

# Summary

## Migration to and from the Netherlands

### A first sample of the Migration Chart

#### The objective of this report

In this report, we have mapped out the size and backgrounds of migration streams to and from the Netherlands since the year 2000 and provided explanations for the distribution of migrants across Europe. We have emphasised the two types of migration that have been, during the last years, the focus of both government policy and the political/public debate: labour migration and asylum migration. These two types of migration are defined on the basis of the formal admittance procedure of which the migrants make use. We have mapped out and interpreted the developments regarding labour- and asylum migration with the aid of figures from a variety of sources, a literature study, and an analysis of the proceedings of the Dutch Lower House. In doing so, we have taken the first step towards the production of the Migration Chart, which is to be published biennially as of 2010. The primary function of this report is a monitoring one. In addition to this, it can be used as a basis for more specific policy evaluation research.

#### Developments in immigration and emigration as a whole and in the stream of labour- and asylum migration after 2000

Before we present a summary of trends in the development of the migration streams in the new millennium, it is necessary to give a short comment on the figures we have used. First, the migration figures include only those people who have been officially registered by the government. We have left illegal migrants aside. Furthermore, we must also mention that someone's motive for migrating to the Netherlands might not necessarily be consistent with the admittance criterion that has granted him or her entry into Dutch territory, and which has thus been registered in the statistics. It should also be noted that, in this study, the criterion to be met by someone to be considered a migrant is not entirely consistent. There is an important difference between asylum migrants and labour migrants. The first category of people already counts as migrants from the moment they apply for admittance (after having migrated to the Netherlands), an application that has yet to be decided upon. By contrast, labour migrants are only registered as migrants when, prior to the journey to the Netherlands, they have an Authorization for a Provisional Stay or a residence permit, or when they have reported themselves as a labour migrant from the EU, the EEA, or Switzerland to a Dutch municipality and/or the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND). In addition, we must also take into account that it is possible for migrants to apply for different residence permits successively; furthermore, someone with an asylum permit can also take steps to enter the Dutch labour market.

In the Netherlands, immigration decreased after 2001. This drop lasted until 2006, after which immigration once again increased. At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, emigration steeply increased, to reach a momentary peak in 2006 with 132.500 emigrants. In combination with the decreased immigration, the increased emigration confronted the Netherlands from 2003 on with a departure surplus, which until recently was considered quite impossible. In 2008, however, the tide seemed to have turned once more. The most recent figures point to an establishment surplus, mainly caused by a record number of more than 140.000 immigrants (source: CBS).

From 2000 until 2004, the number of (registered) labour migrants did not fluctuate much. During those years, a slight decrease took place. After the eastward expansion of the EU, which coincided with a steep growth of the number of vacancies in the Netherlands, this limited decrease changed into a spectacular increase. This increase was so big, that since 2007, labour migration has become the most important motive for immigration, displacing family migration at the top.

The main cause for asylum migration consists of push factors in the countries of origin. After 2000, asylum migration to the Netherlands decreased considerably. In part, this drop is connected with the decreasing numbers of refugees worldwide, and in Europe in particular. However, the decrease after 2001 is so sizeable, that we can also connect the introduction of the Aliens Act 2000 and some other national factors to it. This idea is supported by the fact that the Dutch share in the total number of asylum requests filed in North-West Europe during the first years after 2000 has diminished as well. From 2004 on, the number of filed asylum requests has gradually grown again. The only exception was the year 2007, in which a decrease took place. This same pattern can also be found with regard to the total number of asylum requests filed in North-West Europe.

### **Theoretical explanations**

To explain migratory movements, theories on three levels turn out to be useful:

- 1 psychological theories that provide an explanation for the (choice) behaviour of individuals;
- 2 theories that provide an explanation for migration in general;
- 3 theories that offer an explanation for migration from the perspective of specific (combinations of) motives for migration.

In the chapter on asylum migration, we have introduced the general psychological model of Hedström (2005). According to this model, the choices people make are determined by the *objectives* they set for themselves, the *actual possibilities* at their disposal to realise those wishes, and the *perceptions* people entertain of these possibilities. This model can be successfully applied to (various types of) behaviour, for example to migration.

A very frequently used theory on the second level is the so-called ‘push’ and ‘pull’ theory, which discerns between factors in the country of origin that stimulate emigration (‘push’) and factors in the country of destination that encourage immigration (‘pull’). Subsequently, several migration theories have defined factors that might be at stake in this context. While the emphasis initially lay quite strongly on economic factors to explain migratory streams (differences in in-

come and affluence), more recently the attention has shifted to the importance of (transnational) networks connecting the countries of origin and destination. In the chapter on labour migration, for that matter, Cörvers et al aptly point out that these theories do not explain why only a limited number of people actually do migrate. According to these authors, potential migrants also weigh their institutional embeddedness in their country of origin (social and economic networks, for instance, and also access to social security) against the institutional embedding possible in the country of destination. Phrased in the terminology of 'push' and 'pull', one could say that there are factors that encourage emigration ('push') and factors that hinder emigration ('pull back'), as well as factors that stimulate immigration into a country of destination ('pull') and factors that hinder such immigration ('push back'). A general migration model that might be combined with this is the neoclassical microeconomic migration model, in which the migrant weighs the 'costs' and the 'gains' of migration (either temporary or permanent) against each other. These costs are economic, social, and psychological in nature.

A third category of theories involves a combination of economic explanatory models and network explanations; these theories are primarily applied to labour migration. With regard to asylum migration, the literature discerns between various causes underlying it. Beside the obvious causes of violence and oppression, underdevelopment, poverty, natural disasters, and the effects of climate change play a part as well. To provide an explanation for the destinations chosen by asylum migrants, researchers fill in the factors from the theories mentioned earlier in more detail and combine them with each other. In the literature, migration policy and the political/public debate in the country of destination are added to this.

Until now, all these theories have paid relatively little attention to the role of policy in the countries of destination. However, we can deduce from the theory of segmented labour markets that the government will make labour market policy either more flexible or stricter in response to fluctuations in the general economic and employment situation. In addition, the government will also react to the social unrest that accompanies unemployment. This argumentation has turned out to bear on situations in which the government can choose either to actively recruit specific migrants, or to keep them out. This situation mainly occurs with regard to labour migration (from third countries). It occurs to a far lesser extent with regard to asylum migration, where 'recruitment' does not take place and international agreements oblige the Dutch government to take up every application. This means that the impression entertained of the country of destination by both asylum seekers and human traffickers is essential for the size of the asylum migration. The literature on asylum migration suggests that migration policy can be of influence on this.

### **Explanations for the recent labour migration to the Netherlands**

As we have argued earlier, economic factors and network explanations play an important role in migration theories that are applied to labour migration. To that, we can add the role of government policy as a strengthening or weakening factor. In Chapter 2, it was shown that the number of labour migrants in the

Netherlands has grown steeply after 2005, while the share of EU migrants contributing to that number has greatly increased after 2004. It seems that this can be attributed to a combination of economic factors (steep economic growth and a great number of vacancies), the lifting of restrictions for new EU countries with relatively low wages and high unemployment percentages, and the role of migrant networks already present, that lower the costs of migration. Although a large part of labour migrants staying in the Netherlands originates from EU countries, in recent years, the Netherlands was not among the major countries of destination favoured by EU labour migrants. Most likely, this has to do with the fact that the Netherlands, unlike countries such as the United Kingdom, did not abolish the employment permit obligation for employers of migrants from the Middle- and East-European member states (MEE countries) until 2007. Since the abolition of the transitional arrangement for employees from the MEE countries, on 1 May 2007, the Dutch government's influence on the number and type of admitted labour migrants has been limited to labour migrants from outside the EU and from EU countries for which a transitional arrangement is still in effect (Bulgaria and Romania). This means that the economic forces have 'free play' with regard to labour migration from by far the biggest part of the EU. In recent years, the Dutch government has tried in particular to attract highly educated labour migrants by means of simplified procedures (Knowledge migrant regulation) and tax benefits. The figures do not make clear whether this has resulted in a greater number of highly educated labour migrants.

### **Explanations for the Dutch share in the number of asylum applications in North-West Europe**

As we said before, push factors in the countries of origin constitute the primary cause of asylum migration. Yet, in the choice<sup>1</sup> of a particular country of destination pull factors often play a role as well. We have shown that there are two ways to explain the developments in the size of the asylum migration to the Netherlands between 2000 and 2007, as compared to that going to other North-West European countries. The first explanation focuses on the composition of the asylum intake, combined with the composition of the asylum migration in the past. During the years in which the intake in North-West Europe mainly consisted of asylum seekers coming from countries from which many asylum seekers had found their way to the Netherlands in the past, many did so now, too, and the Dutch share in the influx grew. Yet, whenever asylum seekers came to North-West Europe from countries from which there had not been any asylum migration to the Netherlands before, they went to other North-West European countries, and the Dutch share in this intake dropped. This finding fits in with the network theory, which states that migrants who have arrived earlier attract new migrants with the same background. Thus, the Dutch share in the increase of the North-West influx of asylum seekers in 2005 and 2006 can in part be explained by the growth of the number of Iraqi, Afghan, and Somali asylum

<sup>1</sup> The choice of the country of destination is determined by various factors, among which are the wishes and behaviour of both the asylum seeker and the human trafficker involved, financial and practical possibilities, and chance factors. The country 'chosen' beforehand, for that matter, turns out not always to be the final destination.

seekers in North-West Europe who, once arrived in the Netherlands, found compatriots in possession of a residence permit already present.

The second explanation focuses on asylum policy in combination with the political/social climate regarding migrants. One policy involved is the short application centre procedure. In some years, a relatively large percentage of asylum seekers were rejected in this procedure. Another policy involved, presumably, is the withholding of a suspending effect to appeals against rejections in the application centre, as well as the wider scope of asylum decisions in the Aliens Act 2000. Combined with the hardened tone in the political and social debate on migrants since 2002, this seems to have contributed to the decrease in the Dutch share in the asylum intake between 2000 and 2004 in the subregion consisting of the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Dutch country-specific policy regarding Iraq and Afghanistan seems to have had little influence on the Dutch share in the intake of asylum seekers coming from those countries. Yet, it is plausible that the Dutch policy regarding Somalia actually did have an influence. However, existing relations between the afore-mentioned countries of origin and the United Kingdom and Sweden, as well as policy measures taken by these countries of destination, seem to have been more important for the distribution of the asylum seekers involved across North-West Europe in the period between 2000 and 2007.

The economic factors of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the unemployment rate do not sufficiently explain the fluctuations in the Dutch share in the asylum intake in the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. In all likelihood, the economic differences between each of these countries of destination and the asylum seekers' countries of origin are so big that the differences between these countries of destination, relatively small as they must be in the eyes of potential asylum seekers, may be of little influence. The fact that the unemployment rate increased between 2001 and 2005 might have been an indirect influence, through its effect on the political/social climate.

### **Future developments**

Simple migration projections indicate that there will be a gradually increasing immigration to and a gradually decreasing emigration from the Netherlands until 2020. For various reasons, these developments may actually be expected. In view of the still big differences in wealth world-wide, the many (potential) conflict areas and oppressive situations, and the current ecological developments, it is unlikely that the number of migrants around the world will decrease in the years to come.

In the future, an increase of labour migration is to be expected, especially from countries that will be hit relatively hard by the recession. As far as the Netherlands are concerned, in particular labour migration from EU countries will grow. This will certainly happen if the transitional arrangements for Bulgaria and Romania will be abolished and the EU will expand further (for instance with the addition of Turkey). Migrants from these countries will be attracted by the high level of prosperity and the migrant networks already in place.

Possibly, the effects of climate change and of the conflicts that might arise out of the current world-wide recession will lead to an increase in the number of asylum migrants in North-West Europe. The EU expansion might also affect asylum migration: an expansion at the eastern borders will cause asylum migrants extra problems to reach the EU countries with the highest standard of living, located in North-West Europe, without getting registered in the surrounding EU countries. As long as no sound agreements have been made in the context of common European asylum policy about 'burden sharing', this might cause the number of asylum seekers in North-West European countries to drop off.

To a limited extent, future immigration can be influenced by the Dutch government's policy. The continuing rise in the ageing population will probably result in a lasting demand for labour migrants. In addition, it is to be expected that, due to the present economic recession, Dutch labour migration policy will become stricter with regard to labour migrants from outside the EU. It is likely that the social unrest that comes with the recession will contribute to this as well. The economic decline and the deteriorating social climate regarding migrants might cause the Netherlands to become less attractive to labour- and asylum migrants alike. Whether this will have consequences for the Dutch share in the migration streams within Europe, will depend on the way in which other countries will respond to the economic problems.