moment that the asylum-seeker arrives in the Netherlands. Specifically, if we focus on housing, this begins with housing conditions at the AZC and crucially includes the transition from housing at the AZC to subsequent housing. The transition itself marks a crucial time-period where

refugees must adapt to a substantial change in circumstances to their life situation. Refugees must find a new place to live and must manage their financial situation appropriately to the new circumstance, which involves navigating a previously unknown welfare system. Therefore the issue of housing transition within integration can be looked at as two-fold: firstly, it is important to ensure that the integration process that has already begun is not significantly interrupted. Secondly, refugees should be empowered and supported to commence life in a new country in a stable and cohesive way.

A specific challenge revealed by the interviews concerns the lack of information available to the refugees that are in the AZC regarding the different procedures, the differences within municipalities, and the housing corporations in terms of waiting times. As explained by COA, it is extremely difficult to explain to a person that has a positive decision concerning their asylum application, that he or she has to wait because of differences on municipalities procedures (COA, 15.05).

As explained above, COA assigns refugees a suitable municipality, taking into account a set of criteria (hard and soft criteria as previously mentioned). However, problems may arise in the event that the refugee experiences a change of circumstances which necessitates him/her to move. In such cases, they can attempt to go through COA's legal department who then assesses the case and the reasons for such change. Nevertheless, this mechanism is used very restrictively and only covers exceptional circumstances.

- Financial issues

Family reunification also poses obstacles in the assignment process. Housing corporations receive data of the individual that holds the refugee status, as well as the number and ages of his/her relatives (the ones that are also status-holders). In the case of bigger families they are usually placed in bigger, more expensive apartments. As explained by a Servatius employee, the issue appears when the status-holder informs about his/her intention of enforcing the right to family reunification, reports the number of members that are supposed to come, is placed in a high-cost apartment and the family members for any reason are not able or end up not coming.

Concerning money management, the housing corporations report that refugees tend to incur in debts very soon: when they receive the benefits, they do not prioritize housing, but they prioritize family left behind and costs of travelling. This situation increases the financial

vulnerability of refugees. At the same time, Woonpunt states that they have not seen a significant difference between the proportion of refugees that have debts and the local population.

- Socio-cultural integration

The interview with Servatius identified that refugees who are housed within Maastricht, often suffer loneliness because they do not have the same networks around them that they would have in the Randstad region (Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam). It is suggested that refugees would prefer to live in these regions where they would have the support of members of their origin communities in place. This raises an interesting issue regarding integration, but also regarding the whole system of placement amongst municipalities as some municipalities are more attractive than others. From one perspective living in Maastricht could be seen as an opportunity for refugees to integrate with Dutch people, instead of clustering with people from their home countries. However, maintaining networks and connections with people from their countries of origin can also play a key role in maintaining emotional health and providing support in adapting to a completely new environment.

Woonpunt elaborated on the issues of loneliness, especially of the adults who cannot attend any educational facility. As they explained, “what happens a lot is when they find rest, the problems come out in the night. And that is the bigger problem: VluchtelingenWerk helps until you have your house and you feel well at home, but then the big problems mostly start”.

Issues of racism and discrimination towards refugees is described by Woonpunt as largely an ‘issue of abstraction’, in that they identify that the local Dutch residents have an overarching fear or wariness towards refugees. However, in practice, incidents of racial harassment are not common. In that sense, concerns are raised among the neighbors when an apartment, flat or house is empty; “we do not want refugees here”. This attitude seems to be driven by a lack of information and fear, as suggested by an employee of Servatius. When the local population in the neighborhood of Nazareth found out that there would be more refugees coming to this neighborhood, they asked the housing corporation (Woonpunt) if they could also meet them and talk to them. After Woonpunt allowed one member of the residents to attend the meeting, the neighbors realized the vulnerable situation that the refugees were facing and were reportedly keen to help. However, even in spite of issues around direct racial discrimination, both housing providers pointed towards the existing tensions between neighbors over cultural

differences, which were compounded by the lack of a common language. The inability to make exchanges in the same language is highly problematic for the sake of both general, social niceties and for resolving minor issues such as taking out the trash.

General issues regarding housing

From the interviews, the key barrier towards the integration of refugees that was identified was largely comprised of a lack of communication between different stakeholders and the lack of a targeted organization which can provide support and after-care to refugees after they are housed. Such support is important in resolving issues around socio-cultural integration and in providing information and support in accessing financial mechanisms such as benefits. To an extent this role is taken by VluchtelingenWerk, however they only support the refugees for six months and their support is made up of volunteers instead of paid experts. Servatius reports that this means that - in some cases - refugees have good support from the volunteers who facilitate the integration process, but in other cases the support is less organized.

Best practices

The interview with Woonpunt revealed that staff members had started an informal integration initiative of their own, where a staff member would visit refugees at their home and make sure that everything was okay. The visit would serve as a form of after-care for refugees settling into a new environment. After identifying that there might be problems with the refugee community in the area of Nazareth, a representative from Woonpunt visited the refugee families in order to formally welcome them in the neighborhood, but also to ask them about their first experiences with the neighbors.

The practice is also extended to raising awareness among the neighbors on the situation of refugees. The door-knocking practice is employed as an informal practice and shows that the practicalities of integration can be facilitated by humanitarian efforts taken by civil society. Moreover, the effort is aimed at both the native population and the refugee population, aptly emphasizing the responsibility of integration on both groups. As a way to deal with the obstacle faced by the uncertainty regarding the outcomes of the family reunification process, Servatius is implementing an alternative way of housing allocation. They gather information on the age of every household member, taking into account those who have a status as well as those that are

planning to come afterwards. As a matter of principle, they give the status-holder the possibility of accessing a lower accommodation during the time that he or she is alone and then they consequently provide a larger accommodation if other family members arrive.

CONCLUSION

Maastricht has done a notable job in dealing with the integration of refugees. In general, the process of integration in housing runs smoothly. While integration in education has proven to be more challenging, this is understandable as education is a complex and challenging process in itself, even without the additional challenge of refugee integration.

While barriers to integration do exist, it is clear that all stakeholders are actively working to improve the integration process within Maastricht. Furthermore, there are several successful practices that are efficacious. The biggest, most pressing issue arising out of this research is the lack of formal coordination of the integration process. This single issue seems to be at the core of many of the smaller barriers identified. We would strongly recommend collaboration among the stakeholders involved in refugee integration to develop a formal structure for communication and coordination amongst themselves. This collaboration might be achieved by creating a taskforce that oversees all of the organization that are involved in integration of refugees and makes sure that the transmission of information from one organization to another runs smoothly. The collaboration might also be achieved by having a case-manager within for example the municipality. They are already present, but tend to change rather often. Therefore, a case-manager that guides an individual refugee throughout the whole integration process, to whom he or she can go to with all kinds of questions and be redirected, would improve the integration of a refugee and reduce a potential feeling of loneliness and being lost.

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

On 3 July 2017 an interactive workshop was organized to present the report and our findings. The aim was to bring together stakeholders to exchange ideas and thoughts on some key issues raised in the workshop and to reflect on best practices and how to move forward. The stakeholders were split into two groups and were each presented with two statements to discuss. The groups spent around 30 minutes on each statement and we facilitated the discussion. The statements were as follows:

1. Inclusion of refugees in the planning of integration measures will strengthen the integration process
2. An information desk should be created by the municipality for the purpose of improving the communication between organizations to: improve the organization (1); providing sufficient & appropriate information exchange for refugees (2)

The statements were not presumed to be inherently correct and the discussion was designed to firstly question the validity or accuracy of the statements, and then to propose and exchange ideas related to the statements in question. Below we summarize the main thoughts retrieved from the interesting and fruitful discussions.

Guests of the workshop were representatives of the municipality of Maastricht, VluchtelingenWerk, housing corporation Woonpunt, MATCH project and the NIEM project.

Statement 1: inclusion of refugees in the planning of integration measures will strengthen the integration process

- *Is the statement correct?*

Initially the validity of this statement was put under question. One participant raised the point that many refugees are very integrated, particularly those from previous generations who are now examples of successful integration. Indeed, many refugees who had claimed status in the 80s and 90s are very coherently integrated into Dutch society and perhaps it would be interesting to understand how integration was managed so successfully in this time-period. However, this part of the discussion focused on persons who had successfully integrated in the past, but did not address the issue of inclusion of refugees in planning integration measures. Moreover, we are

largely looking at the influx of new refugees and how integration policies can be mainstreamed in order to include the viewpoints of refugees themselves.

- *The politicized nature of refugee integration*

Following on from the previous point, we also discussed how refugees today are viewed in a more negative light than refugees from previous generations. Also, the issue is highly politicized and therefore, being able to involve refugees in the decision-making process, is not an issue that could necessarily be implemented easily.

- *Refugees are not one homogenous group*

Rather, refugees are composed of clusters of individuals from varying cultures, ethnicities, educational backgrounds, literacy levels and so on. Therefore, if we suppose that we should include refugees in the integration narrative, the question becomes: how can we include refugees such that all heterogeneities are taken into consideration. In that, a refugee with low educational achievements from Eritrea may have a completely different concept of what integration policies should include, compared to a highly educated Syrian refugee. As the conversation evolved, we spoke about how ‘native’ people of a country are also not a homogenous group, and yet through political processes they are able to (at least theoretically) make sure that their voices are heard.

- *“This process has already started”*

A representative from the municipality of Maastricht informed us that the process of inclusion of refugees within the practical framework of integration has already begun. The municipality is in the process of creating a platform of educated refugees to provide feedback on the integration process and to ensure that their voices are heard.

- *National or local level*

Our report was based on the idea that integration occurs at the local level and that there is a notable divergence between national policies and local level implementation. Given this, a relevant question was raised: where should we ideally be looking at integrating refugees into the process – the local or the national level? The discussion seemed to conclude that, since the

pressing issues around integration will vary between local districts, the most plausible scenario is to prompt the inclusion of refugees at the local level.

- *Top-down or bottom-up*

We also looked at whether such a process is envisioned to be a product of grass-roots movement from refugees themselves, or more a process that is sparked by a central organization such as the municipality. We took into account the idea that a bottom-up approach could seem more natural and empowering, for example, if a group of refugees collectively got together and put forward their views on the process of integration: how it could be improved, identifying successes and failures and so on. However, it was also noted that maneuvering around the political landscape can be challenging even for natives. If in addition there is a language barrier, the complexity of such a process is naturally elevated and it might seem unrealistic to expect refugees to organize themselves in such a way. Accordingly, it was suggested that the inclusion of refugees should be initiated and supported by the municipality, however, ideally it would evolve into a more refugee led movement.

Statement 2: an information desk should be created by the municipality for the purpose of improving the communication between organizations to: improve the organization (1); providing sufficient & appropriate information exchange for refugees (2)

- *Is the statement correct?*

One of the first things that was discussed was which organization should be responsible for a smooth communication between all the stakeholders that are involved with the integration of refugees. Is it the local government? Should it be COA, working together with the municipality? Should it instead be kept out of the organizations that are already involved, thus not the local government? The latter was an interesting point that was raised, as one of the main problems is that the organizations are not working together efficiently and therefore it would be easier to improve the communication through an organization that is outside of all organizations that are involved. In general, the idea was that the information desk should not be nationalized/centralized, as the organizations themselves are decentralized and there are a lot of municipal differences despite having a national policy.

Another interesting point that one of the groups started off with, was that an information desk is an information platform and it does not replace the coordination itself, which is the problematic component of our main finding. In addition, it was stated that coordination is not the same as the provision of information, so caution had to be paid to the statement.

- *Who should have access to the sensitive content of the communication that is being exchanged between the different stakeholders?*

After discussing whether or not a local government (the municipality) should be responsible for the information desk or whether it should be an independent body, the discussion switched to the safety of sensitive, personal information that is being exchanged. Ideas that were brought up would be to: have different kinds of layers that would be accessible to different types of people with different types of authorization (1); have something similar to systems that are already in place in primary and secondary schools, where information between parents and teachers is safely exchanged (known as intranet) (2). Another point that was made, was that employers have access to the same type of sensitive information of ‘regular’ citizens, whilst they do not have access to this type of sensitive information of refugees.

- *Have these ideas already been brought up by the stakeholders themselves?*

As told by the experts in the field of integration of refugees, there are a lot of initiatives and currently running projects that are aimed to (further) improve the integration of refugees. The problem with all the ideas and initiatives that are brought up to solve some of the current barriers to integration, is that not everyone shares the same view just yet. Decisions have to be made and relevant actors have to decide what the next best steps will be, but somehow this is not taking place (yet). As identified by a representative of the municipality, there is quite some research that is being carried out by Maastricht University that relates back to the integration of refugees. Unfortunately, the conclusions of all of this research are not transformed into shaping the policies themselves. The stakeholders seem to carry out their own research and for example the municipality does not take the findings from the university into consideration. Therefore, an improvement in the collaboration between the municipality and Maastricht University was one of the things that was brought up.

APPENDIX

1 Indicators for the area of education

Topic	Description
Enrolment in education of refugee children and youth	How many children and youth (up to 25 years old) seeking or benefiting from international protection were enrolled in education in the last calendar year?
Average time between an asylum-application and the enrolment of children in primary/secondary education/preparatory education	How long did it take, on average in the last calendar year, for the children of asylum-seekers to be enrolled in school?
Access to education	Which groups' children and youth have the legal right to equal treatment in education?
Access to education for groups of special concern	Must education law take into account the specific situation of vulnerable persons receiving international protection?
Administrative barriers to education	Which administrative requirements can pose a barrier for accessing education for persons seeking or benefiting from international protection?
Raising awareness about the specific situation of beneficiaries of international protection regarding education	Which measures are taken to raise awareness for the specific challenges of persons seeking or benefiting from international protection regarding education?
Placement in the compulsory school system	How are the children of beneficiaries of international protection placed in the school system?
Length of language support	For how long can children of these groups benefit from state-funded support for learning the host language?
Regularity of orientation and language programs and targeted education measures	Are orientation and language programs and targeted educational measures offered in a systematic manner? Do they receive systematic funding?
Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of children and youth under international protection into education policies	Has the ministry responsible for education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopted a formal strategy involving all relevant partners (government ministries, education bodies, research institutions, professional associations, NGOs) to facilitate the integration of beneficiaries of international protection through education?

- A mechanism to monitor education policies and outcomes for children and youth under international protection?
- A mechanism to review education legislation, programs, practices and outcomes for children and youth under international protection in coordination with all relevant partners (government ministries, education bodies, research institutions, professional associations, NGOs)?

<p>Coordination with regional and/or local education authorities and school boards on education for children and youth under international protection</p>	<p>Does the national government coordinate with regional education authorities and school boards to: support them in dealing with the education needs of children and youth under international protection (i.e. guidelines, trainings)? Provide additional means to adequately address education needs of children and youth under international protection?</p>
<p>Partnership on education with expert NGOs</p>	<p>Does the state provide means for expert NGOs which help children and youth under international protection to receive adequate education support?</p>
<p>Participation in targeted education</p>	<p>How many minor asylum seekers and children and youth under international protection participated in targeted education in the last calendar year?</p>
<p>Budgets for targeted educational measures for minor beneficiaries of international protection</p>	<p>What was the size of the public budget specifically tagged for targeted educational measures for minor beneficiaries actually spent in the last calendar year?</p>
<p>Education staff for minor beneficiaries of international protection</p>	<p>What was the number of publicly funded, full-time equivalent staff in the last calendar tagged as directly working on supporting the education of minor beneficiaries of international protection?</p>

2 Indicators for the area of housing

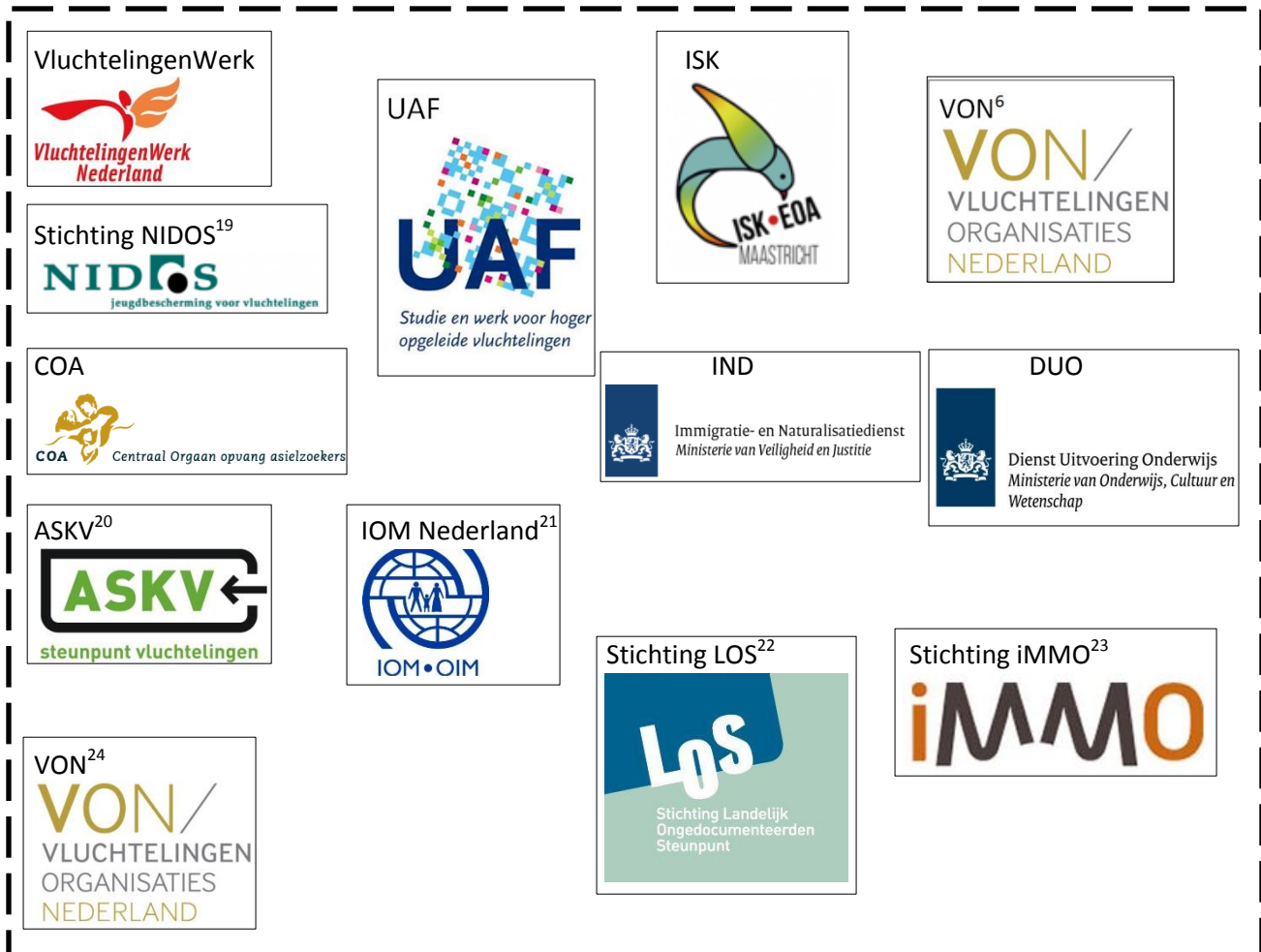
Topic	Description
Free movement and choice of residence within the country	Can these groups freely choose the housing, city and region where they want to live?
Access to housing and housing benefits	Do these groups have the legal right to equal treatment in housing and housing benefits (which includes rent control/subsidies, public/social housing and participation in housing financing schemes) or do they have to fulfill general conditions that they could not be expected to meet as newcomers?
Access to housing for vulnerable persons	<p>To what extent is it required by law that housing policy and services take into account the specific situation of vulnerable groups of beneficiaries of international protection?</p> <p>a. This group is identified as a vulnerable group in eligibility for mainstream housing benefits (like social housing, housing subsidies), leading to facilitated access to those benefits.</p> <p>b. The availability of targeted housing support is required by law for persons belonging to this group (i.e. transitional support from asylum accommodation centers, special homes, special counselling services).</p>
Access to property rights	Do these groups have the legal right to equal treatment in property rights (which includes the acquisition of property and real estate, revenue, sale, leases and contracts) or do they have to fulfill general conditions that they could not be expected to meet as newcomers?
Administrative barriers to accessing public housing	<p>Which administrative requirements can pose a barrier for accessing public housing for persons benefiting from international protection?</p> <p>a. Required documentation is very hard to obtain (not considering costs)</p> <p>b. Excessive administrative delays and waiting periods</p> <p>c. The procedure is subject to discretionary decisions with uncertain outcome</p>
Awareness raising about the specific challenges of beneficiaries of international protection on the housing market	<p>Which measures are taken to raise awareness for the specific challenges of persons benefiting from international protection on the housing market?</p> <p>a. Public housing bodies are regularly sent information on the entitlements and specific limitations of persons seeking or benefiting from international protection.</p>

	<p>b. Public housing bodies are obliged to regularly inform their staff on the entitlements and specific limitations of persons benefiting from international protection regarding the housing market.</p> <p>c. Publicly financed campaigns sensitize private housing actors (landlords, property managements) across the country about the situation of beneficiaries of international protection and target prejudices and perceptions among them.</p>
Targeted housing advice, counselling, representation	Is targeted housing advice, counselling and representation available for beneficiaries of international protection by housing experts?
Provision of targeted temporary housing support	Does this group benefit from targeted, temporary in-cash or in-kind housing support?
Provision of targeted long-term housing support	Does this group benefit from targeted long-term housing support?
Period of targeted housing support	For how long can this group benefit from targeted housing support?
Housing quality assessment	Which of these criteria do authorities have to take into account when allocating in-kind housing assistance for this group? Security of tenure (1); Affordability of housing (2); Accessibility of key services (including transport, schools, integration services) (3); Adequacy of basic infrastructure of the accommodation (i.e. space, lighting, ventilation) (4); Availability of employment opportunities (5); The beneficiary's own preference (6)
Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into housing policies	<p>Has the ministry responsible for housing:</p> <p>a. adopted a formal strategy involving relevant partners (government ministries, regional and local authorities, NGOs) to facilitate the integration of beneficiaries of international protection through housing?</p> <p>b. a mechanism to monitor the use of housing policies and services and the housing outcomes for beneficiaries of international protection?</p> <p>c. a mechanism to review housing legislation, practices, services and outcomes for beneficiaries of international protection in coordination with all relevant partners (government ministries, regional and local authorities, NGOs)?</p>

Coordination with regional and local authorities on housing for beneficiaries of international protection	Does the national government coordinate with regional and local authorities to: a. support them that beneficiaries of international protection live in areas with integration perspectives ? b. provide means to adequately address housing needs of beneficiaries of international protection?
Partnership on housing with expert NGOs	Does the state provide means for expert NGOs to assist beneficiaries of international protection to find accommodation?
Budget for the housing market integration of beneficiaries of international protection	What was the size of the public budget specifically tagged for the public (targeted or mainstream) housing of beneficiaries actually spent in the last calendar year?
Share of beneficiaries of international protection living in the area of their choice	How many beneficiaries of international protection last year were living in the locality, region where they want to live in the country?
Number of beneficiaries of international protection using targeted public accommodation	How many beneficiaries of international protection used targeted public accommodation in the last calendar year?
Length of the use of targeted public accommodation	How long on average do beneficiaries of international protection use targeted public accommodation (based on numbers of the last calendar year)?
Targeted in-cash housing benefits after status recognition	What was the average amount of publicly provided, in-cash housing support per month per beneficiary after status recognition in the last calendar year?
Housing security of beneficiaries of international protection	How many persons were living: homeless? Informally with friends, family, acquaintances etc.? In mainstream temporary public housing? In mainstream long-term public housing (including housing associations)? In long-term private housing with legal contract? In housing they own themselves?
Housing disadvantage	How many persons benefiting from international protection reported a disadvantaged housing situation in the last calendar year because of: a disproportionately high share of rental costs among all expenditures? Overcrowded living conditions? Substandard housing conditions/infrastructure? Remote location (no or remote access to public services, schooling, employment opportunities, family and community life)?

3 Mapping of stakeholders

National level:



¹⁹ Stichting NIDOS has guardianship over unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers that arrive in the Netherlands without their parents.

²⁰ Amsterdams Solidariteits Komitee Vluchtelingen (ASKV) aids undocumented refugees that cannot or dare not to go back to their country of origin.

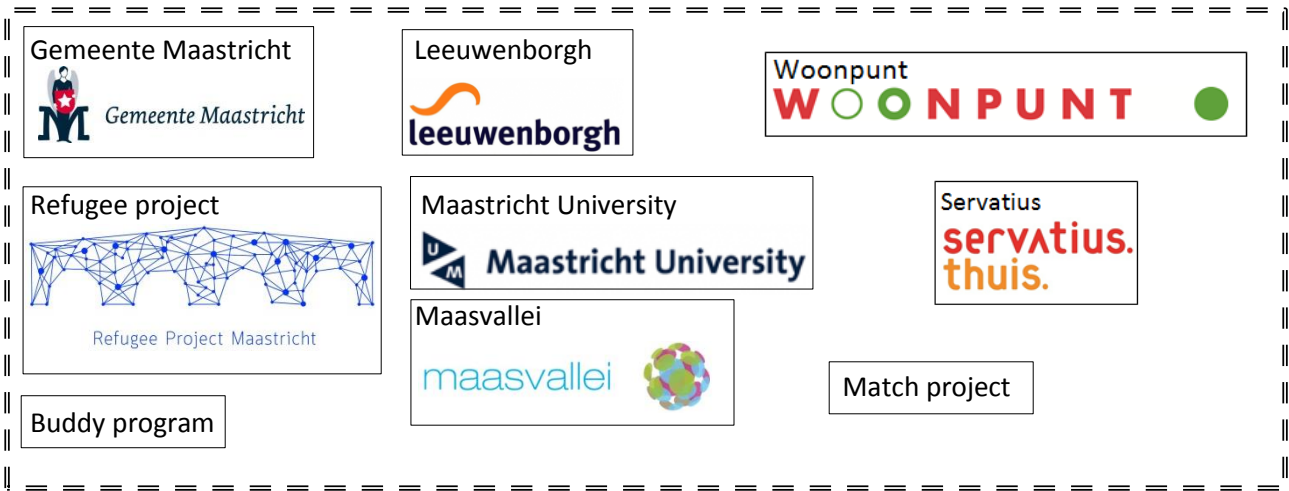
²¹ International Organization for Migration the Netherlands (IOM the Netherlands).

²² Stichting Landelijk Ongedocumenteerden Steunpunt (LOS) supports individuals and organizations that are involved with undocumented individuals.

²³ Stichting instituut voor Mensenrechten en Medisch Onderzoek (iMMO) supports laws and regulations regarding a careful asylum procedure.

²⁴ Vluchtelingen Organisaties Nederland (VON) is a dome organization from smaller, self-initiated organizations for refugees; their website does not provide information from the organizations themselves, but they do connect individuals that are interested.

Local level:



REFERENCES

- Ager, A., Strang, A. (2008). *Understanding Integration. A conceptual Framework*. Journal of Refugee Studies, v21(2).
- Bodewig, C. (2015). Education is the key to integrating refugees in Europe | Brookings Institution. Retrieved 25 May 2017, from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2015/11/23/education-is-the-key-to-integrating-refugees-in-europe/>
- Bruquetas-Callejo, M., Garcés-Mascareñas, B., Penninx, R. and Scholten, P. (n.d.). Policymaking related to immigration and integration. The Dutch Case. IMISCOE Working Paper: Country Report, N.15. Available at: <http://www.mighealth.net/nl/images/8/8c/Brus.pdf>
- Castles, S., Miller M. (2003). *The Age of Migration. Third Edition*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Entzinger, H. (2003). The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands. In: C. Joppke. and E. Morawska (Eds.) *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States*. Palgrave.
- EP [European Parliament] (2016). Briefing: Integration of migrants: The education dimension. Sourced from: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/583847/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)53847_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/583847/EPRS_BRI(2016)53847_EN.pdf).
- Europa (n.d.). *Getting serious with refugee integration in Europe: The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) project*. Retrived from: http://ec.europa.eu/poland/sites/poland/files/161118_presentation.pdf. Accessed on 13/05/2017.
- Fischler, F. (2014). Integration Policy- Netherlands Country Report. INTERACT RR2014/15, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute. Available at: <http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/32657/INTERACT-RR-2014%20%2015.pdf;sequence=1>

- Juzwiak, T., McGregor, E., Siegel, M. (2014). Migrant and Refugee Integration in Global Cities: The role of Cities and Businesses, Policy Brief, UNU-MERIT.
- Klaver, J. (2016). Local responses to the Refugee Crisis in the Netherlands, NIEM ANALYSES. Available at: http://www.forintegration.eu/uploads/drive/publikacje/pdf/holandia_1.pdf
- Nesse (2008). *Education and Migration. Strategies for integrating migrant children in European schools and societies. A synthesis of research findings for policy-makers*. Sourced from: <http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/reports/activities/reports/education-and-migration.pdf#page=43>. Accessed on 25/06/2017.
- Penninx, R. (2005). After the Fortuyn and Van Gogh Murders: Is the Dutch integration model in disarray? Lecture in the International Seminar for Experts 'Integrating Migrants in Europe - Comparing the Different National Approaches', organized by the Cicero Foundation in the series Great Debates, Paris, 9 - 10 June 2005. Available at: http://www.cicerofoundation.org/pdf/lecture_penninx.pdf
- Philips, D., (2006). *Moving Towards Integration: The Housing of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain*. Journal of Housing Studies, v21(4).
- Peters, B., (1993). *Die Integration Moderner Gesellschaften*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Main.
- Vasta, E. (2007). From ethnic minorities to ethnic majority policy: multiculturalism and the shift to assimilationism in the Netherlands. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, v30 (5).