



EMN NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2018

On 31 May 2018, the European Migration Network (EMN) organised its annual national conference at the Europe House in the Hague. The theme of the conference was 'National Migration Agendas in the Netherlands and the European Union'. The conference included presentations of the national migration agendas of France and the Netherlands, an academic lecture on the relationship between the EU and national migration agendas, and a discussion of the provision of e-services and a data-driven approach in the field of legal migration.

Welcome

The conference chair, **Hans Faber**, the Deputy General Director of the Dutch Repatriation and Departure Service welcomed the participants and introduced the programme of the conference. Subsequently, **Andreas Zenthöfer** welcomed the participants on behalf of the Europe House, the venue of the conference.

Opening address

Annemieke van Dam, the Director Strategy and Implementation Advice Department of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service, delivered the opening address. Annemieke van Dam replaced **Aly van Berckel**, the General-Director of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service, who was not able to join the conference. Annemieke van Dam shared her thoughts on the 10th anniversary of the EMN and the theme of the conference. Looking back on the past ten years, Annemieke van Dam stated that EMN has made an important contribution to policy making over the past ten years.

International panel on national migration agendas: France and the Netherlands

This part of the EMN conference included presentations by **Isabelle Swerissen** from the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security and **Christelle Caporali-Petit** from EMN NCP France. Isabelle Swerissen informed the audience about the central idea behind the Dutch migration agenda as well as its underlying principles and six pillars to accomplish these principles. Christelle Caporali-Petit discussed the priorities of France, which focused on measures related to the French action plan on migration, such as the reform of the integration policy and the improved management of migratory flows and reception of asylum seekers. Following the presentations of the Netherlands and France, a lively discussion ensued with the audience. The audience appeared to be especially interested in how the member states deal with issues of irregular migration and family reunification in their national migration agendas as well as the effectiveness of the proposed measures therein.

Presentation: 'Towards more coherence in the European and national migration policies: repairing deficits and trust'

After a short coffee break, **Evelien Brouwer**, Senior Researcher of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, presented her thoughts on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the idea of trust in migration policy, discussing the issues of coherence and shared responsibility. In general, it was stressed that refugee protection is one of the responsibilities of the EU, based on the principles of shared responsibility and solidarity. This has become even more apparent after the migration crisis of 2015–2017 with the high influx of asylum seekers.



According to Evelien Brouwer, a sound solution to the problems of coherence and responsibility in migration policies requires both action at the EU and the national level. Member states and EU institutions need to be more aware that when cooperating or developing tools in the field of migration and border control, there are different actors and objects of trust involved, with different levels of legal standards and procedural guarantees. Member states can build a coherent approach of migration policy only if this is based on EU principles of sincere cooperation and solidarity. To accomplish this, an enhanced cooperation of information between member states must exist and a high level of harmonization of asylum laws needs to be accomplished. If these measures do not work, it could be considered to provide EU agencies with a bigger role.

Dialogue on facilitating legal migration in the ‘battle for talent’

In light of one of the pillars of the Netherlands national migration agenda, legal migration, **Hein Verweij**, Coordinating Advisor and **Irlan Agous**, Programme Manager, both from the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service, informed the audience about the e-services and an information-driven approach for the battle for talent. The presentation was supported by **Bart Oomen**, who is involved in the EU-WAT (Web Application Tools) project. They underlined the importance of e-services, as mentioned in the Dutch migration agenda, for attracting highly skilled migrants, facilitating the whole process from application procedure to enforcement. In their presentation, Hein Verweij and Irlan Agous explained that in legal migration the Netherlands work with a system of recognized sponsors.¹ And that this system is facilitated by e-services, by managing an e-portal, online correspondence and semi-automatic checks of criteria. According to Hein Verweij and Irlan Agous, it is a goal to further improve e-services, by reducing decision-making time and being even more proactive towards clients. The presentation led to an interesting dialogue with the audience. The discussion mainly focused on EU cooperation, digitalization and the legal boundaries of e-services.

Closing remarks

After an interesting mix of both national and international speakers, **Jan-Kees Goet**, Director-General for Migration of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security, drew the main conclusions. Jan-Kees Goet stated that it is crucial to share knowledge, best-practises and experiences by bringing together specialists from different backgrounds and different countries. Moreover, he emphasized that the Netherlands regularly benefits from the work of the EMN. Building networks is one way of reaching this goal, and, according to Jan-Kees Goet, the national EMN conference 2018 perfectly illustrates this.

¹ A sponsor is a person or organisation that has an interest in the residence of a third-country national in the Netherlands who helps the third-country national throughout its application and stay, both bearing rights and obligations.

