



# INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL/ HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION INTO THE DUTCH LABOUR MARKET: policies and good practices





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OF INTERNATIONAL/  
HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION  
INTO THE DUTCH LABOUR  
MARKET: policies and good practices

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## Credits

<b>Title</b>	Integration of beneficiaries of international/ humanitarian protection into the Dutch labour market Policies and good practices
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What measures does the Dutch government pursue to encourage the integration of beneficiaries in the labour market? This is the focus of this EU-wide study of the European Migration Network, of which this report describes the situation in the Netherlands.

To respond to this question, this report addresses the legal frameworks which determine the position of beneficiaries in the labour market in respect of other migrants and Dutch citizens. This study analyses the contents of the measures taken by the Dutch government to encourage the integration of beneficiaries. Here the policy measures applicable in 2015 will be addressed as much as possible, as well as policy initiatives that will possibly be implemented in the near future. After this scrutiny, this report deals with good initiatives and issues in the current integration policy in respect of beneficiaries.

When a third-country national submits an application for asylum, an investigation is carried out whether he is eligible for international protection within the meaning of the Qualification Directive. International protection applies if the refugee status or subsidiary protection is granted. All these people are given the asylum status which grants them the same legal status in the labour market as Dutch inhabitants.

Getting beneficiaries into employment is legally provided for in the Participation Act. This legislation is applicable to all Dutch citizens and third-country nationals who stay lawfully in the Netherlands<sup>1</sup> who have no resources to provide for their essential subsistence costs. This legislation details the rights and obligations applicable to beneficiaries, just like other people on social assistance benefit, in respect of the labour market and social services.

In its response to the increased influx of asylum seekers, the Dutch government introduced a number of measures in the second half of 2015 that focus on the participation of beneficiaries in education and in employment. In light of this influx, a Ministerial Committee on Migration was established in August, in which measures are discussed which focus on the asylum procedure, the reception of asylum seekers and the allocation of responsibilities within the European Union, as well as the integration process of asylum seekers and beneficiaries. These recent measures – insofar as is possible – are included in this review. Aside from the Participation Act, this study addresses integration-encouraging factors: language and orientation, education, credentials evaluation, care, counselling and housing.

In respect of language and orientation the Civic Integration Act stipulates that beneficiaries must successfully complete the civic integration examination within three years. Since 1 January 2015 the module 'orientation in the Dutch labour market' has become a mandatory component within this civic integration programme. In respect of education,

1 As meant in Section 8, subparagraphs a through e and l of the Aliens Act 2000, with the exception of cases pursuant to article 24, second paragraph of Council Directive 2004/38/EC.

in the autumn of 2015 measures were announced by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science to encourage enrolment of beneficiaries into higher education. A significant portion of these measures are geared towards improving the language proficiency of this target group. Furthermore, the UAF fulfils an important role in the counselling and assistance of asylum seekers and beneficiaries during their study programme. The evaluation of credentials attained abroad is taken care of by EP Nuffic and the Cooperation Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB), who also offer to provide a recognition of qualifications when a beneficiary has not brought any qualification certificates.

Social counselling is the responsibility of the municipalities, who, by means of a predetermined subsidy, can purchase counselling from civil society organisations such as the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands. Here, mainly volunteers living in the region are deployed, whereby reciprocal contact can be made between beneficiaries and the local community. On the basis of a programme target, beneficiaries are allocated housing by the municipality. This measure was not introduced to aim at getting people into employment, but it does possibly contribute to it. After all, differences exist between regions where it concerns the labour market and sectors where there is a demand for personnel. All beneficiaries who do not have the resources to provide for their essential subsistence costs, are entitled to financial assistance as stipulated in the Participation Act. The responsibility for the implementation of this legislation is assigned to the municipalities.

Experts who were interviewed on behalf of this study indicated that the policy measures and projects that are implemented by the authorities and civic organisations, could have a structural, positive influence on the integration of beneficiaries in the labour market. In spite of this, they distinguish some points of attention which restrict the accessibility of these measures. In the first instance the self-rescuing capacity that beneficiaries are expected to use for the purpose of integration, is not always considered as feasible. There are a large number of facilities available for this target group, but beneficiaries are not always in a position to make use of this independently. As a result of the increased influx of asylum seekers a systematic check is carried out on how this target group can be supervised better. Secondly, municipalities do not always have a good picture of the level of integration of beneficiaries who must be housed in the municipality. It's for this reason that no specific social counselling is purchased. The manner of financing this social counselling also leads to the fact that new arrangements must be made every year between individual municipalities and the providers of counselling, which makes matters expensive. Thirdly, several measures are legally decentralised, whereas municipalities – understandingly – do not always have the expertise and budget to focus their services better on the needs of people who require more attention in their counselling into the labour market, including beneficiaries.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACVZ	Advisory Committee for Migration Affairs
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
BPR	Personal Records and Travel Documents Database Agency
BZK	(Ministry of the) Interior and Kingdom Relations
BIG	Health Care Professionals
CBS	Statistics Netherlands
COA	Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers
CNV	National Federation of Christian Trade Unions in the Netherlands
DUO	Education Executive Agency
ECHO	Expertise Centre for Ethnic Minorities in Higher Education
EMN	European Migration Network
EP Nuffic	European Platform - Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation
ESF	European Social fund
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FNV	Dutch Trade Union Confederation
GBA	Municipal personal records database
GCA	Asylum Seeker's Health Centre
GVA	Accelerated municipal housing scheme
HBO	Higher Professional Education
IcDW	Information Centre Credential Evaluation
IDW	International Credential Evaluation
IND	Immigration and Naturalisation Service
IPO	Interprovincial Consultative Committee
IVA	Fully Disabled Persons Income Scheme
KNS	Knowledge of Dutch Society
OCW	(Ministry of) Education, Culture and Science
ONA	Orientation in the Dutch labour market
MBO	Senior Secondary Vocational Education
RVA	Asylum Seekers and Other Categories of Aliens (Provisions) Regulations 2005
RWN	Netherlands Nationality Act
RZA	Healthcare for Asylum Seekers Regulation Market
SBB	Cooperation Vocational Education, Training and Labour
SCP	Netherlands Institute for Social Research
SER	Social Economic Council
SME	Royal Association of Small and Medium-sized Businesses Netherlands
SUWI	Work and Income (Implementation Organisation Structure) Act
SZW	(Ministry of) Social Affairs and Employment
TWIV	Task force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees

TWV	Work Permit
UAF	University Assistance Fund
UWV	Employee Insurance Agency
V&J	(Ministry of) Security and Justice
VNG	Association of Netherlands Municipalities
VNO-NCW	Employer's organisation
VON	Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands
VSNU	Association of Universities in the Netherlands
VWN	Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands
VWS	(Ministry of) Public Health, Welfare and Sport
Wajong	Invalidity Insurance (Young Disabled Persons) Act
WAO	Invalidity Insurance Act
WGA	Return to Work for the Partially Disabled Scheme
WHW	Higher Education and Research Act
WODC	Research and Documentation Centre
WRGT	Generic Supervision (Revitalization) Act
WRR	Scientific Council for Government Policy
Wsw	Sheltered Employment Act
Wwb	Work and Social Assistance Act

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In its EU Agenda on Migration (2015) the European Commission states that the integration of beneficiaries of international/humanitarian protection is one of the most important challenges for European Member States.<sup>2</sup> In view of the recent increase of the influx of refugees in comparison to preceding years, the successful integration of beneficiaries is a topic of prevailing importance. Up to now there have been no concrete policy measures on a European level to deal with beneficiaries as a specific target group within the integration policy.

Beneficiaries perceive labour market participation as an essential part of the integration process.<sup>3</sup> Having a (paid) job, after all, can give them a feeling of pride, because they can then maintain themselves and their family and provide a positive contribution to society. At the same time this group has to contend with practical obstacles which could be an obstruction for a good starting position in the labour market, such as a limited language proficiency, a limited social network and discrimination.<sup>4</sup>

This is not only problematic for the beneficiary, but also for society as a whole. It leads to a greater usage of social services, whereas the current ageing of the population calls for an increase in qualified personnel. It's also for this reason that it is important for governments that this target group is given a good starting position in the labour market.

The focused objective of this study is to gain an insight into the manner in which European Member States envisage to improve the integration of beneficiaries in the labour market. This report addresses the legal frameworks which provide structure to the integration policy and the organisation of policy measures in common practice. This means that measures in the field of language and orientation training, professional and higher education, the credentials evaluation, counselling, housing and reintegration and social assistance benefit will be discussed. An important component of this study is the detailing of 'best practices' and points of attention within the current integration policy.

## **Methodology**

This study was carried out on remit for the European Migration Network (EMN). EMN is financed by the European Commission and its objective is to collect current, reliable and possibly comparable information in the field of migration and asylum. The study specifications for this study have been ascertained on a European level.

As the national EMN contact point in the Netherlands, the Research & Analysis department of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service is responsible for the implementation of this study and the publication of the Dutch report. On a European level, a Synthesis Report is compiled on the basis of the study reports from all participating Member States.

2 European Commission (2015) 'European Agenda on Migration,' p. 16-17.

3 UNHCR (2013) 'A New Beginning, Refugee Integration in Europe.'

4 Ibid.

In the context of this study a sounding board group was set up consisting of experts from the Ministry of Security and Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, the Education Executive Agency, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, EP Nuffic, the Cooperation Vocational Education, Training and Labour Market, the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, the University Assistance Fund, the Research and Documentation Centre and the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers.

For this study, use has largely been made of formal, publicly available information. Where necessary, this information has been supplemented with help from the expertise of members in the sounding board group. It is important to emphasise that the good practices and points of attention included in this report are not scientifically proven. It mainly concerns detections of possible good working methods and points of attention picked up from the sounding board group.

For ease of readability and conceptual clarity, the choice was made to use the term 'beneficiary' to indicate the target group of this study. The term is clarified in more detail in Chapter 1 of this study report. This report also contains an explanatory glossary.

In each Chapter, if applicable, a differentiation is made between facilities to which beneficiaries are entitled *inside a reception centre*, and the facilities for beneficiaries who live *independently*.

## 2 THE LABOUR MARKET POSITION OF BENEFICIARIES

This Chapter defines the target group of this study by describing the legal provisions on the status of beneficiaries. Paragraph 2.1 addresses the legal position of this target group compared to other migrants from third countries, after which paragraph 2.2 provides an overview of existing data about the participation of beneficiaries in the Netherlands.

### 2.1 The legal status of beneficiaries

This report focuses on third-country nationals who apply for asylum and who are eligible for international protection within the meaning of the Qualification Directive. International protection applies if the refugee status or subsidiary protection is granted. Refugee status is assumed if the person involved would be persecuted in the country of origin for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political conviction or belonging to a certain social group.

Section 29, paragraphs 1a and b of the Aliens Act stipulate that a temporary residence permit as meant in Section 28 can be granted to a third-country national if:

- a. he/she is a refugee under the terms of the Convention; or
- b. he/she has made it plausible that he/she has well-founded reasons to assume that, on removal, he/she effectively runs the risk of having to suffer serious harm, consisting of:

- 1°. death penalty or execution;
- 2°. torture, inhuman or degrading treatments or punishments; or
- 3°. serious and individual threat on the life or the person of a citizen as a result of random violence in the context of an international or inland armed conflict.

In addition, the study also focuses on persons who are given a humanitarian protection status residence permit within the framework of an asylum procedure because of obligations in the context of international refugee or human rights instruments. In the Netherlands this only concerns people who are admitted on the grounds of Section 29(2) of the Aliens Act 2000, insofar as they have entered the country at the same time as the accompanying refugee or person who becomes eligible for subsidiary protection. Here it concerns:

1. the spouse or minor-aged child of the third-country national as meant in the first paragraph;
2. the third-country national who, as a partner or adult-aged child of the third-country

- national as meant in the first paragraph, is dependent on that third-country national as such, that, for this reason, he belongs to their family;
3. the parents of a third-country national as meant in the first paragraph, if that third-country national is an unaccompanied minor within the meaning of Article 2, under f of Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 in respect of entitlement to family reunification (PbEU 2003, L 251).

In the Netherlands, all these people are given the same residency status, being a temporary asylum residence permit.

**Table 1: Number of extensions of the asylum status, divided into type of protection, between 2010-2014.<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Number of granted statuses/year</b>					
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Refugee status</b>	810	710	630	1150	2485
<b>Subsidiary protection</b>	4010	4065	3325	3350	9290
<b>Humanitarian protection status residence permit<sup>6</sup></b>	3180	2050	1550	1465	775
<b>Total number of asylums granted</b>	8000	6825	5505	5965	12,515
<b>Increase in respect of previous year</b>		-14.69%	-19.34%	+8.36%	+109.81%

Table 1 shows the number of persons granted a temporary asylum residence permit pursuant to Section 29 of the Aliens Act between 2010-2015. This table shows a significant increase in the total number of granted asylum statuses in respect of 2010. The temporary asylum residence permit provides unlimited access to the Dutch labour market, without additional conditions. Employers do not require a work permit to employ beneficiaries.<sup>7</sup> This is in contrast with migrants who want to stay in the Netherlands with another purpose of residency.

The holder of this residence permit is obliged to participate in a civic integration programme and, in principle, must comply with this obligation within 3 years after being granted the permit.<sup>8</sup> For beneficiaries staying in COA reception centres for longer periods, an extended period of civic integration applies. The period of civic integration is

<sup>5</sup> Statistics obtained via Eurostat.

<sup>6</sup> In the English language version at Eurostat this group is defined as being under humanitarian protection: See Eurostat definition of "authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons" which stipulates: "a person covered by a decision granting authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons under national law concerning international protection by administrative or judicial bodies. It includes persons who are not eligible for international protection as currently defined in the Qualifications Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU) but are nonetheless protected against removal under the obligations that are imposed on all Member States by international refugee or human rights instruments or on the basis of principles flowing from such instruments. [...]persons granted a permission to stay for humanitarian reasons but who have not previously applied for international protection are not included under this concept."

<sup>7</sup> Implementation Decree Foreign Nationals (Employment) Act, Section 1c, elaborated in the Aliens Act Implementation Guidelines 2000, C 2/9

<sup>8</sup> Section 7 of the Civic Integration Act

extended by the number of months that the beneficiary stays in the reception centre, minus eight weeks.<sup>9</sup> As of 1 January 2015, the examination component on knowledge of Dutch society has been supplemented with a section on orientation in the Dutch labour market.<sup>10</sup>

After five years, holders of a temporary asylum residence permit could become eligible for a permanent residence permit, the so-called permanent asylum residence permit. Then the third-country national must comply with the civic integration requirement.<sup>11</sup> With a permanent resident permit the beneficiary is also eligible for Dutch citizenship, on the proviso that a number of additional conditions are complied with. For this purpose the obligation to participate in a civic integration programme also applies as a precondition.<sup>12</sup> If the beneficiary has already complied with this obligation in the context of obtaining the permanent residence permit, then the beneficiary is released from this aspect.

In this study, all persons who are staying in the Netherlands on the grounds of subsidiary protection or are refugees under the terms of the Convention, are referred to as 'beneficiaries'.

## 2.2 The labour market participation of beneficiaries

Various studies have been published on the integration of beneficiaries and the participation of this target group. This paragraph provides an overview from two study reports which address these themes: a recently appearing policy letter<sup>13</sup>, published by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), and the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC), and the *Integration Barometer*<sup>14</sup> published by the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands. It's important to note in the interpretation of this data, that the groups who were monitored in these studies, had to deal with other integration measures than the beneficiaries who recently obtained a residence permit.

### *Integration study by the WRR, the SCP and the WODC*

The policy letter by the WRR, the SCP and the WODC describes the integration of a cohort of 33,000 beneficiaries who obtained a residence permit between 1995-1999 and who stayed in the Netherlands at least until 2011. In addition, the researchers involved examined practical aspects of integration of beneficiaries in eleven Dutch municipalities. The selected cohort contains beneficiaries originating from Afghanistan (19%), Iraq (23%), Somalia (3%), Iran (10%), former Yugoslavia (18%), sub-Saharan Africa (8%), and other non-western countries outside Africa (19%).

9 The period can be extended at most by 6 months

10 Bulletin of Acts and Decrees 2014, 404: Decree of 16 October 2014 amending the Civic Integration Decree and the Aliens Decree 2000 in connection with the addition of a practical examination for the purpose of orientation in the Dutch labour market as part of the knowledge of Dutch society and a few other amendments

11 See Article 3.107a of the Aliens Decree, so too for the exceptions

12 Netherlands Nationality Act (RWN) Section 8, first paragraph, under d

13 WRR, SCP, WODC (2015) '*Geen tijd verliezen. Van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten*' ['Don't lose time. From reception to integration of asylum seeking migrants']

14 Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands (2014) '*IntegratieBarometer 2014*'. ['2014 Integration Barometer']

The report describes that labour market participation amongst beneficiaries, especially during the first few years of their stay in the Netherlands, is very low when compared with non-western labour migrants and non-western family migrants.<sup>15</sup> The differences between these three migrant groups has reduced in the course of time. A quarter of the beneficiaries has a job of more than 8 hours per week after staying in the Netherlands for two years. 90% of the labour migrants and 50% of the family migrants have a job after two years. Over the years beneficiaries participate more often in the labour market; after five years 50% of the beneficiaries have a job, and 57% of the beneficiaries have a job after 15 years. By the same token, after 15 years less labour migrants participate in the labour market which reduces the difference between these groups. This trend has been observed in the number of full time jobs of more than 30 hours per week<sup>16</sup>. After 15 years about one-third of the family migrants and asylum seeking migrants have a full time job. Within the group of beneficiaries originating from different countries there are differences in the labour market position. With a labour market participation of 65% beneficiaries originating from former Yugoslavia perform the best and beneficiaries from Somalia perform the worst (43%). Other migrant groups achieve an average of 55%.

Compared to the native Dutch population the policy letter describes that non-western third-country nationals make use more often of a social assistance benefit. In September 2013 migrants originating from Somalia were most often dependent on a social assistance benefit (53%). This was followed by migrants originating from Iraq (37%), Afghanistan (26%) and Iran (24%). Of the native Dutch population during that period, 2% had a social assistance benefit.<sup>17</sup>

### ***The Integration Barometer of the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands***

On the basis of statistics supplied by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) the 2014 Integration Barometer of the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, describes the labour market position of a cohort of refugees.<sup>18</sup> The statistics available on the participation of this group, where possible, are compared to statistics available on the participation of Dutch nationals and other non-western migrants.<sup>19</sup>

An important marginal note in the use of these statistics is that the target group selected by the Dutch Council for Refugees is more extensive than the target group discussed in this study. This cohort also includes people who eventually obtained a residence permit on grounds other than asylum, and people who were still awaiting a decision on an

15 WRR, SCP, WODC (2015) 'Don't lose time. Van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten' ['Don't lose time. From reception to integration of asylum seeking migrants'] p. 10-11

16 WRR, SCP, WODC (2015) 'Don't lose time. Van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten' ['From reception to integration of asylum seeking migrants'] p. 12

17 WRR, SCP, WODC (2015) 'Don't lose time. Van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten' ['From reception to integration of asylum seeking migrants'] p. 10

18 This selected cohort comprises people who came to the Netherlands between 2000 and 2010 and applied for asylum, as well as people who had been granted residence status by 1 January 2010, and who were aged between 15 and 64 on 1 January 2013

19 A selection of people who established themselves in the period from 2000 to 2010 in the Netherlands, and who are staying in the Netherlands on grounds relating to labour, family formation, study and other non-asylum reasons

asylum application at that point in time. This possibly shows a distorted picture of the labour market participation of the target group of this study, because people who are still awaiting a decision on their asylum applications do not have the same rights in the labour market as beneficiaries.

Table 2 shows the labour market position of the cohort of refugees in comparison to non-western foreigners and Dutch nationals. It is apparent from this table that asylum seeking migrants have a paid job less often than the native Dutch population. In comparison to other non-western migrants, in relative terms, they do have a paid job more often. By the same token, the asylum seeking migrants selected in this Integration Barometer, in relative terms, more often live on a social assistance benefit (39%) than other non-western migrants (12%) and Dutch nationals (2%). Asylum seeking migrants make less use of benefits for being occupationally disabled than both reference groups (45%) in comparison to non-western foreigners (18%) and Dutch nationals (14%).

**Table 2: Labour market participation of the cohort of refugees, non-western foreigners and Dutch nationals (aged 15-64) as at 1 January 2013.**

	Cohort of refugees <sup>20</sup>		Other non-western migrants 2000-2010 <sup>21</sup>		Dutch nationals	
	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage
<b>Cohort (total)</b>	<b>62,451</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>222,207</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,614,697</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Paid job</b>	<b>28,629</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>99,125</b>	<b>44.61%</b>	<b>6,394,483</b>	<b>74.23%</b>
<b>No benefit</b>	<b>34,086</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>181,125</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>7,391,525</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>Benefits</b>						
<b>Social assistance benefit (WWB)</b>	<b>24,205</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>26,542</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>196,433</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Unemployment (WW)</b>	<b>3,974</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>11,083</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>426,793</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>People unfit for work (Total)</b>	<b>1,384</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5,103</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>625,273</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>* Wajong</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>0.89%</b>	<b>1,277</b>	<b>0.57%</b>	<b>184,298</b>	<b>2.14%</b>
<b>* WAO</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>0.23%</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>0.41%</b>	<b>304,376</b>	<b>3.53%</b>
<b>* IVA</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>0.14%</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>0.16%</b>	<b>39,045</b>	<b>0.45%</b>
<b>* WGA</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>0.94%</b>	<b>2,560</b>	<b>1.15%</b>	<b>97,554</b>	<b>1.13%</b>
<b>Total with benefits<sup>22</sup></b>	<b>28,365</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>41,082</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>1,223,172</b>	<b>14%</b>

Source: Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands (2014)

20 Persons aged between 15 and 64, who arrived in the Netherlands between 2000 and 2010 and applied for asylum, and were still staying in the Netherlands on 1 January 2013.

21 A selection of people who established themselves in the period from 2000 to 2010 in the Netherlands, and who are staying in the Netherlands on grounds relating to labour, family formation, study and other non-asylum reasons.

22 Since people are able to make use of several provisions, the sum of the individual social services does not tally with the total.

Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands also stated that the number of people employed at a private company is extremely low amongst those in the selected cohort of refugees (28.2%) in comparison to Dutch nationals (53.3%).<sup>23</sup> They also get an income more often from their own business (5.2%) than as a civil servant (0.6%). In comparison to Dutch nationals and other non-western migrants, social services for the selected cohort of refugees, in relative terms, is more often the most important source of income. People within the cohort of refugees, relatively, make use more often of a social assistance benefit than Dutch nationals (respectively 35.1% as opposed to 1.7%). For more than one in every ten people within the cohort of refugees, student finance is the most important source of income, whereas this is a lower percentage for other non-western migrants and Dutch nationals. In comparison to the Dutch nationals, this group and other non-western migrants have in common that they accumulate income more often from other or unknown sources.

Of the total number of women (23,976) in the cohort study, 8,073 have a job. That is 37.42%. Of the men in the cohort study, that is 48.63%; where 42,269 refugees participate in the cohort, 20,556 of them have a paid job. Women, by comparison, don't only work less, they also work shorter working weeks than men. 39.8% of the women in the cohort of refugees have a paid job of less than 12 hours per week. That percentage is lower for the men: 28.3%. The majority of the refugees, however, work less than 35 hours per week (65.6%).<sup>24</sup>

The Integration Barometer shows that almost 9 out of 10 people (89.2%) of the group of refugees selected by the Dutch Council for Refugees had less than EUR 30,000 per annum to spend in 2012.<sup>25</sup> This is a major difference compared to other non-western migrants (76.7%) and Dutch nationals (44%). The number of households with an annual income of more than EUR 50,000 is significantly higher for Dutch nationals than for both migrant groups; while more than 1 in 5 native Dutch households have an annual income of more than EUR 50,000, only slightly more than 1 in 100 refugee households has an annual income of more than EUR 50,000. Of non-western foreigners about 1 in 20 households has such an income.

### **Possible causes**

Both study reports described in this Chapter show an underprivileged position of the selected groups of refugees in the labour market. They have paid jobs less often and claim social assistance benefit more often than native Dutch people.

According to the WRR, the SCP and the WODC there could be a number of causes for the low labour market participation of beneficiaries.<sup>26</sup> Firstly, the authors point out that the asylum procedure provides fewer job opportunities for asylum seekers. Secondly, after obtaining the residence permit, this is followed by an intensive period in which the beneficiary moves, undertakes a civic integration programme and possibly gets family

23 Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands (2014) *'IntegratieBarometer 2014'* ['2014 Integration Barometer'] p. 83

24 Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands (2014) *'IntegratieBarometer 2014'* ['2014 Integration Barometer'] p. 82

25 Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands (2014) *'IntegratieBarometer 2014'* ['2014 Integration Barometer'] p. 83

26 WRR, SCP, WODC (2015) *'Don't lose time. Van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten'* ['From reception to integration of asylum seeking migrants'] p. 14-15.

members to come over to the Netherlands. Thirdly, according to the authors, a deteriorated psychological health as a result of possible traumas could be a cause for the low workforce participation. The undertaking of additional schooling to attain a better position in the labour market, the (older) age of beneficiaries which makes it more difficult to learn the Dutch language quickly or to study, as well as discrimination in the labour market are also indicated as being factors which hinder participation in the labour market.



### 3 MEASURES IN RESPECT OF THE LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION OF BENEFICIARIES

In the Netherlands the Ministry of Security and Justice (V&J) is responsible for the migration policy, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) is responsible for the integration policy. In May 2013 the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment launched an Agenda for Integration. The three main points of the Dutch Agenda for Integration are: *Participating and being self-rescuing; Setting limits and educating; and Interaction with others and internalising values.*<sup>27</sup>

#### ***Development of the Dutch integration policy***

Various study reports outline the development of the Dutch integration policy as a shift from target group policy towards a generic policy.<sup>28</sup> The first integration vision on a prolonged stay of foreign nationals in the Netherlands was developed in the 1980s and focused on a target group-oriented approach. This vision was aimed at getting migrants to integrate within their cultural or ethnic community in the Netherlands.<sup>29</sup>

This ethnic classification did not appear to tie in well with the migrant communities in the Netherlands, which were extremely diverse and split. It's for this reason that since the 1990s, the new integration policy was directed at individual civic integration and social-economic participation. Since 2000 the civic integration of migrants has steadily focused more on cultural integration into Dutch society. This means that newcomers were not only expected to integrate economically, but also that they should also familiarise themselves with the norms and values of Dutch society.<sup>30</sup> This shift of a target group policy towards a generic policy means that, during this period in the Netherlands, no policy was developed which was specifically directed at the improvement of the position of beneficiaries in the labour market.<sup>31</sup> The recent increase of the influx of asylum seekers has led to changes in the Dutch asylum and integration policy this year. It is systematically investigated where beneficiaries need assistance, so that within the generic policy this target group can be offered tailored integration. In August 2015 the cabinet set up a temporary Ministerial Committee on Migration for this purpose, which is devoting time to discussing current migration and integration issues.<sup>32</sup> This has resulted in a Task force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees, an Administrative Agreement on Housing and a package of measures in respect of asylum seekers and beneficiaries

27 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2012-2013, 32824, no. 7.

28 For example, L. Coello et al. (2014) '*Het minderhedenbeleid voorbij: motieven en gevolgen.*' '*Beyond the minorities policy: motives and consequences.*' p. 19. Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2012) '*Living together binds differences: integration in (accelerated) transition.*' p. 4

29 M. Ham and J. Van der Meer (2012) '*De etnische bril: categorisering in het integratiebeleid.*' 'The ethnic glasses: classification in the integration policy.' NiDi, Amsterdam University Press.

30 *Ibid.*

31 The recent increased influx of asylum seekers can possibly have consequences for development of the Dutch integration policy in the near future.

32 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2015-2016, 19 637, no. 2028.

participating in education. This report describes the measures in respect of the labour market integration of beneficiaries which applied in 2015, and where possible, will reflect on new policy initiatives.

### ***Essence of the labour participation policy: the Participation Act***

The most important legal framework that determines the measures facilitating labour market access of beneficiaries, is the Participation Act. This legislation is applicable to all Dutch nationals and foreign nationals<sup>33</sup> who lawfully reside in the Netherlands. This legislation assigns the responsibility for the measures facilitating labour market access of the unemployed to the municipalities, and contains stipulations for financial assistance. These stipulations will be described in Chapter 3.6.

### ***Limiting conditions of integration***

*Aside from this Participation Act, there are measures in the field of language and orientation, education, credentials evaluation, counselling and housing.* Since these measures, according to scientific research, are the limiting conditions for the integration of beneficiaries, these themes will be explained.<sup>34</sup> These measures are not always geared specifically towards beneficiaries, but to vulnerable groups in Dutch society, including migrant youths or people who grow up in a lesser socio-economic environment. In some cases special provisions apply for beneficiaries in these regulations.<sup>35</sup> The development and implementation of policy measures is not centrally assigned to one ministry, but is dependent on the relevant policy field which the measures relate to.

Aside from these determined regulations, initiatives also take place on an ad hoc basis, within which civil society organisations cooperate with local authorities. For example, in October the municipality of Eindhoven organised a trade fair for beneficiaries seeking to access employment and employers in search of personnel with a vocational education<sup>36</sup>, and several Dutch municipalities working together with the UAF on improving the enrolment of beneficiaries into higher education. In the autumn of 2015 employers' organisations signed a diversification pact with which they strive for greater diversity on the work floor by actively recruiting people from different backgrounds.<sup>37</sup>

In the following paragraphs the current integration provisions are described per policy field. This will address *language and orientation, education, credentials evaluation, counselling, housing* as well as *reintegration and social assistance benefit*. First the organisation and implementation of the policy measure will be discussed, after which a differentiation is made between beneficiaries who are accommodated individually, and

33 As meant in Section 8, paragraphs a to e and l of the Aliens Act 2000.

34 For example, Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of refugee studies*, 21(2), 166-191.

35 The recent increased influx of asylum seekers has resulted in several policy initiatives being developed at this point in time, which sharpen the focus more on beneficiaries. In each paragraph there is a distinction between generic and specific services.

36 Volkskrant (newspaper), 17 September 2015: '*Vluchtelingen zijn oplossing personeelstekort ICT*'. ['Refugees are solution to IT staff shortages']. To be referenced via: <http://www.volkskrant.nl/buitenland/vluchtelingen-zijn-oplossing-personeelstekort-ict-a4144462/>

37 SME (2015) '*Diversiteit is een goede businesscase*'. ['Diversity is a good business case']. To be referenced via: <http://www.mkb.nl/index.php?pageID=4&messageID=10387>

beneficiaries who are still awaiting normal housing being allocated while staying in central reception centres.

### 3.1 Language and orientation

As part of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) the interdepartmental Society and Integration Division is responsible for the development of policy in the field of civic integration and the combating of discrimination and social tensions. In the civic integration programme, language and orientation are important aspects in the Netherlands.

#### *The Civic Integration Act and the Aliens Act*

The Civic Integration Act and the Aliens Act require persons aged between 18 years and the pension-entitlement age who want to get a permanent residence permit, or persons who want to stay in the Netherlands with a temporary permit for a permanent purpose, to have a certain command of the Dutch language within three years after obtaining the permit.<sup>38</sup> This obligation is not specifically applicable to beneficiaries, but to all third-country nationals mentioned above and, by nature, is therefore generic.

#### *Civic integration in common practice*

Aside from examinations that test the four linguistic skills – reading, writing, comprehending and speaking – the civic integration examination includes exams on the knowledge of Dutch society (KNS) and ‘orientation in the Dutch labour market’ (ONA). This ONA module is used in preparation of being able to function in the Dutch labour market, in which the beneficiary compiles an own portfolio which contains his/her competences, credentials and aspirations in respect of the labour market. In the context of this module the person undertaking civic integration can apply for a credentials evaluation or recognition of qualifications free of charge, which will be addressed more extensively in Chapter 3.3.

Since 1 January 2013 persons obliged to participate in a civic integration programme who have obtained a residence permit, have been personally responsible, by law, for their civic integration. This obligation applies from the moment that the IND grants a residence permit. The IND then shares information about granted residence permits with the Education Executive Agency (DUO), who then first determines whether the beneficiary is indeed obliged to participate in a civic integration programme. Consequently DUO submits a notification to the beneficiary regarding the obligation to participate in a civic integration programme and the civic integration period.<sup>39</sup>

Beneficiaries who study are temporarily released from their obligation to participate in a civic integration programme. The obligation to participate in a civic integration programme lapses entirely if DUO receives evidence of a successful graduation, and only at

38 See Section 7(2) subparagraph a of the Civic Integration Act and Section 34(1) of the Aliens Act, Article 3.96a of the Aliens Decree 2000, Article 3.80a of the Aliens Decree.

39 Source: DUO (2015) ‘Inburgeren/betrokken partijen.’ [‘Integration/parties involved’]. Can be referred to via: [http://www.inburgeren.nl/ketenpartners/betrokken\\_partijen/](http://www.inburgeren.nl/ketenpartners/betrokken_partijen/)

the request of the beneficiary. Persons obliged to participate in a civic integration programme can also obtain dispensation of the obligation to participate in a civic integration programme on medical grounds or demonstrable efforts made.

In preparation of the civic integration examination the persons obliged to participate in a civic integration programme are eligible for a social loan to be able to finance the language and orientation courses. Specifically applicable to beneficiaries, is that on passing the civic integration examination, they are entitled to a remission of their debt. For all persons obliged to participate in a civic integration programme a maximum loan of EUR 10,000 applies.<sup>40</sup> DUO is responsible for offering these student loans. DUO is also charged with the administering of the civic integration examinations. As a departmental agency, DUO pursues various education laws on instructions from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and the student loans on instructions from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, who finances the student loan system that is intended for civic integration.

### ***Civic integration in the reception centres***

Before beneficiaries move to normal housing, they stay at COA's reception centre. COA is an independent administrative body that is responsible for the reception and counselling of asylum seekers and beneficiaries who are awaiting housing in a municipality. COA operates under the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Security and Justice. Beneficiaries aged between 18 and the pension-entitlement age who still stay in a COA reception centre, are entitled to a so-called pre-civic integration programme, a programme that is carried out by COA on instructions from the Ministry of SZW. *Preparation on civic integration* comprises language lessons, training courses in knowledge of Dutch society (KNS) and individual counselling.<sup>41</sup> The language lessons are given by recognised NT2 teachers and are intended to raise the command of the participants' language level to at least A1-minus. This type of education differs with the (more limited) language education that is offered to asylum seekers who are still awaiting a decision on their asylum application.<sup>42</sup> During the KNS training courses the beneficiary learns about the most important aspects of living in the municipality, which focuses on his/her independence and self-rescuing capacity. Every participant also gets a personal file. The contents of the file is compiled during supervisory discussions with the Case Manager. The programme provides an important contribution to the rest of the civic integration programme which participants must follow independently. Information on (pre-)civic integration is available at COA locations. In the autumn of 2015 this service was improved by providing leaflets in an additional 15 different languages than were currently on hand.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Current developments: declaration of participation***

In keeping with the need to get beneficiaries to integrate well, a declaration of participation has been introduced as a mandatory component of the civic integration exami-

40 See Amendment to Civic Integration Decree, Article 1, 2 July 2015.

41 COA (2015) '*Programma Voorbereiding op inburgering.*' ['Programme in preparation of civic integration']. To be referenced via: <https://www.coa.nl/nl/keten-en-samenwerkingspartners/gemeenten/programma-voorbereiding-op-inburgering>

42 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2015-2016, 19637, no. 2073.

43 Administrative Agreement on Increased Influx of Asylum Seekers, 27 November 2015.

nation.<sup>44</sup> The declaration comprises making an acquaintance with the norms and values of Dutch society, and will therefore form part of the social counselling route that is assigned to the municipalities. Persons undertaking a civic integration programme attend a workshop on Dutch core values and subsequently sign a contract that shows their involvement and alliance with these values. In order to improve the measures facilitating labour market access of this target group, municipalities are advised to create links to employment, education and language. The declaration of participation, as a pilot, has been implemented successfully in several municipalities. As a consequence to this pilot, the declaration of participation will be introduced nationwide. For this purpose, an amendment will be made to the Civic Integration Act. The aspiration is to introduce it as soon as possible, at the latest by 1 July 2017. In anticipation of the amendment of the Act the declaration of participation is already being offered to those eligible for asylum and their family members within the process of the social counselling since 1 January 2016.

Once the declaration of participation legally forms part of the civic integration examination, the consequences for not signing this declaration will lead to failing the civic integration examination. For persons obliged to participate in a civic integration programme who do not pass their examination in good time there is a sanction which amounts to a maximum of EUR 1250. Failure of the examination will also result in the fact that beneficiaries will not be eligible for a permanent residence permit and Dutch citizenship.

### 3.2 Education

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) is responsible for development of the Dutch education policy. In this, it cooperates on the interface of integration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), which develops policy to support vulnerable youths in education.

#### ***Access to vocational education***

In the senior secondary vocational and higher education system beneficiaries are entitled to the same facilities as Dutch nationals. During or after the civic integration programme, beneficiaries have the option to undertake a study in senior secondary vocational education or higher education. They can enrol themselves at a public institution, for which it receives subsidy funding. Beneficiaries can get student financing on the proviso that they comply with certain conditions, which also apply to Dutch inhabitants. This is paid out by DUO. Beneficiaries who enrol themselves at an educational institution which does not receive a government subsidy, pay for their training themselves, just like Dutch inhabitants. This applies for beneficiaries who stay in central reception centres as well as for beneficiaries who live independently. In a number of municipalities it is possible for beneficiaries to be able to study while retaining a social assistance benefit. In common practice, several municipalities – Amsterdam, Utrecht, de Kromme Rijn/Heuvel-

rug municipalities and Heerlen – have signed a voluntary agreement with the UAF to offer beneficiaries an option to study, so that they can later have a better chance of finding a job on their own level.<sup>45</sup> The Ministry of OCW also finances the UAF foundation to support student asylum seekers and beneficiaries in higher and secondary vocational education. The application for dispensation of the obligation to seek employment is dealt with by the municipality where the beneficiary is living.

### **Current developments**

As a result of the increasing influx of asylum seekers a few developments take place which possibly influence the position of beneficiaries in the education system. On 26 November 2015 the Minister and State Secretary of Education, Culture and Science submitted a letter to Parliament which described the most important plans in the field of education for beneficiaries.<sup>46</sup> In order to improve the enrolment of beneficiaries in follow-up studies, the minister intends to raise the examination capacity to sit the civic integration examinations. In addition, together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry assists the *Lezen & Schrijven* foundation who support language providers and volunteer organisations on a local and regional level to improve the command of the Dutch language amongst the Dutch population. By using the “*Tel mee met Taal*” (be included with language) programme, the Ministries of OCW, SZW and Public Health, Welfare and Sports (VWS) are working to combine language proficiency in getting people into employment, e.g. by deploying language screening instruments at employment agencies, social work placement companies, the UWV and at Social Welfare. *Tel Mee Met Taal* commences in 2016, and is a follow-up to pilots that appeared to be successful like “*Taal voor het Leven*” (language for life), which tackled semi-literacy by setting up networks on a regional level comprising schools, libraries, municipalities, social community teams, volunteer organisations and the youth support services.<sup>47</sup>

The letter to Parliament also describes the establishment of a Task Force, consisting of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, EP Nuffic, COA, Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, Association of Cooperating Dutch Universities, ECHO and the UAF, in which agreements are made to encourage participation of beneficiaries in higher education. These parties are aiming to improve five aspects: data, language proficiency, counselling, credentials evaluation and sharing knowledge.

In respect of *data*, the parties involved are aiming to provide an insight into the exact education requirements amongst beneficiaries, so that a better estimate can be made of the resources needed to help those people enrol and to complete their study. Furthermore, the intention is to collect data about the prior education and relevant competences of beneficiaries, in order to help this group to enrol in higher education. In the field of *language proficiency*, the parties involved are making arrangements about the required language level, and they’re working together to be able to offer language courses across the country. Offering travel allowances and internet courses is being examined as an option to make it easier to access language courses. The third point of

45 UAF (2015) ‘Gemeente Eindhoven zoekt samenwerking met UAF’ [‘Municipality of Eindhoven seeks collaboration with UAF’]. To be referenced via: [https://www.uaf.nl/over\\_het\\_uaf/nieuws/nieuwsartikel/newslistid/1/newsitemid/227](https://www.uaf.nl/over_het_uaf/nieuws/nieuwsartikel/newslistid/1/newsitemid/227)

46 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2015-2016, 34334, no. 1

47 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2014-2015, 28760, no. 39.

action, *counselling*, is geared towards an optimum enrolment of beneficiaries, improvements in their study performances, and alignment with the labour market. COA, ECHO and the UAF provide advice to beneficiaries before they start a study. Also, the possibilities to supervise refugees more actively during their study is being examined, so that it will be easier for them to get used to Dutch education methods. Higher education is also developing improvements in credentials evaluations. These are already being carried out, but existing facilities could perhaps be streamlined. Chapter 3.3 extensively describes the *credentials evaluations* procedure. Higher education aims to step up the providing of information on the value of qualifications attained abroad. In the fifth instance, higher education is geared for *sharing knowledge*, in which individual educational institutions share their *good practices*. The purpose of this line of action is to make it easier to match up individual initiatives.

Combination training courses are already being offered in senior secondary vocational education (MBO), which ties private language education to professional training. Here the Netherlands Association of Senior Secondary Vocational Schools acts as a platform where individual education providers can exchange good practices. At the Cooperation Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB) the business community and education sector work together in offering students practical training with prospects of a job. SBB is responsible for acknowledging and supervising work placement companies, maintaining the senior secondary vocational education qualification structure and taking care of information regarding the labour market, practical work experience and efficiency. Within the SBB the education sector and the business community also make arrangements about themes on the interface of vocational education and the business community, such as qualifications and examinations, practical work experience and efficiency. SBB works on a sectoral, regional and national level. SBB is not specifically intended for beneficiaries in senior secondary vocational education. Though SBB also takes care of the evaluation of international qualifications on a senior secondary vocational education (MBO) level (see paragraph 3.3).

### ***Support from civic organisations***

Civic organisations also develop – whether financed or not by the State – various projects that improve the position of vulnerable students. The UAF offers financial assistance to refugee students in higher education and in senior secondary vocational education, and is dependent on donations and subsidies for this purpose. In view of the current influx of asylum seekers, the UAF has specified a number of areas of focus to improve the position of beneficiaries in follow-up studies. It advocates a better use of the labour potential of asylum seekers and beneficiaries by offering them appropriate training. In order to accomplish this, the UAF emphasizes the importance of a quick registration of migrants' training and working experience and an efficient and accurate credentials evaluations procedure. The UAF seeks cooperation with municipalities, so that the municipalities can give beneficiaries the chance to study while retaining their social assistance benefit. The UAF is involved in both the study counselling as well as the career

guidance of graduated beneficiaries, but also expects better tailoring by educational institutions. Finally, the UAF advocates increasing the chances of gaining working experience through internships and traineeships.<sup>48</sup> Every year beneficiaries are selected on the basis of their personal motivation, their prior history and their personal situation. UAF also supports students that have the potential of undertaking a study on MBO level 3 or 4.

At present the Dutch Council for Refugees, the Netherlands Association of Senior Secondary Vocational Schools and the UAF are implementing three pilots, intended to improve the access of beneficiaries to secondary vocational education, by offering an increased number of enrolment periods, stimulating older beneficiaries and offering the possibility to undertake a study, and improving the alignment between civic integration training and studying in a profession-oriented programme. These pilots will be carried out until 1 June, after which the results will determine whether more regional training centres will participate.

### 3.3 Credentials evaluation

In order to be eligible for access to the Dutch education system, a credential of an education qualification is desirable and sometimes essential. Qualifications achieved in secondary, higher and tertiary education in another country's education system other than in the Netherlands must generally be compared with the level of the Dutch education system to establish an evaluation. It's for this reason that the Dutch government has developed a procedure in which people who have attained a qualification abroad can have their credentials evaluated. For senior secondary vocational education this procedure is stipulated in Section 7.4.7 of the Adult and Vocational Education Act. For higher education the legal provisions are stipulated in the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). This legislation stipulates that the Minister can grant these qualifications, or can transfer this competence to a public accreditation organisation.<sup>49</sup>

#### ***Credentials evaluation via the IcDW***

In common practice this evaluation is carried out by Information Centre Credentials Evaluation (IcDW). The IcDW is a partnership between EP Nuffic and the Cooperation Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB). The EP Nuffic foundation is responsible for the evaluation of qualifications attained within general secondary and higher education. As a foundation, the Cooperation Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB) is responsible for the evaluation of qualifications attained on a (preparatory) senior secondary vocational education level. They are both financed by central government. Personnel from SBB and EP Nuffic who are deployed to take care of credentials evaluations, receive an internal training that takes six months. In the training, no special attention is paid to the needs of beneficiaries as individual customers, as the personnel does not come into direct contact with them. However, attention is paid to credentials evaluation procedures for beneficiaries using the '*European Area of*

48 UAF (2015) '*UAF-Visie: Nationaal Actieplan vluchteling & hoger onderwijs.*' ['UAF Vision: National Action Plan for refugees & higher education']

49 Section 36 of the Recognition of EC Higher Education Diplomas Act; Section 5a, second paragraph of the WHW

*Recognition Manual'* compiled by a consortium of professionals from various European countries.

### **Conditions**

All persons who are obliged to participate in a civic integration programme as from 1 January 2015, are entitled to a gratuitous credentials evaluation financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. COA makes all residence permit holders in reception centres aware of the possibility of credentials evaluation or a recognition of qualifications. Furthermore, persons obliged to participate in a civic integration programme are notified of their obligation to participate in a civic integration programme by the Education Executive Agency (DUO). This notification informs the person obliged to participate in a civic integration programme about the possibility of having qualifications attained abroad being evaluated. The notification serves as evidence to apply for a credentials evaluation free of charge from the Information Centre Credentials Evaluation (IcDW). In the process of a credentials evaluation the beneficiary must show his/her relevant documentary evidence, including a copy of the qualifications, lists of marks and subjects studied. These documents must be provided with a Dutch translation by a sworn translator if they are not written in Dutch, English, German or French. A copy of a valid proof of identification is also required.<sup>50</sup>

### **Recognition of Qualifications**

Since 1 January 2015 beneficiaries are also explicitly entitled to a Recognition of Qualifications if they cannot show any qualification certificates. Only beneficiaries who cannot prove their level of education because they have not brought any qualification certificates to the Netherlands can have their level of education recognised by the Information Centre Credentials Evaluation (IcDW). EP Nuffic and the SBB check, based on the beneficiary's story, whether certain facts about the attained qualifications concur. On the basis of this investigation the beneficiary can ultimately be eligible for a recognition of the education level, albeit with a marginal annotation that written evidence of the attained education could not be shown.

### **Dutch title**

Beneficiaries and other people who complete their studies abroad can also apply to the Education Executive Agency (DUO) for a recognised Dutch title, such as for a Masters' degree ('*doctorandus*') or '*meester*' (LLM). For this purpose the applicant must submit a curriculum vitae, a copy of a valid identity document, a recent extract from the municipal personal records database and relevant documentary evidence to support the application. This includes a copy of the Secondary School Certificate, the higher education diploma and a list of marks or transcript. If the documentary evidence is not drawn up in Dutch, English, German or French, then the applicant is obliged to have the documents translated by a sworn translator.<sup>51</sup>

50 IcDW (2015) '*Vereiste documenten.*' ['Required documents']. To be referenced via: <http://www.idw.nl/vereiste-documenten.html>

51 DUO (2015) '*Een Nederlandse titel aanvragen.*' ['Applying for a Dutch title']. To be referenced via: <https://duo.nl/particulieren/diplomas/u-heeft-een-buitenlands-diploma/een-nederlandse-titel-aanvragen.asp>

### ***EC professional qualifications***

The Recognition of EC Higher Education Diplomas Act stipulates the conditions to practice a select group of professions in the Netherlands with qualifications attained abroad. For a number of professions practitioners of the profession must be registered in a professional register. This list is specified in the Regulation establishing the list of regulated professions. Examples of professions which require special registration are doctors, pharmacists and psychotherapists. Persons who have attained qualifications abroad are not automatically eligible for registration in the BIG register (register for healthcare professionals). In order to obtain this, the beneficiary must apply for a Declaration of Professional Competence. The form must be submitted together with a number of additional documents: a copy of the applicant's passport, a copy of the applicant's residence permit, a certified copy of degree certificates or testimonials of the professional training, as well as the subjects attained, documentary evidence of practical experience, possible specialist certificates, a curriculum vitae and perhaps evidence that the person is accredited elsewhere within the EU.

The recognition of qualifications for BIG-registered professions is processed directly via the competent authorities, which are often the various ministries. The competent authority can seek advice about the level of education at the expertise centre for credentials evaluation EP Nuffic or SBB, depending on the attained level of education. A degree holder can also first request a credentials evaluation via the ICDW. In the recommendation, the degree holder will be advised to submit an application for profession recognition at the competent authority. The competent authority assesses the attended training on its merits. The competent authority differs per profession. If the competent authority ascertains substantial differences between the foreign and Dutch training courses, compensating measures such as an internship, testing or working experience are possible. The aptitude test comprises a testing of general knowledge and skills, and a test of specialist knowledge. The costs for sitting the general examination are EUR 650 for academic professions and EUR 250 for MBO professions. For the testing of specialist knowledge for doctors the examination amounts to EUR 1700, for dentists EUR 1500 and for nurses EUR 400. An application for a BIG registration costs EUR 85.

### ***Accreditation of Prior Learning***

Aside from these options which are funded by the authorities, it is further possible to apply for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) via private institutions. This document provides an overview of prior working experience and the skills thus gained. The application costs for an APL differs per institution.<sup>52</sup> Beneficiaries can claim compensation from the benefits agency where they are registered. There is, however, no legal obligation to compensate this privately acquired recognition of competence.

### ***Current developments***

In a letter to Parliament of 26 October 2015<sup>53</sup> the Minister of Education, Culture and Science substantiated the need to streamline the credentials evaluation system, through

52 An APL costs an average of EUR 1000 to EUR 1500. Source: National Knowledge Centre Accreditation of Prior Learning.

53 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2015-2016, 34334, no. 1.

an integration of tasks in the field of credentials evaluation, competence investigation and getting people into employment. This aims to achieve a single helpdesk to merge queries on intake, competence investigation, credentials evaluation and getting people into employment. This is also being developed by means of the pilot '*Leerwerkloket+*' (training and employment help desk). Furthermore, education comparison experts are being engaged who have a command of Arabic and knowledge about the education systems in Arabian regions.

### **3.4 Counselling and care**

In the Netherlands the counselling of beneficiaries is structured in various ways. In this study these initiatives are subdivided into two categories: medical/psychological assistance and social counselling. Although these types of assistance don't appear to have a direct connection with measures facilitating labour market access, this study does address those measures. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, physical well-being could have a bearing on the suitability of the beneficiary to be active in the labour market. Social counselling must help the beneficiary to organise his/her civic integration procedure and to get acquainted with the immediate living environment, which is a prerequisite in starting the search for employment. Thirdly, the description of these measures provides a complete picture of all the integration measures offered by the authorities.

#### **3.4.1 Healthcare**

At the central reception centres COA is responsible for providing healthcare to asylum seekers and residence permit holders. Entitlement to compensation for care is provided for in the Healthcare for Asylum Seekers Regulation (RZA). The RZA benefits package largely corresponds with the benefits package of the Health Insurance Act and the Long-Term Care Act. COA has a non-medical guiding role. This means that COA employees provide guidance to asylum seekers in the organisation of the healthcare sector in the Netherlands. The municipal healthcare services doesn't only carry out tasks in the field of public health for asylum seekers, but does so too for all inhabitants in the Netherlands. All those involved in caring for asylum seekers pay extra attention to the language and cultural differences, the living conditions, asylum procedure and the asylum seeker's need for special care.

When beneficiaries get a residence permit they also fall within the scope of the Health Insurance Act. In the context of the Health Insurance Act it is mandatory to take out a health insurance. In practice, health insurance is taken out when they are accommodated in normal housing. Thereafter they pay a monthly premium and are entitled to a monthly compensation for medical expenses, which is the healthcare benefit if they earn below a certain income threshold, and the same provisions apply for this target group as for Dutch inhabitants.

### 3.4.2 *Support and social counselling* *Personal counselling in the reception centres*

The Netherlands has regulations which are specifically geared for the support and counselling of beneficiaries. At the central reception centres COA offers information and on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment it also offers a pre-civic integration course, which prepares beneficiaries for Dutch society. Aside from orientation training, COA is *not* statutorily required to take measures facilitating labour market access.

#### *Social counselling*

Social counselling is available for beneficiaries who are relocated to a municipality. As a result of the last amendment of the Civic Integration Act (2013) the organisation for offering social counselling to beneficiaries has been adapted. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment makes an amount available to the municipality for each residence permit holder for the purpose of social counselling. The Ministry has made arrangements with COA and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) on the financing and implementation of social counselling for beneficiaries.<sup>54</sup>

The responsibility for the social counselling of beneficiaries is assigned to the municipalities since 1 January 2013. This legislation amendment stipulates that the municipality where the beneficiary resides is given a once-off remuneration from COA on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, which must be spent on social counselling of residence permit holders for whom the remuneration is requested. On 27 November 2015, as a result of the increased influx of asylum seekers, the government decided to raise this budget from EUR 1,000 to EUR 2,370.<sup>55</sup>

COA approaches the municipalities in view of payment for social counselling. They do so on the basis of current data obtained via the IND in cases of beneficiaries and their family members who seek family reunification who are obliged to participate in a civic integration programme, if they are relocated from the reception centre to the municipalities. Municipalities then return the signed notification to COA. This remuneration is applied to offer beneficiaries social counselling.<sup>56</sup> The purpose of this social counselling is to support the beneficiary who establishes himself in the municipality in matters which such beneficiary is not yet able to organise independently.<sup>57</sup> This counselling must be carried out pursuant to the conditions jointly laid down by the VNG and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.<sup>58</sup> It is prohibited to finance language courses with this remuneration.<sup>59</sup>

54 COA (2013) '*Uitbetalingsregeling maatschappelijke begeleiding asielgerechtigden.*' ['Payment scheme for social counselling for those eligible for asylum']. To be referred to via: [https://www.coa.nl/sites/www.coa.nl/files/paginas/media/bestanden/vragen\\_en\\_antwoorden\\_uitbetalingsregeling\\_maatschappelijke\\_begeleiding\\_juli\\_2013.pdf](https://www.coa.nl/sites/www.coa.nl/files/paginas/media/bestanden/vragen_en_antwoorden_uitbetalingsregeling_maatschappelijke_begeleiding_juli_2013.pdf)

55 Administrative Agreement on Increased Influx of Asylum Seekers, 27 November 2015.

56 This scheme applies for beneficiaries from the age of 16, with the exception of beneficiaries who have reached the pension-entitlement age.

57 Municipal Desk (2013) '*Vragen en antwoordenlijst gewijzigde Wet Inburgering inclusief overgangsrecht*' ['Questions and answers on the amended Civic Integration Act including transitional law'] To be referenced via: <http://www.gemeenteloket.minszw.nl/binaries/content/assets/Inburgering/2013-07-24/vragen-en-antwoorden.pdf>

58 Administrative Agreement on Increased Influx of Asylum Seekers, 27 November 2015, p. 7

59 Municipal Desk (2013) '*Vragen en antwoordenlijst gewijzigde Wet Inburgering inclusief overgangsrecht.*' ['Questions and answers on the amended Civic Integration Act including transitional law']. Can be referenced via: <http://www.gemeenteloket.minszw.nl/binaries/content/assets/Inburgering/2013-07-24/vragen-en-antwoorden.pdf>

### ***Social counselling in common practice***

For the implementation, most municipalities engage the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, a civic organisation who is responsible for the counselling of beneficiaries and asylum seekers. The supervisory process is subdivided in three phases: *pre-establishment*, *counselling establishment*, and *counselling integration and participation*.

In the first phase the civic organisation supervises the beneficiary in moving to the municipality where this person will be taken care of. In this phase the refugee is assisted in enrolling for a training and for registration at the municipality. *Counselling establishment* involves organising the administration of the beneficiary. The organisation provides support to him/her to take out a health insurance and other insurance policies, informs him/her about the possibilities of employment and about civic integration, and in getting acquainted with the local population. Psycho-social problems are also possibly registered by the civic organisation. The third phase, *counselling integration and participation*, is specifically intended to accomplish an active participation of the beneficiary. The beneficiary is taught how to organise and plan administrative affairs on his own.

Although the responsibility for the style and implementation of the counselling of beneficiaries lies with the municipalities, it is COA who is responsible for a proper issuing of documents that are essential for participation and the welfare of the beneficiary. When a residence permit holder moves to the municipality, the new GP can only request the medical file via the practitioner's line of the Asylum Seeker's Health Centre (GCA) with the beneficiary's consent.

### ***Current developments***

On implementation of the declaration of participation which was introduced in the autumn of 2015, it is expected that social counselling in future will partially be provided to inform beneficiaries about the norms and values of Dutch society.<sup>60</sup> In addition, more detailed conditions for social counselling will be agreed upon between the Ministry of SZW and the VNG. Social counselling could then partially be given another contents and a different character to the one described above.

## **3.5 Housing**

In the Netherlands the housing procedure of beneficiaries is not geared towards offering housing as a means to enhance the beneficiaries' access to the labour market. However, housing could have consequences for a beneficiary's chances in the labour market: having a steady living environment, the quality of the accommodation and the region within which the beneficiary is accommodated, are factors which could be of influence to the labour market position of the beneficiary. By getting fast access to an own (rental) home, beneficiaries can sooner concentrate themselves on education, employment and civic integration.<sup>61</sup> An effective housing policy for beneficiaries therefore takes priority for the Dutch government.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 3.1 for more information.

<sup>61</sup> WRR, SCP, WODC (2015) 'Geen tijd verliezen. Van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten,' ['Don't lose time. From reception to integration of asylum seeking migrants'] p.40

<sup>62</sup> *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2015-2016, 19637, no. 2053.

It is important to distinguish between accommodations which are primarily offered to asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their asylum applications, and the housing of beneficiaries. The Dutch government's starting point is a good through-flow of beneficiaries from reception centres to normal housing. Due to a scarcity in the housing market and an increased influx of asylum seekers, it is however, not always possible. The housing of beneficiaries is explained below.

### ***Temporary stay at the reception centre***

When there is no accommodation available, a beneficiary remains at the COA reception centre until housing can be found. The beneficiary maintains the same facilities as during the asylum procedure: entitlement to shelter, financial compensation for food, clothing and other expenses, public transport ticket for travelling to the legal assistance provider, recreational and educative activities, medical expenses that could be reimbursed from the RZA, liability insurance and payment for extraordinary expenses.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Housing outside reception centres: the Housing Allocation Act***

The transition from staying inside a reception centre to individual housing is legally structured in the Housing Allocation Act and in the Generic Counselling (Revitalization) Act (WRGT). These regulations stipulate that central government is responsible for the distribution of beneficiaries amongst the municipalities in the Netherlands. This is known as the 'programme target'. Development of the housing policy in the Netherlands is assigned to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK). Aside from the Ministry of BZK various levels of government are involved in implementing the policy, as well as civil society organisations and housing corporations. *Platform Opnieuw Thuis* (home again platform) coordinates collaborations between these organisations. The Platform Opnieuw Thuis was set up in 2014 and is coordinated by a level of government consisting of representatives from VNG, Aedes, the Ministries of V&J, SZW, BZK, the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO) and COA. An important function of this Platform is matching up the processes among the organisations who are involved in the housing of beneficiaries.

Section 28 of the Housing Allocation Act 2014 stipulates that the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations draws up a programme target every six months of the number of beneficiaries to be accommodated per municipality on the basis of proportionality. Central government has no direct responsibility for housing individual beneficiaries. Yet through the Housing Act, it is the direct regulatory authority of housing corporations.<sup>64</sup>

When an asylum seeker obtains a residence permit, COA compiles an information profile of the beneficiary within a period of two weeks. On the basis of the programme target issued by central government, the profile of the residence permit holder, the housing supply and possible programme target backlog of municipalities, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers matches up beneficiaries with municipali-

63 Asylum Seekers and Other Categories of Aliens (Provisions) Regulations 2005 (RVA), Article 9, paragraph 1.

64 Platform Opnieuw Thuis (2015) '*Huisvesting Vergunninghouders*.' ['Housing of residence permit holders.'] p. 6

ties. If a beneficiary is placed in a certain municipality, then it is COA that is responsible for registration of the beneficiary's move.<sup>65</sup>

The Housing Allocation Act 2014<sup>66</sup> stipulates that municipalities are responsible for offering suitable accommodation to beneficiaries. The programme target allows six months to do so.<sup>67</sup> The ambition is to accomplish this within a period of 12 weeks, but there's no legal basis for this. The finding of suitable accommodation in practical terms is done in cooperation with (local) housing corporations. The municipality is then responsible for transferring the beneficiary in the BPR (Personal Records Database).

In the search for suitable accommodation for beneficiaries most municipalities contact housing corporations. Until now beneficiaries have been designated as a priority group on grounds of the Housing Allocation Act. Civil society organisations also fulfil a task in the housing process. Municipalities engage these organisations to help guide beneficiaries in their new surroundings.<sup>68</sup> In order to furnish the home, beneficiaries are eligible for a furnishing credit from the municipality. This is not a nationally established gift, but a loan of which the conditions differ per municipality.

The general policy framework pertaining to power of substitution in the case of neglect of duties, stipulates the sanctions for non-compliance of the programme target obligations. The Generic Counselling (Revitalization) Act (WRGT) stipulates that supervision in the entire housing process is exclusively vested on a provincial level.<sup>69</sup>

### ***Current developments: the Administrative Agreement and the Accelerated Municipal Housing Scheme (GVA)***

As a result of the recent increase of the influx of asylum seekers, the question arises whether the current housing process is tenable. In a letter to Parliament of 2 October 2015 the Minister for Housing and the Central Government Sector promised to look into the possibilities of amending the priority position of beneficiaries in the Housing Allocation Act.<sup>70</sup>

In addition, on 27 November 2015 the government entered into an administrative agreement with the municipalities and provinces on the housing of beneficiaries. In this agreement it is agreed that central government, municipalities and housing corporations are committed to create housing facilities for 14,000 beneficiaries.

In order to accomplish these housing facilities, three measures have been agreed to. Firstly, central government makes a subsidy scheme available to landlords so that new housing can be realised. This contains conditions that the realised housing is not eligible for housing subsidy and that the cost sharing norm can be applied in the social assistance benefit. The cost sharing norm includes a reduction on the social assistance benefit for

65 *Platform Opnieuw Thuis* (2015) 'Huisvesting Vergunninghouders.' ['Housing of residence permit holders.'] p. 9

66 Section 28 of the Housing Allocation Act 2014

67 Section 29 of the Housing Allocation Act 2014

68 *Platform Opnieuw Thuis* (2015) 'Huisvesting Vergunninghouders.' ['Housing of residence permit holders.'] p. 9

69 *Platform Opnieuw Thuis* (2015) 'Huisvesting Vergunninghouders.' ['Housing of residence permit holders.'] p. 8

70 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2015-2016, 19637, no. 2053.

cohabitants. The subsidy scheme assumes at least four persons in one home. Landlords are given a financial contribution of EUR 6,250 per accommodated residence permit holder. This scheme is envisaged to enter into force on 1 February 2016. Secondly, the Minister for Housing and the Central Government Sector intends to ease existing regulations, so that housing corporations are facilitated in accommodating beneficiaries. As of 1 December 2015 an experimental scheme entered into force which enables corporations to provide services to residents of premises that are rented by third parties, such as an administration service and cleaning activities. At the beginning of 2016, as a next step, a legislative proposal will be submitted which will enable housing corporations to rent, maintain and adapt buildings belonging to third parties. Thirdly, central government makes it possible that government premises are leased to municipalities to house beneficiaries, which falls in line with the Vacant Property Act.

In addition, the Accelerated Municipal Housing Scheme (GVA) was established which offers possibilities to municipalities for the temporary housing of 10,000 beneficiaries. If no (permanent) housing is available, municipalities can accommodate beneficiaries in temporary housing through the accelerated municipal housing scheme for a maximum period of 24 months. For this type of housing municipalities receive EUR 50 every week per accommodated adult and EUR 25 per accommodated child.<sup>71</sup> By making use of the accelerated municipal housing scheme they also comply with the programme target.

### 3.6 Reintegration and social assistance benefit

For those people who are unable to participate in the labour market as yet, the Participation Act in the Netherlands provides for income support. In this the law acts as a safety net for people who cannot provide sufficiently for their own subsistence. Municipalities are financially and legally responsible for enforcement of the law. They have a large number of instruments to ensure that people can find a place in the labour market. In this field no specific legal provisions apply for beneficiaries. In the Participation Act they are considered as being the same as Dutch inhabitants. Beneficiaries staying in a COA reception centre are subject to the Asylum Seekers and Other Categories of Aliens (Provisions) Regulations (RVA) 2005. That applies as a primary provision for the Participation Act. So this group is not entitled to any social assistance benefits which are described in this paragraph. They maintain the right to the same gratuitous provisions as during the asylum procedure, which are described in paragraph 3.5 on housing.

#### *The Participation Act*

The right to social assistance benefit is provided for in the Participation Act (2015) as of 1 January 2015. The Participation Act emanates from the former Work and Social Assistance Act (wwb), the Invalidity Insurance (Young Disabled Persons) Act (Wajong) and the Sheltered Employment Act (wsw). Section 11(1) of the Participation Act stipulates that every Dutch national and third-country national residing lawfully in the Netherlands has a right, by law, to social assistance benefit if such person does not have sufficient resour-

ces available to provide for their necessary costs of subsistence. In principle, this law is not aimed at beneficiaries as a specific target group.

### **Instruments**

The purpose of the Participation Act is to get more people into employment. The law provides municipalities with the instruments for this purpose. They can make use of reintegration programmes, schooling, language lessons, job coaching and wage cost subsidies, among other things. The law also stipulates obligations for benefit recipients. Hence the benefit recipients are also obliged to accept and maintain generally accepted work and must make efforts to find employment.<sup>72</sup> On failure of doing one's duty which forms part of a social assistance benefit, the citizen's social assistance benefit can be reduced. Aside from a duty to take on generally accepted work, the Participation Act stipulates that the social assistance benefit must be reduced if the benefit recipient shares a home with other adults and therefore shares in the accommodation costs (the so-called 'cost sharing norm'<sup>73</sup>). The Dutch Language Requirement has been in force in the Participation Act as of 1 January 2016, which stipulates that people are considered to have a command of the Dutch language or are willing to learn. Their social assistance benefit can be reduced if they have an insufficient command of the Dutch Language and are not prepared to make any effort to learn the language. People who have passed the civic integration examination are not required to prove their language level through a language test and their social assistance benefit also doesn't get reduced.<sup>74</sup> For persons who already received social assistance benefit before 1 January 2016, this requirement applies as from 1 July 2016.

### ***Social assistance benefit and measures facilitating labour market access***

Municipalities are responsible for the payment of this financial assistance benefit. According to the Work and Income (Implementation Organisation Structure) Act (SUWI), municipalities are also responsible for getting people who are on social assistance benefit into employment. Within the framework of the Participation Act, they can request citizens who receive a social assistance benefit to provide a service in return in the form of voluntary work.<sup>75</sup> Because the tasks in respect of social assistance benefit are the responsibility of municipalities, there is no question of a uniform policy; there are major differences among municipalities in how they tackle unemployment. In practice, municipalities work in partnership with 'labour market regions' that set up projects to tackle unemployment. In certain municipalities there are special provisions that release beneficiaries from an obligation to work if they study. This release is currently granted in the municipalities of Heerlen, Utrecht and Amsterdam.<sup>76</sup> By means of voluntary agreements these municipalities have pronounced that they are investing in educating beneficiaries, so that they can look for jobs on their own level after their study. For the Municipality of Amsterdam this voluntary education agreement forms part of a wider strategy, the

72 Section 9, paragraph 1a of the Participation Act

73 Section 22a of the Participation Act

74 Section 18b of the Participation Act

75 Section 9(b) of the Participation Act

76 VNG (2014) 'Studie met behoud van uitkering voor vluchtelingen.' ['Study while retaining social assistance benefit for refugees.'] To be referenced via: <https://vng.nl/onderwerpenindex/integratie-vreemdelingenbeleid-en-asiel/integratie/nieuws/studie-met-behoud-van-uitkering-voor-vluchtelingen>

Employment and entrepreneurship action plan for refugees. This action plan comprises a range of ambitions and promises on facilitating measures facilitating labour market access of beneficiaries as a specific target group, and was established in conjunction with the employers' organisation VNO-NCW, employment agency Randstad, the universities and colleges of Amsterdam, Projob and the regional training centre ROC Amsterdam. The action plan comprises measures to ascertain the employment potential of beneficiaries in Amsterdam, to look at study options and streamlining the credentials evaluation process, and to bring beneficiaries into contact with a relevant network.

### ***Current developments***

In the autumn of 2015 the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment announced existing and new measures intended to enhance integration and to get asylum seekers and beneficiaries into employment.

In October 2015, the Task force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees (TWIV) was set up consisting of the VNG, employer's organisation VNO-NCW, the Dutch Trade Union Confederations FNV and CNV, the Social Economic Council, COA, Divosa, the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, the UAF, Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands, the Royal Association of Small and Medium-sized Businesses Netherlands (SME), the UWV, the Ministry of OCW and the Ministry of SWZ<sup>77</sup>. The purpose of this task force is to enhance existing measures to supervise beneficiaries to access employment and to identify and remove bottlenecks in the integration process. In order to improve the tie-in between the knowledge, experience and skills of beneficiaries and the needs in the Dutch labour market and the higher education system, COA, OCW, V&J and SZW are investigating possibilities to make information about competences, working experience, language skills and qualification certificates readily comprehensible by means of a screening of beneficiaries. At present, in the context of the Task force, it is being examined how existing information on the talents of this target group can be used to match up beneficiaries to the labour market and the education system. COA is currently implementing a pilot in which beneficiaries who are staying at reception centres are matched to employers via employment agencies. Beneficiaries are also included as a target group in the national approach to tackling youth unemployment. The Task force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees (TWIV) is also committed to providing support to municipalities, who play a major role in getting people into employment. In conjunction with the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands municipal social services are supported and informed about offering social counselling to beneficiaries. The Task force wants to improve the supply of information for municipalities about the regulations concerning employment and voluntary work for asylum seekers and beneficiaries. Employers' organisation VNO-NCW disseminates this information to the business community. The Task force further tries to make municipalities more aware of existing provisions and instruments to get the people in this target group into employment.

To further enhance getting beneficiaries into employment, the State Secretary of SZW has adapted the subsidy schemes of projects in view of the European Social Fund (ESF). Due to this amendment municipalities can include residence permit holders as a target group in local projects in order to combat unemployment among this target group.

Since municipalities pre-finance expenses for social assistance benefits pursuant to current regulations, and due to the increased influx of asylum seekers, which will possibly cause a higher demand for social assistance benefits, alternative means of financing are being sought in consultations between the State and the municipalities.

### ***The role of civil society organisations***

In practice, the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands and the UAF develop projects on a fund raising basis to supervise beneficiaries as a specific target group to access employment. An example of a current project is called VIP (investing in refugee participation). This project is carried out by the Dutch Council for Refugees through support from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and Rabofonds, and envisages to enhance the interface between the civic integration programme and participation in the labour market. There are 1500 beneficiaries participating in this programme, who are being prepared for successful participation in the Dutch labour market through group courses, personal counselling and on-the-job training. This project is ongoing until the spring of 2018.



## 4 POLICY PRACTICE: GOOD WORKING METHODS AND POINTS OF ATTENTION

The previous Chapter described the Dutch policy measures for enhancement of the integration of beneficiaries in 2015. This paragraph pays attention to good practices and points of attention in the execution of the integration policy. Since the integration policy is subject to change at this point in time, most of the identified good working methods and points of improvement are not scientifically proven. This report identifies signs of *best practices* and points of improvement mentioned by the policy experts involved. Experts from the Ministry of Security and Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, the Education Executive Agency, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, EP Nuffic, the Cooperation Vocational Education, Training and Labour Market, the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, the University Assistance Fund, the Research and Documentation Centre and the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers were consulted for this purpose.

A few possible bottlenecks which come to the fore in this Chapter including the legal restrictions on labour during the asylum procedure and the intensive period of civic integration, housing and family reunification after getting the residence permit, were mentioned earlier in the recently published report by the WRR, the WODC and the SCP.<sup>78</sup>

### 4.1 Language and orientation

From the description of the language and orientation education options for beneficiaries (Chapter 3.1) it appears that the facilities made available to beneficiaries staying at reception centres is more limited than for beneficiaries living independently. Until such time as they have received notification about their civic integration from DUO, they only have access to the pre-civic integration programme provided by COA. This pre-civic integration programme provides a contribution to the integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries. On the other hand, this practice can be seen as a point of attention, because beneficiaries cannot choose their own course directly.<sup>79</sup> Since it currently takes about 8 weeks<sup>80</sup> before the beneficiary gets notification from DUO about the civic integration programme, during this period they don't have access to the student loan system or requests for a credentials evaluation. This could form an obstruction for the civic integration procedure.

78 Chapter 2.2 further addressed the possible bottlenecks that are mentioned in the study: WRR, SCP, WODC (2015) '*Geen tijd verliezen. Van opvang naar integratie van asielmigranten*' ['Don't lose time. From reception to integration of asylum seeking migrants']

79 However, various language courses are offered at COA not only to asylum seekers who are illiterate and low-skilled, but also to those who are educated.

80 This information originates from the customer service desk for Civic Integration at DUO.

### ***Own responsibility***

Since January 2013 the civic integration system dictates that the responsibility for choosing and financing language and orientation courses lies with the person undertaking civic integration. In September 2015 the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment presented the initial results of the new civic integration policy.<sup>81</sup> This data shows that 57% of the new people obliged to participate in a civic integration programme made use of the student loan system in 2013. 52% of the newcomers in 2014 made use of this scheme. Of the 2013 batch of newcomers, 16% has passed the civic integration examination in the meanwhile. Of the number of persons who were obliged to participate in a civic integration programme since 2014, 4% have passed the examination. Taking into consideration that the new civic integration system has merely been in force for 2 years, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has not yet been able to set up an evaluation into its effectiveness in comparison to the previous policy. It is expected that this will be carried out in 2017.<sup>82</sup> A survey carried out by consultants *Regioplan* shows that the civic integration programme itself, notwithstanding the financing, provides a positive contribution to the participation of migrants in the labour market.<sup>83</sup>

Although the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands acknowledges these benefits, in its 2014 Integration Barometer it is critical about the emphasis of current Dutch policy on the self-rescuing capability of beneficiaries. The council argues that beneficiaries are reluctant in requesting a personal loan to finance language and orientation courses. Moreover, not every beneficiary is self-rescuing enough to oversee the possibilities to undertake a recognised training. The fact that the amount borrowed by the beneficiaries can be refunded on passing the civic integration examination, doesn't offer a demonstrable incentive for an improved civic integration programme. Because research has shown that a successful civic integration partially contributes to the labour market participation of beneficiaries, it is important that the beneficiary gets appropriate support in this.<sup>84</sup> This is also in the interests of the municipality, because it has less insight into the civic integration procedure of beneficiaries within the municipality since the reviewed Civic Integration legislation. Recent measures that have been taken, which include stepping up the language lessons for beneficiaries at reception centres, possibly provide beneficiaries with more tailored support and a more thorough preparation of the civic integration programme outside the reception centre.

### ***Language proficiency***

Another point of attention, is that the A2 language level which applies as a starting point for the civic integration examination, is not always adequate to be able to succeed in the Dutch labour market.<sup>85</sup> A higher level of language proficiency is required for that purpose. It is not possible to undertake language lessons in all regions on one's own level: according to the UAF, particularly in thinly populated areas, it is difficult for stu-

81 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2015-2016, 32824, no. 105.

82 *Parliamentary Papers II*, 2015-2016, 30982, no. 23

83 *Regioplan Policy Review* (2013) '*De bijdrage van inburgering aan de participatie van migranten in de Nederlandse samenleving*' ['The contribution of civic integration to the participation of migrants in Dutch society'] p. 65.

84 Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands (2014) '*Integratie Barometer 2014*.' ['2014 Integration Barometer.']

85 Statement derived from the experience of an expert at the Dutch Council for Refugees

dents to find a higher-level language course.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, beneficiaries do not receive any financial compensation from central government for travel expenses incurred to attend language courses, which discourages them even more to continue with their language course after the civic integration examination.<sup>87</sup>

### ***Acquaintance with the labour market***

Finally, the labour market component within the civic integration examination is considered by experts involved to be a positive aspect. On the other hand, until now, no plans have been detailed about the use of the portfolios which beneficiaries compile in the civic integration programme. Municipalities can use these portfolios to better support them in their search for a job. However, no obligation has been ascertained on a national level about the use of these portfolios.

## **4.2 Education**

This report described several initiatives for the enrolment and successful participation of beneficiaries in Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Higher Education (see Chapter 3.2).

### ***Support from the UAF***

The UAF is an example in higher education of a successful and unique initiative which cannot be found in other European Member States. The UAF is in a position to offer major opportunities to beneficiaries and persons still undergoing the asylum procedure, also because this organisation is managed by people who have successful careers and an extensive network. It's thanks to support from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the National Postal Code Lottery, donors and education institutions, as well as employers, that UAF offers beneficiaries the chance to study. Although selection at the gate is stringent considering the limited resources, enrolled beneficiaries have the option to undertake a study that matches up to their level. In this way 190 refugee students were able to graduate in 2014 of which 69% completed a university or professional education programme (WO or HBO) and 31% achieved a senior secondary vocational education (MBO) training. Of the students who were supported by UAF's job support team, 70% found a job on their own level within a year. At this point in time approximately 400 students get this type of assistance.<sup>88</sup>

### ***Accessibility***

In the education system, accessibility is the main focus of attention. In order to participate properly in the Dutch education system, it is essential that beneficiaries have a good command of the Dutch language. According to the UAF there are very few possibilities of intensive language courses and beneficiaries are deterred by the high travel expenses.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, beneficiaries are highly dependent on the willingness of municipi-

<sup>86</sup> Statement is derived from the experience of an expert at the UAF.

<sup>87</sup> Some municipalities grant travel allowances to beneficiaries who do a language course.

<sup>88</sup> UAF (2015) 'UAF-Visie: investeer in vluchtelingen – Nieuw talent benutten op de arbeidsmarkt.' ['UAF Vision: invest in refugees – use new talent in the labour market']

<sup>89</sup> BNR (2015) 'Groot tekort aan goede taallessen voor vluchtelingen.' ['Major shortage of good language lessons for refugees.'] Referenced via: <http://www.bnr.nl/nieuws/813864-1509/groot-tekort-aan-goede-taallessen-voor-vluchtelingen>

palties to allow beneficiaries to study while retaining a social assistance benefit. In common practice this has negative consequences, particularly for beneficiaries aged over 30.

### ***Current developments***

The education policy for beneficiaries is currently under development. The language proficiency of beneficiaries is the most important point of attention for access to Dutch vocational education. Recently described policy initiatives are therefore particularly geared towards language proficiency of beneficiaries, to remove the barriers in respect of enrolment into Dutch vocational education. This includes for example, offering Dutch language courses across the country and the wider project '*Tel Mee met Taal*' (be included with language).

## **4.3 Credentials evaluation**

From the description of services in the field of credentials evaluation (see Chapter 3.3) it was apparent that beneficiaries, in the context of the Civic Integration Act, could have their qualification certificates evaluated free of charge at the IcDW, or could apply for a Recognition of Qualifications at the expertise centre for credential evaluation EP Nuffic and SBB.

### ***Recognition of Qualifications***

The recognition of qualifications is a special initiative that offers beneficiaries who have not brought any qualification certificates with them, the option to get an indication of the level of education. This form of recognition was first implemented as a pilot between 1 February 2012 and 1 October 2013, in which the IDW set-up (EP Nuffic and SBB) received requests from COA, the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, UAF, education institutions and individual municipalities for recognition of beneficiaries' qualifications. As a result of this pilot a survey was held among these partners twice. From these surveys a positive image came to the fore; for potential employers and education institutions this recognition at least provides proof of perseverance. For beneficiaries, such recognitions can be used as a starting position to develop themselves further in the Netherlands. It motivates them to be active for their future and to increase their own self-esteem.

### ***Speed and application-orientation***

Aside from this initiative, the speed and flexibility with which the Dutch authorities evaluate credentials is a good practice. The focus of credentials evaluation is whether the applicant can practice a certain profession with the attained level of education. Instead of looking at the number of education hours that a person has attended, in credentials evaluation the expertise centres scrutinise the learning outcomes of the attended education and to what extent the person is in a position to practice in a certain profession with the subjects attained.

**Contact with countries of origin**

A point of attention in the current credentials evaluation system is that it's not always easy to contact the countries of origin. Certainly in areas where they are at war, education institutions do not always maintain their administrations properly. This makes it more difficult to check whether someone has actually graduated at the relevant institute.

**Not binding**

Another important point of attention is that the credentials evaluation by the IcdW is not binding. On the one hand that has positive effects for the speed at which qualifications can be evaluated and the beneficiary can access the labour market. On the other hand, the beneficiary does not always have certainty about his/her starting position, because education institutions and employers could ultimately refuse the beneficiary. In practice employers are highly appreciative of a qualification recognised by a Dutch educational institution, whose quality is confirmed. Moreover, education institutions have their her own conditions for admission of refugee students, and increasingly do so for Dutch students. These additional admission requirements create a bigger hurdle for beneficiaries to participate in higher education. Certainly for those beneficiaries who want to practice a regulated profession, the fact that the evaluation, strictly speaking, is not binding, has major consequences; a physician's degree certification, evaluated by the expertise centre, offers no guarantee to be able to work as a physician in the Netherlands. The competent Dutch authority for this profession decides on this. Though there is a positive marginal annotation, that the list of regulated professions in the Netherlands is relatively short in comparison to other EU Member States.

**The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**

The alternative for normal credentials evaluation, the APL evaluation, which shows prior experiences gained, competences and skills, does not provide an ideal outcome for beneficiaries either. Because the APL evaluation only registers gained working experience over the past five years, it does not provide a complete picture of the beneficiaries' experience. Employers sooner take on personnel with qualifications that are conclusively established. In addition, such a recognition is extremely costly.

**4.4 Counselling and care**

Chapter 3.4 described the current services for beneficiaries in the field of care and social counselling.

**Outsourcing to professionals**

The manner in which the social counselling of beneficiaries is implemented, whereby municipalities outsource activities to civil society organisations, is perceived as positive by those involved.<sup>90</sup> Social counselling of beneficiaries remains affordable because the services of these organisations are largely carried out by volunteers. In addition, the

90 Assessed from written responses from the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands.

outsourcing of services to civil society organisations leads to opportunities and possibilities to engage Dutch citizens in the civic integration procedure. Involving the local population can have a positive effect on the public support among Dutch citizens for the accommodation of beneficiaries in the neighbourhood. Giving them a role in the civic integration procedure helps the beneficiaries that they supervise to make primary contacts easier in the neighbourhood, which facilitates the integration process. Also municipalities, who don't always have sufficient expertise available in the field of refugee care, are able to obtain advice and knowledge from specialist organisations in this manner. A point of attention in respect of social counselling, is that the remuneration to municipalities is spent in various ways. Municipalities also have difficulty in estimating the amount of counselling that a beneficiary requires. The transition from staying at a reception centre and staying in normal housing is not ideal: Because it is not always clear how much knowledge beneficiaries have already gained during their pre-civic integration programme, the follow-up counselling within the municipality is not always suitably tailored to the 'integration level' of the beneficiary. The social counselling of beneficiaries is perceived as being useful, because beneficiaries don't always know about general institutions, they could have complex socio-psychological problems and Dutch law is perceived as being complicated for this target group.

### ***Remunerations for social counselling***

According to an evaluation report by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) the vast majority of the Dutch municipalities perceived the remuneration of EUR 1,000 per residence permit holder for social counselling as being too low.<sup>91</sup> Although the social assistance is largely carried out by volunteers, the remuneration was not adequate to finance the wage costs for the supervision of these volunteers. During the implementation of this study the government decided on 27 November to raise this social remuneration to EUR 2,370 per person. Secondly, the municipalities are not entitled to this remuneration for every residence permit holder, for instance children under the age of 16. This leads to uncertainty about the total amount of resources that municipalities can spend annually on social counselling.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, this method of financing only provides cover in the short-term; due to municipalities being granted an amount per beneficiary there is no incentive to think about the use of social counselling in the long term. Hence municipalities make new arrangements every year with organisations such as the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, which is a time-consuming and labour-intensive business.<sup>93</sup> To be sure that beneficiaries are able to integrate through social counselling and are able to learn to be self-rescuing, the VNG requests that the number of target groups for which remuneration can be applied is extended, and to change the process of applying for such remuneration. Without suitable counselling there is a chance that these beneficiaries will get into financial difficulties, hence making greater use of social security benefits, and integrating less successfully.

91 Association of Dutch Municipalities VNG (2014) '[Inzichten in tekorten van gemeenten voor maatschappelijke begeleiding van voormalige asielzoekers.](#)' ['Views on shortages at municipalities for social counselling of former asylum seekers'] p. 9

92 Association of Dutch Municipalities VNG (2014) '[Inzichten in tekorten van gemeenten voor maatschappelijke begeleiding van voormalige asielzoekers.](#)' ['Views on shortages at municipalities for social counselling of former asylum seekers.']. p. 17

93 Written response from the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands.

## 4.5 Housing

The description of the housing process of beneficiaries (Chapter 3.5) distinguishes between three different types of accommodations: the reception centre, normal housing and the accelerated municipal housing scheme.

### *Supervised accommodation*

A good practice for these three housing types is that the beneficiary is provided with counselling, and is not immediately expected to be self-rescuing. At the reception centre the beneficiary maintains the same rights as during the asylum procedure. When a beneficiary is declared to be suitable for the municipal self-care scheme, COA takes care of providing good information to the beneficiary, both prior to and during the course of the scheme. The transition to normal housing can also be noted as a good practice, because the obligation for finding suitable housing, as well as the responsibilities for various parties within the housing process, are legally secured.

### *Platform Opnieuw Thuis*

The *Platform Opnieuw Thuis* (home again platform) was set up in view of the programme target and is a good initiative in the housing process. The most important strength of this platform is that it makes municipalities conscious of problems in the field of refugee housing and urges them, in cooperation with other parties, to look critically at improving the programme target. An important activity of the *Platform Opnieuw Thuis* is to detect bottlenecks in the housing process by means of problem analyses. These bottlenecks are subsequently discussed, and in cooperation with other relevant parties such as COA and the IND, are developed to remedy these bottlenecks. The Platform also wants to develop a single central benefits service desk for improving the supply of information about the applications for benefits. These pilots are being introduced as provisional projects, but are intended, if the pilots are successful, to be applied on a large scale to structurally improve the housing process. In addition, at the request of *Platform Opnieuw Thuis*, a Support Team for Asylum Seekers and Residence Permit Holders (OTAV) was set up.<sup>94</sup> This Team, which is administered by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), aims to support and inform municipalities on their asylum policy. By publishing answers to the frequently asked questions, informing municipalities about current legislation and regulations, and issuing guidelines, the OTAV envisages providing for the municipalities' information needs. In this it is supported by regionally appointed Account Managers who are all active in their own designated region. In this way they provide individual assistance to municipalities, act as the mutual contact and, if so desired, engage experts for tailored assistance. Municipalities can also make use of the OTAV when they have concrete plans for the preparation of suitable housing, and require advice from experts for that purpose. The OTAV can be reached by telephone or via the internet.

94 VNG (2015) 'Het Ondersteunings Team Asielzoekers en Vergunninghouders.' ['OTAV - Support Team for Asylum Seekers and Residence Permit Holders.']

### ***Housing issues***

Despite the ongoing projects within the current housing policy several points of attention are to be distinguished. An important point of attention is the correlation between the housing location and the job opportunities for the beneficiary. In shrinking rural municipalities beneficiaries have fewer suitable job opportunities, and they will have to travel distances if they want to study, for example. The Advisory Committee for Migration Affairs (ACVZ) is critical of the current housing policy and insists that the labour market component should play a more significant role in the allotment of housing to a beneficiary.<sup>95</sup> At this point in time account is kept of various aspects in matching up to municipalities, which includes aspects like training and having a job. There are also ongoing pilots relating to the employment potential of residence permit holders, in which the matching up to municipalities is also taken into account.

In the past the allocation of an accommodation has led to practical difficulties because it was not always clear how many people will eventually end up in the home when taking the option for family reunifications into consideration. In order to remedy this issue, since 1 January 2015 COA offers information to municipalities on the beneficiaries' family composition. In addition, in conjunction with IND, COA offers an IT instrument to inform municipalities about the procedural steps for family reunifications. Secondly, during recent years the regulations in respect of rental housing has become complicated, which makes it more difficult to renovate buildings with a different zoning into housing. The current strict controls carried out on application of rental subsidies as a result of prior abuse by other migrant groups, has led to rental subsidy applications being delayed. Hence in November 2015, COA started a pilot in which subsidy applications for accommodated beneficiaries are submitted centrally by COA. The results of this pilot are not known as yet. A final point of attention is the housing supply. According to forecasts the supply of (affordable) social rental housing is inadequate to be able to comply with the demand for housing. For all housing seekers – including other groups of migrants and Dutch nationals – a longer waiting time applies in their search for suitable accommodation. This problem mainly applies in the major Dutch cities which house many beneficiaries. Alternative forms of housing will have to be sought, such as converting vacant office premises and nursing homes. The question, however, is whether this solution can be realised in the short-term.<sup>96</sup>

## **4.6 Financial assistance**

From the description of social assistance benefits for beneficiaries (Chapter 3.6), it is apparent that there are differences between the services for beneficiaries staying in a reception centre, and for beneficiaries who live independently.

### ***Services in the reception centre***

The same social services apply for beneficiaries still staying in the reception centres as during the asylum procedure. If they undertake paid employment while staying in the

95 Advisory Committee for Migration Affairs (2015) 'Geef vreemdeling woning in regio waar werk is.' ['Accommodate third-country nationals in regions where there are jobs.'] Financieel Dagblad (financial newspaper), 14 September 2015.

96 Volkskrant (newspaper) (2015) 'Huisvesting vluchtelingen steeds groter probleem.' ['Housing refugees, an ever-growing problem.']

reception centres, then the living allowance that beneficiaries receive from COA is reduced.

### ***Services outside reception centres***

Until now, beneficiaries staying in normal housing, are entitled to the same social services as other Dutch citizens. These services are carried out by the municipalities pursuant to the Participation Act, and provide beneficiaries with a social wage so that they can provide for their necessary means of subsistence.

### ***Measures facilitating labour market access by municipalities***

The Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands is critical about the consequences for the position of beneficiaries in transferring tasks relating to the former Sheltered Employment Act and the Invalidity Insurance (Young Disabled Persons) Act (Wajong). It is feared that municipalities will cut back on the counselling of beneficiaries as a result of the increased responsibilities.<sup>97</sup> The Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands predicts that municipalities will sooner opt for 'the shortest route to access employment' in their counselling of beneficiaries, which means that beneficiaries carry out low-skilled employment without any prospect of additional schooling. In practice the current financing system could possibly lead to beneficiaries, who do have the potential of earning a diploma, not being given the chance to undertake a higher level of education first, but they move directly into lower positions in the labour market. Alternatively, it could probably take a long time before a beneficiary is counselled to access employment, because municipalities first await the civic integration programme of three years. After this length of time it could be difficult for a beneficiary to find suitable employment. The search for a proper balance between participation in the labour market on the one hand and the civic integration procedure on the other, is therefore a point of attention.

A second point of attention is the differences that arise among various labour market regions who counsel the unemployed towards paid employment; where certain regions have a large municipality participating with more knowledge and budget, other regions have to make do with a smaller budget and less experience. This leads to quality differences between regions, which is also attributable to the job opportunity differences that exist between the regions.

### ***Developments on a national level***

Due to the increased influx of asylum seekers in 2014 and 2015 there's been a nationwide increase in attention for the integration of beneficiaries in the labour market. The Task force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees (TWIV) which was established in the autumn of 2015 is a distinctly national means to enhance the integration of this target group in the labour market, by screening the employment profiles of beneficiaries, matching them up to employers, and focusing more intensively on language proficiency. Since the Platform has such a varied composition of government organisations, the business community and civic organisations, it is expected that these efforts will

lead to greater participation by beneficiaries in the labour market in the long term. The activities of the Task force possibly respond to the criticism from the Advisory Committee for Migration Affairs. This Committee recently emphasized the importance of ascertaining what positions are available which do not require a thorough command of the Dutch language. When it is clear what other skills are required there, then beneficiaries can be matched up to a suitable labour market region. The ACVZ further emphasizes that the measures facilitating labour market access for refugees are currently fragmented and not well coordinated, because a large number of institutions are involved. The ACVZ recently advocated for a more central approach.<sup>98</sup>

### ***Measures facilitating labour market access by civil society organisations***

In the field of job coaching by civil society organisations, the individual counselling offered by the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands and the UAF, can possibly be designated as a good practice. Projects that are financed with private funds such as *Startbaan* by the UAF and the Dutch Refugee Council of the Netherlands, are generally not geared for the participation of beneficiaries on a macro level, but use a personal approach to prepare individual beneficiaries for the Dutch employment culture and the focus on norms and values that it entails.

### ***Current developments***

A legislation amendment was recently proposed, in which the period enabling naturalisation is extended from five to seven years legal residency in the Netherlands.<sup>99</sup> It must be assessed to what extent this amendment could have negative consequences for the position of beneficiaries in the labour market.

98 Advisory Committee for Migration Affairs (2015) 'Geef vreemdeling woning in regio waar werk is.' ['Accommodate third-country nationals in regions where there are jobs.'] *Financieel Dagblad* (financial newspaper), 14 September 2015.

99 Parliamentary Papers II, 2013-2014, 33 852, no. 3

## 5 CONCLUSION

The key objective of this study report is to identify Dutch policy in respect of the integration of beneficiaries in the labour market. In the first instance attention is paid to the legal frameworks which determine the position of beneficiaries in the labour market compared to other migrant groups and Dutch citizens. From this it is apparent that people who are admitted on the grounds of the Geneva Convention on Refugees, as well as people who receive subsidiary protection get the same residence permit, namely the temporary asylum residence permit. This title gives them the same rights to participate in the labour market as Dutch inhabitants.

Secondly, an insight has been provided into which policy measures are being implemented at this point in time to improve the integration of beneficiaries in the labour market. Consecutively measures in the field of language and orientation, education, credentials evaluation, counselling and care, housing and reintegration and social assistance benefit are addressed. This has shown that the integration policy is being developed in various initiatives, which are largely carried out by decentralized levels of government and civic organisations.

On the one hand these initiatives could lead to positive effects on the capacity of beneficiaries to acquire a position in the labour market. By means of the student loan system for civic integration they acquire the resources to undertake a civic integration programme in which they gain proficiency in the Dutch language and orientate themselves on Dutch culture and the labour market. Thanks to a gratuitous recognition of qualifications, beneficiaries increase their chance of finding a suitable study or job. On the basis of a programme target, beneficiaries are allocated housing by the municipality. Developments are also taking place within secondary vocational education and higher education to increase the enrolment and successful study achievements of beneficiaries.

The Dutch government appreciates the self-rescuing capacity of residence permit holders in the context of the civic integration programme. This expected independence is not always realistic when taking the unfamiliarity with Dutch society into consideration. This is sometimes perceived as an obstruction. Municipalities also find it difficult to offer social counselling that corresponds to the integration level of the residence permit holder. Furthermore, the beneficiary's accommodation partially has an influence on the labour market options, considering the employment opportunities in a region. Finally, a number of tasks relating to integration, measures facilitating labour market access and social assistance benefit fall under the responsibility of the municipalities, who don't always have access to the required amount of resources and expertise to enable compliance with these responsibilities. They can opt to invest in people who are easier to supervise in getting into employment, whereby people who are distanced further from the labour market are supervised less intensively than is necessary.

From this study it is apparent that a large number of projects and pilots are launched to structurally improve the position of beneficiaries in the labour market, and which can individually be distinguished as 'good practices'. These measures, however, are not always fully matched up to each other, which could be an obstruction for the successful integration of beneficiaries. In view of the current influx of asylum seekers new policy developments took place in the autumn of 2015 which could influence the integration of beneficiaries in the Dutch labour market in the near future. Especially the Task force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees, in which employers' organisations and trade union confederations, refugee organisations and municipalities participate, can provide a more integrated approach and execution of the integration policy. The Ministerial Committee on Migration, which was established in August, is responsible for the coordination of measures arising from the increased influx of asylum seekers so that these match up to each other. This coordinated deployment of measures can benefit the integration of beneficiaries in the Dutch labour market in the long term.

## LIST OF DEFINITIONS

As far as possible, this report assumes the definitions as described in the EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary. The terms and definitions described in this glossary aim to enhance the comparableness of the information collected by the European Member States. If there is no definition provided in this Glossary the information described below originates from other sources.

*Beneficiary of international protection:* A person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status.

*Beneficiary of subsidiary protection:* A person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status.

*Integration:* in the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of member states.

*Naturalisation:* Any mode of acquisition after birth of a nationality not previously held by the target person that requires an application by this person or their legal agent as well as an act of granting nationality by a public authority.

*Residence permit:* An authorisation issued by the Dutch government allowing third-country nationals to stay legally in its territory, in line with the conditions of Article 1(2) (a) of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1030/2002 of 13 June 2002 laying down a uniform format for residence permits for third-country nationals.

*Refugee:* In the EU context, either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Art. 12 (Exclusion) of Directive 2011/95/EU does not apply.

*Aliens Act 2000:* Framework act for Dutch policy on foreign nationals. This organises the conditions for admission as well as the stay in the Netherlands of third-country nationals.

*Beneficiary of international/humanitarian protection:* Asylum Seeker whose application has been granted and who has been given (legal) residence status.



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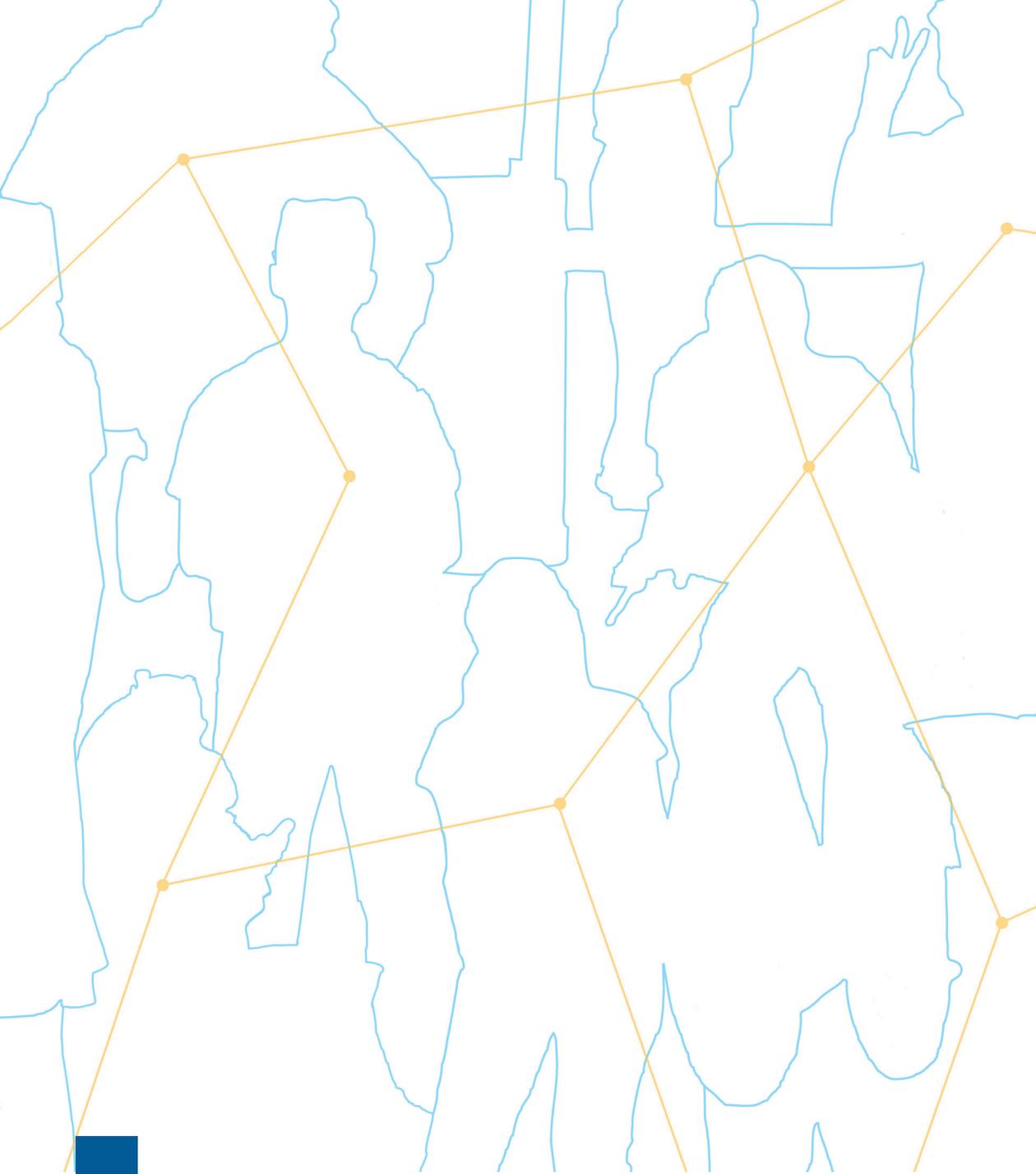
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