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Family-network migration after asylum migration in the Netherlands

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1. Introduction

Asylum seekers who are allowed to stay in the Netherlands and who are subsequently registered as immigrants, have the right, under certain circumstances, to bring their partner and/or child(ren) to the Netherlands. Little is known about family reunification and family formation migration generated by these asylum migrants. In view of the demand for such information, for example for the purpose of specific government policies and for the National Population Forecasts of Statistics Netherlands, estimates have been made of the number of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants of asylum migrants. These estimates are based on population stock data per 1 January 1997 obtained from the municipal population registers. Additionally, the number of asylum migrants has been estimated at the same time.

This paper provides information on the relation between numbers of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants and numbers of asylum migrants in the period 1990-1996.

Although Statistics Netherlands obtains more detailed information on immigration since 1 October 1994, when a new system of decentralized automated population registers started in the Netherlands, the motive for immigration is still not recorded in the external migration statistics. Therefore estimates are necessary to obtain more information on asylum migrants and their family-reunifying and family-forming migrants. These estimates are carried out for eleven countries from which most of the asylum migrants to the Netherlands originated: Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, (former) Yugoslavia and Zaire. The results are then compared to the results from another data source, the Central Reception of Asylum seekers.

This paper starts with a brief outline of the categories of migration that are distinguished in this paper. Then the method of estimating asylum migrants and family-reunifying and family-forming migrants will be described shortly. This is followed by the main results of the estimates of asylum migrants, family-reunifying/family-forming migrants and the relation between these two groups. Furthermore, the results have been compared with another source, the Central Reception of Asylum seekers. Finally this paper ends with some conclusions, expectations and suggestions for further research.

2. Categories of migration

2.1. Asylum migration

Not every asylum seeker in a certain year is counted as an immigrant in that year. In order to be counted as an immigrant, registration in a municipal population register is required. For asylum seekers there are two registration practices. Those who are accommodated in the special centres for asylum seekers, registration

either takes place if they become a bearer of a residence permit¹ or if they reside in a special centre for more than one year. Asylum seekers who are accommodated outside the special centres for asylum seekers are only registered if they reside in the Netherlands legally. After Statistics Netherlands has received notice of registration in the municipal population register, the asylum seeker will be entered as an immigrant in the external migration statistics.

Asylum seekers, bearers of a residence permit and invited refugees who are registered in the municipal population registers are called *asylum migrants*.

2.2. Family reunification migration

The term *family reunification migration* is used for the immigration of family members who join their family members already living for a longer period in the Netherlands yet. Family reunification is often preceded by labour migration (family reunification of Turks and Moroccans is a well-known example), or by asylum migration. In general, asylum migrants with a residence permit have the right to bring their partner and/or children to the Netherlands.

In 1993 rules for family reunification were tightened up. From that moment on family reunification for migrants was only possible within three years of arrival in the Netherlands. Although the legal restrictions have been withdrawn by now, its effects for the estimates presented in this paper have to be taken into account.

2.3. Family formation migration

Family formation migration takes place if a person settles in the Netherlands for the purpose of a marriage or cohabitation with a partner already living in the Netherlands. The family reunification migration of Turks and Moroccans in the late 1960s and the 1970s for example was followed by an increasing family formation migration in the 1980s. For migrants, family formation is only allowed if one has resided legally in the Netherlands for at least three years and if one disposes a sufficient income and appropriate accommodation.

3. Method

The estimates in this paper are based on the population stock data per 1 January 1997 obtained from the municipal population registers. These data contain information on every person registered in a municipal population register in the Netherlands.

Variables recorded are among others, age, sex, country of birth, year of most recent arrival in the Netherlands, year of most recent change of marital status and family position. Information of the purpose of immigration however is not recorded in these stock data. Given this information, estimates have been made of asylum migrants and their family-reunifying and family-forming migrants on the basis of certain assumptions (Den Dulk and Nicolaas, 1998)

Migrants from one of the countries examined in this paper, settling in the Netherlands as a non-family person and not intending to live in family context, are counted as asylum migrants. Migrants joining their legal spouse who lives in the Netherlands are considered family-reunifying migrants. Migrants joining someone who already lives in the Netherlands with the purpose of marrying or cohabiting with this person are considered family-forming migrants (marriage-related migrants).

The calculations refer to the years 1990-1996 and are carried out for eleven countries: Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sri Lanka, (former) Yugoslavia, Vietnam and Zaire.

The choice for these countries is based on the following four criteria:

- the size of the population group from the relevant countries living in the Netherlands on 1 January 1997;
- the number of requests for asylum from the relevant countries in the period 1990-1996;
- the share of the asylum seekers allowed entrance in the Netherlands;

¹ Persons with the 'A-status' (refugee-status), a 'VTV' (residence permit) or a 'VVTV' (conditional residence permit).

- the assumed homogeneity with regard to the purpose of the immigration.

The size of the population born in one of these eleven countries amounted to 140 thousand persons in total on 1 January 1997, ranging from 2.5 thousand for Angola to 46.1 thousand for the republics of former Yugoslavia (*table*). In the period 1990-1996 almost 70% of the total number of requests for asylum were filed by persons from one of the countries examined. Figures from the Dutch Ministry of Justice indicate that asylum seekers from these countries have a great chance to be admitted in the Netherlands.

Thus it is quite reasonable to expect that immigration from these countries at least partly exists of family-reunification and family-formation migration of former asylum seekers. Finally it can be stated that immigrants from these countries arrived in the Netherlands particularly for the purpose of asylum.

Table: size of the population born in the eleven countries examined living in the Netherlands, 1 January 1997

	x 1,000
Total of the eleven countries	136
of which:	
Afghanistan	7
Angola	2
Ethiopia	7
Ghana	10
Iran	17
Iraq	14
Somalia	20
Sri Lanka	8
Vietnam	10
(Former) Yugoslavia	46
Zaire	4
Total number of foreign-born persons in the Netherlands	1,434

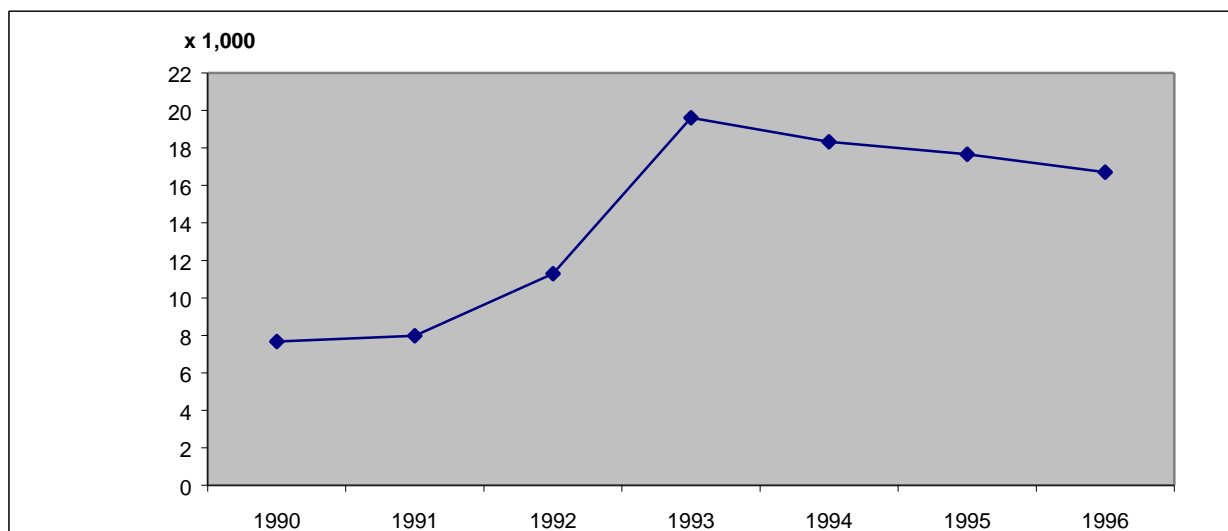
4. Results

4.1. Asylum migration

In the early nineties, the number of asylum migrants has increased sharply. In 1990, some 8 thousand asylum migrants from the eleven countries examined in this paper came to the Netherlands, 7% of the total immigration in that year. In 1993 their number rose to almost 20 thousand, 17% of the total immigration. Ever since, asylum migration amounts to an average of 17 thousand persons a year (*figure 1*). In the period 1990-1996 almost 100 thousand asylum migrants from the countries examined came to the Netherlands. This means that for every eight immigrants in these years, one person has immigrated for the purpose of asylum migration.

The largest single groups came from former Yugoslavia and Somalia, 32 thousand and 17 thousand respectively. Another 12 thousand came from Iran, and a similar number from Iraq. The remaining seven countries examined, comprised 27 thousand asylum migrants of the total number during that period.

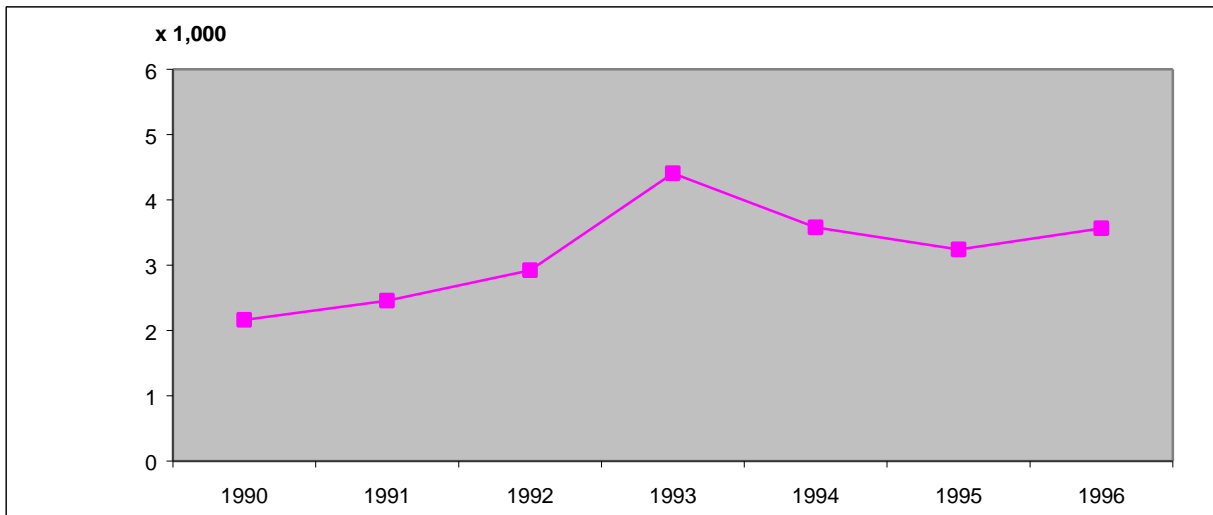
Figure 1: Asylum migrants, total number of the eleven countries examined



4.2. Family reunification and family formation migration

Compared to the large number of asylum migrants in the early nineties, the number of family reunification and family formation migration caused by asylum migrants is still relatively modest. In 1990, 1.9 thousand family-reunifying migrants, mostly from Sri Lanka and former Yugoslavia, were counted. In that same year 0.3 thousand persons arrived for the purpose of family formation. A peak of 4.4 thousand family-reunifying and family-forming migrants was reached in 1993 (*figure 2*). In 1994 and 1995 their numbers decreased after the introduction of a more restrictive legislation. However, in 1996 the number of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants increased again. A possible explanation for this is the fact that some immigrants who had delayed their arrival to the Netherlands after the rules were tightened up, complied with the conditions by now and came to the Netherlands in 1996.

Figure 2: Family reunification and family formation migration, total number of the eleven countries examined



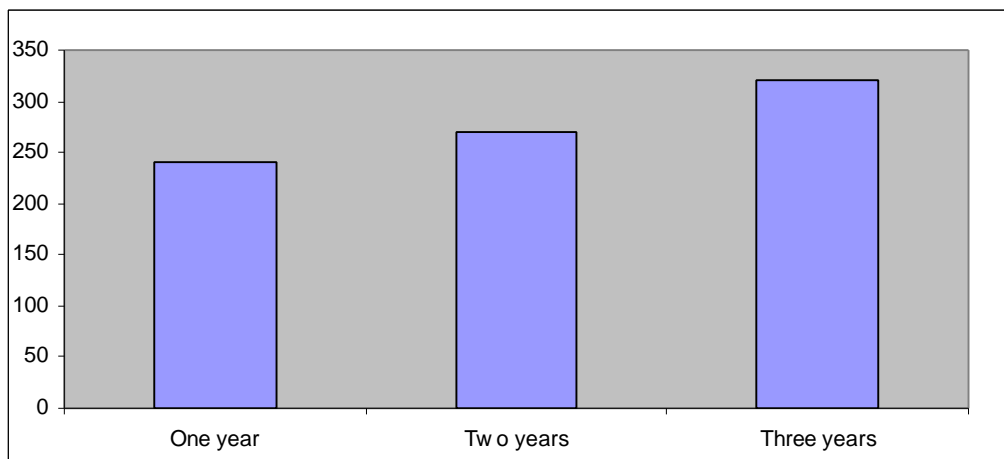
From the countries examined, an estimated 22 thousand persons immigrated for the purpose of family reunification (19 thousand) or family formation (3 thousand) in the period 1990-1996. The largest group came from former Yugoslavia (6 thousand), followed by Somalia (4 thousand), Iran and Iraq (2 thousand each). From the remaining countries, another 8 thousand family-reunifying and family-forming migrants came to the Netherlands.

4.3. Family reunification and family formation migration related to asylum migration

By relating the number of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants to the number of asylum migrants, a ratio can be calculated for the impact of asylum migration. For the total number of asylum migrants this calculated ratio is three to four, indicating that for every three to four asylum migrants one person has immigrated for the purpose of family reunification or family formation. This ratio differs considerably per country of origin. For Vietnam, this ratio is two, meaning that for every two asylum migrants one person has immigrated for the purpose of family reunification or family formation. The ratio for Angola is eight asylum migrants for one family-reunifying or family-forming migrant.

The ratio between numbers of asylum migrants and numbers of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants depends on the assumed period of time between the registration of an asylum migrant and the family-reunifying/family-forming migrant. In the above-mentioned estimates it has been assumed that this interval is on average two years. A shorter or longer interval has little influence on the ratio between numbers of asylum migrants and numbers of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants. An interval of one year, for example, leads to 240 family-reunifying and family-forming migrants per 1 000 asylum migrants, Intervals of two and three years show 270 and 320 family-reunifying and family-forming migrants per 1 000 asylum migrants respectively (*figure 3*).

Figure 3: Number of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants per 1 000 asylum migrants for the eleven countries examined by interval between registration of these two groups



5. Comparison of the results to other data

As a plausibility check, the estimates of the number of asylum migrants has been related to data from the Central Reception of Asylum seekers (CRA).

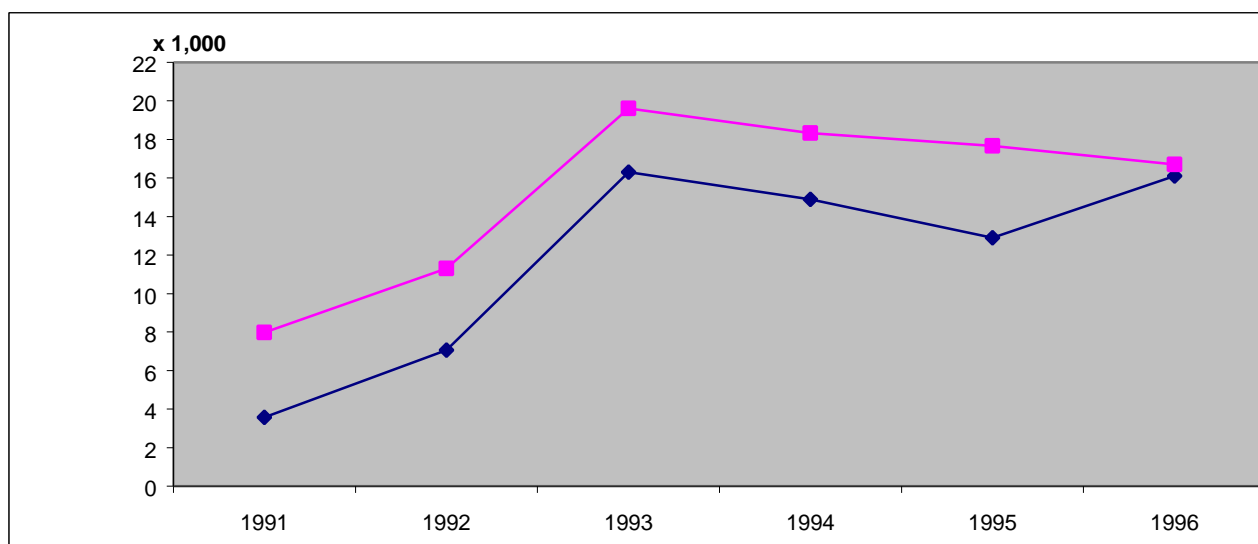
From the CRA information on the outflow of admitted asylum seekers from centres for asylum seekers to municipalities have been received. These outflow-figures can to a high extent be interpreted as asylum immigration, as it concerns asylum seekers with a residence permit who can register themselves in a municipal population register. On the basis of such outflow-figures, Croes (1995) made estimates of the number of asylum migrants for the period 1991-1994. For the countries of origin examined in this paper, the number of asylum migrants have been calculated for 1995 and 1996. *Figure 4* shows these CRA-figures in comparison with the estimates of the number of asylum migrants presented in this paper.

The comparison shows that the CRA-figures are on a lower level than the estimates presented here. The main reason for this difference is that asylum seekers who have stayed for more than one year in a centre for asylum seekers and who are not (yet) granted a residence permit, may be included in the municipal population registers but not in the CRA-figures. Asylum seekers are only included in the CRA-outflow figures when they move from a reception centre to a dwelling.

Figure 4: Estimates of the total number of asylum migrants for the eleven countries examined on the basis of data from the Central Reception of Asylum seekers (CRA) and on the basis of the enumeration from municipal population registers

Enumeration

CRA



6. Conclusions, expectations and further research

In the period 1990-1996 the size of family reunification and family formation migration caused by asylum migrants of the main countries of origin has been relatively modest. Estimating future numbers of asylum migrants and their family-reunifying and family-forming migrants is difficult. Asylum migration depends on several factors such as:

- the political situation in the countries of origin;
- the number of requests for asylum filed from these countries;
- the share of asylum seekers allowed entrance in the Netherlands and subsequently can register themselves as an asylum migrant in a municipal population register;
- asylum policy of the Dutch government.

Despite the uncertainties involved with these factors it can be expected that in the short run, the number of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants from countries that have recently generated large flows of asylum seekers, such as Afghanistan, Iraq and former Yugoslavia, will increase.

On the other hand, the number of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants will become negligible for countries with low numbers of asylum requests in recent years. Examples are Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. New conflicts in one of these countries however, may affect future numbers of asylum migrants and their family-reunifying and family-forming migrants.

The estimates show that the migration of asylum seekers has become an important part of the total immigration to the Netherlands. Therefore it is recommended to monitor this migration categorie on several aspects. Firstly, further investigation of the share of asylum seekers that eventually register themselves as asylum migrants is necessary. Secondly, the calculations of the numbers of family-reunifying and family-forming migrants caused by these asylum migrants has to be completed and updated. Finally, further study of the relation between these two categories of immigration will be necessary in order to prove the above-mentioned expectations and to get more grip on the whole process of the registration of asylum seekers and their possible followers.

References

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