

## Chapter 6. Block 4. Sectoral policies related to integration

### Match migrant skills with economic and job opportunities (Objective 9)

The Netherlands has the largest gap in labour market outcomes between native and foreign-born in the OECD. The gap in the unemployment ratio between native and foreign-born people was 14.4 percentage points in 2015, while the OECD average was 3.4 (OECD, 2017e). According to OECD database on migrant population outcomes at TL2 level, the gap in North Holland in the unemployment rate between native-born (6%) and foreign born (10%) was smaller in 2014-2015 than at national level. In 2016, the difference between the percentage of the unemployed population in Amsterdam among non-western migrants (10.2%) and native born (4.7%) was 5.5 percentage points (OECD, 2017e). An OECD Skills review (OECD, 2017e) for the Netherlands shows that even within the same level of education, the employment gap between the native and foreign-born populations persists, hinting at the fact that other factors such as discrimination, difficulties in the recognition and validation of skills, as well as social and economic networks might play a role in labour market performance.

According to the information provided by the city, several measures have been taken to increase migrant integration through labour. Monitoring the immigrant to native-born ratio of employees has been possible since the 1990s when the national government obliged employers to register all employees, including migrants. In those years, employers in Amsterdam set up a foundation which aimed at helping immigrants obtain a stable job.

While the city doesn't have the competence to decide on labour migration policies and working permits, which are under the remit of the national government, it plays a vital role in influencing job placement and can help to connect newcomers as well as long-standing resident migrants and local employers. The city indicates to be greatly involved in the qualification and education of migrants, which are a prerequisite for successful entry to the labour market. Further, the city plays a role in welfare benefit distribution as it distributes social benefits to 40 000 unemployed people through financing from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. Among these beneficiaries approximately 77% have a migrant background (OECD-Questionnaire, Amsterdam, 2017). Migrants generally benefit from the services of the employment insurance agency (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen) on the same basis as nationals, provided they have previously worked in the Netherlands. Specific measures that the city takes will be analysed below.

#### *High-skilled labour*

The demand for high- and medium-skilled workers substantially exceeds supply in the Dutch labour market: until 2025, 1.3 million new job opportunities are expected at medium skill levels and 2.4 million at high skill levels. During the same period, the labour supply is expected to grow by only 1 million for highly skilled people and to fall

for medium skilled ones (OECD, 2016d). Based on these projections, a Highly Skilled Migrants Scheme, introduced in 2004 and revised in 2014, aims at attracting “knowledge” migrants. A facilitated procedure<sup>1</sup> allows Dutch companies to file visa applications for highly skilled migrants they would like to recruit from outside the EU (OECD, 2017a). Visa applications for “knowledge migrants” are accepted based on the remuneration they will receive, not on educational requirements. Therefore, it is possible that the first 7 000 permits for knowledge migrants issued in 2014 do not necessarily correspond to a higher share of tertiary educated persons among employed migrants nor that they have contributed to the highly innovative and export-oriented top nine sectors of the Dutch economy, where migrants are currently under-represented (OECD, 2017a).

The city of Amsterdam has deployed significant efforts to attract skilled migrants and has made contacts with local enterprises to this end. The city established the Expat Centre (now called IN Amsterdam – International Newcomers Amsterdam): a one-stop shop for the integration of highly skilled migrants. Migrants find assistance to register and settle in the city. In collaboration with the national Ministry of Security and Justice (Immigrate and Naturalisation service, IND) the Expat Centre helps with residence and work permits, registration with the municipality, tax questions and many other official matters.

### ***Support to groups that face obstacles in entering or re-entering the labour market***

In 2015, non-western migrants were three times more often unemployed than natives, and 1.5 times more so than EU migrants (OECD-Questionnaire, Amsterdam, 2017). This population is part of the group facing obstacles to entering or re-entering the labour market that the municipality targets through a set of measures.

The programme “Amsterdam Inclusive Labour” market has been developed by local authorities with the aim of creating professional networks that are willing to educate and employ migrants and refugees.

The “Create your own job” (*Eigen Werk*) initiative is the city’s programme to support unemployed people who would like to become entrepreneurs; 10-20% of its beneficiaries have a migration background. The programme has been running for over ten years and is part of a general re-integration policy – with a 70% success rate of starting a business. Success rates are similar between natives and migrants. “Create your own job” systematically maps in which sectors there are more opportunities for entrepreneurs to create a start-up. This mapping is done in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and the Statistics Netherlands, which provides data. As workshops in the programme are in Dutch, migrants should have a good command of the language. All programme participants are eligible for national tax benefits for entrepreneurs. Moreover, when applicable, authorities top up the entrepreneurial income to the amount of their initial unemployment benefit (based on their personal employment history) or social benefits (accessible to all) for up to three years. The city also provides microfinance for migrant entrepreneurs.

### ***Refugees’ integration in the labour market***

Supporting refugees to find employment is a priority for the city under the previously described Amsterdam Approach. In the past the city observed that during the first three years after their arrival, less than 25% of refugees were employed. Yet, research shows that the chance of employment increases the longer a refugee resides in the Netherlands, thus encouraging policies to help refugees find a job in a shorter period of time

(Gemeente Amsterdam, 2016b). Specifically, low employment numbers are found for Somalis, Iraqi and Afghan refugees (Wittebrood, K. and I. Andriessen 2014). To target these issues, the Amsterdam Approach offers fast, intensive and high-quality language lessons combined with intensive coaching and guidance to enter different aspects of integration including health problems. The first step is to assess refugees' skills to orient them towards educational or professional opportunities. This was outsourced by the city to [Manpower](#), a leading private headhunting company. Manpower implemented a pilot project in the AZC asylum centre in Amsterdam, which included the design of an assessment tool, in different languages, to identify the specific competences and aspirations of the candidates and defining a personal development plan. Most participants needed to focus on their level of Dutch in order to increase their chances in the labour market. Another pilot project is being implemented in the AZC camp to facilitate refugees' access to jobs – the Refugee Talent Hub<sup>2</sup> (see “Space applied to refugee integration” in Chapter 4). This is a digital matching platform sponsored by the municipality and private companies such as Accenture and IKEA, aiming to bridge the gap between employers and refugees. It is interesting to notice how companies, NGOs, educational institutes and the government who are involved in the platform proudly advertise their engagement through social media, contributing to establishing social recognition for welcoming refugees and helping them find a job.<sup>3</sup>

In October 2015, at the beginning of the influx of refugee and asylum seekers, the municipality developed an Action Plan in co-ordination with a number of stakeholders, among them: the Confederation of Netherlands' Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW), the COA, the IND, employment agencies, education/training institutions as well as universities. The action plan aimed at gaining insight on the competences of newcomers. It advocates for starting individual trajectories towards employment before status recognition and, concerning refugees, fostering a quick and suitable match between competences and employers (e.g. making use of acceleration programmes, partnerships and networking events).

It is important to note that the Amsterdam Approach represents an update of and creates synergies with previous initiatives for migrants developed in the city, including, for instance, the Access to Amsterdam programme (*Toegang tot Amsterdam*). This project has existed since 2011 and comprises an integrated approach towards language, empowerment and employment skills. A first evaluation conducted in 2014 showed the programme pays off, with 73% of the participants moving one step up on the so-called participation ladder. Equally, the approach seeks synergies with the re-integration efforts of the Action Plan against Youth Unemployment (*Aanvalsplan Jeugdwerkloosheid*), the Action Plan for Entrepreneurship (*Actieplan Ondernemerschap*) and the programme Employment for and by Refugees (*Werk voor en door Vluchtelingen*), set up by the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

### Secure access to adequate housing (Objective 10)

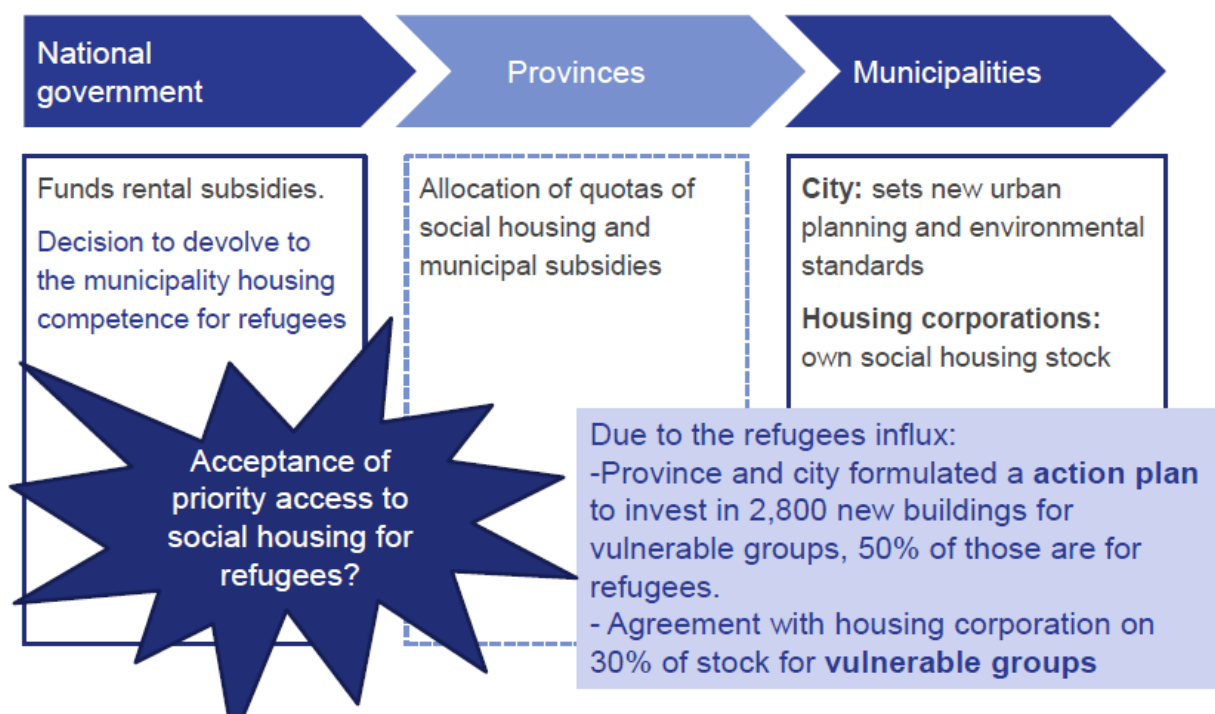
Social housing in the Netherlands is a competence mostly shared between the central government, the municipal level and housing associations. The central government sets the quality standards for new buildings, the regulatory framework for housing associations, the regulation for housing benefits and determines the number of status holders that each municipality should accommodate. The province has a very limited role in this sector and is mainly concerned with spatial planning for new housing. It also controls whether municipalities fulfil the housing quota for status holders. The

municipality is in charge of housing for all vulnerable groups, including refugees. A unit in charge of housing is situated in the economic services department of the municipality, and co-ordinates the housing aspect of the refugee response (OECD-Questionnaire, Amsterdam, 2017).

Figure 6.1. Competences for social housing in Amsterdam

## Competences for social housing in Amsterdam

60% of housing stock is controlled by housing corporations, 40% owners, 10% rent  
No different treatment for migrant groups: access to social housing is based on income, 8.7 years waiting list.



Source: Author's compilation based on responses to the OECD questionnaire Amsterdam, 2017.

The city of Amsterdam has an active land policy, meaning it is involved in releasing land for development and developing it itself (OECD, 2017g). The municipality also has its say in new housing projects in terms of urban planning. While direct funding for the construction of affordable housing is largely absent, municipalities can offer lower land prices to housing associations.

Amsterdam has six housing associations. These associations are non-profit organisations with their own board and they control their housing stock. They are responsible for managing social housing, investing in new buildings and dealing with social housing applications. They work based on a set of regulatory frameworks negotiated with the municipality and the tenants' associations on a range of issues such as: the environment, the distribution of housing, building and living standards as well as affordability. In the past housing associations were instrumental in building and renovating new neighbourhoods; the share of social housing stock reached 80% in the 1980s. Today

housing associations' stock represents 43% of all housing in Amsterdam, 95% of which is in the social rental sector (OECD, 2017d).

Social houses (houses made available to dwellers paying a subsidised rent) are allocated to Amsterdam residents strictly on the basis of income: in 2016 households with an annual income lower than EUR 36 165 (before tax) were eligible. The maximum net monthly rent for social housing was EUR 710.68 in 2016, the average rental costs for social housing in Amsterdam in 2015 was EUR 496, compared to EUR 745 on average rent for private rentals (OECD 2017g). The income criterion applies to all residents equally. However, priority access is given to vulnerable groups including disabled citizens, victims of domestic violence and refugees. In 2015, the average registration time for accessing social housing was 8.7 years (Questionnaire Amsterdam, 2017).

Amsterdam has developed a housing strategy called “Vision 2020” to address the structural shortage of affordable housing. Amongst other targets the strategy aims at increasing the turnover in social housing stock (e.g. by increasing rents at a higher pace for tenants whose earnings have passed certain thresholds) and at building neighbourhoods where all groups – regardless of age, income and ethnicity – live together. The 2015 reform of the Housing Act introduced changes to the commercial activities of housing associations for instance by introducing a new levy but also making it easier for associations to sell portion of their housing stock to the private market. Generally, the city and associations express the idea of a “sustainable equilibrium” to balance the housing demand. At present this equilibrium amounts capped at 162 000 housing units own by associations. For further analysis of housing and real estate trends see *The Governance of Land-Use in the Netherlands: The Case of Amsterdam* (OECD, 2017g). Three factors seem to influence spatial distribution in the coming years, potentially making the inner city more and more polarised. On the one end is going to be increasingly inhabited by highly advantaged dwellers who can either buy the social housing stock now being privatised or who already own a property – 29% of dwellings in Amsterdam in 2015 were owner occupied (Geemente Amsterdam, 2016) – or who can afford high rents. On the other end, the inner city will be characterised by the most disadvantaged dwellers who benefit from the social housing system. In effect, since 2011 changes to national legislation have increasingly set higher rent for middle-income individuals, pushing them to move to the private rental market, often outside the inner city (OECD, 2017g). Finally, the city has competence for building neighbourhoods where all groups can co-exist and potentially the right to release the land for development.

### ***Mechanisms for housing refugees in the city of Amsterdam***

The inflow of refugees in 2014-15 created even more pressure on the city's housing system, as according to the Housing Allocation Act (*Huisvestingswet*, renewed in 2014), the municipality is responsible for providing accommodation for refugees allocated to its territory.

Recognised refugees assigned to the city of Amsterdam are placed in housing in collaboration with the COA, the housing associations and the refugee's case manager. In 2016, 2 013 refugees received social housing either through temporary rental contract or in an asylum centre. In addition, two measures were put in place: 1) an agreement was established between the municipality and the housing associations stating that 30% of available rentals should be allocated to vulnerable groups, including refugees, who represent roughly one-third of the beneficiaries; 2) the province of North Holland and the city of Amsterdam formulated an action plan to make up for the shortfall of housing for

vulnerable groups, investing in 2 700 new dwellings until 2018. Funding mainly comes from the housing associations themselves and the municipality. National funding to build new houses for refugees is available, but the criteria are restrictive, i.e. four refugees should be hosted in one apartment. No European funds are being used at this time for this purpose.

The mechanism to assign long-term housing to recognised refugees is implemented by the municipal housing unit and the housing associations. All housing associations are involved in identifying available housing and make a “gentlemen agreement” for sharing equally the number of refugees who need to be sheltered, thus also allowing dispersion across different neighbourhoods, which avoids putting more pressure on neighbourhoods that already have an established presence of migrants and refugees. Once suitable housing becomes available, the housing associations and the municipality make a one-time offer (accept or decline) to the refugee. If the refugee accepts (which is almost always the case), he/she is provided with basic services and a grant to sum the house (partially a grant – EUR 600 – partially a loan – EUR 1 600). The municipality pays a loan to the housing association to cover the cost of the house. Refugees, as all other social housing dwellers, are supposed to pay the corresponding rent, but can receive financial support from the municipality if their income is insufficient. The national government funds these housing subsidies. The process of contracting the allocation, registering and moving from the AZC should take 2.5 days from the moment the refugee accepts the house. There is no time limit for refugees to stay in the dwelling. Tenants may officially swap dwellings, allowing them to move to other locations.

Refugees younger than 28 years old are eligible for student housing; however, these kinds of dwellings are only available for a maximum of five years. The housing associations match the student’s skills and competencies to the residential environment in co-ordination with the municipal department in charge of education. Refugees housed as students are not accounted for in the 30% quota of social housing for vulnerable groups.

## **Provide social welfare measures that are aligned with migrant inclusion (Objective 11)**

### ***General social benefits***

According to the data provided by the city of Amsterdam, in 2015, 13.8% of non-western migrants received social benefits, opposed to 2.2% of the native-born population and 4.4% among western migrants (Statistics Netherlands, 2016). The city also indicated that around 65% of recognised refugees – who represent 0.8% of the migrant population in Amsterdam – receive social benefits, compared to 7.7% of the Amsterdam population on average. Eleven to 15 years after arrival, dependency on social benefits among refugees is still five times higher than the average in Amsterdam. Some groups of refugees are more dependent on social benefits than others; for instance, after residing in the Netherlands for at least nine years, 23.9% of the Afghan migrants, 32.4% of the Iraqi migrants, 21.4% of the Iranian migrants and 43.2% of the Somali migrants received social benefits (Statistics Netherlands, 2016).



**Box 6.1. Example of social support at the neighbourhood level**

In terms of general social services, the municipality has implemented care programmes, like the “ACT together” ([Samen DOEN](#)) programme. This programme consists of 22 teams across the city specifically in charge of supporting inhabitants/families who are simultaneously facing several problems, such as with work, upbringing, debts, education, housing and healthcare. When needed, recognised refugees can be referred to these services. This programme depicts the integrated needs-based approach to public services that Amsterdam tries to offer to all users at the neighbourhood level.

***Healthcare***

Health statistics for Amsterdam indicate that natives are in better health than non-western migrants; in addition, healthcare costs are lower for natives and EU migrants than for non-western migrants. In particular, obesity and diabetes are a problem for non-western migrants (Statistics Netherlands, 2016). Depression and post-traumatic stress disorder can be a problem for refugees and asylum seekers; Statistics Netherlands estimates that between 13% and 25% of asylum seekers and refugees are treated for these diseases in the Netherlands. Yet, the general health of the recently arrived is good, as this group is mostly young and has shown resilience in dealing with the fleeing experience (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2016b). The health of some refugees even worsens during their stay in the Netherlands compared to their health when they arrived (Lamkaddem, Essink-Bot and Stronks, 2013). This is often related to the poor socio-economic situation of refugees, which lacks perspective and creates stress. It underlines further the need for early integration and health measures that the city could provide. Moreover, many migrants have insufficient knowledge about the Dutch healthcare system, which hinders their access to treatment.

This is why the municipality aspires to address these issues as early as possible. For example, more attention is now given to prevention by means of counselling on a healthy lifestyle (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2015).

To access basic health<sup>4</sup> in the Netherlands one needs to subscribe to a private health insurance company. Non-EU migrants have to subscribe after three months (once they receive a valid residence permit) and EU migrants after one year in the Netherlands. When the person is unemployed or does not have sufficient income to pay for the insurance, he/she receives a subsidy from the national government for as long as needed.

Some measures have been taken at the national level to respond to the influx of refugees. For instance, the Regulation for Asylum Seekers (*Regeling Zorg Asielzoekers*, RZA) gives asylum seekers in the asylum centres (AZC) access to healthcare that is highly comparable to the general basic healthcare insurance and long-term care insurance for Dutch residents and employees.

The COA is the body responsible for the provision of healthcare for asylum seekers. A few days after registration, asylum seekers receive an RZA healthcare card with a personal COA healthcare number. Once they are granted status they can subscribe to basic health insurance. In 2009, the COA externalised the provision of health services for RZA holders to a Dutch private health insurance corporation, Menzis. Services are

provided at general practitioners centres (*Gezondheidscentrum Asielzoekers*, GCA) located near or at each AZC. Furthermore, asylum seekers have the right to an interpreter when seeking healthcare. This service has been commissioned to Concorde, a private translation company ([www.concorde.nl](http://www.concorde.nl)), since 2015.

Public healthcare (*Publieke Gezondheidszorg Asielzoekers*, PGA) is provided by the Association of Community Health Services (GGD)<sup>5</sup> and Regional Medical Preparedness and Planning (GHOR) office. The GHOR is predominantly responsible for national co-ordination of the 25 Dutch GGD centres. The GGD centres usually operate in several municipalities, which give their own assignments to the GGD, as specified in the municipal memoranda on local policy on community health. These services are generic and the COA has an agreement to provide them specifically for asylum seekers. Since November 2016, the national government assists in the co-ordination of healthcare development and health programmes for refugees through the appointment of a regional health co-ordinator for each working area of the GGD. The regional co-ordination is funded by the national Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports and will last at least until May 2018. *The goal is to achieve structural healthcare policies for migrants with a residence permit and to implement and embed this policy in the future strategies of the local authorities.*

Among others, the support from the regional co-ordination includes the sharing of national good practices, networking, the creation of a chain of care, and the provision of knowledge about healthcare that is culturally sensitive. In line with this, the VNG provides support and advice about policies that concern the health and well-being of migrants and refugees to local governments. Pharos, the Dutch Centre of Expertise on Health Disparities, provides counselling in this respect. In turn, the regional co-ordinator advises the municipality about the quality of care and cures. Currently, the city of Amsterdam is offered this overarching support together with five other smaller municipalities. The nomination of a regional health co-ordinator addresses several concerns that various organisations (e.g. NGOs, governmental organisations) had raised:

- achieve more effective policies through co-ordinated efforts
- underline the need for intercultural and professional education of healthcare professionals in order to enhance their competences in working with migrants and refugees
- more systematically address the prevention of health problems among refugees, including monitoring their health and socio-economic status more regularly and providing operators with longer contracts.

The regional health co-ordination on health provision for status holders and other migrants aims to systematically deliver more effective policies, share best practices, strengthen intercultural competences and prevent health problems. Municipalities are offered this overarching support on issues related to migrant health as well as from the VNG and the Dutch Centre for Expertise on Health Disparities.

Another example for co-ordination and sharing of best practices in health services dealing with refugees and migrants has been the implementation of a so-called “sounding board group” (*klankbordgroep*), which can be alternatively described as a focus group for professionals. This sounding board group is set up at the municipal level, and its main objective is to let key persons from different ethnic communities give their advice to professional care takers on how to approach the respective target group. Efforts are currently being made to integrate all relevant perspectives during the evaluation phase of



a policy, while keeping the lines of communication between policy makers and practitioners as short as possible.

### **Establish education responses to address segregation and provide equitable paths to professional growth (Objective 12)**

Historically the Dutch government's approach to migrants' education was to help them maintaining their own culture, in view of a possible return to their home country. Thus, from the 1970s the national government financed education systems for immigrant children in their own language and culture. Since the early 1980s, the Dutch Minister of Education changed the "minority language and culture teaching" policy objective from "encouraging re-migration" to "encouraging integration", recognising that temporariness was fiction. Since 1994, teaching took place in Dutch and language classes – of students' native language – were provided only outside of regular school hours. This programme stopped being financed in 2004 (Bouras, 2012).

#### ***Gaps in education attainment and results***

As explained above, generally, non-western immigrants in Amsterdam have a lower overall educational attainment than native Dutch: for all levels of education, non-western migrants are less likely to obtain their degree than natives. Children from Turkish or Moroccan descent have significantly more difficulties passing language tests in primary schools. However, the percentage of non-western students that enrolls in higher educational programmes has increased over the past decade, but this also holds true for native students. Thus, the overall educational attainment gap between non-western immigrants and natives remains nearly unchanged (Statistics Netherlands, 2016). Still, in terms of average score of students at the bottom of the performance distribution, students in the Netherlands have relatively high results compared to other OECD countries. The OECD 2016 review of Dutch national policies for education showed that the performance gap between students with an immigrant background and native students is smaller in the Netherlands than in countries of a similar size and nature of migrant population (such as Austria, Germany or Sweden) (OECD, 2016d).

A number of reasons have been explored in the literature as contributing gaps in educational attainment and results.

The concentration of immigrant students in "enclave schools" has detrimental effects on learning; this is not due to the concentration of immigrant students, but because of the concentration of socio-economically disadvantaged students, for instance the educational levels of the children's parents (OECD, 2015). The parental choice system in the Netherlands is contributing to creating more segregated schools. (Ladd, Fiske and Rujis, 2009). Two important policy options to balance school choice are the strengthening of weak schools to ensure making quality education accessible for all and to enhance the means of disadvantaged and migrants families to exercise a well informed choice (OECD, 2010).

#### ***Means deployed by municipal authority to improve quality education for all groups***

Municipalities operated public schools until 2006, when they were made the responsibility of independent boards, thus leaving local policy makers with no operational authority. All schools are subject to the same national accountability standards, general

national curriculum guidelines and national teacher salary schedules (Ladd, Fiske and Rujis, 2009). Primary schools receive equal funding regardless of whether they are publicly (30% of Dutch primary students attend public schools) or privately operated

Municipalities tried to tackle the school selection mechanisms to influence the parental choice system. For instance, some municipalities in the Netherlands (i.e. Nijmegen) have introduced a central subscription system to assign students to primary schools, so as to reach a share of 30% of disadvantaged students in each school. In other cities (i.e. Rotterdam), oversubscribed schools are required to give preference to children who would enrich the school's ethnic and socio-economic mix (OECD, 2010b).

Efforts have been made to attract more funding for schools serving disadvantaged students, so as to improve the educational achievement of primary/grammar school pupils and thus access for these students to higher forms of secondary education. From 1973 to 2006, a national "weighted funding" system (*gewichtenregeling*) aligned the level of funding to the school for each child based on the educational attainment and ethnicity of his/her parents (Vink, 2008). The ethnicity clause was dropped in 2006 and now funding is only based on the parents' educational attainment.

Currently, a national policy is being implemented by municipalities which directly target the access of disadvantaged children (which includes immigrant children according to the target definition of this policy) to quality early education and care. Early childhood programmes (day care centres, pre-kindergarteden and kindergarten, up until the age of six) can offer what is referred to in the Netherlands as "before and early school education" (*voor en vroeg schoolse educatie*, VVE) for students with a migration background in addition to the general education programme. These programmes have been implemented since the early 2000s and funded by municipalities, with the objective to reduce the integration gap very early, by providing, in particular, language support (OECD, 2016d). One study proved that increased investment in VVE reduces repeating a year during the first two years of primary school (at age four or five), which is heavily biased towards children from socio-economically disadvantaged and immigrant backgrounds (Akgunduz and Heijnen, 2016). Nowadays, early childhood education is funded by the central government and distributed by the municipal authorities (preschool VVE) and school boards (VVE in primary education) (Eurydice, 2017).

The municipality is also involved in skills recognition and works with NUFFIC, a non-profit Dutch organisation in charge of the recognition of qualifying degrees in the Dutch system. NUFFIC matches the level of education previously obtained in the country of origin with the Dutch requirements and indicates the amount of additional courses needed to obtain an equivalent professional degree. Information about assessing foreign qualification is also systematically provided in the integration programme for immigrants that is offered within the framework of the civic integration exam (OECD, 2017b).

### ***Refugees' integration through education***

Strategies for education and training of newcomers in Amsterdam started well before the peak in arrivals of refugees and asylum seekers. In 2009, the city developed a strategy based on the results of a study it had commissioned on the educational needs and profiles of newcomers. This strategy was expanded as the number of newcomers increased in 2015, by increasing the number of partners involved in its implementation.

Since the increase of the number of refugee arrivals, 114 elementary and secondary schools have received new refugee students. The city organises newcomer classes for

children 6-11 years old to ensure their level of Dutch is sufficient to join regular education. To that end, the city receives a budget for schooling refugee and asylum seeker students 5-18 years old. The money has been used to hire more teachers and build new classrooms. However, the duration of the funding is uncertain, leaving the programme largely open.

Within the framework of the Amsterdam Approach, refugees above the age of 18 who hold a master degree have the opportunity of completing or validating their higher education. The municipality has established a contract with the UAF<sup>6</sup> which supports refugees in their procedures with NUFFIC for the recognition of their diplomas and connects graduated refugees to the labour market as early as possible. Students under this scheme are provided with a scholarship and coaching. According to the target set by the Amsterdam Approach, 75% of the students under this programme should complete their diploma.

For refugees with an intermediate level of education, the main objective of the Amsterdam Approach is for them to acquire a basic qualification. In general, refugees older than 18 but under 28 are oriented towards an education path. For instance, the city organises bridging classes that allow refugees to start their bachelor's degree. The target is that 50% of those who receive training will complete this successfully. This is implemented in co-operation with regional education centres (*Regionale Opleidings Centra*, ROCs), that mostly offer intermediate vocational training, and Dutch as a second language courses. For lower or uneducated refugees, who receive a social allowance, the focus is on basic language training and citizen participation (a dual trajectory). This is a multi-year path that is customised towards specific educational needs and that also includes participatory programmes.

#### Key observations: Block 4

- The national-local co-ordination mechanism in the health sector is significant not only as example of multi-level-governance, but also as an example of how updates in service delivery and related governance mechanisms implemented to respond to refugee inflows can be extended to larger groups, including long-standing migrants. From only sharing knowledge, this mechanism could be scaled up to actual service provision. A good example could be the collaboration between 13 municipalities in the Gothenburg region that share responsibility for migrant service provision across the province.
- The “Amsterdam Inclusive Labour Market” programme and the Refugee Talent Hub are examples of the city's efforts in building networks with professionals that are willing to educate and employ migrants and refugees, and not only the high-skilled ones. These experiences need to be well documented in order to decide if is worth scaling them up,
- Efforts to accurately assess refugees' competences early on show that the city has learned from unsuccessful labour integration of large groups of refugees in the past. It could also systematise its efforts to match profiles with local opportunities – beyond the Refugee Talent Hub – by establishing regular dialogue with the chamber of commerce and the Institute for Employee Benefit Schemes (UWV). One example is the Austrian collaboration between the Employment Agency and the chamber

of commerce for matching refugee profiles with the right job opportunity also beyond Vienna.

- The city's response to housing refugees and asylum seekers is an example of successful multi-level co-ordination. It also shows the city's resilience capacity: the city recognised hosting refugees as a priority and collaborated with other stakeholders (housing associations, COA, etc.) to find appropriate housing solutions. It also shows its communication capacity by sensitively explaining its decision to the public. The response took into account spatial distribution, thus avoiding the concentration of newcomers in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Across-the-board services have been updated to respond to refugee arrivals since 2015. These targeted responses in the field of housing, labour, health and education, as well as the governance innovations that accompanied them (i.e. the chain model to implement the Amsterdam Approach) should be considered as pilots and through close monitoring the city could evaluate the feasibility of extending it beyond this group, which only represents 0.8% of the population with a migration background in the city.
- The municipality has limited competences in addressing the education gaps between students with migration background and the rest of the population. However some measures implemented through local authorities in early and pre-school education show promising results in reducing repetition of years in primary school. The tailored approach to the level of education of newcomers conceived within the Amsterdam approach as well as the decision to disperse them across 114 schools in the city are promising and their impact in terms of accelerating learning process should be monitored.

## Notes

1. Employers need to become a "recognised sponsor" by registering with the Dutch Immigration Service and pay a fee of EUR 5 276 (lower for start-ups and companies employing less than 50 people). The approval is valid for an indefinite period and allows the company to file visa and work permit applications (<https://ind.nl/en/work/pages/highly-skilled-migrant.aspx>).
2. [www.refugeetalenthub.com/en/werknemers/home/#/inspiratie](http://www.refugeetalenthub.com/en/werknemers/home/#/inspiratie).
3. [www.matchcare.nl/proud-partner-refugee-talent-hub](http://www.matchcare.nl/proud-partner-refugee-talent-hub).
4. Two main forms of healthcare insurance exist in the Netherlands: basic insurance that covers common medical care (Zorgverzekeringswet, Zvw) and insurance against long-term nursing and care for people with chronic illnesses, vulnerable elderly, or people with a severe mental or physical handicap (Wet langdurige zorg, Wlz). Dutch residents and employees are automatically insured against long-term care by the government, but everyone is obliged to subscribe to their own basic health insurance; otherwise they could be fined. Various private insurance companies offer this insurance, but the national government remains responsible for the overall accessibility and quality of the healthcare

system. These companies therefore have to offer a defined set of basic treatments, and they are not allowed to refuse healthcare or to impose special conditions. In 2015, Dutch residents spent an average of EUR 1 200 a year on basic healthcare insurance.

5. The tasks of the GGD centres are specified by the national Public Health Act and generally include child healthcare, environmental health, socio-medical advice, periodic sanitary inspections, medical screening, epidemiology, health education and community mental health.
6. This foundation has been supporting refugee students in the Netherlands since 1948. A small portion of funding comes from the municipality and is largely financed through private contributions and the national lottery. The foundation is moving from a model where it only supported students in obtaining a diploma to also facilitating refugees' access to the job market.





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