

## **The integration crisis in the Netherlands: the causes and the new policy measures**

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### **Prologue - status questionis**

Praised for its capacity to accommodate different social groups throughout history, ironically, the Netherlands stands out as a country where immigration has become associated with an integration ‘crisis’ needing an urgent response. The latter has been formulated in the ‘New Style Integration Policy Letter’, which the Minister for Immigration and Integration sent to the Lower House on September 16, 2003.<sup>i</sup> The Letter states that the objective of the new Dutch integration policy is ‘shared citizenship’, which implies that people speak the Dutch language, participate in the social life and make an active contribution to the public domain, establish inter-ethnic contacts and subscribe to the Dutch norms.

In the meantime, the new policy measures the Netherlands has undertaken to solve the integration ‘crisis’ indicate to assimilationism, which is defined as ‘absorption of immigrants culturally and socially so that they become indistinguishable from the existing population’ (Castles & Miller 1998, p.203). Before passing onto assimilationism, however, the Netherlands had resorted to ‘multicultural-assimilationism’ (Vasilyan 2003, p.55). This meant recognizing the difference of the immigrants and allocating them a certain niche and only afterwards acknowledging their Dutch-ness (Ibid., p.60). Before September 11<sup>th</sup>, however, the Netherlands could be best described as multiculturalist, i.e. ‘maintaining the languages and cultures of ethnic origin as long as respect for basic institutions/political order was guaranteed’ (Castles & Miller 1998, p.203). Thus, there has been gradualism in the Dutch policy-making process as far as integration is concerned.

While a bulk of the literature has appeared to reflect on the Dutch integration ‘crisis’ and escort the political developments around it, there are still things that remain unclear. The latter can be formulated through the following questions:

- How can one account for the factors that could have caused the integration ‘crisis’ in the Netherlands?
- How has the Dutch government addressed the integration ‘crisis’?<sup>ii</sup>
- What could be done to improve the situation?

### *History of immigration to the Netherlands*

According to the estimates as of January 2005 there are 16.3 million people living in the Netherlands of which 1.6 million are immigrants, which comprises 10% of the population. Cherished as a safe heaven, the Netherlands hosted Belgians during the Eighty Years' War with Spain and Spanish and Portuguese Jews who fled from persecution on the Iberian peninsula in the 16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Huguenots from France after the French Revolution. The next largest immigration flows to the Netherlands commenced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1945 a number of Moluccas who had been dreaming of self-determination fled from the former Dutch East

Indies, which became recognized as an independent Indonesia in 1949. Other immigrants arrived in the 1960s and 1970s from the south of the European continent, namely, Italy, Greece, Spain, Yugoslavia, as well as Morocco and Turkey. Another stream came from Surinam - a Dutch colony, which gained independence in 1975. The newcomers feared an economic downturn and decided to settle down in the Netherlands, given the choice they had. Yet another flow entered the country from the Dutch Antilles and Aruba, which are still parts of the Netherlands. In the 1990s a large number of asylum seekers coming from conflict-ridden parts of the world made the Dutch immigrant picture even more diverse. In addition, there was continuous labour immigration from Poland, Hungary, as well as China, the Philippines, South Africa and India. In a nutshell, it is just the integration 'crisis' that is a new phenomenon to be addressed in the Netherlands, while immigration is not. However, being currently associated with the integration 'crisis', 'immigration' has come to bear a burden of which it has to be relieved in order to give birth to 'shared citizenship'.

#### *The Dutch case – a case of European importance*

Although constrained to the Netherlands, this research can be equally useful for other EU countries facing a similar 'crisis' situation. Therefore, on the EU level 'social protection and inclusion', which in their connotational meanings are equivalent to the concept of 'integration', are among the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy. They concern all the EU member-states by spilling across the domain of security to that of economy. To demonstrate their commitment to 'social protection and inclusion', the EU member states have agreed to develop a common immigration policy, which still falls within the third pillar of the EU, namely, Justice and Home Affairs and, thus, represents a domain where national sovereignty of the member-states is preserved. It is, consequently, evident that here the principle of subsidiarity whereby member states take the initiative for strategy development, identification of priorities, and policy implementation is endorsed. The EU, however, retains the right to monitor the process of 'social protection and inclusion' on a regular basis. Most importantly, a member-state experience is supposed to be exchanged and coordinated through peer review and transnational learning projects on the EU platform (European Commission 2005).

From and through the EU the newly devised laws and regulations would be supposedly transmitted to other countries of the European continent – all of which are Council of Europe (CoE) member-states. Thus, both within the frames of the CoE and through the EU policies, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) covering some of the former-Soviet countries on the European continent, namely, Armenia, Azerbaijan, potentially Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, all the CoE member-states are supposed to standardize their legislation and harmonize their procedures with those of the EU. Such 'partnership' (as worded in the ENP Action Plans and the Four Common Spaces Road Maps signed between the EU and Russia) is likely to generate administrative, legal and political uniformity.

Shortly, the analysis of the Dutch immigration/integration policies is hardly a self-sufficing task and should deserve utmost scrutiny. The analysis of the Dutch case through critical lenses can be of interest and importance to all the states on the European continent.

In line with the research questions set out above the article will, firstly, examine the existing theoretical accounts, which could help to understand the factors of the Dutch integration 'crisis'. It will secondly, analyze and evaluate the newly devised/revised Dutch policy measures vis-à-vis the immigrants. This will be done by concomitantly exploring the implications and trends of these measures per sphere. Thirdly, against the background of the new policy-measures the article will advise as to what should be conceivably done in order to solve the integration 'crisis'.

### **Theoretical accounts**

The integration 'crisis' in the Netherlands will be revealed through three theoretical lenses, namely, political psychology, institutional political science and the micro-theory of securitization. Such an attempt intends to provide a holistic understanding of the causes of the 'crisis' since without knowing them one cannot assess the proportionality of the newly-devised/revised policy measures with the problem at hand, and, most importantly, give valuable advice.

#### *Political psychology*

Political psychologists refer to the concept of 'ethnic', 'national' or 'cultural' 'identity' and conception of 'difference' of the 'other'.<sup>iii</sup> Cheung (1993) defines 'ethnic identity' as a construct, which is based on and influenced by racial, natal and cultural factors.<sup>iv</sup> Saharso (1989) claims that the definition of 'ethnic identity' implies a distinction between the 'self' and the 'other', as well as acceptance and acknowledgment of one's identity both by the 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' members. De Vos (1982, p.19) proposes a functional definition saying that 'ethnic identity' stems from psychological attachment to a particular group because of sharing the same cultural origin or heritage and a specific religion or language.

According to Ward, 2001 (in Oppedal, Roysamb and Heyerdahl, 2005, pp.646-647) the greater the cultural distance between the sending and receiving countries, the more challenging is the acculturation.<sup>v</sup> Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior (2004, p.36) state that the impact of concerns about the Dutch 'national identity' 'is conditional on the prominence of differences between groups'. The authors predict and demonstrate a high level of perceived conflicting 'cultural' identities between the native Dutch and the immigrants. Vedder (2005, p.398) states that several surveys have shown that 'public opinion in the Netherlands is tending towards growing impatience with immigrants and the progress of their adaptation to Dutch culture'. 'Adaptation', in the meantime, refers to not only 'speaking Dutch' but also 'acting Dutch' (Ibid.).

#### *Institutional political science*

Institutional political science offers another theoretical framework to draw explanations from as far as the Dutch integration 'crisis' is concerned. Coincidentally, Lijphart (1968) focuses on the Dutch case to show that, despite the widely held belief about the impossibility for a state to enshrine peaceful cohabitation in presence of an ideologically diverse society, the segregated groups in the Netherlands have lived in harmony.

This has been achieved through a creation of a system of governance whereby the Catholics, Protestants and Socialists have shared the public space. The creation of ideologically-fed institutional pillars *qua* subcultures allowed every group to pertain to their preferred way of life and preserve their separate niche in the society. In this way, every group could in its desirable ways and means dispose of its public life both through self-funding and by receiving governmental subsidies. This system came to be known as consociational democracy (Lijphart 1976). In today's terms, it alluded to the plausibility of social cohesion, protection and inclusion.

Although Daalder (1996) argues that the pillars have crumbled, he admits that the tradition of accommodation as the 'principle of leave well alone whatever one's gripes and complaints' is still prevalent in the Netherlands. Andeweg and Irwin (2002) suggest that 'the importance of pillarization has been overemphasized' (Ibid., p.42) but they also support the argument that pillarization has not disappeared (Ibid., p.39).

#### *Micro-theory of securitization*

The micro-theory of securitization pinpoints to yet other factors, which could account for the Dutch integration 'crisis' associated with the immigrants. It proposes that any issue can be depicted as a 'real' threat if there are certain interests to do so (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998). With discourse lying at its core, securitization is upheld through speech acts. Ceyhan and Tsoukala (2002, p.23) state that immigration is apprehended by sidestepping the economic, social and cultural analyses. In other words, it is a subject-matter restrained to the hard political domain. In the meantime, this is dangerous since the current discourse lumps together all the foreigners, ignoring the heterogeneity 'designated' by the word - 'immigration' and comprising illegal immigrants (referring both to their mode of entry and to their subsequent status), short-term visitors, long-term residents, as well as citizens born to parents of non-'native' Dutch without making a distinction among them (Bigo 2002, p.78).

#### *Testing the factors in practice*

When tested in practice, the factors offered by political psychology hold true generating the following picture. Although the objective definition of an 'immigrant' is a disputable one, in the Dutch context the term is delimited to the two 'groups' comprising guest workers and asylum seekers, most of whom originate from Muslim countries and have a low socio-economic status. Meanwhile, paradoxically, such a perception of the 'immigrants' is in no way representative. On the contrary, it is a stereotypical and generalized one and imposes an inferior image on all the 'others' taken together by the 'native' Dutch.

To investigate whether pillarization could have led to the integration 'crisis' in the Netherlands one has to cast a look at the situation of the immigrants in the political, social, cultural and economic domains of public life. In the political sphere the immigrants are not adequately represented and they tend to vote for a candidate with the same ethnic origin as their own, validating the existence of voluntary, internally-generated

pillarization (Nieuwenhuizen 2002, pp.11-17). A similar kind of pillar is characteristic of the social domain: in most of the cases the immigrants lead a self-absorbed social life, i.e. their social ties are mostly established within their own ethnic group. In the cultural domain, pillarization is directly and, thus, externally, endorsed by the government. The latter has subsidized lessons on language and culture of origin, allowed to found private schools, build religious institutions and freely practice one's religious beliefs and cultural traditions, as well as guaranteed services in native language at such state institutions as hospitals and courts. As a result, 500 000 settled immigrants in the Netherlands have little knowledge of the Dutch language – a figure comprising 30% of the total number of first-generation immigrants (National Contact Point 2005, p.8). In the field of economy the generous social welfare system can be stated to have indirectly acted as a catalyst of pillarization since it has allowed the immigrants to rely on social welfare benefits instead of encouraging them to engage in the labour force. For statistics, the number of immigrants living on unemployment benefits is 2.5 times higher than that of the 'native Dutch' and the labour participation rate of the immigrants is by 15% lower than the total, which is about three quarters of the national average (National Contact Point 2005, pp.5-8). While such are the symptoms of the 'crisis' per sphere, pillarization must have inhibited the smoothness of integration of the immigrants in the Netherlands.

Last but not least, securitization seems to have been an overarching factor of the Dutch integration 'crisis'. Worse, if Pim Fortuyn, the leader of the right-wing Leefbaar Rotterdam party, did not open up the discourse on 'immigration', hardly would the topic attain so much importance in political deliberations and become so inflated. On the contrary, today's 'crisis' situation might be considered 'normal', ironically, against the background of the 'point of departure' of the immigrants, their cultural 'differences' and the peculiar institutional tradition of pillarization.

### **Newly devised / revised policy measures**

The Netherlands has embarked on a number of policy measures in order to facilitate the integration of the immigrants in the Dutch society and, thus, overcome the integration 'crisis'. The analysis of these new measures in all the domains of public life will be accompanied with their assessment *qua* implications and trends. This undertaking will help to gain insight into the essence of these measures and see if they can efficiently tackle the engendered 'crisis'.

#### *Security*

A number of measures have been undertaken by the Dutch government with the purpose of assuring public security, as claimed. The legislation, which has been effective as of January 2005 requires mandatory possession of an ID at all times and allows identity checks on demand by the police. This has been accompanied by increasing the prerogatives of the police and allowing the latter to search on suspicion. Above all, the photos on the ID must match the requirements imposed by law. The instructions on how a photo should be taken (ranging from the colour of the background to the face expression) are displayed on plasma screens in the town halls.

More surveillance cameras have been put up in public places. Constant checks are conducted by the police. More security, police and public transport inspectors have been recruited and retrained. Measures have been undertaken to eradicate dangerous areas and eliminate the immigrant concentrated neighbourhoods. Foreign police is supposed to inspect whether the immigrants whose residence permits have expired have left the country.

The government has gone so far as to investigate into the profiles of the immigrants. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Lower House VVD member of Somali origin, was one of the first to undergo such an inquiry being accused of having changed her name in order to get a refugee status.

The police has been instructed to check all the officially registered enterprises and fine the employers who hire illegal immigrants or legal immigrants on an illegal basis. The illegal immigrants are placed into detention camps first and then deported.

#### *Assessment: implications and trends*

The steps taken under the pretext of establishing a secure public space could be justifiable if goal of the Dutch government were to prevent terrorist attacks or fight criminality. Instead, the latter represent exaggerated and disproportional security (in the hard sense) responses. As manifested during the last parliamentary elections in November 2006 the Dutch politicians have cunningly marginalized the issue of wages and pensions by repositioning it from the top of the political agenda in favour of revitalizing the discussion on banning the *burqa* – the Islamic clothing for women, which covers everything except for the eyes. The latter is stated to be worn by only 30 immigrant women (International Herald Tribune, 17 November 2006). In the meantime, such political acts and corresponding policy measures, which are probably beneficial for some political actors (in this case primarily, the far right parties) seem to be to the detriment of freedom, which, despite having been so much cherished in the Dutch culture, is fraught with the danger of becoming an obsolete category.

#### *Technical*

Technical measures have been taken to compile information about the immigrants. In 2004, the Ministry of Justice Research and Documentation Centre in cooperation with the Statistics Netherlands embarked on development of an Integration Monitor. The objective of the Monitor is to measure the integration of first and second-generation immigrants in the society over a period of time and to obtain knowledge about the means through which it has been taking place. The Monitor allows to carry out a longitudinal analysis of the immigrants' personal data. Personal surveys top up on this database making it render accurate results. It is worthwhile to note that the Social Statistics Database of the Statistics Netherlands combines a large number of registers (including those from the tax authorities, social welfare agencies and the Information Management Group), which are linked at an individual level to the municipal personal records database.

Above all, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service has agreed to allow its Central Aliens Register to be linked to the Social Statistics Database.

From 2005 onwards the Dutch government has resorted to adopting a stricter policy of integration. The Minister for Immigration and Integration has expressed the need to combine the various information flows on integration of immigrants. The Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands, the Ministry of Justice Research and Documentation Centre and the Statistics Netherlands have been asked to work together to produce an Annual Report on Integration. The latter would replace the Minorities Report produced by the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands, the Ethnic Minorities in the Netherlands Report produced by the Statistics Netherlands and the Integration Monitor produced by the Institute for Sociological and Economic Research, which have been published regularly since mid-1990s. The Annual Report is supposed to provide a description and analysis of immigrants' integration and draws from data obtained through surveys.

*Assessment: implications and trends*

Collating the databases and the development a single Integration Monitor, as well as the publication of a single Annual Report on Integration could be seen as positive a) if the purpose these measures served was coordination and b) if they were targeted at the whole Dutch population. Employing them only against the immigrants, however, is discriminatory and represents a moral assault by impinging on their privacy. Most importantly, keeping the immigrants under constant scrutiny could engender a feeling of uneasiness on their part.

*Immigrant composition*

Having discovered that there is a disproportion between the Dutch graduates from certain academic disciplines and the job market demands, the government has resorted to policy measures, which aim at encouraging labour immigration to the Netherlands. In the meantime, the Netherlands is the only continental European country, led by the EU member-state UK and immigration countries, like the US, Canada and Australia, to embark on such an initiative. Although having initially set up a high salary level and a complicated and long bureaucratic procedure, from October 2004 the requirements for 'knowledge migrants' to enter the Dutch labour market have been simplified and accelerated.

*Assessment: implications and trends*

Recruitment of high-skilled immigrants is a step forward from the previously non-strategic immigration policy. However, it can only partially deal with the labour market demands. The fact that the immigrants, especially the illegal ones, continued staying in the Netherlands without receiving social benefits after their files were closed pinpoints to the fact that there has been a demand not only for high-skilled but also low-skilled labour force. Thus, although the development of an immigration strategy is positive *per se*, it might be replete with negative consequences. In other words, a gap might appear between the demand and supply

sides of the Dutch economy whereby the private entrepreneurs might need cheap and low-skilled labour force to compete in the world economy.

### *Cultural*

A number of measures have been also taken in the cultural sphere. In January 2005 the Dutch government launched the Broad Initiative on Social Cohesion. By entering into dialogue with all the social stakeholders – municipalities, NGOs, religious organizations and well-known individuals - the government intends to prevent ‘people from different and cultural backgrounds from ignoring or even becoming alienated from each other’ (National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Inclusion in the Netherlands 2006-2008, p.16). The government also supports male and female role models from ethnic minorities who can show a positive image at the local level and, thus, stimulate the integration of their compatriots.

In March 2005 the Dutch government approved a Bill submitted by the Minister for Immigration and Integration, which revised the Newcomers Integration Act. The Bill obliges both the newcomers and the settled immigrants aged 16-65 to follow an integration program in the Netherlands. However, now, in contrast with the past when the integration program was fully state-subsidized, the immigrants have to purchase the course materials themselves, while the government will reimburse the costs only if the examinee passes the test within three years. The Bill grants the municipalities the right to fine the individuals who fail to pass the integration exam and obtain the Common European Framework for Modern Languages A2 level within a specified time. The latter varies from three and a half years for immigrants who have taken the pre-arrival integration tests in the country of origin to five years for all the others.

In March 2006 the Civic Integration Abroad Act came into effect. Under this Act, immigrants who voluntarily choose to settle in the Netherlands for a long period of time must prepare for their arrival abroad by taking tests of Dutch language (oral and written) and culture. They are supposed to pass these tests at the Dutch Embassy in their home country. It is believed that in this way the immigrants will more easily integrate in the Dutch society after they arrive. The test costs 350 euros and is a requirement for a residence permit. This also applies to scholars and imams. The compulsory integration exam for immigrants who have been already residing in the Netherlands is in place since January 2007 (National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Inclusion in the Netherlands 2006-2008, p.17).

### *Assessment: implications and trends*

The measures in the cultural field seem to carry the logic of mandatory Dutchification, i.e. allegiance to the Dutch lifestyle and an unequivocal pressure exercised against the immigrants to integrate. Although the idea of fostering integration is in theory positive, the measures imply a certain supremacy by the host ‘native’ Dutch and are, therefore, degrading.



### *Social*

Projects aimed at introducing diversity in housing supply and distribution of households have been embarked on. Investment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is supposed to be made. Relocation is seen as an important condition for fighting against the immigrants' concentration in certain residential areas, primarily, the big cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and the Hague, while the 'native' Dutch live in the suburbs. This presumably procrastinates the integration process.

#### *Assessment: implications and trends*

Although social segregation can be fought by introducing different types of housing (from relatively affordable to luxury) in most of the neighbourhoods, the immigrants cannot be forced to purchase another dwelling. The choice for housing location would still remain voluntary and relocation might happen only in the longer term. The schooling issue marked by the division into 'black' and 'white' schools lies along the same trajectory since it is a result of the choice of one's dwelling.

### *Economic*

Measures have been taken to involve the immigrants in the labour force. In 2005 the employers and trade unions reached an agreement on supporting the National Labour Market Discrimination Monitor, which will be set up by the government. The Dutch government has already taken measures designed to raise the level of labour participation of the immigrants. Projects, such as a 'jobs offensive' for refugees and a campaign to counter negative attitudes and discrimination in the labour market, have been launched to engage the immigrants in the labour force (National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Inclusion in the Netherlands 2006-2008, p.16).

#### *Assessment: implications and trends*

Hardly can the measures aimed at combating discriminatory attitude towards the immigrants be implemented straight away. In addition, their success cannot be measured immediately. Even though such measures may make the employers more vigilant as far as the recruitment procedure and the selection criteria are concerned, the presence of cultural stereotypes may inhibit their success.

### **New categories**

#### *Gender*

While in previous policies no specific focus had been put on gender, the new measures are more gender-specific since the research on the situation of immigrants in the Netherlands has disclosed the following state of affairs:

- The participation of immigrant women in the labour market is lower than among the 'native' Dutch (National Contact Point 2005, p.5).
- More than 180 000 immigrant women (approximately 30% of the total) live in a socially deprived position (Ibid., p.8).

Therefore, the Dutch government has earmarked funds for the years 2006 and 2007 in order to enable the municipalities to foster the participation of immigrant women in the society. Extra funds are allocated to the municipalities through the Decree on Payments for Broad Social, Integration and Safety Objectives and the Integration Program with the aim of encouraging the immigrant women to successfully pass the above-mentioned integration exam.

The gender issue has been also given due regard in the economic domain. In January 2006 the Ethnic Women and Work steering group was formed. The representatives of this group, namely, municipalities, social welfare agencies and employers work together to help immigrant women find a job.

In addition, through the Multi-Year Emancipation Policy Plan 2006-2010, the Dutch government has aimed at strengthening the social position of immigrant women. At least 75 projects have been initiated in order to back up the Plan. The Dutch cities have arranged to initiate a campaign for emancipation with 20 000 women reach out to 200 000 women. A social contract is planned to be concluded with voluntary organisations in order to stimulate the participation of 50 000 socially deprived women. (National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Inclusion in the Netherlands 2006-2008, pp.16-17).

#### *Assessment: implications and trends*

Targeting women in order to foster their emancipation and integration is an important undertaking but if overemphasized such a policy measure could result in resilience. After all, it entails a drastic shift of one's social role. Provided the fact that most of the targeted women adhere to the Islam and have been socialized differently, they could be experiencing moral stress a) if the measure is not carefully communicated and b) if the women are not cautiously guided through this process.

#### *Youth*

The immigrant youth has also come to deserve more attention in the newly devised/revised policy package. The reason for the inclusion of youth as a separate target-group is the following:

- Young people from immigrant groups are over-represented among suspects of crime (National Contact Point 2005, p.8).
- Turkish and Moroccan pupils lag behind in their command of Dutch language at the end of primary school by about two school years (Ibid.).
- Dropout rates are higher than among native Dutch peers (Ibid.).
- Two thirds of Turks and Moroccans have not attained a qualification, which is 20% higher than the corresponding number for the native Dutch (Ibid.).
- Juvenile delinquency and drop-out rates are high (Vedder 2005, p.396).
- In 2005 the unemployment among immigrant youth of 15–24 was 26%, compared to 11% - the corresponding figure for the 'native' Dutch youth (Hamidi 2005, p.12).

To improve the situation, measures have been taken in the sphere of education and economy. In the former, appointment of coaches for young people with only lower secondary vocational education has been foreseen. To facilitate youth participation in the labour force, the employers and trade unions have made a commitment to remove the obstacles that young people might encounter when searching for professional training and/or employment. (National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Inclusion in the Netherlands 2006-2008, p.16).

*Assessment: implications and trends*

Although the measures could conceivably improve the situation of the immigrant youth, the efforts are quite limited. There is no guarantee that this group will welcome the measures taken to foster their integration if the barriers concocted in the security, technical and cultural domains are preserved. Rather, the youth might become overwhelmed by the measures the Dutch government has resorted to and recede to its roots by nurturing their 'difference' even more. Hardly would such a future scenario be one the Dutch policy-makers have been striving for by introducing the new policy measures.

**General assessment**

The depiction of the newly devised/revised policy-measures shows that the new policy is affirmative in nature and implies positive discrimination but simultaneously imposes sanctions, deploys stricter instruments and foresees closer monitoring. As a result, it has moved from 'multicultural assimilationism' (Vasilyan 2003, p.55) practiced since September 11<sup>th</sup> to assimilationism. Not only does it 'attack' the immigrants in the public space but also restricts their freedom in the private one, e.g. to form families and to be aware of the extent of one's involvement with his/her own community, especially speaking one's native language. To specify, according to the Dutch coalition agreement as of May 16, 2006, the immigrants who want to bring a partner from their country of origin to the Netherlands must be at least 21 and have an income equivalent to at least 120% of the statutory minimum wage (Netherlands Government). In addition, the New Code of Conduct as of January 2006, which is to be introduced by the Dutch municipalities, states that the Dutch language should be the official language used 'in school, at work, in the street and in community centres'. Such instruments could generate more resistance on the part of the immigrants by reinforcing their perception of 'difference' from the 'native' Dutch. They could wave the path to 'other'-ing and hardly have any positive effects on the integration of the immigrants. On the contrary, the policy could intensify rather than annihilate the existing perceived 'difference' of the immigrants from the 'native' Dutch and, in the long term, turn out to be very costly for the Netherlands.

With the government imposing obligations on the immigrants, making them subscribe to the norms of the host culture, more resentment could be the outcome. The immigrants, which were to integrate in the Dutch society must have already done so when more discretionary instruments were in place. The ones who were resilient towards integration might become even more so now. Moreover, while for the settled immigrants the preliminary stage of entry and stay in the country and adaptation to the norms must have served as a

stimulus to show their respect for the host Dutch society, as well as conformity with its values and rules, the potential newcomers might reconsider choosing the Netherlands as their place of residence. Furthermore, the immigrants who have or will obtain permanent residency could contemplate on leaving the Netherlands because of the increased moral pressure and civilian control. Even the 'native' Dutch might avert from a state where the current tense climate, ironically, might undermine the promulgated motto of 'shared citizenship'. While it is noteworthy that since 2005 the Netherlands has again (after having been an immigration country since 1961) become an emigration country, this might become a new trend. The latter would carry negative repercussions, which, in the long run, would be undesirable for the Dutch policy-makers.

Therefore, this article will embark on providing policy advice. After all, the Netherlands is just one of the EU countries, which has become harsh towards the immigrants and the track record it would establish may be similar to other countries in the EU where far-right has gained such a momentum.

### **Solving the integration 'crisis' - policy advice**

By and large, the new policy measures should become more general as far as their goal and application are concerned even if eventually (deliberately or coincidentally) most of the subjects will be immigrants. Otherwise, as the new policy measures obtain an inertia of their own, 'shared citizenship' – the proclaimed objective of integration of the immigrants in the Netherlands – might remain an empty concept or even become a political fiasco. The following advice stemming from the policy analysis might be helpful.

#### *Security and technical*

Instead of openly subjugating the immigrants to scrutiny often without the presence of valid reasons the Netherlands should possibly become more tacit. This can be done through an open and sincere dialogue, which would be more likely to facilitate integration. After all, the Netherlands does have an excellent experience of cherishing differences and still remaining an admirable 'safe heaven' and a 'bastion of freedom'.

If there is an inherent worry that the country has been abused by the 'immigrants' who have been labelled as 'welfare scroungers', the government might reorient its instruments towards making the admission policy more efficient. It is hereby noteworthy that in a letter sent to the Minister of Immigration and Integration the National Ombudsman expressed 'his concern about the functioning' of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (National Ombudsman of the Netherlands 2005, p.7). The latter could be improved by retraining the Dutch civil servants, providing them with information about the countries of origin and, thus, demanding more competency.

### *Cultural and social*

In the cultural domain reciprocity should be endorsed. If the immigrants are required to become Dutchified, the 'native' Dutch should also be in turn required to learn more about the 'other' in order to preserve rather than lose the praised Dutch tolerance. In this case some focus on the immigrants' culture at school could help to attain this goal. This could be done by modifying the school curricula and having both the immigrant students and the 'native' students appreciate and 'celebrate' their 'differences' instead of shading the latter away on this level but highlighting them on a higher political level albeit placed in a negatively charged 'shell'. In this way, alienation would be substituted with acceptance and mutual adaptation and, thus, lead to integration.

When this happens at school, social segregation will not be the case any more and neither will there be a need for imposition of housing supply regulations. Instead, coexistence will be valued as a natural outcome bred through cultural learning.

### *Economy*

Instead of contemplating on abandoning the welfare system altogether and moving towards a more liberal economic system, the focus should be put on devising such laws, which will be both all-friendly and ensure participation of the immigrants in the Dutch economy. The following measures could be relevant for consideration: deprivation of pension a) not only if one is not actively looking for a job, which should be demonstrated by all the people receiving social welfare benefits but also b) if one changes one job after another too often (an indicator can be set after examination of the labour market trends). The usefulness of such tactics is that it will make use of stricter measures without affirmatively segregating the 'immigrants' from the 'native' Dutch.

### **New categories: gender and youth**

As far as the newly introduced categories of gender and youth are concerned, the following is advisable. Gender targeting should be done selectively. The engagement of socially and economically deprived immigrant women should carry a voluntary nature and incorporate only those who are willing and ready to experience a change of their role. Moreover, the immigrant youth should deserve more attention than the new policy envisions. Even if the Netherlands has failed in integrating the previous immigrants, it can still invest in the younger generation. This will ensure that the Dutch society of tomorrow becomes a socially cohesive one naturally prone to 'shared citizenship' and worthy of serving as a model to other countries on the European continent.

### **Immigrant composition**

Provided the ageing population and the foreseen demographic changes, the Netherlands might be in need of both high-skilled and low-skilled labour force so as to maintain its current wage and pension system. Moreover, to remain a globally competitive economy it would have to open up its labour market, while at

this point the tendency of attracting immigrants is grinding to a halt. If the Netherlands is willing to do so but is sceptical of the recently identified free-riding by the immigrants on the welfare state, one could conceive of institutionalizing the non-institutionalized sectors of the economy (e.g. household services) in addition to practicing stricter economic measures proposed above. Moreover, the future immigration policy should stream from the identified special areas of human capital need. Consequently, the immigration policies could rely on bilateral country agreements with both the country of origin and destination taking responsibility for the push- and pull-consequences of immigration flows, respectively. In the meantime, the procedures for hiring immigrants temporarily or even permanently (the chance of obtaining a permanent residency status should not be excluded since this can serve as a best stimulus for the immigrants to choose the Netherlands as a country of destination) should be further simplified. It is believed that such a policy would be non-discriminatory and satisfy all the reasons because of which the previous immigrants had been accepted. At the same time, it would facilitate better integration of the immigrants in the host Dutch society.

### **Addressing the causal psychological, institutional and securitized factors**

Overall, the newly devised/revised measures are not seen as adequate for solving the integration ‘crisis’ in proportionality with the factors that must have engendered it. On the contrary, they could exacerbate the situation because of not addressing the root causes. To prevent the worst effects of the new immigration/integration policy, it is advisable that the new Dutch government, which comprises both left-wing and right-wing parties since February 2007, de-securitizes immigration as a threat. The propaganda conveyed by the politicians and the media, which unequivocally suggests ‘difference’ and segregation, should be eradicated through a qualitatively different discourse. The latter should reveal the advantages of immigration with the help of the media. More emphasis should be put on exhibiting the similarities between the group identities rather than differences. It is essential to show both the cultural virtues and the vices of the ‘native’ Dutch and the ‘immigrants’, as well as the junctures of compatibility/incompatibility between the two. It is important to provide a non-biased coverage not only of cultural paradigms by displaying a more nuanced picture of the ‘immigrants’ but also highlighting individual stories. This should be done not by presenting certain identities (Dutch on the one hand, and ‘others’, on the other) as complementary or conflicting (as has been done) but by suggesting that different elements have been/can be combined on an individual level at will. This kind of tactics would ensure that integration would be achieved as a result of enmeshing the ‘identities’ and ‘pillars’ without prioritizing and/or choosing between them. Such should be the setting within which the Dutch – as the European citizen of the 21<sup>st</sup> century - will find ‘social protection and inclusion’!

### **Epilogue**

While the image of the Netherlands as an exemplary European country capable of harnessing both well-being and freedom has been shattered through an integration ‘crisis’, this research has tried to make a diagnosis, look at the developed ‘medications’ and evaluate their effectiveness, as well as prescribe better treatment. To do so, it has a) unveiled the factors that could have caused the ‘crisis’ and b) analyzed the

newly devised/revised measures taken by the Dutch government to ‘cure’ the new Dutch ‘disease’. The former has been done by retrieving all the possible factors from the existing theories and testing their validity against the situation in the Netherlands. All of them have proven to be present. The latter has revealed that the measures have been concocted merely with the symptoms in mind and can hardly attack the root causes of the ‘crisis’. On the contrary, not only are they inadequate but they could also exacerbate the situation. Ultimately, a daring step has been made to provide policy advice as to what should be done to optimize the promulgated objective of ‘shared citizenship’ – a value of European importance.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Succeeding the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) party member Hilbrand Nawijn as the Minister of Immigration and Integration in the Balkenende I government, the VVD member Rita Verdonk has held the post in the Balkenende II government from May 27, 2003. Ms. Verdonk lost it in the Balkenende III government as a result of a vote of no-confidence put forth by the left-wing Groene Links and supported, among others, by the cabinet coalition partner D66. Since December 14, 2006 until the formation of the new Balkenende IV government in February 2007 Ms. Verdonk served as the Minister for Integration, Juvenile Protection, Prevention and Probation.

<sup>ii</sup> The Dutch Balkenende I government was composed of the right-wing LFP called after the name of its founder, the centre-right Christen Democratisch Appèl (CDA) and the right-wing Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD). The progressive centre-right Democrats 66 (D66) together with the CDA and VVD were in charge of the Balkenende II government. Now the CDA and the VVD rule in the Balkenende III government. The Balkenende IV government formed in February 2007 comprises the CDA, the Labour Party (PvdA) and the Christian Union – a merger of the Calvinist Political Union (GPV) and the Reformed Political Federation (RPF).

<sup>iii</sup> The differentiation between ‘ethnic’, ‘national’ and ‘cultural’ ‘identity’ is not of big importance for the purpose of the article since it does not disrupt the key concept ‘identity’.

<sup>iv</sup> Racial factors refer to physical characteristics, natal factors - to common ancestry or place of origin, and symbolic factors – to religious beliefs, cultural practices, language, etc.

<sup>v</sup> Acculturation is defined as a developmental process towards gaining competence within two or more cultural domains, typically that of the host society and that of one’s group.