

Migration Profile

THE NETHERLANDS

A. Executive Summary

The Netherlands is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy. It has been a member of the European Union since 1958 and of the Schengen area since 1995, shaping as a consequence the country's legal and executive administration of migration and refugees. II

Historically, the Netherlands has been a destination country of migration,ⁱⁱⁱ and its immigration patterns have been the result of the Dutch colonial heritage and different waves of labour recruitment programs.^{iv} In 2021, the main countries of origin for immigrants were Poland, the Former Soviet Union, Syria, Romania, Germany, and Turkey.^v

Emigration is mostly young and motivated by housing factors since rents in the Netherlands are very high, and citizens prefer living in border areas located in Belgium or Germany. Vi Many students also look for high-quality education abroad, and their main countries of destination are Germany, Belgium, the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Vii

Regarding asylum seekers and refugees, asylum applications have increased throughout the years due to the different conflicts involving non-EU countries. Dutch policies have been evolving to adapt to this higher demand. Nevertheless, the country is facing great challenges in handling asylum applications. In 2021, most refugees came from Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Turkey, and Somalia. X

In 2020, the main sectors of the Dutch economy were the public administration, defence, education, human health, and social work activities (21.7%); wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation, and food services (20.4%); and professional, scientific, and technical activities (14.7%).* Intra-EU trade accounts for 66% of the Netherlands' exports and 44% of its imports.*xi

In 2021 the Dutch GDP amounted to US\$ 1,018,007,060, xii experiencing an annual growth rate of 5% from the previous year due to a decrease of -3.8% in 2020, xiii Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) net inflows in 2020 represented -26% of the country's GDP, compared with the previous year, which stood at -3.7%, xiv The inflation rate in 2021 was 2.7% of its GDP compared to 1.3% of the previous year. xv

B. Country Profile

I. Basic Information

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is located to the west of the Eurasian continent. It borders Belgium to the south, the Federal Republic of Germany to the east, and the North Sea to the west.xvi Its territory extension is 41,500 sq. km, and includes also 500 sq. km of the Caribbean islands of Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius.xvii The country is divided into 12 provinces and 388 municipalities.xviii

Its capital is Amsterdam and its official language is Dutch. xix In January 2022, its population was 17,193,499 inhabitants, xx of whom 79% were of Dutch descent, while the other ethnic groups include Europeans (5.7%), Turks (2.4%), Indo-Europeans (2.3%), Moroccans (2.2%), Surinamese (2.1%), Caribbeans (0.9%), Poles (0.6%), Chinese (0.3%), Iraqis (0.3%), and others (3.9%). xxi

Regarding religion, there is freedom of worship in the Netherlands, although the country has traditionally been Calvinist; but there are also Catholics (20%), Protestants (15%), Muslims (5%), and other religions (6%). Currently, people with no religious affiliation are the majority (54%).xxiii

II. International and Internal Migration

In 2021 there were nearly 2.5 million immigrants in the Netherlands.*xiii The top five countries of origin were Poland, the Former Soviet Union, Syria, Romania, Germany, and Turkey.*xiv In the same year, most of the granted family reunification permits were given to persons coming from India, Turkey, and Syria. Conversely, most students and work permits were issued to nationals from China, the USA, and India.*xvv

The migrant share from EU countries is equal to the one from non-EU countries (both represent 3% of the total population), xxvi and this can be explained by the historical background of the country's migration flows. Since the end of World War II, immigration patterns have resulted from the Dutch Colonial heritage, including many Dutch returnees and descendants coming back from Indonesia, Suriname, and the Caribbean. Moreover, the industrial boom in the 1950's and the 1974 oil crisis increased the arrival of many migrant workers through labour recruitment programs, especially from Italy, Spain, Turkey, Morocco, and Yugoslavia, with prominent diasporas established in the country.xxvii

Thus, there are four main streams of immigration in the Netherlands: intra-European Union migrants (particularly from Poland), asylum seekers, family reunification arrivals, and, as a remnant of the country's colonial history, longstanding migration from the Caribbean.

The primary pull factors for immigration are labour and family reunification; however, the government has recently recognised the need to bring in highly skilled workers. The most common occupations for migrants are logistics (44%), horticulture (19%), food industry (13%), metallurgical industry (8%), and agriculture (6%).xxx

Even though there is a wide distribution of migrants throughout the country, most of them do live in western areas.xxxi In fact, almost 40% of them are located in the main cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, and Utrecht.xxxii Nevertheless, since 2012 migrants have

also been accommodated in smaller municipalities in Randstad, Noord-Brabant, and Limburg (such as Westland, Zeewolde, and Roosendaal).xxxiii

To obtain a permanent or a long-term residence permit or to become Dutch citizens through naturalisation, migrants must follow a "civic integration process", which consists in learning about Dutch culture, speaking the language, and being able to work or study independently.**xxiv** But nationals from EU countries, Liechtenstein, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, and Turkey, are exempt from these requirements.**xxxv*

Regarding irregular migration, the government estimates that the number of unauthorised immigrants is approximately between 23,000 and 58,000 people, noticing a decrease since the 2004 and 2007 EU inclusion of other countries.xxxvi xxxvii To prevent the irregular phenomenon, the Dutch police performs regular inspections in sectors where these migrants are mostly employed, such as agriculture and services.xxxviii

Migrant workers who do seasonal and low-skilled jobs also face serious housing concerns in the country. They often live in overcrowded accommodations and are exploited by landlords and employers. There are considerable wage differences between migrants and nationals, amounting to a 20% pay gap in 2020.xxxix There is an ethnic hierarchy in the Dutch labour market, where ethnic minorities of Middle Eastern, African, and Latin American origin are the victims of high levels of discrimination.xl The female labour participation rate for migrants is (36%) in comparison with the male one (64%).xli Moreover, migrant children also face integration difficulties in schools due to their language, religion (many of them are Muslim), and irregular status.xlii

III. Emigration and Skilled Migration

In 2021, the Netherlands registered 145,330 new emigrants.xiii Male emigration was slightly higher (50.59%) than the female one,xliv The main destination countries were Germany (14.06%), Belgium (14.70%), the United States (10.74%), Canada (10.10%), Australia (8.80%), and the United Kingdom (7.88%).xlv However, in the first half of 2022 emigration picked up again: around 7,000 Netherland-born citizens left the country (3.5 times more than the same period in the previous year),xlvi and many of them were relatively young. In 2021 of all emigrants, 43.8% were between 25 and 40 years old, and 21.9% were between 15 and 25 years old.xlvii

Since 2000, cross-border migration to Belgium and Germany has also increased due to the cost of housing in the central Dutch cities. Alviii Alix Therefore, people live across the border but continue working in the Netherlands. The main reason for this phenomenon is the high price of housing and land in the Netherlands, and the fact that Belgium and Germany have larger houses available, that would be practically unaffordable for the middle-income class people in the Netherlands.

In addition, in 2019 there were 2,176 Dutch students registered in a tertiary education programme in the US, 5,110 in Belgium, 3,822 in the UK, and 1,796 in Germany. The main reason for Dutch students to study abroad is the attractiveness of the study programmes, the quality of education, job opportunities and outlets they may have access to later on, immersion into another culture, and learning another language. Nevertheless, this cannot be considered strictly speaking a brain drain. There is no evidence that more scientific researchers are leaving the Netherlands than arriving; if one considers the human flight and

brain drain index, the country has a score of 2.4 out of 10, which indicates that this phenomenon is low.^{liv} What is happening, instead, is an increasingly intense international brain circulation.^{lv} The Netherlands is an attractive country for the scientific world because of its good facilities and quality of life.^{lvi} At the same time, pushing factors for researchers include the 30% tax exemption for people recruited from outside the Netherlands,^{lvii} low salaries, tight research budgets and limited possibilities to secure funding.^{lviii}

IV. Forced Migrants (Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and Climate Displaced People)

From September 2021 to August 2022, 33,530 first asylum applications were registered in the Netherlands, $^{\rm lix}$ out of which, 34% came from Syria, 13% from Afghanistan, 7% from Yemen and Turkey, and 4% from Somalia. $^{\rm lx}$

Between the end of World War II and the 1980s, relatively few refugees arrived in the Netherlands, and those who did were mostly resettled rather than being considered asylum seekers. Ixi By 1985 the number of asylum seekers increased by more than 4,500, forcing the government to change its approach to humanitarian protection. Ixii The aim was to resettle 500 persons per year while developing a system for processing spontaneous arrivals, and facilitating the identification of *bona fide* asylum seekers. Ixiii

Annual asylum applicants peaked in 1998 (45,000), most of whom were fleeing the Yugoslavian wars. After handling many asylum applications during the 1990s with temporary protection measures and by imposing restrictions, arrivals were reduced. Laiv A quota system was established to resettle 500 refugees per year and abandon the usual practice of selecting groups of refugees. This number was later extended to 750, by following the EUTurkey Statement in 2016, and a Dutch commitment to accept resettlement refugees was added. By 2021 the number of reception places was expanded from 32,000 to 42,000 due to overall resettlement needs, which were upward. Resettled refugees, even though were less than those agreed to (by that year only 467 were allocated in the country: 80,5% from Syria, 6,4% from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 5,4% from Eritrea, and 1% from Senegal), Lavi receive a residence permit after entering the country, giving them the same rights and obligations as Dutch citizens. Lavi Lavii The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers is responsible to receive the people to be resettled and take them to their new home. Laviii

In 2021 89% of them were naturalised in other European countries. Globally, in 2021 the Netherlands (45,700), Canada (6,300), and France (3,700) naturalised the most refugees. Naturalisation is the end of a successful integration, providing social, economic, and political rights. Lxix

However, the Netherlands is currently experiencing a crisis in accommodating asylum seekers, with more people needing accommodation than available beds and houses. lxx Overcrowding at the reception centre for new arrivals in Ter Apel and Groningen has forced several families to sleep in tents and others to travel by bus for hours across the country at night to reach available spaces. lxxi The reasons for this situation are the increase in asylum seekers (17,106 by 2021) and the lack of stable housing for people who have been granted legal status in the country or residence permits. lxxii Consequently, these people are still living in regular refugee centres occupying beds that should be available for new applicants, and this is causing this problematic situation. lxxiii

Temporary accommodation for this group has also been taking innovative forms: boats, former army barracks, and sports halls. Lixxiv The Dutch government has not yet forced municipalities to act to find accommodation for these people. Lixxiv

Among the main problems refugees face is the low labour market participation of adult asylum seekers, even those who have lived in the Netherlands for a long time. Another issue is the social isolation that affects a quarter of the refugees. These two problems result in the marginalisation of a relatively large group of people, and older asylum seekers are more vulnerable to this phenomenon. The phenomenon of the low labour market participation of adult asylum seekers.

According to IDMC, in 2021 there were 51,343 internal displacements due to disasters, particularly floods. Moreover, in 2022 there have already been 8 registered internal displacements due to violence and security concerns. Maxx

V. Victims of Human Trafficking

The Netherlands is tier 1 in the US Trafficking in Person Report since it meets the standards for eliminating human trafficking. Nevertheless, there are cases of labour traffickers exploiting foreign victims in industries such as retail, catering, leisure river cruises, agriculture, domestic servitude, and forced criminal activity in the country. The victims' top five countries of origin are Poland, Nigeria, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, and Hungary. Traffickers exploit Venezuelan women in the BES islands and children in the sex tourism industry. Since 2020 there has also been an increase in victims from Nigeria and Uganda, and Ukrainians are especially vulnerable. Most of the traffickers are male, and half of the suspects are Dutch, usually younger than 35 years old. lxxi In 2020 the country registered 984 possible trafficking victims (408 were victims of sex trafficking, 603 of labour trafficking, and 38 of multiple forms). Most of the victims were women (547), and 68 children. lxxxii

In 2021, the police initiated 178 trafficking investigations and prosecutions of 201 alleged traffickers, and continued ongoing prosecutions of 41 alleged traffickers. Moreover, the courts convicted 205 traffickers. Judges often award restitution to victims. Regional police units maintained professional teams with trained anti-trafficking detectives and experts. Through the EUROPOL, the country cooperated with Vietnam to investigate organised criminal groups involved in the exploitation of children for sex and labour trafficking in the Netherlands. lxxxiii

Local governments funded an extensive network of care facilities for victims with legal residency status, providing accommodation in local shelters. Those without legal residency status were provided a three-month reflection period in one of the three NGO-managed specialised trafficking shelters. Then, those who agreed to assist the police could continue. Both shelters offered medical and psychological care, schooling, language and skills training, legal assistance, and self-defence classes. Child victims were placed in specialised shelters. Ixxxiv

In 2021, the country funded the 2023-2027 National Action Plan (NAP). It carried out several awareness campaigns and cooperated with the UN in a program to improve anti-trafficking law enforcement coordination in Niger and Nigeria. hxxv More than 50% of municipalities conducted inspections of commercial sex establishments. The government provided assistance and training overseas, and it funded campaigns in victim source countries in Africa and the Middle East. It continued to implement a national plan against child sex tourism and maintained a police liaison at the Dutch embassy in Thailand. hxxvi

However, despite the country's efforts, some considerable concerns are still present in combating trafficking. Several NGOs criticised the NAP for its lack of measurable goals and monitoring tools. Strict EU privacy regulations refrained victims from registering due to fear of stigmatisation as victims, and non-EU third-country nationals seeking asylum had difficulty accessing victim care services. Juxxviii

VI. National Legal Framework

The primary law governing migration in the Netherlands is the 2000 Aliens Act, related to permits and foreigners' rights and duties. Lexxviii It is implemented through decrees, regulations, and guidelines. Lexxix It also describes asylum procedures and the reception conditions of asylum applicants. Con January 1, 2021 there was an amendment to the Dutch integration law known as the "Civic Integration Act", which requires completing a civic integration programme assisted by municipalities. The Dutch Act on Employment of Foreigners regulates labour migration in the country, in which workers from the European Economic Area are given priority. Cii The law on Dutch citizenship came into effect on January 1, 1985 Ciii.

Regarding human trafficking, Article 273f of the criminal code criminalises sex and labour trafficking. It prescribes punishments up to 12 years imprisonment or a fine for trafficking offences involving an adult victim and 15 years or a penalty when the victim is a child.xciv Likewise, the country recently developed a legal procedure for stateless persons to opt for Dutch citizenship.xcv

Furthermore, at the international level, the Netherlands has been a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention^{xcvi} since 1956, and the 1967 Protocol since 1968.^{xcvii} In 1952 the country also signed the 1949 ILO Migration for Employment Convention,^{xcviii} and in 1966 ratified the 1969 International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.^{xcix} In 1962 it ratified the UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons,^c and in 1985 the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.^{ci}

Moreover, the Netherlands are a party to the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance after its ratification in 2011^{cii}. The country further signed in 2000 the Palermo Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially Women and Children^{ciii} and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air.^{civ} However, it is not a member of the 1975 Migrant Workers Convention,^{cv} nor the 1990 UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrants Workers and Members of their Families.^{cvi}

VII. Main Actors

The State

In the Netherlands, several ministries play a role in developing and implementing migration and asylum policies. CVII The Ministry of Migration is responsible for policies regarding third-country nationals' admission, residence and return. CVIII The Ministry of Justice and Security develops policies on entry, stay and return of foreign nationals, acquisition, and loss of Dutch citizenship. CIX The Immigration and Naturalisation Service, dependent on the Ministry of Justice, implements and develops policies and decides on residence permit applications. CIX

The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers arranges the reception and housing for asylum applicants. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs oversees granting visas at embassies and consulates, and the Ministry of Defence manages border control. Police controls the border, combats human trafficking, and identifies and registers refugees in the country.cxi The regional police unit has the specialised anti-trafficking teams and the national police has dedicated anti-trafficking offices.cxii

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is the authority leading the governance of migrant integration. It develops labour market policies and ensures the access and integration of foreigners in the country. CXIII The civic integration exams are coordinated by the Institute for the Implementation of Education and DUO, part of the Ministry of Education. CXIV

International Organisations

The European Union plays a crucial role in migration management in the Netherlands, implementing measures to control external borders and regulating free movement among Schengen's Member States.^{cxv} FRONTEX is the agency in charge of managing the external EU borders.^{cxvi} The blue card directive regulates the conditions and entry of highly qualified workers from EU and non-EU countries.^{cxvii}

The International Organisation on Migration (IOM) and the Netherlands have also cooperated in the field of migration.cxviii In 2021 the Netherlands and IOM launched a global migration project to protect people on the move, combat human trafficking and smuggling, and support the reintegration of returnees.cxix Through this initiative, vulnerable migrants have had access to a broad range of protection and assistance services. IOM also assisted national and local governments in enabling a conducive migrant protection and management environment.cxx In 2022 more than 30,000 migrants received critical assistance through this initiative, including humanitarian items, shelter, cash, psychological support, healthcare, and legal aid.cxxi

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is located in the Hague and is part of the regional office in Brussels. CXXII Since the country has its own institutions responsible for refugees, the UNHCR does not register, issue documents, arrange accommodation, or resettle refugees. CXXIII It just monitors the country's compliance with international standards of refugee law and the reception conditions, and issues recommendations on the Dutch's asylum framework. It raises awareness through campaigns on asylum and refuge. CXXIV

NGOs and Other Organisations

One of the organisations in the Netherlands is *Médecins Sans Frontières*, whose work currently focuses on people seeking asylum in the country.^{cxxv} It is responsible for providing medical care to hundreds of people stranded outside the main Dutch reception centre for asylum seekers in Ter Apel, in the north-east of the Netherlands.^{cxxvi}

The Red Cross is also present in the country.cxxvii It has set up tents in the crowded application centre in Ter Apel to receive asylum seekers,cxxviii cxxix and provides transportation to people in need of getting to an emergency shelter in Heerenveen.cxxx

Moreover, Save the Children helps children who fled Ukraine and are now living in the Netherlands. CXXXI Schools with refugee children from Ukraine offer the TeamUp programme in cooperation with WarChild and Unicef, CXXXII providing psychosocial support to children affected by conflict and migration through structured play and exercise activities. CXXXIII

Takecarebnb and *People for people* are two NGOs partnered to provide shelter to refugees on a large scale. CXXXIV Their work connects refugees with Dutch families willing to open their homes for three months. CXXXV With the support of a team of volunteers, they make it possible for refugees with residence permits to stay temporarily with Dutch host families while waiting for their own homes. CXXXVI

Finally, *We are here* is a group of refugees in Amsterdam who have not been granted refugee status and are not allowed to work. The group has decided to make their situation visible to raise awareness in Dutch society. CXXXVIII

The Catholic Church

The Dutch Bishops Conference, through its pastoral Christmas letter 'Herbergzaam Nederland', has raised awareness among the local population to take care of migrants and refugees. To do so, it emphasised the important role of volunteers, who provide accompaniment to migrants and refugees in the legal process together with the Dutch authorities. The local population to take care of migrants and refugees in the legal process together with the Dutch authorities.

As a result, the responsibility of migrant parishes and migrant communities without special status falls under the jurisdiction of the local Ordinary. Calii

Likewise, following up on a decision of the Dutch Episcopal Conference in 2005, the pastoral care of immigrants has been entrusted to the dioceses, cxliii meaning the Archdiocese of Utrecht and the Dioceses of Haarlem-Amsterdam and Rotterdam.cxliv In all dioceses there are initiatives and projects at the local level focused on welcoming, protecting, promoting, and integrating refugees and immigrants.cxlv These projects contribute to the integration of refugees into Dutch society.cxlvi

The Council of Churches in the Netherlands, which brings together 19 Churches and Christian organisations, is also active. Calvii The Working Group on Refugees of the Council of Churches identifies and analyses developments related to the field of asylum policy and subsequently advises the Council of Churches on positions to be taken or activities to be carried out. Calviii The group is also in touch with policymakers and the Minister of Immigration, where they hold discussions on this issue. Calix

Salesians, instead, focus more on families and young people.cl They have set up places for refugees and have created shelters where they provide them with accommodation, food, and spiritual assistance.cli

Another Catholic organisation in the Netherlands is Caritas, whose work focuses on projects in the Dutch community to fight poverty and exclusion. clii It also works with migrant organisations on initiatives to care for people in their country of origin, as well as on religious initiatives, and supports local institutions to provide appropriate medical care in areas such as training for staff, improving financial structures and advocacy on behalf of patients. cliii

Among Caritas' members in the Netherlands there is Cordaid, an organisation working in close collaboration with government, churches, private organisations, international development aid organisations, educational institutions, and the Catholic network CIDSE, to offer protection to the most vulnerable, either in the country or abroad. Its main activities, carried out in 46 countries, are indeed focused on emergency aid and disaster resilience, rehabilitation, conflict settlement, entrepreneurship and microfinance. In the Netherlands,

Cordaid works with migrant organisations developing programs to support people in their countries of origin, as well as local institutions in providing adequate healthcare (for example through staff training, improved financing structures and advocacy for patients).

Finally, the *Zusterwerk* centre, member of the European network Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking in Women (RENATE), has been proactively working in the Netherlands since 2016, also focusing on the aspects of migration related to trafficking of human beings. Zusterwerk carries out activities in schools and advocacy to raise awareness and prevent the phenomenon of human trafficking, while also providing information, offering support and refering victims to the right professionals. Among its main objectives, Zusterwerk wants to make people know how to migrate safely, as well as to advocate for destination countries to welcome migrants in a dignified way.

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