

Fast Lane to the Labour Market and VET

State of the Art Report - the Netherlands

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20-12-2016



Glossary

Asylum seekers	Refugees waiting for a decision
Refugees	General term, mostly used for permit holders with a permit to stay for 5 years
Permit holders (statushouders)	After getting permission to stay, refugees get a 'status' and a residence permit.
integration requirement (inburgeringsplicht)	The requirement to integrate according to the Civic integration law. In general this applies to non-EEA immigrants. The integration requirement consists of language tests and two tests of knowledge of Dutch society.
Inburgeraar	Immigrant with a residence permit (not necessarily a refugee) who has to pass the civic integration exam within 3 years.
Immigrants	General term, used for both immigrants with an integration requirement as immigrants from the EU, without this requirement.

1 Overview of situation in the Netherlands

In this paragraph, we will give a short statistical overview of the situation in the Netherlands regarding the structure of the refugee group.

According to statistics provided by the Dutch Central Agency for Statistics, the number of asylum applications has more than doubled from 2013 to 2015 (see Table 1 for an overview of the inflow).

Whereas in 2013 only 16.725 people asked for asylum, this number increased to 58.880 in 2015. This includes repeated asylum applications and family reunification applications. In the first three trimesters of 2016 20.538 people requested asylum. From the summer of 2015 onwards the Netherlands has been one of the major destination countries for refugees.

Table 1 *Inflow of Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands*

Year	First asylum applications	Repeated asylum applications	Family reunification	Total
2013	9840	3255	3630	16.725
2014	21810	2725	5355	29.890
2015	43095	1940	13845	58880
1 st trimester 2016	5560	380	1920	7860
2 nd trimester 2016	2953	450	1305	4708
3 rd trimester 2016	4905	465	2600	7970

Note: From 'CBS Statline', Accessed 14 November 2016 from <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb>.

Of the asylum seekers who entered the Netherlands between 2013 and 2015 more than 71 percent were male, whereas only 29 percent were female. About a quarter of the asylum seekers (23 percent) were minors. In this period the majority were Syrian nationals (36 percent), followed by Eritreans (15 percent) and Iraqis (7 percent). A substantial number of these applicants are registered as stateless (7 percent): these are mostly Palestinians from Syria (IND 2015).

There is little information concerning the qualification levels and employment history of this group of refugees. Estimates by COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) show that about a third of recent arrivals attained higher education degrees in their country of origin (Zorlu & Welie, 2016). According to the Central Agency for Statistics, 62 percent of the Syrians and approximately half of the Eritreans received social security payments in 2014, so the distance to the Dutch labour market appears to be big.

In the Netherlands, a distinction is made regarding the extent to which refugees are permitted paid jobs or do volunteer work. During the asylum procedure, they are not allowed to work. If the procedure takes longer than six months the asylum seeker is allowed to do volunteer work and to apply for an

employment permit, with which he may find paid labour under certain conditions (e.g. not for more than 24 weeks per year).

The waiting time for an asylum application is currently at least seven months. Only after that period of time is the IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) able to consider whether asylum seekers will be permitted to remain in the Netherlands. Depending on the numbers of asylum seekers, the amount of time the IND needs to make a decision can and has been extended to up to 15 months.

Once granted a temporary residency permit, refugees have free access to the labour market. Once a refugee receives a residence permit, they can move from a reception centre to a municipality, but the waiting time can be up to half a year. A policy trend is that the time the refugee has to wait has to be spent usefully. Refugees can now start learning the language for 121 hours (VOORinburgering), get a four-day training Knowledge of Dutch society and get ten hours of personal guidance. Also, they can start getting a validation of their diploma's.

In contrast to other immigrants, refugees get support from the receiving municipality for housing, schools, health, getting to know the municipality and finding a language course provider. In many municipalities the Dutch Council for Refugees (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland) or other organizations provide this support.

For information about the numbers in Fast Lane partners Alfa-college and Scalda, see Annex 2 and 3.

2 Policy trends regarding integration of refugees and access to labour market and VET

2.1 Description of the policy trends

The integration system in the Netherlands has the aim to stimulate participation in Dutch society, by working or taking an education. Knowing the language is required for this. For immigrants (18+) from outside the EEA, Switzerland or Turkey, who are in the Netherlands for a longer period it is obligatory (Dutch Civic Integration Act) to learn the Dutch language. They have to pass the integration exam ('inburgeringsexamen') to prove this. Also, a vet-qualification in the Netherlands of EQF level 2 or higher (mbo 2 or higher) is regarded as sufficient proof.

Immigrants have to pass the integration exam within three years. Immigrants have to register and pay for the exam and the courses themselves, student loans are provided. There are language courses and courses for knowledge of Dutch society and the course for orientation on the labour market. The minimum level of language to achieve is A2, but if there is enough time and the loan is still sufficient many refugees continue towards B1 or even B2.

To prepare for the integration exam foreigners can take a performance related conditional loan for the study costs. The official government agency DUO has the responsibility to organize all the processes and funding of integration courses. Since they are a central government agency with a limited number of regional offices they organize this through websites and letters. The permit holder receives a letter in Dutch language to inform him about his obligation to follow an integration course. He is informed about the website, which is in Dutch, English, French and Spanish, and some information has recently been added in factsheets in other languages. The idea behind this system is that the permit holder is responsible for organizing his own integration course, and responsible for finishing the integration course within three years. Unfortunately, the DUO procedures are complicated, all kinds of forms have to be filled in, the funding system is complicated and the exam system is not always easy to understand. A conditional loan for the study costs has to be paid back in ten years. Immigrants can borrow maximum 10.000 depending on income, refugees can always borrow 10.000. If the refugee or immigrant doesn't pass the exam within three years without a good reason, refugees and immigrants can get a fine or even lose their residence permit (this does not apply to refugees). The loan can only be used for courses at approved language institutes. These institutes are audited yearly. Refugees don't have to pay back the loan if they pass the exam within three years or get exemption from passing the exam. When a permit holder is not able to achieve the exam, he and the school he has been following lessons, have to prove that he followed a sufficient number of hours (600) and did the best he could to achieve a certain level but due to learnability is not able to reach that level. There is a difference between illiterate permit holders and other permit holders in proving this. An illiterate permit holder has to follow 600 hours of lessons and six months before the expiration of the three-year period he will do a specific exam in order to prove he or she is not able to reach A2 level. The other permit holders have to repeat the official integration exams they failed at up to four times to prove they are not able to reach A2.

If a permit holder who has a refugee status fails to finalize the integration courses and exams within 3 years by succeeding for all the exams or proving his effort with 600 hours and several tries to succeed for

the exam, he has to pay a fine of € 1250,- and gets a new shorter term to succeed. If that also fails the permit holders with a refugee status has to pay back the total amount of the used money of the loan. If a permit holder with a refugee status succeeds in passing the integration obligation within the period of 3 years, with a possible prolonged period, he does not have to pay back any money and the loan is presented as a gift. A permit holder who does not have a refugee asylum status, for example someone from Brazil or someone who got a permission to stay on other grounds than asylum as a refugee, always has to pay back the used money from the loan. Usually this category of people choose to obtain A2 and not continue for B1 or B2.

More information in English about the integration system is found at:
<http://en.inburgeren.nl/inburgeren-hoe-moet-dat.jsp>.

By influencing municipalities that have no role anymore in the integration system until after three years, VET-schools and other institutes have tried to influence municipalities in taking up their responsibilities in order to prevent completely demotivated refugees after three years. In recent months we see the effects of our pushing and pulling them in our system, that they are ready to organize project meetings where VET-schools and municipalities are involved together in order to create some kind of backup system where integration courses can be linked to dual activities.

This has resulted in some internships and work experience projects for refugees in certain regions, mostly aimed at lower educated refugees, but also advising refugee permit holders to follow their integration courses at VET-schools in order to be better prepared to continue their studies and follow combined programs.

Scientific Advice Council for the Government

In December 2015, the WRR, scientific advice council for the government, issued a report stating that in order to prevent inactive and demotivated people we should organize our integration system in a different way. They have done research about asylum seekers in the 1990's and concluded that a large majority is without a job and not active in society. With this report the WRR actually represented also the vision of many VET-schools that the current bureaucratic system works contra productive. The main items of the report are:

- No waste of time;
- Parallel combined organizing of settlement in a municipality, language courses, education and work;
- A short and quick asylum procedure with more attention and focus on possibilities at the labor market;
- A combined integrated program in which learning the language up to the highest possible level, following an education, settlement in a municipality and building networks and orientation on jobs, take place as much as possible at the same time and combined and not step by step (first settlement, then language, then....).

2.2 Best practices

Best practice 1 Alfa College and municipalities working together

The last two years we have been trying to get local authorities involved, sometimes with success, to take up a role in the integration procedure. Because they receive no funding for guidance, municipalities have difficulties organizing this. With some municipalities, we try to influence the ministries in changing this system. With some municipalities we made plans to organize a whole guiding system for the refugee students that contains dual activities next to the integration courses, such as work experience places and getting to know the Dutch educational system. We also try to persuade the municipalities to take up a role in monitoring the refugee, since the refugee is responsible for his own integration we foresee many problems when refugees have not finished their integration course within three years.

In recent months we see the effects of our pushing and pulling municipalities in taking up a responsibility within this system, they are ready to organize project meetings where VET-schools and municipalities are involved together in order to create some kind of back up guiding system where integration courses can be linked to dual activities. There are regional employability agencies who have exact detailed information about the labor market, job vacancies etc. In some areas technical skilled employees are needed. Due to the lack of enough information about the background of the refugees, mismatches in educational levels and the criteria for jobs, it is not easy and almost impossible to match refugees with employees. Also the language level that is required is a big issue. We are just moving ahead somehow with influencing municipalities to take up their role and hope they will organize together with us proper re-integration programs towards the labor market.

With the municipality of Groningen, our colleague VET-school Noorderpoort, the Higher VET university Hanze Hogeschool and the COA we are going to organize a pilot for 50 new statusholders that will get housing in the city of Groningen. The main focus of the project will be to organize and connect all the steps and information streams starting from the asylum center towards settlement in the city and continuing with his integration course and possibly VET-studies or combined programs towards the labor market at the best possible way. More partners will join such as welfare organizations and also an advise group of refugee students from Alfa-college as a reference group to advise us. Our main focus is that all integration courses should be combined with dual activities and that language courses should have a focus upon this dual activity. Depending on the levels and background and perspective of the refugee these dual activities can be organized in a different way. For refugee/migrant students with the possibility to enter VET or University the focus will be on preparing them by organizing language internships at companies or schools and offer preparing modules to enter their study program. For refugees and migrants who are not able to study the focus will be on organizing dual activities connected to preparation for the labor market, such as language internships, work experience activities, orientation on jobs.

With the municipalities of Hoogeveen, de Wolden and Midden-Drenthe we will offer a model of guidance and dual activities in the same way as in Groningen, but organized a bit differently. The project with Alescon which is described separately as a good practice is part of this model.

Best practice 2 *Early screening of refugees and informed placement in regions*

A pilot in the Eastern town of Doetinchem was aimed to do a screening with refugees straight after they got their permit to stay. In three months' time 400 refugees were interviewed about their work experience and education. For 300 of them this led to a placement in a region or municipality where they have a chance of finding work. For example an ICT-specialist has a greater chance of finding work in a region like Eindhoven, and a fisherman was placed in fishing town Den Helder. The refugees themselves feel heard and object less to placement to another region.

Source: Kamerbrief Asscher Voortgang Integratie, oktober 2016

2.3 Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The compulsory integration course encourages all refugees to acquire the Dutch language and familiarize themselves with the labour market.
- It is possible to apply for a loan to cover language course costs.
- The social loan for immigrants is remitted after passing the examination.
- There is a policy trend that gives more opportunities for combined integration courses and labour market integration.

Weaknesses

- Due to the large influx of refugees, the asylum procedure takes too long, leaving refugees in uncertainty for long periods of time.
- The social loan forms a barrier for non-refugees and creates pressure for refugees.

3 Access to the labour market

3.1 Description of the system

To find a job people can register with an employment agency. Refugees often have a municipal contact person (client manager). In Amsterdam refugees are advised to keep in mind that they won't be able to work full-time for the first three months because they'll be following the municipality of Amsterdam's language and orientation program twelve hours a week. They are advised to take the integration course alongside a paid job. More information can be found at:

<https://www.amsterdam.nl/immigratie/vluchtelingen/opvang-huisvesting/information-for/>

The municipality of Amsterdam has an integral approach which aims for fast labour market integration for refugees who are capable of working. Others get offered other trajectories, like health or mental care, focus on language learning or education. Strong points in the Amsterdam approach are the involvement of specialist client managers with the same language background of the refugees, the commitment of the municipality to get the best kind of trajectory for the refugees and the guidance that they provide. This is in contrast to other municipalities where refugees are forced into low qualified jobs, just to get them out of social benefit.

Until now there are a many moments from arrival to full (labour) integration where intakes, screenings, interviews and other assessments are done to get information about the qualifications, work experience, learning abilities and competences. Lately organizations have started themselves using assessment of competences to get more information about the background and possibilities at the labour market. A couple of assessment methods have been developed in different languages.

One of the challenges we see are the securing of the outcomes of all these activities and building up on them. Because of privacy regulations it is difficult to give information gathered by one party in the chain to the next party in the chain. One of the ways to do the formal side of this will be initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, in the form of electronic follow system. Other trends are that a need is felt for a portfolio like system that is personal property of the refugees. There have been a few initiatives on this.

3.2 Best practices

Best practice 3 Alfa College Orientation on Dutch Labor Market as soon as possible

Assessment is part of the module Orientation on the Dutch Labor Market which is offered at the final stage of the integration course (level A2 must be reached). Some schools, such as Alfa-college, have started experimenting with offering Orientation on the Dutch Labor Market earlier (level A1) and they work with inquiries in for example Arabic to create a more clear image of the background of refugees.

Best practice 4 *Work project for 30 permit holders at Alescon*

In a project in the eastern province of Drenthe thirty residence permit holders from the municipalities Hogeveen, De Wolden and Central Drenthe started to work at Alescon. New in this approach is that language education, integration and support for work are combined.

It is expected that participants will quickly learn the language by practice. This should help to ensure that these people quickly will integrate in the Netherlands and will be able to be independent of social benefit.

The combination of language training, integration and work is unique in Drenthe. The municipalities Hogeveen, the Wolden and Midden-Drenthe, the ROCs Alfa College and Drenthe College, the language institute itom and Alescon work together in this project.

The cooperation is aimed to enhance the connection between education and the labor market for refugees/migrants with a low education or no education in their home country. The work-study programs for status holders is an example of a process that has been started in this context.

Source: <https://www.dekrantvanmiddendrenthe.nl/nieuws/regio/461621/dertig-statushouders-gaan-per-direct-aan-de-slag-bij-alescon.html>

Best practice 5 *Pilot projects aimed at labour market integration in reception centers*

IOM NL is piloting the project VOORwerk. VOORwerk is a project initiated by the Dutch Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), IOM and the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) to decrease the gap between permit holders residing in reception centres and the labour market. The project offers trainings focusing on the development of soft skills which are necessary to succeed in the Dutch labour market. The project provides permit holders with individual consultation hours and an opportunity to find volunteer work in order to practice and further develop soft skills. In September 2016 the first 150 participants completed the training and earned their certificates. For more information: www.facebook.com/VOORwerk.nl

By November 2016 the VOORwerk project has provided approximately 400 status holders with training, counselling and work placements as preparation for entering the Dutch labour market.

Project activities are implemented in 10 reception centres, with this number set to increase- further expanding the geographical scope of the project's activities.

The Skills2Work team has completed a regional review of good practices on the themes of skills recognition, skills validation and employment of asylum seekers and refugees. The complete list of good practices from the region will be displayed on a digital platform in 2017 to promote information sharing among participating countries.

The training materials for VOORwerk are available in four languages (Dutch, English, Arabic and Tigrinya). In order to prepare as well as possible in the labour market VOORwerk developed a training aimed at recognizing and practicing soft skills for Dutch work situation. The ten soft skills that are most relevant are divided into four categories: communication, own initiative, agency power, responsibility. The training consists of a total of five meetings, where all these categories are discussed.

Basic module: Introduction to Soft Skills

Floor Module 1: Find a Job

Floor Module 2: Skills in the workplace

Floor Module 3: Work Ethics

Floor Module 4: Your personal route

Sources: Valuing Skills of Beneficiaries of International Protection "Newsletter September 2016

<http://www.iom-nederland.nl/nl/over-iom/iom-nieuwsbrief/688-iom-newsletter-november-2016#Pilot>

Best practice 6 Municipality of Amsterdam Screening and matching

In Amsterdam, the municipality set up an agreement in which the municipality and various organizations and companies work together to lead refugees to the labour market. The contribution of these companies is not competitive and participation mainly takes place from social considerations. The Policy Framework for Refugees (Beleidskader Vluchtelingen 2015-2018) is aimed at a totally integrated approach for the integration of refugees, from arrival, housing, healthcare, education and work. The departments of Work, Participation and Income (Team Entree) work together with Economic affairs and the Werkgeversservicepunt (Employers' service point).

One of the actions consists of an early screening followed by a coaching program. In this approach, the municipality of Amsterdam focuses on status holders aged 18 to 65 years.

Currently, the early screening and counseling of refugees is still in a pilot phase. End of 2016 this pilot will be evaluated, and the approach is being extended. Not only new status holders will be screened, but also refugees who have been longer in the city (since 2013). The screening is done by an external agency, but after 2016 the screening will be done by municipal employees.

Actions by the Municipality of Amsterdam:

- ⇒ Early screening and guidance in cooperation with reception centre (COA)

Intake meeting at municipality between casemanager COA, client manager municipality and refugee (and interpreter). In this intake information about previous activities in reception centre is reported. This is called a 'warm transfer'. In this interview the municipality assess the options for a further screening and the guidance project. The refugees has to speak one of the languages of the assessment (Dutch, English, Arabic or Tigrinya), needs digital skills, and has got to have a motivation to find work quickly. If not, the refugees follows the regular route.

The next step is the assessment day. With help from an interpreter the refugee will do online surveys and tests (Persoonsprofielscan, personal profile scan). The content of the assessment is aimed at the ability to take care of oneself, hindering factors (like traumas or health issues), job finding actions, language level, learning abilities, personality, competences and distance to labour market. The online tests are followed by an interview about the results. Following steps can be enrolment in a language course, education, work or a combination of education and work.

- ⇒ Personal guidance towards to the labour market

After the personal profile the organisation Manpower continues the guidance with a personal action plan with short and long term goals. During 6 months the guidance consists of twelve contact moment in which coaching, evaluation and training sessions can play a role. The guidance is done in English, with counselors of the same language background or with help of interpreters.

After three to six months the guidance by Manpower ends, after which the refugees will continue with

(language) education and/or work. If the refugee has the plan to study in higher education, they can be transferred to UAF, who will help them to find and finance a study. Another option is that the refugees go to VET college ROCvA or ROC TOP, who have special programs in which language learning and VET training are combined.

Amsterdam is planning to add a Language boost program during two to four weeks, but this hasn't started yet.

Success factors:

- involvement of specialist client managers with the same language background of the refugees;
- commitment of the municipality to get the best kind of trajectory for the refugees;
- personal guidance by the specialist client managers.

A challenge for the municipality is the embedding of the activities in a continuous chain and the integration courses for language learning after the refugees are housed in Amsterdam.

Best practice 7 Municipality of Amsterdam Matching tables and specialized job hunters

Another good practice by the municipality of Amsterdam are the so called Matching Tables, where refugees are connected to employers by specialist job hunters and advisors. In these matching tables the departments of social benefit and reintegration work together with the Werkgeversservicepunt WSP (employers service point) which deals with employers in need of personnel. There are different ways an employer can accept a refugee, and get financial support for guidance of the refugee. A few options are trial placements, learning placements, temporary placements and traineeships.

The Werkgeversservicepunt (WSP) acquires job vacancies for a broad group of clients with a distance to the labour market (e.g. young handicapped persons, and long term unemployed people).

The Team Entree works especially for refugees and helps them find their way in Amsterdam with all issues (housing, social benefit etc). The client manager makes a plan of actions with the refugee. In some cases the plan will be oriented towards education, social activation or (mental or health) care. If the refugee has a desire and the possibilities to start working, the client manager will connect the refugee to a specialist jobhunter who will look for job vacancies that suit the refugee. The jobhunter works together with the WSP-advisors to find suitable vacancies and will prepare a match. The jobhunter takes care that the placement can be combined with the language integration courses that the refugees have to follow. The placement and matching can also be done by WSP, for example when a company is interested in giving opportunities for refugees. In those cases the matching is done by advisors and a specialist jobcoach from WSP will monitor and guide the placement.

Success factors:

- the combination of the WSP for the job vacancies and support for employers with the specialist job hunters of team Entree who search for suitable job vacancies;
 - specialist jobcoaches and client managers with the same language background of the refugees;
 - attention for jobs and placements that can be combined with personal circumstances of the refugees (language learning and other obligations);
 - guided placement and monitoring of introduction at the workplace.
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3.3 Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- For the allocation of a refugee to a municipality the person's work experience and labour opportunities in certain regions are taken into account.
- Many municipalities are looking for ways to accelerate the route of refugees to work. Recently this has gained more attention.

Weaknesses

- The municipalities' approaches in the guidance of refugees to work is not uniform. Because the policies are arranged at municipality level, the guidance of refugees can differ greatly per region.
- Good practices of municipalities are not always shared.
- The transfer of information about previous actions from one party to the next is often limited.
- Activities for labour market orientation are sometimes done in an early phase with aid of interpreters, but there is no follow up after the refugee starts his integration course.
- Many different people and institutions are involved in the process of guiding refugees to work. This can be very confusing for refugees.

4 Integration system

4.1 Description of the system

Since 2013 there is a new integration law in the Netherlands that states that everyone who gets a permission to stay in the Netherlands has the obligation to pass integration exams within three years. This is called the civic integration requirement (inburgeringsplicht). All Dutch residents are required to learn the Dutch language and understand Dutch society. This is known as ‘inburgering’ (integration). Asylum seekers (refugees without a status) are not obliged (and allowed) to integrate. Once they get their status, they become ‘inburgeringsplichtig’. Before that they can only join in civic integration courses and language classes in the reception centre by volunteers.

Before an immigrant can come to the Netherlands they have to take the basic integration exam in their home country (basisexamen buitenland), proving a basic knowledge of the language (CEF level A1 for speaking and reading) and knowledge of Dutch society. This exam is not required for students, refugees and people who come temporarily as (knowledge) workers (arbeidsmigranten).

Integration exams

The Dutch integration exam consists of four tests for language (reading, listening, writing and speaking) and two tests for Knowledge of Dutch society (Knowledge of Dutch society and Orientation on the Dutch Labour market).

The language tests can be done at five locations in the Netherlands. All tests are done at the computer, but for the writing exam the candidate can choose to do the exam on paper. The language tests can be done at different levels. The minimum level is CEF-level A2 for all language skills, but also the State Exam can be taken, at CEF level B1 or B2. It depends on the permit holder what level he is able to achieve within the maximum period of 3 years. For low educated immigrants the term for integration can be extended to five years (e.g. when an immigrant also needs to learn how to read and write).

For the exam Orientation on the Dutch Labour market immigrants have to fill a portfolio about eight subjects and do an interview with an assessor about their orientation process. The subjects are: job orientation, job perception, competences, job chances, job schooling, networking, finding a job and working culture. With this portfolio they have to prove that they have focused upon their possibilities in the Netherlands by comparing their background working experience and level of education and possibilities in the Netherlands in order to study or obtain a job.

Since 2016 the integration process starts with the ‘participatieverklaring’ (participation statement). It is considered part of the integration exam and consists of one or more workshops about ‘fundamental values of Dutch society’ and the signing of the participation statement.

The participation certificate trajectory is part of the social supervision and guidance offered to refugees and is organized by municipalities.

Integration courses

Immigrants are free in their choice of course providers for the integration exam. It is not required to take a course. In most municipalities refugees get advice which course will probably suit them best.

Refugees have to register for the courses and the exams themselves. There are language courses and courses for knowledge of Dutch society and the course for orientation on the labour market. There are all kinds of activities in which they will be taught by volunteers. Sometimes volunteers teach small groups (eg in community centers and libraries), and sometimes individually in the form of serving as a language buddy (taalcoach or taalmaatje).

If one wants to use the loan for a course, the course should be followed at an approved language provider. The teachers at these schools must have at least completed a postgraduate training NT2 or have a certification of their competence as a teacher Dutch as a second language.

In most cases all the billing for the language courses is done by the language institutes. There is a limit to the amount of money language institutes can send bills for per period of time (€ 1250,- per three months). Therefore the institutes are limited in what they can offer in terms of lessons per week. For this amount the language providers can offer two to four half-day classes per week. This limits intensive courses and speeding up lessons for those refugees and permit holders who are able to learn faster. Refugees who have received a residence permit, but are not yet placed in a municipality, can participate in the program 'VOORinburgering' (preparation for integration) in the reception center (COA-opvang). This consist of a language program, a short training Knowledge of Dutch society (KNM) and individual guidance.

Extra-curricular activities aimed towards participation and labour market access

There is a trend in the Netherlands to promote volunteer work by refugees as part of their integration program to enhance language contact, start participation in society and also use this for orientation on the Dutch labour market. However, there is a big difference in how these activities are incorporated and supported by the language providers and the quality of cooperation with third parties.

The exam part Orientation on the Dutch Labour market enhances the need for external activities like excursions, internships, open days, volunteer work, networking and finding a job and civic integration providers see the need to train their teachers for this new and different role. Due to the limitations of the Integration System many institutes and schools are not able to organize a lot of dual activities. Some schools try to do this anyway without any funding for, such as:

- Organizing language internships at companies or institutes;
- Organizing internships and work experience projects for refugees;
- Guidance for the refugees in orientation on labor market or studying.

4.2 Good practices

Best practice 8 Orientation Programme municipality of Amsterdam

When refugees are placed in a municipality they get help to start their new life. The municipality of Amsterdam has a four-week orientation program for refugees. This program explains more about Amsterdam and the organizations that can help refugees to start a new life. They also provide help to find a suitable language course.

The Team Entree has specialist client managers who help the refugees to get social benefit, housing etc.

The Team Entree also guides the refugees to the four-week orientation programme.

Best practice 9 Practical information about getting settled in Amsterdam

The local Dutch Council for Refugees (VluchtelingenWerk, VWN) gives practical information about getting settled in Amsterdam. This includes finding a GP (a doctor) and finding a school for children. The refugees are invited to attend a meeting with the VWN after moving to Amsterdam.

Best practice 10 Alfa college Study councilor for refugees and refugee colleagues

The main focus of the integration courses is preparing for the exams. Because of our own mission and educational views we try to do more and expand our tasks. We try to organize language internships/work experience places parallel to the integration course. We also assist the refugee in having his diploma or level of education in his home country validated, we provide study councilors and during the integration course offer a wide range of guidance towards study possibilities. We also try to create jobs within our own school for refugees with skills we are able to use to facilitate our integration courses in a better way. At the moment we have 3 colleagues with a refugee background who work for us. One is a Syria young refugee who is still busy with his integration course but already studies at university in English language. He has many coach and communication skills and organizes workshops both for our Dutch staff but also our Arabic speaking students. The workshops entail intercultural communication, motivational workshops, guidance etc.

4.3 Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The compulsory nature of the exam may have a positive effect;
- There is more than one route to meet the integration requirements;
- Close attention is given to KNM and ONA in the integration curriculum;
- Language courses are given by second-language qualified teachers;
- Language institutes are certified using a quality label;
- There is a variety of activities and initiatives for immigrants;
- A social loan is an option;
- Refugees can start the integration process quickly in the asylum seekers center;
- COA offers pre-integration plans;
- Refugees receive social guidance after placement in a municipality;
- Local authorities play their part regarding housing and social support.

Weaknesses

- The coordination with integration providers differs per district;

- There is little in the way of coordination regarding the numerous initiatives;
- ONA (Orientation on the Dutch Labour Market) should come into play in an earlier stage of the integration trajectory. Refugees entering with a high level of ambition need time for ONA to (re)discover their prospects;
- There is a high level of deployment of (unskilled) volunteers. Guidance and quality control remain a point of attention;
- More intensive integration trajectories are difficult to realize, in connection with a maximum amount that can be charged by DUO;
- Nationwide the focus on dual activities alongside the integration courses depends on local initiatives.

5 VET-system and other related vocational training forms¹

5.1 Description of the system

The Dutch vocational/professional education system is characterized by three organizational levels: the national, sectoral and the regional levels. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science lays down the general conditions for VET whereas the administration and management of schools as well as vocational education is regionally organized. Quality and quality assurance are, in the first place, the responsibility of the VET providers. The Dutch VET system doesn't make a clear distinction between IVET and CVET. The quality assurance framework in place does not distinguish between IVET and CVET and thus it applies to the VET sector as a whole.

In Dutch VET there are four training levels of different duration (six months to four years) and two learning pathways. In the Netherlands, a VET student can choose between two learning pathways: The first one is the school-based pathway (BOL-pathway), and the second one is the on-the-job-training pathway (BBL or apprenticeship pathway). Both pathways lead to the same level of qualification and diploma. The content of the programmes, in terms of what is acquired is determined at national level in a qualification profile (educational standards as output) within the national qualification system (Eqavet, 2016).

The MBO sector consists of 65 VET colleges comprising multidisciplinary VET colleges (ROCs in Dutch), agricultural VET colleges (AOCs in Dutch) and specialized vocational colleges. All VET colleges have a strong regional orientation and function. The ROCs offer VET in technology, economics, personal/social services, health care and adult education. The agricultural VET colleges offer pre-vocational secondary education and VET in the agricultural sector and in food technology. Specialized vocational colleges offer programmes for one branch of industry only, such as graphic arts and design, butchery, house painting, furniture making, the fishing industry and shipping and transport. Generic subjects students get are Dutch, English (level 4) and Mathematics.

Generally, the four VET levels correspond with the first four levels of the EQF. It is however possible to come to a different classification for a specific qualification, if there is clear evidence for another classification. In that case certain Dutch level four qualifications have the possibility to become referenced to the EQF 5 level.

Among the Dutch educational sectors, the MBO sector maintains the closest relations with the labour market. Colleges have frequent contacts with companies and organisations where students work or obtain their work experience. Regional trade and industry communicate with the colleges about the quality and content of the courses on offer. These contacts between colleges and companies are extremely important in ensuring a close match between the education that colleges offer and the skills that companies need. On the national level, the needs of trade and industry are brought in line with the education and training programs through the 'Foundation of Vocational Education and Labour Market' (SBB), where employers and education are equally represented. Together they advise the Minister of

¹ An English description of the Dutch VET system is found at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/nl/publications-and-resources/publications/8090>

Education about subjects that concern education and trade such as the qualification structure and the requirements of the work experience periods (MBO Raad, 2016).

National Framework of Qualifications the Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF) comprises 8 qualification levels and an entry level. See Table 2 for a simplified diagram of the Dutch NLQF. The MBO diploma is positioned at level 1-4 of the Dutch Qualifications Framework (NLQF level 1-4 / EQF level 1-4), depending on the duration and the specialization of the program.

Table 2 A simplified diagram of the Dutch NLQF

EQF	NLQF	Dutch Qualification
8	8	Doctor
7	7	Master
6	6	Bachelor
5	5	Associate Degree
4	4+	VWO
4	4	MBO 4 / HAVO
3	3	MBO 3
2	2	VMBO kb, gl and tl / MBO 2
1	1	VMBO bb / MBO 1

Note: From 'National Coordination Point for the Dutch Qualifications Framework NLQF'

During the time a student following VET courses the Dutch language is important. To get a degree you need to pass the exam Dutch with success. For a VET diploma level 2 and 3 you need to pass the exam on 2F. This is comparable to level B1 (CEFR). For a VET diploma level 4 you need to pass the exam on 3F which is comparable to level B2.

A student complete an integration course in the Netherlands successful on level A2. Here we have one of the biggest problems for refugees to complete a VET successful. The language level is very high and for a lot of refugees it's not possible to pass the Dutch exams. During the VET there is not enough attention for these students, since a regular VET contains 2-3 hours of Dutch language lessons a week.

Students also need to have a certain level of language in order to be able to follow the programs. For immigrants most schools demand the following language levels:

- Level 1: A1 or A2 depending on school
- Level 2: B1
- Level 3: B1
- Level 4: B2

For level 1 some VET-schools such as Alfa-college offer a combined program where integration course and VET-education is combined. They can follow this program from level A1 and are prepared to enter VET-level 2. Some VET-schools also offer Preparation Years for Refugees for Higher Vocational Education and Training and University. Alfa-college offers for example a program of five days a week with Dutch language, English, Mathematics, and the subjects that are needed to enter university such as Biology, Economics, Science, Physics in Dutch. At the end of the program students reach level B2.

Difference between Language Institutes and VET-schools in the integration courses

Many schools for VET have a separate department of non-vocational adult education. These departments also provide integration courses as well as do other institutes with a certificate. The difference is that until 2007 the VET-schools always organized the integration courses but due to European market working laws this has been changed since 2007. The VET-schools such as Alfa-college and Scalda still provide integration courses but with a focus on reaching the highest possible level, not finishing with A2 when someone is able to reach B1 or B2, and combining where possible integration courses with VET-education.

VET-schools have in many cases taken over the former responsibilities from the municipalities by organizing a whole guiding system around the refugee student.

5.2 Good practices

Best practice 11 *Scalda Coachklas anderstaligen 18+*

The 'coachklas anderstaligen 18+' is an intensive full-time Scalda programme for permit holders between 18 and 23 years of age. The participants are well-equipped to meet the VET requirements (level 1,2,3 or 4) and receive a thorough preparation for college using the necessary skills. The students follow Dutch language lessons, as well as classes in professional orientation, social skills, basic math, sports and computer skills. There is a short internship at a company or institution. This route takes approximately twenty weeks. Cooperating partners are secondary schools for refugees, municipalities and companies.

Success factors:

- Full-time programme; five days a week of speaking, reading and listening in the Dutch language.
 - Combined language learning and content learning
 - The opportunity to discover all the VET possibilities.
 - The chance to get acquainted with the Dutch school and labour systems.
 - The opportunity to meet Dutch students and adults and thus expand their networks.
-

Best practice 12 *Scalda Entree met NT2*

Another initiative is 'Entree met NT2,' designed for permit holders aged between 18 and 27, with a language level between A1 and A2 and not in the possession of a degree in their country of origin. The student has the opportunity to achieve a vocational qualification level 1 and/or move onto the labour market, as well as attaining an integration certificate. The course kicks off with a preparation program (16 weeks) with many Dutch language courses, and lessons in professional orientation, social skills, basic math, sports and computer skills. After these initial 16 weeks the students proceed to the regular VET level 1 programme with some extra Dutch language classes as well as additional guidance.

During the entire programme there is a short internship at a company or institution. The route takes approximately one year and a half. Cooperating partners are secondary schools for refugees, municipalities and companies.

Success factors:

- The combination of VET and an integration course allow for a reduction in the time required to attain a degree.
 - Combined language learning and content learning.
 - Students get acquainted with professional practice.
 - Full-time programme; five days a week of speaking, reading and listening in the Dutch language.
-

Best practice 13 Scalda Vavo en Staatsexamen

The third initiative from Scalda is 'vavo en staatsexamen' for permit holders over 18 years of age with a degree in their country of origin and with a language level of A2 or higher. Participating students follow the State Integration Program at Scalda (Dutch language lessons at level B1 of B2) and follow the secondary school subjects 'English' and 'Mathematics A' at the College for VAVO (Secondary education for adults). A requirement is a degree completed in the student's country of origin at a level comparable with Dutch secondary school. By following 'English' and 'Mathematics A' next to the State Integration Program students are better prepared to follow an HBO or WO course. Furthermore, students get the chance to become accustomed to the fast pace and the extent of independent working.

Success factors:

- Students get the chance to adapt to the Dutch school system.
 - Students get accustomed to working independently.
 - Extra hours each week for speaking, reading, writing and listening to the Dutch language.
 - The opportunity to meet Dutch students and thus expand their networks.
 - Combined language learning and content learning.
-

Best practice 14 Alfa College Combination of integration courses with VET-education or preparation for higher VET or university

At Alfa-college we offer specific integration courses for young refugees/migrants under 30 who are able to follow a VET-program at some point or a Preparation Year for University or Higher Vocational Education and Training. At the intake we look carefully at their perspective and their level of education and work experience in the home country. Also, their capability of learning the language fast is tested. We have special study councilors for refugees and migrants who at an early stage of the start of the courses will advise the student about the programs he can take and what level of education he could follow. Diploma-validation and indication of educational level without having the diploma available in the Netherlands is applied for, we send the application to a national agency who has knowledge about all educational systems throughout the world. With the results from the intake tests and the validation of the diploma or educational level we set up some kind of a learning route for each student. At first we offer specific integration courses at a maximum of 4 times a week to prepare the student for entering VET education or preparation for university and when a certain language level is achieved they can

combine the integration course with entering a VET-program or Preparation Year for University. We have three kinds of specific courses.

1. Language course until A1 and then entering VET-education level 1: For students without a diploma in their home country or a low education in their home country, a program of 4 times a week (10 hours) (the budget from the loan does not allow more times) with 3 times a week focus on language and 1 time a week orientation on VET-education and the labor market. When the students reach level A1 (usually after 6 or 12 months) they can enter the VET-level 1 education program (assistant level) and their integration course will be combined with this program. They apply for study financing like every Dutch student. The VET-education level 1 programs that can be combined with Integration Courses are a. Technical VET (building, installation, electrotechnical skills), Service and Health and Tradesmanship)
When entering VET-education level 1 combined with Integration Courses they follow a program of 1200 hours a year. The program that is offered is 24 hours of lessons per week with Dutch language course, Dutch jargon course, Numeracy, Working and Study skills, Knowledge of Dutch society/Citizenship, specific VET lessons in the chosen profiles and they follow an internship at a company between 300 and 400 hours a year. The diploma for VET-education level 1 can be achieved after 1 or maximum 2 years. After VET-level 1 students can proceed towards level 2 if they can meet with the requirements for level 2. At Alfa-college 90percent of the refugee/migrant students receive the diploma for level 1 and 60 to 75percent of the students continue towards level 2 and even some to level 3 and 4. During the combined program at some point within the 3 years limit the students do their integration exams, when possible at level B1 otherwise at level A2.
2. Language Course until level B1 and then entering VET-education level 2: the students follow the same program as described above in the specific Integration Course but now with the focus on entering level 2 VET. The language level to be reached is B1. The specific Integration Course usually takes 1 to 2 years to reach B1. After entering the VET-level 2 education students receive additional language lessons to help them with Dutch language difficulties. We are about to develop a special integrated program for level 2, such as our combined program with level 1, for level 2 as well now. During the combined program at some point within the 3 years limit the students do their integration exams, when possible at level B2 or B1 otherwise at level A2.
3. Language Course until level B1 and then entering Preparation Year for University or Higher Vet. The students follow the same specific integration course as mentioned above (4 times a week) but now with the focus on entering the Preparation Year for University or Higher VET. The specific Integration Course usually takes 1 to 2 years to reach level B1. When they reach level B1 they can do some specific admission tests for the Preparation Year, also language but also other skills are being tested and they are asked to choose the study they would like to follow at Higher VET or University. When entering the Preparation Year they follow a program of 5 days a week (25 hours per week) with Dutch language, Knowledge of Dutch society/Citizenship, English and the courses they need for their study at Higher VET or University such as Biology, Mathematics, Economics, Science, Physics etc. in Dutch language. The program is offered in cooperation with the Hanze Hogeschool (High VET in Groningen) and the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (University).

The integration course is continued within the program and at the end of the Preparation Year the students do their integration exams at level B2. Level B2 is required for entering Higher VET or University.

5.3 Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- The Netherlands has a well-functioning dual system with an emphasis on learning in practice.
- The applicable Dutch exam requirements are a good incentive for added emphasis on language in educational courses.
- If students are under 30 years of age, it is possible to receive a loan against low interest rates for a course of the student's choice.

Weaknesses

- Students over 30 may not apply for the loan with low interest rates for their courses.
- The exam requirements for language are difficult to meet for non-native speakers. This may lead to these non-native speakers dropping out and failing to obtain their degree.
- In practice it has proven difficult to find sufficient learning places for students. This applies to non-native speakers in particular.

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Important websites

- <http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/>
<https://www.coa.nl/en/>
<http://www.werkwijzervluchtelingen.nl/>

Annex 1 Parties involved in integration in the Netherlands

Immigration and asylum

[IND](#)

Official website of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service, responsible for assessing residence permit applications of people who intend to live in the Netherlands.

[Government.nl / rijksoverheid.nl](#)

Official website of the Dutch government.

[COA](#)

Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers', responsible for the reception, supervision and departure of asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands. <https://www.coa.nl/en/asylum-seekers/reception-process>

[ACVZ](#)

The Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs is an independent Committee that advises the Dutch Government and Parliament on immigration law and policy.

Integration

[Inburgeren.nl](#)

Official website for refugees on integration in the Netherlands and learning the Dutch language.

Support for refugees

[VluchtelingenWerk](#)

The Dutch Council for Refugees is a major NGO defending the rights of refugees and offering practical support and information to refugees coming to the Netherlands. It also develops projects to promote the integration of refugees in the Netherlands and provides information on refugees to Members of Parliament.

[UAF](#)

The Foundation for Refugee Students UAF provides work and study support and counseling for highly skilled refugees.

Annex 2. Numbers of integration students in Alfa-college

Table 1 *Total numbers, gender and age in integration courses, both regular integration courses and combined with VET*

	Total	Age	percentage	
male	540		63%	male
younger than 30		277	51%	of the men is younger than 30
between 31 and 50		233	43%	of the men is between 31-50
older than 50		30	6%	of the men is older than 50
female	314		37%	female
younger than 30		140	45%	of the women is younger than 30
between 31 and 50		152	48%	of the women is between 31-50
older than 50		22	7%	of the women is older than 50
Total male and female	854		100%	
total younger than 30		417	49%	
between 31 and 50		385	45%	
older than 50		52	6%	
total	854		100%	

Table 2 *Educational background*

	illiterate	%	low educated	%	average	%	higher	%	total	total
male										
younger than 30	22	8%	83	30%	110	40%	62	22%	277	100%
between 31 and 50	23	10%	77	33%	86	37%	47	20%	233	100%
older than 50	1	3%	12	40%	8	27%	9	30%	30	100%
total	46	9%	172	32%	204	38%	118	22%	540	100%
female										
younger than 30	9	6%	51	36%	57	41%	23	16%	140	100%
between 31 and 50	21	14%	41	27%	52	34%	38	25%	152	100%
older than 50	2	9%	7	32%	8	36%	5	23%	22	100%
total	32	10%	99	32%	117	37%	66	21%	314	100%
male and female										
younger than 30	31	7%	134	32%	167	40%	85	20%	417	100%
between 31 and 50	44	11%	118	31%	138	36%	85	22%	385	100%
older than 50	3	6%	19	37%	16	31%	14	27%	52	100%
total	78	9%	271	32%	321	38%	184	22%	854	100%

Table 3 *Nationality, country of origin*

Number in order of percentage		
1	Syria	494 57,8%
2	Eritrea	190 22,2%
3	Afghanistan	20 2,3%
4	Iran	20 2,3%
5	Iraq	19 2,2%
	Other	111 13,0%
	Total	854 100%

Annex 3. Numbers of integration students in Scalda College

Table 1 *Total numbers, gender and age in integration courses, both regular integration courses and combined with VET*

	Total	Age	Percentage	
male	325		52%	male
younger than 30		136	42%	of the men is younger than 30
between 31 and 50		162	50%	of the men is between 31-50
older than 50		27	8%	of the men is older than 50
female	301		48%	female
younger than 30		135	44%	of the women is younger than 30
between 31 and 50		148	49%	of the women is between 31-50
older than 50		18	6%	of the women is older than 50
Total male and female	626		100%	
total younger than 30		271	43%	
between 31 and 50		310	50%	
older than 50		45	7%	
total		626	100%	

Table 2 *Educational background*

	illiterate	%	low educated	%	average	%	higher	%	total	total
male										
younger than 30	22	16%	66	49%	34	25%	14	10%	136	100%
between 31 and 50	41	25%	70	43%	30	19%	21	13%	162	100%
older than 50	6	22%	14	52%	5	19%	2	7%	27	100%
total	69	21%	150	46%	69	21%	37	11%	325	100%
female										
younger than 30	29	21%	61	45%	34	25%	11	8%	135	100%
between 31 and 50	32	22%	59	40%	36	24%	21	14%	148	100%
older than 50	8	44%	5	28%	5	28%	0	0%	18	100%
total	69	23%	125	42%	75	25%	32	11%	301	100%
male and female										
younger than 30	51	19%	127	47%	68	25%	25	9%	271	100%
between 31 and 50	73	24%	129	42%	66	21%	42	14%	310	100%
older than 50	14	31%	19	42%	10	22%	2	4%	45	100%

total	138	22%	275	44%	144	23%	69	11%	626	100%
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Table 3 *Nationality, country of origin*

Number in order of percentage	
1 Syria	241 38,5%
2 Eritrea	86 13,7%
3 Ethiopia	50 8,0%
4 Iraq	19 3,0%
5 Iran	17 2,7%
Other	213 34,0%
Total	626 100%