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**INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES
OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION
IN THE NETHERLANDS:
THIRD SET OF RESULTS FROM
THE NATIONAL INTEGRATION
EVALUATION MECHANISM (NIEM)**



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Preface

Dear Sir/Madam,

You hold in your hands the Evaluation 2 National Report on the implementation of various areas of integration policy towards beneficiaries of international protection in the Netherlands.

The report is the result of the evaluation of integration policies in the European Union (EU) Member States, implemented as part of the project “The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM)”.

NIEM is a six-year long transnational project which aims to prepare key actors in the integration field in 16 EU Member States to better face the current challenges and improve the integration outcomes of BIPs. Representatives of academic centres, non-governmental organizations and think-tanks were invited to participate in the project.

The main aim of the project is to provide evidence concerning the gaps in integration standards, identify promising practices and shortcomings in different Member States, as well as evaluating the effects of legislative and policy changes which may provide a basis for further developing an efficient integration policy. Within the research part of the project, a tool is developed to monitor and comprehensively evaluate the integration of beneficiaries of international protection and to identify good practices and obstacles in integration, as well as to assess the impact of legislative and policy changes. NIEM establishes a mechanism for a biennial, comprehensive assessment of the integration of beneficiaries of international protection.

This report is the result of the third of three planned evaluation rounds, which consist of more than 150 indicators aimed at reviewing the existing situation. The subsequent evaluations are carried out periodically every two years. After each round respective national reports are issued, as well as a common European report comparing the examined dimensions of integration policies of all the participating Member States in the NIEM project.

The report is addressed to representatives of public administration, academic and research centres, think-tanks, non-governmental organisations and for all of these dealing with migration and integration issues. We do hope that the report will meet with interest and will be a good basis in creating policies and deepening knowledge about the integration of beneficiaries of international protection.

1. Introduction

The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) presents evidence with regard to the legislation and policies that are implemented at the national level for the benefit of beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs). The study, which is based on a large number of various indicators, supports stakeholders to identify gaps and challenges in the refugee integration policies at the national level. This report is the second follow-up of the Baseline Report on the Integration Policies for BIPs in the Netherlands, preceded by the Evaluation 1 Report on the Integration Policies for BIPs in the Netherlands, which were based on 2017 and 2019 data respectively.

The first part of this report describes the methodology employed during the implementation of the NIEM project. The second part of this report outlines the key developments in the field of integration policies for BIPs in the Netherlands between May 2019 and June 2021. The second part also provides for an outline of the new civic integration regime that entered into force on 1 January 2022. The third part of this report examines the positive and/or negative developments that have taken place between Evaluation 1 and Evaluation 2 for the Netherlands. Additionally, the report identifies three main challenges faced by BIPs during their integration trajectory in the Netherlands. The final part of this report serves as a summary, while at the same time providing for some concluding remarks.

2. NIEM Methodology

The analysis of refugee integration frameworks covers a variety of legal and policy indicators, administrative implementation, policy coordination efforts, financial investments and integration outcomes. 120 indicators have been assessed and scored in Evaluation 2. The normative framework from which the indicators are derived includes EU legal standards such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (EU Charter)¹ and the instruments comprising the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), EU policy standards such as the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU (Common Basic Principles),² and international legal standards such as the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Refugee Convention)³ and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).⁴ The Common Basic Principles, adopted in 2004, addressed integration as a “dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States”.⁵ An

¹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, O.J. C. 326, 26 October 2012, pp. 391-407.

² Council of the European Union, 14615/04 (Presse 321), Justice and Home Affairs, Brussels, 19 November 2004. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2008-08/doc1_1274_415560448.pdf.

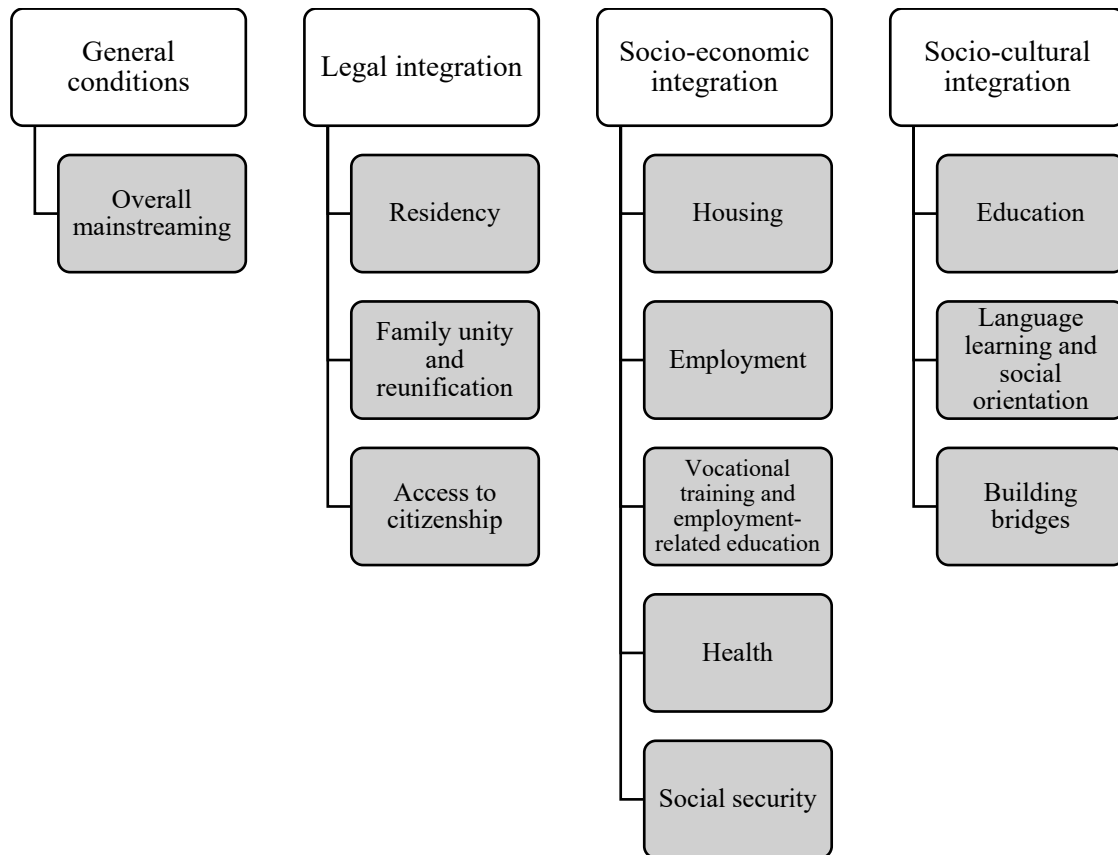
³ Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 28 July 1951, 189 UNTS 137 (entered into force 22 April 1954).

⁴ European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11, 14 and 15, 4 November 1950, ETS 5 (entered into force 3 September 1953).

⁵ Council of the European Union, 14615/04 (Presse 321), Justice and Home Affairs, Brussels, 19 November 2004, p. 17.

important legal standard is enshrined in Article 34 of the Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU,⁶ which stipulates that Member States must ensure access to integration programmes in order to facilitate the integration of BIPs into society.⁷

The research covers 12 dimensions, divided over four sectoral policy areas; general conditions, legal integration, socio-economic integration and socio-cultural integration.



All project partners filled out a standardised NIEM questionnaire with a scoring system. Each indicator is formulated as a specific question in relation to a different aspect of integration. Points are assigned to each answer option, reflecting the different policy choices available, with 100 points awarded to the most favourable option and 0 points to the least favourable option. Using simple averages, the average score of each country on a single indicator, a dimension or all indicators combined can be easily calculated. The NIEM questionnaire differentiates between the various sub-groups of BIPs:

- Recognised refugees
- Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection
- Resettled refugees

⁶ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast), O.J. L. 337, 20 December 2011, pp. 9-26. (Qualification Directive)

⁷ *Ibid*, Article 34.

- Persons under temporary protection
- Persons under humanitarian protection

Another differentiation made within the NIEM questionnaire is that between the different steps policymakers need to take in order to establish a comprehensive framework that is in line with the standards required by both international and EU law. These steps include: “Setting the Legal Framework”, “Setting the Policy Framework”, “Implementation and Collaboration”, “Reliable Data and Evaluation”, “Providing Financial and Human Resources” and “Achieving Integration Outcomes”. However, as a consequence of data gaps in the various participating countries in this research, and because it is highly challenging to provide a meaningful comparison across all countries for all of the indicators, NIEM’s Evaluation 2 Report focuses only on the first three steps; “Setting the Legal Framework”, “Setting the Policy Framework” and “Implementation and Collaboration”.

Setting the Legal Framework

- Legal standards which a country needs to comply with
- Types and duration of residence permits
- Conditions for obtaining long-term residence, family reunification, and citizenship
- Access to rights, services, benefits, and entitlements across different policy areas/ dimensions

Building the Policy Framework

- Policies, rules and arrangements that a country needs to put in place to support the integration of BIPs in all relevant policy areas
- Availability, scope, and duration of targeted provisions and services
- Provisions for special needs groups and needs-based criteria for the allocation of goods and services
- Administrative barriers
- Fees for long-term residence, family reunification, and citizenship
- Awareness-raising/information for stakeholders and beneficiaries

Implementation and Collaboration

- Efforts towards developing, coordinating and implementing an all-of-government and all-of-society response
- The existence and implementation of an overall refugee integration policy/strategy
- Mainstreaming across all relevant policy fields
- Multi-level and multi-sectoral coordination with local and regional authorities, social partners, and civil society
- Acknowledgment of integration as a two-way process and support for an active role on the part of the receiving society
- Encouragement of the participation of BIPs in society and integration policy making

3. Key legal and policy developments 2019-2021

In this report, the most relevant legal and policy measures adopted between May 2019 and December 2021 in relation to integration in the Netherlands are presented. Subsequently, this report provides an overview of the Dutch integration policies compared to the other participating countries. First, an overview is provided of the number of asylum applications and the granted residence permits in the Netherlands. This is followed by an overview of the recent policy developments, as well as some additional information on the, by now, not so new civic integration legislation in the Netherlands.

3.1. Asylum applications in the Netherlands

The number of first-time applications for asylum, perhaps unsurprisingly, decreased from 22.540 in 2019 to 13.720 in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. That number increased again to pre-pandemic levels in 2021 to 24.740. It is expected that 2022 will see another increase in the number of first-time applications for asylum.

Table 1. Number of asylum applicants

	First-time applications	Subsequent applications	Total applications
2019	22.540	2.725	25.265
2020	13.720	1.595	15.315
2021	24.740	1.815	26.555
2022 (January-June)	13.535	795	14.330

Source: Statistics Netherlands - CBS⁸

The largest group that applied for asylum in the Netherlands between 2019 and June 2022 are Syrians, followed by Afghanis and Turks. A noticeable change is that the second largest group of applicants for asylum between 2017 and 2019, Eritreans, is now a relatively small group situated at the tenth position. The previously highlighted trend of an increased number of applications for asylum from Turkish nationals has persisted in such a manner that they have by now become the second largest group of applicants for asylum. By contrast, the applicants for asylum arriving from “safe countries of origin” have decreased, but this is largely due to the revocation of Algeria from the Dutch list of safe countries of origin, as applications for asylum from both Algeria, formerly a “safe country of origin”, and Morocco, another “safe country of origin”, remain relatively high.⁹

Table 2. Number and grounds of residence permits

⁸ <https://opendata.cbs.nl/#/CBS/nl/dataset/83102NED/table?ts=1659950546237>

⁹ Kamerbrief over herbeoordeling veilige landen van herkomst van Albanië, Algerije, Montenegro en Noord-Macedonië, 11 June 2021, 3317913. Available at: <https://open.overheid.nl/repository/ronl-a13e213c-48aa-4d6a-b32d-94235f2778d6/1/pdf/tk-herbeoordeling-veilige-landen-van-herkomst-albanie-algerije-montenegro-en-noord-macedonie.pdf>.

	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection status	Humanitarian grounds	Total residence permits
2019	2.455 + 350	1.830 + 525	560 + 120	5.840
2020	4.975 + 440	2.820 + 540	820 + 100	9.695
2021	7.825 + 760	2.865 + 995	1.375 + 265	14.085

Source: Eurostat¹⁰

According to Eurostat, the number of residence permits issued to asylum seekers has significantly increased between 2019 and 2021. While in 2019 the difference in numbers between refugee status and subsidiary protection status was almost negligible, that is no longer true in 2021, when the difference between the two, in the favour of refugee status, rose considerably.

3.2. Policy developments

During 2019 and 2022, several policy measures and initiatives have been adopted, with many of them related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A few of them are highlighted in this section.

In April 2019, the Dutch government introduced a new exception to the obligation to pass a certain element of the Dutch integration system. This exception relates to the orientation on the Dutch labour market (*Oriëntatie op de Nederlandse Arbeidsmarkt* or ONA). The ONA aims to help the newcomers familiarise themselves with the Dutch labour market, thereby increasing their chances on the Dutch labour market. Following the introduction of this exception, newcomers who have, in the past 12 months, worked for a period of six months for at least 48 hours per month, no longer need to take the ONA course and exam.¹¹ This makes sense, as newcomers who meet these conditions already show in practice that they can find their way on the Dutch labour market, so it would be unreasonable on them having to demonstrate this by taking a course and passing an exam.¹²

A similar exception entered into force on 1 October 2020 for self-employed newcomers. In this vein, newcomers who started their own business in the Netherlands need to show that, in the

¹⁰ See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00192/default/table?lang=en> for first instance positive decisions and <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00193/default/table?lang=en> for positive decisions on appeal. The data collected by CBS, which does not differentiate between refugee status and subsidiary protection status, significantly differs from the data collected by Eurostat, see <https://opendata.cbs.nl/#/CBS/nl/dataset/82027NED/table?ts=1659621435019>.

¹¹ Article 2.4a Besluit inburgering.

¹² Besluit van 10 april 2019 tot wijziging van het Besluit inburgering in verband met vrijstelling van het examenonderdeel oriëntatie op de Nederlandse arbeidsmarkt en enkele technische wijzigingen (Stb. 2019, 148), Nota van Toelichting.

past 12 months, they were registered as a self-employed with the Dutch chamber of commerce for at least six months and have earned at least 2.791,44 EUR in profits from their business.¹³

On 1 June 2021, the definition of ELIP was expanded. The End of Loan for Persons having to Integrate (*Einde Lening Inburgeringsplichtigen* or ELIP) refers to those newcomers who have an obligation to pass the civic integration test, but have failed to do so and fall under one of the two categories: they spent 75% of their loan and only have 12 months left to pass the civic integration test, or they spent 95% regardless of the time left for passing the civic integration test. ELIP then allows the municipality and DUO to identify and assist the struggling newcomer with advise guidance in order to complete the civic integration trajectory on time.¹⁴

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, several exceptional policy measures have been adopted. The time limit for passing the civic integration trajectory, which in principle is 36 months from the start of the civic integration trajectory, was extended on numerous occasions. In March, May and July 2020, all newcomers who had to pass the civic integration trajectory received an extension of two months. In September 2020, everyone received an extra four months. In December 2020, everyone who had less than six months until their time available for passing the integration trajectory expired received an extra extension of four months. Finally, in December 2021, everyone who had less than six months until their time available for passing the integration trajectory expired received an extra extension of one month. The policy guidelines had been amended accordingly and provided for a maximum extension of ten months, as well as a four extension in case the time left for passing the integration trajectory was less than six months.¹⁵ These extension were introduced as a response to the lockdowns and restrictions that seriously hampered the integration trajectories of the newcomers.

3.3. Not so new civic integration regime

For many years, the integration regime for newcomers in the Netherlands has been the centre of debate, both at the academic level and the political level. The current system, called *Wet inburgering 2021* or Wi2021, was already introduced in 2020, but only entered into force on the 1st of January 2022. Its predecessor, which was introduced in 2013, heavily relied on the self-reliance of newcomers and suffered from many challenges that impeded the effective integration of BIPs and newcomers alike. This is why the Dutch government decided to reform the old system and replace it. Most importantly, the new civic integration regime now shifts its focus from self-reliance of the newcomer to a collective effort of society. It is remarkable that

¹³ Article 2.4a Besluit inburgering, and Besluit van 2 september 2020 tot wijziging van het Besluit inburgering in verband met een vrijstelling voor ondernemers van het examenonderdeel oriëntatie op de Nederlandse arbeidsmarkt (Stb. 2020, 330).

¹⁴ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 'Nieuwsbrief Verandering Inburgering', Nummer 16, 20 May 2021, pp. 3-4. Available at <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/publicaties/2021/03/24/verandering-inburgering---nieuwsbrief/Nieuwsbrief+15%2C+april+2021.pdf>.

¹⁵ Article 7a Beleidsregel verlenging inburgeringstermijnen bij geen verwijt.

this shift from self-reliance to governmental (or municipal) support is actually reminiscent of the policy that applied before 2013.

As a result of the reinforced role of the municipalities,¹⁶ newcomers, who as of 1 January 2022 become obliged to participate in the civic integration trajectory, will now receive a wide intake with the municipality,¹⁷ where among other things they will draft a personalised Plan on Integration and Participation (*Plan Integratie en Participatie* or PIP). The municipality will also determine the learning trajectory and can advise on the proper integration school.¹⁸ There are three different learning trajectories; the B1 trajectory, the education trajectory and the self-reliance trajectory.

Firstly, the B1 trajectory is aimed at learning the Dutch language at the, what's in a name, B1 level or higher.¹⁹ This should enable the newcomer to find a job within three years. Contrary to the previous civic integration trajectory, participants are now allowed, and even encouraged, to start working or doing volunteer work during their trajectory.

Secondly, the education trajectory is especially aimed at the younger generation of newcomers. They will also learn the Dutch language at the B1 level, or even higher, and they are prepared for going to secondary or even tertiary education in the Netherlands.²⁰

Finally, the self-reliance trajectory is available for those who are not able to participate in any of the other trajectories. They learn the Dutch language at the basic A1 level and are in an easy-going way prepared for participation in the Dutch society.²¹

Next to these learning trajectories aimed at language learning and participation in the Dutch society, all newcomers still have to take the exam testing their knowledge of the Dutch society and sign the participation statement.²² What has changed in this respect is that only those participating in the B1 and self-reliance trajectories have to complete a Module on the Dutch Labour Market and Participation (*Module Arbeidsmarkt en Participatie* or MAP). The newcomers participating in the education trajectory receive academic counselling instead. Another change is that the municipality will financially support the newcomers who have to integrate and will also finance the integration trajectories as well as the first two attempts at the civic integration exam.²³ What has not changed is that the newcomer is the one who is in the end responsible for passing the civic integration exam, but this time assisted and supported by the municipality.

¹⁶ Article 13 Wet inburgering 2021.

¹⁷ Article 14 Wet inburgering 2021.

¹⁸ Article 15 Wet inburgering 2021.

¹⁹ Article 7 Wet inburgering 2021.

²⁰ Article 8 Wet inburgering 2021.

²¹ Article 9 Wet inburgering 2021.

²² Article 6 Wet inburgering 2021.

²³ Article 13 Wet inburgering 2021. It must also be noted that not all newcomers receive financing from the municipality. Newcomers who are not BIPs or their family members need to take out a loan and pay for the relevant courses themselves. See Article 19 Wet inburgering 2021 to that extent.

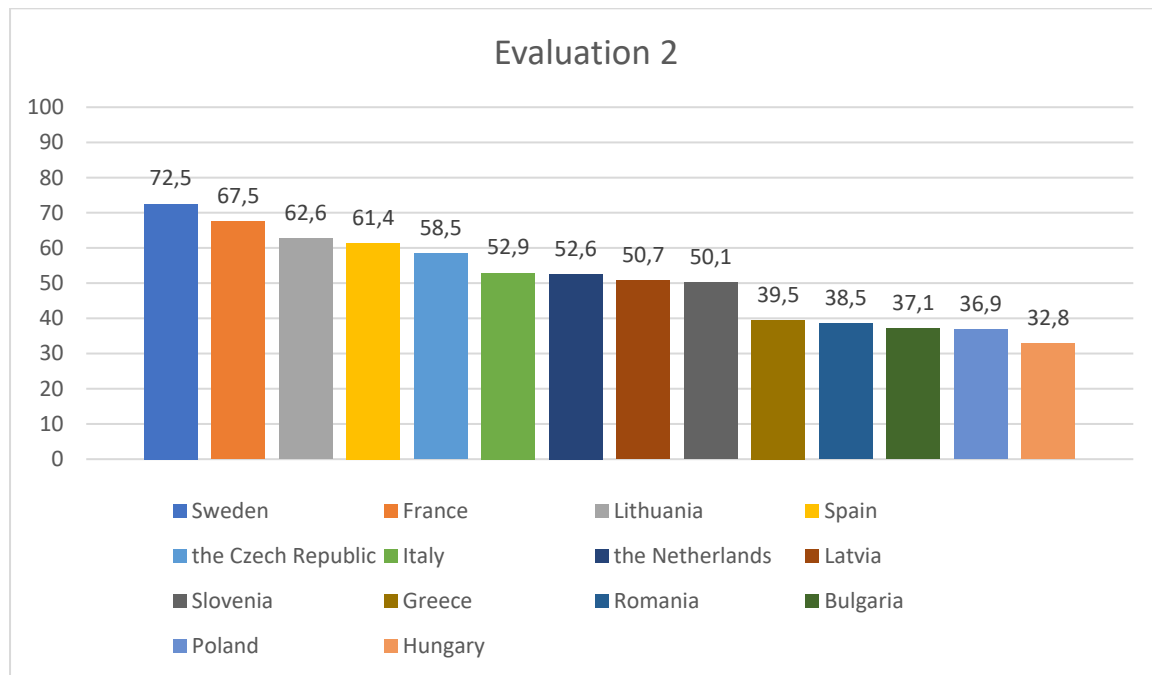
Because the current civic integration regime only entered into force on the 1st of January 2022, the NIEM questionnaire, which analysed the situation as of the 31st of March 2021, did not include any results on the impact of the legislative change. Thus, the results of the NIEM questionnaire are all based on the “old” integration regime as it applied until the 31st of December 2021. These results are analysed in the next sections.

4. Evaluation 2 of the Dutch integration framework

In this section, the results from Dutch integration framework as part of the NIEM questionnaire are analysed and compared to the results of the Evaluation 1 Report.

4.1. Comparative chart

First of all, let us have a look at a comparative chart indicating the overall performance of the 14 participating countries.

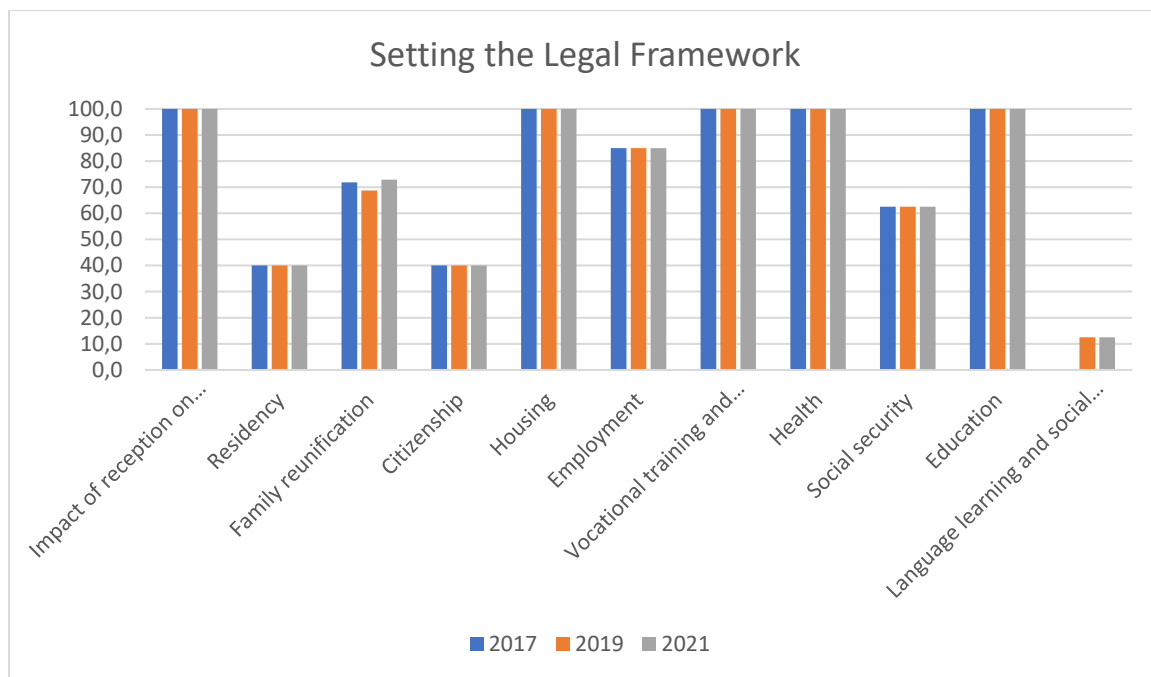


Comparative data: Migration Policy Group, Brussels
Own visualisation.

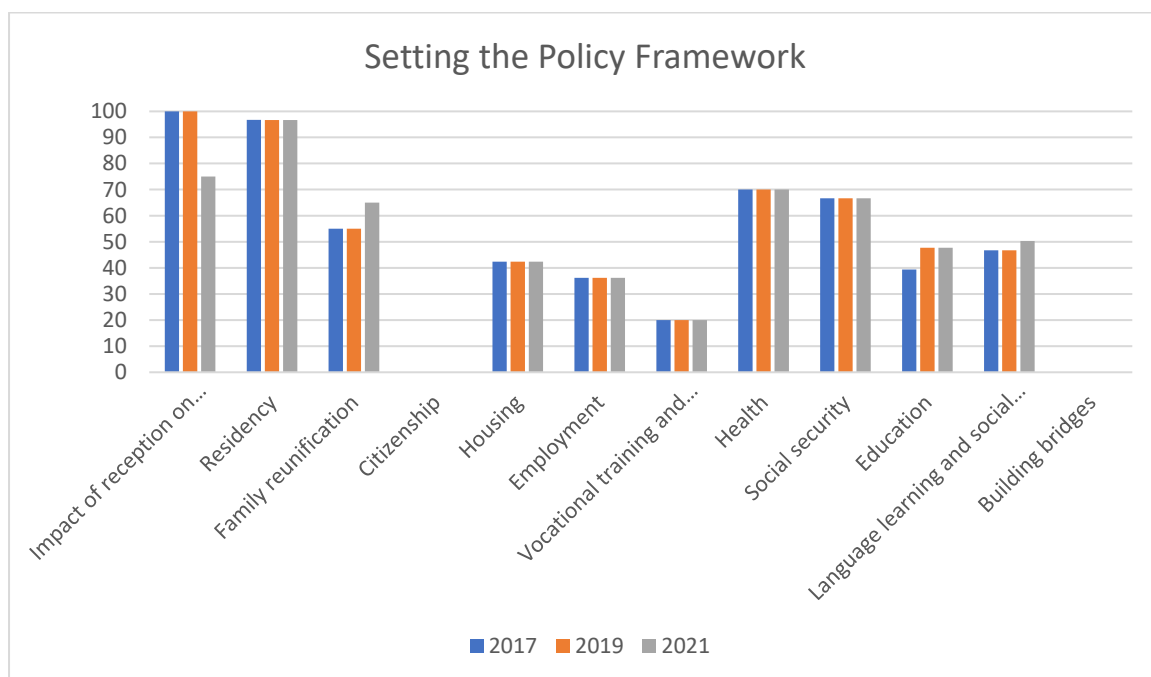
As can be seen from these this chart, the Netherlands is not performing at a high level when it comes to the integration of BIPs. It ranks only seventh out of 14 participating countries. The Netherlands has an overall score of 52,6, which is only slightly above the average score (51) of all participating countries. Same as in the previous Evaluation 1 and Baseline reports, Sweden is the top performing country with a score of 72.5, scoring five points more than the second in line, France (67,5), and almost ten points more than the third in line, Lithuania (62,6). At the other side of the spectrum, five countries fail to pass the half-way point; Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Hungary. Hungary is the lowest scoring country, with an overall score of 32,8.

4.2. Three general charts

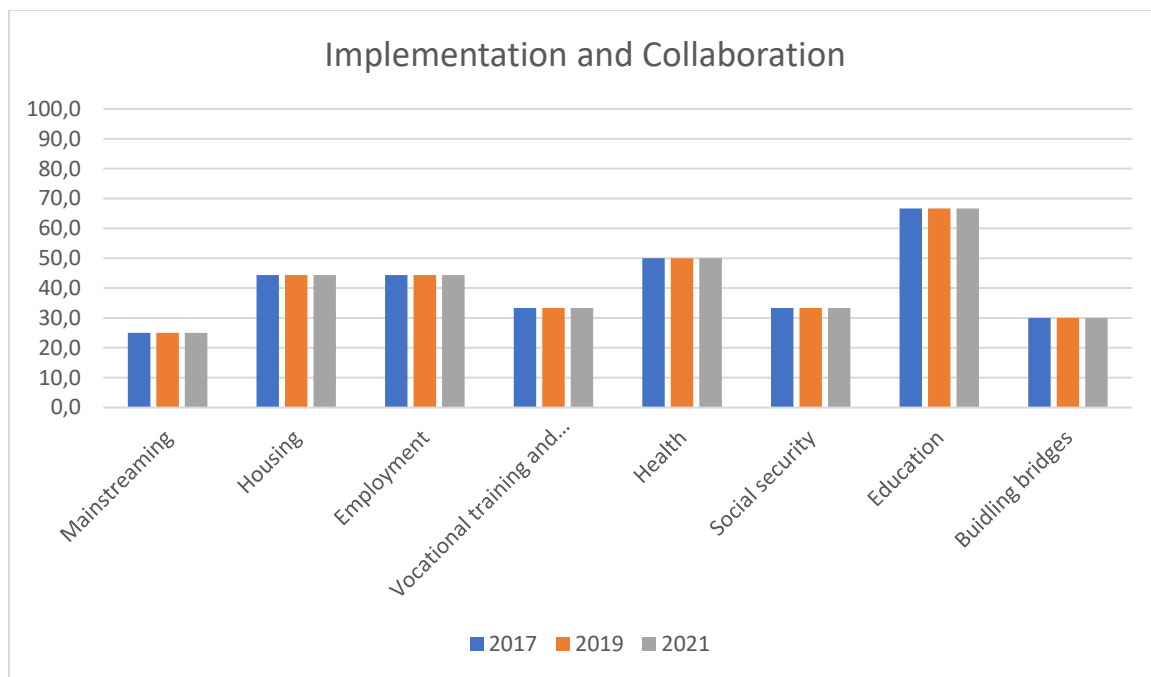
In this next section, three charts are shown to indicate the performance of the Netherlands on the steps that policymakers need to take in order to establish a comprehensive integration framework that is in line with the standards required by both international and EU law. As already indicated before, the NIEM questionnaire focused on the three first steps; setting the legal framework, setting the policy framework, and implementation and collaboration. These three steps are highlighted next.



Comparative data: Migration Policy Group, Brussels
Own visualisation.



Comparative data: Migration Policy Group, Brussels
Own visualisation.



Comparative data: Migration Policy Group, Brussels
Own visualisation.

These three charts show, in addition to the stark contrast between the three steps, also the progress that has been made or the decline that has taken place between the NIEM Baseline (based on 2017 data), NIEM Evaluation 1 (based on 2019 data) and NIEM Evaluation 2 (based on 2021 data). Comparing the scores from the Netherlands across these three steps throughout the project implementation period (2017, 2019 and 2021) shows that the Dutch integration framework remained relatively stable, with only a limited number changes.

In the “Setting the Legal Framework” policy step, the changes took place in the “Family reunification” and “Language learning and social orientation” dimensions. The “Family reunification” dimension saw a decrease from 2017 to 2019, but again a larger increase in 2021, resulting in an overall net increase. However, as the decrease in 2017 was caused due to a calculation error, this change will be omitted in the remainder of this report. The same goes for the “Language learning and social orientation” dimension, as it already increased between 2017 and 2019, but remained stable between 2019 and 2021.

In the “Setting the Policy Framework” policy step, the changes took place in the “Impact of reception on integration”, “Family reunification”, “Education” and “Language learning and social orientation” dimensions. The “Impact of reception on integration” dimension remained stable between 2017 and 2019, but witnessed a rather steep decline in 2021. The “Family reunification” dimension also remained stable between 2017 and 2019, but increased in 2021. The “Education” dimension increased between 2017 and 2019, but remained stable in 2021. As this report only concerns developments between 2019 and 2021, the change of the “Education” dimension will be omitted in the remainder of this report. Finally, the “Language learning and social orientation” dimension remained stable between 2017 and 2019, but increased in 2021.

No changes occurred in the “Implementation and Collaboration” policy step.

Overall, the scores of the Dutch integration framework on the different dimensions remained rather stable across the three policy steps. Only three changes have taken place in the course of Evaluation 2; none in the “Setting the Legal Framework” policy step, three in the “Setting the Policy Framework” step and again none in the “Implementation and Collaboration” policy step. Out of these three changes, two were positive and one was negative.

4.2.1. Zooming in on dimensions and indicators of integration

The above-mentioned four changes all took place in three dimensions: one in “Impact of reception on integration”, one in “Family reunification” and one in “Language learning and social orientation”. This subsection zooms in on these dimensions and the affected indicators in particular.

One change took place in the “Impact of reception on integration” dimension, in the first indicator on the average length of the reception phase. This indicator questions how long it takes on average to reach a final decision for asylum cases delivered in the last calendar year. In 2017, the average duration was 168 days. In 2019, this waiting period increased with 40 days, which amounts to almost 25%, to a total of 208 days.²⁴ This resulted in a decrease in score from 100 in Evaluation 1 to 75 in Evaluation 2.

In the “Family reunification” dimension, there was also just one change. That change took place in the 15th indicator on the amount of fees and costs for family reunification. This indicator looks into the average fees and costs for family reunification, per beneficiary. In Evaluation 1, the average cost was € 237,51, resulting in a score of 60. This decreased in Evaluation 2 to € 192,64, resulting in a score of 80.²⁵

The score of the Netherlands in the “Language learning and social orientation” dimension increased between 2019 and 2021 as part of the “Setting the Policy Framework” policy step. The indicator at stake revolved around the quality of the social orientation courses offered to BIPs. In 2021, these social orientation courses were regularly evaluated by the quality label *Blik op Werk*, while this did not happen on a structural basis previously.²⁶

4.2.2. Challenges in the Netherlands

After this overview of the developments in the Dutch integration framework between 2019 and 2021, this section analyses the challenges that BIPs when going through the integration procedure in the Netherlands. This section is not exhaustive, but merely identifies three main

²⁴ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, ‘Cohortonderzoek asielzoekers en statushouders – asiel en integratie 2021’, Den Haag/Heerlen/Bonaire, 2021. Available at:

<https://longreads.cbs.nl/asielenintegratie-2021/statushouders-huisvesting-en-integratie/>.

²⁵ See the website of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Services (IND):

<https://ind.nl/Paginas/Kosten.aspx>.

²⁶ See the website of the quality label *Blik op Werk*: <https://www.blikopwerk.nl/dienstverlener/info-keurmerk>.

challenges. These three challenges are: the emphasis on the self-reliance of BIPs, the complex integration system and the great distance to the labour market.

Firstly, the integration approach of the Dutch government, which heavily relied on the own responsibility and the self-reliance of the BIPs, did not seem to be working in practice. The Dutch government imposed a mandatory integration trajectory on BIPs that they had to complete successfully. Apart from a loan of € 10.000,00 from the government that would help them fund their integration courses, BIPs were left to their own devices. They had to find their own suitable integration courses and make sure that they successfully passed the civic integration trajectory within three years. In that case, the loan would be turned into a gift. However, if they failed to do so, they would have to repay the loan as well as face the possibility of receiving a fine. As BIPs find themselves in an unknown and unfamiliar society and may face difficult emotional, personal, physical and psychological situations, this emphasis on the own responsibility and on the self-reliance of BIPs is not the most suitable way to fostering the integration of BIPs. Integration works best when it is considered a collective effort by both the receiving society and the persons who have to integrate, instead of as an individual effort of these persons.

Secondly, connected to the first challenge, many BIPs had difficulties to find their way in the complex Dutch integration system. There is an abundance of integration schools and courses and it may have been difficult for BIPs to find the one that suits their needs best.

Thirdly, a major issue is the great distance to the labour market that BIPs face. According to official statistics, from the group of BIPs who received their protection status in 2014, only 41% had found a job after four and a half years. From those BIPs who received their status in 2017, only 16% had found a job after two and a half years. However, this small number could be partially explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. In finding their way to the Dutch labour market, BIPs encountered a number of barriers. These include insufficient language skills, missing diplomas or certificates, different cultural expectations, traumas and other health issues, as well as a lack of a social network to facilitate their job hunt. Furthermore, Dutch employers are in general reluctant to hire BIPs with foreign qualifications. Employers rather prefer BIPs who graduated from a Dutch (higher) education institution and possess a Dutch degree. Finally, the requirements that were attached to the integration trajectory may also have impeded the economic integration of BIPs. As part of the integration trajectory, BIPs have to follow language classes and other integration courses that mostly take place during the day. This makes them less flexible and limits their availability for work. What is more, due to the sanctions connected to failing the civic integration trajectory, BIPs tended to focus on passing the civic integration trajectory, rather than looking for a job or making social. All of this severely hindered the actual integration of BIPs into the Dutch labour market.

5. Conclusion

This National Evaluation 2 Report builds on the National Evaluation 1 Report that was published in 2020. This report is based on the results of Evaluation 2 of the NIEM indicators. As its name suggests, the current report evaluates the Dutch integration policy and discusses the policy changes that were implemented in the Netherlands between 2019 and 2021. This is the final report, following the Baseline Report and the Evaluation 1 Report.

As this report has shown, there have not been many major policy changes in the Netherlands. However, in that period, a major legislative change has taken place. For the BIPs themselves, the most important developments are the exemptions provided to newcomers who are engaged in genuine (self-)employment activities when it comes to completing the ONA (Orientation on the Dutch Labour Market) module. A second development is the widening of the scope of ELIP (End of Loan for the Integration obliged Persons), thus enabling municipalities to assist struggling newcomers with their integration trajectory. Apart from these two policy developments, only some minor changes have taken place that only had a limited impact on the integration of BIPs. Indeed, other measures were aimed at remedying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This explains the limited, both positive and negative, changes in terms of scoring on the indicators that have been reported for the Dutch integration framework.

However, and more importantly, the Dutch integration policy had been at the centre of political and legislative debate for many years, since its introduction in 2013. This has finally resulted in the adoption of a new legislative act introducing the new civic integration regime, called *Wet inburgering 2021*, which entered into force on 1 January 2022. With the introduction of this new integration regime, the Dutch government reformed the previous system and aimed to remedy its flaws. As such, the new integration regime reinforces the role played by the municipalities. Newcomers are no longer left to their own devices, but are instead supported throughout their integration trajectory by their municipality. Moreover, their integration trajectories are tailored to them and drafted in close cooperation with the municipality. Three different integration trajectories are available to them; one aimed at participating in the Dutch labour market, another aimed at participating in Dutch education, and a last one aimed at helping the most struggling newcomers become self-sustainable in the Dutch society. Unfortunately, due to its postponed entry into force, the effects of the new civic integration regime could not be included in this Evaluation 2 Report.

The results of Evaluation 2 of the NIEM indicators have shown that the Netherlands is, compared to other western and northern European countries, underperforming when it comes to supporting BIPs in their integration trajectory in the Dutch society. Sweden, France, Lithuania, Spain, the Czech Republic and Italy are outperforming the Netherlands. Maybe the entry into force of the new civic integration regime will prove instrumental in closing the gap

with the other countries and making the Dutch integration framework more supportive for BIPs.

This gap, though the result of a plethora of policy choices, is exemplified by the issues faced by BIPs in the Netherlands. This report on the one hand highlighted three such issues; the emphasis on the own responsibility of BIPs, the difficulties in finding the proper integration trajectories for BIPs and the large distance from the Dutch labour market. On the other hand, the recent policy developments may remedy some of these challenges. With the entry into force of the new civic integration regime on 1 January 2022, less emphasis is put on the own responsibility of BIPs. Rather, municipalities now have a bigger role to play in assisting and supporting the BIPs with integrating in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the three different integration trajectories should help the BIPs, while supported by their municipality, finding the one that suits their needs best. These trajectories should also help to, at least partially, help BIPs to close the gap in the Dutch labour market.

So the newly introduced regime might be able to remedy these challenges. It at least changes the narrative on integration from an individual effort of the BIPs to a collective effort of the Dutch society. By reinforcing the role played by the municipalities, BIPs should be better guided throughout their integration trajectory. By amending the integration trajectories, encouraging BIPs to start working from the outset, they should be able to at least partially close the gap in the Dutch labour market. In doing so this new regime will hopefully prove effective in helping BIPs integrate in the Netherlands. The current labour shortages on the Dutch labour market might also be helpful for a better economic integration of BIPs in the Netherlands.

6. Appendix: NIEM indicators

The following shows the indicators used for scoring the Dutch integration framework.

Impact of reception on integration	
Conditions for asylum seekers in selected indicators across five dimensions: employment, vocational training and employment-related education, education, health, language learning; social orientation.	
Legal framework	
Residency	Type and duration of residence permit upon recognition
	Renewal of residence permit
	Residency requirement for granting permanent/long-term residence
	Facilitated conditions for permanent/long-term residence
	Facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for permanent/long-term residence
Family Reunification	Family unity and legal status of family members
	Definition of family unit for family reunification
	Residency requirement for family reunification
	Economic resource requirement for family reunification
	Housing requirement for family reunification
	Health insurance requirement for family reunification
	Language assessment for family reunification
	Requirement to comply with integration measures for family reunification
	Time limit for facilitated requirements for family reunification
	Documents from country of origin to verify family links
	DNA/age tests to verify family links
	Facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for family reunification
	Expedited length of procedure for family reunification
	Status of family members
	Autonomous residence permits for family members
	Access to services for family members
Citizenship	Facilitated residence requirement for naturalization
	Period of residence requirement for naturalization
	Economic resource requirement for naturalization
	Language assessment for naturalization
	'Integration'/citizenship assessment for naturalization
	Criminal record requirement for naturalization

	Documents from country of origin for naturalization
	Facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for naturalization
	Naturalization by entitlement for second generation
	Expedited length of procedure
Housing	Free movement and choice of residence within the country
	Access to housing and housing benefits
	Access to property rights
Employment	Access to employment
	Access to self-employment
	Right to same recognition of formal degrees and right to skills validation for BIPs
	Right to same recognition procedures as nationals
	Support in the recognition of foreign diplomas, certificates, and other formal qualifications
Vocational training and education	Access to mainstream vocational training and employment-related education
Health	Procedure to identify special health-related reception needs
	Inclusion in a system of health care coverage
	Extent of health coverage
Social security	Inclusion in a system of social security
	Extent of entitlement to social benefits
Education	Access to education
Language learning and social orientation	Access to publicly funded host language learning
	Access to publicly funded social orientation
Policy framework	
Residency	Administrative barriers to permanent/long-term residence
	Fees and costs for obtaining permanent/long-term residence
Family reunification	Family tracing services
	Fees and costs for family reunification
Citizenship	Fees and costs for naturalization
Housing	Access to housing for vulnerable persons
	Provision of targeted temporary housing support
	Provision of long-term housing support
	Administrative barriers to accessing public housing
	Housing quality assessment when allocating in-kind support

	Targeted housing advice, counselling, representation
	Raising awareness about the specific challenges of BIPs on the housing market
Employment	Job-seeking counselling and positive action
	Access to employment for groups of special concern
	Assessment of professional education and skills
	Administrative barriers to accessing employment
	Raising awareness about the specific situation of BIPs on the labor market
	Targeted support for entrepreneurs
Vocational training and education	Access to vocational training and employment-related education for groups of special concern
	Administrative barriers to accessing vocational training
	Raising awareness about the specific situation of BIPs regarding vocational training
	Accessibility of vocational training and other employment-related education measures
	Length of targeted vocational training and employment education
Health	Access to health care for special needs
	Administrative barriers to obtaining entitlement to health care
	Information for health care providers about entitlements
	Information concerning entitlements and the use of health services
	Availability of free interpretation services
Social security	Administrative barriers to obtaining entitlement to social benefits
	Information for social welfare offices about entitlements
	Information concerning entitlements and the use of social services
Education	Access to education for groups of special concern
	Administrative barriers to education
	Placement in the compulsory school system
	Regularity of orientation and language programs and targeted education measures
	Length of language support
	Raising awareness about the BIP's specific situation regarding education
Language learning and social orientation	Quality of language courses
	Duration of host language learning
	Administrative barriers to host language learning

	Duration of translation and interpretation assistance
	Quality of social orientation courses
	Provision of social orientation for groups of special concern
	Administrative barriers to social orientation
Building bridges	Expectations of mutual accommodation by BIPs and host society members
	Raising awareness of the specific situation of BIPs
Implementation and collaboration	
Mainstreaming	National strategy for the integration of BIPs
	Commitments in the national strategy for the integration of BIPs
	Monitoring and review of policies for the integration of BIPs
Housing	Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of BIPs into housing policies
	Coordination with regional and local authorities on housing for BIPs
	Partnership on housing with expert NGOs
Employment	Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of BIPs into employment policies
	Coordination with regional and local authorities on employment for BIPs
	Partnership on employment with expert NGOs or non-profit employment support organizations
Vocational training and education	Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of BIPs into vocational training and employment-related education policies
	Coordination with regional and local authorities on vocational training for BIPs
	Partnership on vocational training and employment-related education with expert NGOs and non-profit adult education organizations
Health	Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of BIPs into health care
	Coordination with regional and local authorities and/or health bodies on health care for BIPs
	Partnership on health care with expert NGOs
Social security	Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of BIPs into the social security system
	Coordination with regional and local authorities and/or welfare bodies on social security for BIPs
	Partnership on poverty relief with expert NGOs
Education	Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of children and youth under international protection into education policies

	Coordination with regional and/or local education authorities and school boards on education for children and youth under international protection
	Partnership on education with expert NGOs
Building bridges	Coordination with regional and local authorities on social cohesion
	Encouragement of voluntary initiatives to complement public policies
	Support for the involvement of BIPs in civic activities
	Involvement in national consultation processes
	Involvement in local consultation processes



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