



The Netherlands at a glance

- **Population:** 16 730 348
- **GDP (Per capita):** 131 PPS (available for 2011 only)
PPS=Purchasing Power Standard, based on the EU 27 average of 100
- **Asylum applications total (2012):** not available
- **Total decisions reached in 2012:** not available
- **Positive decisions (refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian reasons):** not available

2012 data, published by Eurostat in May 2013

The Dutch resettlement programme at a glance

Resettlement quota and main actors

Start of annual quota: 1984

Current quota: Average 500 each year. A flexible four-year quota allows unused places to be carried forward into subsequent years within the four-year period. The current flexible quota period is 2012-2015 (2000 places in total).

Main national actors: the Ministry of Security and Justice including the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), and the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (COA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the national guardianship organisation Nidos (UAM) and local authorities. NGOs include the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR) and the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF).

Resettlement numbers

YEAR	ACCEPTED (PERSONS)	ARRIVALS (PERSONS)	NATIONALITY ↔ COUNTRY OF ASYLUM OF LARGEST GROUPS
2013* <i>anticipated</i>	500		Congolese ↔ Rwanda, Uganda Ethiopians ↔ Kenya Iraqis ↔ Jordan Eritreans ↔ Sudan Burmese ↔ Thailand

YEAR	ACCEPTED (PERSONS)	ARRIVALS (PERSONS)	NATIONALITY → COUNTRY OF ASYLUM OF LARGEST GROUPS
2012	483	326	Ethiopians → Kenya Iraqis → Lebanon Eritreans → Sudan Burmese → Thailand Colombians → Ecuador
2011	556	530	Bhutanese → Nepal Burmese → Thailand Ethiopians → Kenya Iraqis → Syria
2010	484	435	Bhutanese → Nepal Burmese → Thailand Eritreans → Sudan Iraqis → Syria, Jordan
2009	401	367	Iraqis → Jordan, Syria Ethiopians → Kenya Eritreans → Sudan Somalis → Kenya Bhutanese → Nepal

UNHCR Submission categories considered for resettlement

- Legal and physical protection needs
- Survivors of violence and torture
- Medical needs - *max. 30 persons per year*
- Women and girls at risk
- Family reunification - *within quota (if application lodged within 3 months after arrival)*
- Children and adolescents at risk
- Lack of foreseeable alternative solutions

UNHCR Priority levels accepted (with sub-quota where applicable)

- Emergency** *max. 7 days between submission and resettlement*
- *100 dossier submissions per year, including 50-60 emergency cases (where requests are received from UNHCR)*
- Urgent** *within 6 weeks between submission and resettlement*
- Normal** *within months between submission and resettlement*



The Netherlands' Resettlement Programme

Legal Basis

Resettlement to the Netherlands is not formally regulated by law. The **2000 Aliens Act** provides the legal basis for refugee recognition, the identification of beneficiaries of international protection outside of the Netherlands, and the grounds for admission. Overall policy and procedures for resettlement are laid out in the Minister of Justice's Decree (WBV 2010/10). The **Policy Framework for Resettlement** sets out priorities for the Dutch quota, and is renewed for each four-year flexible quota period.

Resettlement Criteria

Basic criteria

- Being recognised as a refugee as such according to the 1951 Convention on Refugee Status or be a person in need of subsidiary protection.
- Persons may also be accepted for resettlement for humanitarian reasons and via family reunification under specific conditions (see 'Family Reunification' below).

Criteria related to integration

- Willingness and ability to integrate into Dutch society.
- UNHCR is encouraged to submit more 'high profile' cases such as

human rights advocates (see 'New Developments' below).

Identification and Selection

The Netherlands carries out up to four **selection missions** per year, and interviews approximately 100 refugees per mission. Selection mission delegations include representatives from IND (including an IND medical doctor), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and COA, who collectively discuss cases before final selection decisions are made by IND ahead of the delegation's return to the Netherlands. Processing time between acceptance and departure generally does not exceed **6 months**.

Approximately 20 per cent of the quota is selected based on **dossier submissions**, including medical and emergency cases. The Netherlands has also selected emergency cases from the Emergency Transit Facility (ETF) in Timisoara, Romania.⁴⁶

Refugee Status, Permanent Residency & Citizenship

There is no legal provision enabling the Dutch government to take asylum decisions outside of the territory, and resettled refugees must therefore apply for asylum on arrival in the Netherlands. Applications are processed and refugee status granted **at the airport**, where an asylum residence

⁴⁶ See Chapter IV for more information on the ETF

permit ('asiel bepaalde tijd') valid for five years is then issued.

A **permanent residence** permit may be issued after an initial five years of residency, in cases where refugees have passed the national integration exam (see 'Integration services & support' below) and have not committed a criminal offence. Refugees are eligible to apply for **citizenship** after five years of permanent residency and on passing a civic integration test.

Family reunification

Family reunification of refugees can take place both within and outside the quota. Family reunification under the resettlement quota is possible for spouses, biological children under 18 and foster children who are part of the family.⁴⁷

Besides the latter, other family members eligible for family reunification include:

- Unmarried partners, including same-sex partners, only if assessed as dependent on the person granted asylum;
- Children over 18, also if dependent;
- Parents of a minor child with an asylum status;

Resettled refugees can apply for family reunification within 3 months upon

arrival or upon the date the residence permit is granted. After 3 months, it is still possible to apply but not within the resettlement programme and upon fulfillment of income requirements. Relationships need to be made credible either with statements, documentary evidence or sometimes DNA-examination (children).

Resettled refugees can still apply for family reunification more than three months after arrival, but in such cases must prove that he/she has sufficient income to support the family member or relative(s) in question.⁴⁸

Resettlement in Practice

Linking Phases

How is information transferred between selection and reception of refugees in order to prepare for their arrival?

Sharing of information gathered during Cultural Orientation (CO)

Other:

Social intake files: COA conducts 'social intake' interviews during selection and pre-departure CO missions to gather biographical and social information, at which the COA representative and refugees discuss

⁴⁷ In the case of children, relationships need to be proven either with documentary evidence or DNA-examination.

⁴⁸ While unemployment benefits can be counted as part of this income, work and social assistance benefits cannot.



both life in the Netherlands and the refugees' expectations of their resettlement. Social intake files are transferred to receiving municipalities.

Referral mechanism - COA and UAF: UAF supports refugees (including resettled refugees) in the Netherlands to access higher education. As part of a cooperation agreement on resettlement between COA and UAF, COA identifies refugees willing and able to access higher education⁴⁹ during selection and pre-departure CO missions and refers the cases to UAF. UAF and COA liaise with municipalities close to or where there are higher education institutions to secure housing, thus enabling refugees to access higher education more easily (see 'Integration in Focus' below).

Pre-departure

☑ **Cultural Orientation (CO):** Almost all refugees selected for resettlement to the Netherlands receive pre-departure CO, including both

those selected during selection missions or on a dossier basis.

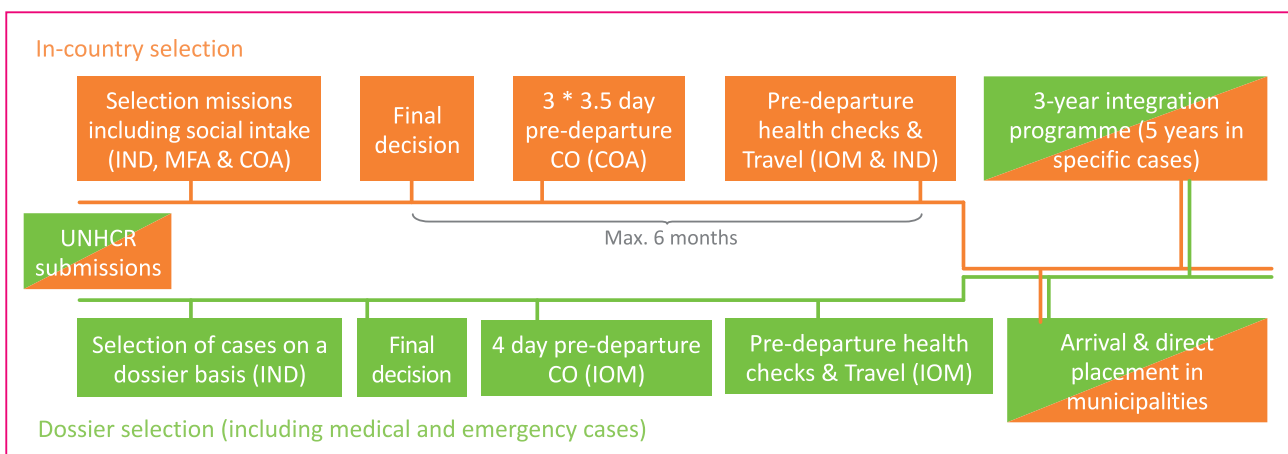
Refugees accepted for resettlement during a selection mission attend **three pre-departure CO training sessions** organised by COA. Each session takes place over 3.5 days, and includes Dutch language tuition and information about resettlement departure and travel, Dutch society and life in the Netherlands and the receiving municipality.

In 2010, the Netherlands piloted a CO programme for refugees selected on a dossier basis. This group did not previously receive any pre-departure CO. Developed by IOM, the **Netherlands Cultural Orientation (NLCO)** programme provided refugees with a 3-day CO programme. A second NLCO project began in late 2011, and extends the CO programme for dossier cases to four days.

☑ **Medical Exam:** IND

☑ **Travel arrangements:** IOM

⁴⁹ UAF generally requires refugees they support to have 11-12 years prior experience of formal education.



Integration in Practice

Reception

Refugees are welcomed upon arrival at Schiphol airport by representatives of COA. Refugees spend one night at a hotel, complete some initial paperwork, are given a residence card by IND and undergo TB screening. They are then accompanied to the **receiving municipality** by representatives from COA. Before 2011, all resettled refugees were placed in a centralised reception centre in Amersfoort, where they would stay for a period of 3-6 months before moving to municipalities. Centralised reception was abolished in 2011 and replaced by a system of **direct placement** in municipalities.

Placement policies

In the Netherlands, resettled refugees are placed in municipalities by COA using the **reception placement system for asylum seekers** established through (voluntary) contracts between COA and local authorities. Municipalities are obligated to house a certain amount of refugees, with quotas set for 6-month periods, and can indicate if they want to receive resettled refugees as part of this obligation.

COA contacts municipalities about the housing needs of resettled refugees

as soon as they are selected. A lack of available affordable housing in larger municipalities means that resettled refugees are dispersed over a large number of smaller municipalities in the north, east and south of the country, away from the main urban centres in the west. Refugees are not obliged to remain in the municipality where they have been placed, but are not automatically provided with alternative housing in a new municipality should they move.

Integration services & support

Length: 3 years (can be extended to 5 years for persons requiring literacy training).

When arriving in the municipality, refugees are received by municipal staff working in conjunction with an NGO (most often the Dutch Refugee Council). Furnishing of housing for resettled refugees and the division of other tasks between municipalities and NGOs are configured differently in different municipalities. NGOs assist refugees for some time to help them find their way in the community.

Since January 2013, all holders of an asylum permit,⁵⁰ including resettled refugees, are obliged to demonstrate their integration into Dutch society

⁵⁰ Exemptions can be granted on medical and/or psychological grounds.



Bhutanese children going to the local primary school in Wommels (North Netherlands)/UNHCR/P.de Ruiter

within three years of their arrival.⁵¹ Integration is demonstrated by passing the **national integration exam**, which includes components on Dutch language⁵² and society.

Dutch integration policy has recently moved from extensive government involvement in fostering integration to a **strong emphasis on individual responsibility**. Prior to 2013, municipalities were required to provide access to integration courses and exams for all refugees and newcomers. Under the new system, refugees and newcomers are responsible for independently finding and paying for their own integration courses and language tests. These courses are

delivered by official institutes, and refugees may request a loan for up to €10,000 to finance these activities. All refugees who pass the civic integration test within three years are exempt from the requirement to repay the loan. Refugees who are unemployed are eligible to receive the same social welfare benefits as other unemployed Dutch residents or citizens.

INTEGRATION IN FOCUS: Resettlement of refugee students

Since 2012, the **Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF)**, together with COA and selected municipalities, universities, and student associations has implemented a project focused on the needs of highly educated refugees resettled to the Netherlands. Co-financed by the national ERF programme,

51 Three years after the date the asylum permit is issued for refugees exiting the asylum system.

52 Since the start of 2013, the integration exam tests speaking, reading, listening and writing skills to European A2 level, whereas the previous exam included only a spoken Dutch test.

the project aims to improve the reception arrangements for highly educated refugees by facilitating their access to higher education as soon as possible after arrival.

COA refers resettled refugees to UAF in advance of their arrival to municipalities, allowing for better planning of educational guidance, language training and educational courses once refugees arrive in the Netherlands. Pre-arrival cooperation between COA, UAF and municipalities also enables refugees to be housed in areas with easier access to universities and other higher education establishments. In cases where it is not possible to secure housing in larger university cities, such as is the case in Amsterdam and Utrecht, resettled students are housed in smaller, nearby municipalities.

The project has also developed a mentoring programme, within which matches Dutch students with resettled refugees to provide them with support to settle into university life. UAF has also produced a film on the education system in the Netherlands for use in COA's pre-departure CO programme, so resettled refugees are given a realistic picture of educational and career opportunities in the Netherlands.

Use of the European Refugee Fund (ERF)

Persons resettled using 2012 ERF funding

- Persons resettled under a Regional Protection Programme
- Unaccompanied minors
- Women and children at risk; particularly from psychological physical or sexual violence or exploitation
- Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement

Pledges made to resettle under ERF specific categories for 2013

- Persons resettled from a country or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme
- Women and children at risk
- Unaccompanied minors
- Survivors of torture and violence
- Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement
- Persons in need of emergency resettlement or urgent resettlement for legal or physical protection needs

Pledges made to resettle under ERF resettlement common EU priorities for 2013

- Congolese refugees in the Great Lakes Region
- Refugees from Iraq in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan



- Afghan refugees in Turkey, Pakistan, Iran
- Somali refugees in Ethiopia
- Burmese refugees in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand
- Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan

Evaluations

The Research and Documentation Centre (WODC)⁵³ at the Ministry of Justice carried out an evaluation of the new model of direct placement in municipalities introduced in the **Implementation Plan for Direct Placement of Invited Refugees in municipalities** in 2011.⁵⁴ While the study concluded that the system of direct placement of resettled refugees in municipalities generally operated smoothly, and was largely experienced as positive by the parties involved, it also identified a number of problems that had occurred, including how:

- delays in issuing residence permits had caused difficulties for accessing welfare and child benefits, and opening bank accounts;
- some municipalities have limited awareness of the health needs of resettled refugees, and did not always facilitate prompt access to healthcare for the refugees they received. Doctors interviewed as part of the research also pointed

to the January 2012 abolition of compensation for the cost of interpreters as a barrier to the effective provision of healthcare for resettled refugees.

The Dutch Council for Refugees commissioned Regioplan to conduct research,⁵⁵ published in December 2012, on the **experiences of refugees, volunteers and practitioners** in the context of the new direct reception model. The evaluation was again relatively positive, with the following recommendations for improvement:

- More detailed case information should be provided by COA to Dutch Refugee Council staff working in municipalities.
- Placement of refugees in municipalities should involve a more detailed assessment of the support structures and assistance available in specific localities.

A 2010 study by Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD) and Dutch Refugee Council researched the specific **experiences of the 229 Bhutanese refugees** resettled to the Netherlands after long periods spent in camps in Nepal, and produced several key recommendations in relation to this group, including:

- Integration support and services should be tailored to meet the needs

53 Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek en Documentatiecentrum

54 Pro facto, Directe plaatsing in gemeenten van hervestigde vluchtelingen, February 2013

55 Regioplan Policy Research (December 2012) 'Opvang van uitgenodigde vluchtelingen'

of refugees from specific groups and backgrounds.

- Bhutanese refugees have strong cultural and family ties, and separation via placement in different municipalities thus created barriers for integration. Bhutanese families should therefore be placed near to others, and family reunification policies should be made clearer to refugees.

Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- The Dutch resettlement programme is a well-established programme that offers protection to a varied caseload of refugees, including medical and emergency cases submitted on a dossier basis. The **flexible four-year quota** model enables the Dutch resettlement quota to be fully utilised.
- Partnerships between governmental authorities and NGOs are well established, particularly at the local level where **Dutch Refugee Council volunteer support** is available in most municipalities.

Challenges

- **Periods between selection and**

arrival are relatively long (6 months), influenced by the requirement for refugees selected or resettlement to attend three CO sessions before departure to the Netherlands.

- Integration policy and discussion are increasingly focused on the **obligatory nature of integration** for refugees and other newcomers, with punitive measures applied where this obligation is deemed not to have been met. This approach is also evident in resettlement selection criteria and processes, which stipulate that where the refugee is assessed as being 'difficult' to integrate, the submission will be rejected.

New Developments

- When the system of placing refugees directly in municipalities was introduced, municipalities received a basic payment of around €2,000 per adult and €1,000 per child as an additional payment, to incentivise their involvement in resettlement. These incentive payments will cease in 2013 - from 2014, municipalities will receive the same amount of money (€1,000) per resettled refugee as for refugees recognised via the domestic asylum procedure.