



Mapping of social orientation: the case of the Netherlands

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I. Legal and institutional framework

1. Legal framework of social orientation

Civic orientation in the Netherlands is regulated in twofold. The *Civic Integration Act*, focusing on individuals residing in the Netherlands, dates back to 30 November 2006.¹ In 2013, important changes have been effected as well as in 2017. Taking all changes into account, the most up to date legislation can be found here.² In addition, a second law focuses on the integration of individuals who intend to move to the Netherlands. This law on civic integration abroad obligates certain categories of foreigners to acquire a certain level of Dutch and a certain level of knowledge of the Dutch society before their immigration to the Netherlands (*Civic Integration Abroad Act*³) and is in force since 2006.

In this report, we concentrate on the civic integration policy focusing on the integration of migrants present in the Netherlands as in power after the latest change in October 2017. Immigrants are invited or obliged to learn Dutch and to learn about life in the Netherlands. In total, beneficiaries need to acquire a certain level of Dutch, learn about Dutch society, orientate themselves on the Dutch labour market and sign a declaration of participation in Dutch society. Central to this policy is the personal responsibility of the beneficiaries. They are responsible for their own trajectory and have considerable freedom to arrange it themselves. Courses can be followed through different channels, self-study is allowed and when one already has obtained certain diplomas, exemptions can be granted. People are encouraged to ask for help amongst their family members, friends and other people surrounding them, such as people from school.

Civic integration can be completed in two ways. One can pass the civic integration exam or the state exam "Dutch as a Second language" (NT2), which demands a higher level of Dutch and allows for further studies in Dutch. Most people who are obliged to comply with civic integration demands choose the civic integration exam. Since this report is on social orientation (a component of civic integration) we focus on civic integration and to a lesser extent on NT2.

The impact on the legal status of beneficiaries is mentioned in the preamble of the civic integration law of 2017. Not only are foreigners and certain categories of Dutch nationals obliged to comply with certain integration demands, issuing certain residence permits depends on passing the civic integration exam.

Civic integration is compulsory for certain categories of individuals. People have 3 years to meet the requirements connected to their civic integration. If, after 3 years, the individual is guilty of not complying with the requirements, a sanction will follow. In most cases, a fine up to €1250 can be administered. Moreover, not meeting the civic integration requirements can also obstruct acquiring stronger residence rights or the Dutch nationality. When one receives a fine a new deadline (generally in 2 years) is set for meeting the requirements. In case of non-compliance, fines can be repeated.

¹ The Netherlands/ BWBR0020611/30.11.2006.

² The Netherlands/ BWBR0020611/01.01.2018.

³ The Netherlands/ BWBR0023204/15.03.2006.

2. Course/module providers

On the national level, there are no authorities or other public entities that offer courses or modules to beneficiaries. Since 2013 however, DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs - The Education Executive Agency of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) is responsible for beneficiaries who received a residence permit on or after 1 January 2013. Through DUO they receive information regarding their obligations. Until 2013, municipalities were in charge of this.

Regional or municipal authorities do not offer courses either and today they do not have any responsibility towards beneficiaries who have obtained a residence permit in 2013 or later. Only beneficiaries who were obliged to participate in civic integration before 2013 fall under the municipality's responsibility until the completion of their trajectory. Asylum beneficiaries and religious servants who received a residence permit before 2013 are still entitled to a civic integration trajectory offered by the municipality. This is still a considerable group of people, since not everyone has complied with civic integration demands.

NGOs and private sector organisations provide civic integration courses. Language buddies and coaches of a variety of independent volunteer organisations add to the civic integration trajectory. People can choose for themselves how they want to prepare for the exam. Course providers in the private sector are regulated but not directly mandated by the state or region. Every agency in the Netherlands can provide civic integration courses but one needs a specific certification by an agency called 'Focus on Work' (Blik op Werk). They are independent organisation focused on quality guiding individuals to certified service providers, to proven methods and knowledge concerning sustainable labour participation and civic integration.⁴ This quality assurance organisation has been established in 2007 by (amongst others) social partners, Council for Work and Income (Raad voor werk en Inkomen), VNG (Dutch Municipalities) and the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV).

Because of the high diversity in integration offers and the responsibility of the beneficiary to choose how to prepare for the exams, there are no special requirements towards the professional qualifications of provider's experts. They can even be volunteers and beneficiaries can choose to prepare for the exams by means of self-study. There is no special type of education preparing teachers for this kind of work. Only language teachers can follow special education. There are several educational organisations in the Netherlands offering courses in teaching Dutch as a Second Language (NT2). Reading several vacancies for civic integration and Dutch teachers of officially recognised integration providers shows however that several qualifications are sought after. One school demands higher education, NT2 certificate, certificate of competency as NT2 teacher (BVNT2⁵), post-HBO education NT2, education as a Dutch as Second Language-expert, dual Master of Dutch as Second Language. Most of these items are related but not restricted to NT2. Another school explicitly asks for official teaching qualifications and minimally two years of relevant experience.

II. Audience

1. Coverage of social orientation courses, by category of non-nationals

⁴ ["Blik op werk"](#) Accessed January 2018.

⁵ A professional association of Dutch teachers (BVNT2) assesses teachers and delivers certificates of competency since 2006. These competency certificates can help show and validate experience and are sometimes sought after by course providers.

The website of DUO provides some statistics regarding the progress of integration from 2013 until 2016.⁶ The numbers (and derived calculations) have been based on these data. For readability reasons, not all tables and numbers are presented here.

Firstly, we chose to present the numbers of beneficiaries by category and the percentage of beneficiaries that has already completed civic integration successfully. The percentage of completed trajectories is based on the total number of obliged beneficiaries reduced by those who have been exempted. In general, people have 3 years to complete the integration demands so the lower percentages of 2015 and 2016 are partly made up of people whose 3 year term did not expire yet. Moreover, extensions of the term can be asked for.

Number of beneficiaries per category and percentages of completed trajectories, both per year	2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Asylum migrants ⁷	4,744	60.7%	10,412	29.8%	18,846	2.9%	25,920	0.2%
Family migrants ⁸	4,027	77.3%	6,458	61.9%	5,926	18.8%	6,578	4.8%
Others ⁹	644	71.8%	527	57.3%	243	24.4%	506	8.1%

Table 1: Number of beneficiaries per type of migrant in the Netherlands 2013-2016

The table clearly shows the rise in asylum migrants that we have experienced over the past years.

Other interesting statistics shows us the language level of the beneficiaries who take the exam. A2 is the basic level that one needs to acquire but there is a possibility to take an exam on language level B1 or B2. Level B1 is needed for intermediate vocational education which prepares trainees for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, and totally related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. Level B2 allows further studies at the level of higher vocational education (HBO) or academic studies.

Language level	A2				B1				B2				Other diploma			
	'13	'14	'15	'16	'13	'14	'15	'16	'13	'14	'15	'16	'13	'14	'15	'16
Asylum migrants	1,190	2,233	325	25	244	289	35	3	157	244	49	4	145	202	122	30
Family migrants	2,401	3,119	807	144	237	291	38	4	147	184	31	0	253	350	236	167
Others	269	148	23	14	26	16	3	0	12	9	6	0	108	108	26	26

Table 2: The language level of exams successfully taken, per type of migrant in The Netherlands, per year in which they became obliged to comply with integration demands.

Central to integration policy in The Netherlands is the responsibility of the beneficiaries. They need to arrange their integration themselves within 3 years. The numbers below give an indication of how many have actively asked for the

⁶ "Inburgeren" Accessed on 6 November 2017.

⁷ People who have obtained an asylum status and family members who join them in the Netherlands.

⁸ Family migrants married or about to marry a Dutch national or a person (non-asylum migrant) previously obliged to follow civic integration.

⁹ E.g. religious servants and family members of children under falling under the arrangements of the so-called 'Kinderpardon' regulation.

loan (see below) in order to start with their integration trajectory. The years indicate the year in which they received the letter stating their obligation.

Loans granted (on 1 July 2017)	Loans granted to people becoming obliged to civic integration per year			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Asylum migrants	4,508	10,072	18,295	23,706
Family migrants	1,224	1,892	1,612	1,537
Others	378	218	100	91
Total	6,110	12,182	20,007	25,334

Table 3: Loans granted, per type of migrant, to people becoming obliged to civic integration

2. Categories of non-nationals having access to or the obligation to attend social orientation courses

Categories of people with and without obligation to comply with civic integration demands are regulated in articles 3 and 4 of the *Civic Integration Act*. Exemptions are fixed in article 6.¹⁰

People seeking international protection are not obliged or even allowed to participate in civic integration. Only after their official recognition as a refugee, they receive this obligation. This category of migrant has gained importance over the past few years, since the number of asylum migrants has risen considerably. Today, asylum migrants make up the largest category of beneficiaries for civic integration. Their procedure differs slightly from those with other migratory backgrounds. After being granted asylum through the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), they register at their municipality. Through the municipality people receive a Citizen Service Number (*burgerservicenummer*) and though DUO they receive a letter stating the obligation to integrate. It is their own responsibility to arrange this. After applying for DigiD (a code needed to arrange online affairs with the Dutch government) people can log in on the DUO website to arrange everything from choosing schools to registering for the exams. Asylum migrants need to pay for their own integration but they can apply for a loan of maximally 10,000 EUR. The determination of the amount of this loan is done, unlike in the cases of non-asylum beneficiaries, without taking into account the income someone might have. If the asylum beneficiary passes the exam within 3 years, this loan is converted to a gift.

In general, newcomers are obliged to comply with integration demands. There are however many exceptions:

- a. Dutch nationals;
- b. Migrants with a EU/EEA, Turkish or Swiss nationality,
- c. Third country nationals who are family members of EU/EEA migrants who fall under the scope of EU Directive 2004/38/EC;¹¹
- d. Third country nationals who are long term residents of EU/EEA countries and fall under the scope of EU Directive 2003/109/EC;¹²
- e. Minors;
- f. People over the retirement age;
- g. Those who have lived in the Netherlands for 8 or more years during years of obligatory education;
- h. Those who have certain Dutch diplomas, certificates or other proof of education in the Dutch language;

¹⁰ The Netherlands/ BWBR0020611/01/01.2018.

¹¹ 2004/38/EC, (29.04.2004).

¹² 2003/109/EC, (25.11.2003).

- i. Those who are in the Netherlands for temporary purposes (e.g. expats).

Even when one is obliged to comply with integration demands, further exemptions can be made (e.g. in case of illness or handicap).

Religious servants make up a special category of beneficiaries. Even though they can be in the Netherlands for temporary purposes, they are requested to participate in civic integration and pass the exams. In some cases they have to pass an exam before coming to the Netherlands. When religious servants do not share their work externally (e.g. working as a monk, internal functionary or board member), this exam is not obligatory. After arriving in the Netherlands, the receiving religious institution needs to register the religious servant at DUO in order to start the integration procedure. The religious organisation has to make sure that the religious servants accept integration and need to provide time and possibility to comply with the integration demands.

'Oldcomers' or settled migrants who had been in the Netherlands before the *Civic Integration Act* entered into force, previously also had to comply with civic integration demands. In 2013, the law changed but that did not mean this group is now exempted from civic integration. The municipalities where they live are still responsible for the follow up of their civic integration process. They still need to pass their civic integration exam. One can however imagine that people becoming obliged more than 10 years ago might not pass the exam anymore. What happens with these cases? Via targeted information enquiries at the municipality of Rotterdam we learnt that there are several ways to be exempted if it is indeed impossible to pass. One can be exempted for medical reasons or being 'not educatable' (niet leerbaar) which means that people put in considerable effort in learning and taking exams but that it was never enough. Also, one can ask to be declared 'evidently integrated' by showing a fixed employment and language skills. The municipality decides about this case per case. People are still followed up and efforts are made for these people to participate in and pass civic integration.

3. Initiatives targeted at specific non-national groups

Religious leaders make up an official target group (by law) within civic integration, as mentioned above. Furthermore, illiterate people are especially encouraged to participate in civic integration. For them, prolonged trajectories exist and schools have designed particular courses to prepare them for the exams.

III. Courses/modules' characteristics

The length of the courses differ. A glance at different schools shows both short and long term courses that also vary in intensiveness. Courses can take a few weeks up to months in a row or even longer than a year. The format of people's civic integration trajectories differ equally. People can choose to follow a course but self-study is also an option. Some schools even offer online education. People are allowed to decide for themselves what type of education is most suitable. Schooling times differ from one institution to the other so evening courses are possible. In terms of language, research shows that information about social orientation courses is offered in 26 languages: Arab, Farsi, Albanian, Tigrinya, Aro, English, Bosanski, Chinese, Dari, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Kurdish, Croatian, Dutch, Ukrainian, Pashtu, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Signali, Spanish, Tamil and Thai. It is not possible to say whether courses are also available in these languages. Every school we have been in touch with offers civic integration courses in Dutch. Smaller migrant-oriented organisations might assist migrants in their own language but information on this is not widely available. As already stated, content of courses and teaching materials differ from school to school. There are however guidelines as to what beneficiaries should learn in the civic integration course. This material is not directly used by the schools, but the teaching

materials they might use are probably based on this material. Original course objectives have been published in 2007 but several changes demanded an update of this document. The ministry of Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment demanded a research organisation "Bureau ICE" to update the course objectives. This is an independent organisation that also makes exams for schools. They reformulated the objectives by using previous research and findings of the Franssen commission that reviewed civic integration as a whole. All course objectives have been extensively discussed with experts. The version published in 2013 is still valid today. Civic integration courses cost money. When an obliged beneficiary does not have enough means to pay for the courses, a loan of maximally 10,000 EUR can be obtained via DUO (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs - The Education Executive Agency of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) for the course and the exam. Asylum migrants who pass the exams on time do not have to repay this loan. Other migrants have to repay this loan. Besides the courses, one also needs to pay for the exams and the declaration of participation. Beneficiaries pay 150 EUR for this declaration to the municipality. Asylum migrants do not have to pay for their declaration of participation.

Description	Amount
Writing	50 EUR
Speaking	60 EUR
Listening	50 EUR
Reading	50 EUR
Knowlegde of Dutch Society (Kennis Nederlandse Maatschappij)	40 EUR
Orientation on the Dutch Labour Market (Oriëntatie op de Nederlandse Arbeidsmarkt)	100 EUR
Declaration of participation (Participatieverklaring)	150 EUR
Total	500 EUR

Table 4: Costs of the civic integration exams¹³

The civic integration exam consists of seven parts: reading, writing, speaking, listening, knowledge of Dutch society (KNM), orientation on the Dutch labour market (ONA) and the declaration of participation (participatieverklaring). This last component is compulsory as of October 2017. When a candidate does not pass everything at once, certificates are distributed. If one passes for the four language components, this can be exchanged for a NT2 diploma (Dutch as a second language). Obligated beneficiaries have three years to pass their exam. If certain circumstances prohibit the beneficiary to study for this exam, a prolongation of the term can be obtained. Examples of such circumstances are: the obliged beneficiary still lives in an asylum centre instead of in a regular home. A newcomer can in this case not start the course in their future place of residence. Analphabetic beneficiaries first need to learn how to read and write and have two more years to complete their civic integration.

Moreover, newcomers can be exempted from the obligation of civic integration. Exemptions are usually obtained when someone already has certain qualifications demonstrating sufficient knowledge of Dutch and Dutch society. Exemptions can also be granted when a doctor determined that due to psychological, mental or physical constraints a beneficiary is not able to comply with the demands of the exam. When someone has followed 600 hours of courses (at a certified institution Blik op Werk) and failed the exam at least 4 times, an exemption can also be granted.

There are no central regulations concerning course participation and attendance but beneficiaries pay for their own trajectory. Incentives to actually be present and participate may therefore increase. The exams can be passed one by one. Certificates are distributed when a candidate does not pass the entire civic integration exam at once. When a beneficiary has obtained all language certificates, this should be traded for a NT2 diploma.

¹³ ["Inburgeren"](#) Accessed January 9, 2018.

IV. Content of courses

1. Aims of the courses

In short, the goal of the civic integration courses is promoting self-reliance among beneficiaries.

2. Themes covered

Schools of civic integration are free to choose their own schooling method. There are different education packages on the market but they are all based on the terms set by the ministry. The most recent version of these terms date back to 2013. What follows is drawn from this curriculum.¹⁴

Before enlisting the themes, it is crucial to highlight the situations in which the beneficiary should be able to handle him or herself. These are four so-called 'Crucial Situations in Practice' (CP):

- a. On the labour market
- b. In the own living environment
- c. In contact with agencies and the government
- d. As a citizen in the Netherlands

Departing from these CP situations, eight themes have been identified which can be relevant for one up to four CP situations.

1. Work and income: beneficiaries are able to make the necessary steps to seek and maintain employment and to make a living.
2. Manners, norms and values: beneficiaries are able to deal with Dutch manners, norms and values.
3. Living: beneficiaries are able to find suitable housing and to arrange utilities, to take care of safety in the home, and a clean environment.
4. Health and healthcare: beneficiaries are capable to use the health care system in accordance with the regulations.
5. History and geography: beneficiaries are, through knowledge of the Dutch history and geography, connected to the Netherlands and Dutch society.
6. Agencies: beneficiaries know local government services, tax authorities, police, and agencies for social and judicial service. They are able to ask for common information at agencies for judicial or social services.
7. Structure of the state, rule of law: beneficiaries are capable, by knowing Dutch state structure, to feel connected to the Netherlands and Dutch society.
8. Schooling system and education: beneficiaries know the Dutch schooling system and recognise the importance of the knowledge economy. They facilitate their children's participation in education and know what is expected of them as parents.

¹⁴ ["Eindtermen Kennis van de Nederlandse Samenleving"](#) accessed 11 January 2018.

Within these themes, crucial actions (CA) can be identified. If we break down the theme 2 “manners, norms and values” we learn that four actions are crucial:

1. Identifying and using different manners in the Netherlands;
2. Dealing with unusual or conflicting habits, norms and values;
3. Participating in social networks;
4. Engaging in and maintaining daily social contacts.

For each of the themes, crucial actions have been identified which again are divided into further practical issues the beneficiary needs to be aware of. As said, the available educative material is based on this report. Examples of such teaching material are “Welkom in Nederland” (Welcome to the Netherlands)¹⁵ and “Taal Compleet A1+A2”.¹⁶

It is up to the teachers to decide how to transfer this knowledge to the beneficiaries.

3. Teaching methods

Teaching methods, again, depend on the schools. It might be interesting to know that teaching in the Netherlands is rather interactive. Throughout all years of schooling, pupils and students are encouraged to not just absorb information, but to also actively participate and to have an opinion. It is likely that this way of teaching is also present in civic integration education to the extent to which this is possible.

The audits by “Blik op Werk” show that there are tremendous differences when it comes to group size. Sizes 1-5, 6-10, 11-15 or 16-25 beneficiaries and schools with higher ratings are generally those with smaller group sizes.

Audits show that some schools offer civic integration tailored to the needs of the beneficiary whereas others have developed a more general course to suit larger groups at once.

4. Participation of host society in the courses

In the civic integration courses themselves contact with the Dutch is rather limited. The schools we have been in touch with hardly invite Dutch in the classroom for example. Only one school had volunteers present during some sessions to assist with reading or to provide extra support for lagging students. This does however not mean that there is no contact with the Dutch. Looking at the exercises beneficiaries need to do, they do need to engage in contact with Dutch people outside of school, to do their ‘homework’. Furthermore, one school representative explained that they focused on language and on transferring the information of Dutch society through language education. While contact with the Dutch was not aimed for as such, beneficiaries were guided to organisations where they could find work or participate in voluntary activities.

¹⁵ Gathier, Marilene. Welkom in Nederland. Bussum: Countinho, 2015.

¹⁶ “Taal Compleet”, Accessed January 15, 2018.

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