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Policy review on hosting international organisations in the Netherlands

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Zaken





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Preface

In the past two decades, as a result of the Dutch government's active policy of seeking to attract international organisations (IOs), an increasing number have opted to base themselves in the Netherlands. In 2008, 32 such organisations were based in the Netherlands, including 23 in the Hague area. As a host state of IOs, the Netherlands seeks to present itself as an internationally-minded country with The Hague as the 'legal capital of the world'. However, the conditions offered to these organisations did not keep pace with the government's success in attracting them. Thus, for example, IO staff complained about taxes, residence rights, international schools and the Dutch healthcare system. Cooperation between the government and IOs was far from smooth, and IOs felt that the government's approach was not very solution-oriented.

The then government took this criticism very seriously and, based in part on the findings of a 2002 Interministerial Policy Review (IBO), published a position paper on attracting and hosting IOs in mid-2005. The emphasis shifted from attracting IOs to the Netherlands towards doing better at hosting the organisations already located here.

At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Protocol Department (DKP), the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) carried out the present policy review to establish the extent to which the measures taken by the government have so far helped to improve conditions for Dutch-based IOs. Coming three years after the introduction of the policy, it is an interim assessment rather than a final evaluation. The key aim is to draw lessons from experiences to date with a view to making further policy improvements.

The review focuses on hosting – and thus not on attracting – IOs. It does not evaluate the position paper itself, but devotes considerable attention to the views of the IOs and their non-Dutch staff, obtained by means of surveys and interviews,

on the implementation of the measures adopted. Other sources of information include a desk study of documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and interviews with relevant officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as of other ministries and implementing organisations.

The policy review was conducted by and under the responsibility of IOB inspector Ted Kliest, in cooperation with IOB researchers Bas Limonard and Rianne Verbeek. Zinzi Shamburg of research bureau TNS NIPO was responsible for the survey of IO staff and the statistical analysis of the results.

The policy review was supervised by a reference group, consisting of Pauline Genee (head of the Desk for International Organisations until 31 March 2008), Ron Muyzert (Ambassador for International Organisations until 31 July 2008) and Rob Zaagman (Ambassador for International Organisations from 1 August 2008) on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as Serv Wiemers of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Paul Vlaanderen of the Ministry of Finance, Christian Archambeau and, subsequently, Aad Jacobs of the European Patent Office, and Professor of Management and Organisational Sciences Mandy van der Velde of Utrecht University. IOB thanks the members of the reference group for their valuable comments on the draft Terms of Reference of the policy review and the draft report. During the review process, IOB inspectors Rita Tesselaar and Gerard van der Zwan acted as internal readers.

IOB also wishes to thank the IO representatives and staff of the IOs who responded to the surveys and participated in the interviews with the IOB assessment team. The full report contains a list of persons interviewed.

Responsibility for the content of this summary rests entirely with IOB.

Bram van Ojik

Director, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department

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The full report in Dutch and English, as well as the Dutch and French versions of the summary, are available on IOB's website: www.minbuza.nl/iob.

List of Abbreviations

AMIO	Ambassador for International Organisations
AO	Head of an international organisation and his/her family, and highest ranking staff and their families
AOW	General Old Age Pensions Act
BO	Members of the technical and administrative staff and their families
CAWI	Computer Assisted Web Interviewing
CB/IFB	Central Bureau for International Tax Treatment
DKP	Protocol Department
DKP/BV	Foreign Missions, Privileges and Immunities Division
DKP/DIO	Desk for International Organisations
DV	Staff members who are considered to be permanent residents in the Netherlands
EO	Members of the service staff and their families
EU	European Union
IBO	Interministerial Policy Review
IND	Immigration and Naturalisation Service
IO	International Organisation
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department
IOSA-NL	International Organisations' Staff Associations in the Netherlands
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OPCW	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
PROBAS	Protocol personal records database
RGD	Government Buildings Agency
UN	United Nations
VAT	Value Added Tax

1 The review

At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Protocol Department (DKP), the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) has carried out a review of Dutch policy on hosting international organisations, which has been in force since mid-2005. The aim of the policy review is to establish the extent to which the measures adopted have so far helped to improve conditions for Dutch-based IOs. This will enable the Dutch government to render account to Parliament and the IOs themselves and draw lessons with a view to making further policy improvements. The policy review focuses on the implementation of the government's 2005 position paper on attracting and hosting IOs, with the exception of those aspects relating to attracting IOs.

The character of Dutch-based IOs varies greatly in terms of their tasks and organisation. IOs generally consist of states parties or member states that support the organisation's aims and operations financially and/or politically. Roughly speaking, Dutch-based IOs can be divided into three groups: (a) judicial IOs (courts, tribunals and EU-linked organisations in the field of investigation and prosecution); (b) organisations in the field of peace and security (non-proliferation or civilian NATO organisations); and (c) technical IOs in a wide range of fields, including patents, space, migration, language, the environment, international education and research. Of the 32 IOs based in the Netherlands (in 2008), 23 are located in the Hague area.

IOB carried out this policy review between April and October 2008. Written and electronic sources were analysed by means of a desk study. Interviews were conducted with officials from the most closely involved ministries, implementing organisations (the Tax and Customs Administration, the Government Buildings Agency and the Immigration and Naturalisation Service), the municipality of The Hague and representatives from Dutch-based IOs and the International Organisations' Staff Associations in the Netherlands (IOSA-NL). The policy review devotes considerable attention to the views of the IOs and their non-Dutch staff on

the implementation of the measures adopted. At the request of IOB, research bureau TNS NIPO carried out a survey among non-Dutch IO staff. The questionnaire was answered by 2,676 staff, amounting to a response rate of 39%. Another questionnaire was sent to IO management and was answered by 22 organisations. In addition, interviews were conducted with representatives from 19 organisations. On the basis of these questionnaires and interviews, it is possible to provide a representative picture of the views of IOs and their non-Dutch staff on the implementation of the government's position paper.

The policy review has a number of limitations. There are no firm data on services provided to IOs and their staff by the Dutch government. As a result, it was impossible to determine 'objectively' whether service delivery has improved or deteriorated. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not register all complaints, making it impossible to identify statistical changes in their frequency and nature. Another limitation concerns the fact that the quantitative results of the staff survey cannot be compared with the situation prior to the adoption of the government's position paper due to the lack of baseline data for this period. The survey carried out by IOSA-NL in 2005 cannot serve as a baseline either due to the different nature of its questions and scope. Finally, Dutch IO staff were excluded from the staff survey because their responses would have distorted the answers to many of the questions. When formulating the questions for the survey, moreover, the assessment team was not sufficiently familiar with the position of Dutch staff *vis-à-vis* their non-Dutch colleagues in terms of privileges and immunities. It therefore investigated this issue via the management questionnaire and the subsequent interviews with the organisations, as well as in an interview with representatives of IOSA-NL.

2 The policy

Since 1988, the Dutch government has pursued an active policy to attract international organisations (IOs) to the Netherlands. As a host state of IOs, the Netherlands seeks to present itself as an internationally-minded country with The Hague as the 'legal capital of the world'. In 2008, thanks in part to this policy, 32 IOs were based in the Netherlands, including 23 in and around the city of The Hague.

At the beginning of this century, it became apparent that there were many problems relating to the conditions offered to IOs in the Netherlands. The gradual deterioration in the tax position of IO staff was a key factor in this regard. The right to a tax-free car had been curtailed, the threshold for VAT refunds had been raised and the introduction of the Income Tax Act 2001 had worked out unfavourably for IO staff. The effects of these measures were distributed unevenly, as the various headquarters agreements had introduced substantial differences between IOs in terms of the fiscal and other privileges accorded to their staff.

The organisations also felt that the Dutch government did not take adequate account of their particular situation when adopting new legislation. In 1998, non-Dutch IO staff were removed from the municipal personal records database as a result of the Benefit Entitlement (Residence Status) Act. This led to administrative problems. In addition, the rules for obtaining a permanent residence permit were more restrictive for privileged persons than for persons residing in the Netherlands under the Aliens Act. Complaints of an 'infrastructural' nature related to the limited availability of international education, the perceived high cost of childcare and housing and the shortage of family doctors and dentists in the Hague area. Non-Dutch IO staff were deeply dissatisfied with the Dutch healthcare system.

On the whole, there was a feeling among IOs at the time that the Netherlands was barely fulfilling its role as host nation. They felt that, from time to time, the Dutch government's approach was rigid and not very solution-oriented. This created the impression that their presence in the Netherlands was not adequately appreciated.

As a result, cooperation between the Netherlands and the organisations was far from smooth, and the Netherlands' image as an attractive host state was damaged. Two organisations even threatened to leave the Netherlands.

The government's 2005 position paper was not only a formal response to the 2002 Interministerial Policy Review (IBO) 'Policy Framework for Attracting and Hosting International Organisations' but also addressed a number of problems raised by IOs. It marked an important shift in Dutch policy from its initial emphasis on attracting IOs towards doing better at hosting the organisations already located in the Netherlands.

With its position paper, the government sought to highlight and strengthen the role of the Netherlands as a host country. The basic premise was that there were strong political, practical and economic arguments for valuing the presence of IOs in the Netherlands. The government therefore wished to create an image of the Netherlands as an attractive host country for IOs. The guiding principle was that the Netherlands should offer them conditions that are competitive with those on offer elsewhere and that its policy should be seen as hospitable, generous, effective and solution-oriented.

The key element of the government's position paper concerned the harmonisation of privileges and immunities according to staff category, regardless of organisation. This was achieved by granting certain categories of staff a diplomatic status similar to that of embassy staff. In addition, the rules on adding together residence periods were relaxed and the right of children of IO staff to a Dutch identity card was expanded.

In addition, the government would improve communication with and the provision of information to IOs and to ensure that they were better informed about policy developments and new legislation in areas relevant to them. To this end, measures would also be taken to strengthen the interministerial framework. The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would continue to hold periodic meetings with IO representatives. Furthermore, the government referred to the role of the Central Bureau for International Tax Treatment (CB/IFB) in Rijswijk and a planned expatriate helpdesk within the municipality of The Hague as central information points.

The government's position paper stated that central government could play a supportive and stimulating role in relation to possible improvements in the

infrastructure available to IOs and their staff, including premises, security and access, medical facilities, international schools and conference facilities.

Finally, the government's position paper emphasised that various ministries share responsibility for hosting IOs and that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plays a coordinating role in this regard. In order to strengthen interministerial cooperation, a high-level interministerial Steering Committee would be established under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This committee would focus on formulating policy proposals, including proposals for attracting new IOs, guiding policy implementation in the right direction and rendering account in these areas.

3 Organisational aspects of hosting IOs in the Netherlands

A joint responsibility

Hosting IOs is the joint responsibility of all ministries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the coordinating ministry and bears primary responsibility for contacts with the organisations and for mediating between them and local authorities in case of problems. This follows from its responsibility for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the relevant obligations under international law. The ministry responsible for a particular IO is jointly responsible for solving any problems that arise. In practice, however, most ministries are usually indirectly involved in hosting IOs and do not regard it as a priority.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the day-to-day contacts with IOs but is dependent on the cooperation of other ministries for solving certain problems. It serves as a 'front office' for IOs and must also articulate their concerns to other ministries and mediate between them in seeking solutions when problems arise. Some ministries characterise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the IOs' mouthpiece within the Dutch government, while some IOs have in the past referred to it as the mouthpiece of the Ministry of Finance. These characterisations are illustrative of the difficult position occupied by the ministry. Its coordinating role is not accompanied by additional powers. The government established the interministerial Steering Committee on the Netherlands as Host Country to provide a clear and solid framework for this interministerial cooperation.

Organisational structure within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Protocol Department (DKP) is the contact point for foreign missions and IOs in the Netherlands. It is responsible for various tasks, including registering privileged persons, dealing with matters concerning the immunities and

concerned. Examples of this include working groups in the following areas: helpdesk, IO premises and education.

In practice, the Steering Committee, which has gradually lost its high-level character, serves primarily as a useful platform for exchanging information on current activities and related problems, proposing new ideas to improve conditions for IOs in the Netherlands and activities relating to the role of the Netherlands as a host country for all kinds of foreign persons and institutions (private business, financial institutions and so forth). The Steering Committee thus facilitates cooperation between ministries, some of which are only occasionally involved – whether directly or indirectly – in issues relating to IOs.

By participating in the Steering Committee, the parties ensure that they continuously receive information on current activities. The Steering Committee also plays a key role by keeping the objectives of government IO policy in the minds of all participants. With the exception of the working group on IO premises, all the other working groups have completed their activities and have in practice been disbanded.

Budget

The policy of hosting IOs in the Netherlands entails various costs, such as financial contributions towards the housing or rehousing of organisations (including the provision of premises or sites for a symbolic fee or free of charge), incidental financial contributions supplementing the Netherlands' regular contributions as a states party and the costs of transporting and providing security for defendants (and visiting family members), lawyers and witnesses involved in the work of the international tribunals.

The costs of this policy are borne by the various ministries that are responsible for one or more IOs and sometimes by different departments within these ministries. There is accordingly no overall budget. Not all ministries were able to provide some or all of the information requested by the assessment team. In addition, not all ministries differentiate between the Netherlands' regular contributions to IOs as a member state or states party and the costs arising from hosting IOs in the Netherlands. Not all ministries were able to provide a detailed breakdown of the costs of hosting IOs. In the case of three organisations, moreover, the Netherlands' contribution is made through a Dutch university to which these organisations are linked. In short, the following overview of the total annual costs (average for 2006 and 2007) of hosting IOs is merely an estimate. The total costs

amount to EUR 38.7 million, comprising premises (EUR 27,235,000), security (EUR 5,000,000) and other costs (EUR 6,455,000).

4 Implementation of government policy

4.1 Privileges and immunities

IOs and their staff are granted privileges and immunities to ensure that they are able to perform their duties without hindrance and independently of the host country. The salaries of IO staff are generally exempt from income tax. In addition, the heads of IOs and most judges of international tribunals are granted the same privileges and immunities as diplomats of equivalent rank. Privileges and immunities are granted, first and foremost, on the basis of existing bilateral agreements and are laid down in each organisation's headquarters agreement.

Harmonisation of privileges and immunities

Prior to the government's position paper, there were substantial differences in the privileges and immunities granted by the Dutch government to staff in the same category but employed by different IOs. Faced with mounting criticism, the government was unable to justify these differences based on the character or origin of the organisations.

The government decided to eliminate the differential treatment of staff in the same category. To this end, all categories of staff were to be streamlined in accordance with the international standards enshrined in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961). The most senior IO staff would be placed on an equal footing with diplomats of equivalent rank at embassies in the Netherlands (AO status). Other staff would be placed on an equal footing with the administrative and technical staff (BO status) or – where applicable – service staff (EO status) at such embassies. With a few exceptions, the package of privileges and immunities that applied to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) served as a benchmark. Dutch staff and staff with permanent residence (DV) status (granted on the basis of previous residence in the

Netherlands or a short break between two consecutive contracts) were excluded from this harmonisation.

In order to enshrine these changes in international law, the government had to conclude supplementary agreements with all Dutch-based IOs. The aim was to bring the new regime into operation on 1 January 2006. The standardised package would also apply to new organisations.

Immediately after the adoption of the government's position paper, DKP/DIO initiated consultations on the supplementary agreements with eligible IOs. Between mid-2005 and the end of 2007, the government concluded supplementary agreements with 26 IOs. Four organisations have still not accepted the proposed package. The exclusion of Dutch staff and staff with DV status from certain privileges forms the main obstacle in this regard.

IOs are generally satisfied with the results of the harmonisation process. The majority of staff are better off in terms of privileges and immunities, but most organisations regard the effects of granting DV status as a problem. Only a few feel the same way about the exclusion of Dutch staff. Opinions are divided among staff members who were questioned about the harmonisation of privileges and immunities. Although more than half of the respondents regard the harmonisation as an improvement, 43% believe that the system of privileges and immunities remains unfair. Dissatisfaction is strongest among staff who were excluded from most privileges. Instead of differences between organisations, differences have now emerged between staff members within organisations, based on Dutch nationality, DV status and/or the distinction between staff with AO or BO status.

The implementation of this key issue from the government's position paper has calmed and – where necessary – had a positive impact on relations between the Dutch government and Dutch-based IOs. The majority of staff now have a package of privileges and immunities that may be regarded as generous in international terms. There is less understanding for the decision to exclude Dutch staff and staff with DV status. The Netherlands justifies this decision on the basis of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, but those who do not accept it base their arguments on the same document. It is likely that this issue will return to confront the Dutch government in the future, for example in the form of notices of objections or possibly even legal proceedings.

Implementation of the rules on fiscal privileges

IO staff are expected to pay tax on income not derived from their official activities in the Netherlands, that is to say, income other than the salary and emoluments obtained as a result of their employment by an IO. There is accordingly a partial exemption of income that must be declared in box 3 (income from savings and investments). Staff with AO status are granted certain fiscal privileges for an unlimited period of time, while staff with BO status receive them for a maximum period of ten years. These fiscal privileges include partial or total exemptions from a range of national and municipal/local taxes, such as income tax (boxes 1, 2 and 3), value-added tax on certain goods and services, excise duties, import duties, tax on passenger cars and motorcycles, motor vehicle tax, property tax, waste disposal charges and so forth.

The Tax and Customs Administration's Central Bureau for International Tax Treatment (CB/IFB) specialises in handling the fiscal affairs of Dutch-based IOs, embassies and consulates and their Dutch-based staff. In 1992, due to the growing number of IOs in and around The Hague, the government decided to combine the tax treatment of these organisations and their staff. In 2002, the handling of customs matters and VAT refunds was added to the list of responsibilities. As of 2008, CB/IFB is responsible for handling the fiscal affairs of all Dutch-based IOs and their staff. One of its key tasks is to provide information on fiscal matters. If requested, moreover, it helps IO staff to file their tax returns. CB/IFB officials visit IOs (as well as consulates and embassies) for this purpose. This involves approximately 1,000 tax returns per year.

IOs are generally satisfied with the assistance and services provided by CB/IFB and note that there has been an improvement in this area. However, they point out that VAT refunds could be processed more swiftly and that information on fiscal matters could be further improved in a general sense. A few organisations criticise the lack of an income tax exemption for trainees, while the partial non-exemption from income tax in box 3 remains a source of dissatisfaction. The lack of English-language tax forms is also regarded as a shortcoming.

A little over a third of all non-Dutch IO staff are now familiar with the CB/IFB. Its services are generally regarded as useful. Most staff feel that it is customer-friendly and efficient.

Immunities in practice

IOs and their staff are subject to national law; they are not above the law. Immunities granted to organisations by virtue of their tasks form an exception to this rule. IO staff also enjoy certain immunities in their capacity as employees of IOs. The privileges and immunities granted to privileged persons under a headquarters agreement are granted for the sake of the organisation and not for the personal benefit of the individuals concerned.

Senior staff enjoy absolute immunity from Dutch criminal jurisdiction. Other staff only enjoy functional immunity. Persons with functional immunity cannot invoke their immunity in relation to traffic violations. Persons with absolute immunity are requested to respect Dutch law and cooperate with the police if, for example, they decide to conduct a breathalyser test. However, the police cannot compel persons with absolute immunity to cooperate with such tests.

Complaints from privileged persons and police reports submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that there was a fundamental lack of knowledge about privileges and immunities both within the police and among IO staff. The police did not always respect valid immunities, while IO staff members sometimes wrongly invoked their immunities. It also emerged that the identity card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs caused confusion (see section 4.2).

Following the adoption of the government's position paper, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to intensify its contacts with the Haaglanden regional police force and organised briefings on privileges and immunities for uniformed police officers.

IOs note that officers from the Haaglanden police force are currently better informed and that complaints are taken seriously. In addition, as noted in section 4.2, the level of recognition of the identity card among law enforcement officers has increased. Half of the staff responding to the survey describe police action as customer-friendly, while one-fifth feel that it is not. The Protocol Department notes that the number of complaints concerning police action is falling.

Social security

IOs are confronted with the social security system of the host state. In general, they have their own social security system for their staff. As a member state, the Netherlands is involved in designing the social security system and employment conditions during the establishment of a new IO. As a host state, it assesses the

organisation's social security system prior to its establishment in the Netherlands. If necessary, it can ask the organisation to modify the system. If the Netherlands believes that the organisation's social security system offers adequate coverage to its staff and their families, it excludes the organisation and its staff from the Dutch social security system. However, if there are no arrangements for family members or if these arrangements do not offer adequate coverage, those family members are obliged to pay contributions to the Dutch social security system in exchange for coverage.

As a rule, a retired staff member's pension is taxed in the country where he or she lives or intends to live. Other rules apply to retired staff of EU institutions.

Since the adoption of the government's position paper, two new IOs have decided to base themselves in the Netherlands. During the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the drafting of its headquarters agreement, the social security system was not properly assessed. The fact that this tribunal is not a UN organisation was not taken into account, and the provisions on pensions and collective social insurance therefore still do not satisfy the minimum requirements imposed by the Netherlands. During the recent establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in the Netherlands, its social security system was assessed at an early stage, with the involvement of DKP/DIO.

IOs have drawn attention to the following issues:

- IO staff (including Dutch nationals) and their families lose the right to build up a basic state pension under the General Old Age Pensions Act (AOW). For every year that they work for an IO, 2% is deducted from their accumulated AOW pension rights.
- A pension gap is developing in the case of staff of UN institutions that set the pensionable age at 62.
- An IO that plans to reduce its activities in the near future and terminate them in due course foresees a problem with regard to financing unemployment benefit for staff members who will be made redundant. It is not clear to the many Dutch staff members employed by this organisation whether they are entitled to unemployment benefit.
- The provision of English-language public information on the social security system, including the possibilities for taking out voluntary insurance, is inadequate.

Only a third of the non-Dutch staff responding to the survey indicate that they are moderately or well informed about their position in terms of social security, while 43% indicate that they are not.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are familiar with the problems described above. However, they take the position that it is the responsibility of the IO or the individual staff member to close any gaps in the basic pension. It is also the responsibility of IOs to make arrangements for paying unemployment benefit to their staff, in accordance with what was laid down in this regard in the headquarters agreement. The fact that an IO has not made any financial provision in this regard does nothing to alter this. On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledges that the provision of information on the position of IO staff as regards social security can be improved.

As mentioned, IOs and their staff are themselves responsible for making the necessary arrangements in relation to social security. Under current rules, they cannot shift this responsibility onto the Dutch government. However, as noted, the Dutch government is responsible for monitoring the quality of the arrangements made by IOs. The taxation of pensions is standard practice internationally, and the Netherlands is right not to depart from it.

4.2 Admission and residence

Identity cards

IO staff and their families are entitled to identity cards issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The identity card for privileged persons is a valid identity document in the Netherlands. It indicates that the holder is residing legally in the Netherlands, has a visa permitting him or her to travel within the Schengen area and enjoys certain privileges and immunities. In the case of family members, it also indicates whether or not they may work in the Netherlands. The identity card is not a travel document.

Two problems arose in connection with the identity card. First, public authorities in the Netherlands (municipalities, police, IND, Customs and so forth) and abroad did not always recognise or accept the card. Second, there were complaints that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sometimes took a long time to issue identity cards. This occasionally caused problems for IO staff, who need the card to travel within and to the Schengen area and to apply for certain goods and services, such as bank accounts, mobile phones and insurance.

The issue of identity cards by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is sometimes delayed by seasonal peaks or temporary understaffing in the Foreign Missions, Privileges and Immunities Division (DKP/BV). It is not standard practice to report delays or the reason for delays to IOs, unless they are caused by incorrectly or incompletely filled-out application forms. At the time of the policy review, the ministry was examining the possibility of processing applications electronically in order to reduce the turnaround time and render the process less labour intensive.

Slightly more than half of those responding to the staff questionnaire feel that the process for obtaining or renewing identity cards is efficient (simple and fast). One-fifth of respondents hold the opposite view.

To make the identity card better known, the Protocol Department (DKP) has organised briefings and courses to bring it to the attention of the immigration service (border controls carried out by Royal Military and Border Police) and the regular police. Judging from the comments of some IOs, the Haaglanden regional police force is now better acquainted with the identity card. However, the same cannot be said for other police forces, municipal institutions and government departments, and commercial enterprises such as banks, utility companies and post offices.

IOs argue that the identity card is not sufficiently clear, in that it does not state that it serves as a Schengen visa but does state that it is not a travel document. As a result, border officials do not always recognise the identity card as a Schengen visa. This causes problems for certain non-EU passport holders at border crossings. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledged these problems and introduced a new identity card on 1 July 2008. The new card states: 'This ID card together with a travel document entitles the bearer to reside in the Netherlands and to enter the territory of the Schengen States.' IO staff who anticipate problems while travelling can apply for a new card.

In certain cases, lack of knowledge regarding the identity card and the status of privileged persons can give rise to discourteous and occasionally offensive treatment by the Royal Military and Border Police at Schiphol Airport. One-fifth (22%) of those questioned feel that the treatment is not customer-friendly, one-third (34%) are neutral and almost half (44%) regard it as moderately or very customer-friendly.

Opinions regarding the police are slightly more positive, but respondents also point to a lack of knowledge regarding the identity card in this context. Measures aimed at making the identity card better known are having a positive effect but focus mainly on law enforcement officers in and around The Hague and the immigration service at Schiphol Airport.

Admission and residence of children and visitors

In the past, the policy on issuing identity cards to children of privileged persons was considered restrictive. Dependent, non-studying children lost their right to an identity card as soon as they turned 18, and children studying abroad were not entitled to an identity card at all. The government decided to relax the rules so that dependent, non-studying children between the ages of 18 and 23 and children studying abroad up to the age of 27 also qualify for an identity card.

Two-thirds of those questioned consider this an improvement, while one-third are neutral. In addition, a third of respondents feel that the rules are now sufficiently flexible. The opinion of staff members regarding the process for obtaining or renewing identity cards is less positive in relation to their children than in relation to themselves. One-third of those questioned consider the process efficient, 14% consider it inefficient and a majority (55%) has no strong opinion.

Opinions vary regarding the procedure for obtaining visas for visiting family members and friends. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents feel that the process is easy or very easy, while 21% feel that is difficult or very difficult.

Permanent residence

After their employment has ended, IO staff and their families must in principle leave the Netherlands. Before 2005, staff members were entitled to remain in the Netherlands under certain conditions, provided that they had been employed continuously by their organisation for at least ten years. If the principal family member left the Netherlands, the dependent family members, particularly the children, did not have a right to continued residence. Furthermore, IO staff and their family members were not allowed to add the years they had resided in the Netherlands as privileged persons to any periods of residence under the Aliens Act.

The government decided that IO staff would be entitled to a permanent residence permit after working in the Netherlands for ten years. Adult family members would also be able to apply for their own permanent residence permits after living in the Netherlands for ten years. In addition, IO staff and their families would be

allowed to add together the periods of residence under the Aliens Act 2000 and as privileged persons. Applications can only be submitted before employment ends. Adding together periods of residence is also important in relation to naturalisation. The government's aim was to amend the relevant legislation by 1 January 2006.

IOs have nothing special to report regarding the relaxation of the rules for obtaining a permanent residence permit, except for the fact that the procedure for granting them in 'complex cases' is slow and inefficient.

It appears that, even after the relaxation of the rules, IO staff and their families are making little use of the possibility to apply for permanent residence permits. A significant proportion of respondents (64%) indicate that they are not well informed about the possibilities for obtaining a permanent residence permit. Three-quarters of respondents regard the relaxation of the rules as positive, although some draw attention to problems relating to their implementation, such as the date of registration in PROBAS differing from the date of entry into employment with IOs, the bureaucratic nature of the application procedure, the occasional inconsistency of the information provided by IND staff and confusion regarding the terms 'permanent residence (DV) status' (used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and 'permanently resident' (used by IND).

4.3 Infrastructure

The Netherlands seeks to provide the best possible facilities for Dutch-based IOs.

Premises

As host nation, the Netherlands can decide to bear all or part of an IO's housing costs on a temporary or permanent basis. The value that the government attaches to attracting the organisation concerned to the Netherlands is a key factor in this decision. In addition, the state can decide to provide premises for a symbolic fee or free of charge.

The government's position paper supports the role of the Government Buildings Agency (RGD) as landlord and buildings manager, but leaves IOs free to engage such services directly from the private sector. The government undertook to amend the Premises for International Organisations (Procedures) Order to enable IOs to sign a housing contract directly with the RGD without needing to involve the ministry responsible for the organisation concerned. In such cases, the government can also grant a VAT exemption.

Since mid-2006, the RGD has operated the 'Premises for International Organisations Unit'. This internal coordination unit carries out all the tasks associated with housing or rehousing IOs. In practice, once it has agreed to the turnkey project, the organisation in question only needs to sign the contract. The unit maintains contact with other relevant parties, including the departments of the municipality where the IO is or will be based.

Four IOs have indicated that they decided to base themselves in the Netherlands because the Dutch offer with regard to premises was better than those of competing countries, while a few have provisional or concrete plans to move to a new location in the Netherlands. IOs note that securing new or permanent premises often takes a considerable amount of time and that assistance in this regard is not optimal, due in part to the government's laborious and bureaucratic decision-making processes. Not all organisations are satisfied with their temporary or permanent premises. Some are placed together in the same building against their wishes, while others, in whose case it would make more sense to do so given the similarity of their tasks, are not. Structural alterations involve substantial costs, which are difficult to justify in the case of temporary premises.

Most IOs indicate that they intend to remain in their present location, but this does not imply that they are fully satisfied with it at all times. Complaints that have been raised relate to vandalism, air pollution and noise pollution in the immediate surroundings of the building, inadequate security measures, lack of parking spaces and poor building management services combined with high rents.

The RGD is in favour of conducting a general assessment of the future need for IO premises, with a view to developing scenarios for dealing with any new organisations that wish to base themselves in the Netherlands. Such an assessment would facilitate an integrated approach to finding premises for IOs instead of the current *ad hoc* approach.

Security

IOs enjoy immunity from jurisdiction within the scope of their official activities. In order to enter a building, the Dutch authorities therefore need permission from the head of the IO concerned, except in emergency situations. The Dutch authorities are responsible for the external security of the building. The National Coordinator for Counterterrorism periodically determines the required level of security. IOs

employ their own security staff to ensure the safety of staff and visitors inside the building.

In practice, the provision of security to IOs rarely gives rise to problems. Relations between the organisations and the responsible government agencies are generally good. Potential improvements include more effective measures against vandalism, more frequent police surveillance outside office hours and ensuring the best possible compliance with UN and other security requirements. The tribunals and courts consider the security measures adopted for temporary experts, defendants and visiting family members and witnesses to be adequate.

Ninety per cent of those questioned believe that their working environment is sufficiently secure. A majority of respondents also feel that the Netherlands offers a safe living environment.

Medical facilities

In 2005, IO staff were deeply dissatisfied with the Dutch healthcare system. Among other things, they complained about long waiting lists, the lack of preventive medical care, the government's policy of reducing healthcare costs rather than focusing on patients and the standard of the available care and treatment.

According to the government's position paper, access to health care (family doctors, specialists and dentists) and information on the Dutch healthcare system were both in need of improvement. Initiatives in the Hague area would later be implemented at national level. Due in part to government stimulation, a number of healthcare institutions in the Hague area have actively responded to the specific needs of non-Dutch IO staff. Bronovo Hospital operates an internationally-oriented family doctors' practice and a children's health clinic for expatriates living in The Hague. An International Health Centre has been opened in Scheveningen. These initiatives were launched by the healthcare institutions themselves. To date, no measures have been implemented at national level, and no measures have been taken to tackle the shortage of dentists in and around The Hague.

Informing staff about the Dutch healthcare system is first and foremost the responsibility of IOs, although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does provide documentation on the subject. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is taking a cautious approach with regard to improving access to hospitals and specialist

Netherlands Congress Centre, which is now known as the World Forum. According to IOs based in the Hague area, the supply of conference facilities is sufficient.

Accessibility

The government considered The Hague to be sufficiently accessible and saw no reason to adopt specific measures in this regard.

IOs consider the Netherlands to be accessible thanks to its good infrastructure, Schiphol Airport and the relatively short travel time to several important European cities. They also regard the accessibility of their own organisation via public and private transport as sufficient, although some organisations draw attention to the shortage of parking spaces, the desirability of having a taxi rank close to the organisation and the need for better signposting of IOs within The Hague. The vast majority of staff are satisfied with access to their work location by public and private transport. Staff of organisations based outside The Hague are less satisfied with access to their work location by public transport than their colleagues who work in and around The Hague.

4.4 Information and communication

Communication and the supply of information form an intrinsic part of the services that the Dutch government provides to IOs and their staff. In the past, the organisations complained that they were not informed about relevant policy developments in a timely manner and, in this connection, that the government did not take adequate account of their particular situation when adopting new legislation. The government's position paper promised 'systematic communication about relevant policy developments and planned legislative changes'. In order to achieve this and other objectives, measures were taken to strengthen the interministerial framework, and the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would continue to meet with IO representatives. Another issue was that non-Dutch IO staff had problems functioning in Dutch society because much information is only available in Dutch. This applies to leaflets and forms issued by municipal authorities, central government implementing organisations and commercial companies, information on websites and telephone menus. The language problem is most acute for staff immediately after their arrival in the Netherlands.

The following steps were taken to improve communication and the provision of information:

- The Protocol Department (DKP) was allocated additional staff, including an Ambassador for International Organisations (AMIO), which enables it to maintain close relations with IOs. DKP visits every organisation once a year and holds frequent consultations with the 'larger' IOs. Where relevant, it conducts visits together with other government agencies, such as the Central Bureau for International Tax Treatment (CB/IFB).
- In 2006, the outdated Protocol Guide for International Organisations was thoroughly revised and made available online. It was updated again in 2008. The guide is meant to serve as a practical manual for the personnel departments and individual staff members of IOs. It is available in English and French.
- DKP regularly issues *notes verbales* with information on new legislation.
- As already noted, the interministerial Steering Committee on the Netherlands as Host Country was established in 2005 and reported to Parliament on policy implementation in 2006 and 2007.
- The Desk for International Organisations (DKP/DIO) organises information meetings and briefings for IOs, usually at their own request and often in cooperation with other government departments.
- A web portal that allows expatriates to obtain information about and gain access to various services in the Netherlands is currently being developed. It will focus primarily on matters that need to be dealt with directly after arrival. The project, entitled 'My first month in the Netherlands', will be linked to an existing web portal (www.newtoholland.nl).
- With the cooperation of central government, the municipality of The Hague has established the Xpat Desk. This desk, which comprises a website and an information counter within city hall, is part of the Hague Hospitality Centre and serves as the first point of contact for new foreign residents in The Hague.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is trying to encourage other government agencies to provide information in English. However, current Dutch integration policy discourages the provision of information by the government in any language other than Dutch.

IOs note that there has been an improvement in communication and the provision of information. The government devotes more attention to the needs and problems of the organisations, and bilateral cooperation between them has intensified. The strengthening of DKP/DIO and in particular the appointment of AMIO have contributed to this. The organisations also value the periodic meetings with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although the last of these meetings took place in 2006. The Protocol Guide for International Organisations

is regarded as a very useful tool, although the personnel departments of the organisations are in need of practical guidelines for applying the rules contained in the guide and the *notes verbales*. IO staff appreciate the services provided by the Xpat Desk of the municipality of The Hague.

IOs still feel that the government does not announce new policy developments and legislation in a timely manner and that it does not take adequate account of their particular situation. They suggest that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should henceforth make *notes verbales* available electronically to facilitate their distribution to IO staff. Based on the different signals that they sometimes receive from various government departments, IOs conclude that coordination within central government is not optimal. A number of ministries appear reluctant to enter into substantive discussions with IOs about problems they have experienced. Most organisations are in favour of continuing the periodic meetings with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

IO staff are meant to receive key information through their employers. The staff survey indicates that this is indeed the case. It appears that just over a quarter (27%) of IO staff members are familiar with the Protocol Guide for International Organisations. This may be due to the limited distribution of the guide, although it has been available electronically since 2006. Half of those questioned feel well informed about current regulations. Four out of ten respondents do not feel well informed about policy developments that are relevant to IO staff, while three out of ten do feel well informed. IO staff would like to see the advent of a single, central website that provides access to all information and – possibly – a Frequently Asked Questions section.

4.5 Other aspects of conditions in the Netherlands

Local authorities

Local authorities set their own policy towards the international organisations based in or near their municipality.

IOs note that they generally have good contacts with local government departments. They are also fairly satisfied with the handling of requests and complaints. However, non-Dutch staff, especially newcomers, have difficulty finding their way around the institutions of the municipality in which they are based. More than half of those questioned feel that they are not well informed about municipal regulations and services, while one-fifth feel that they are.

Knowledge of the Dutch language plays a key role in this context, as many municipalities only provide a very small amount of information in English. Only a quarter of respondents know their way around the municipal institutions. A frequently-cited issue is the need to be registered in the municipal personal records database as well as in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' PROBAS personal records database in order to obtain certain services.

The municipality of The Hague

With the establishment of the Xpat Desk, the municipality of The Hague feels that it has progressed to a higher level in the provision of professional services to foreign residents. Every two months, the Hague Hospitality Centre organises a briefing for recently arrived expatriates entitled 'Welcome to The Hague'. The municipality is counting on the fact that, by taking this group of residents seriously and assisting them, it has generated a substantial amount of good will. To strengthen its image as 'the legal capital of the world' and in the framework of the Structural Plan for The Hague in 2020 – Global City by the Sea (*Structuurvisie Den Haag 2020 – Wêreldstad aan Zee*), the municipality of The Hague is developing an International Zone, running from Kijkduin to the Alexanderkazerne near Scheveningen. This area is already home to a number of IOs, and several others that are currently located in other parts of The Hague have plans to move there in the future.

IOs based in and around The Hague refer to the following positive aspects of being based there: its international character, with a growing number of high-quality shops and restaurants and a wide range of cultural offerings; the proximity of other IOs and foreign missions and the fact that it is the Netherlands' centre of government; the multicultural urban environment; good transport connections; the municipality's proactive policy, with increasing attention for the needs of IOs; and the fact that The Hague generally provides a safe living and working environment. Less positive aspects include the sluggishness of bureaucratic decision-making processes, for example with regard to finding premises for IOs and the provision of other services; the city's unattractiveness to young professionals; the shortcomings of the municipal infrastructure; high housing costs due to overheating at the upper end of the housing market; and the operation of the Dutch healthcare system.

Hague-based IOs are positive about the Xpat Desk, although not all staff living in and around The Hague are equally aware of its existence. A third of those questioned are well aware, an equal proportion is vaguely aware and the rest are

unaware. Of those who are familiar with the Xpat Desk, over half are satisfied or very satisfied with the assistance it provides, while approximately 40% have no strong opinion on this point.

Cost of living

A survey conducted by the International Organisations' Staff Associations in the Netherlands (IOSA-NL) in 2005 indicated that many staff were concerned about the high cost of living in the Netherlands. The government's position paper does not address this issue.

The staff survey indicates that almost three-quarters of respondents consider the cost of living in the Netherlands to be high or very high. The verdict concerning the cost of housing is very negative (90% of respondents). Over half of the respondents consider the costs of transport and consumer goods to be high or very high. The same applies to the costs of international education and childcare.

Overall view on conditions in the Netherlands

IOs are generally satisfied with conditions in the Netherlands, including its high standard of living, its favourable geographical location and good international transport connections, its stable political climate, its good domestic physical infrastructure (roads, transport and telecommunications), the generally high standard of economic services, the good working relations with central and local government and, more specifically, the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in many areas. Less attractive aspects include the sluggish bureaucracy and the high cost of living for IO staff.

A large proportion of non-Dutch IO staff (68%) is satisfied or very satisfied with living and working in the Netherlands. A minority (14%) is dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, while 18% are neutral. Besides the loss of privileges that results from being granted DV status, the main criticism focuses on the operation of the Dutch healthcare system and the high cost of living (especially housing). Another criticism relates to the poor service mentality in government institutions, utility companies and the retail trade. Finally, IO staff are concerned about language problems and the fact that government institutions and commercial service providers pay too little attention to foreign residents.

5 Key findings and recommendations

5.1 Key findings

It is not easy to demonstrate an indisputable causal link between the measures adopted and the degree of satisfaction of IOs and their staff regarding the performance of the Netherlands as a host nation. Reasons for this include a lack of reliable baseline data and the fact that previous studies and surveys and the present policy review did not employ the same questions or approach. However, based on the findings of earlier studies and by triangulating the data obtained through the research methods applied in the present policy review, it is plausible that the increased satisfaction of IOs and their non-Dutch staff is due in part to the improvement in the services provided by the Dutch government.

- 1) *Almost all the planned policy measures have been implemented or are in an advanced stage of implementation.*

Three years after the publication of the government's position paper, implementation is still in full swing. The government vigorously embarked on the implementation of its policy in 2005. For example, it succeeded in harmonising privileges and immunities by concluding supplementary agreements with IOs. It has yet to conclude such agreements with four organisations, which have so far not accepted the proposed package. Fiscal privileges have been extended. Adjustments to make legislation on the adding together of periods of residence more flexible entered into force, as planned, on 1 January 2006. The Xpat Desk of the municipality of The Hague was reinforced with a staff member from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A new version of the Protocol Guide for International Organisations was published in 2006 and updated in 2008. As regards infrastructure, central government was not responsible for taking concrete measures, but it nevertheless provided support and encouragement. The following key findings provide insight into the results achieved.

- 2) *The potential of the interministerial Steering Committee on the Netherlands as Host Country, established to promote the joint responsibility for implementing the government's position paper, has not been fully exploited.*

The government's position paper emphasises that all ministries share responsibility for hosting IOs in the Netherlands. The cooperation of other ministries in implementing a policy that is hospitable, generous, effective and solution-oriented is very important to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its capacity as the first point of contact for IOs. This also applies to ministries that may regard hosting IOs as less of a priority.

The interministerial Steering Committee on the Netherlands as Host Country was established as a high-level forum charged with putting the joint responsibility for policy implementation into practice. In reality, it appears that the committee serves primarily as an information exchange platform for the ministries involved in hosting IOs and the municipality of The Hague. Its main value is accordingly that, from time to time, it draws the attention of the ministries to the issue of hosting IOs, which also facilitates bilateral working relations. The level of participation varies widely between ministries, which means that the Steering Committee can no longer be regarded as a high-level body. It keeps little or no record of policy developments that may be relevant to IOs. DKP/DIO prepares the meetings but in practice has difficulty fulfilling its coordinating role within the Steering Committee. For example, it is not easy to induce ministries to find solutions to problems raised by IOs. This is particularly true in relation to issues that are not mentioned specifically in the government's position paper. In addition, the Steering Committee has still not formulated an integrated long-term vision, which means that problems are usually dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis.

- 3) *The harmonisation of privileges and immunities has calmed relations with IOs. The procedure and criteria for granting permanent residence (DV) status are considered problematic.*

Organisations have praised the elimination of the key differences between them in terms of privileges and immunities. The extension of fiscal privileges has reversed the negative effects of the Income Tax Act 2001, at least for most staff. Most organisations have also praised the process of achieving this harmonisation through supplementary agreements. Dutch staff and staff with DV status are excluded from certain fiscal privileges. For this reason, four organisations have refused to accept the proposed package. In addition, a number of IOs that did accept it have questioned the exclusion of staff with DV status and the strict

application of the relevant rules. Eleven per cent of non-Dutch IO staff in the Netherlands have DV status.

The verdict of IO staff has not been uniformly positive. Despite the fact that harmonisation has eliminated key differences in terms of privileges between staff of equal rank in different organisations, it has introduced new differences between various categories of staff within organisations. Although more than half of all respondents regard the harmonisation as an improvement, approximately 17% do not share this view. Only one quarter of respondents consider the harmonisation to be fair, while a significant proportion of staff (43%) believe that the system of privileges and immunities remains unfair. Dissatisfaction is strongest among staff who are excluded from a number of fiscal privileges. In addition, some respondents believe that the distinction between high-ranking (AO) and lower-ranking (BO) staff is arbitrary.

- 4) *The staff increase at the Desk for International Organisations and the appointment of an Ambassador for International Organisations have led to an improvement in the management of relations with IOs, but continuity remains a concern.*

Most IOs believe that their working relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Desk for International Organisations (DKP/DIO) have improved in recent years. In this context, they refer to the increased capacity of DKP/DIO and, above all, to the Ambassador for International Organisations' contribution to the improved cooperation. The larger IOs, in particular, now hold consultations with DKP/DIO staff on a regular basis. Nevertheless, many organisations are concerned about the impact of the high turnover of DKP staff on continuity in the provision of services.

- 5) *Communication with and the provision of information to IOs have improved, but certain matters still require attention.*

IOs and their staff welcome the measures introduced since 2005 to improve communication and the provision of information. This applies in particular to the new version of the Protocol Guide for International Organisations, the intensification of bilateral contacts initiated by DKP/DIO, the periodic briefings organised by DKP/DIO in cooperation with, for example, the Central Bureau for International Tax Treatment (CB/IFB) and the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), and the establishment of the Xpat Desk by the municipality of The Hague. However, the joint meetings with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have not taken place for some time, despite the fact that there is demand for them among IOs. In addition, IOs believe that communication about

planned changes to policy and legislation that are relevant to them is still inadequate. A key example in this regard is the introduction of the new Healthcare Insurance Act in 2006. Both the government and the private sector still rarely provide information in English.

- 6) *IOs and their non-Dutch staff are generally satisfied with their presence, life and work in the Netherlands.*

Without exception, IOs are generally satisfied with their presence in the Netherlands. In this context, some organisations refer to the stable political climate of the Netherlands, its relatively high standard of living, the good service infrastructure and/or the financial support (e.g. for housing) that they receive from the Dutch government. The survey of non-Dutch IO staff reveals that the vast majority (68%) of respondents are generally satisfied with living and working in the Netherlands. However, this does not prevent both IOs and non-Dutch IO staff from raising issues on which, in their eyes, the Dutch government could take action (see below).

- 7) *IOs and their non-Dutch staff believe that special attention should be devoted to a number of issues during policy implementation.*

Organisations

The way in which the Dutch government facilitates relocation, renovation and expansion of IO premises and the procedures it applies in the process are not always satisfactory. Obtaining new or permanent premises often takes a considerable amount of time, due in part to the government's sluggish and bureaucratic decision-making processes.

Security for buildings and persons (staff, defendants, witnesses, etc.) is handled in a satisfactory manner. The Netherlands should continue to provide adequate responses to new security needs. It is important that the relevant authorities consider the varying security needs of organisations that are (or will be) located in close proximity to each other. This issue arises, in particular, in the context of the further development of The Hague's International Zone.

Staff

The Dutch healthcare system appears to be a source of dissatisfaction for many non-Dutch IO staff. This applies to its structure and policies (such as the 'gatekeeper' role of family doctors) as well as to its cultural aspects (such as the egalitarian nature of the system and the restraint in prescribing drugs). Measures

aimed at improving the provision of information about the system and facilitating the access of IO staff to medical care have produced some improvements, but have so far not eliminated the dissatisfaction, which undermines the attractiveness of the Netherlands as a seat for IOs.

IO staff have also drawn attention to the need to expand options in the field of international education. Various options for improving the availability of international education in The Hague have now been examined. Improvements include increased options for bilingual secondary education (Dutch-English) within the mainstream education system and the recent introduction by the International School of The Hague of a continuous curriculum for children aged between 4 and 18 at one location. In addition, the availability of international education will increase as a result of the plan to establish a 'European stream' at this school in the near future. In contrast, there is a shortage of international educational facilities for children with special needs.

In the case of multilingual childcare facilities, non-Dutch IO staff are confronted by long waiting lists and relatively high costs. The problem is especially pressing for this group, as they are generally less able to rely on family members for childcare.

- 8) *There is a certain discrepancy between the expectations of IOs and their non-Dutch staff and the extent to which the Dutch government is able to meet these expectations in the framework of its policy.*

The review suggests that not all problems experienced by IOs and their staff can or should be dealt with by the government to the same extent. At one end of the spectrum, the government provides services and information directly to IOs. Here, it can and should take responsibility. At the other end of the spectrum, IOs and their non-Dutch staff are confronted by social and cultural habits characteristic of Dutch society. The closer you move to this end of the spectrum, the harder it is for the government to control matters. In addition, there will always be differences of perception regarding what is 'good enough' and what could be 'even better'. In the framework of its policy, the government makes independent choices based on a wide range of considerations, including other interests. When making these choices, however, it is important for the government to listen and give appropriate consideration to the arguments of IOs and their staff.

5.2 Recommendations

As a general rule, policy implementation should take account of the guiding principle of the government's position paper, namely that the Netherlands should offer IOs conditions that are competitive with those on offer elsewhere and that its policy should be seen as hospitable, generous, effective and solution-oriented. The issues identified in the key findings should be considered from this perspective. In addition, this section presents a number of specific recommendations.

- 1) *The current level of effort should be maintained and should include effective cooperation between the ministries involved in host country policy.*

During the past three years, a lot of effort has been invested in performing overdue maintenance on the hosting of IOs in the Netherlands. Relations with IOs have accordingly improved considerably. Implementing the basic principles of the government's position paper nevertheless requires constant attention and commitment from all parties. The momentum that has been created should be sustained. In this connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may, where necessary, call on other ministries to shoulder their joint responsibility and help to ensure that the Netherlands remains an attractive host country for IOs.

- 2) *The interministerial Steering Committee on the Netherlands as Host Country should be used more effectively.*

In order to facilitate the implementation of the basic principles of the government's position paper and to ensure that they remain the responsibility of the ministries, the performance of the interministerial Steering Committee on the Netherlands as Host Country needs to be improved. If the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the ministries responsible for specific issues, prepares the meetings of the Steering Committee more thoroughly, its potential as a high-level decision-making body can be exploited more effectively. This also requires that the representatives in the Steering Committee come from the appropriate level. In addition, contact persons from the ministries and implementing agencies (who are not represented in the Steering Committee) could meet periodically to prepare the work of and implement decisions adopted by the Steering Committee.

- 3) *Developing a long-term vision and defining the ambition level.*

In order to move away from the *ad hoc* nature of problem solving, a long-term approach to the presence of IOs and their staff in the Netherlands needs to be developed. This could be done on the basis of scenarios such as the expected

arrival of new organisations or the closure of existing ones. In this framework, it would be possible to define the minimum level of service provision to which the Netherlands aspires. Action plans could then be drafted on the basis of this long-term vision.

4) *Further improvement of information and communication.*

One aspect of creating good conditions for IOs consists of informing them about planned changes to policy and legislation that are relevant to them and taking account of their special position in connection with such changes. To make this possible, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be actively informed about and involved in any changes planned by the other ministries.

It is important to provide a forum in which IOs can provide feedback on host country issues and in which the Dutch government can explain its vision and plans for the future. The meetings of the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with IO representatives should be revived. To complement these meetings, substantive issues such as premises, security and residence periods could be explored in greater depth with government and IO experts. In addition to responding to requests for information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could proactively examine what issues to single out for clarification or discussion.

Being an attractive host country implies that non-Dutch IO staff should be able to find their way in Dutch society without necessarily being able to speak Dutch. Central government and local authorities should therefore ensure that information and forms relating to their services are available in English or that they are able to provide adequate English-language assistance when approached by non-Dutch speakers. Non-governmental organisations should also be made aware of this need. None of this changes the fact that IOs are also responsible for informing their staff about Dutch society and providing the necessary assistance.

5) *Staffing levels in the Protocol Department.*

The level of service provision as experienced by IOs depends to a large extent on staffing levels in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Protocol Department (DKP). The department's future staffing levels are therefore a matter of concern, especially in the light of the present cutbacks. At current levels, the Foreign Missions, Privileges and Immunities Division (DKP/BV), which is responsible for registering non-Dutch staff and issuing identity cards, already has little leeway in this regard. Backlogs can therefore easily develop. The actual staffing levels of the Desk for International Organisations (DKP/DIO), which at present relies heavily on

temporary, additional staff, should be made permanent. The importance of preserving vital knowledge, established working relations and institutional memory should be taken into account in the regular transfer process within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The planned merger of DKP/DIO and DKP/BV should preserve enough manpower for managing relations with IOs, and the position of the Ambassador for International Organisations should preferably be retained.

6) *Attention should be devoted to the systematic monitoring of policy implementation.*

In order to maintain the standard of services provided to IOs and facilitate intervention where necessary, information on the performance of the relevant parties is needed. This entails monitoring policy implementation and systematically logging incidents and complaints. In the future, moreover, as a follow-up to the surveys carried out in the framework of this policy review, similar surveys among IOs and their staff could help to provide an insight into the Netherlands' performance as a host country.

Annexe Results of the survey of non-Dutch IO staff

At the request of and in close cooperation with the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB), research bureau TNS NIPO carried out a survey among the non-Dutch staff of Dutch-based IOs.

Method

The survey was carried out by means of computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI). This method allows respondents to participate in the survey via their own computer, after receiving an email message with a link to the questionnaire. IOB provided TNS NIPO with a list of email addresses of potential respondents. The respondents were able to fill out the questionnaire at a time that was convenient to them, without intervention from pollsters or interviewers.

For privacy reasons, not all organisations were able to release the email addresses of their staff. TNS NIPO created an open link for these organisations, which they distributed to their own staff. The questionnaire could be filled out an unlimited number of times via the open link. The advantage of this solution was that a large number of respondents were thus able to participate in the survey after all. The disadvantage is that the findings are less reliable, as there is no longer any control over respondents' conduct. In theory, the same respondent would have been able to fill out the questionnaire several times.

Finally, two organisations received printed versions of the questionnaire, which they distributed to their own staff. Respondents were able to return the questionnaire by stamped addressed envelope.

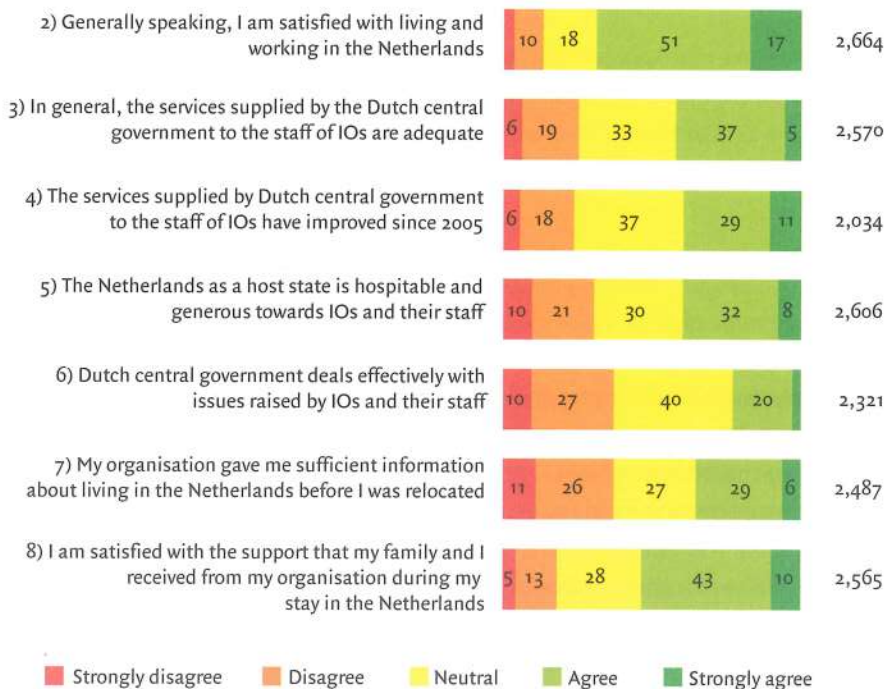
Sample

Because the survey also made use of an open link, it is not known exactly how many people received the questionnaire. There are two sources that can serve as a basis for estimating the total number of potential respondents, namely the

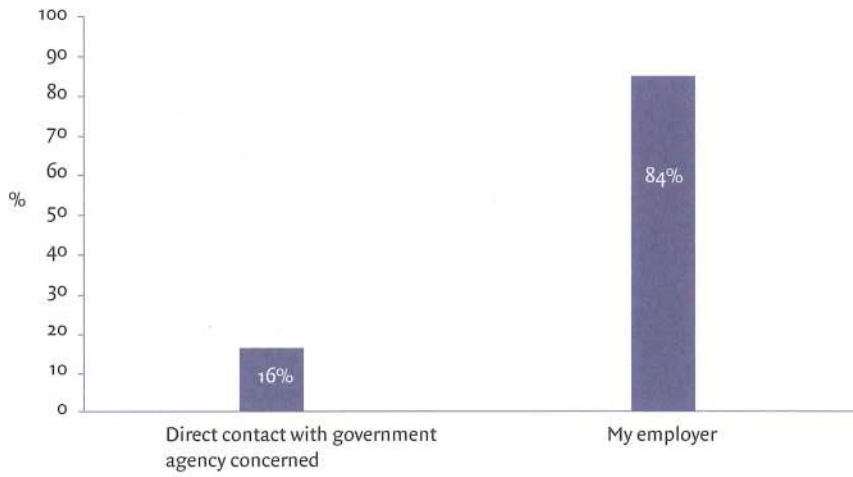
Question 1) Do you have Dutch nationality?

General

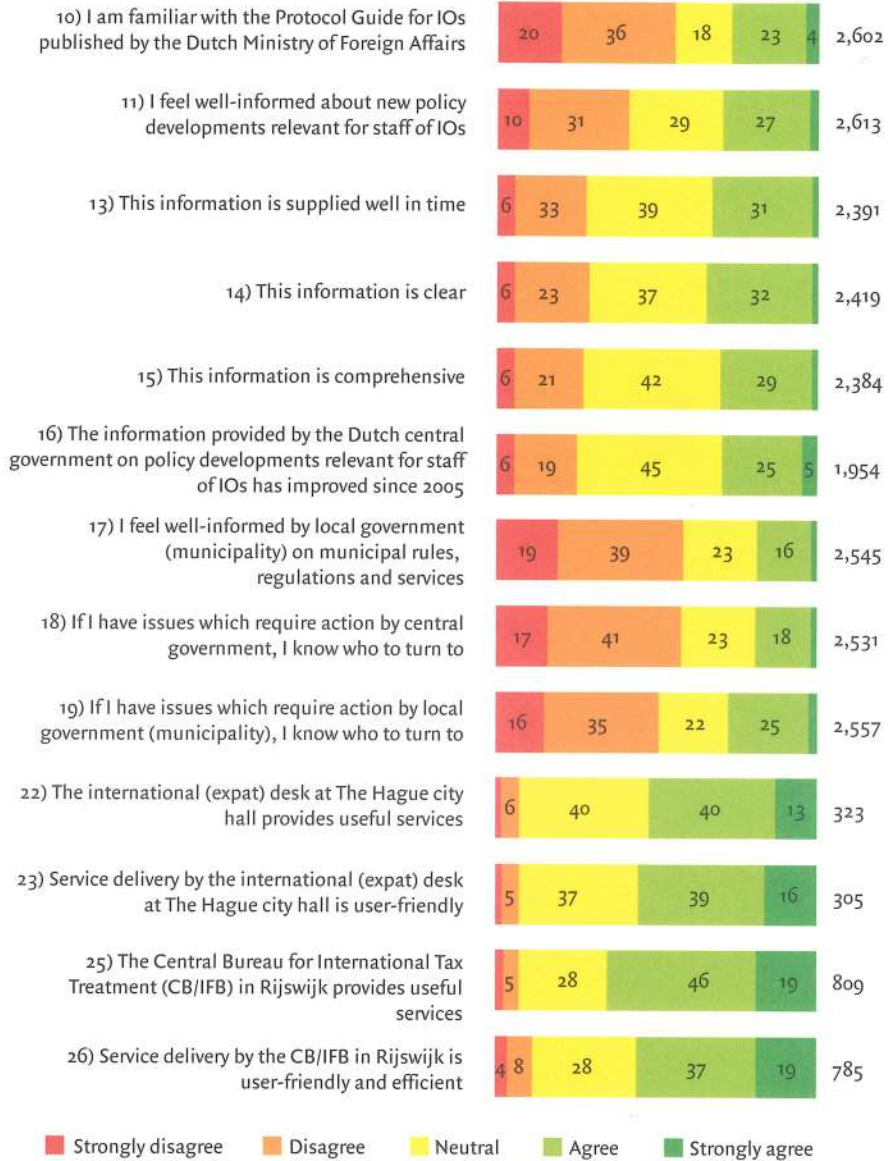
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:



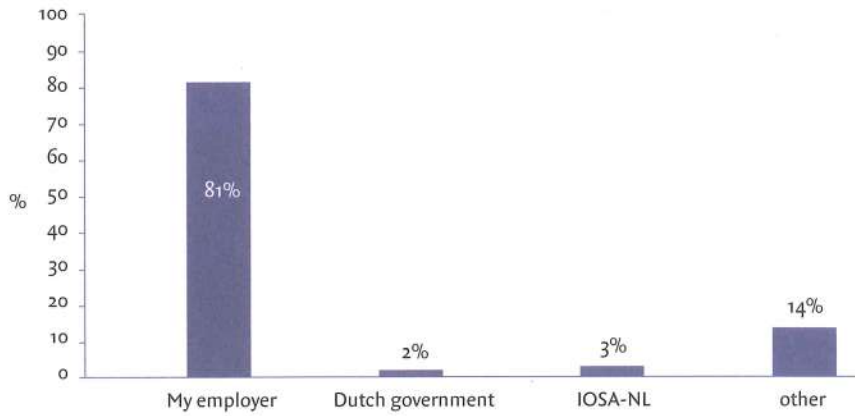
Question 9) The assistance I most rely on comes from:
n=2,676



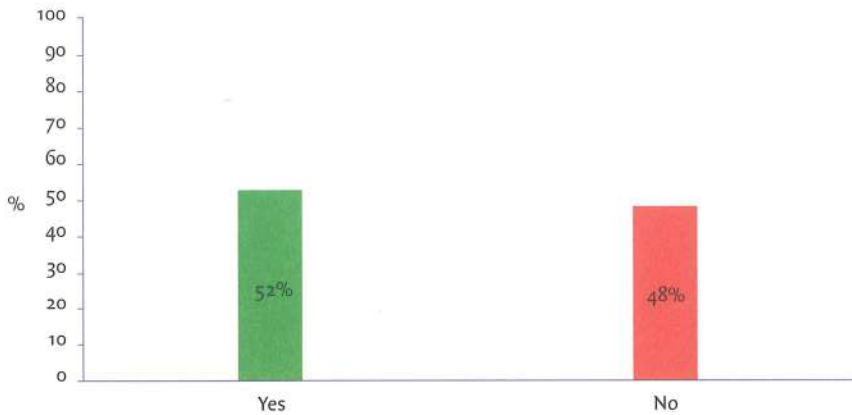
Information & Communication



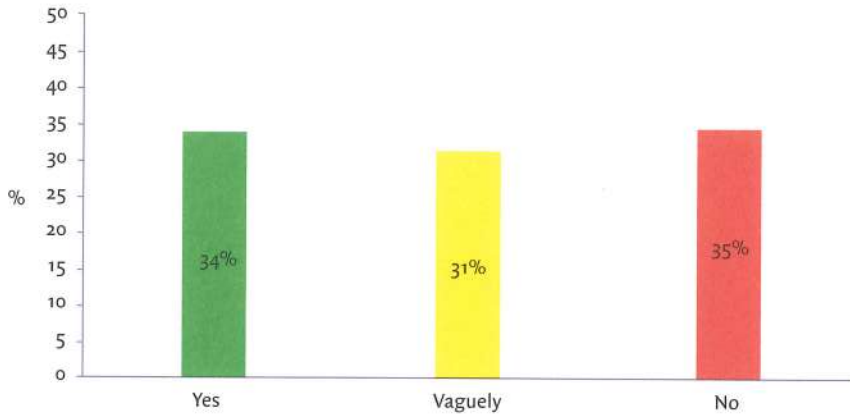
Question 12) Information on new policy developments relevant for staff of international organisations is primarily provided by
n= 2,283



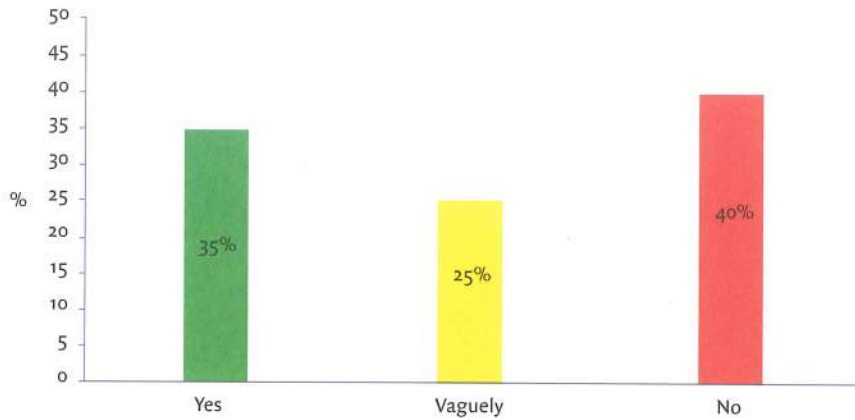
Question 20) Do you live in The Hague municipality?
n=2,676



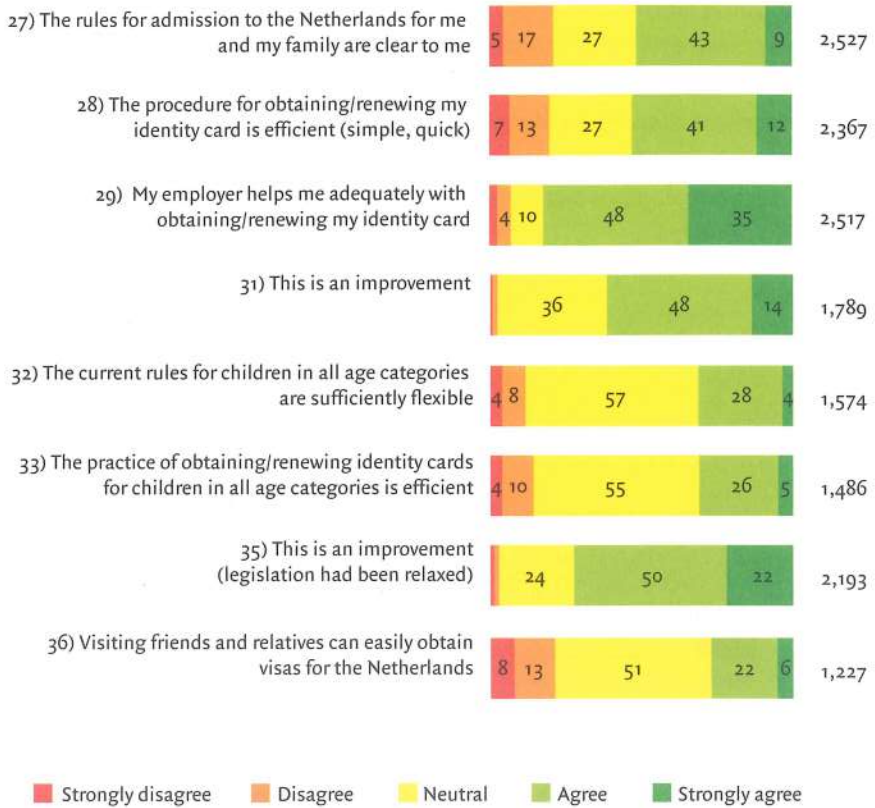
Question 21) I am aware of the existence of an international (expat) desk at The Hague city hall
n=1,396



Question 24) I am aware of the existence of the Central Bureau for International Tax Treatment (CB/IFB) in Rijswijk
n=2,676

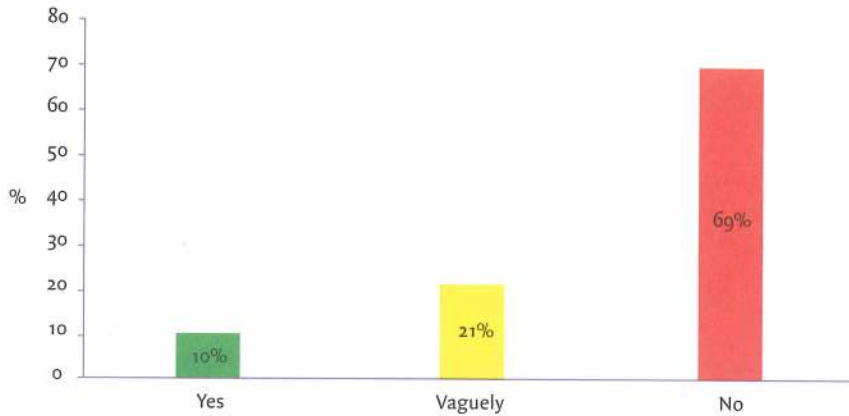


Access to and residence in the Netherlands



In 2005 the rules were relaxed so that dependent children aged between 18 and 23 who are not full-time students now also qualify for identity cards as accompanying family members provided they are part of the household of the staff member concerned and are resident with him/her. Children younger than 27 who are studying abroad are eligible for identity cards – valid for one year – if they are both studying in and nationals of a non-Schengen country. The rules for children under 18 to qualify for identity cards have remained the same.

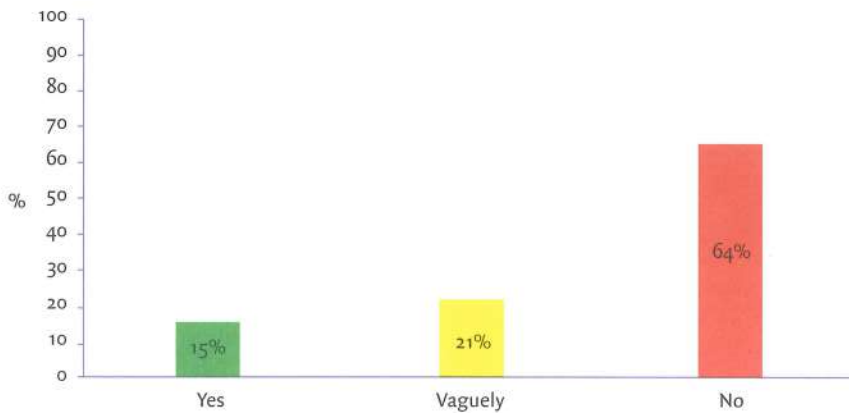
Question 30) Were you aware that the rules had been relaxed?
n=2,676



In 2006, the Aliens Act was amended so that employees and former employees of IOs and their accompanying family members who have spent ten years in the Netherlands now have an independent right to remain in this country. Staff of international organisations now have rights of permanent residence after 10 years, even if they voluntarily leave the employ of the IO. Family members aged 18 or over may apply for a permanent residence permit after 10 years in the Netherlands, even if the member of staff they were originally accompanying continues to work for an international organisation or leaves the Netherlands.

Question 34) Were you aware that the legislation had been relaxed?

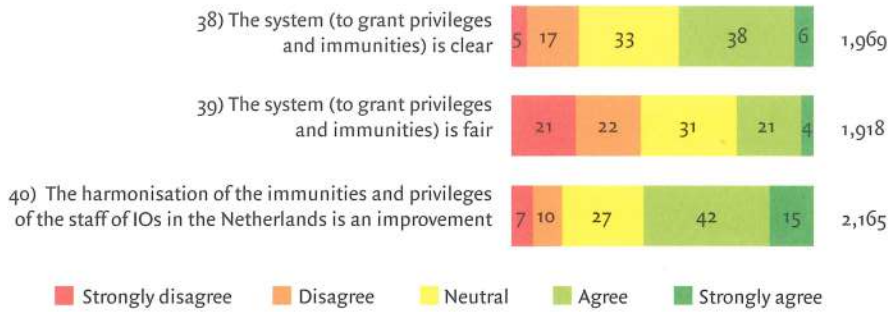
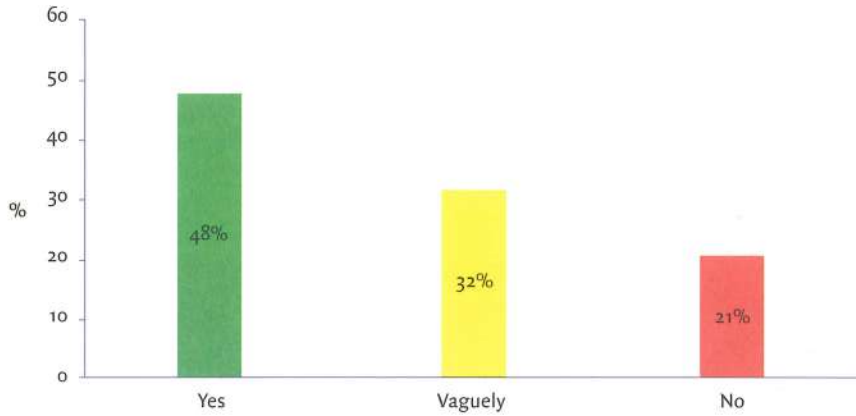
n=2,676



Privileges and Immunities

Privileges and immunities are granted according to differences in ranks and status of international staff. The system has been harmonised and laid down in headquarters agreements.

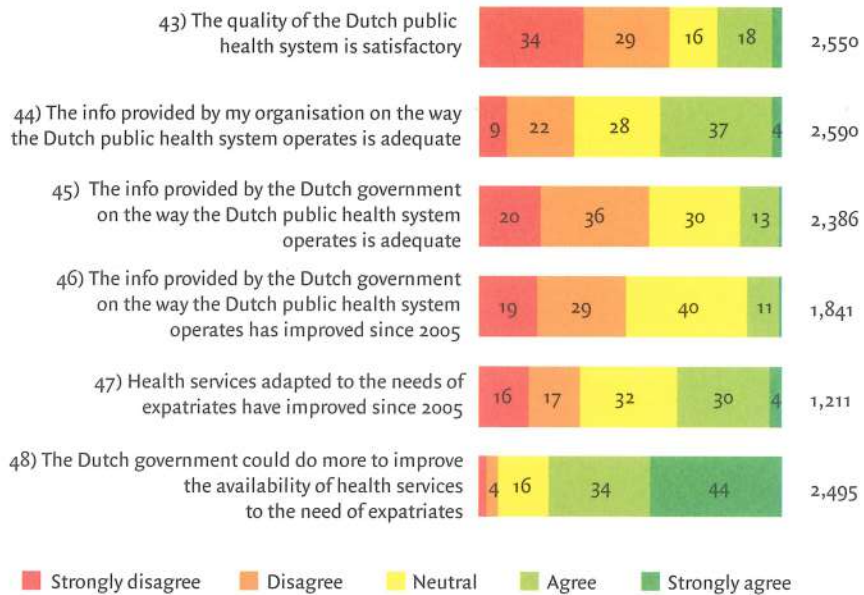
Question 37) I am aware of the system used by the Dutch government to grant privileges and immunities
n=2,676



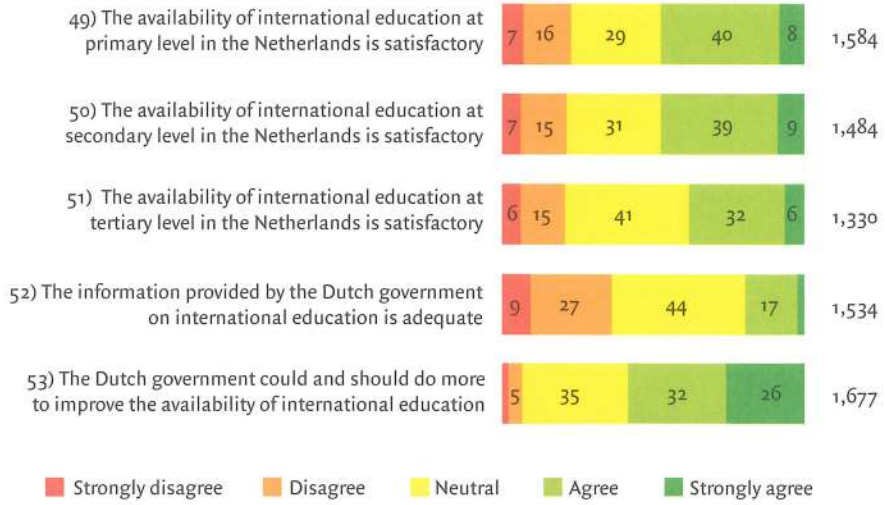
Importation of personal effects



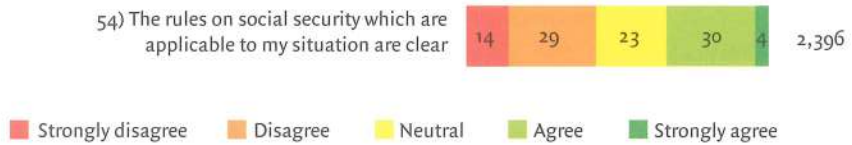
Public health system



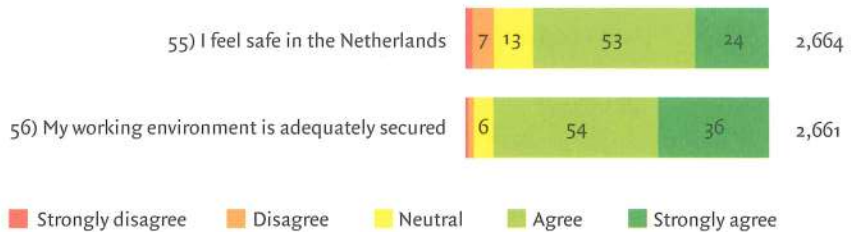
Education



Social Security



Security



Mobility

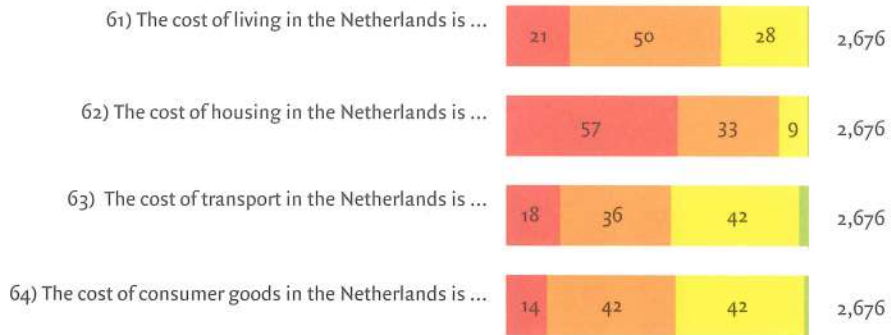


■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly agree

Other issues



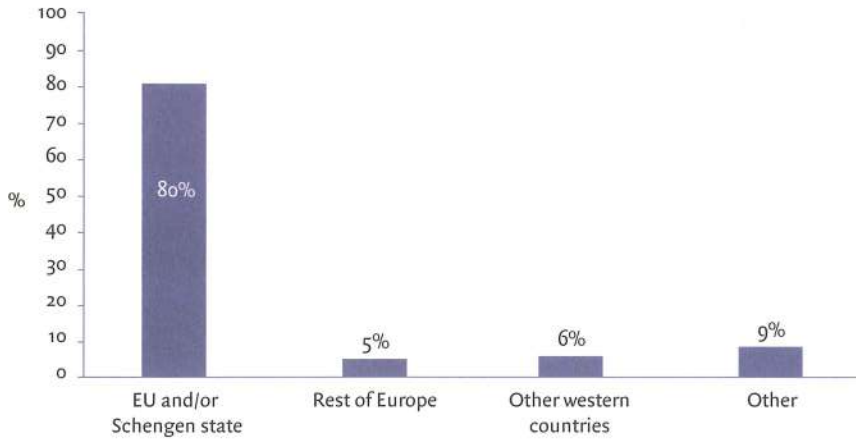
■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Agree
 ■ Strongly agree



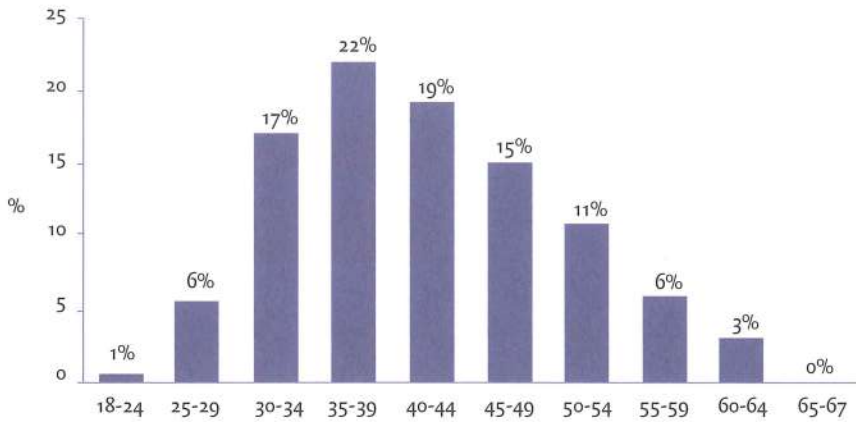
■ Very high
 ■ High
 ■ Reasonable
 ■ Low
 ■ Very low

Personal profile

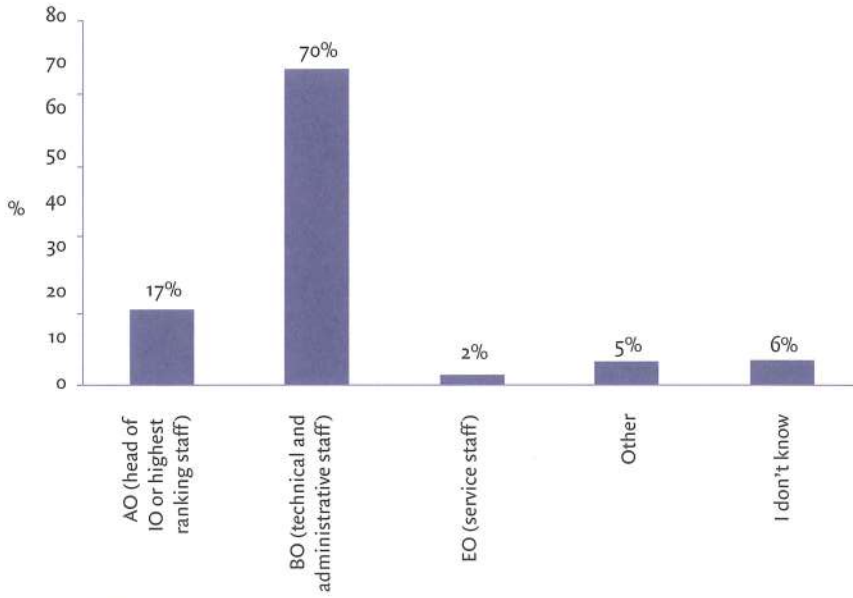
Question 65) Nationality
n=2,676



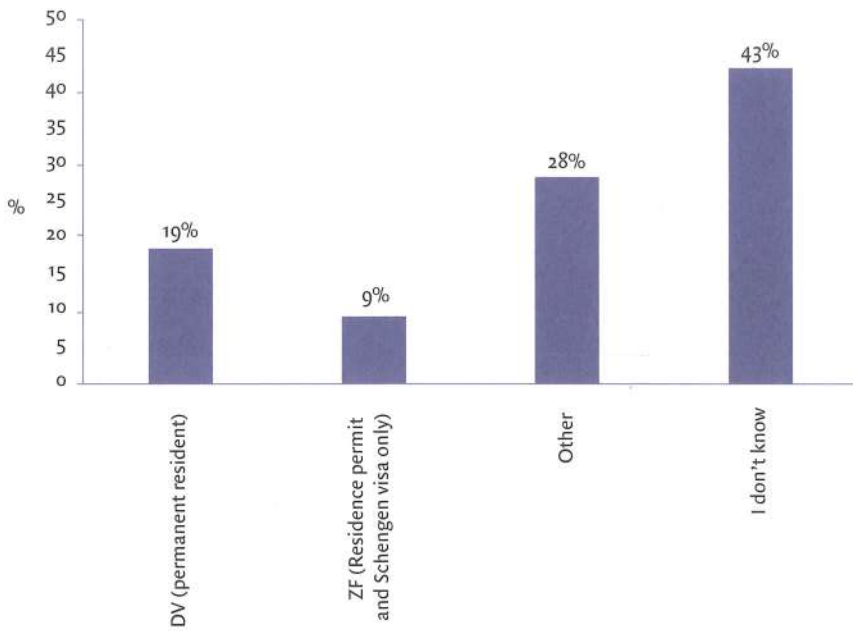
Question 66) What is your age?
n=2,676



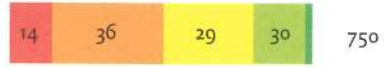
Question 67) What is your status? (see identity card)
n=2,676



Question 68) What is your residence status? (see identity card)
n=2,676

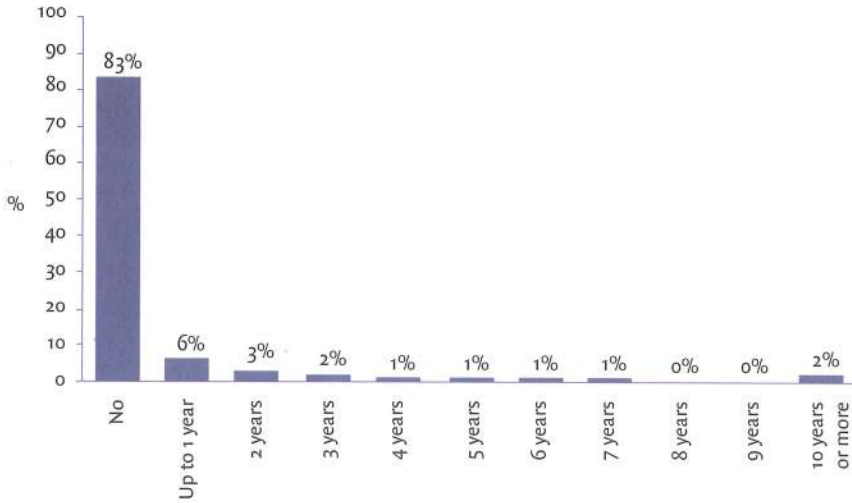


74) How would you rate this experience?

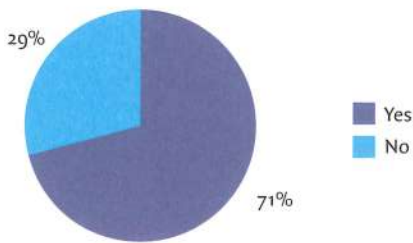


- Far better than in the Netherlands
- Better than in the Netherlands
- Equal to my experience in the Netherlands
- Worse than in the Netherlands
- Far worse than in the Netherlands

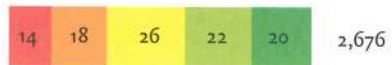
Question 75) Had you lived in the Netherlands before your assignment?
n=2,676



Question 76) Had you visited the Netherlands before your assignment?
n=2,226

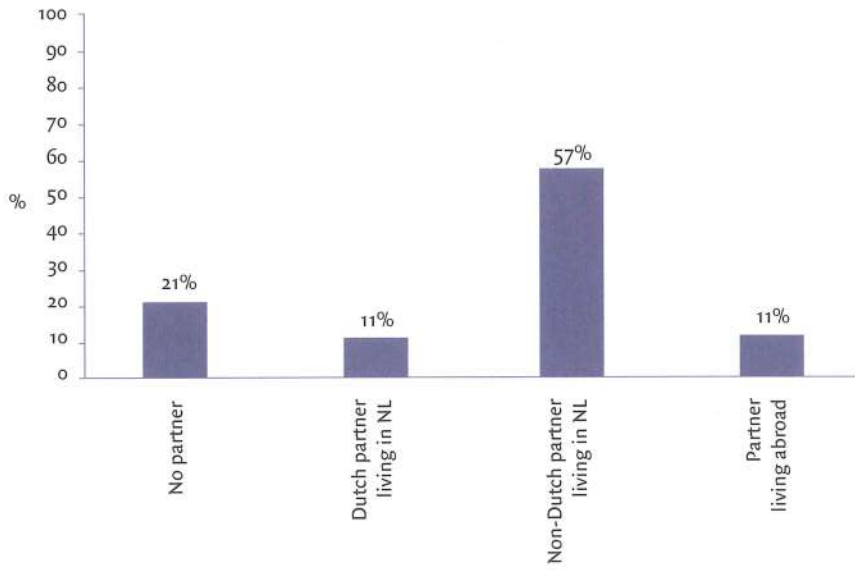


77) Do you speak Dutch?

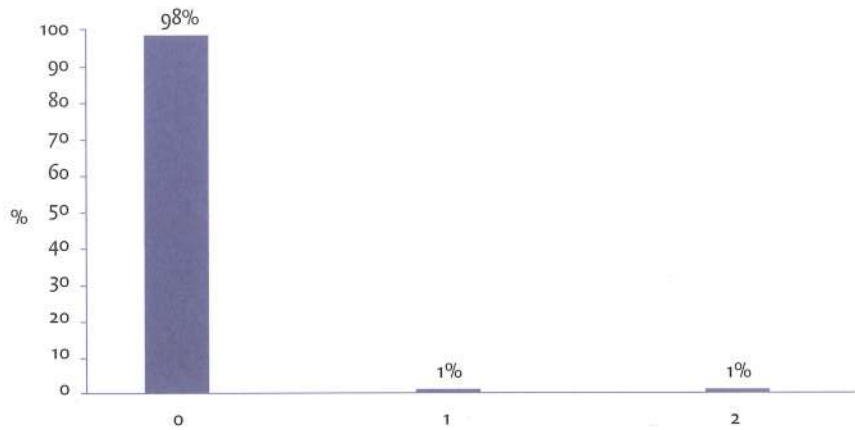


- Not at all
- Hardly
- Some
- Reasonably
- Fluently

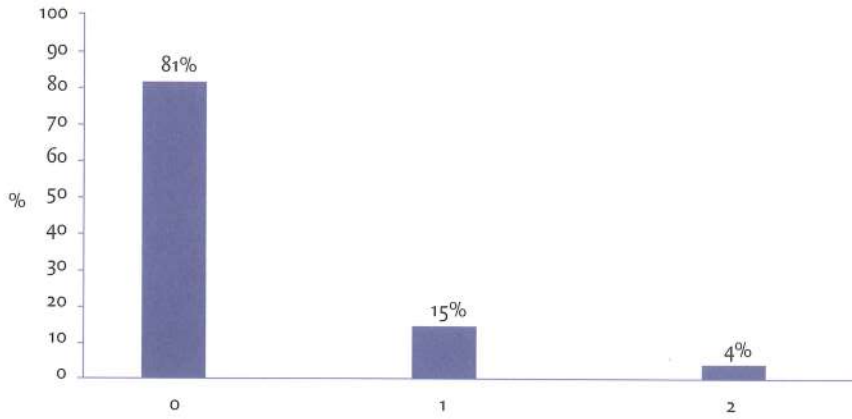
Question 78) Dependents (partner)
n=2,676



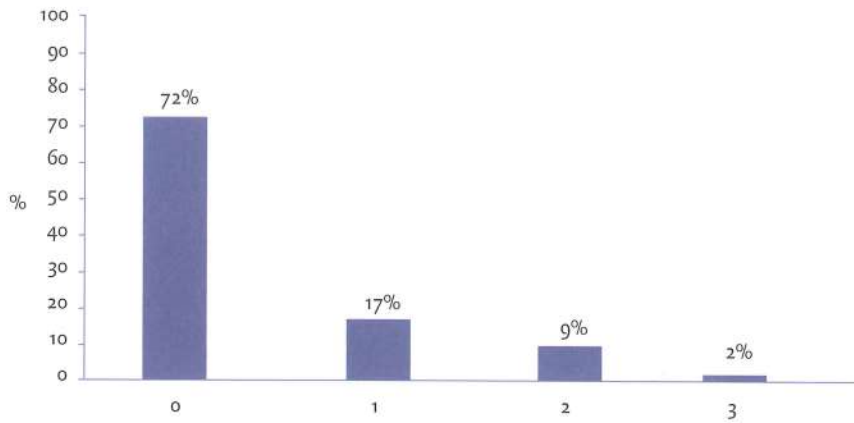
Question 79) Number of children with only Dutch nationality
n=2,676



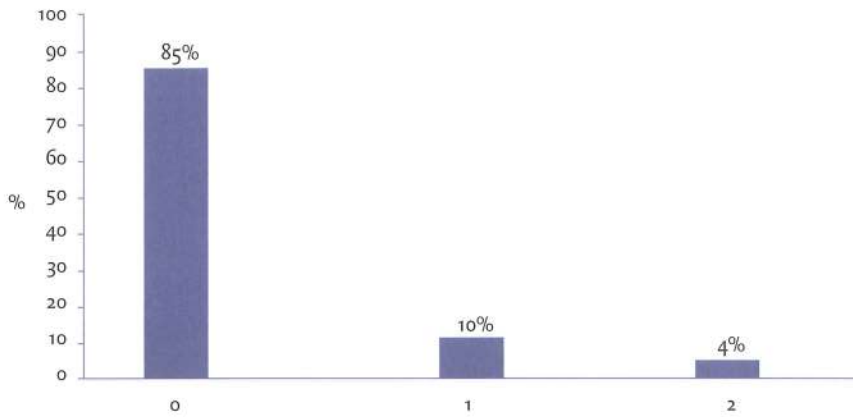
Question 79a) Children with other or double nationality aged 0-3: number n=2,676



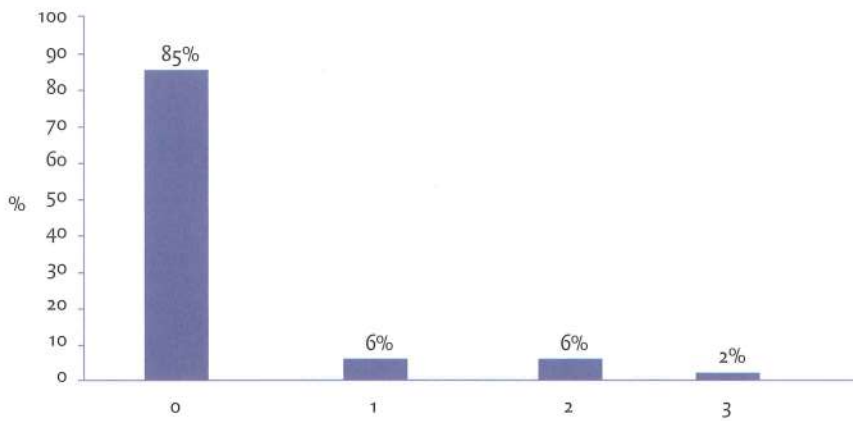
Question 79b) Children with other or double nationality aged 4-12: number n=2,676



Question 79c) Children with other or double nationality aged 13-18: number n=2,676

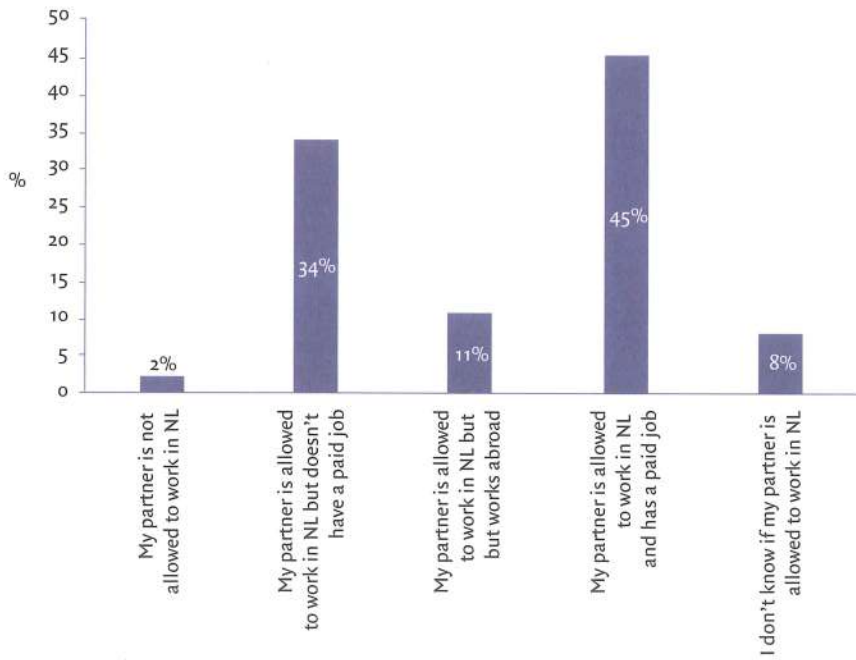


Question 79d) Children with other or double nationality aged over 18: number n=2,676



Question 80) Working situation of the partner

n=2,120



81) I am generally able to adapt to new situations

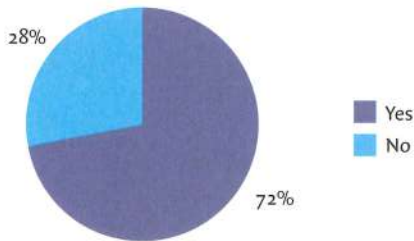


2,676

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Question 82) Do you live in the Hague area?

n=2,676



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