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Civic integration as a key pillar in societal resilience for newcomers

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Foundation Civic aims to provide evidence-based suggestions to improve integration strategies for newcomers in the Netherlands (and other EU member states). The objectives of the Foundation are (a) to collect social science and legal research on the outcomes of current policy and (b) to provide constructive suggestions for better integration policy, that is, policy that is measurably effective and in accordance with the rule of law.

Colofon

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Executive summary

This paper demonstrates that a major reconsideration of current civic integration policies and programs in the Netherlands is required. Furthermore, it calls for more research on the effects of possible alternative civic integration strategies on a variety of societal domains (e.g., health, participation in the labor market, education). The main finding of this paper is that it is currently unfeasible to identify best practices in the context of Dutch civic integration strategies, as the effectiveness of different integration strategies has been vastly under-researched.

This paper is a literature review; it presents macro-, meso-, and micro-level analyses of best civic integration practices in the Netherlands. The term “integration” can be broadly defined as a multidimensional societal process that imposes responsibilities on newcomers as well as for the host state. “Best practices” are public programs or policies that have been tested in different contexts and have emerged from evidence-based research.

Firstly, this paper presents a macro-level analysis of the design of the approach to civic integration that is currently employed in the Netherlands, highlighting the unrealistic expectations with regard to the ability of newcomers to become self-reliant. Indeed, several recent evaluations of the first cohort of newcomers that were subject to the integration requirements of the Civic Integration Acts of 2013 and 2017 have indicated that Dutch civic integration policies and programs are based on faulty assumptions and therefore have counterproductive outcomes. Secondly, the meso-level analysis in this paper provides an overview of best practic-

es in the context of policies, programs, and services intended to facilitate the integration of newcomers in the Netherlands. In particular, it focuses on best practices aimed at strengthening the labor market position and socioeconomic performance of newcomers, but it also considers the domains of education, housing, health care, and social connections between newcomers and host communities.

On the one hand, this paper highlights some of the opportunities that exist in the Dutch civic integration framework, such as programs that simultaneously focus on different domains and start as soon as possible after a newcomer arrives in the Netherlands. On the other hand, this paper examines problems in the current civic integration framework, such as low-quality commercial language agencies, unclear educational requirements for newcomers, and the long waiting times for newcomers when attempting to obtain access to appropriate (private) housing.

Finally, a micro-level perspective on best civic integration practices is presented through relating the personal stories of newcomers. Previous research on civic integration has generally focused on how newcomers perform in the host state; far less academic research has focused on newcomers’ coping strategies and experiences with civic integration programs, practices, and policies. All of the stories presented in this paper suggest that newcomers can only make progress toward successful integration if relevant programs and policies take into account their personal circumstances and needs.

These narratives emphasize the intersections among the different structural dimensions of integration. It is important to note that integration is not about finding paid work; it is also about experiencing a feeling of belonging and embeddedness in social networks, housing, access to health-care services, and opportunities for personal development and further (vocational) education. This applies equally to 'native' Dutch citizens.

“ It is important to note that integration is not only about finding paid work; it is also about experiencing a feeling of belonging and embeddedness in social networks, housing, access to health-care services, and opportunities for personal development and further (vocational) education. ”



1. Introduction

The Netherlands has had a national civic integration policy for newcomers from outside of the EU since 1996. Whereas integration contracts with newcomers were initially aimed at preparing them for integration into Dutch society, subsequent civic integration contracts have been compulsory and have increasingly served as restrictive examination tools for measuring the personal degree of integration of newcomers (e.g., Van Oers, 2013, 41–64).

Over the last two decades, newcomers have been subject to an increasing number of language tests and evaluations intended to assess their knowledge of the core values of democracy, the labor market, and Dutch society in general. Moreover, integration and language education programs for newcomers have been privatized, and, from 2013 onward, newcomers have been made almost fully responsible for completing their civic integration programs and exams under penalty of sanctions such as fines and the refusal to grant permanent residency (e.g., De Waal, 2017, 50). This paper reviews current literature and presents macro-, meso-, and micro-level analyses of best civic integration practices in the Netherlands.

It focuses on the cohort of migrants who have entered the Netherlands since the end of 2013 and are or have been subject to the Civic Integration Act of 2013 and 2017 (i.e., predominantly non-EU family migrants and refugees; Significant, 2018). In the remainder of this paper, members of this group are referred to as newcomers. In 2014, more than 26,000 newcomers entered the Netherlands. The majority of these newcomers came from countries such as Syria and Eritrea (Bakker, 2015).

Members of both of these groups had a greater than 90% chance of receiving a temporary residence permit (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). Due to the influx of a relatively high number of newcomers, the Netherlands was challenged to identify evidence-based policy interventions intended to contribute to their successful integration (Papadopoulou et al., 2013; OECD, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017; Dagevos & Odé, 2016). The aim of this paper is to explore promising approaches and best practices with regard to civic integration in the Netherlands and to facilitate a discussion among policy makers, scholars, service providers, and newcomers on the bottlenecks and successes within the Dutch civic integration framework.

To do so, the concepts of “civic integration,” “integration,” and “best practices” are discussed. Subsequently, this paper presents three levels of analysis: macro, meso, and micro. The macro level describes the historical and contemporary context of civic integration in the Netherlands.

This paper adopts a multidimensional and intersectional approach. The meso-level addresses five structural dimensions of integration in the Netherlands: employment, housing, education, health, and social connections. While most research on integration has focused solely on integration in terms of the unemployment rate and welfare dependency among newcomers, this white paper goes a step further by performing a multidimensional analysis of different dimensions of civic integration (Joppke, 2007).

The micro level sheds light on the personal narratives of newcomers in order to identify the successes of and bottlenecks in civic integration programs and practices, and participation in Dutch society in general. The final section elaborates on the intersections, interdependence, and relations between the three levels of analysis and the five structural dimensions.

1 Through this paper, the term ‘newcomers’ is used to refer to recently arrived, non-EU immigrants who are confronted with compulsory integration requirements. Of course, the group of newcomers that arrive is not homogenous. Therefore, this paper takes into account the big differences within this group in terms of national origin, gender, age, language, religion, culture and socio-economic position (Bakker, 2015; Hampshire, 2013). More background information on newcomers can be found in Section 5.1.

2 With that, the paper works with a variation of the integration framework developed by Penninx (e.g. Penninx & Garcés-Mas-careñas, 2016)

1.1 Integration and civic integration

There is no unanimous definition of “integration”; therefore, it has become a vague and divisive concept (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, while it is a highly controversial topic, many scholars state that it is still important to discuss integration in order to shed light on exclusionary policies and describe trends in the political, public, and scientific arenas (e.g., Dagevos & Grundel, 2013; Ghorashi, 2006; Joppke, 2007; Schinkel, 2008).

In general, integration encompasses “the inclusion [of newcomers] in already existing social systems” (Esser, 2004, p. 46 in Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016). Additionally, Heckmann (2006, p. 18) describes integration as “a generations lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society” (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016). In academic and legal documents, integration is often typified as a multidimensional, two-way process involving responsibilities both on the part of newcomers as well as that of the host state (Bakker, 2015; Joppke, 2007; Garibay & de Cuyper, 2017; Hampshire, 2013).

However, even this description (“two-way”) may be excessively simplistic, as it implies that immigrants have to integrate into a fixed image of the receiving society. However, all developed societies consist of “ramshackle, multifaceted, loosely connected sets of regulatory rules, institutions, and practices in various domains” (Freeman, 2004, p. 946). In other words, society is, with or without migration, already fragmented and decentered, with the result that integration processes must also be fragmented. That said, many scholars and policy makers are critical of the increasingly normative nature of the concept of integration (Dagevos & Grundel, 2013; Ghorashi, 2006; Schinkel, 2008; Penninx, 2005; Van Mierlo Stichting, 2018).

Therefore, integration processes involve non-newcomers as well. Debates on integration have led to a negative tendency toward culturalization and framing. These processes indicate a bias against specific groups in society and consider cultural differences between ethnic groups as the cause of societal problems (Entzinger, 2014; Entzinger & Scholten, 2015; Ghorashi, 2006; Penninx, 2005; Schinkel, 2008; De Waal, 2017).

This research therefore builds on the vision of Foundation Civic with regard to integration. This requires that civic integration policies should be assessed based on their measurable effects on a set of societal outcomes that are specified as their policy objectives (e.g., increased language proficiency levels or participation in the labor market). This vision strongly contrasts with the analytical framework that underlies the current integration policies of a growing number of EU countries, including the Netherlands. These policies suggest that newcomers must demonstrate the ability to personally integrate into a pre-existing society in order to deserve equal rights and belonging.

In other words, the current perspective on integration is highly normative and sees the function of integration policies as “contractualized,” meaning that they demand that newcomers complete their individual integration processes by satisfying formalized integration requirements in return for the residency and citizenship rights delivered by the state (De Waal, 2017; Penninx, 2005). Foundation Civic argues that integration should not be associated with or based on earned citizenship or belonging, as this conceptual understanding of integration has a tendency to lead to ineffective civic integration policies.

On the one hand, it frequently creates counterproductive barriers to the participation and inclusion of newcomers, who will most likely permanently settle but fail to satisfy formalized integration requirements "On the other hand", civic integration policies are not evaluated based on their factual impact on certain societal goals but rather on the question of "how do we measure whether people have integrated enough to deserve rights and to belong?" For this reason, the focus of integration debates should be on addressing public issues and concerns that may arise if newcomers join a society in a non-normative fashion (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016).

Integration does not imply a linear process that can be used to assess which newcomers should "deserve" citizenship. For this reason, it is also evident that different newcomers require customized forms of integration education and public supervision. Indeed, host states have a responsibility to provide customized social services in order to facilitate the settlement of newcomers (Korac, 2003), with the goal of creating opportunities for newcomers to participate in the economic, social, cultural, and political domains (Joppke, 2006; Penninx, 2005; Korac, 2003; De Waal, 2017).

This paper also examines the concept of "civic integration." This concept is related to the Dutch concept 'inburgering' and specifically refers to public policies intended to stimulate the integration process (which is viewed as a multilayered societal process involving both newcomers and the receiving society). Hence, the main difference between integration and civic integration is that the former refers to a societal process, whereas the latter refers to public policies and strategies intended to stimulate this process.

1.2 Evidence-based best practices

Over the years, Dutch civic integration policies have been repeatedly revised, and several actions, activities, programs, practices, or policies have been implemented in order to (at times supposedly) assist, support, and empower newcomers in the Netherlands. However, while the Dutch government has repeatedly revised its civic integration legislation, not much research has been conducted on best practices in the context of civic integration policies.

The main problems have been that (a) many policies or initiatives have been changed or aborted before they were fully implemented, which has deprived researchers of opportunities to assess their effectiveness (Entzinger, 2014); (b) evaluations of civic integration in the Netherlands have mainly demonstrated that current policies have counterproductive societal effects but have provided little information concerning feasible and effective alternative configurations of civic integration policies (e.g., Dutch House of Audit, 2017; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018; Significant 2018); and (c) certain promising Dutch initiatives and programs have not been evaluated in different contexts in order to definitely establish whether they can be described as best practices (Huddleston et al., 2015; Papadopoulou et al., 2013; Migration Policy Group, 2011).

For this reason, this paper aims to make a first step toward an analysis of evidence-based civic integration in the Netherlands. In order to do this, this paper examines various best civic integration practices (Section 3) and presents several narratives that illustrate both the bottlenecks and successes of these programs, practices, and policies (Section 4).

In order to describe best civic integration

practices, the conceptual framework by Montero-Sieburth (2018) is used. This framework defines best practices with regard to civic integration in terms of “actions, activities, programs, particular practices and policies that have emerged from evidence-based research that has been tested in different contexts and that has been correlated with having positive outcomes for migrants who have emigrated for a variety of reasons” (Montero-Sieburth, 2018, p. 1).

Best practices are thus generalizable to different national contexts provided that policy makers take into account the diversity of newcomers in terms of personal experiences, character, educational level, language proficiency, ambitions, health, gender, culture, country of origin, age, adaptive behavior, and socioeconomic position (Korac, 2003; Bakker, 2015; Hampshire, 2013; Montero-Sieburth, 2018). In addition, best practices can, in principle, be decontextualized. This means that they are also applicable to other local contexts, such as local municipalities. A best practice is only duplicable if the practice in question has been globally tested and the context in which it is to be implemented resembles the given resources and inputs of the original context (Bretschneider, Marc-Aurele, & Wu, 2015; Montero-Sieburth, 2018). Naturally, best practices should aim to empower newcomers in the least painful and most non-intrusive manner possible and take into account any ethical issues associated with their needs.

Montero-Sieburth (2018) states that best practices should provide transitional mechanisms intended to promote newcomers' social and cultural participation. Any evaluation will be more reliable should it take into the number of newcomers who are affected by a best practice, the frequency at which civic integration activities occur and programs and services intended to support newcomers are offered, and newcomers' responses and experiences with such practices (Montero-Sieburth, 2018). Lastly, when evaluating best civic integration practices, it is important to shed light on regional, local, and national differences (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016). Therefore, the next section examines the national Dutch civic integration context.

“ Best practices should aim to empower newcomers in the least painful and most non-intrusive manner possible and take into account any ethical issues associated with their needs. ”



2. Macro-level analysis of best civic integration policies

This section analyzes the historical development of the Dutch civic integration framework through a macro phenomenon lens. An analysis of macro phenomena is often used to explain statistical data on societal trends and is described in terms of widespread trends in and the values and definitions of a certain field of study. This section reflects on the changes that have occurred in the civic integration context in the Netherlands.

2.1 The beginning of civic integration legislation in the 1990s

In 1996, the Dutch government formulated the first national civic integration legislation concerning newcomers from countries outside the EU. The outset of civic integration policies in the Netherlands was a reaction to the disappointing effects of previous “minorities” policies. The majority of immigrants who arrived in the nineties were dependent on social welfare and occupied an underprivileged position in Dutch society (Entzinger, 2014; Entzinger & Scholten, 2015; Odé, 2008).

For example, immigrant employment was four times higher than the unemployment rate of native Dutch (Driouichi, 2007). This large welfare dependency could be attributed to the discrepancy between unskilled migrant workers with relatively no knowledge of the Dutch language and the requirements of the post-industrial labor market (Suvarierol & Kirk, 2015).

During the 1990s, municipalities were obliged to organize integration courses for migrants who were dependent on social welfare. Participation in these courses was on a voluntary basis (Bakker, 2015; Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012).

In 1998, the Dutch government implemented the Newcomer Integration Law, named *Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers* (henceforth referred to as the *Win*; Joppke, 2007). In contrast to the act of 1996, the *Win* obliged all newcomers to participate in a 12-month integration course. This course consisted of 600 hours of Dutch language instruction, civic education, and preparation for the labor market (Suvarierol & Kirk, 2015; Joppke, 2007; Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012; Scholten et al., 2017; Odé, 2008).

Newcomers from non-EU countries were also invited to participate in Dutch civic and language education courses (Odé, 2018). While newcomers who arrived after 1998 were obliged to participate in these Dutch civic courses, migrants who had entered the Netherlands prior to 1998 could still choose to attend these classes on a voluntary basis (Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012).

Under the *Win*, Dutch municipalities were made responsible for the integration of newcomers and received relatively large budgets from the government. The municipalities held intake meetings with newcomers and sent them to regional educational centers (in Dutch, *Regionaal Opleidingscentra* [ROC]). The ROCs were responsible for facilitating Dutch language courses for newcomers (Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012).

After newcomers successfully passed their civic integration courses, they were encouraged to gain access to the labor market (Odé, 2018). Though the civic integration courses concluded with an exam, there were no legal or financial consequences should newcomers not pass it (Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012).

2.2 Trend toward more restrictive civic integration policies in 2000s

During the 2000s, a relatively more conservative government took power in the Netherlands. The Dutch government developed new legislation regarding newcomers, titled the Aliens Act of 2000 (Vreemdelingenwet 2000; Driouichi, 2007; Bakker, 2015; Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012; Entzinger, 2014; Entzinger & Scholten, 2015). This act restricted opportunities for family reunions and made it more difficult for immigrants to obtain long-term residence permits (de Lange et al., 2017).

During the 2000s, it became clear that the Win had not met the expectations of the Dutch government. Reports were critical of newcomers' knowledge of the Dutch language and society, the poor quality of integration classes and the lack of sanctions and state-funded ROCs. Odé (2008) and Joppke (2007) state that this integration policy forced newcomers to assimilate to the Dutch culture, obtain a good command of the Dutch language, and participate in civil society and political activities.

From 2007 onward, a more restrictive civic integration law was accepted: the Wet Inburgering (henceforth referred to as Wi2007; Driouichi, 2007; Joppke, 2007). As a result, all migrants in the Netherlands of between the ages of 18 and 65 years who wished to stay in the country were obliged to integrate. This sanction was applicable to all migrants who arrived in the Netherlands, both before and after 2008. In contrast to the Win, the Wi2007 made newcomers responsible for their own integration process. This was in line with the philosophy of autonomy and self-sufficiency (in Dutch, zelfredzaamheid; Driouichi, 2007).

The Wi2007 marked a change toward a more mainstream policy, as it embedded the civic integration of newcomers in generic policy measures and instruments. As a result, targeted group-specific measures were abandoned (Scholten et al., 2017). While the responsibility of municipalities was diminished, regulations concerning and expectations of newcomers were increased (Joppke, 2007). As a result of the Wi2007, the government was no longer the leader in guiding the integration of newcomers, and newcomers had to pay for the civic integration courses themselves. The provision of civic integration education was farmed out to private language schools.

The government wished to stimulate a competitive market wherein newcomers themselves could choose which civic integration course they wished to participate in. The government hoped that the privatization of language schools would lead to a better quality of civic integration courses and lower prices (Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012; Bakker, 2015; Odé, 2008; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). If newcomers did not pass the integration exam within 3.5 years, they were sanctioned by financial penalties or legal consequences (Bakker, 2015; Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012; Joppke, 2007).

These financial penalties took the form of administrative fines of a maximum of €1,250 (Odé, 2008). Since state involvement was reduced to solely facilitating civic integration exams, municipalities were provided with less money with which to organize additional civic integration programs for newcomers. Municipalities would only receive €1,000 per newcomer (Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012; Scholten et al., 2017).

3 Who came from outside the European Union and arrived in the Netherlands after 1998.

4 This is also applicable for migrants who were living in the Netherlands for a longer period.

2.3 From self-reliance toward the civic integration framework of 2021

In 2013, a new Civic Integration Act (henceforth referred to as Wi2013), which continued the trend toward self-reliance, was implemented (Dagevos & Gijbert, 2012; Significant, 2018). This was reflected in a new requirement that newcomers successfully pass the civic integration exam within three years (Scholten et al., 2017). Furthermore, newcomers who did not participate in civic integration courses were not eligible for permanent residency (Driouichi, 2007; Klaver, 2016).

The Wi2013 has been repeatedly criticized by different reports (Algemene Rekenkamer, 2013; Significant, 2018). The Court of Audit is highly critical of the privatization of the civic integration market, as this trend has led to a lack of transparency on the part of language schools in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the Court of Audit notes that the trend toward self-reliance has not led to an increase in the pass rate of civic integration exams (Algemene Rekenkamer, 2013). In addition, the minister of Social Affairs at the time also acknowledged that the refinements of the civic integration framework of 2013 had not led to any improvements. As a result, in 2017, the Dutch government slightly refined its civic integration legislation. A seventh mandatory category was added to the civic integration exam. Newcomers were obliged to learn about the Dutch core values, and they had to sign a declaration that they would uphold these values (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018).

Several studies have indicated that the current civic integration framework is excessively complex, inadequate, and ineffective (Driouichi, 2007; SER, 2018; Algemene Rekenkamer, 2017; Engbersen et al., 2015; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018).

In July 2018, the current Minister of Social Affairs announced a new civic integration legislation, which is intended to be enacted in 2021. The details of this new policy have yet to be determined. Minister Koolmees acknowledges that the privatization of language agencies has provided malicious commercial language companies with leeway to deceive newcomers (Rijksoverheid, 2018b).

In general, the Ministry of Social Affairs wishes to increase the language level of newcomers from A2 to B1. Within the civic integration legislation of 2021, municipalities will become responsible for constructing a personal integration plan for, and in cooperation with, newcomers (Rijksoverheid, 2018a). The aim of this new civic integration legislation is to hasten the civic integration of newcomers (Rijksoverheid, 2018a; Ombudsman, 2018). The government aims to accomplish this through an intense program of 28 to 32 hours of language classes and orientation on the labor market (Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving, 2018).

Municipalities will receive larger budgets with which to finance newcomers' studies in language schools. Furthermore, they will match newcomers with suitable language agencies and will assist them with insurance costs and rent. Nonetheless, newcomers will still be responsible for their own integration and are increasingly fined if they do not meet the terms and legal conditions for integration (Rijksoverheid, 2018a).

Foundation Civic has called for attention to

the position of the 70,197 newcomers who are subject to the current civic integration legislation of 2013 and 2017 (DUO, 2018, p. 2). More than a thousand newcomers will join this group by 2020. The National Ombudsman (2018) notes that many of these newcomers will not be able to pass the civic integration exam within three years and will thus be fined. Since many reports have indicated that the current civic integration framework of self-reliance is not effective, Foundation Civic has called for the demanding circumstances faced by newcomers who are subject to the current civic integration legislation to be eased (De Waal, 2018; National Ombudsman, 2018; Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018, p. 49).

5 There was only an exception for migrants who originated from Turkey, the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Community (EEC) (Dagevos & Gijsberts, 2012).



3. Meso-level analysis of best civic integration practices

This section employs a meso phenomenon lens to analyze five structural dimensions of civic integration: employment, housing, education, health, and social connections (Ager & Strang, 2008). Firstly, this section addresses opportunities and problems with regard to the housing of newcomers in the Netherlands (Ghorashi, Holder, & Boer, 2017). The second dimension describes the employment and socioeconomic performance of newcomers (Schinkel, 2010; Odé, 2008). The third dimension examines best practices and obstacles in the domain of education, which includes civic integration schools, courses, and exams, as well as further education options for newcomers. The fourth dimension describes Dutch health-care programs and services for newcomers. The fifth dimension, that of social connections, examines the complex interplay of social bridges, bonds, and lines within the host community (Ager & Strang, 2008). When reading this section, it is important to note that the dimensions are interrelated, not static, and dependent on the local context.

3.1 Housing

In recent years, national and local governments have faced increasing challenges in accommodating newcomers in the Netherlands. However, in 2014, national and local governments realized that there were not enough housing options to immediately accommodate all of the newcomers who would enter the Netherlands in 2014–2015 (Klaver, 2016; SER, 2017). The governmental organization called the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (in Dutch, *Centraal Orgaan opvang Azielzoekers* [COA]), municipalities, and housing associations sought creative solutions to the housing problem (Klaver, 2016; SER, 2017). The housing of newcomers was accompanied by logistical obstacles. In order to provide housing to newcomers, a variety of stakeholders have to collaborate and follow both local and national policies. Before newcomers are accommodated in municipalities, they are placed in asylum seeker centers (AZCs), where they have to wait until the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) has considered their applications (Ghorashi, Holder, & Boer, 2017; Klaver, 2016). Since 1987, the COA has been responsible for organizing accommodation for asylum seekers in the Netherlands (Bakker, 2015; Ghorashi, Holder, & Boer, 2017).

Dutch reception centers are built in remote areas, where newcomers are isolated from Dutch society. The COA employs the slogan “sober yet human” in describing these centers (Ghorashi, Holder, & Boer, 2017). The sizes of AZCs vary. Asylum seekers receive basic facilities and services such as shelter, a weekly budget for clothing and food, and access to health care (Klaver, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017). Due to harsh criticism and political debate over the activities that are made available to newcomers, several measures have been taken to facilitate more activities in the form of pre-integration and case management programs.

These programs are aimed to promote the participation of newcomers (Scholten et al., 2017). Several scholars have addressed the poor living conditions found in reception centers and the restrictive rules applied in these centers (Ghorashi, Holder, & Boer, 2017). With the Aliens Act of 2000, the Dutch government sought to expedite the asylum procedure and improve the position of asylum seekers in the Netherlands. However, this legislation seemed not to be effective, since asylum seekers still had to wait longer than the required waiting time of six months (Bakker, 2015; Ghorashi, 2005). Ager and Strang (2001) focuses on the positive impact of housing on social and cultural relations with a neighborhood. Scholten et al. (2017) state that accommodating newcomers in neighborhoods with prior experience with immigrants is more favorable for newcomers.

Robinson et al. (2003) state that such a social network can help newcomers to make their first steps toward the labor market. When asylum seekers are granted a residence permit, local municipalities become responsible for their settlement (Klaver et al., 2015). The allocation procedure consists of three phases.

During the first phase, newcomers will have an intake meeting with the COA, which will allocate them to a local municipality. The Dutch government has entered into agreements with local municipalities on the allocation of permit holders to their respective areas. Permit holders are allocated based on the number of citizens in a municipality (Klaver et al., 2015).

During the second phase, municipalities receive information from the COA and become responsible for the accommodation of the permit holders who have been assigned to them. Each municipality interacts with various housing cooperatives to find accommodation. While this process should, in theory, take approximately 10 weeks, in practice, the allocation of individuals and families can take more than three months.

The third phase lasts two weeks. During these weeks, newcomers are given some time in which to move to their new houses. They are often assisted by a volunteer or employee from the local Dutch Refugee Council (Klaver et al., 2015; Scholten et al., 2017).

6 More on the personal integration plan can be found in Section 4.3.

7 These programs are highlighted in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.

Case 1: Amsterdam: Startblok Riekershaven

Startblok Riekershaven is a housing project for young newcomers and young native Dutch between 18 and 27 years old living in the Netherlands. This project aims to pave the way for integration through housing (Klaver, 2016). This housing project is a collaborative venture between two social housing corporations (De Key and Socius Wonen) and the municipality of Amsterdam. The housing project offers 565 affordable housing units to 282 young permit holders and 283 young people, such as students, young workers, and individuals who have recently graduated from universities in the Netherlands. Every studio has facilities such as a small kitchen, toilet, and bath.

Startblok Riekershaven also has several communal living spaces (Klaver, 2016). The housing project has created an established community with the slogan “Building a future together” (Housing Europe, 2017). The residents of Riekershaven are involved in self-management of the complex and are encouraged to play an active role in the management of housing, common areas, and outdoor spaces. The community organizes initiatives in the fields of sports, culture, and leisure (Housing Europe, 2017). This helps to create a welcoming atmosphere and contributes to social cohesion and community building (Progress, 2017; Klaver, 2016).

In order to stimulate the integration process of residents in the project, there is also a “buddy project” that matches newcomers with a young Dutch person. This is a partnership for sharing common skills and interests and pursuing goals such as gaining access to the Dutch labor market. In order to increase participation among Riekershaven’s residents, the initiators of the project are cooperating with the social initiative New Dutch Connections, which is also based in Amsterdam, and the Volunteer

Centre Amsterdam (VCA; Boss Magazine, 2016). The VCA is a citywide organization that assists individuals in finding volunteer work, supports and advises voluntary organizations, and promotes voluntary work in Amsterdam. The VCA has had several conversations with the residents of Startblok Riekershaven in order to determine what kind of activities should be organized. The VCA attempts to encourage the residents to engage in voluntary work and provides information on such work during the integration and language classes and by means of signs placed on doors throughout the building.

Information on such activities is provided in Dutch, English, Arabic, and Tigrinya. The VCA cooperates with several social initiatives, such as Ykeallo, Bor-Fiep, and sport associations, to encourage newcomers to engage in voluntary work. As a result, more than 25 residents have started performing voluntary work at Riekershaven (VCA, 2017). Though the housing project has been described as innovative and promising by many, there are also some challenges at Riekershaven.

Case 2: Nijmegen: Housing for Eritrean Men in Lent

In early 2016, the municipality of Nijmegen accommodated 98 male Eritrean newcomers in a former student building in Nijmegen, Lent. The building is not located in the city itself and is relatively isolated from the rest of Nijmegen (Ferrier & Massink, 2016). As a result of the shortage of available apartments and the relatively limited financial resources available to newcomers with which to find housing, the municipality placed the newcomers in this building.

In addition to the Eritrean permit holders, the housing complex also accommodates 21 students from a Dutch university (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2015). Ferrier, Kahmann, and Massink (2016) state that the organization of activities for the Eritrean men by the Dutch students can be seen as a promising practice. However, volunteers should not only organize activities for the Eritrean men but should also organize activities with the newcomers. Before the housing project in Lent started, Tandem (a local health organization) and Vluchtelingenwerk (the Dutch Refugee Council) investigated the backgrounds of the Eritrean men.

Their study indicated that Eritrean newcomers to Lent generally have difficulties with learning the Dutch language due to their educational level.

In addition, the majority of the Eritrean men noted that they felt lonely. Moreover, they have almost no financial reserves, since they only receive €50 per week from Dutch welfare institutions to spend on food or other necessary expenses (Bevolo & Gerrits, 2018). Bevolo and Gerrits (2018) note that many Eritrean newcomers are still influenced by political groups originating from the current dictatorial regime in Eritrea (DSP Group & Tilburg University, 2016; Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018).

The social initiative “Welcome to the

Neighbourhood” attempts to promote contact between the neighborhood and the residents of the compound in Lent (Ferrier, Kahmann, & Massink, 2016). A local health organization, Tandem, has also been assigned to promote the social participation of Eritrean newcomers in the local municipality. Both organizations run activities and initiatives intended to connect newcomers to locals in Nijmegen.

The research paper “Nothing is what it seems” (in Dutch, Niets is wat het lijkt) commissioned by the DSP group and Tilburg University (2016) concludes that there is much anxiety and distrust in the Eritrean community in the Netherlands.

This research concludes that certain Eritrean men imposed social requirements on Eritrean newcomers. Moreover, in multiple cases, they are obliged to “voluntarily” pay a 2% tax to the Eritrean consulate. Many Eritrean newcomers in the Netherlands face intimidation, which can range from subtle forms of coercion to explicit threats and violence (DSP-groep & Tilburg University, 2016; Ferrier, Kahmann, & Massink, 2017).

However, there are also studies that state that Eritrean newcomers do not face oppression by the Eritrean regime in the Netherlands (Ferrier & Massink, 2016). The report by Ferrier and Massink (2016) indicates that the Eritrean newcomers in Lent generally exhibit resilience and ambitions to begin their lives in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, the bureaucratic civic integration policies have a demotivating effect. Moreover, the men face difficulties with Dutch norms and values as well as attending all of their language classes. The report states that Eritrean men do not have enough opportunities to practice Dutch outside their language classes. Therefore, a majority of the newcomers state

that they would like to have more social contact with members of Dutch communities and be able to engage in more activities. Ferrier and Massink (2016) provide the following advice: give the newcomers a more structured daily routine in terms of the scheduling of their language classes, make practical information for newcomers accessible in Tigrinya, and support the Eritrean men through financial and administrative regulations. More information can be found in the report titled "Overleven in Nederland" (2016).

“ Give the newcomers a more structured daily routine in terms of the scheduling of their language classes, make practical information for newcomers accessible in Tigrinya, and support the Eritrean men through financial and administrative regulations. ”

Case 3: Platform Opnieuw Thuis

The Platform Opnieuw Thuis (Back Home) was an alliance between the Dutch government, the Dutch Municipalities Association (in Dutch, Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeentes or VNG), the Association of Provinces of the Netherlands (in Dutch, het Interprovinciaal Overleg or IPO), COA, and Aedes, which is the association for Dutch housing cooperatives (Rijksoverheid, 2017a). The online platform was active in sharing good practices on housing and integration on both the local and national levels (Klaver, 2016).

During the period between November 2014 and July 2017, the Platform Opnieuw Thuis was active in helping local municipalities with the process of accommodating newcomers. However, this platform is no longer accessible (Rijksoverheid, 2017a). In the period between 2014–2015, local municipalities experienced major backlogs in accommodating newcomers. As a result, a significant group of newcomers who had already received residence permits still had to stay in centers for asylum seekers until their respective municipalities found appropriate housing. The platform took on a facilitating and supporting role for municipalities (Klaver, 2016).

The report by the Ministry of Security and Justice is very positive about the actions that the municipalities have undertaken to address these backlogs (Rijksoverheid, 2017b). The tasks of the platform can be divided into three main activities: improving the accommodation process for newcomers, giving advice to municipalities on the accommodation of newcomers, and providing concrete analysis and information products (Rijksoverheid, 2017a).

Firstly, in terms of the accommodation process for newcomers, municipalities currently take into account their individual characteristics such as educational and work experience. The process has been significantly accelerated and improved. Secondly, the platform advised municipalities on the accommodation of newcomers and informed them about the flexible nature of the Dutch housing market. Due to the advisory role of the platform, municipalities were able to strengthen their bonds and cooperate with regional and national stakeholders.

Thirdly, the Platform provided concrete analysis and information products. As a result, the registration system for Dutch citizens (Basisregistratie personen) has been refined. In addition, the Service Point Toeslagen at COA was able to optimize the process of applying for rent, health care, and childcare benefits. As a result of informative meetings organized by the platform, municipalities have also been able to enhance the housing information services that they currently offer (Rijksoverheid, 2017a). This evaluation provides an optimistic overview of this platform. More research is needed on the bottlenecks of this platform and the reasons why VNG, IPO, COA, and Aedes have decided to stop using this platform.

Case 4: Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam

Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam (SNTR) is a philanthropic organization that assists 200 Syrian families to participate in the city of Rotterdam. This program is focused on families, since SNTR specifically wants to create a safe living environment for families and children. The organization cannot determine which families are accommodated in its program, as this is arranged by the governmental body named Support Desk for Permit Holders (In Dutch, Intakeloket Ondersteuning Statushouders) (Stichting De Verre Bergen, 2019).

The SNTR program provides housing, social support, language courses, job coaching, and training. In terms of housing, a member of the SNTR housing staff assists newcomers to move into their new houses.

The apartments are purchased by the organization Stichting De Verre Bergen, which purchases apartments, which it then rents to newcomers. Newcomers and their families are assisted by social workers (coaches) as well as connectors (individuals who speak the Arabic language). The social guidance provided to newcomers is divided into three phases.

Firstly, during the “Basic in Order” phase, a coach helps the newcomers with their administration and getting acquainted with the municipality of Rotterdam. The second integration phase, “Participation,” starts after five months and encourages newcomers to engage in voluntary work and participate in activities in the neighborhood. By means of home visits and participation workshops, the Syrian families learn more about Dutch norms and values. In addition, the newcomers will be assisted by a career coach, who will support them in finding employment.

During the third phase, “Low-threshold Psychological Interventions,” newcomers are provided with assistance in overcoming stress and anxiety (Stichting De Verre Bergen, 2019). Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam cooperates with certified language schools and offers a relatively intensive civic integration program to newcomers. Newcomers start with this program two months after receiving the keys to their apartments.

The program aims to educate newcomers until they have obtained a B1 level of Dutch proficiency. They have four language classes per week and also have to do homework. Erasmus University is currently conducting research on the SNTR program, in which the researchers are attempting to compare the progress of participants in the SNTR program with that of newcomers who are not part of the SNTR program (Stichting De Verre Bergen, 2019).

3.2 Employment

Previous studies on integration have predominantly focused on the domain of employment in order to investigate the position of newcomers in the Netherlands (Ager & Strang, 2001; Castles et al., 2002). A distinction can be made between the position of asylum seekers and permit holders in the Dutch labor market. During the first six months of the asylum procedure, asylum seekers are not allowed to work. Thereafter, they can work for a maximum of 24 weeks in a year. Nonetheless, employers need to have a work permit if they wish to hire asylum seekers.

This permit is only given in case of insufficient local labor supply. Asylum seekers can retain a maximum of €185 per month; the rest has to be handed over to the COA. In contrast to asylum seekers, permit holders have full access to the Dutch labor market. Nonetheless, many studies have addressed the minimum participation of permit holders in the labor market (Klaver, 2016). After 15 years, 57% of newcomers have held a paid job for more than eight hours per week (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017; Maliepaard, Witkamp, & Jennissen, 2017).

The difference in labor market participation rates between refugees and other types of migrants is referred to as the “refugee gap.” An article by Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen (2017) indicates that the refugee gap exists at the beginning of refugees’ working careers in the Netherlands and diminishes over time. Before elaborating on the current position of newcomers in the labor market, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of how the regulations concerning employment for refugees have changed over the years.

In 1989, the Scientific Council for Government Policy Netherlands (in Dutch, Wetenschappelijk Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid [WRR]) recognized that the position of permit holders in the Dutch labor market had to improve. It stated that asylum seekers should obtain access to the labor market within two months of making their request for a residence permit (Entzinger & Scholten, 2015; WRR, 1989; de Lange et al., 2017).

However, this proposal was rejected (de Lange et al., 2017). Until 2015, newcomers were encouraged to find work after they successfully completed basic language courses and passed the civic integration exam. This sequenced approach has been described by the WRR as involving a “loss of time.” Learning the Dutch language can take up to two or three years, which means that newcomers are not able to enter the job market (Scholten et al., 2015; Engbersen et al., 2015; Klaver, 2016).

In 2015, the WRR published a report on the low employment rate of newcomers: only one third of permit holders aged between 15 and 64 had a paid job (Engbersen et al., 2015; Klaver, 2016). The WRR advised local municipalities to focus on the potential of newcomers and match them with relevant job opportunities. Moreover, it recommended that municipalities adopt a parallel approach where newcomers participate in civic integration courses as well in voluntary or paid jobs (Engbersen et al., 2015; Klaver, 2016).

The Participation Act (in Dutch, *Participatiewet*) made Dutch municipalities responsible for promoting the participation of newcomers in the labor market (Razenberg, Kahmann, de Gruijter, & Damhuis, 2018). The Dutch government adopted this law to increase the competitiveness of the Dutch economy and to control state budgets (De Lange et al., 2017). The aim of this law is to facilitate sustainable activation of Dutch citizens in the labor market. In line with this, the National Ombudsman emphasizes that municipalities should consider civic integration as a sustainable investment instead of as a favor to newcomers.

Dutch society as a whole benefits when the civic integration programs of newcomers is facilitated (Ombudsman, 2018). As a result of the Participation Act, more than 82% of Dutch municipalities have formulated special policies intended to increase the participation of newcomers in the labor market (Razenberg, Kahmann, & De Gruijter, 2017). De Lange et al. (2017) are critical of the Participation Act, however, since this law has a negative effect on the position of newcomers in the labor market.

The European Parliament has also been critical of this legislation, since this law does not take into account the flexible labor contracts and part-time jobs that dominate the Dutch labor market (Buiskool et al., 2016). The European Parliament concludes that flexible employees have a less secure position in the labor market when compared to permanently contracted employees. These risks are also applicable for newcomers many of whom find flexible labor contracts to be insufficient and insecure. Therefore, newcomers are predominantly dependent on unemployment benefits such as the *Werkloosheidwet* or social benefits such as the *Bijstand*. Several studies have found that dependence on such benefits creates risks of poverty and social exclusion (Buiskool et al., 2016).

Pathways to employment

Booijink, Stavenuiter, and Taouanza (2017) describe the following strategies that Dutch municipalities employ in order to assist newcomers to participate in the labor market: (1) emphasizing the “Work First” approach; (2) providing schooling, training, and courses; (3) subsidizing jobs, work experience programs, and voluntary work; and (4) providing parallel trajectories in which newcomers receive schooling. In addition to these, a fifth strategy can be identified: promoting entrepreneurship among newcomers (Bijl & Verweij, 2012; Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016; Huddleston et al., 2015; SER, 2017; Scholten et al., 2017).

The first strategy used by municipalities is the work first approach. Several studies have demonstrated that finding employment relatively quickly has a positive effect for newcomers’ future employment opportunities (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017; Martin et al., 2016). Moreover, working has a positive effect on both the personal and social capabilities of individuals. The longer a person is unemployed, the more difficult it becomes for him or her to find work. In a recent study, Razenberg, Kahmann, and de Gruijter (2017) found that more than 50% of municipalities follow a work first approach. These municipalities are convinced that newcomers have to work, even if a job does not meet their capabilities. Due to the Participation Act, newcomers are increasingly obliged to work below their level (Razenberg, Kahmann, de Gruijter, & Damhuis 2018).

Local municipalities want to give newcomers the same treatment as other vulnerable groups. Additionally, municipalities see employment as a positive means by which newcomers can learn the Dutch language, build a social network, and learn about Dutch culture (Razenberg, Kahmann, & De Gruijter, 2017; Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017). The municipality of Eindhoven serves as an example of the use of the work first approach. The city uses the slogan “First work, then the rest will follow” (in Dutch, *Eerst werk, dan volgt de rest*).

The municipality maintains good relationships with important stakeholders, such as employers and the COA, in order to map the competencies and ambitions of newcomers and promote the participation of newcomers in the labor market (Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2017; Scholten et al., 2017). At the local AZC, there is a job desk that newcomers can go to with their questions on employment. Moreover, there is an account manager who has access to a large network of interested employers. This account manager is responsible for recruiting newcomers for several job vacancies.

Scholten et al. (2017) view the role played by this account manager as a specialized manager as a promising practice. The last promising practice involves setting flexible standards with regard to the level of proficiency required in Dutch on the part of requirements for newcomers. Subsequently, newcomers are not obliged to fully comprehend Dutch and can also start working if they have a limited degree of proficiency in the English language. In 2015, the municipality launched a project for highly skilled newcomers. In 2016 and 2017, the project expanded to allow lower-skilled newcomers to participate for lower-skilled newcomers (Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2017; Scholten et al., 2017).

Local municipalities also aim to enhance the participation of newcomers in the labor market by offering schooling, training, or vocational courses (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017), a strategy that is elaborated on in Section 3.3.

The third strategy employed by municipalities to strengthen the labor market position of newcomers involves facilitating subsidized jobs, internships, work experience programs, and voluntary work (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017; Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017). Subsidized jobs are partly or fully paid from a social allowance. Therefore, employers or organizations have no or lower costs when hiring a newcomer (Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016).

Roorda (2013) is critical of the effects of subsidized jobs, stating that subsidized employment does not necessarily lead to paid work for newcomers. Moreover, Koning (2013) explains that it is unlikely that either employers or employees will change of subsidized employment. Therefore, this type of employment limits newcomers' options in terms of securing paid work. An internship or work experience program can be described as a work position where an individual receives little or no pay but works in order to gain work experience or satisfy the requirements of a qualification (Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016; OECD, 2016).

A newcomer is generally helped by a coach who focuses on the personal and professional development of the newcomer and facilitates daily working activities (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017). Since interns often get paid less or do not get paid for these types of functions, internships pose minimal financial risks for employers. Booijink, Stavenuiter, and Taouanza (2017) describe internships and work experience programs for newcomers as a promising practice with regard to transitioning to employment.

Municipalities are also active in stimulating newcomers to engage in voluntary work. The Taskforce for the Employment and Integration of Refugees has been initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs in order to promote voluntary work among newcomers (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017). In cooperation with the welfare organization Pharos, the taskforce has initiated the project “Getting Started” (in Dutch, *aan de slag*). This project will be implemented in 25 municipalities (De Lange et al., 2017; Klaver, 2016).

Nonetheless, research on Dutch individuals who receive social welfare has indicated that mandatory voluntary work does not directly help newcomers to find paid employment positions (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017). By means of the taskforce, the government calls for further research on the incentives and opportunities available to asylum seekers as well as newcomers to engage in voluntary work (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017). An example of a platform that promotes voluntary work among newcomers is the PiëzoMethodiek, which is used in the municipality of Zoetermeer. More information on this methodology can be found in Case 11.

The NewBees foundation is also active in assisting newcomers to find voluntary work. This online platform aims to support newcomers in participating in Dutch society as soon as they arrive so they can build local networks and develop their CVs (Ferrer, Kahmann, & Massink, 2017; NewBees, 2018). Through this platform, newcomers are able to search for voluntary positions where they can gain working experience and improve their Dutch language skills. NewBees takes into account the skills, educational background, and working experience of newcomers and strives to connect them with valuable voluntary working opportunities in order to increase their employability (Klaver, 2016).

In 2016, in collaboration with the municipality of Zaanstad and COA, NewBees organized four pilots, in which a total of 200 people were enrolled. Of the 200 sign-ups, 30 newcomers received voluntary jobs through the platform. Newcomers are facilitated by a local coach who supports the newcomer. If the newcomers finish their voluntary job, they are presented with a certificate that indicates the number of hours they worked and the capabilities that they developed during the work (SER, 2018).

Newcomers in Zaanstad are screened by means of assessments in order to estimate if they are ready to find employment. In addition, newcomers have an integral intake meeting with the municipality and the Dutch Refugee Council (Razenburg & de Gruijter, 2017). The municipality aims to productively use newcomers’ participation declaration trajectories to make them more aware of the norms and values of the municipalities. Moreover, in cooperation with NewBees, the municipality of Zaanstad makes use of local networks and cooperates with employers and language schools in Zaanstad in order to increase the employability of newcomers (Razenburg & de Gruijter, 2017).

A fourth strategy by which municipalities seek to improve the position of newcomers in the labor market is to facilitate parallel trajectories (Klaver, 2016; Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2017; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). These are trajectories where newcomers receive schooling as well as work opportunities. In recent years, almost all municipalities and social initiatives have attempted to facilitate these types of parallel trajectories. The municipality of Amsterdam can be seen as a forerunner in the field of working with such an integral approach (Klaver, 2016; Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2017).

Its case management program is highlighted in Case 5. Furthermore, the parallel approach of the municipality of Amersfoort is frequently promoted as a promising civic integration program (Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2017). Its parallel approach is examined in Case 10.

Beyond municipalities, the Dutch Refugee Council has facilitated several parallel employment programs, such as Startbaan and VIP, to educate newcomers and assist them to find proper employment. These programs are also discussed in the cases below.

A fifth strategy that can be identified in reports on newcomers' participation in the labor market is encouraging entrepreneurship. Recently, an increasing number of municipalities have experimented with promoting entrepreneurship among newcomers (Bijl & Verweij, 2012; Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016; Huddleston et al., 2015; SER, 2017; Scholten et al., 2017).

In addition, there are several social initiatives that have set up incubator programs where newcomers can obtain information about the Dutch entrepreneurial climate and regulations and learn how to write a business plan. Several potentially successful incubator programs can be identified, including Delite Labs, Incubators for Immigrants, and Start-T. All of these programs guide newcomers through the process of setting up a business (OECD, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017). Refugee Forward is also often described as an example of best practices in terms of assisting newcomers to set up an enterprise in the Netherlands.

Not much research has been conducted on the effects of these programs and the obstacles that newcomers face in setting up their own enterprises, however, not much research has been conducted on the effects of these programs and the obstacles that

newcomers face in setting up their own enterprises (De Lange et al., 2017).

Role of employers, social initiatives, and municipalities

In recent years, more employers have become enthusiastic about creating employment opportunities for newcomers within their organizations (de Lange et al., 2017). In order to match newcomers to employers, some municipalities organize meet and greet sessions (Scholten et al., 2017). Razenberg, Kahmann, and de Gruijter (2018) emphasize that successful matching of newcomers with employers can only be facilitated by real-life encounters between newcomers and employers.

A wide variety of meet and greet-type sessions can be found among Dutch municipalities. For example, the city of Zaanstad sends short videos featuring newcomers to employers (Razenberg, Kahmann, de Gruijter, & Damhuis, 2018; Scholten et al., 2017). In contrast, the municipality of Westland enters into close relationships with socially responsible employers who are enthusiastic about hiring newcomers. When newcomers are allocated to this municipality, they receive coaching on practical issues, finding work, and starting a civic integration course. All newcomers receive opportunities to participate in a work and learning program of around 16 hours per week.

They are thus able to learn more about Dutch society and the country's labor market (SER, 2017). The municipality of Utrecht also organizes meet and greet sessions for employers and newcomers.

Razenberg, Kahmann, and de Gruijter (2018) emphasize that municipalities should contact employers and organizations that have the motivation and energy to hire newcomers rather than focusing on convincing businesses that do not have an affinity with the target group. There are several social initiatives and institutions that cooperate with organizations to create job opportunities for newcomers. For example, Dutch Railways (in Dutch, Nederlandse Spoorwegen or NS) cooperates with the Foundation for Refugee Students (In Dutch, Stichting voor Vluchteling-Studenten [UAF]) and has created several work experience programs (in Dutch, werkervaringsplekken) for newcomers in order for them to gain work experience.

In addition to NS, the building firm Dura Vermeer also cooperates with the UAF and is active in helping newcomers to find proper employment (SER, 2017). Dura Vermeer facilitates several work experience programs and internships, organizes in-house days, and helps with sponsorships for newcomers. Participants in these projects are helped by a job coach and a buddy. This buddy helps the newcomer to become acquainted with the local customs of the organization and helps with practical issues (SER, 2017). The SER (2017) highlights the approach of the organization van Ede & Partners as a promising approach that creates job opportunities for newcomers.

The organization has entered into a corporate responsibility partnership with the Council and Stichting Vergunninghouder. Due to this partnership, van Ede & Partners is able to help highly educated and talented newcomers. The company coaches 70 newcomers with relatively advanced educational backgrounds. Moreover, it facilitates more than 20 coaching trajectories for newcomers on an annual basis. The organization also matches more than 60 highly educated Dutch clients with newcomers in order to help the latter find appropriate employment.

The report by de Jong et al. (2016) titled “Refugees working” (in Dutch Vluchtelingen aan het werk) offers the following advice for employers who would like to hire Syrian refugees.

Employers should re-inform the specific department where the Syrian employees will be working and create support within the organization. Organizations in general should inform Syrian employees about the organizational culture by explaining what the norms and values of the organization are, rituals, appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, and cultural norms and mores. Moreover, organizations should invest in the career paths and personal development of new employees. Organizations also have to take into account the individual characteristics of a newcomer and his or her possible traumas (de Jong et al., 2018).

“ Organizations in general should inform Syrian employees about the organizational culture by explaining what the norms and values of the organization are, rituals, appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, and cultural norms and mores. ”

Case 5: Parallel approach: The Amsterdam Case Management Program

The municipality of Amsterdam has implemented a case management program that has the goal of accelerating the integration of newcomers. This program is an example of a parallel approach in which newcomers are assisted in gaining access to the labor market, education, language schools, and health-care institutions. The OECD (2018) describes Amsterdam's approach to accommodating newcomers as successful due to its holistic, sensitive, and integral nature. Amsterdam has implemented comprehensive group-specific policies in order to provide room for an integration program for newcomers that is sensitive to cultural differences.

The municipality follows an integral approach and therefore aims to avoid a sequential provision of services (OECD, 2018). Razenberg and de Gruijter (2017) describe this program as promising, as the caseload in this program is lower than usual. Instead of requiring each caseworker to deal with approximately 250 newcomers, caseworkers in this program are responsible for only 50 newcomers per caseworker. Newcomers have to meet several criteria before they can enroll in the case management program.

Firstly, they need to prove their literacy in Dutch, English, Arabic, or Tigrinya. Secondly, they have to be aged between 18 and 67. Thirdly, they have to be able to work with digital devices. The language proficiency and prior educational and work experience are measured by means of a competency test named a NOA assessment (Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2017).

Due to the use of this NOA assessment, the municipality is able to offer help more rapidly and efficiently. If it is not possible for newcomers to take the digital NOA assessment, they can also do an oral test. Within Amsterdam's case management program, caseworkers aim to get to know newcomers, meet them at home, and help them with job interviews (Razenberg & Gruijter, 2017).

Participants in the case management program are obliged to follow the Language Development and Orientation Program (in Dutch, Taal en Oriëntatieprogramma; SER, 2017). This program includes a participation declaration (in Dutch, participatieverklaringstraject) and training on the Dutch health-care system. Newcomers can also voluntarily do a language assessment and participate in a city orientation course (Scholten et al., 2017). All participants who have fulfilled this initial program then have the opportunity to start a course of study or to find an organization to gain some work experience. Higher educated newcomers are offered the opportunity to pursue higher education and are not obliged to find work.

The municipality has also facilitated a path for newcomers with lower educational experience to follow vocational training (SER, 2017). The municipality of Amsterdam works intensively with other crucial stakeholders, such as the Dutch Refugee Council and employers, in order to create tailored job opportunities for newcomers (Scholten et al., 2017).

Case 6: SER: Employment Pointer for Refugees

The SER (Sociaal Economische Raad) developed a website titled Employment Pointer for Refugees (in Dutch, Werkwijzer Vluchtelingen): www.werkwijzervluchtelingen.nl. This website provides an overview of all organizations and initiatives that are active in facilitating education, employment, and integration programs for newcomers (Klaver, 2016). The platform also provides information about laws and regulations, as well as practical examples of innovative working methods that have the ability to positively affect the participation of newcomers in Dutch society.

The site focuses particularly on nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, social initiatives, and employers. It also aims to provide newcomers with a better understanding of the Dutch labor market. The website collects information on immigration law and policies and related organizations and gives examples of best practices in the field of integration projects (Klaver, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017).

Lastly, the website is in line with the Taskforce for the Employment and Integration of Refugees of the Ministry of Social Affairs (Rijksoverheid, 2016). More research is needed on newcomers' experiences with online information platforms such as the Employment Pointer for Refugees. The website is currently only accessible in English and Dutch. Since the majority of newcomers do not have proficient levels of Dutch or English and come from countries such as Syria and Eritrea, lastly, it would be useful if the site also becomes available in Arabic and Tigrinya. (Bakker, 2015).

Case 7: Plan Einstein

Plan Einstein is a promising and innovative approach adopted by the municipality of Utrecht (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018; Plan Einstein, 2018). The Plan Einstein program aims to promote the reception and integration of newcomers. In the Utrecht district of Overvecht, newcomers live together with students. Residents of Plan Einstein and people from the neighborhood can attend English lessons or courses on entrepreneurship, participate in a practical program on entrepreneurship, get help in finding (voluntary) work, or gain access to higher education (Plan Einstein, 2018).

The foundation is funded by the local municipality, the Dutch government, and the EU (Klaver, 2016). The slogan of Plan Einstein is “Living together, learning together, and working together in Overvecht, that makes Plan Einstein special!” (Plan Einstein, 2018). The evaluation by Oliver, Dekker, and Geuijen (2018) of Plan Einstein indicates that the neighborhood was relatively positive about the establishment of Plan Einstein.

In the first phase of the project, Plan Einstein did not attract enough participants. This was due to shifts in the demographic profiles of the participants of the program, the removal of a shared entrance to the building, and changes in the planning of the project. Moreover, the program did not promote the projects due to security and political concerns. In a later phase of the project, Plan Einstein decided to promote awareness of the activities that are organized among members of the neighborhood. As a result, newcomers and neighbors became more involved (Oliver, Dekker, & Geuijen, 2018).

The project was thus able to attract a large number of “diverse individuals in the neighborhood.” Plan Einstein attracted more middle-aged neighbors than was initially anticipated.

Regarding the value of the program, almost all participants were very enthusiastic about the courses and the business incubation program. Respondents reported feeling more productive and connected to the neighborhood, which gives them confidence and empowers them to develop a new and positive perspective on finding work or pursuing education in the Netherlands (Oliver, Dekker, & Geuijen, 2018).

The researchers call for more research on the inclusive nature of the program. For example, so far, in some cases, educational level, language proficiency, and childcare possibilities have obstructed the participation of some residents. In addition to newcomers and neighbors in Overvecht, students are also involved in the program. The researchers conclude that Plan Einstein could play a larger role in facilitating contact between the newcomers and the neighborhood.

Plan Einstein was partly initiated and set up by the Socius housing cooperative. The management of Socius emphasizes that volunteers and student residents need training on how they can contribute to creating a stronger and inclusive community. Oliver, Dekker and Geuijen (2018) also state that the program should make use of the skills and knowledge of newcomers. Moreover, they emphasize that newcomers would benefit from more opportunities to gain work experience and build networks.

Case 8: Project Startbaan

The Dutch Refugee Council supports newcomers during their asylum process and helps with participating in Dutch society. One of their initiatives is titled Project Startbaan. In cooperation with UAF, the project helped 766 newcomers to find (voluntary) work or (vocational) education or start an enterprise (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017). Startbaan was a three-year project and helped newcomers by providing individualized support, skills awareness training, help in formulating a career development plan, language courses, and job application training (Grootjans et al., 2015).

The skills awareness training empowers newcomers to find employment in the Netherlands. Therefore, newcomers are helped with collecting proof and obtaining recognition of foreign education diplomas, professional qualifications, former experience, and informal personal skills (Grootjans et al., 2015). In addition, the project aims to bring employers and newcomers together (Beckers et al., 2015). By means of this project, the Dutch Refugee Council also aims to change negative discourses in society and create more support for newcomers in the Netherlands (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017).

In 2017, Movisie, the Dutch Institute for Knowledge and Advice for Social Development, evaluated this project (Vijlbrief et al., 2017). Project Startbaan has given many newcomers a good start in finding employment in the Netherlands. One year after completing the Startbaan course, half of the newcomers had paid jobs. A large number were also able to find work by means of an employment agency.

Moreover, one-third of the respondents had started with (vocational) education. Vijlbrief et al. (2017) indicate that after the program, newcomers predominantly work in domains similar to those of the (voluntary) jobs that they engaged in as part of Project Startbaan. Beckers et al. (2015) have also evaluated Project Startbaan. In general, they found Project Startbaan to be a positive initiative. Nonetheless, they are critical about the target group of the project.

They state that not all newcomers in the target group are able or motivated to work, and they emphasize that many newcomers are struggling with their positions as refugees in the Netherlands. Newcomers first require assistance with coping with negative and traumatic experiences before they can focus on work and education in the Netherlands (Beckers et al., 2015).

Case 10: NVA

The Newcomers and Refugee Foundation Amersfoort (in Dutch, Stichting Nieuwkomers en Vluchtelingen Amersfoort or NVA) aims to support newcomers in participating in the labor market. The NVA was commissioned by the municipality of Amersfoort and provides several services (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017). The Foundation does not make a distinction between female and male newcomers and aims to give all of them individual coaching in order to create employment opportunities (Razenberg, Kahmann, & de Gruijter, 2017).

Firstly, the Foundation provides newcomers with information when they are allocated to the municipality. Thereafter, newcomers attend an intake meeting and are directed to a program that should minimize distance to the labor market (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017). Newcomers are also supported by a job coach, who helps them to find an internship. When the labor market module is completed, newcomers have the opportunity to participate in a work experience program for approximately two or three months (Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017).

As mentioned in the previous case, the NVA program was evaluated by KIS and the Verwey-Jonker Institute during the period between 2016–2018 (Tinnemans & Stavenuiter, 2018). In 2017, KIS published its preliminary findings regarding the first year of the NVA program. The short-term changes caused by this program are that participants become aware of the Dutch labor market and Dutch culture and are able to take into account cultural differences and make choices in finding employment and/or education.

The program also aims to give participants knowledge of the possibilities in terms of paid work in the Netherlands, internship, work experience programs, voluntary work, and (vocational) education if necessary. Additionally, the program aims to develop newcomers' language and communication skills so that they are able to appropriately present themselves to employers (Tinnemans & Stavenuiter, 2018).

Similar to the VIP program, this program has the objective of making newcomers self-reliant and giving them the agency required to make their own choices concerning work and education. In the long term, the NVA program hopes to contribute to paid jobs for all newcomers. Moreover, it hopes that their participation in the labor market will contribute to their active participation in Dutch society (Tinnemans & Stavenuiter, 2018).

Case 11: Piëzo Methodology

The municipality of Zoetermeer, which follows the PiëzoMethodiek, seeks to create a broad approach to promoting the participation of newcomers in Dutch society. This methodology aims to create a connections between newcomers' personal backgrounds and lifeworlds and Dutch society (Bijnen et al., 2016). The program gives newcomers structure and is focused on encouraging their participation in social-cultural activities, engaging in (voluntary) work, or following education.

The Piëzo methodology involves five phases: social activation, participation in social activities, doing voluntary work at the Piëzo center, doing voluntary work at partner organizations, and starting a course of study or finding a paid job. The Piëzo program aims to teach newcomers something new within all five phases (Bijnen et al., 2016; Booijink, Stavenuiter, & Taouanza, 2017). Some studies have evaluated the effectiveness of the Piëzo methodology; most reports are positive about the program, as this approach focuses on the talents and ambitions of the participants.

The research of Booijink, van den End, and Keuzenkamp (2017) indicates that creating a network is crucial for promoting employment among newcomers. The report indicates that more research is needed on the ability of the program to create a safe environment and facilitate integral coaching and stimulating employment. The Piëzo methodology mainly focuses on developing capabilities for finding a job; however, to ensure effective labor market participation, the approach stresses that employers also need to be facilitated and activated.

For example, newcomers still face discrimination while searching for jobs. The methodology focuses on combatting stereotypes about newcomers among volunteers and employers but could extend these attempts to change negative framing (Booijink, van den Enden, & Keuzenkamp, 2017).

3.3 Education

Dutch educational institutes are responsible for facilitating access to language schools for newcomers. Nonetheless, in 2015, it became clear that these schools were not able to organize sufficient numbers of civic integration courses (Klaver, 2016, 10; Eurofound, 2016, 28; Scholten et al., 2017). The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science has been critical of the current system, as newcomers have to pay for their own civic integration courses and courses cannot be combined with (voluntary) work (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015).

In the current system, all newcomers aged between 18 and 27 can qualify for a student loan from the Educational Services Department (in Dutch, Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs or DUO). The Court of Audit (Algemene Rekenkamer) states that the privatization of language agencies has had a negative effect on the quality of civic integration programs. The government implemented the *Blik op Werk* quality standard in order to inform newcomers about the quality of language schools.

However, the privatization has not led to a better market and has paradoxically led to higher prices for integration courses and poor-quality language agencies (Dutch House of Audit, 2017). As a result, the Ministry of Social Affairs wants to eliminate the privatized market for these language companies (Rijksoverheid, 2018a). Several reports indicate that the emphasis on self-reliance of the current civic integration policy has not led to an increase of the passing rate of integration tests. Subsequently, a substantial number of newcomers in the Netherlands are unable to pass the civic integration exam (Klaver, 2016; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018; Scholten et al., 2017).

According to Nieuwboer (2017), the change in civic integration legislation has had a significant effect on the obligations imposed on newcomers and the content of civic integration courses and exams. In 2013, newcomers were required to obtain, at minimum, an A2-level command of the Dutch language and obtain knowledge of Dutch society. The Dutch Refugee Council states that the basic A2 level is not sufficient for newcomers to participate in the labor market (Scholten et al., 2017; SER, 2017).

In 2015, newcomers were also required to learn skills that could help them to participate in the labor market. Moreover, in 2017, newcomers were ordered to demonstrate respect for the norms and values of Dutch society. Knowledge of the Dutch language and culture are seen as prerequisites for obtaining Dutch citizenship (Entzinger, 2014; Odé, 2008). Moreover, since 2018, newcomers have been required to sign a statement of participation. This statement declares that newcomers will respect Dutch standards and values. Should they refuse to sign it, they will be subject to a penalty of €340 (Rijksoverheid, 2017c).

As discussed in Section 2.3, from 2020 on, the required language level of newcomers will be increased from A2 to B1. Unlike the previous civic integration legislation, municipalities will match newcomers with suitable language agencies and will assist them in paying the costs of insurance (Rijksoverheid, 2018a). Within the personal integration plan, newcomers can follow the B1 route, the Z route, or the education route. This choice depends on their educational level. The B1 track will be the main path for newcomers. If newcomers are unable to acquire this level of Dutch, they will not receive a dispensation but will be reallocated to the Z route.

Newcomers who follow the Z route (in Dutch, *zelfstandig met taal*) do not have to obtain a B2 level of Dutch and will instead participate in a practically oriented civic integration program. Lastly, the education route is for newcomers who are able to start a course of study at a higher education institute (Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving, 2018; Rijksoverheid, 2018a). Ghorashi et al. (2009) emphasize that it is important for newcomers to learn the Dutch language, as language can function as an instrument that can create contact between different lifeworlds.

However, Dutch communities should also focus on the value of multilingualism and the skills, capabilities, and potential of newcomers instead of focusing on their shortcomings. The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (in Dutch, *Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen* or KNAW) emphasizes that more than 2.5 million Dutch citizens grow up speaking a second language in addition to Dutch (KNAW, 2018). In contrast, Dutch society and the educational sector do not provide much room for multilingualism. The KNAW (2018) notes that the native languages of newcomers, such as Arabic or Tigrinya, could be seen as enriching Dutch society.

If the Netherlands would make use of the linguistic expertise of speakers of these languages, this could generate added value for the Dutch knowledge economy. The public sector should pay more attention to promoting multilingualism in order to facilitate communication between people and between people and institutions, as well as the implications of multilingualism for education in the Netherlands and the changes that will be necessary in that regard. The study by Ghorashi et al. (2009) emphasizes that newcomers are positioned in-between different cultures.

The interplay of different norms, values, and experiences creates room for enrichment of the norms and values that the Dutch take for granted. The authors elaborate on the City and Language (in Dutch, *Stad en taal*) social initiative of the city of Amsterdam.

Six museums in Amsterdam have collaborated to develop this educational program in order to acquaint newcomers with Dutch art, culture, and history. During the program, newcomers are empowered and encouraged to participate and share their experiences and opinions of the artifacts in the museum (Ghorashi et al., 2009). This is an example of an initiative that gives room to increased multilingualism and the linguistic expertise and experiences of newcomers.

Obtaining further education

In theory, newcomers have access to the entire Dutch educational system and related services. Research has demonstrated that a Dutch diploma secures a greater likelihood of employment. Local municipalities state that one out of four newcomers would profit by beginning a course of study in order to increase their opportunities in the labor market. However, several studies have indicated that only 16% of all newcomers are supported in pursuing an education in the Netherlands (Razenberg, Kahmann, de Gruijter, & Damhuis 2018).

In 2015, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science set up a Taskforce for Refugees in Higher Education in order to identify the bottlenecks and opportunities for newcomers with regard to obtaining access to Dutch higher educational institutions. This taskforce is a collaborative effort between the ministry, UAF, Nuffic, and several organizations related to universities and institutes for higher education. It aims to improve access to integration and language classes, promote coaching and buddy programs, and to improve diploma accreditation, assessment, and recognition of skills and competencies (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015; Klaver, 2016).

Several studies have indicated that successful diploma accreditation makes it easier for newcomers to participate in the Dutch labor market (Bakker, 2015). If newcomers wish to pursue vocational training or education at Dutch universities, they need proof of prior education and a sufficient command of the Dutch (or sometimes English) language. The process of diploma accreditation for newcomers is free. However, Nuffic accreditation is not always accepted by Dutch institutes for higher education (Klaver, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017). Moreover, discriminatory practices have been identified in the qualification and recognition of newcomers' former educational certificates and diplomas (de Lange et al., 2017).

Official institutes can only give advice concerning newcomers' diplomas. Therefore, educational institutions are free to accept or decline newcomers' accredited diplomas (de Lange et al., 2017), which is highly problematic (Bakker, 2018).

In order to smooth newcomers' entrance into educational systems, multiple schools and universities have organized preparatory programs for newcomers. Should potential students succeed in these programs, they can begin with the regular curriculum. The Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Haagsche Hogeschool have implemented such preparatory programs. Within these programs, newcomers are given the opportunity to obtain Dutch language skills, intercultural communication, citizenship, and academic skills (SER, 2017). Beyond this program, educational systems also facilitate the process of newcomers meeting such buddies (Klaver, 2016).

Newcomers can apply for a DUO loan should they wish to study at an educational institution. In some municipalities, higher educated newcomers have the opportunity to study at a higher educational institute and receive social welfare benefits at the same time. In addition, the UAF foundation offers financial support for talented newcomers who wish to obtain a degree at a higher education institute (Klaver, 2016; VSER, 2017).

Children

The Dutch government aims to enroll children with a refugee background in schools within three months after their arrival (Klaver, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017). Schooling for the children of newcomers is generally regulated according to a sequenced approach. During the first years of schooling, children have a special teacher and follow preparatory classes in order to obtain a basic level of skills in Dutch. If older children are able to attend secondary education, they first enroll in international intermediate classes (in Dutch, internationale schakelklassen). Thereafter, they can participate in the regular schooling system (Klaver, 2016; Scholten et al., 2017).

The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science has been critical of the current educational system for children of newcomers, stating that a considerable number of children have not enjoyed earlier education, are illiterate, and suffer from traumas. Therefore, schools need more specialized teachers in order to provide children with extra guidance and help them to become familiar with the new school system and to learn the language.

Furthermore, the Ministry emphasizes that the quality of small-scale primary schools for these children is not sufficient and has to be improved (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015). Additionally, children of newcomers can attend regular schools at their places of residence. These schools form an important place of contact for both parents and children with other citizens of the local municipality (Ager & Strang, 2001).

Case 12: Pre-civic integration programs in AZCs

Since July 2017, asylum seekers who have obtained a residence permit but still live in reception centers have been able to make use of a pre-civic integration program (in Dutch called the V-inburgering or voorinburgering; Klaver, 2016; SER, 2017; Scholten et al., 2017; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). The program is voluntary and provided by COA. During the program, newcomers start by learning the Dutch language and obtaining personal, practical, and labor market skills (SER, 2017; Klaver, 2016).

Courses are available for illiterate, low-, middle-, and highly educated newcomers. Newcomers receive training on Dutch society, housing, health care, education system, labor market, democratic values, and the rule of law (Klaver, 2016).

Moreover, newcomers receive individual counseling sessions in which they can develop a personal portfolio with information on their ambitions, former work and educational experience, and diplomas (Klaver, 2016; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). Klaver (2016) is positive about the pre-civic integration program, as it aims to strengthen newcomers' self-reliance.

Moreover, the earlier the integration courses are started, the earlier newcomers can make steps toward participation in the Netherlands (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). The new civic integration framework of 2021 strives to expand these pre-civic integration programs in AZCs (Rijksoverheid, 2018a). The majority of the respondents of the study conducted by the Dutch Refugee Council indicated that the civic integration courses should be mandatory for all asylum seekers (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018).

However, some critical remarks have also been made regarding the pre-civic integration program. For example, the Dutch Refugee Council states that the quality and coordination of the pre-civic integration program is not always sufficient. Moreover, newcomers have noted that the levels of the classes offered vary significantly. Before newcomers receive a residence permit, they are temporarily accommodated in a reception center. Newcomers are generally located in these centers for periods ranging from a few months to two years. Research has indicated that this period of waiting has a negative effect on their learning potential.

Case 13: Informal networks of language schools in Amsterdam New-West and West

The report by Achbab and Faddegon (2016) describes a trend with regard to the withdrawal of state responsibility for civic integration services and the privatization of the market for language schools. The results of their report indicate that cooperation between language schools is fragmented in the New-West district of Amsterdam. Only limited networks can be identified. Within these networks, social initiatives closely cooperate with one another and collectively forward clients to the most suitable language schools.

The establishment of informal networks and cooperation among language schools and social initiatives can be seen as a promising practice. Achbab and Faddegon (2016) suggest that language schools should seek to strengthen these informal networks in order to make the language programs for newcomers more effective. Achbab and Faddegon (2016) identify several reasons why cooperation in the New-West district was not optimal. Firstly, most social initiatives emphasized societal instead of organizational values. Moreover, there are limited resources for hiring employees and facilitating cooperation between language schools.

In the period between 2014 and 2016, several informal and social initiatives intended to support newcomers were implemented. Therefore, it is difficult for schools to obtain an overview of all institutions that facilitate language courses for newcomers. Research indicates that formal language schools are not always eager to cooperate due to competition (Achbab, 2016).

Achbab (2016) highlights the collaborations among ABC, De Hippe Heks, Vrouw en Vaart, and the collaborations among Toptaal and STOC as promising integration practices, since such cooperation has a positive effect on language and integration training for newcomers (Achbab & Faddegon, 2016; Achbab & Karo, 2017).

ABC, De Hippe Heks, and Vrouw en Vaart all have the same target group: migrant women. Therefore, it is easier for them to cooperate. Achbab and Karo (2017) also conducted a study on the supply of language schools in other districts in Amsterdam. The authors identified better partnerships among language schools in the West district of Amsterdam, which they attributed to several reasons. Firstly, the West district has a longer tradition of social initiatives and language schools that help newcomers. Secondly, there is greater coordination among the different language schools. Achbab (2016) advises that the city of Amsterdam should play a greater role in facilitating networking and collaboration among all language schools, both formal and informal.

Case 14: IDEAL Method

Nieuwboer and Rood (2016) have developed a promising method intended to help migrants participate in society. The authors are critical of the current civic integration legislation, as this system treats proficiency in Western language as the only means by which one can participate in society. The authors state that these literacy-oriented programs are not appropriate for migrants who have not had previous basic education. As a result, these programs do not lead to the participation of vulnerable migrant groups in Dutch society.

Furthermore, the authors emphasize that illiterate newcomers or those with a low educational level are more vulnerable to alienation and social exclusion. In response to these problems, they developed the IDEAL (Integrating Disadvantaged Ethnicities through Adult Learning) program. This program offers a beneficial alternative to current and mainstream civic integration programs in the Netherlands. Several evaluations of the method have indicated that participants in the program are empowered and are able to make better efforts toward social participation in the host community (Nieuwboer & Rood, 2016; Themis, 2018).

The IDEAL method adopts a participatory didactic approach wherein migrants' personal perceptions and family life conditions are used as a starting point for learning (Rood, 1996). Nieuwboer and Rood (2016) have been developing the method for more than 15 years but have only evaluated it in small-scale research settings. The participants in their research during the period between 2011 to 2013 were migrant women living in Sweden and the Netherlands.

Within the IDEAL method, the teacher plays a fundamental role in facilitating productive classes on migrants' daily obstacles and challenges. The method suggests recruiting teachers with the same background as the end users. Research has indicated that migrant women are better able to relate to a teacher who has knowledge of cultural paradoxes and the same cultural background (Edens, 1997; Nieuwhof, 2002).

Therefore, in the research conducted by Nieuwboer and Rood (2016), the teacher was also of Berber and Arabic origin and served as a role model and social broker. This method can be described as a best practice in that it provides relatively vulnerable groups with opportunities to obtain new insights, skills, and attitudes regarding the topics of health, parenting, and communication. These insights lead to an increased language proficiency and participation in the host community.

For example, participants based in the Netherlands started to employ physical punishment and threats to their children less frequently and to practice more positive parenting skills instead (Nieuwboer & Rood, 2016). The IDEAL method could be useful to coach newcomers who will follow the Z route in the new civic integration policy, which will be launched in 2021 (Rijksoverheid, 2018a). Newcomers who follow the Z route are not required to obtain a B2-level command of Dutch. These newcomers will instead focus on gaining practical skills to be able to participate in the Dutch society. Due to the practical approach of the IDEAL method, it is an extremely good match for newcomers.

3.4 Health

Newcomers have to be resilient in order to survive long and dangerous trips in the Netherlands. Without this innate quality, newcomers would not be able to deal with their flight from their native countries and their position in the Netherlands (OECD, 2018; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2016; Pharos, 2016; Ghorashi, 2016). Resilience is a combination of individual factors and societal conditions. As discussed in the previous sections, individual capacities are formed by cultural, symbolic, economic, and personal characteristics. Furthermore, newcomers' (mental) health has a large influence on their degree of resilience. Newcomers' characteristics and (mental) health influence their capacity to recover (rapidly) from difficulties and obstacles in the host state (Ghorashi, 2016). Policy makers and politicians should provide space in which newcomers can develop to their full potential.

Newcomers undergo a medical scan on the second day of their accommodation in a reception center. Since 2009, Menzis, a nonprofit health insurance provider, has been responsible for performing these scans. The COA is also responsible for helping and instructing newcomers about the Dutch health-care infrastructure (Scholten et al., 2017; OECD, 2018). When newcomers are registered, they are issued a care card (zorgpas) that allows them to make use of health-care services and institutions in the Netherlands. Asylum seekers do not have to pay for these services or for monthly health-care insurance. The reception centers generally have health-care professionals, such as specialized nurses, general practitioners, and mental health counselors. Newcomers can make use of interpreters (via phone) when visiting health-care professionals. In addition, AZCs provide opportunities for newcomers to make use of specialized call centers (for free) that can help the newcomers with answering medical questions (Scholten et al., 2017; OECD, 2018).

When newcomers receive a residence permit, they have to subscribe to a private health insurance company. When newcomers do not have sufficient income to pay for insurance, they are granted a subsidy by the Dutch government. Public health care (in Dutch, Publieke Gezondheidszorg Asielzoekers) is organized by the Association of Community Health Services (In Dutch, Gemeentelijke Gezondheidsdienst [GGD]) and the Regional Medical Preparedness and Planning (In Dutch, Geneeskundige Hulpverleningsorganisatie in de regio [GHOR]) office.

The GHOR is chiefly responsible for national coordination of the 25 Dutch GGD centers (OECD, 2018). These stakeholders aim to share national best health-care practices. Moreover, they are active in networking, the creation of a chain of care, and the development of cultural sensitivity skills on the part of health-care professionals. In addition, the VNG contributes by providing support and advice for municipalities on how to deal with the health and well-being of migrants and newcomers. Pharos, the Dutch Centre of Expertise on Health Disparities, assists the VNG (OECD, 2018).

Pharos (2016) emphasizes that the health-care position of newcomers is not static and cannot be generalized to all newcomers in the Netherlands. The health of newcomers is positively influenced by the provision of appropriate private housing, the opportunity to get a job or to start a course of study, the present of a social network of support, family and friends living nearby, and clarity about their residence permits (Bakker, 2015; Pharos, 2016; SER, 2017).

In general, newcomers are relatively unfamiliar with the health-care infrastructure in the Netherlands and encounter several barriers when attempting to obtain help several barriers with finding help (Ager & Strang, 2001; Pharos, 2016; OECD, 2018). For example, barriers can be created due to lack of accessible information, communication difficulties, insufficient Dutch language skills, and different perceptions of gender and cultural customs (Ager & Strang, 2001). Local municipalities play a significant role in helping newcomers to receive the appropriate health care and prevent public health-care problems (Klaver, 2016). Nonetheless, Klaver (2016) is critical of the current support provided by municipalities and health-care institutions. Overall, municipalities treat newcomers as individuals who are self-reliant and are able to independently gain access to health-care institutions. However, in practice, newcomers need more help to gain access to appropriate health-care services (Pharos, 2016).

Furthermore, Klaver (2016) notes that the relocation of newcomers during the asylum process and the fragmentation of psychological and social care has a negative effect on newcomers' health. Klaver (2016) advises that municipalities provide more information on local health-care services and take responsibility for coordinating and connecting existing services. These measures should improve the existing health-care infrastructure and should ensure that health-care professionals are able to identify health issues among newcomers (Klaver, 2016).

“ The health of newcomers is positively influenced by the provision of appropriate private housing, the opportunity to get a job or to start a course of study, the present of a social network of support, family and friends living nearby, and clarity about their residence permits. ”

Health of newcomers

Pharos (2016) has performed an analysis of newcomers' health in the Netherlands. Several studies have found that in comparison to native Dutch, newcomers generally suffer from more health problems. It is important that the Dutch government pays attention to newcomers' (mental) health issues, as these problems can have a negative effect on their civic integration process (Ager & Strang, 2001; Bakker, 2015; Klaver, 2016; Ferrier, Kahmann, & Massink, 2017; Pharos, 2016; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018).

Research has demonstrated that newcomers' health declines during their stay in the Netherlands (Lamkaddem et al., 2013). This is due to (traumatic) post-migration experiences, stress associated with their current position in the host community, and lack of future (socioeconomic) perspectives. Furthermore, newcomers are generally worried about their residence permits as well as family and friends who are located elsewhere (Bakker, 2015; Dagevos et al., 2018; Engbersen et al., 2015; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). These criteria have a negative effect on newcomers' health and possibilities in terms of finding their way in the Netherlands (Engbersen et al., 2015; SER, 2017; Pharos, 2016; Bakker et al., 2013).

Overall in terms of physical illness, newcomers are more frequently diagnosed with diabetes, obesity, or pain complaints than native Dutch citizens. Pharos (2016) states that health-care professionals should focus on identifying diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis B and C, HIV, and sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, health-care professionals should be attentive toward sexual abuse, sexual health, teenage pregnancy, abortion, and maternal mortality (Pharos, 2016). Several reports have also concluded that newcomers suffer from more mental illnesses than native Dutch (Bakker, 2015; Pharos, 2016; Gezondheidsraad, 2016). According to the Dutch Health Council (2016), 13–25% of newcomers are diag-

nosed with post-traumatic stress disorder or depression (OECD, 2018; CBS, 2016b). More research is needed on the degree of anxiety and psychosis among newcomers (SER, 2017; Gezondheidsraad, 2016). The prevalence of both mental and physical complaints and illnesses is dependent on prevention, early diagnoses by doctors, degree of access to and level of health care, social networks, asylum period, and the lifestyles of newcomers (Pharos, 2016). Due to mental problems, a number of the newcomers who were interviewed by the Verwey-Jonker Institute (2018) stated that they had encountered difficulties with the civic integration courses.

The findings of the report titled "Syrians in the Netherlands" present a negative image of the health of Syrian newcomers. They indicate that, in particular, middle-aged Syrian newcomers do not perceive their health to be sufficient (Dagevos et al., 2018). The report implies that more than 40% of Syrian newcomers are mentally unhealthy. A large number of Syrian newcomers are anxious and sober. Nonetheless, in comparison to the rest of the population in the Netherlands, Syrian newcomers make less use of mental health institutions. Van Berkum et al. (2016) state that this is due to traumas, unfamiliarity with the Dutch mental health-care infrastructure, and cultural taboos. Furthermore, they emphasize that Dutch health-care institutions often fail to take into account the context of a newcomer (Van Berkum et al., 2016).

In contrast, a report by Sterckx and Fessehazion (2018) has explored the position of Eritrean newcomers in the Netherlands. The majority of the Eritrean newcomers in the Netherlands are relatively young and male. The report shows that there is a considerable gap between Eritrean permit holders and the Dutch health-care system (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018).

This is partly due to financial reasoning. Newcomers do not consult doctors because of the high costs associated with doing so. Communication problems also play a major role. For example, language is an important barrier for newcomers when it comes to articulating health issues.

Even with the aid of an interpreter, it is difficult for newcomers to discuss complex and sensitive issues (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018). Research by Ferrier and Massink (2016) indicates that Eritrean newcomers face psychosocial and health problems due to their refugee backgrounds. Additionally, the study found that many Eritrean women have faced sexual abuse during their journey in the Netherlands (Pharos, 2016). Several studies have also noted Eritrean newcomers' problems with the usage of alcohol (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018; Ferrier, Kahmann, & Massink, 2017; Ferrier & Massink, 2016). Ferrier, Kahmann, and Massink (2017) call for more training for newcomers on sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, they state that due to a lack of official documents from the Eritrean newcomers who came in the Netherlands in 2004, only 3% were able to bring family members in the Netherlands through a family reunification procedure. This has also had a negative effect on the mental well-being of newcomers.

Underage minors and children

Ferrier, Kahmann, and Massink (2017) state that health-care professionals should devote more attention to the position of single underage asylum seekers (in Dutch, *alleenstaande minderjarige asielzoekers* or AMAs). Statistics Netherlands (CBS) notes that one in five underage asylum seekers who arrived in the Netherlands in 2016 was not accompanied by an adult relative (CBS, 2016a). The lack of family members in the Netherlands has a negative effect on AMAs' sense of belonging, health, and future outlook (Beirens, Hughes, Hek, & Spicer, 2007).

Pharos (2016) also emphasizes that minors who came in the Netherlands without their parents require additional support. Furthermore, Pharos (2016) states that both municipalities and health-care institutions should focus on the health of children of newcomers. Children need love, care, cohesion, and support from their family units and a positive schooling environment. Therefore, municipalities should pay attention to the traumas experienced by parents. Under assignment of the Dutch government, Nidos acts as guardian for unaccompanied minor refugees and is committed to helping. Therefore, municipalities should pay attention to the traumas experienced by parents.

Case 15: Empowerment of Eritrean newcomers in Haarlem

The municipality of Haarlem has started the TIMNIT training program for Eritrean youngsters. TIMNIT can be translated in Tigrinya as “to hope, my wish.” This training is given by an Eritrean trainer who makes youngsters aware of their talents, motivation, and potential. Therefore, the trainer aims to empower youngsters and to support their mental health. This training is based on the theory of sense of coherence (SOC; Erim et al., 2011). This term is related to the concept of societal resilience and is frequently used in public health research.

A person’s SOC represents his or her view on life and capacity to respond to stressful situations. Therefore, SOC is a marker for the perceived mental health of and social stress experienced by an individual (Erim et al., 2011). An evaluation of the project by the municipality of Haarlem was positive regarding its focus on strengthening the SOC of newcomers. The report states that this methodology could also be used in other civic integration programs.

The success of the training is determined by usage of role models, humor, and physical exercises during the classes. The report advises that the role of the drama teacher can be strengthened.. Furthermore, the report calls for more possibilities for newcomers to visit various working contexts. These visits are valuable, as they give newcomers opportunities to obtain more practical knowledge of the Dutch labor market. In addition, the inclusion of relatively older participants (i.e., older than 30 years old) also has a positive effect on the group dynamics in such training (Berkhout, 2017).

Case 16: The Facebook pages Eritreeërs Gezond, Syriërs Gezond, and Opgroeien in Nederland

Pharos and GGD have started three successful Facebook pages, each of which focuses on a particular theme: Eritreeërs Gezond [Healthy Eritrean], Syriërs Gezond [Healthy Syrian], and Opgroeien in Nederland [Growing up in the Netherlands]. These Facebook pages have the goal of improving the health of newcomers in the Netherlands.

On these pages, health-care professionals who speak Tigrinya and Arabic give advice to newcomers about the Dutch health-care system and leading a healthy lifestyle. These professionals answer questions from newcomers and provide them with reliable information (European Migration Network, 2018). The European Migration Network (2018) notes that these Facebook pages provide accessible and reliable information on health care, growing up, and parenting in the Netherlands.

In addition, VNG (2017) states that these initiatives lead to an acceleration of the civic integration process of and self-reliance among newcomers. The National Ombudsman (2018) stresses the need for better information services. Beyond offering online platforms in Arabic and Tigrinya, municipalities should also facilitate a personal service point where newcomers can go if they have practical questions. Professionals should bear in mind that not all newcomers have enough digital skills to make use of platforms such as Eritreeërs Gezond, Syriërs Gezond, and Opgroeien in Nederland (Ombudsman, 2018).

Case 17: DEGASTEN: Awareness of health and care by means of theatre

The theatre group DEGASTEN has collaborated with many social initiatives in order to produce theatre plays for newcomers. Theatre can create a space for newcomers to tell their stories and express themselves (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008). It can also help to provide knowledge about health and care in the Netherlands. DEGASTEN aims to make theatre about societal issues with, for, and about vulnerable groups in society. DEGASTEN collaborated with a psycho-trauma expert group in order to set up the play *My Name Before Naomi*.

This expert group is an umbrella organization for organizations that deal with vulnerable groups in society that have witnessed shocking and psycho-traumatic events. The play *My Name Before Naomi* is about a woman who recounts her experiences of being a newcomer in the Netherlands. Her story relates to the topics of human rights, religion, sexuality, trauma processing, and migration process. For this research, the makers spoke with several experts, such as officials from the Amsterdam Coordination Center for Human Trafficking, the public prosecutor, and the IND (Frascati Theater, 2018).

DEGASTEN has also produced an interdisciplinary theatre play titled *Holon*. This play is about newcomers' memories. The newcomers who participated in this project were related to the Worldhouse. This is a center for and run by undocumented migrants, and it strives to empower newcomers. The project aimed to give newcomers the opportunity to use their own creativity, talents, ideas, opinions, and imagination to put on an original theatre show.

This gave newcomers the chance to share their stories with their host communities. Theatre can also help newcomers to develop new skills and competencies, ranging from language to knowledge of cultural norms and behavior (Holon, 2016). Kaptani and Yuval-Davis (2008) have recently conducted research on the usage of Playback and Forum Theatre. These forms of theatre include image work, character building, performing scenes, and interventions.

The findings of this research suggest that theatre can be useful when studying the narratives of identity and health of vulnerable groups in society. More research is needed on how theatre can empower newcomers and how it can educate them on topics such as health and care (Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008).

3.5 Social connections

The fifth dimension of integration encompasses social connections. Ager and Strang (2001) emphasize the importance of social connections for newcomers. Social connections allow newcomers to feel at home and experience a sense of belonging to Dutch communities. A sense of belonging is defined as the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment such that individuals feel that they are an integral part of the system or environment in which they are situated (Hagerty et al., 1992; Davis et al., 2018).

An individual can consider him- or herself as being involved and related to various places, countries, and/or nations (Ghorashi, 2003). Furthermore, belonging is related to the degree to which an individual feels safe in the environment in which he or she is embedded. This can be on a national or municipal level, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, or at home (Duyvendak, 2017; Duyvendak, 2011; Davis et al., 2018).

Eurostat (2011) has published a pilot study on measuring newcomers' civic integration by focusing on the extent to which they feel socially included and consider themselves active citizens. In order to measure social inclusion, the authors focused on newcomers' income, poverty rate, and health situations. Active citizenship relates to the type of residence permit held by newcomers and their participation in politics (Penninx, 2005). This study only operationalized civic integration indicators and presented the available data on these indicators. However, this research was not critical of the normative nature and measurement of these indicators (Papadopoulou et al., 2013; Eurostat, 2011). In contrast, Ager and Strang (2001) aimed to step away from a normative view of cultural assimilation or the social inclusion of newcomers in a host community.

Instead, they focused on the interactive and two-way process of social contact between newcomers and members of host communities. When one reflects on the changes that have been made to the Dutch civic integration framework, it seems that by means of the Participation Statement, newcomers are compelled to feel a sense of belonging in the Netherlands (Tilly, 1996 in Nieuwboer, 2017).

The primary question is whether current integration practices contribute to newcomers' development with the host society. Cheung and Phillimore (2013) note that newcomers are embedded in various social networks. Social networks are comprised of relationships with friends, relatives, national or ethnic communities, religious groups, and other type of groups or organizations (Cheung & Phillimore, 2013).

Duyvendak, Hendriks, and Van Niekerk (2009) note that a social mix of different ethnic groups in a neighborhood has a positive effect on the opportunities available to newcomers in terms of social mobility. However, several studies have noted that newcomers generally experience difficulties in gaining access to host communities since they are preoccupied with meeting the requirements of civic integration acts, including finding work and successfully passing the civic integration exam within three years (Korac, 2003; De Gruijter & De Winter-Koçak, 2018; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018).

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) has evaluated the civic integration of migrants in several countries by focusing on the societal participation of newcomers (Huddleston et al., 2015; Migration Policy Group, 2011). In order to measure the social embeddedness of newcomers, this research group focuses on the political participation of migrants in the Netherlands.

They concluded that political participation among migrants has increased over the last 10 years. Moreover, the Index focuses on the degree of discrimination toward minority groups in Dutch society. In comparison to the other countries evaluated, the Netherlands scored relatively low on discrimination.

The report describes the Netherlands as a special case, since it has developed a thorough body of antidiscrimination legislation (Migration Policy Group, 2011). Since the influx of newcomers in the Netherlands in 2015, several social initiatives have been implemented at the local level. These activities are coordinated by local municipalities and are organized by NGOs, social work organizations, housing corporations, schools, public health organizations, and other stakeholders in civil society (Klaver, 2016). According to Klaver (2016), these activities facilitate the integration of newcomers in various domains of their lives. For example, the municipalities of Nijmegen and Tilburg have implemented initiatives intended to encourage citizens to participate in social activities. Newcomers with a low monthly income can make use of the participation allowance (in Dutch, *meedoenregeling*).

This allowance provides newcomers with a low monthly income the opportunity to participate in art, sport, education, spiritual, culture, language, and drama activities (Gemeente Nijmegen, 2016; Gemeente Tilburg, 2013). Case 17, above, elaborates on an integration initiative that organizes theatre classes for newcomers and two plays about newcomers' experiences of living in the Netherlands. Case 20 describes the sports initiative Talent Team Nijmegen-Noord, which gives Eritrean newcomers opportunities to practice several sports and become part of a community.

Case 18: Boost in Amsterdam

Boost is a crowd-funded and bottom-up-initiated neighborhood shelter. This initiative aims to encourage interactions between newcomers and native Dutch. It was set up by local volunteers and is partly funded by the municipality of Amsterdam (OECD, 2018). Boost offers a meeting space, temporary work places, and a variety of activities such as language and conversation classes, sports, workshops on Dutch society and culture, music, drama, dialogue and lecture sessions, and cooking and food gatherings.

It is located in the eastern part of Amsterdam (Klaver, 2016; OECD, 2018). According to OECD (2018), Boost itself has proven to be a best practice in the domain of civic integration. Many volunteers are active at Boost. Moreover, the language teams and courses have expanded. There are approximately 20 teachers, all of whom work on a voluntary basis. From the start, more than 400 students have enrolled in the language classes. In addition to these classes, there is a language café, where newcomers and native Dutch can meet one another and have conversations (OECD, 2018).

Boost is related to the Gastvrij Oost initiative. In 2015, Gastvrij Oost started the program Hoost Mauritskade, which temporarily hosted 30 newcomers in a vacant public office building. This program encouraged the municipality to search for more permanent accommodation options for newcomers in Amsterdam (Klaver, 2016; OECD, 2018). The initiators wanted to demonstrate the viability of an alternative approach to providing housing by means of a small-scale local reception center. The OECD (2018) notes that this project will likely not be repeated due to the high costs and resources required.

The temporary housing project ended in 2016 (Klaver, 2016). In addition to these promising reports, critical ethnographic research has also been conducted on voluntary engagement in social initiatives in Amsterdam East (Ghorashi & Rast, 2018). The report identifies the difficulties associated with creating truly inclusive participatory spaces.

Volunteers and newcomers differ in how they perceive voluntary work. While volunteers generally aim to support newcomers to do voluntary work, newcomers generally have different needs, expectations, and priorities and were relatively more focused on (re)gaining relevant diplomas and paid work (Ghorashi & Rast, 2018). The authors emphasize that newcomers' societal activation should be supported with discretion. They also note that societal participation is not solely facilitated by means of standardized voluntary programs.

Moreover, the findings of their research report indicate that community initiatives should also take into account newcomers' needs and perceptions of voluntary engagement. During the course of this research, volunteers aimed to give newcomers space to work in their own way. Nonetheless, the dominant Dutch approach to organizing and scheduling the social initiative in Amsterdam East did not always lead to all perceptions and needs being taken into account. The authors call for reflection on dominant ways of organizing and the differences between the perceptions of newcomers and native Dutch (Ghorashi & Rast, 2018).

Case 19: Private sponsorship system

Fratzke (2017) has evaluated the private sponsorship system in Canada and states the adoption of certain aspects of this system could have a positive effect on the protection and integration of newcomers in Europe. In the past, policies regarding the reception and allocation of newcomers have been overseen by governmental institutions. However, recently, community groups worldwide have played a significant role in providing shelter, food, and clothing and contributing to a sense of belonging among newcomers.

Community-driven sponsorship is not only effective in helping newcomers in the short term but also promotes a broader perspective on the asylum and protection of newcomers in the long term. Privately sponsored refugee (PSR) programs allow citizens and host communities to assist a selection of newcomers with housing and participation in society (Fratzke, 2017).

Therefore, PSR programs can be considered as an alternative to mainstream civic integration programs facilitated by the government. These mainstream policies are in line with government-assisted refugee (GAR) programs (Fratzke, 2017).

The government of Canada is proactive in encouraging PSR programs.

The Canadian government believes that this system is more effective than the GAR programs and increases self-reliance on the part of newcomers (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007). Since 2013, PSR initiatives have also emerged in Europe, such as Refugees Welcome International (Fratzke, 2017; Refugees Welcome, 2018). The Refugees Welcome movement is popular not only in Germany but also in other European countries, such as the Netherlands and Sweden.

The previously discussed bottom-up initiative Boost Amsterdam is also an example of a grassroots initiative that aims to assist newcomers with finding housing and mentorship. Sponsorship systems are set up in communities by individuals. Fratzke (2017) states that these systems enhance social contact between different cultural and ethnic groups. Without private sponsorship systems, newcomers would be less embedded in their receiving communities. Since newcomers are supported by local communities, this system empowers both newcomers and the receiving community and provides them with a sense of ownership.

Therefore, Fratzke (2017) states that the PSR system has a positive effect on the social acceptance of newcomers in society. However, there is not enough scientific evidence that PSR programs increase newcomers' options for employment. There are a variety of factors that should be taken into account, such as educational level and type and duration of contract. In 2019, a similar initiative to the private sponsorship system for refugees will be organized by the organization Justice & Peace. This initiative is called the 'Samen Hier' Project.

Through the project the organization aims to connect groups of at least five Dutch citizens to an individual newcomer or family to speed up the 'process of integration' of permit holders into Dutch society. This project is supported by a special matching method developed by dr. Craig Damian Smith and a team of academics from the University of Toronto (Justice and Peace, 2019).

Case 20: The Talent Team Nijmegen-Noord

In Nijmegen-Noord, a social sport initiative named the Talent Team Nijmegen-Noord has been established. This is a sport initiative for Eritrean newcomers who are living at the Griftdijk. The talent team consists of cyclists, runners, and volleyball players. Sport can lead to social inclusion and has a positive effect on participants' health (Block and Gibbs, 2017). Social inclusion refers to a sense of belonging and personal involvement on the part of individuals in a community (Hagerty et al., 1992).

The sport players from the Talent Team are facilitated by volunteers from several sport clubs in Nijmegen. For example, the Running Talent Team is closely connected to the athletics club Cifla (Cifla, 2018). Block and Gibbs (2017) state that participation in sports can have a positive effect on newcomers' physical and psychosocial health. Moreover, participating in sports can lead to a positive settlement and meaningful engagement with the host society. The researchers state that several organizations worldwide aim to promote sports among newcomers.

However, newcomers can face barriers due to costs, lack of knowledge about mainstream sport services, and cultural customs (Block & Gibbs, 2017). This research was conducted in Australia but a similar study could also be conducted in the Netherlands. More research is needed on the relationship between sports and a feeling of belonging in host communities (Block & Gibbs, 2017; Hagerty et al., 1992).



4. Micro-level analysis of newcomers' experiences with best civic integration practices

This section adopts a micro phenomenon lens to describe newcomers' experiences with the civic integration framework in the Netherlands (Kelle, 2005). The National Ombudsman (2018) emphasizes that the Dutch government should only be able to revise current civic integration policies if it takes into account the experiences, needs, and aspirations of newcomers.

However, current civic integration policies and research on civic integration do not give much room to the micro experiences, daily life aspirations, and actions of newcomers. This illustrates one of the shortcomings of current policies and research. Popular policy discourses focus on how newcomers “perform” in Dutch society instead of highlighting newcomers' individual stories (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016).

Since this paper is a literature review of published studies, it presents an overview of personal stories that have been published in various academic and professional reports. This section examines newcomers' experiences with civic integration policies and programs that aim to facilitate newcomers' access to housing, employment, education, health, and social connections.

These narratives are discussed with reference to the five structural dimensions of civic integration discussed in Section 3. This section focuses on the intersections among the five structural dimensions of civic integration: housing, employment, education, health, and social connections. Intersectional analysis has been adopted in many research fields, but it originates from feminist theory (Shields, 2008). Intersections refer to the mutually constitutive relations among the domains of housing, employment, education, health, and social connections.

In practice, this means that the domain of, for example, social connections is interrelated with other domains and that best civic integration practices overlap different domains (Shields, 2008). This analytical tool has made various forms of marginalization and discrimination visible in complex situations. When we step away from categories, we are able to examine the lived experiences and practices of newcomers. With reference to these stories, it is possible to explain the bottlenecks and successes of current civic integration actions, activities, programs, practices, and policies. Subsequently, this section reflects on how the civic integration framework for newcomers in the Netherlands may be enhanced (Montero-Sieburth, 2018; Ombudsman, 2018).

4.1 Background information of newcomers

Before examining the micro experiences of newcomers in the Netherlands, it is important to elaborate in the diverse backgrounds of such individuals. As described in the introduction, this paper mainly focuses on newcomers who entered the Netherlands from 2013 onward. In the period from 2013 to 2015, asylum applications rose to 58,880. Of these newcomers, 27,710 originated from Syria. Since 2014, a large number have also come from Eritrea. There have been approximately 1,000 Eritrean newcomers per month. In the period between 2016 to 2017, asylum applications in the Netherlands decreased to 31,642, and, in 2018, they decreased to 31,327.

This paper has predominantly given examples of the positions of Syrian and Eritrean newcomers in the Netherlands (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018; Dutch Refugee Council, 2018). More information on the position of Eritrean newcomers in the Netherlands can be found in the report titled “Nothing is what it seems” (2016) by the DSP Group and Tilburg University as well as the Eritrese statushouders in Nederland: Een kwalitatief onderzoek over de vlucht en hun leven in Nederland by Sterckx and Fessehazion (2018). More information on Syrian newcomers in the Netherlands can be found in the report titled *Syriërs in Nederland* by Dagevos et al. (2018).

In recent years, other groups of newcomers have arrived in the Netherlands. In 2015, the third and fourth largest groups came from Iraq and Afghanistan, respectively. In 2016 and 2017, this changed due to the influx of asylum applications from Algeria, Albania, and Morocco.

While newcomers from Syria and Eritrea had an almost 90% chance of receiving a residence permit, for newcomers from Albania, this was 0%, while it was 1% for newcomers from Algeria and 6.5% for newcomers from Morocco (Dutch Refugee Council, 2018).

Ferrier, Kahmann, and Massink (2017) emphasize that newcomers who entered the Netherlands from 2013 onward vary significantly in terms of nationality, gender, age, educational level, personal experiences, rural or urban background, character, and ambitions. Hence, when analyzing the position of newcomers and their integration practices in the Netherlands, it is important to take into account differences in terms of their individual experiences, aspirations, and needs (Ferrier, Kahmann, & Massink, 2017; Bakker, 2015). Lastly, in describing the experiences of newcomers, this paper wishes to avoid depicting newcomers as passive beneficiaries of the civic integration framework. As discussed in Section 3.4., newcomers possess a certain degree of resilience in coping with housing, employment, education, health, and social issues (Ghorashi, 2016).

This section highlights newcomers' daily coping strategies and experiences with these categories. Therefore, this section aims to explore the personal agency of newcomers (Ghorashi, 2005). The concept of agency plays a central role in sociological debates. It refers to an actor's ability to act independently of the constraining power of social structures (Campbell, 2009). Therefore, agency includes the capacity of a newcomer to creatively determine his or her own actions (Ghorashi, Holder, & Boer, 2017). The stories in this section also highlight an agency paradox. Klaver, Dekker, and Engbersen (2018) state that the capacity of a newcomer to control his or her life in the Netherlands is negatively influenced by the Dutch reception and civic integration policies. The design of these policies is very

different from what newcomers are used to in their countries of origin. Subsequently, the significant differences between newcomers' old lives and their new lives in the Netherlands can have a negative impact on their inventiveness and determination (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018). Ghorashi, Holder, and Boer (2017) elaborate on the challenge that scholars face in articulating newcomers' everyday practices and simultaneously considering the institutional structures in which newcomers are embedded. These structures both constrain and enable (inter)actions between newcomers and the host state. This section explores the stories of various newcomers in order to learn more about their experiences with housing, employment, education, health, and social connections on a daily basis.

4.2 Housing

This section examines newcomers' experiences with Dutch institutions, housing policies, and programs.

“ One Eritrean respondent stated: “I had to wait quite a long time for my interview. I was afraid they were going to reject me because it was taking so long. I was finally interviewed after three months. I didn't find the questions difficult. All I had to do was tell them everything I'd been through. It felt like a team, with the IND official and

an interpreter there. I was lucky to have a good interpreter; I've heard from others that their reports frequently had to be corrected. After my interview, it took a month before I was given refugee status. That was a difficult time. I was afraid I would be rejected, so I was relieved when I finally heard that I could stay here!”

(Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018, p. 164).

This narrative highlights a newcomer's experience with the waiting period in a reception center. The prospect that newcomers may have their residence applications rejected

results in a considerable amount of stress (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018).

“ Rachid is 24 years old, comes from Syria, and arrived in the Netherlands in 2015 (Ombudsman, 2018, pp. 8–10).

As a result of mistakes made by local authorities, Rachid became homeless for seven months and could only start with his civic integration after two years and two months of waiting.

The first problems started when Rachid was accommodated in the AZC. Initially, the COA could not take fingerprints of his damaged fingers due to his former work experience as a tiler. Moreover, due to his Iraqi accent, the COA did not believe that he came from Syria.

Therefore, he had to wait for 10 months in the reception center before he received his residence permit (Ombudsman, 2018,

pp. 8–10).

Due to a mistake in the municipality's accommodation system, Rachid received housing offers from two municipalities.

Municipality A said he had to decline the offer from municipality B; after he declined the offer, he could not make use of the offer made by municipality A and became homeless for seven months. Eventually, the municipalities acknowledged that they had made a mistake. Rachid was subsequently accommodated in municipality C. In the end, a volunteer helped him to get a room in a temporary housing unit. However, due to a mistake in the system at IND, Rachid was not able to register himself at the municipality. Hence, he could not receive a social welfare benefit. A volunteer was later able to help him to obtain a permanent housing unit.

(Ombudsman, 2018, pp. 8–10).

Rachid's narrative reflects the inability of local authorities to immediately accommodate all newcomers who entered the Netherlands between 2014–2015. Rachid's story demonstrates that volunteers can play a crucial role in helping newcomers with the administrative and bureaucratic difficulties that they experience in their dealings with municipalities. For example, the SNTR foundation (Case 4) hires volunteers who help Syrian families with their administration.

Moreover, they make use of a connector who speaks the Arabic language. This connector helps newcomers to obtain an understanding of the SNTR program and become acquainted with the neighborhood in which they are to live (Stichting De Verre Bergen, 2019).

“ Abdi comes from Somalia and elaborates on his experiences with the extensive waiting time while living in a reception centre: “I’m cleaning the centre every day for one hour. I’d rather do voluntary work than stay at home. I don’t attend classes, but in my spare time I educate myself. I study the Dutch language. During the nights, I can’t sleep, I read books or do my studies.

I’ve lived here for 10 months now, a long time. Keeping yourself busy is the best... Next week I start cycling. I don’t have a bike yet. I asked COA, but they told me we don’t pay for that, you have to pay for it yourself. Now I saved money over three months, so I can pay for it myself. Next week I get my bike. I’m excited!”

(Respondent, male) (Ghorashi, Holder, & Boer, 2017, p. 380).

This quote indicates Abdi’s need for daily structure and personal development. Due to a lack of financial resources and the isolated location of reception centers, newcomers are often limited in undertaking social activities. The lack of activities in the reception center results in boredom and loneliness. In addition, many female newcomers report that they do not feel safe in the AZCs (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018).

Section 3 elaborated on several initiatives that aim to facilitate their access to such housing. These initiatives are Startblok Riekershaven, Griftdijk Eritrean Men in Lent, Hoost at the Mauritskade, and Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam (SNTR).

The existence of these housing programs indicates that appropriate housing is not only about facilitating living spaces but is also related to supporting newcomers’ integration in other dimensions, such as employment, education, health, and social connections.

Housing also has an effect on newcomers’ sense of belonging in the Netherlands. In line with this concept, Gruijtenburg and Razenberg (2017) have investigated newcomers’ experiences of living in the Netherlands.

“ One newcomer elaborates on his sense of belonging in the Netherlands: “Though I am free here, I have the feeling that I always will be disadvantaged. How can I feel at home in the Netherlands, if I see that Syrian refugees receive a preferential treatment? We Eritreans have too much respect for the authorities because we are

not experienced dealing with them. In comparison to the Syrians, we are submissive and polite. While Syrians are demanding and often get what they ask for, local authorities approach us like we are small children.

(Man, 28 years old)” (Gruijtenburg & Razenberg, 2017, p. 8).

“ “I am very happy that I live in a city. Many different people with different backgrounds live here. If I would live in a small town or village, I would feel unhappy

(Man, 30 years old)” (Gruijtenburg & Razenberg, 2017, p. 8).

“I like living in Amsterdam. There are living a lot of different people here, and it is easier to find work. And there are living a lot of Eritrean people. That is important since they can help me with finding a job

(Man, 19 years old)” (Gruijtenburg & Razenberg, 2017, p. 8).

“I like living here because the Eritrean church is nearby

(Man2, 19 years old)” (Gruijtenburg & Razenberg, 2017, p. 8).

“I prefer to live in a large city where I can easily go to the church

(Woman, 28 years)” (Gruijtenburg & Razenberg, 2017, p. 8).

“It is pretty quiet here. I would prefer to live more centrally

(Woman, 27 years)” (Gruijtenburg & Razenberg, 2017, p. 8).

In the study conducted by Gruijtenburg and Razenberg (2017), respondents who lived outside cities were found to be less satisfied. They have to travel a great distance to attend civic integration courses, visit churches, or do their grocery shopping. Furthermore, they preferred to live closer to other Eritrean communities in the Netherlands.

4.3 Employment

This section examines newcomers' experiences with civic integration programs that aim to increase the employment rate of newcomers. Kelle (2005) emphasizes that a

qualitative analysis of social interactions on the micro level is needed in order to obtain insight into the occupational pathways of individuals.

One newcomer elaborates on his experiences with the Plan Einstein program in Utrecht: "I want them [Dutch people] to talk to me as a human being, not as a refugee. They don't have to feel sorry for me. I have experienced a lot since I fled my country. Plan Einstein gives me a chance to work on my future. Last week I received a

certificate for participating in the entrepreneurship course. I would like to thank everyone for making this plan possible. I don't have to sit still anymore. I can actively work on my future"

(Plan Einstein, 2018, p. 4).

The respondent emphasizes that he does not wish to be portrayed as a refugee who is in need of help. Plan Einstein does not approach newcomers as victims but rather aims to highlight their individual potential. It does so by giving residents and people from the neighbourhood the opportunity to attend English language courses, participate in practical programs on entrepreneurship, or obtain help with gaining access to higher education and finding (voluntary) work (Plan Einstein, 2018).

An evaluation of the Plan Einstein program indicates that participants who have completed the program feel more confident and empowered to find appropriate work or education in the Netherlands (Oliver, Dekker, & Geuijen, 2018).

“ *One newcomer from Syria elaborates on his associations with voluntary work and experiences with a civic integration initiative in Amsterdam. He stresses that he wants to start his life in the Netherlands as soon as possible. For years, he was occupied with organizing family reunification, gaining private housing, organizing diploma accreditation, and finding paid work that fits his previous working background. The respondent elaborates on the limited benefits of doing voluntary work in the Netherlands. He associates voluntary*

work with a lower status and doubts if active engagement in the community would lead to paid work in the end. There are many voluntary positions in the Netherlands, but certainly not all options match newcomers' educational and working background. He states: "People should not look for the benefits. Because, for volunteer work, they will not sign a contract. It will not help your CV if you help with painting or moving stuff or anything. Or teaching Arabic, but I study IT. What will it help?"

(Interviewee 4, recent male refugee from Syria, volunteer)" (Rast & Ghrorashi, 2018, p. 193).

As discussed in Section 3.2, there are various programs in the Netherlands that aim to encourage newcomers to engage in voluntary work. Examples of these include the Piëzo methodology adopted by the municipality of Zoetermeer and the NewBees Foundation. These types of organizations view participation in the labor market as a path to successful social integration in the Netherlands. However, from a micro perspective, civic integration programs should take into account newcomers' needs, cultural perceptions, and expectations of voluntary work.

Furthermore, municipalities should consider whether it is beneficial for newcomers to engage in voluntary work and whether voluntary positions match newcomers' former work and educational experience (Rast & Ghorashi, 2017; Klaver, 2016; Ponzoni, Ghorashi, & van der Raad, 2016). The meso analysis of the domain of employment (introduced in Section 3.2.) elaborated on municipalities that follow a sequenced work first approach. This approach solely focuses on encouraging newcomers to start working and generally does not take into account their personal circumstances, qualifications, and experiences.

Due to this work first approach, newcomers do not get recognition for their qualifications and are obliged to work in jobs that do not meet their former work and educational experience (Ager & Strang, 2001; de Lange et al., 2017). Furthermore, newcomers who succeed in quickly finding work are generally portrayed as role models by municipalities and organizations. As a result, public institutions use them to obtain access to local communities. However, these institutions should critically reflect on what these role models receive in return for their services. Additionally, they should think about ways to facilitate newcomers' personal development instead of taking advantage of them (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018). Critical scholars have emphasized that, in some cases, newcomers face discriminatory practices and misunderstandings in their work environments (Ponzoni, Ghorashi, & van der Raad, 2016; Ghorashi & Tilburg, 2016).

For example, a singular focus on newcomers' language proficiency and accent means that newcomers do not have opportunities to utilize their potential and demonstrate their talents in the workplace (Ghorashi & Tilburg, 2016).

Several studies have indicated that the degree of success of newcomers' pathways to employment is dependent on language proficiency, education in the Netherlands, knowledge of the Dutch labor market, working experience in the Netherlands, health, and the existence of a social network (Bakker, 2015; Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011; Engbersen, et al., 2015; Razenberg & de Gruijter, 2017; Vroome & Tubergen, 2010). Therefore, when civic integration programs attempt to increase the employment rate among their participants, they also have to invest in other domains of civic integration, such as housing, education, health care, and social connections.

When conducting a micro-level analysis of newcomers' experiences with labor in the Netherlands, it is crucial to highlight disparities in terms of gender differences and exclusionary practices.

“ One newcomer elaborates on her experiences with working in a Dutch organization. She had seven years of working experience as a physician in Afghanistan before she came in the Netherlands. In order to be able to work in the Netherlands, she had to redo parts of her studies in medicine and the residency in the Netherlands. This took approximately three years. After her studies, she has worked in three hospitals and frequently changed jobs, since she did not feel accepted in her work environment (Ghorashi & Tilburg, 2006). She stresses: “I was different from everyone. I felt like a black horse among

all white horses. Everybody always seemed to be together, and I was alone. I felt excluded, not because the people were mean: it was just that there were Dutch white people and I was the only foreigner. After one year I did not want to work there anymore, nothing special happened. It was just that I did not feel comfortable there. I had the feeling that my colleagues did not see me; maybe this has to do with cultural differences. When I said Hi, I did not get a response. In their own group they were nicer to each other and more understanding

(Respondent 2)” (Ghorashi & Tilburg, 2006, p. 60).

This narrative indicates that organizations should play an active role in identifying exclusionary practices on the work floor. Moreover, it might be helpful for newcomers who start working in an organization to be supported by other employees. For example, Section 3.2 elaborated on a few civic integration programs that provide newcomers with the support of a job coach and a buddy. These individuals help newcomers to become acquainted with the local customs of organizations and can help employees with practical issues (SER, 2017).

Razenberg, Kahmann, and de Gruijter (2017) evaluate the strategies employed by local municipalities to help newcomers with finding employment on an annual basis. Their study indicates that 61% of municipalities face difficulties in finding employment for women. The findings of this study indicate that within newcomers’ households, women are generally responsible for domestic tasks, have less relevant work experience, and are not always qualified to perform physical labor (Razenberg, Kahmann, & de Gruijter, 2018). The employment gap between male and female newcomers can be clarified with reference to religious motives and traditional gender perspectives.

Within these families, most male newcomers have been in the Netherlands for a longer time, since most female newcomers come in the Netherlands as nareizigers (Razenberg, Kahmann, & de Gruijter, 2018; SER, 2017; CBS, 2015; Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018).

As a result, in comparison to their partners, they tend to enter civic integration programs later. Nareizigers often do not stay in AZCs. Therefore, the COA does not receive information about the characteristics and previous educational and working experience of female nareizigers. Moreover, one third of local municipalities solely focus on the employment activation of one adult per household.

Therefore, employment programs often focus exclusively on men. Consequently, female newcomers have fewer options in terms of obtaining access to the labor market (Razenberg, Kahmann, & de Gruijter, 2018). More research is needed on the relationship between gender roles and the civic integration progress of newcomers. For example, future studies could focus on how personal circumstances and cultural and religious aspects influence newcomers’ participation in the labor market (Bakker, 2018; Penninx, 2005).

4.4 Education

This section elaborates on newcomers' experiences with schooling in the Netherlands.

“ Meet a Bosnian doctor of 35 years who talks about his experiences with the Dutch civic integration framework. It took him more than seven years to become a permit holder, learn the Dutch language, have his diploma recognized, and be able to continue his profession (Korac, 2003). He states: “I think that our adjustment would have been much easier if we'd been given a chance to learn the language properly

immediately after our arrival. But we were ‘taught’ [at the asylum center] how to turn on the light and use the lavatory, instead of being given a good language course appropriate to our skills and needs. That caused a certain level of resistance to this country, our homeland now”

(Korac, 2003, p.55).

“ Denzel from Eritrea also emphasizes his willingness to learn the Dutch language (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). “In Eritrea, Denzel had to work in the army, sold vegetables and fruit and was a tailor when he did not have to work for the army. He lived in an AZC for the first two years of his stay in the Netherlands. He is currently living in a house with his family. He wants to

improve his Dutch language skills so that he can continue his profession as a tailor. In hindsight, Denzel thinks it is a pity that he could not make use of a pre-civic integration program in the AZC and that he had to wait with learning Dutch till he received a residence permit

(Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018).

Denzel and the doctor's accounts indicate that newcomers are very motivated to learn the Dutch language. They both emphasize that they would have preferred to learn the language as soon as possible. The following

story highlights an Eritrean man's difficulties with finding a suitable private language school.

“ No one helps you choose a suitable language school. We are all left to our own devices. People are misled by schools and their ignorance is exploited. I know that you have the right to cancel your contract with a school after three months. Most people don't know that and are contractually tied to the same school for two years.

The money runs out before they have completed their integration programme

(man, 42 years old)” (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018, p. 165).

The Verwey-Jonker Institute (2018) has conducted research on newcomers' experiences with the civic educational system (they interviewed 36 newcomers, some of whom were illiterate, but the majority were not). The majority of the respondents stated that they had to invest a relatively great deal of energy and time to stay on track during the courses. Furthermore, a small number of the newcomers stated that the classes were too easy. The research indicates that more heterogeneous classes lead to more obstacles for immigrants.

Illiterate respondents explained that they encountered difficulties with the civic integration courses since the level of education required generally is too high for them (Dutch Refugee Council, 2018). A good teacher can be characterized by good didactic qualities, is interested in his or her students, and has an eye for the individual ambitions and obstacles that his or her students face. The respondents prefer to be taught in their native languages. A moderate or poor teacher can be described as one who does not have enough motivation, time, and enthusiasm to educate his or her students (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018).

The respondents emphasized that they learned a great deal from the feedback that is provided during the language classes. Moreover, they note that if they have multiple teachers who follow up one another, this does not have a positive effect on the quality of the classes.

The majority of the respondents practice Dutch language skills by making use of (social) media. Some newcomers also indicated that they practice Dutch with the help of a buddy from a social initiative or contact with the neighborhood, at schools, or at sport associations (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). Many respondents express that they would like to have more hours of training per week. With more intense language training, they would have more time to focus on grasping the basics of the Dutch language. In line with this, the respondents in the research by Ferrier and Massink (2017) stated the following:

“You will learn theory at school, but if you do not have experience [with the language] in practice, you will not learn the [Dutch] language and culture”

(Respondent, female, 26 years old) (Ferrier & Massink, 2017, p. 10).

“You cannot speak Dutch if you only go to Dutch language classes, you have to talk to Dutch people”

(Respondent, male, 19 years old) (Ferrier & Massink, 2017, p. 10).

These narratives indicate that newcomers realize that learning the Dutch language takes a great deal of effort and that it cannot solely be learned during civic integration classes. The findings of the study by the Verwey-Jonker Institute (2018) illustrate that some newcomers had mixed feelings about the themes discussed in the civic integration courses. Some respondents appreciated the knowledge that they learned during these classes, while others are more critical and do not believe that all themes are informative.

During the civic integration courses, newcomers receive training on the Dutch labor market (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). However, the research clarifies that not all respondents state that they have learned something useful from the courses on labor market participation or Dutch culture. Furthermore, the findings of the report indicate that female newcomers with children generally have to miss more classes due to childcare obligations. Since families noted that they cannot make use of private childcare and do not have families or friends who can take care of their children; thus, it is common that the male newcomer in a family starts with the civic integration course while the female newcomer takes care of the children (Ferrier & Massink, 2016; Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018). Lastly, the Verwey-Jonker Institute emphasizes that the material taught in civic integration courses should match newcomers' daily experiences. This statement is in line with Nieuwboer and Rood's (2016) IDEAL method (Case 14).

The participants in Nieuwboer and Rood's study reported that they were positive about the method since their communication skills and relationships with their families had improved. As a result, the researchers call for more research on the application of this method in other contexts (Nieuwboer & Rood, 2016).

4.5 Health

This section elaborates on newcomers' experiences with the Dutch health-care system and related initiatives.

One newcomer emphasized that he would like to receive more information on health and care in his own language:

“It would be better if we would get information [on the health-care system] in our own language. I face a lot of incomprehension and antipathy at [governmental] institutions. You should give your [language] schools and institutions more reliable information on the different groups of

newcomers in the Netherlands... We do not need people to feel sorry for us, but we need an understanding of our situation in the Netherlands

(Respondent, male, 23 years old)" (Ferrier & Massink, 2017, p. 9).

Another respondent from Ferrier and Massink's (2017) study on newcomers' experiences with the Dutch healthcare system stated the following:

“The municipality and the Dutch Refugee Council often forget that we are human beings. They treat us as a number. They do not show respect. We are frequently dismissed. I think it would be better if they would make use of Eritrean professionals. They could intertwine the interests and

lifeworlds of governmental institutions and the Eritrean community of newcomers in the Netherlands

(Respondent, female, 26 years old)" (Ferrier & Massink, 2016, p. 9).

These narratives indicate newcomers' preference for professionals with the same cultural backgrounds. Case 16 elaborated on the Eritreeërs Gezond [Healthy Eritrean], Syriers Gezond [Healthy Syrian], and Opgroeien in Nederland [Growing up in the Netherlands] civic integration initiatives. These online initiatives make use of native health-care professionals and facilitate information on health and care in Tigrinya and Arabic. The TIMNIT training in Haarlem (Case 15) also makes use of an Eritrean trainer. Reports on this approach to training are relatively positive, as it aims to empower Eritrean youngsters and help them to cope with mental health issues and stressful situations (Berkhout, 2017).

However, more in-depth research is needed on the effects of these programs and newcomers' experiences with programs that aim to empower them. Van Dijk et al. (2011) have conducted an ethnographic case study on newcomers' experiences with health and care in the Netherlands.

“ A young woman from former Yugoslavia elaborates on her experiences with the Dutch health-care system. The woman experienced problems with receiving the right health care from her general practitioner. First, the general practitioner did not give her a reference to go to a specialist for services he was not able to provide. After some help from a Dutch friend who works for a newspaper, she was able to inform the general practitioner about his duty to refer her to a specialist (Van Dijk et al., 2001). The Dutch friend wrote an article about the situation. This made the doctor change his mind. She said: “I can

fight for myself and my husband and children. I fight for myself and for my health. The others don't. They are afraid, I'm not. If they will not help you, tell them to write it down. I know what I can do with such a letter. Then they will help you, because they know that you are in your right. Most of the asylum seekers are well aware of the most valuable weapons for their battle: knowledge of the Dutch language, Dutch friends, familiarity with their rights, a network of supportive family and friends, engagement in meaningful activities and relationships and the ability to imagine alternative futures”

(Van Dijk et al., 2001, p. 292).

This narrative indicates that it is not always easy for newcomers to obtain access to health-care services. A social network and proficiency in the Dutch language can help to combat problems with obtaining access to health-care services, but more research is needed on how newcomers experience the given support of health-care associations (Pharos, 2016). Furthermore, health-care professionals should take into account newcomers' traumas.

Before most newcomers arrive in the Netherlands, they endure highly traumatic and shocking experiences. Sterckx and Fessehazion (2018) emphasize that it is important for them to share their experiences, since doing so will help health-care professionals to understand the physical and psychological baggage that most Eritrean newcomers bring with them in the Netherlands.

One female Eritrean newcomer elaborates on her journey in the Netherlands: “Before the journey, every woman had a contraceptive injection to ensure they didn't get pregnant for three months. It was known that women would be raped by Sudanese or Libyans, so if you didn't have the injection, there was a strong chance you would

get pregnant. You can't avoid being raped, but if the journey doesn't last too long, you can at least make sure you don't get pregnant. As a woman, you know it can happen, and so you say goodbye to your life before leaving Sudan

(woman)” (Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018, p. 161).

Another newcomer describes her traumatic experiences before leaving Eritrea: “I fled for various reasons. I would describe Eritrea as a gateway to Hell. During my military service, I was sexually harassed several times. And I was raped by my superior officer. There was nowhere I could go to escape the situation. If I'd

become pregnant as a result of being raped, I would definitely have committed suicide. Everyone around me knew what was happening, but I couldn't ask anyone for help. I still think about it sometimes. I'm glad it's over!”

(Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018, p. 160).

4.6 Social connections

This section elaborates on newcomers' contact with Dutch host communities and their experiences with civic integration programs that facilitate social connections (mostly

between recent newcomers and Dutch residents) in the Netherlands.

“ The 35-year-old doctor from Bosnia elaborates on his experiences with living in the Netherlands: “I am employed in a Dutch medical firm, I speak the Dutch language well, my child goes to a Dutch school and soon he'll speak Dutch better than his mother tongue, but we live here a parallel existence, because we don't have real contact with Dutch society. We are

neither accepted nor rejected. I have a flat in Amsterdam, I live here, but I don't have any ties with Dutch people. I do what I am told to do, and everything is going according to 'integration' rules that we 'refugees' have to follow. We didn't have to integrate really, you see, we just had to do what we were told”

(Korac, 2003, p. 55).

Though this newcomer “successfully” reconstructed his life in the Netherlands by means of employment, housing, and education, he

explains that he does not feel included in Dutch society.

“ Meet Ammar. He is 27 years old and comes from Syria. He has the ambition to study ICT at a university. He considers social contact with Dutch people to be crucial in order to learn about the Dutch culture and language (Dutch Refugee Council, 2018, p. 41). Ammar wants to keep in touch with Dutch citizens but does not know how he can achieve this. He has a contact person at the municipality and at a societal initiative. Moreover, he knows two or three Syrian families, with whom he has good contact (Dutch Refugee Council, 2018, p. 41). Yet Ammar finds it difficult to build social relations as an individual in a

small village. He explains that he is surrounded by unfriendly neighbors, cannot participate in sports because of injuries, and is on a waiting list until he can be linked to a language buddy. He prefers not to go to specific activities for newcomers but wants to go to social activities with native Dutch in order to meet new Dutch people. Yet he is not always aware of the social activities in his village. Ammar wants to step away from his social network of Syrian families and is looking for activities that facilitate social meetings between newcomers and native Dutch

(Dutch Refugee Council, 2018, p. 41).

This example illustrates the intersections between the domain of education and that of social connections. Should newcomers become embedded in host communities, it becomes easier for them to learn the Dutch language. Since the majority of the respondents are focused on following the civic integration courses and successfully passing the civic integration exam, they explain that they

do not have much time to participate in voluntary work or societal activities. The Dutch Refugee Council states that the civic integration course could place a greater emphasis on stimulating social contact (Verwey-Jonker Institute, 2018).

Despite newcomers' attempts to establish closer ties with neighbors, it is not always easy for them to feel embedded in Dutch society (Korac, 2003, p. 55).

The Verwey-Jonker Institute (2018) also indicates that several newcomers face difficulties with establishing social contact with native Dutch individuals due to language and cultural barriers.

One newcomer from Afghanistan elaborates on his difficulties with finding social contact with native Dutch communities. He has lived in the Netherlands for several years but has not succeeded yet in finding social contact with Dutch people. "My wife does not speak Dutch, so I always help her with the language. She is watching Dutch

television every day. Yet she has no contact with the outside world. There are only living foreigners in our neighborhood. We feel no connection towards them. If we had friends, my wife would already speak Dutch for a long time

(Man, former refugee from Afghanistan)" (De Gruijter & De Winter-Koçak, 2018, p. 11).

“ One Eritrean newcomer emphasizes, “I don't have any contact with Dutch natives. I'd like to have contact so I can learn the language, but they are difficult to approach. It's easy to make contact in Eritrea. Here, it's impossible to make contact with the Dutch. I haven't dared to make any contact up to now. They just ignore us.

The neighbors sometimes say hello, but beyond that it's difficult to have a conversation: which language should I speak? Perhaps they think I'm arrogant. My neighbors don't know where I come from or that I find Dutch an extremely difficult language”

(Sterckx & Fessehazion, 2018, p. 172).

The Migration Policy Group (2011) states that in comparison to other European countries, the Netherlands has the best antidiscrimination legislation for migrants. However, there are also studies that adopt a more critical stance toward these statistics. For example, the ethnographic study on health care by Van Dijk et al. (2001) also highlights newcomers' experiences with exclusion and discrimination in the Netherlands. More research is needed on the perceived acceptance of and discrimination against newcomers in the Netherlands.

“ Daley (2009) has conducted a case study on community relationships among refugees and asylum seekers, other migrants, and long-term residents within a local area for newcomers in the United Kingdom. This study found that community initiatives and social support have the potential to facilitate dialogue and understanding among newcomers and individu-

als in the host community. Community initiatives have the ability to bring newcomers and locals with different cultural backgrounds together. Cultural and religion-oriented communities can play an important role in connecting individuals but can also lead to strong divisions

(Daley, 2009; Penninx, 2005).

Community initiatives based on common values have a positive effect on the sense of belonging of newcomers in host communities. Therefore, when studying newcomers' integration process, it is crucial to also focus on the dynamics among newcomers, migrant groups, and established host communities (Castles et al., 2002; Daley, 2009). Case 19 elaborated on the private sponsorship system. The study by Fratzke (2017) indicates that such initiatives have a positive effect on the social acceptance of newcomers in host communities. Nonetheless, Fratzke (2017) calls for more research on the extent to which these programs actually facilitate a more rapid integration of newcomers in society and their participation in the labor market.

4.7 Opportunities for a micro level analysis

This section has elaborated on the stories of newcomers in order to provide a deeper understanding of newcomers' daily experiences and practices. Their stories enable policy makers and governmental officials to critically reflect on the bottlenecks in current civic integration policies and programs. According to Korac (2003), the current politics and policies in the Netherlands are predominantly motivated by economic and financial reasoning. As a result, the current Dutch civic integration framework does not place much emphasis on the personal narratives of newcomers.

Healey (2006) is critical of this tendency and states that newcomers should be treated in a more constructive way. Governmental policies should not address newcomers as a problem but should instead highlight their potential and personal circumstances (Healey, 2006; Ghorashi, Holder, & Boer, 2017). Therefore, they should take into account newcomers' needs, stories, and the diversity in their backgrounds, culture, country of origin, gender, age, and socioeconomic position (Korac, 2003; Bakker, 2015; Hampshire, 2013). This section conducted a micro-level analysis as a form of critique of the Dutch top-down approach to civic integration.

Civic integration implies a relationship between newcomers and the host state. The micro perspective adopted in this section provided insight into how newcomers experience social services that are facilitated by the host state (Korac, 2003). Robinson (1998) pleads for more attention to be paid to narratives, as they provide an opportunity to hear newcomers' voices in an unadulterated way. The stories of newcomers illuminate the variety of situations that they encounter in their everyday lives and their experiences with civic integration programs, policies, and practices.

By hearing their stories, we can step away from static categories and explore the intersections and mutually constitutive relations among the domains of employment, housing, education, health, and social connections. Furthermore, a focus on narratives and intersections makes it possible to make visible and address the effects of exclusionary civic integration practices.



5. Conclusion and reflection

This final section summarizes the findings of the previous sections and highlights the contributions provided by the macro, meso, and micro analyses. Furthermore, this section makes suggestions concerning future civic integration policies, practices, and research.

5.1 Macro phenomenon analysis

Section 2 adopted a macro phenomenon lens to analyze the historical development of the Dutch civic integration framework. Integration is frequently defined as a multidimensional process involving responsibilities on the part of both newcomers and the host state. The analysis in Section 2 indicated that the Dutch state predominantly focuses on the responsibility on the part of newcomers to successfully participate into Dutch society. Over the years, civic integration contracts have increasingly become obligatory and have come to serve as a restrictive examination tool for personal integration levels. This trend indicates a movement toward a more restrictive immigration discourse in the Netherlands.

The implementation of these policies has led to unclear civic integration requirements, long waiting times for language courses, and lack of transparency or, unfortunately, a number of outright malicious commercial language agencies.

This paper is highly critical of the normative nature of current civic integration policies. Such policies require newcomers to meet formalized integration requirements in return for residency and citizenship rights delivered by the state (Penninx, 2005); De Waal 2018. This paper has demonstrated that formalized integration requirements lead to counterproductive barriers that obstruct newcomers' inclusion in Dutch society. New perspectives on what integration is and who is responsible for it should be explored to ensure that more effective civic integration programs are implemented in the future.

This paper is thus in line with Foundation Civic's holistic understanding of the concept of integration. This approach emphasizes the responsibility of local municipalities, institutions, and the Dutch government to facilitate civic integration services and programs for newcomers. Therefore, more evidence-based research that focuses on the measurable effects and societal outcomes of civic integration policies and programs intended to promote language and participa-

tion in the labor market is needed. Within the public debate, Foundation Civic places emphasis on the Dutch government's responsibility to facilitate effective civic integration strategies (De Waal, 2018). Governmental bodies should not only focus on the labor market integration of newcomers but should also consider newcomers' health and fundamental human need to feel embedded in social networks (Penninx, 2005).

5.2 Meso phenomenon analysis

Section 3 adopted a meso phenomenon lens to analyze five structural dimensions of integration: employment, housing, education, health, and social connections. This section addressed opportunities and problems with regard to the civic integration policies and programs that aim to facilitate appropriate housing for newcomers in the Netherlands. Moreover, it elaborated on several employment programs and the socioeconomic performance of newcomers. The discussion of the domain of education examined the successes of and bottlenecks in Dutch integration schools, courses, and exams, as well as further education options for newcomers. This section also noted the lack of research on Dutch health-care programs and services for newcomers.

Furthermore, this section examined the complex interplay of social bridges between newcomers and host communities. In addition to elaborating on the five dimensions, this section also outlined 20 integration practices that are occasionally labeled as best practices by policy makers. As noted previously, Foundation Civic believes that more research is needed on newcomers' experiences with best civic integration practices. Future research could investigate to what extent these practices comply with Montero-Sieburth's (2018) definition of best practices.

In short, best practices can be programs, particular practices, and policies that have emerged from evidence-based research, have been tested in different contexts, and have positive outcomes for the participation of newcomers. Moreover, future studies on best practices should take into account the number of newcomers who are affected by best practices and the frequency with which civic integration activities, programs, and services are offered. Finally, governmental bodies should determine which civic integration programs are successful and have the potential to be duplicated in other contexts. These programs can only be effective in the long term if the government devotes adequate financial resources to them. Former evaluations of the current civic integration legislation have demonstrated that the reduction of financial capital has led to an ineffective civic integration framework for newcomers.

5.3. Micro phenomenon analysis

Section 4 employed a micro phenomenon lens to analyze newcomers' experiences with civic integration programs, policies, and practices in the domains of housing, employment, education, health, and social connections. Therefore, this section presented a variety of narratives that highlighted the processes by which newcomers give meaning to the Dutch civic integration framework. Future civic integration policies, programs, and research can only contribute to the inclusion of newcomers in society if they take into account the diversity of the group of newcomers in the Netherlands in terms of background, experiences, gender, age, language, educational level, working experience, religion, culture, health, socioeconomic position, and country of origin.

These categories are not static but are instead constructed through a dynamic interplay between newcomers and their social and organizational context (Ossenkop et al., 2015). This fluidity leads to a variety of experiences with civic integration policies and programs. Foundation Civic acknowledges that newcomers' personal stories provide insight into the exclusionary practices that they might face in their day-to-day lives. Therefore, the organization notes that more research is needed on how newcomers' positionality influences their experiences with civic integration practices in the Netherlands.

The narratives within Section 4 demonstrated that newcomers generally possess a significant degree of resilience. Resilience is demonstrated in how newcomers use individual characteristics such as a social network or language skills in order to cope with barriers that they face with, for example, obtaining access to Dutch health-care services.

The narratives in Section 4 indicated that governmental bodies and social initiatives should pay attention to newcomers' coping strategies and should not solely consider them as passive recipients. Within research on newcomers' experiences with civic integration, the domain of health care has received the least systematic attention. Research has shown that newcomers' health has a tremendous effect on their integration process. Thus, it is important that research examines newcomers' (mental) health issues and ability to obtain access to health-care services in the Netherlands.

For example, a large number of newcomers in the Netherlands struggle with (mental) health issues. If newcomers suffer from health issues, it is more difficult for them to find employment or to successfully pass the civic integration exam within three years. This also has an effect on the macroeconomic statistics and dominant discourses concerning newcomers. As a result, the Dutch government first has to facilitate appropriate civic integration services before it can expect newcomers to successfully pass the civic integration exam within three years.

5.4 Further perspectives

From 2021, local municipalities will be challenged to implement the new civic integration legislation. This gives local municipalities the opportunity to critically reflect on and reconsider current civic integration strategies and services. The decentralization process will give local municipalities more authority to improve local governance, make decisions, evaluate the problems that newcomers face, and support affected individuals. Additionally, local municipalities will be in charge of matching newcomers with suitable language agencies and helping them with their rent and the costs of their civic integration courses.

The National Ombudsman (2018) emphasizes that local municipalities have to be assisted by the Dutch government in order to be able to facilitate individual trajectories and mediation for newcomers. For example, municipalities do not always have the resources and knowledge required to deliver specialized and appropriate assistance to newcomers. Therefore, it is important that the Ministry of Social Affairs formulates one vision with regard to how local municipalities make provision for the personal needs and experiences of newcomers.

Local municipalities will become responsible for constructing a personal integration plan (in Dutch, *Persoonsplan Inburgering en Participatie*). However, the National Ombudsman (2018) emphasizes that local municipalities have to look beyond this plan and focus on the needs and personal situation of the newcomer. Furthermore, municipalities should be critical of programs that force newcomers to do work that does not meet their work and educational backgrounds. Many reports have indicated that the current civic integration framework is not effective. As a result, the Dutch government has to evaluate the negative consequences of the current framework and should apply eased circumstances for newcomers who are subjected to this legislation.

Since local authorities will get more responsibility, it is important that a future civic integration framework encompasses an instrument that guarantees the quality control of the civic integration programs and initiatives. So far, there is no quality mark that can inform newcomers about the quality of the services facilitated by local authorities. A quality mark has the potential to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of public services as well as increase the accountability and transparency of civic integration initiatives (Bovens, 2007; Harwick & Russell, 1993).

Since accountability encompasses a relationship between an individual and an institution, it is important that the individual is able to anonymously give feedback to the government on the services facilitated by the institution (Bovens, 2007). In the context of civic integration, local authorities should face consequences if their civic integration services do not meet newcomers' needs (Harwick & Russell, 1993). To summarize, local authorities should critically reflect on their responsibility to facilitate civic integration services. In order to establish accountability and transparency, authorities could integrate quality control instruments such as benchmarks and quality marks (Bovens, 2007; Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2007).



6. Recommendations

This paper puts forward 10 key recommendations concerning civic integration policies intended to promote integration processes. These recommendations are relevant for all parties concerned and involved with immigrant integration (e.g. policy leaders, politicians, civil servants, municipalities,

NGO's, civil society, business and academia) and hopefully increase their learning and reflective capacities. The 10 key conclusions of this paper are as follows:

- 1** Make use of academic research on and practical (international) experiences with best practices in the field of civic integration policies in different societal contexts while designing and implementing civic integration policies. An example of an initiative that aims to do this is the Together Project initiated by the Justice and Peace organization. This organization makes use of research on the private sponsorship system for newcomers in Canada and aims to implement a similar model in the Netherlands.
- 2** To assess the quality of possible civic integration trajectories, use non-normative approaches to integration that measure the impact of policies on several policy objectives (instead of using normative approaches to measure the integration level of individual newcomers to establish whether they have “earned” rights or belonging).

- 3** Ask newcomers for input about their experiences with civic integration policies while assessing the effectiveness of these policies (as done by KIS and Verwey-Jonker Institute).
- 4** Make use of a narrative approach to evaluate and assess the quality of civic integration trajectories. Policy papers and research that take into account newcomers' stories and narratives are able to identify the main successes of and bottlenecks in current integration programs and practices. A recent report by the Dutch National Ombudsman, *Een Valse Start (A False Start; 2018)*, is an example of such a report.

- 5** Use a multidimensional and inter-sectional approach to design policies intended to facilitate the integration of newcomers. This type of approach acknowledges the mutually constitutive relationships among the domains of (inter alia) housing, employment, education, health, and social connections. This means that the best civic integration policies mutually reinforce and expedite the outcomes of public policies pertaining to other domains (e.g., housing, employment). This approach makes it possible for various forms of marginalization to be made visible, and also makes it possible to identify when different policies applicable to newcomers undermine each other's outcomes.
- 6** Focus on constructively stimulating the learning ability of individual newcomers by taking into account their personal didactical and professional backgrounds instead of using generic negative incentives such as sanctions and fines to stimulate higher learning outcomes. In the current Dutch civic integration framework, newcomers are sanctioned if they do not pass the integration exams within a set timeframe. This system has transpired to not be effective, as it increases barriers to the inclusion and participation of newcomers who will (nevertheless) permanently settle.
- 7** Give space to and fund bottom-up community initiatives intended to supplement the public assistance given to newcomers. An example of such an initiative is Boost in Amsterdam. Boost is a crowd-funded and bottom-up-initiated neighborhood shelter that aims to promote interactions between newcomers and native Dutch. It was set up by local volunteers and is partly funded by the municipality of Amsterdam.
- 8** Give space to and fund bottom-up community initiatives intended to supplement the public assistance given to newcomers. An example of such an initiative is Boost in Amsterdam. Boost is a crowd-funded and bottom-up-initiated neighborhood shelter that aims to promote interactions between newcomers and native Dutch. It was set up by local volunteers and is partly funded by the municipality of Amsterdam.
- 9** Structurally involve professional experts—on the EU, national, and city levels—when designing or implementing civic integration policies (e.g., specialized in intercultural communication, effects of traumas, didactical challenges when learning second languages, illiteracy).
- 10** Collect, preserve, and make accessible scientific knowledge and research on evidence-based civic integration policies. In this context, also nurture a strong social infrastructure between research platforms, scholars, and policy leaders to facilitate the exchange of relevant knowledge and forge relationships of mutual benefit. An example of an initiative that aims to do this is Foundation Civic. Its ambition is to increase the reflective capacities of all parties involved in stimulating civic integration policies (e.g., national governments, municipalities, business, NGOs, civil society and research) and to provide constructive, evidence-based policy suggestions, that is, policy suggestions that are measurably effective and fit within a constitutional state.

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