



Press release

Statistics Netherlands

PR00-214
21 September 2000
9.30 hrs

Immigration on its way to new record

The total number of immigrants in the Netherlands may exceed 125 thousand this year, an all time high. The current record stands at 122 thousand, and was reached in 1998.

In the first seven months of 2000 Statistics Netherlands counted 71 thousand immigrants, 8 thousand more than in the same period last year. More immigrants usually arrive in the Netherlands in the months August, September and October than in other months. If this pattern is repeated this year the number is expected to lie in the region of 125 to 130 thousand immigrants.

Effect of labour shortage

Part of the increase in immigration can be attributed to the shortage on the Dutch labour market. Studies by Statistics Netherlands have shown that immigration rates rise when unemployment falls. Since the mid-nineties registered unemployment has more than halved from nearly 500 thousand in 1994 to fewer than 200 thousand now. Annual immigration has risen from nearly 100 thousand in the mid nineties to possibly more than 125 thousand this year.

As a consequence of increasing shortages on the labour market immigration from countries in the European Union is increasing. Last year 20 thousand people from other EU countries came to live in the Netherlands, and another 23 thousand are expected this year. Nearly half of these immigrants come for work reasons, with substantial from the United Kingdom and Germany.

Workers from outside the European Union

Labour migration from outside the European Union has also been increasing in recent years. The number of labour migrants from further afield doubled in the period 1996-1999, from 4 thousand to 8 thousand, and will probably top 10 thousand this year. More and more of the workers arriving from outside the EU are highly qualified, many are managers and engineers. Relatively high numbers of migrants arrive from the United States. The impact of IT staff shortages is also being softened with the aid of workers from outside the EU, with computer scientists being recruited from India and South Africa.

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More asylum seekers

Another cause for the rising number of immigrants is the increase in asylum seekers recorded in the municipal population registers. Asylum seekers are not counted as immigrants at the moment they enter the country. Until recently, they were only entered in the municipal population registers after one year, and were only then included in the immigration figures. Since 1 June this year, this period was reduced to six months. This shorter delay up to registration, which is being introduced gradually, will have a considerable catching up effect later this year, and will result in a temporary increase in the number of asylum seekers being registered as immigrant. This effect has not been taken into account in the estimate of immigration for this year. In 1999 39 thousand people applied for asylum in the Netherlands. This could rise to 45 to 50 thousand this year, unless the number of people seeking asylum falls in the last few months. This increase in the number of asylum seekers will probably be noticeable in the immigration rate at the end of this year or the beginning of next year.

More immigrants from Netherlands Antilles

A third cause of the increase in immigration may be the economic recession in the Netherlands Antilles which has pushed up the immigration rates of Antilleans substantially in recent years. The total number of immigrants born in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba has risen from 3 thousand in the mid nineties to nearly 9 thousand in 1999, and the increase has continued this year. If the immigration of Antilleans retains this level in the last months of the year, the total immigration rate of Antilleans and Arubans will exceed ten thousand, more than ever before.

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