



Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe

Country Reports



INTEGRATING IMMIGRANT CHILDREN INTO SCHOOLS IN EUROPE

THE NETHERLANDS

NATIONAL DESCRIPTION – 2003/04

The national contributions contained on this CD-Rom and on the Eurydice website formed the basis for the comparative study on the integration at school of immigrant children in Europe. Each contribution has exactly the same structure with four main sections entitled as follows:

- 1) National definitions and demographic context of immigration
- 2) Measures offering school-based support to immigrant children and their families
- 3) Intercultural approaches in education
- 4) Evaluation, pilot projects, debates and forthcoming reforms

Contributions are available in English and, in the case of some countries, in French.

1. NATIONAL DEFINITIONS AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT OF IMMIGRATION

1.1. National Definitions and Legislative Sources

The Dutch term generally used for 'immigrant' is '*allochtoon*'. Unlike the term 'immigrant', the term '*allochtoon*' refers not only to people who arrive from abroad but also to their descendants born in the host country. The Advisory Council on Government Policy (WRR) defines the term as follows: '*Allochtonen* are, generally speaking, all those who, having come from elsewhere, have settled in the Netherlands and their descendants, up to the third generation, insofar as the latter wish to consider themselves *allochtoon*' (WRR, 1989). In education policy, more specific definitions are used to demarcate the target groups of specific measures.

Immigrants may obtain Dutch citizenship under certain conditions. A child of immigrant parents who is born in the Netherlands does not automatically acquire Dutch citizenship, unless the mother has Dutch nationality or the father has Dutch nationality and is married to the mother. In other cases, children are given the nationality of their parents. They can apply for Dutch nationality at age 18, provided they have lived in the Netherlands since birth (Ministry of Justice, *Hoe kunt u Nederlander worden?* 2003).

1.2. Rights to Education and to Support Measures

Perhaps the single most important piece of legislation relating to immigrants is the first article of the Dutch Constitution: 'All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race, or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted.' On the other hand, there is article 23, which gives parents the 'freedom to provide education according to religious or other belief'. Article 23 is the basis for the existence of religious schools, which have their own pedagogic approach but are funded by the state on an equal basis with public schools (Muslim parents have made use of this article to found Islamic schools).

From age five, all children residing in the Netherlands are legally required to attend school. This requirement extends to school-age children of asylum seekers and irregular residents.

Legislative measures relating to education that benefit immigrant children may be specifically targeted at immigrants or at disadvantaged children, including both indigenous and immigrant children. There are also special educational measures for which irregularly resident children, asylum seekers and specific so-called 'cultural minorities' (see annexe *cumi-regeling*) are the target groups.

1.3. Demographic Information

The Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) defines '*allochtoon*' as 'a person at least one of whose parents was born abroad.' The figures on immigrants given in this sub-section should be interpreted in the light of this definition.

In 2001, the total number of immigrants in the Netherlands was slightly over 1.6 million, i.e. about 10 % of the total population (CBS; quoted in '*Integratiemonitor ISEO*'). The largest immigrant groups come from Turkey (ca. 320 000), Surinam (ca. 308 000), Morocco (ca. 272 000) and the Antilles/Aruba (ca. 117 000), which are former colonies or former recruitment countries.

During the past decade, growing numbers of immigrants have come from countries designated as refugee countries. In 2001, the largest group came from Iraq (there were about 38 000 at that time), Somalia (ca. 30 000), Afghanistan (ca. 26 000) and Iran (ca. 25 000). Although the absolute number of immigrants from these countries is smaller than those from former recruitment countries and ex-colonies, the growth rates are much higher.

Immigrants settle across the country but tend to concentrate in urban areas. At the provincial level, there is a concentration of immigrants in the provinces of North Holland and South Holland. At municipal level, there is a

concentration in the large cities, particularly the four largest – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. One consequence is that schools in cities are more likely to have significant proportions of immigrant pupils (up to 100 %), than schools in more rural areas. Refugees are less concentrated, because there are reception centres for asylum seekers, and these are spread across the country.

In primary school, immigrant children constitute 13 % of the school population (as of 1 October 2002). The fastest growing group of immigrant pupils are refugee children.

Figure 1: Participation in primary education, by country of origin, in 2001 ('000s)

Total number of primary school pupils	1 555.2
Turkey	55.6
Morocco	47.6
Surinam	35.3
Antilles/Aruba	13.3
Greece, Italy, former Yugoslavia, Portugal, Spain, Cape Verde, Moluccas, Tunisia	20.9
Non-English speaking countries outside Europe, except Indonesia	40.6
Refugees	23.3

Source: ISEO.

In secondary education, almost 10 % of the students come from immigrant backgrounds. Even though a growing number of immigrant students are finding their way into general senior secondary (HAVO) and pre-university (VWO) education, they are still more than proportionally represented in the lower levels of secondary education: learning-support (LWOO) departments of pre-vocational secondary (VMBO) schools have 33 % of all immigrant students; practical training departments of VMBO schools, which prepare pupils for low-skilled jobs, have 30 % of all immigrants.

Figure 2: Enrolment in lower secondary education, 2000/01

Type of secondary education	Total enrolment	Of which immigrant pupils
VO (regular secondary education) years 1, 2	332 300	7.7
VBO (pre-vocational education) years 3, 4	82 900	10.9
MAVO (junior general secondary education) years 3, 4	98 300	7.7
HAVO/VWO (senior general secondary and pre-university education) year 3	78 100	3.8
LWOO (learning support departments in pre-vocational schools) years 1, 2,, 3, 4	67 700	33.3
SVO-LOM (pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties)	11 500	10.9
SVO-MLK (pupils with learning difficulties)	5 400	17.8
Practical training departments of pre-vocational schools	13 400	30.2

Source: Ministry of Education, facts and figures, 2002.

2. MEASURES OFFERING SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT TO IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

The kind and amount of school-based support that immigrant children and their parents may receive depends to a large degree on the policies of schools and/or municipalities. National government provides some of the funds needed by the schools offering school-based support, but schools and municipalities have great freedom in choosing what kind of support to offer.

Through the Local Compensatory Education Act ('Wet GOA', 1998), the government has decentralised education policy with respect to disadvantaged pupils to local authorities. Municipal governments having a certain proportion of disadvantaged children are allocated a specific budget to improve provision for these target groups. They are required to draw up a four-year policy plan in consultation with school boards. This plan must be based on the priorities defined in the National Policy Framework, which is a guideline set by the Ministry. These priorities are: pre-school education, school career guidance, preventing dropout, Dutch-language proficiency and

school-specific approaches. Immigrant children and parents are mentioned as specific target groups in this context. The Ministry is responsible for evaluating these policies.

Most municipalities also invest funds of their own in promoting educational opportunity. In the metropolitan areas and most middle-sized municipalities, the largest portion of these funds is devoted to support of immigrant children.

In allocating resources for education policy, different weights are assigned to pupils of different socio-economic categories so as to provide municipalities and schools that require extra resources with the funds they need. In this weighting system, children of Dutch middle-class parents are given a weight of 1.0; children of immigrant parents with low educational and socio-economic levels are given a weighting of 1.9. In secondary education, only the country of origin of pupils' parents is considered (see annexe for more specific information on the criteria used for the weighting system). Most school-based measures for the children of immigrants are based on the definitions used in the weighting system.

2.1. Reception and Guidance

The ministry of education funded a campaign which aims to encourage immigrant parents to have their young children participate in preschool provisions and to register them as early as possible in primary schools. The campaign began in 2002 and is carried out by the national institute for multicultural development Forum.

2.2. Integration into School Learning

Measures for Immigrant Pupils in Municipalities using the GOA-Budget

GOA budgets make it possible for municipalities to promote arrangements for immigrant pupils at the municipal level (e.g. reception classes, after-school programmes, multi-service provision by primary schools) and to encourage individual schools to adopt policies and programmes aimed at reducing disadvantages. Some common practices are:

- **Reception classes** (primary schools) or **international transition classes** (secondary education) for immigrant children arriving in the Netherlands at a later age. Municipalities organise these classes in cooperation with schools.

Nearly all municipalities with asylum seekers have some form of reception classes for asylum seekers children in primary schools. There are about 90 such provisions across the country, mainly in the larger and medium-sized cities. Their number is dwindling, because the number of asylum seekers is declining. Part of the costs of reception classes (staff and materials) are paid from the regular budgets of schools, which are based on the number of pupils; other costs, such as housing, are usually paid from the Local Compensatory Education budget.

International transition classes, which are intended for older newcomers (adolescents), are less numerous, because secondary schools tend to operate on a larger scale and are more concentrated in the larger municipalities. Funding takes places generally along the same lines as reception classes. There are about 60 sites with international transition classes, but this number is also dwindling as a result of the declining numbers of asylum seekers. The National Education Working Group for Asylum Seekers' Children in Centres (LOWAC), which is financed by the Ministry of Education, functions as a national platform for professionals who work in this field. It organises national and regional meetings to promote professional development through exchange of information and practice as well as training.

According to the Decree on Education to Aliens (17 July 2003), municipalities can claim, if certain conditions are met, government subsidy for the organisation of educational provisions for asylum seekers' children. The subsidy consists of a fixed amount per child (dependent on whether it attends primary or secondary school) and a start-up subsidy for the creation of an education provision for asylum seekers' children (e.g. reception classes or transition classes) in situations where such provisions did not yet exist.

- **Special language classes** that are organised during the period of transition from primary to secondary education. In these classes, immigrant pupils with great ability and motivation who nevertheless have problems with the Dutch language receive a full year of intensive Dutch- language training. Many subsequently move on to higher secondary education.

Additional Staffing Resources

Under the Primary Education Staffing Decree, (*Formatiebesluit WPO*), which is included in the Primary Education Act, primary schools having a certain proportion of disadvantaged pupils receive additional resources (staffing hours). The number of additional hours is based on the total of weights assigned to the schools' pupils (see sub-section 1.2).

Schools have a great amount of freedom in deploying these extra staffing hours: they may reduce class size, offer additional remedial teaching or appoint a classroom assistant, for example.

In secondary education, there is a similar regulation, the '*Cumi-regeling*' for cultural minorities (Secondary Education Act (WVO) section 85a, paragraph 1). Secondary schools receive extra resources with which to appoint additional staff with a view to remedying the language problems of immigrant pupils. The amount of resources to be granted is based on the pupils' countries of origin and the length of their stay in the Netherlands (See annexe *cumi-regeling*).

Special Budgets for Schools given a Negative Evaluation by the Inspectorate

For primary and secondary schools having a high percentage of immigrant children (40-50 % or more) and a negative evaluation by the Inspectorate, special budgets are available for a period of four years to improve the achievement level of immigrant children and other children at risk due to socio-economic factors. Schools commit themselves to a procedure involving: a diagnosis of their current situation and environment; development of a school plan specifying quantitative goals for language proficiency or other objectives (depending on the diagnosis); monitoring of and accounting for the processes and the results. This money is provided to schools by the municipalities who, in turn, receive the funds from the Ministry of Education.

Extra Funding for Schools in which Children of Asylum-Seekers are enrolled

Schools and municipalities are entitled to funding for the provision of education to asylum seekers' children of compulsory school age during the first year of their stay in the Netherlands.

Children of asylum seekers are, just like all other children, subject to the Compulsory Education Act. This means that parents are required to enrol their compulsory school age children at an educational institution. Parents are legally entitled to choose any school of their liking, but they usually opt for one of the educational provisions specifically intended for newly arrived immigrants. These provisions are linked to, or part of, a regular school, and are equipped to provide intensive language teaching and pupil guidance. The asylum seekers' children may be taught separately (all the time or part of the time) or – in case of small numbers – within mainstream classrooms. The curriculum consists for a large part of intensive Dutch language instruction. Some asylum seekers' centres have school classes on their own premises.

Regardless of the type of provision or the child's age, pupils generally attend reception classes for one year (in some cases 18 months), until they move on to mainstream education. Schools receiving asylum seekers' children are entitled to subsidies from the Central Body for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) covering tuition fees and the costs of materials.

Extra Funding for Schools in which Children of Irregular Residents are enrolled

These schools receive funds with which to teach the children. On top of their regular budget, which is based on the overall number of pupils, primary and secondary schools receive additional funding from the Ministry of Education, based on the percentage of immigrant pupils (see annexe for weighting system and *cumi-regeling*). This additional budget is allocated regardless of the residence status of the immigrant pupils. The way these

budgets are spent is agreed on in the Local Compensatory Education Policy Plan (GOA plan), which is drawn up by the municipal government in consultation with school boards. The budgets are mostly used to reduce class sizes, but they are also used to introduce more specific measures, such as a school-wide language policy or reception facilities for newcomers.

2.3. Support for the Language, Culture and Religion of Origin

The government has recently decided to abolish minority language teaching in primary schools (OALT), arguing that language teaching in primary schools should give priority to the acquisition of Dutch.

2.4. Adaptation of Daily School Life

Most schools adapt their school life, at least to some extent, to the cultural or religious customs of immigrant children. For example, many schools take into account Ramadan and its concluding celebration. The degree of tolerance that will be observed with regard to dress codes is still under debate.

2.5. Access to School Services and Special Financial Assistance

There is no special financial support for immigrant children or their parents. However, there are some provisions for low-income families, such as subsidies to cover school fees and other expenses. Immigrant families have the same rights to apply for these allowances as other families.

2.6. Language Tuition for Parents and Families

There are no language tuition measures for parents or families at their children's schools.

2.7. Information to Parents

The Ministry of Education provides general guides to primary and secondary education in several languages for parents, guardians and students. Many schools in which immigrant children are enrolled have an official who is responsible for contacts with immigrant parents.

Both at national level and within the framework of the municipality, policies, special approaches and programmes have been developed to support the parents of immigrant school children. Examples are:

- Parenting support, which usually includes: providing information on the development and upbringing of children, giving pedagogical advice and initial pedagogical assistance, detecting developmental problems at an early stage and referring parents to the appropriate agencies, and organising self-help and social support for children and parents.
- Programmes that establish a link between school and home, generally with children's language development as the focal point.
- Priority for parents in educational programmes for adult immigrants, and the development of linguistic materials covering such subjects as upbringing and education.

3. INTERCULTURAL APPROACHES IN EDUCATION

3.1. Curriculum and School Activities

In the attainment targets in **primary education** (ages 4-12), which specify the knowledge pupils should have acquired by the end of primary school, references to intercultural aspects are included. Intercultural education is not a separate subject but is included in various parts of the curriculum. Some examples of the targets set are the following:

For geography: 'Pupils [should] understand that developments in the Netherlands do not occur independently but are part of a broader pattern. Within this context, attention is given to: past and present migration to and from the Netherlands; the European Union; Eastern Europe.' Pupils should also be able to describe how daily life in the Netherlands is similar to as well as different from daily life in other parts of the world.

For history: 'Pupils [should be] familiar with the following contemporary and historical events, phenomena, developments and persons: current European and global relations, including the development of multicultural societies since 1945; the European Union; changes in Eastern Europe.'

For society: 'Pupils [should be] able to describe some characteristics of groups in Dutch society, including: characteristics of living units, similarities and differences; some forms of group behaviour and factors determining such behaviour; similarities and differences between ethnic groups; discrimination and tolerance; equal opportunities.' In addition: 'Pupils [should be able to] describe similarities and differences between some of the religious and ideological movements that play an important role in Dutch multicultural society. This concerns, in particular, living habits and festivals.'

In **secondary education**, too, schools must devote attention to intercultural education in order to comply with legal requirements. The attainment targets in the curriculum of basic secondary education (the first two or three years of secondary school) include the following:

For language and culture: 'Pupils [should] have some insight into variations in language and language change in relation to time and place; this [should] include differences between dialects, group languages, languages of immigrants and other minorities.'

For geography: 'Pupils [should be able to] describe and explain the multicultural character of Dutch society. They [should be able to] identify various migrant groups and their regions of origin and describe motives for migration to the Netherlands in terms of push and pull factors.' Also: 'Pupils [should be able to] describe and explain through examples the spatial effects of the development of a multicultural society in the Netherlands. They [should also be able to] describe and explain the settlement patterns of ethnic groups in the Netherlands, the connection between social and spatial segregation and/or integration of ethnic minorities on the one hand and the degree of social-spatial inequality between urban areas on the other.'

For history: 'Pupils [should be able to] explain and describe the development of multicultural societies in Western Europe since 1945. In that context, they [should be able to] take into account the significance of decolonisation, labour migration and migration in search of asylum.'

The government is entitled to set such attainment targets, but not (as a consequence of article 23 of the Constitution, see paragraph 2) to determine the exact content of curricula. This means that it is up to the schools themselves and to the publishers of school textbooks to include intercultural aspects in the school curricula. Primary and secondary school textbooks generally do not include instructions for teachers in the use of special strategies for intercultural education; nor do they particularly encourage cooperation between teachers of different subjects with regard to intercultural education.

Other forms of intercultural education in primary and secondary schools include:

- Projects intended to foster intercultural understanding and reduce stereotyping. (Such projects are usually developed by national and regional educational advisory centres and non-profit organisations such as the Anne Frank Foundation, religious organisations and museums.)
- In secondary schools: cultural activities, within or outside of the regular teaching programme. (Such activities are often part of the new school subject 'culture and the arts'; although no intercultural objectives have been specified for this subject, the activities undertaken by pupils often have an intercultural character.)
- International exchange between Dutch schools and schools abroad.

- Devoting attention to cultural difference in daily school life, for example by celebrating or discussing religious festivals, by asking pupils to bring something from their own culture to school for class discussion, by distributing information to parents in other languages, by using translators during parent information meetings, by organising separate meetings for immigrant fathers and mothers, etc.

3.2. Teacher Training

For teaching programmes at primary-teacher training colleges, the Minister of Education has set standards of competence that include intercultural education. A special pedagogical approach that meets the requirements of intercultural education has been developed. This approach has been introduced into teacher education through a network of training colleges. In teacher training courses at higher professional education colleges, intercultural education is generally taught as a separate course for teacher students. In-service training courses on intercultural education, often related to language teaching, are offered by teacher training institutes and educational advisory centres.

4. EVALUATION, DEBATES AND FORTHCOMING REFORMS

4.1. Evaluation

At all levels of the education system, the educational achievements of immigrant children are constantly monitored. Findings over the past years show that immigrant pupils are slowly achieving better results. It is difficult to determine, however, to what extent the measures described in sections 2 and 3 have contributed to this improvement.

An evaluation of the weighting system by the Education Council has shown that its impact is hard to measure, because it is not possible to make comparative analyses (all schools that are entitled to extra resources do in fact receive them) and because, until recently, clearly defined targets were lacking (*Onderwijsraad* 2002). In the context of local compensatory policies, the Ministry of Education has now defined clear targets for the impact of resources allocated through the weighting system and the local compensatory policy. For example, by 2006 the language lag of immigrant pupils is to be reduced by 25 %. The weighting system has been a subject of political and educational debate. The government is considering revision of the system, but it is not clear whether any changes made will be of a fundamental nature.

An evaluation of intercultural learning in primary, secondary and post-secondary education published in 2000 found that intercultural learning had not become widespread, due to a number of factors such as: lack of commitment on the part of school management teams, growing emphasis on independent learning (whereas intercultural education requires interaction), lack of time, and competition from other policy priorities. The Education Inspectorate has found that, in 2002, 45 % of primary schools paid 'sufficient' attention to intercultural education, up from 33 % in the previous year.

4.2. Pilot Projects

In the school year 2002/03 a new programme designed to improve the language skills of immigrant children aged 2-4 was developed. Implementation in schools started in 2003 in 12 regions. Full-scale implementation will be supported by the children's television programmes of Dutch public networks and by the provision of special materials for children and their parents related to reading and other aspects of language development.

4.3. Debates and Forthcoming Reforms

There is an ongoing debate in the Netherlands about the social composition of schools. There has been growing support for the idea that a high concentration of immigrant children in schools has negative effects on pupils' cognitive development and on social relationships, both in school and in society. In the large metropolitan areas, more than half of compulsory school age children are from immigrant backgrounds. So far, no way has been

found to achieve a more balanced distribution of immigrant and native children. Tension over the growing variety of cultural backgrounds in schools is reflected in the ban imposed by some schools on the headscarves worn by Muslim girls. (Some court verdicts have given school managements the right to ban clothing that is considered to interfere with normal educational processes or to hinder eye-to-eye contact between teachers and students.) The tension is also reflected in the difficulty of introducing language-sensitive teaching approaches in school subjects that are not language courses.

Emphasis on proficiency in the Dutch language and the attainment of labour-market qualifications has grown markedly in the past few years. Some schools with a long tradition of bilingual education have not been allowed to continue this kind of teaching. The teaching of mother tongues of immigrant pupils is abolished from 2004. Translating information about education, schools and other sectors of social life into minority languages, a common practice some years ago, is less and less frequent.

Recently, there has been a great deal of political and public debate about the desirability of having Islamic schools. In addition, some have felt that Catholic and Protestant private schools were using article 23 of the Constitution to limit the number of immigrant pupils in their school population – a claim that has not been substantiated by research. Although such arguments have been used to back requests for adapting or abolishing article 23, the Education Council (*Onderwijsraad*) has advised the government to uphold this article, and the government has done so in its most recent policy plans (*hoofdlijnenakkoord*).

The government has recently invested in improving the transition of immigrant pupils from reception/transition classes to mainstream education and from primary to secondary education.

ANNEXE

The weighting system – *gewichtenregeling* (primary education)

A pupil is attributed a weight of 1.9 if:

- The educational qualifications of his or her father or mother (or guardian) do not go beyond the level of pre-vocational education
- The parent or guardian having the highest income in the family works as an employee, doing physical or manual labour

and

- belongs to the Moluccan population

or

- One of the parents or guardians comes from Greece, Italy, the former Yugoslavia, Cape Verde, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, or Turkey.
- One of the parents or guardians comes from Surinam, Aruba or the Dutch Antilles
- One of the parents or guardians has been recognised as being a refugee by the Minister of Justice in application of article 15 of the immigration law
- One of the parents or guardians comes from a non-English speaking country outside of Europe, with the exception of Indonesia.

In this context, English-speaking countries outside of Europe include the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. All other countries outside of Europe are considered to be non-English-speaking countries. Policy measures and criteria for the allocation of funds in secondary education do not take into account criteria 1 or 2; only criteria 3-7 are used.

The *cumi-regeling* (secondary education)

Within the context of education policy, 'cultural minorities' are a narrowly circumscribed list of target groups of a particular policy, in this instance the '*cumi* regulations' for secondary education. In other words, the policy does not provide a definition of 'cultural minorities'; it is uniquely targeted at the groups of pupils specified within the regulation:

- Pupils whose parents/guardians both come from (or have the nationality of): Greece, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and former Yugoslavia, Cape Verde, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey
- Pupils from Moluccan background
- Pupils from Surinamese, Antillean or Aruban background who have attended fewer than four years of schooling in the Netherlands
- Pupils from Roma background and caravan dwellers
- Non-Dutch-speaking pupils from a country outside Europe who have not completed a full primary school career in the Netherlands
- Pupils from Eastern European countries (except the former German Democratic Republic) who have not completed two years of schooling in the Netherlands.