

Summary

Non-naturalization under Ranov-permit holders: a study of background characteristics, motivation and perceived barriers

Background and objective of the study

In 2007, approximately 27 000 foreigners received a residence permit under a so-called *Generaal Pardon* (Amnesty). As of June 15th 2012, these so called Ranov permit holders could submit an application for naturalization since they met the naturalization requirement of five years admission in the Netherlands by that date. Until September 2014 two thirds of Ranov permit holders did not yet hand in an application for naturalization.

On October 29, 2014, the State Secretary of Security and Justice has agreed to conduct two studies. The first examines the reasons why 820 naturalization applications of Ranov permit holders were rejected. This study was conducted by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND 2015). The second study investigates the motives of Ranov permit holders to not submit a request for naturalization. This is the topic of the present report.

The following research questions were formulated:

- 1 What are the background characteristics of non-naturalized Ranov permit holders and do they differ from the characteristics of former Ranov permit holders who have naturalized?
- 2 What reasons do (former) Ranov permit holders give for whether or not to opt for Dutch nationality?
- 3 Did Ranov permit holders experience obstacles when applying for naturalization and if so, what obstacles did they experience?

The basis of the study consists of background data of 24 899 (former) Ranov permit holders and data from a web survey that was completed by 419 (former) Ranov permit holders (response rate 42%). In addition, 15 semi-structured interviews with non-naturalized Ranov permit holders and three interviews with employees of NGO's were conducted.

Results

Explanations on why immigrants do or do not naturalize are sought in personal and demographic characteristics of migrants and contextual characteristics of both countries of origin and destination. The scientific literature on naturalization shows that young people and highly educated people are more often naturalized than older people and low-skilled migrants. Migrants with children more often naturalize than people without children and migrants from less economically developed and politically unstable countries are more likely to naturalize than persons from stable prosperous countries. It also appears from comparative research that stricter conditions for naturalization have a negative effect on naturalization rates.

Of the Ranov permit holders nearly 30% has naturalized. Younger persons more often than older ones and higher educated people more often than lower educated persons. Nevertheless, the percentage of permit holders who naturalized is below what could be expected based on the literature. Differences in naturalization rate by

country of origin were also found. Ranov permit holders from China and Azerbaijan, for example, seldom naturalized.

The majority of the respondents who are not yet naturalized do have the desire to naturalize. Motives for wanting to naturalize are both of a practical nature; easier to travel, better job opportunities and of an emotional nature; respondents feel connected to the Netherlands and in nearly 80% of the cases, feel Dutch. Respondents with no interest in naturalization say they do not see the added value of the Dutch nationality above their current nationality.

There are several reasons why respondents who want to naturalize do not submit an application. These range from insufficient knowledge of the procedure to not meeting the requirements for naturalization. Not being in possession of the right documents from the country of origin is by far the main obstacle for respondents. Of the non-naturalized Ranov permit holders, 71% do not have these documents.

Of the respondents who want to naturalize but lack proper documentation from the country of origin, 83% said they have tried to come by these documents. They cite opposition from authorities, difficulties traveling to the country of origin and the high costs involved in trying to obtain the proper paperwork as the main problems they encounter. It is difficult to prove one cannot get the documents needed and exceptions are rarely made.

Concluding remark

The fact that two thirds of Ranov permit holders submitted no request for naturalization yet is explained largely by the barriers they experience in getting the proper documentation from their countries of origin. The motivation to naturalize is very high.