



Press release

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Immigration down sharply

According to estimates just released by Statistics Netherlands, the total number of non-western immigrants entering the Netherlands will total 59 thousand in 2002, down from 65 thousand last year. The number of western immigrants is also expected to be lower, 41 thousand, compared with 45 thousand last year.

Fewer asylum seekers

The fall in the number of non-western immigrants was partly caused by the decrease in the number of asylum seekers. Twenty thousand people applied for asylum in the Netherlands in 2002; in 2001 this number was 33 thousand. This decrease is not yet wholly reflected in the immigration rate, as asylum seekers only count as immigrants when they have been entered in a municipal population register. This either takes a few months from the date of application, or does not take place at all if the request is turned down.

The share of asylum seekers from some of the main countries of origin in recent years, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Somalia, is declining. On the other hand, the number of asylum seekers from Angola and Sierra Leone has increased.

Drop in immigration from Antilles

The number of Antillean immigrants has dropped sharply. While 10.2 thousand Antilleans and Arubans entered the Netherlands in 2000, in 2002 the number will be 5.7 thousand. As more Antilleans and Arubans are returning to their country of origin, the migration surplus (immigration minus emigration) for this group has shrunk from 5.4 thousand to two thousand, the lowest since 1992.

Fewer western immigrants too

The number of western immigrants will come to 41 thousand in 2002, down from 45 thousand last year. Half of these immigrants were born in one of the countries of the European Union: 22 thousand in 2001, an estimated 20 thousand this year. The decrease may be connected with the slowdown of the economy, as more than half of European immigrants come to the Netherlands for work-related reasons.

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Former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union are the main countries of origin for the remaining western immigrants: 8 thousand immigrants come from these countries, nearly two thousand fewer than in 2001.

Migration surplus down sharply

Twenty-two thousand non-western immigrants left the Netherlands in 2002. There was a noticeable rise in the number of Somalia-born emigrants: in 2002 twice as many people born in Somalia country left as arrived in the Netherlands. They do not go back home though; but to the United Kingdom.

The migration surplus of non-western immigrants is 36 thousand in 2002, down from 46 thousand in 2001. Net immigration of western immigrants also fell sharply, from 21 thousand in 2001 to 13 thousand in 2002. More Dutch born people have left the country than returned this year. The total migration surplus will be 29 thousand in 2002, down from 51 thousand last year.

As a consequence of the sharp fall in net immigration, total population growth in the Netherlands in 2002 will be below one hundred thousand for the first time since 1997.