



Press release

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Population growth slowing down

The Netherlands had 16.2 million inhabitants on 1 January 2003, an increase of 88 thousand in 2002, whereas in 2001, the population grew by 118 thousand. The declining growth is chiefly caused by a decrease in immigration and an increase in emigration, according to recent figures by Statistics Netherlands.

On the way from sixteen to seventeen million

At the beginning of 2001, 16.0 million people were living in the Netherlands. Within two years, the population grew by 200 thousand but in the course of 2002, the growth rate declined. Statistics Netherlands expects the growth rate to drop further in the years to come. It will take until 2015 for the Netherlands to reach 17 million inhabitants.

Four causes for lower population growth

In 2002, the population grew by 88 thousand, whereas in 2001 the increase was 118 thousand. Four causes can be distinguished for this decline. The immigration slowed down and at the same time the emigration grew, mortality rose and the municipal registers were updated. Conversely, a slight increase in the number of live births in 2002 had a positive effect on the population growth.

Fewer immigrants

The number of immigrants fell from 133 thousand in 2001 to 124 thousand in 2002. The number of immigrants from the Antilles and Aruba dropped significantly from 8 thousand to 6 thousand. The number of asylum migrants also fell. Immigration from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran dropped significantly, as well as immigration from the EU countries.

The influx of people from traditional immigration countries like Morocco, Turkey and Surinam, however, remained fairly stable.

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More emigrants

Emigration rose from 63 thousand in 2001 to 67 thousand in 2002. The emigrants were largely people born in the Netherlands. Belgium and Germany are preferred by the Dutch. The United Kingdom, France and Spain are also favourite destinations and outside Europe the United States. Among emigrants not born in the Netherlands, the Antilles and Aruba are popular.

Mortality rising

The number of people who died, rose from 140 thousand in 2001 to 143 thousand in 2002, due to the ageing of the population. In the coming years this will be the main cause of the declining population growth.

Updating the registers

The current Dutch population of 16.2 million refers to all people entered into the municipal population registers. People who move, do not always notify the municipal authorities. If it becomes clear that a person no longer lives at the address as recorded in the registers, the registers are updated. In 2002, there were 9 thousand updates more than in 2001. It is assumed that this mainly concerns people who have left the Netherlands without notifying the authorities.