

Introduction

In the years 2013 and 2014, 250 Syrian refugees are allowed to enter the Netherlands for an indefinite period, that is they can obtain the Dutch nationality after a given period. From the very beginning after entering the country, they have nearly the same rights as Dutch individuals, for example with respect to housing, education and benefits. Moreover, they can or must follow courses in language and customs of the Netherlands and Western Europe.

Until December 2013 none refugees are taken up under this program (at least to the knowledge of the author), probably because of the complex procedure to get all rules executed correctly.

This proposal gives some guidelines to streamline the procedure and thus to increase the influx of Syrian refugees in the Netherlands. The procedure has been divided in three parts, disrespectfully mentioned the sending and receiving side with the "ether" as medium between them. This last part will not be treated here.

With this procedure the Netherlands (the receiving side) would probably be an example in the world how to linger the fate of a small part of the refugees in the neighbouring states Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq.

At an early stage (by the author called:) companion families must be sought to accompany the refugee family. When possible with a corresponding family composition.

We shall give an example of the possible reception of a refugee family in the home town of the author, Eindhoven, 210.000 inhabitants.

Starting-points

Given the sheer number of refugees the repatriation (as we will mention it, no exact translation of the (new-speak) Dutch word "hervestiging") of 250 persons is "a drop on a glowing plate" as we say in the Netherlands.

The author himself favours a number of things with respect to the sending side:

- let us start with a number of 200 refugees, than a remainder of 50 persons will exist as a buffer.

- it has advantages to accept as a common rule families, that is households, thus parents and children. This does not exclude a small number of single persons.

- assuming the families are large - larger than the Dutch families - these 200 refugees form circa 40-50 families. For them there should be housing, education, etc.

- most of the refugees should be Christian. Christians will be accepted more easily in the Dutch society, and it is clear that after the normalisation of the situation in Syria, the Christians will have a difficult time. The last decades millions of Christians have left (or fled) the states in the Middle East when it was possible.

- the UNHCR, to be more precise UNHCR Lebanon must choose the persons. Lebanon is the state that has most refugees, and a good working organisation. Because of the relatively small size of the country, refugees can be reached more easily.

- UNHCR Lebanon will screen households that meet the criteria, taking into account background and religion, region and proficiency. Moreover the refugees themselves must want to leave Syria and their direct relatives definitively. It must be very clear to the persons "that there is no way back".

- when applicable, a criterion for accepting a household is (for example) family members in the Netherlands, or other links with this country, or health problems that need special treatment.

- UNHCR Lebanon will present these persons to UNHCR Nederland and the Dutch IND.

The medium:

How exactly the refugees are transferred from the UNHCR (in this case Lebanon) to the receiving state is not known to the author. However, a Dutch report describes this process in more detail (titled: "Directe plaatsing in gemeenten van hervestigde vluchtelingen, een onderzoek naar de impact van het gewijzigde beleid"). This report also contains more information on the receiving side.

The receiving side:

- with respect to the "Inburgering" (=integration in the Dutch society) etc we direct the attention to the report INBURGERING EN PARTICIPATIE De bijdrage van inburgering aan de participatie van migranten in de Nederlandse samenleving [report number blg-248793.pdf on www.overheid.nl]

- in the view of the author it is compelling that these household are spread over the Netherlands and not concentrated in some areas. This will enhance the chance on proper integration.

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The municipalities in the Netherlands are obliged to accept these refugees, but of course there must be a equal burden for all.

- towns with integrating facilities must be chosen first. Integrating means here (for example): special schools with emphasis on language acquisition, interpreter facilities, etc.

- medical screening, political screening, etc will be carried out in Lebanon. UNHCR Lebanon and the Dutch IND can refuse persons when their political background is not fully clear. It makes no sense to accept religious fanaticism, especially from the Muslim population.

- when a person has a serious medical problem, an investigation must be carried out where the patient can be cared for, i.e. for treatment, operation and revalidation. In a certain sense the author would give preference of those applicants.

More details

The Netherlands are divided in 12 provinces, with circa 400 municipalities. In not all these municipalities are facilities for this kind of problems. Probably about 100 larger towns can accommodate the refugees in housing and facilities nearby.

Spreading means in this case that the circa 50 families are divided over the larger towns. Towns of 100.000 inhabitants must provide one dwelling for the refugee families, and the larger two or three. In this way all families can be "absorbed" easily.

Of course we take care of the special needs or wishes when that is possible: joining relatives already in the Netherlands is a reasonable wish.

Streamlining the procedure

UNHCR Lebanon. When all "parties" know how the procedure progresses the whole procedure can be optimised. The UNHCR Lebanon screens possible candidate-families and immediately sends a note to UNHCR Nederland.

Events in the Netherlands. With the list of refugees the IND and COA can take care of the housing all over the country. It seems appropriate that all families are distributes over the Netherlands. But it is reasonable to believe that people in the larger towns are more accustomed to foreigners.

Future housing. UNHCR Nederland has links with the IND and the housing organisation COA (Centraal Orgaan Asielzoekers), which takes care/distributes of the housing.

Beforehand the COA can claim housing in a municipality. Precept is that all municipalities evenly bear the burden of housing refugees.

Rented houses are the only source of housing for these refugees, as it cannot expected that the refugees can afford an own house.

Simple ("basic") furniture will be available when the family arrives.

In the view of the author, satellite antennas (dishes) will be forbidden: not too much looking back to Syria and because of the regulations with the rent of the houses.

Schools. Families with very young children probably do not give problems. With some extra effort the children can start immediately in primary education.

For the older children (11-16 years) there is separate education; these schools are specialised in the education of non-Dutch-speaking children. Bussing to this special school will be necessary for most children. After about 6 months the children will join a common primary school in the neighbourhood of the family.

Medical care. The family gets his own "huisarts", a general practitioner nearby. In general: hospitals in towns are within a radius of some km.

Dentists, psychological support probably can be found in the neighbourhood.

Translation facilities are readily available by phone, but they cost a lot of money to the doctors.

Transport. All distances in a town can be "biked". Some people have to learn that, they must learn that immediately after arrival. No exception will be given.

Work. It will not be easy to find a decent job when the family arrives. Knowledge of the Dutch language will be essential.

How to find companion families?

Companion families in the direct neighbourhood are indispensable! These persons must be present from the start. And they must be trusted fully by the refugee family.

It must be a early task for the Dutch authorities to find these people/families.

When the local authorities start with a small campaign early it cannot be difficult to find appropriate persons, maybe with a corresponding background.

An example, the town Eindhoven

In the south of the Netherlands we find Eindhoven, the fifth town of the Netherlands, with a population of 210.000 inhabitants. It is a town with many relics of its industrialisation, but strictly spoken, there is no real heavy industry anymore, just research in electronics and the manufacturing of high-tech equipment as trucks, semiconductor manufacturing and high-quality medical instruments. Smaller industries deliver parts for these end-products.

Given a total population of 17 million in the Netherlands, 1 out of 80 live in this town, that means that as a "refugee burden" the town should accept 2 or 3 persons. One family of 5 persons is double of what could be expected.

We will continue with more details how a family of 5 persons could be housed and accompanied in Eindhoven.

In this town already quite a lot of refugees from Syria are living for more than 20 years; those persons and also other Arabic-speaking people originating from the Middle East, could translate and explain the way of life in the mother-language of the refugees.

The in the Netherlands known refugee organisation "Vluchtelingenwerk" has an office in Eindhoven. Furthermore there are some smaller organisations linked with the Roman Catholic church.

All for refugees important organisations are located in the centre of the town, for example the "Vreemdelingenpolitie" and the "Belastingdienst". With a bicycle all these places can be reached within 30 minutes. Furthermore, there is at least one civil servant that deals with the housing of refugees. This civil servant has connections with the COA, so that the municipality follows the rules of the Dutch Government. All over town there are people living with a foreign, i.e. not European Union, background.

There are several housing organisations, with names as wooninc, Trudo, Woonbedrijf. These organisations possess thousands of houses, there will be a steady streaming through and at a given time several dwellings are available, waiting for modernisation or new renters. For example: Woonbedrijf has a website, partially translated in English for foreigners, see www.woonbedrijf.com/Welkom/

On the website www.kijkindewijk.nl the reader can obtain an oversight of all kind of organisations, education, sport, shops, etc.

One school for children between 11+5 months and 16 years exists that educates foreign language kids. It is mentioned "Eerste Opvang Anderstaligen". It is a part of a school for secondary education "het Stedelijk College Eindhoven". See www.stedelijkcollege.nl Children will take the bicycle to visit this school.

Younger children (4-12 years) will visit "De Wereldwijzer" as can be seen on www.wereldwijzereindhoven.nl Children can stream in at any moment of the year. In 40 to 60 weeks the children will learn the Dutch language.

Note that there must be sought solutions for children above 16 years.

Medical care in Eindhoven is good. Most people will visit their doctor only a few times a year. In Eindhoven there are two large hospitals, "Catharinaziekenhuis" en "Máxima Medisch Centrum". Furthermore two hospitals nearby in Veldhoven en Geldrop.

All operations will be carried out in those 4 hospitals, but in seldom cases very specialized operations will be made in Utrecht, Nijmegen, Maastricht or Antwerp (Belgium), all in a radius of 100 km.

Note that all people, thus our refugees too, need to have an medical insurance and that they will receive all medical treatment that is appropriate.

The role of companion families

Dutch families living nearby can help the refugee family "in raad en daad" (by word and deed). When possible these families are sought beforehand in for example the local newspaper or district magazine.

The text could be something like this:

Voor de begeleiding van een uitgenodigde vluchtelinggezin uit Syrië zoekt de gemeente [Eindhoven] enkele gezinnen met kinderen [van ongeveer x tot y jaar] in het stadsdeel [Tongelre], postcodegebied [5641 en aanliggend] die in raad en daad het gezin [Z.] willen bijstaan. Het gezin [Z.] bestaat uit de ouders van circa [40] jaar en drie opgroeiende kinderen van [a tot b] jaar.

Bij serieuze belangstelling graag contact opnemen met de ambtenaar [Y.], per e-mail op [ambtenaar@eindhoven.nl].

Some additional notes

It must be fully clear to the refugees that they cannot go back to Syria, except

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maybe for a holiday after many years in the Netherlands.

Arabic men must understand that the role of women, i.c. their wives, is fully different from the role in Syria. From their part, the women must understand that (for example) wearing a veil or head-cloth is considered submissive, and generally not accepted when working in shops or offices.

The "customs" as corruption, nepotism, secrete police, "security" forces do not exist in the Netherlands and nobody wants them. It will not be allowed to buy false passports, or something like that.

The refugee families receive a loan to buy furniture and household articles. At a later stage they have to pay back the loan. It must be forbidden that the family buys unnecessary or very expensive items. Note that all kind of second-hand goods are available at a very low price!

Work will not be available for many unschooled refugees. They have to do volunteer work ("vrijwilligerswerk") without direct pay.

Retiring pension will be low compared with the common Dutch people. Refugees must accept that their standard-of-living will be considerably lower than most Dutch.

A crude calculation for a refugee family

Here the author outlines the money-household of the typical refugee family, consisting of parents and some puber kids. Of course there are large deviations from these numbers possible. All in €.

income per month ("bijstand" or "uitkering")	1250
"kinderbijslag" estimated	250
[maybe some income from the children, working in shops	100]
rent of the house per month	500
heating, electricity, water, litter	150
transport	100
pay-back of loan	200
food	300
medical insurance for the parents (children are free)	200
reserve	50

Some remarks, conclusions

Given the situation in the Netherlands, the author has some strong views:

- refugees with wounded family members should be given preference, when it is expected that in the Netherlands their illness can be cured completely.
- Christian refugees have preference above Muslim refugees. This, because of the acceptance of Christians.
- families with the father missing or dead could result in problems when the children are grown up. In this case a strong companion family is essential.
- when the refugees have no specialised education it can be very difficult to get a good job. The refugees should know that they will remain poor compared with the original Dutch people.
- a very good knowledge of the Dutch language is essential, in technical jobs knowledge of English is essential too.
- a high degree of flexibility is necessary; people who do not have that flexibility will have problems from the first moment.
- the refugees must possess a strong will to succeed in a new country, so different from their own. They must trust the Dutch civil servants, police, companion families.
- it will take several years, at least five, before the refugee families find themselves accepted.

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