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## The experiences and intentions of European labour migrants concerning integration in the Netherlands

A qualitative research study to the needs of labour migrants in terms of integration in the Netherlands, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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## **Abstract**

*Due to the EU enlargements in the 2000s, significant amounts of labour migrants moved from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe to Western Europe. The needs and intentions of the labour migrants themselves are often not taken into account in policies in the Netherlands. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic could influence these needs and intentions. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to explore the experiences and (shifting) intentions of European labour migrants in the Netherlands in terms of integration. Ager and Strang (2008) have developed a framework in which four indicators of integration are found, these indicators are housing, education, labour and health. This framework is used as the main theoretical approach of this research. I have applied a qualitative research design, using in-depth interviews as a research method, to gain insights concerning the experiences and intentions of labour migrants on integration. A mixed method of inductive and deductive data analysis has led to the following main findings: Firstly, labour migrants need more guidance in every stage of their integration trajectories in the Netherlands. Second, the knowledge and the power of agencies should become more transparent since agencies abuse their power, which leads to decreased trust of labour migrants in these agencies. Third, the integration prospects for labour migrants should increase in terms of permanent contracts, language knowledge, promotion possibilities and prospects on better housing. Finally, the role of COVID-19 in these intentions and experiences is limited.*

# Index

Index.....	4
1. Introduction .....	6
1.1 A brief history of labour migration towards the Netherlands .....	6
1.2 Problem statement .....	7
1.3 Research question .....	10
2. Theoretical framework.....	12
2.1 Theory .....	12
Understanding integration: A conceptual framework .....	12
Theory of intergenerational immigrant integration .....	14
Socio-cultural integration theory .....	14
2.2 Literature review .....	15
Integration.....	15
Intentions and expectations.....	16
The context of COVID-19.....	18
2.3 Conceptual model .....	19
3. Methodology.....	20
3.1 Approach and methods of data collection.....	20
3.2 Participant recruitment.....	20
3.3 Operationalization.....	21
3.4 Data analysis.....	22
3.5 Ethical considerations .....	23
4. Findings .....	24
4.1 Descriptive results.....	24
4.2 Reasons and intentions to come to the Netherlands .....	24
4.3 First experiences in the Netherlands .....	25
4.4 Housing and employment situation in the beginning of their career.....	26
Housing.....	26
Employment .....	27
4.5 Considerations and reasons to stay or go.....	28
4.6 Experiences for new housing and better employment.....	29
4.7 Integration process and intentions .....	31
Housing and employment .....	31
Education.....	32
Future of the participants .....	35
4.8 In the context of COVID-19 .....	35

5. Conclusion and discussion.....	37
5.1 Strengths and limitations .....	37
5.2 Recommendations .....	38
5.3 Future research .....	38
5.4 Conclusion .....	38
6. Literature.....	41
Appendix 1: Information letter, letter of consent and interview guide .....	43
Appendix 2: Code tree.....	55

## 1. Introduction

Since the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007, significant migration flows from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to Western Europe have occurred. According to the central government of the Netherlands (2021), around 400.000 labour CEE migrants currently reside in the Netherlands. However, almost 60% of these migrants leave the Netherlands after six years. Furthermore, 30.000 labour migrants work on the basis of fixed term contracts, doing occasional or seasonal work, usually in agriculture (Statistics Netherlands, 2020).

### 1.1 A brief history of labour migration towards the Netherlands

Since the 1960s, the Netherlands has become an immigrant country instead of an emigrant country. This means that the Netherlands has a positive migration balance; more people immigrate to the Netherlands than emigrate from the Netherlands. The people who migrated to the Netherlands can be distinguished between three groups: immigrants from former colonies, guest workers (people who were recruited for unskilled jobs) and refugees. In this research, the role of the guestworkers and labour migrants is explored. This is done because these people came to the Netherlands particularly to work, therefore, this form of migration is the focus of this research.

In the beginning of the 1960s, the demand for unskilled jobs increased while the supply of unskilled Dutch workers decreased. The Dutch government had to find a solution for this problem because in this period, the country had to be rebuilt after the Second World War. Therefore, workers were actively recruited from countries in the Mediterranean such as Spain, Italy, Turkey, Morocco, etcetera. The recruitment of these guest workers was most often initiated by employers, but regulated by a series of international treaties. In 1970, the total number of immigrants living in the Netherlands reached 235.000 (Penninx et al., 1993; Hartog & Vriend, 1989).

The intention of employers, recruiters and the international treaties was that the guest workers would reside in the Netherlands temporarily. However, only 30% of the guest workers returned to their home country. For Turkish and Moroccan migrants, this percentage was even lower. Since most guest workers came from these countries, the Dutch government introduced a recruitment stop for migrants for the Mediterranean region in 1973. Since then, legal immigration to the Netherlands became impossible especially for Moroccan and Turkish people, because they were not part of Europe. After the 1970s, when the oil crisis reached the Netherlands, the unemployment of guest workers increased. Since these people had lost their jobs, they were massively hit by this oil crisis. However, these workers did not return to their home country. As a result of this massive unemployment, the Dutch government tightened the immigration policies even more in the second half of the 1980s. Because of the increasing European integration, it became easier for residents of the EU to settle in the Netherlands. Especially after the implementation of the Treaty of Amsterdam (2 October 1997) in which it was confirmed that within the EU borders, completely free mobility of labour is granted (Zorlu & Hartog, 2001; Nicolaas, Sprangers & Witvliet, 2003).

As a result of this free movement of labour, the first 'labour migrants' found their way to the Netherlands. After EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007, especially Polish temporary labour migrants started to work as seasonal workers in the Netherlands, later on also other nationalities started to work in the Netherlands. In order to provide a framework in which context these labour migrants are placed, the next paragraph makes comparison of the labour migrants and

the guest workers from the 1960s in terms of integration, which highlights the different political approaches in these periods.

#### *Comparison of guest workers with CEE labour migrants*

During the 1960s and 1970s, when guest workers arrived in the Netherlands, there were no political approaches towards integration in the Netherlands. The presence of guest workers was framed as a temporary phenomenon. Only in 1979, a report from the government drew attention to the importance of integration and language problems of these guest workers. During the 1980s, the Dutch government started implementing an integration framework for guestworkers and migrants in general (Höhne, 2013). This centrally coordinated Minorities Policy had distinct multicultural traits. It focussed on immigrants as individuals as well as groups. Immigrants were framed as members of permanent ethnic or cultural minorities in the Dutch multicultural society and integration of these minorities was the 'end goal' of this policy. Therefore, this policy is the base of the current policies (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008).

The current policies concerning the integration of CEE labour migrants are divided into the length of stay. The categorization used is short-stay, mid-stay and long-stay. Since the arrival of CEE labour migrants in the 2000s, the Dutch government shifted its policies from central integration policies in the 1990s to a more assimilationist approach in the 2000s. In these policies, cultural dimensions of integration are stressed and there is a focus on 'common citizenship'. Additionally, educational qualifications and labour market achievements became important. With the realization that a substantial group of labour migrants may permanently settle in the Netherlands, the Dutch government made sure that these people were treated equally as the Dutch, according to the principles of being an EU member state. Doing so, the Dutch government makes sure that the integration of the CEE migrants is arranged better than the integration of the guest workers in the 1960s (Nijhoff, 2017).

#### 1.2 Problem statement

The Netherlands have conducted multi-level governance policies in terms of integration of migrants. Local policies are often driven by specific local problems and developments. The role of regional policies is only to facilitate knowledge and expertise, while national policies focus on national problem developments such as the politicization of migration. This sometimes leads to conflicting policies (Scholten, 2013). This research will focus on the local policies because these policies are applied at the local level, and as such more concrete than the national policies.

According to Alexander (2003), four types of local migrant policies exist in Europe. These policies are the transient policy (non-policy), the guestworker policy, the assimilationist policy and the pluralist policy. These policies describe how local authorities can cope with labour migrants and therefore explore which policy types are applied in the Netherlands. Table 2.1 provides an overview of these types of policies. The first column explains the characteristics of the policies per topic. First the general characteristics of the policy, then the attitudes of local authority, third the socio-economic characteristics and lastly the spatial characteristics are described.

	<b>Transient</b>	<b>Guestworker</b>	<b>Assimilationist</b>	<b>Pluralist</b>
<i>Local migrant policies</i>	<b>'Non- policy'</b>	<b>'Guestworker policy'</b>	<b>'Assimilationist policy'</b>	<b>'Pluralist policy'</b>
<b>Policy aims</b>	De facto: ignore migrants	Meet basic needs of guestworkers; ignore undocumented migrants	Long term integration into host society through assimilation	Integration within a multicultural city: support diversity
<b>Policy mechanism</b>	Avoiding responsibility Ad-hoc reaction to crisis situations	Division of responsibility between state, city employers and NGOs	General policies Equal opportunities/antidiscrimination mechanism	Ethically targeted policies Pro-active mechanisms
<i>Attitudes of local authority</i>	<b>Migrant as a passing phenomenon</b>	<b>Migrant as 'guestworker'</b>	<b>Migrants as permanent, but as Otherness as temporary</b>	<b>Migrants as permanent, and their Otherness will remain</b>
<b>Spatial segregation of labour migrants</b>	Segregation ignored	Segregation tolerated or formalised	Assimilation will lead to spatial integration	Some degree of segregation acceptable in multicultural city
<b>Otherness of labour migrants</b>	Otherness ignored	Otherness tolerated	Otherness ignored or discouraged	Otherness accepted and supported
<i>Socio-economic Labour market</i>	Ignore black market activity	Limited vocational training as temporary solution to labour market needs	Equal access to vocational training, ignore ethnic factors in employment	Affirmative municipal hiring policy; ethnic based vocational training, ethnic-based vocational training, ethnic entrepreneur policy
<b>Education</b>	Allow access to migrant children on ad-hoc basis	Ensure enrolment of migrant children in schools, support home-language classes	Support national language tutoring, oppose home language classes	Home-language classes, multicultural curriculum. Extra resources to schools with high percentage of migrant pupils
<b>Local social services</b>	Ignore migrant needs, or ad hoc access to basic services	Formalise access to selected local services	Equal access to local services	Pro-active access to local services' ethnic community-targeted services
<b>Municipal policing</b>	Migrants treated as public security problem	Municipal police as agents of migrant regulation	Area based policing, but possible implicit targeting of migrants	Police as social agents. Active anti-racism enforcement



<i>Spatial housing</i>	Ignore migrant housing conditions. React to crises with temporary solutions	Guestworker housing and other short-term housing solutions	Equal access to social housing, but implicit institutional discrimination. Ignore discrimination in private housing market	Anti-discrimination policy based on ethnic monitoring
------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------

Table 2.1: Host stranger and types/phases of local migrant policies (source: Alexander, 2003)

The aim of Dutch municipal policies is to integrate (temporary) labour migrants with the local community. These policies are most related to the assimilationist policies, as Nijhoff (2017) already stated. The ‘assimilationist policy’ sees migrants as permanent, but their otherness is temporary and therefore ignored. This policy aims to long-term integrate migrants into the host society through assimilation of general policies. There are anti-discrimination mechanisms conducted and the policy gives equal access to social housing but ignores discrimination in the private housing market. The municipal policy implies area based policing but possibly implicit targeting migrants.

However, the local Dutch policies are written from an administrative perspective. Therefore, these policies are not always in line with the needs of the labour migrants because these people are not involved in the formulation of these policies. Additionally, the intentions of labour migrants could possibly change over time. An example is the municipality of Peel and Maas. Peel and Maas is located in the South of the Netherlands, in the northern part of the province Limburg. The municipality of Peel and Maas consists of several small and rural villages. The labour force of Peel and Maas is declining because of their aging population and the small share of the young people of the total population, because the young people move to the city. This decline in population affects the liveability of Peel and Maas. Attracting labour migrants to settle in Peel and Maas could lead to a vital and young community. Not only from a demographic point of view, but also from an economic perspective, labour migrants are needed in the region because there is more demand than supply for workers, especially in the agricultural sector. So, labour migrants are needed in Peel and Maas (Municipality of Peel and Maas, 2019; Scholten, 2013). However, the labour migrant is not involved in the development of policies, these policies are often not in line with the needs of labour migrants. Therefore, this research explores the experiences and intentions of labour migrants and to which needs these experiences and intentions lead. Doing so, recommendations for policy makers can be made. These recommendations could be used by policy makers in order to include the needs of labour migrants into their policies. However, this research is not focussed on labour migrants who live in the municipality of Peel and Maas, but on labour migrants through the whole of the Netherlands.

The aim of the Dutch local policies is to integrate labour migrants in the Netherlands. Integration is the overarching term used in different policies. However, the definition of integration is often not given in these policies. Therefore, Ponzo et al. (2013) defined integration as the following:

*The dynamic, multi-actor process of mutual engagement that facilitates effective participation by all members of a diverse society in the economic, political, social and cultural life, and fosters a shared and inclusive sense of belonging.*

In this research, this definition of integration is used. According to Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) integration can be examined with four aspects: housing, health, education and labour market. Housing is the most taken-for-granted aspect of integration, which has led to a lack of literature about the role of housing in relation to integration. However, there are significant issues which need to be addressed about how housing conditions, location and rent affect the process of integration (Craig, 2015). The housing conditions for labour migrants in the Netherlands are often below the benchmark. Examples of this are people sleeping on mattresses in living rooms, six people sharing one room for €400 a month each. Since there is no institution or union for these labour migrants, it is hard for labour migrants to address these abuses (Julen, 2020).

### *Context of COVID-19*

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic influences labour migration in Europe (Fernandez-Reino & McNeil, 2020). Due to closed borders and the decreased supply of goods, the position of labour migrants is vulnerable. Migrants with a non-permanent contract are at more risk of losing their jobs and they have troubles with going back to their home country due to closed borders or quarantine duty (Fernandez-Reino & McNeil, 2020). Additionally, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the conditions of the labour migrants became visible because relatively a lot of labour migrants got infected with the Coronavirus. An example happened in a meat processing factory in Helmond, where the employees were summoned to declare that they were healthy, even though they had symptoms of Corona (Reijn, 2020). As a result of this attention drawn to the conditions of labour migrants, the house of representatives has decided that the control on the maintenance of the Corona regulations by independent supervisors will be increased (van 't Wout, Koolmees, & Ollongren, 2021).

Research about the needs of labour migrants concerning integration before the pandemic was already scarce. However, research into the influence of COVID-19 on the experiences and needs of labour migrants is, according to the authors' knowledge, not published yet. The pandemic could have an influence on the experiences and needs of labour migrants. Therefore, this study researches the experiences and needs concerning integration and the role of COVID-19 in these integration trajectories.

### 1.3 Research question

The experiences and intentions concerning integration of labour migrants themselves are not taken into account in most policies. In order to create policies that are in line with the experiences and intentions of labour migrants, these experiences and intentions should be examined. Additionally, the needs of these labour migrants have to be taken into account in order to link the experiences and intentions to the needs of labour migrants. According to the authors' knowledge, limited research has been developed regarding the experiences and intentions of labour migrants in the Netherlands in terms of integration. Additionally, the role of COVID-19 is not included in previous studies either, since this pandemic is only one and a half years old at the moment of writing. Therefore, this research tries to reveal the intentions and experiences that lead to the needs that labour migrants have in terms of integration. This leads to the following research question:

**What are the experiences and intentions of labour migrants in the Netherlands in terms of integration and to which needs do these experiences and intentions lead?**

This question is answered using the following sub-questions:

1. What are the intentions and experiences of labour migrants concerning integration?
2. What do labour migrants perceive to be the role of COVID-19 in their integration experiences?
3. What are the needs of CEE labour migrants concerning integration?

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Theory

#### Understanding integration: A conceptual framework

One of the earliest and most influential analyses regarding the meaning of integration has been developed by Ager and Strang (2004, 2008). They developed a conceptual framework in which integration is tried to be understood. This framework is based on an inductive methodology using interviews held with refugees and local residents living in Glasgow, UK. However, this framework can also be applied to other types of migrants, like labour migrants (Craig, 2015). Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) suggest that there is no single generally accepted definition of integration. Additionally, integration has become a desired outcome and a clear policy goal for governments built into many projects with different kind of migrants (Craig, 2015). Image 2.1 displays the framework.

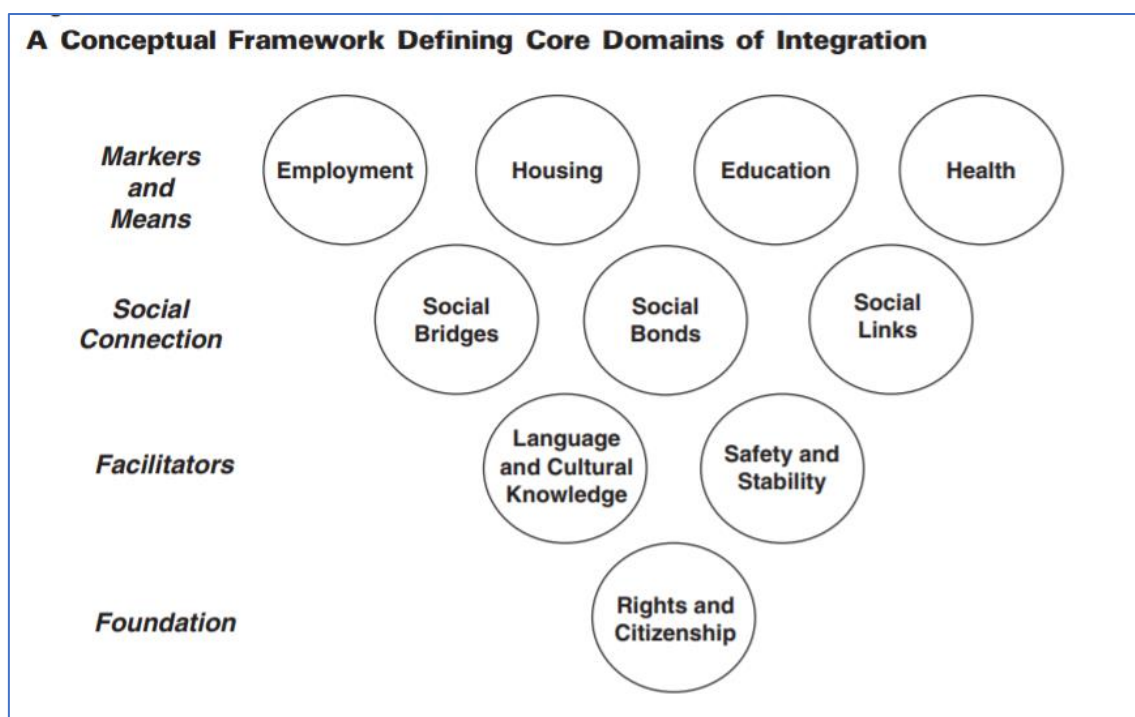


Image 2.1: A conceptual framework defining core domains of integration (source: Ager and Strong, 2008)

The framework includes four general domains of integration. These domains are the markers and means; social connection; facilitators and; foundation. Additionally, the framework specifies ten core domains that shape understandings of the concept of integration. The domains cover achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education, and health.

#### *Foundation*

The foundation of this framework is based on citizenship and rights. This framework addresses citizenship and rights and the responsibilities associated with it. The term citizenship has a widely different understanding. Depending on which definition is used, the foundation that is used to understand integration differs. Therefore, different approaches to nationhood, citizenship and rights provide a different foundation in order to understand integration.

#### *Facilitators*

The concepts of inclusion and exclusion are often associated with policy measures, these policies use the metaphor 'removing barriers to integration'. The role of the receiving/host country is to remove these barriers. These barriers exist in two major areas which are: Language and cultural knowledge and; safety and security. Adjusting to a different culture is not straightforward according to migrants. The issues of language competences receive dominant attention. However, not only language skills but also the needs of knowledge of national and local procedures, customs and facilities and the knowledge of the circumstances and culture of non-migrants highlight the value of a broader cultural knowledge of migrants. Additionally, in order to achieve safety and stability migrants value continuity and community stability, which is an important facilitator of integration.

### *Social connection*

The social connection is the 'connective tissue' between the foundational principles of public sectors such as health, education, employment and housing on one hand and citizenship and rights on the other hand. Social connection is seen as a fundamental role in driving the process of integration at a local level. Social connection is identified, mostly by locals, the defining feature of an integrated community. Social connection is divided into 3 domains: Social bonds, social bridges and social links. These domains find their origin in the social capital theory of Putnam (1993). These domains refer to the connection of migrants with the local community and the other way around.

Social bonds describe the connection that links members of a group. Migrants value proximity to family because that enables them to share cultural practices. Such connection plays a large part in them feeling 'settled'. The connection with like-ethnic groups has various benefits toward effective integration.

Social bridges make the connection between groups. The social distinction between social contacts with local communities that reflect friendliness and encourage more intensive involvement with the local people. The social bridge is linked to the facilitator of safety and security which brings long-term social and economic benefits to the community.

Social links refer to the connection between individuals and structures of a country. Certain circumstances such as lack of familiarity with your surroundings or not speaking the language lead to barriers that require additional effort from the migrants as from the local community. Accessibility to relevant services to make this connection between migrants and locals should be initiated.

### *Marker and means*

The marker and means include the indicators that highlight a number of key areas that are widely suggested as an indicator of successful integration. These key areas are employment, housing, education and health. The framework suggests that the achievement in these areas is not seen as an outcome of integration but as a means to the end of integration and therefore seen as a means of achievements in other areas. Additionally, the characteristics of integration for employment, housing, education and health are markers of this framework.

For education these characteristics are: The development of skills and competences; contact with Host country nationals; language development and; support of choice of subject likely to lead to employment.

For housing the characteristics are: Size, quality and facilities of housing; security of tenancy; safety and security of the housing environment; the development and; continuity of relationships in a neighbourhood.

For health these characteristics are: Reliable access to health services; good information about healthcare; supportive language provision and; attention to gender dimension of healthcare.

For employment these characteristics are: Promotion of economic independence; enabling future planning; meeting HCNs (Host Country Nationals); developing language skills; restoring self-esteem and; encouraging self-reliance.

Additionally, the framework provides three elements that shape integration. These elements are: Achieving public outcomes equivalent to these within the wide host communities; social connection with their own community, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state and; having sufficient linguistic competence, cultural knowledge and, sense of security and stability reflecting shared notions of nationhood and citizenship. These elements reflect the facilitators of the framework. This research focuses on the marker and means of the framework because the marker and means are the most prevalent outcomes of the framework. Additionally, all the other 'layers' of the framework come back in these markers and means, as indicators or as characteristics of these indicators. Therefore, they are discussed in this theory anyway.

Theory of intergenerational immigrant integration

Esser (2004) developed the theory of intergenerational immigrant integration in order to understand why and how immigrants' settlement intentions affect their integration trajectories. This theory is added to this research because the settlement intentions of labour migrants are researched in this study, which is not included in the theory of Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) According to Esser (2004), immigrants make decisions on whether or not to invest in resources that are specific to the host country, examples are investing in language courses or property. The attractiveness of these investments depend on their expected costs and returns. For immigrants who intend to stay in the host country, investing in host country specific capital is more attractive than for temporary immigrants. This is because of the longer period in which migrants who intend to stay can use their newly obtained capital.

This theory states that in all immigration processes there is a structural change in the institutional and cultural conditions for productive actions, making certain resources and investments more efficient than others for the attainment of the respective cultural goals. Relevant national institutions and cultures still play a central role in for example the educational systems. Regional and local circumstances are still relevant for the integration trajectories of the labour migrants. (Esser, 2004).

Socio-cultural integration theory

The socio-cultural integration theory (SIT) developed by Snel, Faber and Engbersen (2015) presumes a negative relation between the socio-cultural integration of migrants and their return intentions. In other words, higher integration intentions lead to lower return intentions. Socio-cultural integration can be understood in terms of identification with the host country, social contacts with native citizens, participation in social institutions of the host country and speaking its language. Furthermore, it assumes a negative association between the duration of staying in the destination country and return intentions. The longer migrants stay, the more they become integrated into the receiving country, the more difficult it becomes to return to their country of

origin, especially in terms of financial and emotional costs, the more they are inclined to settle permanently in the host country. Therefore, the SIT theory proposes the following hypothesis: the stronger the socio-cultural integration of a migrant, the less they intend to return to their home country. The empirical research of Snel, Faber and Engbersen (2015) found evidence that is in line with this hypothesis. Socio-cultural factors like integration explain return intentions better than socio-economic success or failure.

The theories explained in this paragraph form the basis for this research. These theories are the base of this research because these theories do not overlap but replenish each other perfectly. The theory of Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) forms the basis of how integration can be measured, the theory of Esser (2004) explains how intentions of labour migrants are formed and the theory of Snel, Faber and Engbersen (2015) connects the integration intentions with the return intentions and therefore integration with intentions. On the basis of these theories, the methodology and especially the interview guide for this research is developed. This is further explained in paragraph 3.3 'operationalisation'.

## 2.2 Literature review

### Integration

The article of Philimore (2012) employs the analytical framework indicators of integration by Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) in order to explore the efficacy of integration projects funded by European Refugee Fund II (ERFII) in facilitating refugee integration. Three key topics are addressed in this article. These topics are: First, what types of approaches are effective in facilitating refugee integration?; second, attention is turned to what can be learned about integration from the evaluation of initiatives, and; finally, the article explores the usefulness of Ager and Strang (2008) framework as an analytical tool. Craig (2015) wrote a paper in which he reflects on the experiences of migrants in four domains. He reflects this on how governments should deal with integration. These domains are based on the framework developed by Ager and Strang (2008), which are health, education, housing and the labour market. Therefore, the theory of Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) could be applied to a variety of studies concerning integration. Both Philimore (2012) and Craig (2015) suggest that integration is a two-way process. The migrants as the host country governments, institutions and communities have to put effort into it.

Craig (2015) suggests that local integration is contingent to national and international levels. Which includes the following factors: National policies, the history of immigration, the question of how citizenship is understood and shaped in different countries, and the structure of the welfare regime of each country. Local integration does not work if these factors are not supporting this goal. Additionally, Craig (2015) reflects that the national government should not withdraw from their role of resourcing and standard-setting. Without a central monitoring role, local projects might be poorly managed or resourced and local initiatives are less effective.

Additionally, Craig (2015) recommends that integration should not be solely understood as a goal but as a process which is dynamic, sustainable and two-way (integration is dependent on the attitudes and actions of host country governments, institutions, communities, etcetera). Furthermore, there appears to be a growing tendency towards racism and discrimination at institutional and individual level. This tendency undermines the process of integration and places migrants generally in work which is low paid, low skilled and does not acknowledge their qualifications. Additionally, it places migrants in poor housing in areas with poor health care, education facilities, and access to transport. This, in turn, leads to tensions which are

manipulated by the same right wing politicians that created the conditions for the tensions in the first place.

In order to cope with these tensions and to make integration more two-way, Philimore (2012) found that the way in which two-way adaptation frequently proposed by academics could lead to shifts in thinking that impacts on refugee integration, and community. Structured contact between refugees and hosts, such as presentations or events, is sufficient to change community relations. Additionally, the findings have implications for the types of initiatives supported by integration and cohesion funds. When funds are scarce, as is likely to be the case for several years, it may be more effective to focus on activity on hosts rather than migrants. With the extent of negative attitudes against refugees and other migrants, and refugees being willing to adapt and build connections if they feel secure, activities educating local people about the refugee experience may have significant impact on community relations at the neighbourhood level (Philimore, 2012).

Craig (2015) concludes that although there remains some disputation about definitions, there is more than enough material available to assist those countries that are seriously concerned to pursue the effective integration of all migrants, within a framework of social justice and human rights for host country nationals and migrants themselves. Additionally, his paper suggests that it might be better to develop and implement integration strategies rather than seeking for a theoretical understanding of what integration in fact is. Philimore (2012) agrees that there are difficulties in developing theory around integration due to the lack of compatibility between data. Particularly at the level of evaluations and neighbourhood-based studies. However, Philimore (2012) concludes that the framework of Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) is a useful way of structuring analysis of a large body of data. The wide ranging domains enabled the multifaceted nature of integration to be questioned. Hence, the indicators of integration developed by Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) which are education, housing, employment and health do little to aid understanding about the interlinkages between them.

## Intentions and expectations

### *Decision to migrate*

Various studies found different results concerning the intentions of labour migrants in order to integrate in the Netherlands (Constant & Massey, 2002; Wachter and Fleischmann, 2018; Engbersen et al., 2011 & 2013). According to Constant and Massey (2002) the decision for people to emigrate is affected by the attachment of the receiving country. When a person makes the decision to migrate, they do this with a certain intention. There are two groups of people with different intentions. 75% of the people belong to the group where the decision to migrate is a cost-benefit decision. Those people migrate in order to maximize their earnings. 25% of the people belong to the groups where the decision to migrate is based on the market failure in their home country.

### *Migrants with the Intention to stay*

According to Wachter and Fleischmann (2018), settlement intentions are important in order to predict the willingness of recent EU immigrants to integrate in the Netherlands.

European immigrants who intend to stay in the Netherlands permanently are more proficient in the host country language than those who want to leave. Additionally, immigrants who intend to stay consume more host country media at the beginning of their integration process compared to those who want to leave (Wachter and Fleischmann, 2018). The study of Constant and Massey (2002) found that 75% of the labour migrants intent to stay in the host country,



these migrants will only return when the expectations of earnings are not met. Their success depends on their wages, employment and occupational achievement. These people do not send remittances home. The Reason why these migrants do not send remittances home is because they have less place attachment to their home country. For example, they do not have family in their home country. These migrants invest more in learning about their host country and are more willing to learn the language, consume more host country media and include themselves more in new social contexts. Additionally, Wachter and Fleischmann (2018) found that migrants who did not have the intention to stay in the Netherlands when they arrived there, but changed their intentions after a while, have more contacts with natives than migrants with early settlement intentions in the host country.

The settlement migrant meets these characteristics because this type of migrant intends to stay in the Netherlands for more than five years. Settlement migrants are higher educated and have children that live in the Netherlands. They are the most integrated group of labour migrants; they speak Dutch fluently, have contacts with natives and participate in the Dutch society. These people are often knowledge migrants from Romania (Engbersen et al., 2011 & 2013).

#### *Migrants with the intention to leave*

25% of the labour migrants living in Germany have the intention to move abroad temporarily and see return migration as a success. These people leave the receiving country and move back to their home country when their target is reached (Constant & Massey, 2002). Migrants who intend to leave the Netherlands, worked most hours at the beginning of their stay in the Netherlands compared to migrants who intend to stay (Wachter & Fleischmann, 2018). These migrants do not have the intention to integrate in the receiving country because they have a lack of place and employment attachment, which predicts their intention to return. Furthermore, the goal of migrants who have the intention to leave their receiving country is to send remittances home and to go home themselves. Reasons for these migrants to go home is because they have a family at home where they often have to take care for (Constant & Massey, 2002).

Engbersen et al. (2011, 2013) made a distinction between four types of migrants. One of these types of migrants is the footloose migrant, which is the biggest and most heterogeneous group of people. The footloose migrant meets some of these characteristics because this type of migrant is little rooted in Dutch society, is less educated and does not have the intention to stay. However, this type of migrant is also not in touch with their country of origin and therefore does not meet all the characteristics found in the studies of Constant and Massey (2002) and Wachter and Fleischmann (2018).

According to Wachter and Fleischmann (2018) another type of migrant found by Engbersen et al. (2011, 2013), the seasonal or circular migrant, seems to take an intermediate position in terms of language knowledge, host country media consumption and number of working hours. However, according to Engbersen et al. (2011, 2013) the seasonal or circular migrant workers are in the Netherlands temporary and are in the country for seasonal work. He or she returns to the receiving country and to its country of origin several times during his or her career. Additionally, this migrant is less integrated in terms of language and native contacts.

The transnational migrant takes an intermediate position in terms of intentions and integration because the transnational migrant is Dutch speaking, has interaction with host country nationals and is rooted in both the host country as in the country of origin. However, this migrant has strong ties with his homeland and often owns property in their homeland. Therefore, this

migrant is rooted both in the host country and in the country of origin. These migrants are often higher educated than seasonal workers and earn more and are better integrated in the Dutch society (Engbersen et al., 2011,2013).

#### *Decision to leave.*

Constant and Massey (2002) found that factors to leave are influenced by the attachment of the home country. People are more willing to move back to their country of origin when their children are living there. The people who decide to move back to their home country are often people that send remittances home and therefore are more attached to their home country than migrants who decide to stay in the receiving country.

#### *In the context of housing*

Different types of labour migrants have different needs in terms of housing. Migrants who are moving for work, are more likely to substitute housing of lower quality for the housing they would prefer than those moving for housing or household reasons. Reasons for this substitution of housing are: Firstly, the difference in wage between the area of destination and the area of origin. This difference is usually greater for international than for internal migrants. So they have more (economic) gain even if they sacrifice housing quality. Secondly, international migrants frequently do not plan to stay permanently, so they expect a situation in lower-quality housing to be just temporary. Thirdly, international migrants are more likely to migrate without a family, which lowers the necessity of finding suitable housing. Fourthly, international migrants are less likely to have a thorough knowledge of the local housing market. So, with international labour migration, which is seen more since the enlargement of European Union, there seems to be a firmer basis for trying to accommodate the housing demand of the migrants than for trying to use housing policies to direct their location choices. As a consequence, the intentions of temporary labour migrants are related to their needs in terms of housing and vice versa, which means that housing conditions have influence on their intentions and that their intentions have influence on their type of housing (Mulder, 2006).

#### *The context of COVID-19*

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the EU decided on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 to close the borders of the Schengen area in order to constrain the spread of the virus. The EU recommended to making an exception for seasonal migrant workers. However, the EU member states adopted policies that translated into limitations on extra and intra- EU movements of people moving for legitimate purposes, including seasonal migrants. This has led to labour shortages, especially in the agricultural sector since the harvest season started in March and April. Therefore, European governments had to react quickly to avoid major problems. The first solution was to replace seasonal workers with domestic labour. Due to the lockdown measures, people working in non-essential businesses were free and could replace the seasonal migrants (Mitaritonna & Ragot, 2020).

The consequences for the labour migrants who returned to their home country due to the COVID-19 limitations have been significant. In Romania, an estimated 3.6 million people are working in OECD countries and make a significant contribution to the Romanian economy by sending remittances of almost €6 billion home each year, representing almost 2% of the GDP. Most of these migrants are typed as transnational migrants. In total 1.3 million migrants returned home, producing significant flows of people, unwittingly bringing COVID-19 with them. Therefore, the government largely overlooked the dilemmas faced by transnational workers. A consequence of the return migration of the Romanian was that labour shortages emerged in the agricultural sector in Western Europe. Therefore, policies were made to allow workers to move

to Western Europe to work in the agricultural sector. Consequently, it was now recognized that migrants from Eastern Europe were necessary, since Western European economies were relying on labour migrants. At the same time, the pandemic highlighted the exploitation and inequality experienced by European migrants since there were several COVID-19 outbreaks at workplaces and accommodations. The poor pay, poor working conditions and poor accommodation in which large numbers of people were housed, preventing social distancing came to light and received an unprecedented level of attention in the media. As a result, a group of 28 labour and human right organisations from across Europe produced a joint statement calling on the EU to reform the Common Agricultural Policy and guarantee the labour rights of agricultural workers (Crețan & Light, 2020).

### 2.3 Conceptual model

This conceptual model is developed in order to create an overview of the concepts used in this research, and how these concepts are linked to each other. In this research, integration of migrants is the central concept. These integrational indicators are measured using the theory of Ager and Strang (2004, 2008). These characteristics are employment, housing, education and health. Additionally, the experiences and intentions of labour migrants are explored. These experiences and intentions lead to certain needs with regard to the indicators of Ager and Strang (2004, 2008). Which is all in the context of integration of labour migrants. Therefore, the conceptual model is the following:

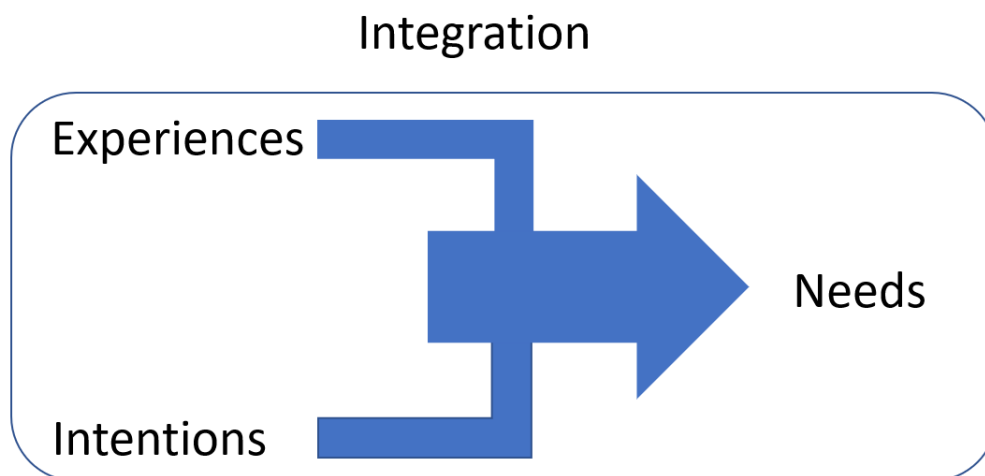


Figure 2.3: Conceptual model (source: Author)

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Approach and methods of data collection

Qualitative analysis has been used for this research. The data is generated from interviews held with labour migrants and experts who desire to develop decent housing for labour migrants. The labour migrants interviewed are from Europe and speak English or Dutch. Participants that do not meet these requirements, are excluded from this research. The interviews are used in order to understand the labour migrants' experiences and intentions better and to find the vision of the expert on housing and integration of labour migrants.

The method of data collection is qualitative data because of the complexity of the topic. With qualitative research, the relations between the concepts used in this research can be studied into a deeper level. The experiences and intentions of people are measured more into detail using qualitative methods. In this research there is chosen for in-depth interviews. Using in-depth interviews, the needs and intentions of labour migrants have been explored. This gives a broad overview and deep understanding of the intentions and expectations of labour migrants and gives insights into the opinions, feelings and perceptions of labour migrants towards their experiences and stay in the Netherlands. The interviews have been semi structured. It is chosen for semi structured interviews because the interview keeps the guidance of the topics and it is made clear what the motives behind an experience are. Additionally, there is also a lot of space for a deeper conversation on a particular theme a participant has an interesting or not so common experience in (Clifton & Handy, 2003; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020).

### 3.2 Participant recruitment

Participants have been recruited with help from the company the researcher has done an internship at. This company named AROM is a legal consultancy focused on spatial planning that is committed to realize decent housing for labour migrants. Using the connections of this company, labour migrants are recruited for the interview. Only the connections of AROM are used, they were not involved or interested in the process of recruiting the migrants. Therefore, the privacy of the participant is granted because AROM is nothing more than an intermediary and does not have any direct contact with the participants.

AROM has given two contacts that the researcher could use to find participants for this research. One contact with a person who houses labour migrants and developed a new form of housing for labour migrants and one councillor who is committed to develop decent housing for labour migrants in his municipality, which is the municipality of Helmond. The councillor gave the contact of a woman who employs labour migrants and is developing a new housing project for labour migrants. After contacting this woman and sending her an information letter, she wanted to help with recruiting participants and she agreed to do an expert interview. The other expert interviewed, who already houses people, was happy to help recruiting participants for the interviews and is very interested in this project. Therefore, he agreed to do an expert interview himself.

The needs of labour migrants are explored from two points of views, the migrant him/herself and the expert. The expert interviews are done at the beginning of May 2021. The goal of the first interview was to explore what is already achieved and what the view is of the people who help to achieve decent housing for labour migrants. This gives the researcher an overview of what the possibilities are regarding housing and what is already done for labour migrants. The second expert interview was held on a cucumber farm. This expert is in process of developing

new accommodation for labour migrants and employs a couple of labour migrants. She is the manager of the cucumber farm.

The first interview with a labour migrant is done at the beginning of May. This participant is found using the network of the author. The author has asked her connections if they knew any labour migrants. One of these connections had an acquaintance that is from Poland that came to the Netherlands to work a few years ago. After contacting this person and sending her the information letter, she agreed to participate in the interview. The interview took place at her home and took around one hour. The atmosphere during the interview was relaxed and the participant was eager to talk about her experiences of living and working in the Netherlands, the interview was done in English.

The second and third interviews were done with employees of Marja and held at the cucumber farm. These participants were recruited with the help of Henk. They have read the information letter which was sent to them a few days in advance. The interviews were held in Dutch. However, they could not speak Dutch perfectly fluently. Consequently, it was sometimes hard to understand each other, the interviews took around 35 minutes each. However, the information they provided was quite valuable and the interviews are included in this research.

The last five interviews are all done on the same day. The participants of these interviews are recruited using the connections of the Henk. After this expert interview, the researcher left a few information letters at the reception of the Hotel. Residents of the Hotel could contact the researcher if they were interested. Two residents contacted the researcher and made an appointment. These participants told the researcher that three more people were interested to participate in this research. Therefore, five interviews were conducted that day. The people interviewed were very enthusiastic to talk about their experiences and life in the Netherlands. All the interviews have been done in English and all the participants did speak English fluently. This has given the researcher a good overview over how people experience working in the Netherlands and how this changed over time.

### 3.3 Operationalization

The concepts gathered from the theory are measured with in depth interviews. The interview guide has included the concepts of Ager and Strang (2008), Esser (2004) and Snel et al. (2015). From the framework of Ager and Strang (2008), the markers and means of integration are used, these are the indicators for this study, and are education, health, housing and employment. From the theory of Esser (2004), the finding that national institutions play a role in integration is added. This is done by adding a question about how migrants experienced their welcome in terms of administration and bureaucracy. And, from the theory of Snel et al. (2015) the factors to understand integration are included in the interview guide, these factors are how they identify with the Netherlands, their social contacts with Dutch people, their participation in social institutions and if they are speaking the language. Some of these factors have overlap with the characteristics of the indicators found by Ager and Strang (2004, 2008), for example the language and contact with Dutch people.

The questions are developed using the theory found in the literature. Ager and Strang (2004) developed a theory in which integration of refugees is measured using four aspects. These aspects are education, housing, labour and health care. These aspects are used in the interview to measure how integrated the participant is. There is taken into account that the participants are no refugees. However, there is still chosen for this theory because it is the theory which is the most reliable.

In depth interviews are conducted, the interview guide, information sheet and letter of consent interviews are added in appendix one. Because some interviews are done in Dutch and others in English, the interview guide, letter of consent and the information letter have been written in English and Dutch. In total, ten interviews are held. After these ten interviews, no more striking new information has been found, these ten interviews have given enough information to give insights and analyse the needs of labour migrants in terms of integration. Therefore, data saturation happened after ten interviews. Two types of interviews are done, eight interviews with labour migrants and two interviews with experts in the field of housing for labour migrants. Therefore, two interview guides are developed. The expert interviews are only held in Dutch and therefore, no English version of this interview guide is written. The interviews are done face-to-face on 1.5 meter distance, taking the Corona measures into account. The interviews are done in real life because it is easier to catch underlying thoughts and feelings. Then, the interviewer can anticipate these thoughts and feelings when you are face-to-face with a participant. All the interviews have been done at the place of residence or at the work location of the participant. The interviews have been held in a private and quiet room where no one else was able to listen to the interview. Therefore, the participants have spoken their mind freely and sensible information is shared. Since the interviews have been done in a neutral place where the participants feel comfortable, the interviews have been straightforward, without being forced.

Before starting the interview, the researcher has asked if the participant has read the information letter. If not, the participant can read this letter before starting the interview and decide if he or she still wants to participate. In the information letter, the researcher and the institution are introduced, the topic and the aim of the interview is explained, how the participant is treated and the rights of the potential participant is explained. These rights include that the participant can always stop the interview, withdraw from the interview three weeks after participation, decide not to answer a question, etcetera. Furthermore, the contact details of the researcher and the supervisors are shared in this letter.

Additionally, the participant and the researcher have signed the letter of consent. In this letter, the participant confirms that he or she has read the information sheet; that the participant has the choice of whether or not to join the research; that the participant gives permission that the interview is recorded and the transcript will be archived and; that the participant agrees to take part in the interview. Every participant agreed with the letter of consent and signed it. The researcher signed it as well. These letters are drawn twice, one for the participant and one for the researcher.

After signing the letter of consent, the interviews have started. The expert interviews and the in-depth interviews have started with a small introduction in which the researcher repeats the aim of the research, introduces herself and explains the structure of the interview. The structure of the in-depth interviews have been the following: The interview has started with some personal questions including their gender, age and nationality. Second, a few general questions about the experiences, intentions and expectations regarding the participants' stay in the Netherlands have been asked. Third, the participants' opinion about their personal life and contacts in the Netherlands has been asked. Fourth the opinion of influence of COVID-19 has been asked and, finally four questions about their life and recommendations have been asked.

### 3.4 Data analysis

After the interviews have been done, the interviews have been transcribed and anonymized. Names and any personal information to which a respondent can be recognized have been left out of the transcript.

It is chosen for a mixed analysis method, using inductive and deductive analysis methods. Additionally, an interpretative design has been used. This design of this study focuses on how participants make meaning of a situation and where the researcher describes the collective experiences and seeks to discover or understand the participants' point of view. Furthermore, during the analysis of the interviews, there has been made sure that the qualitative research circle is used. This cycle encourages you to check for coherence between the data, theory and the research question (Hutter & Hennink, 2020). When using a mix of deductive and inductive analysis, both the theories that were found in the literature and new phenomena found in the interviews have been tested and explored. Therefore, some codes that have been used in the analysis are found in the literature while others have been conceptualized during the analysis itself. During the analysis of the data, the inductive codes generated from the theories of Ager and Strang (2004, 2008), Esser (2004) and Snel, Faber and Engbersen (2015) have been used. However, the deductive codes have been generated from the experiences and intentions of the participants itself. An example of an inductive code and finding are the codes about housing from agencies, which has not been a characteristic or topic in the used theories. Additionally, the finding regarding health insurances has also been generated from deductive coding.

The interviews have been analysed using the Atlas ti. In this program, the interviews have been coded into various codes referring to their experiences, integration and expectations. Using this codes, the needs of these labour migrants have been explored. In total 130 codes have been created, these codes have been divided into 9 code groups. These code groups are the general topics of the interviews. Examples of these code groups are 'Integration', 'Needs' or 'Experiences'. Codes that are part of the code group 'integration' are for example 'integration-housing' or 'integration- culture'.

Experiences on housing in the past or in the present and their opinion about this could lead to needs. These needs have not been expressed by the labour migrants itself explicitly but have been generated while reading through the lines and comparing their opinion, reasoning and experiences with their integration process and opinions.

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

Several considerations regarding ethical issues have been taken into account. The design of the study, the data collection and the analysis of the data have been considered wisely. Talking about sensitive topics like migration and experiences and digging into the emotions of labour migrants could have led to emotionally challenging interviews. Therefore, the interviewee could always have decided to take a break from the interview and get a glass of water. Other options have been to stop the interview and decide to withdraw from participation. None of these things happened during the interviews, all the participants were eager to talk and to speak their minds without any problems.

Two ethical issues most prevalent in this study are beneficence and justice (Hutter & Hennink, 2020). Beneficence and justice of the participants and the confidentiality of data have been important to keep. Anonymization of the data has been important. Regarding justice, it has been important to stick to the role of a researcher and to import all the findings of the study, even if the outcome is negative. Regarding beneficence, the welfare of the participants has been kept in mind. If the results of this research have had a negative impact on the participant, well-considered choices in co-operation with the participant regarding publishing these results would have been made (Hutter & Hennink, 2020). During the interviews, none of the participants nor the researcher felt that the welfare of the participants has been in danger. Therefore, everything said during the interviews is included in the research.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Descriptive results

The characteristics of the labour migrant that participated are quite diverse. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the characteristics of the participants.

X	Gender	Language of interview	Nationality	Years in NL	Age	Housing situation	First time abroad
Alina	Female	English	Polish	8 years	27	Bought house a	Yes
Tola	Female	Dutch	Polish	20 years	40	Bought house a	Yes
Zotia	Female	Dutch	Polish	15 years	39	Bought house a	Yes
Jacob	Male	English	Polish	9 years	38	Shared house	Yes
Radu	Male	English	Romanian	3 months	24	Shared studio in hotel	Yes
Francisco	Male	English	Portuguese	15 years	59	Private studio in hotel	No
Tomas	Male	English	Portuguese	23 years	54	Bought house a	Yes
Dorek	Male	English	Polish	10 years	38	Private studio in hotel	No
Henk (expert)	Male	Dutch	Dutch	/	/	/	/
Marja (expert)	Female	Dutch	Dutch	/	/	/	/

Table 4.1: Characteristics of participants

Most participants work or worked for an agency. An agency in the context of this research is an agency that recruits migrants to work in the Netherlands. These agencies arrange their housing, their work, their permits, their registration, insurances, etcetera. The first acquaintance that labour migrants have with the Netherlands is arranged by these agencies. Additionally, information about the country, wages, culture, etcetera. should be provided by these agencies. Therefore, these agencies are quite powerful and the labour migrants depend on their agencies.

The topics that are most prevalent in this research are integration, experiences, intentions and the needs of labour migrants. These experiences and intentions influence each other. Furthermore, the intentions of the participants change over time. This can be seen as a cyclic process. Therefore, this chapter is structured as a timeline, first their reasons to come to the Netherlands and their experiences concerning their welcome in the Netherlands is explored. Second, the experiences, intentions and needs of the labour migrants when they have just arrived in the Netherlands are explored and explained. Then their considerations and decision why they prefer to stay in the Netherlands are discussed. Later on their needs concerning integration and further employment and housing are explored. Finally, experiences concerning COVID-19 are explored.

### 4.2 Reasons and intentions to come to the Netherlands

For all labour migrants, the reason to come to the Netherlands is the money they can make here. Francisco explains this as the following:



*'My reason is only about salary. In Portugal its very low and life is a bit difficult. Here the salary is more than two times. The life is more expensive but the salary is good. We can live good here. I like it here'. (Francisco)*

This means that they can make around two to three times as much money in the Netherlands compared to their home country. This counts for the other participants as well. So for all these people, the main reason to come to the Netherlands are the higher wages.

Tomas and Zotia are the only participants that did not come to the Netherlands only to work but also because their partners were living in the Netherlands. Zotia came because her husband was a truck driver in the Netherlands and Tomas came to the Netherlands for a TV program named Heartbreak Hotel, where he was reunited with his Dutch girlfriend. At first, Zotia was only supposed to stay in the Netherlands for three months and move back to Poland, however, after a few weeks she decided to stay. Alina was also planning to stay in the Netherlands for three months:

*I finished high school when I was 19. I did not know what to do further. Study or to work. Instead of working in Poland I decided to work abroad for 3 months to see different countries especially for some experience for me. [...] I was very spontaneous. I made the decision on Thursday morning and on Saturday I was in the Netherlands (Alina).*

This means that the participants do not always plan to go to the Netherlands as a part of their life trajectory but some do it spontaneously or stay in the Netherlands longer than they expected at first, which is in line with the other participants. Therefore, their intentions changed over the time they stayed in the Netherlands.

### 4.3 First experiences in the Netherlands

After the participants decided to come to the Netherlands, they arrived here. Their welcome in the Netherlands is often their first time they are in acquaintance with the Netherlands. Therefore, this is quite an important moment. Most participants experienced their welcome as okay. However, they did not always receive much guidance when they arrived here. For example Dorek experienced his welcome in the Netherlands as the following:

*'Cold, it was February. That was a small shock because that was again going to a country you don't know anybody. I was coming here alone. Mostly people are coming in couples or with friends. I was coming alone and I was put into that [alone], I did not know anybody. That is something strange and also the combination of people that does not know from different regions in Poland an different age. That is quite difficult. I lived only with Polish people. I never lived with people from a different country. Here now it's different.'*

Interviewer: *'Was there any guidance?'*

*'No. mostly my neighbours, she was Polish who married a Lithuanian, they tried to help.'* (Dorek)

This quote shows that it can be hard to come to the Netherlands without any help or guidance to get to know the country. The participants have to find their way in the Netherlands themselves and look for help themselves as well. However, Radu, who arrived in the Netherlands three months ago and lives in the hotel, experienced his welcome more positively

*'Yes, somebody from [name of company] helped. When you come here and you need something they will help you. That was a big surprise for me. They are really helping you. They take you by your hand and come with me. It's the easiest way'. (Radu)*

This shows that not everyone experienced their arrival and welcome negatively. Perhaps this participant is an exception to the rule. On the other hand, this participant arrived only three months ago in the Netherlands while the other participants arrived a minimum of eight years ago. Therefore, this guidance has possibly improved since then. However, there is still more guidance needed for labour migrants who arrive in the Netherlands. If there is more guidance, they get to know the culture better and are more willing to integrate since they are more aware.

#### 4.4 Housing and employment situation in the beginning of their career

When the participants arrive in the Netherlands, the first experiences they have here are related to housing and employment. This paragraph

##### Housing

Francisco came for the first time to the Netherlands 15 years ago and experienced his first housing the following:

*'That was a problem. They said they have a house for us but it was a garage with 6,7,8 people together. There was no space for nothing. It was like a garage for a car. It was really bad. I only was there not even 3 months.'* (Francisco)

This quote shows that the living conditions of Francisco at their first house were very low. This is in line with the experiences from other participants and with the opinion and experiences of the experts. Both experts have the opinion that in many places the housing of labour migrants is bad. Therefore, Marja is developing a new residence for labour migrants. Her goal is to make a facility where 400 migrants can live with a maximum of four persons per residential unit and where couples can merge two rooms into one room. Additionally, facilities like sport fields, a warehouse and a reception will be developed. According to her, the places facilitate integration for labour migrants more than when they are put in empty office buildings. She explains her vision regarding integration about her facility the following:

*'We want to facilitate walk-in hours, to inform people and to help them integrate in society, if they want that. [...] They are just people, just like you and I. But they know that we pay attention to them and that they don't have to leave their own culture behind completely. [...] We have store for Polish people but we also just put them with 20 to 30 people in one building. In my opinion, that is completely wrong. A person has to feel at home here. [...] I don't want to create a cult, they will get informed, and can become members of the local sports club, but in order to create a certain rest for these people, because many Dutch people don't want to talk to Polish people. Just one or two years and then they have to leave.'* (Marja)<sup>1</sup>

All these negative housing experiences come from previous locations the participant used to live. No one has explicitly been negative about the residence they are living now, which is

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<sup>1</sup> We willen een inlooppreekuur, gewoon dat de mensen goed inlichten in meehelpen te integreren in de samenleving als ze dat willen. [...] Het zijn gewoon mensen net als jij en ik. Maar wel gewoon dat ze weten dat er aandacht is voor ze en dat ze hun eigen cultuur ook niet helemaal los te hoeven laten want [...] Voor Polen hebben we wel allemaal winkels enzo maar die stoppen we allemaal in panden neer met 20, 30. Ik denk dat dt helemaal fout is. Als ik zie hoeveel rust zo van die moestuintjes en dergelijk een mens moet zich thuis voelen [...] Niet een soort secte, ze worden op de hoogte gesteld kunnen bij de plaatselijke sportclub maar om toch voor die mensen bepaalde rust creëren want heel veel mensen willen niet meer met Poolse mensen een praatje maken. Gewoon 1 of 2 jaar werken en dan weer weg

relevant because this means that all the participants were able to find better housing and that they do not live in the conditions they described anymore.

Alina is a good example of this. The researcher has asked what grade she would give her life as it was five years ago and she replied the following:

*'Than for sure, I was not that happy but I think at that point in my life I also did not expect much more. But when I was in a bungalow and in this sad house in the middle of nowhere I would give it a 3 or a 4.'* (Alina)

This shows that the needs concerning housing for labour migrants who just arrived in the Netherlands are that they prefer to live in a normal house and not on a camping, farm or garage, as some experienced in the past. However, there are not enough of these places at the moment and therefore, new housing facilities for labour migrants should be created and developed. This is in line with the vision of the interviewed experts. According to the experts, labour migrants need a place where they have enough privacy, where they can be outside with sport facilities, have contact with each other and feel comfortable. Additionally, according to the experts it is needed that the housing facility where the labour migrant lives in, is not linked to their labour contract. This means that if the labour migrants switch jobs, this would not mean that they have to leave their housing accommodation as well. This separation is also a need of the labour migrant itself.

### Employment

Most of the participants that started working in the Netherlands, started with low skilled jobs. Alina, Tola, Zotia and Francisco started to work in agriculture, Jacob and Radu in logistics and Tomas and Dorek in the construction industry. Only Tola and Zotia are still working in the same sector. Most participants found their job using an agency. Participants have different experiences with agencies. Alina and Francisco experienced that agencies take money from their wages for things they do not need. Francisco explains that there was only money left for food. He also explains how they gave him his wages:

*'They put the money in an envelope, and take money out: 10 euro for this, 17 euro for that, 5 for that. The rest is for you. That was very bad.'* (Francisco).

The participants have experienced that agencies take money from them for example for: Washing mattresses, internet despite not having access to internet, transport to work while cycling to work, promises to pay for flights and for shoes and clothes they did not receive. Additionally, Alina experienced that agencies abuse their knowledge, she explains this the following:

*'You come to a different country you also don't really know the laws so you are very easy to lie to. That they can tell us everything they want and you believe it in the beginning.'* (Alina)

These experiences are examples or reasons why labour migrants do not trust agencies to the fullest anymore. Agencies have knowlegde and power that labour migrants do not have and agencies abuse this knowlegde and power. This affects the trust that labour migrants have in agencies. In order to know what people can take from their salary, one of the most important needs for labour migrants is to get guidance with getting to know the laws in the Netherlands. Additionally, increasing the trust between agencies and the participants is needed, this can be achieved by making agencies more transparent.

Additionally, the participants spoken with have various experiences with insurance in the Netherlands. The participants that work or worked for an agency, receive insurance from them. The cost of their insurance is taken from their wages. However, this insurance is not really trusted. Alina experienced the following:

*'Normally with the agencies they take health care from you salary with the house, transport and all things that they think of to take from you. A lot of people don't need to go to the doctor in the Netherlands. They never discover that they pay for nothing. My brother had the situation that he needed to go to the doctor and that I had a pretty big bill to pay because he was not insured. But he paid for it every month. So he made a pretty big case from it at the agency and they paid it and everything was fine but yeah it was difficult. [...] If I see my salary that I paid for it I mostly believe that I have it. Even if you get your pass, the insurance pass. But when you see the website everything, in Dutch you don't really understand you don't know how to log in to on the account, you are kind of just don't do it.'* (Alina)

This tells that labour migrants do not really trust their agency with insurances and that the information provision about their insurance is not clear. Other participants spoken with experienced similar things.

Information provision about health care in the Netherlands could be improved as well. For example Radu, who is in the Netherlands for three months now, did not receive any information about how to contact a family doctor or how to make an appointment for a consult. Providing this information for the participants gives them a better understanding of the Netherlands and that, in turn, makes them better integrated.

#### 4.5 Considerations and reasons to stay or go

The experiences the participants have in the Netherlands influence their intentions to stay in the Netherlands or to move back to their home country. However, for Francisco, this was different. He experienced such negative things concerning housing and his work that he decided to go home to Portugal after three months, after he worked for the first time in the Netherlands. He explains this with the following words:

*'It was a bit of a shock, I had a very bad job and company. I thought I go back to Portugal and stay there. [...]. They said they have a house for us but it was a garage with 6,7,8 people together. There was no space for nothing. It was like a garage for a car. It was really bad. I only was there not even 3 months. Also the factory I worked at I packed fruits. The job was very early from 6 in the morning to 6 in the afternoon. They paid it black and white. There was no contract, it was really bad.'* (Francisco)

This shows that for Francisco, the things he experienced were so bad, that he decided to move back to his home country because his life was better there. However, the housing conditions of Jacob were also bad but he decided to stay in the Netherlands. He explained his reasoning to stay in the Netherlands the following:

*'I think about in 2014, because then I began to learn your language and then I meet friends who were nice who explained how everything is going on here. Then I wanted to stay. Because here its good for me. I feel good in Holland. The culture is good, what can I say. Here everything is quite, you don't have to fight everything so much in Poland. [...]The worst is only because my family is in Poland or in Germany. This is the worst.'* (Jacob)

This quote tells that participants decided to stay for a longer period in the Netherlands when they became more familiar with the Dutch culture. This is in line with the other participants that decided to stay in the Netherlands, which means that participants who are more integrated in - or familiar with - the Netherlands, decide to stay in the Netherlands for a longer period. When Jacob decided to stay in the Netherlands, he started to look for a new house himself, after living in two terrible houses offered by his agency. He started to live in a privately rented room with his friends. This was, in the end, cheaper than to rent from his agency. He found this house on Marktplaats, which is a Dutch website to sell and buy all kinds of things, including rooms.

This tells that participants experience things and act on their experiences differently, some move back to their home country while others try to fix their problems in the Netherlands. When participants decide to stay in the Netherlands, they start to look for better housing and employment. Doing so, these participants are more critical about their housing, agency and job. Therefore, the next paragraph explains the experiences people have when they have changed from agency, job and housing.

#### 4.6 Experiences for new housing and better employment

Most of the participants have left their first job and changed to another job, most of them changed from agency as well. Only Zotia and Tola are still working for the same employee. The participants that changed their jobs, often changed them for higher skilled and paid jobs or changed agency. However, Dorek has the feeling that he cannot grow as much as Dutch people. He is working in the Netherlands for ten years and his job and wages increased step by step. However, someday this stops, he experiences. He asks himself why this is the case and he thinks it is because he is Polish. He also gives an example of this:

*'If Dutch people are in school learning for secretary. She wont do anything else besides being secretary. She will sit at home taking money from the government because there is no work as a secretary. In Poland if anybody learned for secretary and there is no job she is looking for something different. Most of the Polish people just want to have a job. So our work experience are much higher than in NL. We can do more but we are stopped at one point. Because I think in my opinion that Dutch people are afraid. How its possible that a Polish guy came and knows more than him.'* (Dorek)

This quote means that, according to Dorek, Dutch people would not do the same work as Polish people for the same wages and that the expectations from Dutch to Polish people is that they have to know more things about work than Dutch people. Other participants that changed their jobs did not show their opinion as explicitly as Dorek but for example Tomas has experienced similar things, which was for him a reason to resign from a company he worked for.

The agency where five out of eight people work for at the moment the interviews are done, is very positive commented. For only one participant, this is his first agency, the other participants have worked for another agency or employee before. Tomas experienced this the following:

*'That is how I found [name of agency] how they care about the people, they make sure that they have good care for everything. For me that was everything. So I knew [...] That was for me, I have a lot of respect for that. I like to receive respect and give respect.'* (Tomas)

Their opinion of their agency is very positive. This agency helped respondent nine when he was unemployed for two years. According to him, this agency cares about people and respects its employees. Jacob and Radu agree with that. The agency these people work for is the agency of

Henk. These experiences are in line with the vision of this agency. Henk explains the vision of his agency as the following:

*'Our vision is that when we invite people to work here, we want them to stay here as long as possible. In order to achieve this, we give respect and the only thing we ask for is respect. Doing so, everything will be alright.'*<sup>2</sup> (Henk)

This tells that Henk respects his employees and these employees respect him.

Moreover, participants also experience positive things about their housing from this agency. Three participants live in a hotel that is developed by Henk. The vision of Henk on housing is that when you give respect to the labour migrant you get respect back. His vision about the hotel he has developed is that the residents have to manage and make the hotel their home. Marja agrees with this and explains that labour migrants deserve that they get attention and she agrees that we should not put them in old and neglected houses.

Two participants have a studio for themselves and one shares his studio with a roommate. Francisco, who is living alone in this studio, is very happy with living there. He lived with five people before who he liked as well because they cooked and ate together. But because of his age he likes to live alone now. However, Dorek prefers to live in a house he shares with six persons. He explains this the following:

*'I liked the house more than the hotel. More privacy, more outside. More possibilities for your hobbies and not like you come out and 20 people are watching what are you doing. That is not nice here.'* (Dorek)

This tells that participants are happy with their housing facilities arranged by the agency Henk is CEO from. However, this is not the best place for all the participants.

However, there are also participants who decided to stop working and renting from an agency. For example Alina, she started to work for an agency in the tomatoes, and then she decided to apply for a job without an agency and started to work for TempoTeam. Via this employment agency, she found a job, where she has a permanent contract now. She explains her experiences with finding a job without an agency the in the following quote:

*'Yeah the hardest part was I think to go out of agency which arrange everything for you. I went from Polish agency to tempo team. They also arranged in some places accommodation but I was in Venlo and they did not. So I needed to find some room myself. First I was staying with some friends from me, then I find a room and I was renting the room. When you already start working with tempo team, then the of course the salary gets better because you get better conditions, better contract. You are not always cheated on hours you work or some different things you are to pay which you actually did not need to pay.'* (Alina)

This quote shows that she experienced that when she wanted to move from agency arranged housing to a privately rented or bought house, there is no guidance for this. This accounts as well for when a participant decides to stop working at an agency and starts working for themselves, they lose their housing. Therefore, more information provision and guidance in this process is needed for these people. This accounts for labour and work as well. When a

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<sup>2</sup> *(Onze visie is dat als we mensen uitnodigen om hier te komen werken dat willen we het liefst dat ze lang mogelijk bij ons blijven werken. We geven respect dat is het enigste wat we terugvragen van jullie, dan komt de rest automatisch goed.'*

participant has the wish to get out of an agency that arranged everything for her and to start working at a job found by herself, there is no guidance. Since this is a big step, guidance to do this is needed. Because when people start to have a job by themselves, they are more willing to integrate in the Netherlands.

This accounts for insurance as well. Participants that are in the Netherlands for a longer period, change to private insurance. Francisco has his private insurance at Zilveren Kruis and is quite happy about this insurance. They change to private insurance because they do not always trust their agency they have their insurance from. Therefore, labour migrants need to get more information about insurance.

The interviewed experts explain as well that the insurance is mandatory to have in the Netherlands and that the employer has to arrange this. Henk explains that at his company, they have an 'plus package' where the labour migrant does not have an own risk.

#### 4.7 Integration process and intentions

When the participants are in the Netherlands for a longer period and have received better housing and employment, their intentions for integration on the field of employment, education, housing etcetera could change.

##### Housing and employment

The intentions of Dorek changed during his stay in the Netherlands. What this participant needs now is to get a private house. Which he explains in the following quote, after the interviewer asked if he wants to have a house here:

*'Probably yes and then take the family if I have the house here. Its possible. I am written in the woningstichting. I had already three choises but the houses were too small. That was almost 1 room with a kitchen and smaller than all this together. It was like three quarters of this room, that is not much it was including the toilet and bathroom. With two kids its not possible.'* (Dorek)

This quote tells that labour migrants want to have their family over if it is possible. This also applies to other participants spoken with who already have a house in the Netherlands or have the intention to have one in the future.

Additionally, the intentions regarding promotion also influence the integration trajectories of the participants. These intentions vary a lot per participant. For example, Zotia explicitly said that she does not need any promotion. While Dorek really wants to get a promotion, but he feels that there is a glass ceiling for Polish people in the Netherlands.

*'you can see through it but you can't reach it'.* (Dorek)

He feels that where he is working now there is no promotion possible but he also thinks that this would happen when he starts working for another company. Alina already made quite some promotions according to herself. She got a permanent contract, switched to a better paid job and has possibilities for more promotion. Additionally, Zotia, who is only here for three months yet, has the intention to get a promotion as well, therefore, he is starting to learn Dutch.

These promotion intentions are not really in line with the experiences of the interviewed experts. The experiences of the experts concerning promotion is that the labour migrants they hired don't really need a promotion. Henk explains this as the following:

*The average labour migrant we see here, is stuck in a socialistic system. 'I don't feel like a promotion'. You can become a front worker then you have 10 persons beneath you and you receive 40 euro netto per month more, which is 80 cents per hour. If you drink two beers less, you have earned this as well. The drive that we have as Dutch people to receive 80 euro more and get more out of your life, that stands up against those people. We experience that people don't want to work overtime because they have to pay more taxes for these hours. Additionally, these people don't want to become a leader because they feel like they are all the same.'*<sup>3</sup> (Henk)

This is somehow in line with the experiences and intentions of the participants of this research, two participants do not have the intention to get promoted. However, according to the experiences of the labour migrants spoken with, the opportunities for promotion are limited. Especially while working for an agency. Therefore, this statement of this expert is a quite generalization for the whole group of labour migrants. However, not all the participants that are spoken in this research have these intentions. As stated above, some feel that there is no possibility for them to get promoted. Therefore, these participants experience the negative consequences of the perception of the expert because they are the exceptions to this rule and are, because of this idea of the expert, hindered by their own career trajectory.

Additionally, participants experience that they do not get a permanent contract that easy. Moreover, participants felt sometimes that they are easily replaceable for someone else. This might influence their intentions to integrate in the Netherlands because they are not sure if they can keep their job and their place to live. Francisco had to stop working every 3.5 years for half a year, because the company he worked for did not want to give him a permanent contract. Additionally, Dorek experienced that he was promised a permanent contract but in the end, he did not get one and got fired after the maximum extension of his temporary contract. Keeping this in mind, it is understandable that these experiences could form a boundary for integration in the Netherlands. Therefore, a need of the participants in this research is to have a better prospect on a permanent contract.

Also, participants feel that they cannot grow or get a promotion as easily. Therefore, facilities to let labour migrants get promotion in order to keep them in the Netherlands is needed. Doing so, they will become more part of the Dutch society and integrate more easily.

## Education

Another important indicator of integration is education. However, none of the participants is planning on studying in the Netherlands. For example Radu, who is 24 years old and did not study in his home country, does not want to study in the Netherlands because perceives that he is too old for that, for him its more important to start a family and make money. Alina agrees with this, she did think about studying here but:

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<sup>3</sup> *De gemiddelde flexwerker die wij zien, die zitten in een socialistisch systeem. Ik heb geen zin in de promotie, je kan voorwerker worden krijg je 10 mensen onder je en krijg je 40 euro netto meer per maand. Dat is 80 cent per uur extra. Als je twee potjes bier mensen drink heb ik dat ook verdient. Die drive die wij hebben als NL om voor 80 euro iets meer te mogen en uit je leven te halen. Die slaat zich rond tegen ie mensen. Wij maken mee dat mensen niet hoeven over te werken want dan betalen we meer belasting dan een gewoon uur. Ook willen ze niet graag die begeleider worden want ze voelen zich allemaal samen gelijk.*



*'The time and the money are the problem. Studying is really expensive and when I have to study half the time I can only work half the time and earn less money. So from my side it's really something I would like to do but from the other side I am a little afraid'. (Alina)*

This shows that there are some boundaries for labour migrants when they want to start a study that is not provided by their agency.

However, the participants are open for doing courses or get certificates that are needed for their jobs. Two participants did a study in the Netherlands, for both of them, this study was facilitated and paid for by their boss. Jacob did MBO 1 for a logistic employee and Tomas did the full VCA training. Additionally, most of the participants did hold some certificates for first aid, or to drive a fork lift truck. Most of them do not have the intention to do more courses if it's not necessary for their job.

Therefore, people are very open to do courses or get certificates. However, the participants are not very enthusiastic about starting a study in the Netherlands. Mostly because this is expensive in the Netherlands and it is hard to combine this with their work. Since they do not feel the need to start a study, it is not necessary to create opportunities for them to do so.

However, most of the participants want to learn the Dutch or English language. Not everyone that comes to the Netherlands could speak English or Dutch. The participants interviewed can speak English or Dutch right now, otherwise they could not be interviewed because of a language barrier with the researcher. The five Polish participants, all learned Dutch or are studying Dutch now. One of the Portuguese learned Dutch and the other one did not and does not have the intention to learn Dutch because of his age. However, he agrees that for integrating in the Netherlands, it is better to go to school and learn the basics because he cannot go further. Jacob learned English and Dutch in the Netherlands and experienced that as good. In the beginning his English improved very much because he was only living with people from Latvia and Lithuania but when he started to learn Dutch as well, he started to talk in a mix of English and Dutch.

The participants who feel most integrated in the Netherlands speak Dutch. Tomas explains that for him, when living in the Netherlands, you should learn the language.

*'But I try to learn the language. Even if it's a difficult one, try to communicate. And very important, try to understand the culture of a country. I don't like it when people come to Portugal and try to not stick to the rules. If you don't like that, then leave. The same is in Holland.'* (Tomas)

Participants experience that not knowing the Dutch language is one of the most striking problems regarding integration in the Netherlands. All of them perceive that knowing the Dutch language makes them more integrated. In order to integrate labour migrants in the Dutch society, language courses should be provided for them. However, the participants point out as well that making time and to do the effort to start learning Dutch is hard, next to their job. Most of the participants that can speak Dutch learned it to themselves, with only a bit or without any help from language schools or courses. Additionally, the participants who did language courses experienced that these courses take a lot of time, which is also the reason for two participants to stop with the courses. Therefore, there should be another possibility to learn Dutch than just courses. The author would suggest creating buddy groups with locals who are willing to help the labour migrants with the Dutch language. Doing so, the locals and the labour migrants can get to know each other and this, in turn, could lead to better understanding of each other's culture

which can lead to a better integration of labour migrants and better connections between the locals and the labour migrants.

Four of the participants interviewed have bought a house in the Netherlands. Three of these participants speak Dutch fluently and one is studying the language. Two of these participants are working at the cucumber farm where Marja is the manager of. This expert explained in the interview that she encourages her employees to buy a house here. She said that she had to convince Zotia to buy a house. In the following quote, she explains why she thinks that migrants have to be convinced to buy a house:

*'Maybe because they are not sufficiently informed about the advantages of having a house. They are quite afraid to buy a house. We really had to convince [name] and [name]. I think that they have their own home now since 2018 and the value of the house, for sure, has increased by almost €50.000.'*<sup>4</sup> (Marja)

This shows that when an employee of the experts has the intention to move to another house, like a private house or a bought house, they can receive help for this. Henk has employed a housing coach and therefore, both experts are willing to help them with guidance and information.

Additionally, participants that have bought a house have more contact with their neighbours. However, they have to deal with prejudices as well. For example Zotia, she explains that when she bought the house, the neighbours were sceptical and scared because Polish people became their neighbours. But now they have contact with their neighbours, they have each other's keys and they watch the cat when they are on a vacation.

Therefore, having Dutch contacts and friends is also part of integration in the Netherlands. Most of the participants have or had Dutch friends. For example Radu, who is only in the Netherlands for three months made Dutch friends with people he met in Eindhoven. Tomas explains that he only has Dutch friends because he can level better with them and Jacob explains that he had Dutch friends but since he lives in Eindhoven he has more immigrant-friends. Alina explains why it is hard to make a deep connection with Dutch people when you don't speak the language as the following:

*'In the beginning it was nice. People made that effort to speak English with me but later it did not feel right for me that. I believe it would be nice when you go with you friends and you all need to start English its not your first language, you just want to have fun. Don't feel like school that you must speak just to make someone understand. At some point I started to feel bad about it and I just stopped to walking mostly on parties with them because I don't want to have them in these situation.'* (Alina)

The general opinion is that Dutch people are friendly, smiling, nice, sweet, that Dutch people have time, that Dutch people like to talk and are open minded. However, people also experienced discrimination like in the example above with the neighbours that are scared

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<sup>4</sup> En dat ze misschien ook onvoldoende voorgelicht zijn op wat het voordeel kan zijn. Ze hebben ook best wel allemaal angst om een huis te kopen. ... en ... hebben we echt moeten overtuigen. Ik denk dat ze nu vanaf 2018 hun eigen hun, dat is sowieso al bijna met een halve ton gestegen.

because they get a Polish neighbours. Dorek has experienced discrimination as well, especially from older men. He gives the following example:

*'I had the situation that I was driving our company car and older men spit on the car. I had a Dutch friend with me and I asked what they doing and that grandpa asked are you Polish? I said Yes. Ohh you are an alcoholic [...] its really discrimination I experience quite often.'* (Dorek)

Other participants did not experience discrimination so explicitly as Dorek. By all means, they have not spoken about it in the interviews. This could mean that Dorek is an exception or that the other participants do not perceive discrimination the same as Dorek.

#### Future of the participants

Most of the participants spoken are quite sure about their future. Five of the participants want to settle in the Netherlands, for two it depends on their housing situation and one wants to go back to his home country after he is retired. One participant feels that he is so integrated in the Netherlands that he can level better with the Dutch than with the people from his home country and therefore wants to live here. Additionally, in terms of labour, most of the people plan to stay in the Netherlands until they are retired. However, Tola and Zotia prefer to keep working for the company they are working for now, Jacob explains that he does not know if will he still works for his agency within ten years and for Alina it depends, she knows at least that she can grow in the company she works when she is more experienced.

Furthermore, three of the participants that bought a house indicated that they want to stay in the Netherlands after their retirement. Tomas indicated that he wants to stay in the Netherlands half a year and half a year in Portugal, where he is coming from. He explains with the following quote that Dutch people do the same, so he still feels very Dutch.

*'I want to keep everything here. But I want to be like Dutch people, I will go for winter to Portugal. We can have a nice summer here.'* (Tomas)

#### 4.8 In the context of COVID-19

Just as everyone, the Corona pandemic has influenced the lives of the participants in a certain extent. The opinion and influence of Corona is quite different between men and women.

All three women interviewed agree that the rules are needed and they respect the rules. Zotia says that she has the opinion that the rules in the Netherlands are better than in Poland because in Poland, the politicians are only talking and not doing anything. Alina thinks that the rules have some purpose and that people should feel responsible to follow the rules. However, she experiences that many people go to Poland and come back without quarantine. She agrees that the vaccination process in Poland goes much faster compared to the Netherlands. Additionally, the working life of the female participants has changed. The shifts in which Alina works have changed. Now there is half an hour between every shift to make the contacts with colleagues as low as possible. Zotia explains that her boss encourages her to test as much as possible. When a colleague is sick, everyone has to test and has to wait for a second test, she agrees with these regulations. Also, no one of the women has lost their or had to work less as a consequence of Corona. Alina explains that Corona affected the company she is working for positively, because they got a lot of new customers as a consequence of Corona. The hardest consequence of Corona is that the participants cannot visit their family.

Men are less positive about the Corona regulations. Radu thinks that the rules are stupid, for example, the masks are not hygienic and the regulation are unstable. Jacob agrees with this, he explains this in the following quote:

*'First they say a mask does not help. After 2 months you have to wear a mask because they help. Sorry you have RIVM if they say masks don't help, they are professionals. If they are wrong you have to close this and if they say something wrong they are to be fired. OF course we have Corona and or Corona is very dangerous but not for everybody and I stopped to watch TV and when I need to wear a mask I do it in the shops and everything. When it was avondklok [curfew] I did not respect it, sometimes I needed to hide in the forest, they did not catch me.'* (Jacob)

Jacob explains that at first, he was very happy to live in the Netherlands because the Corona regulations were not as strict as in Poland, where they closed the whole country when 200 people were tested positive.

Additionally, three of the five male participants believe that Corona is a sort of conspiracy. Tomas gives an example of Le Pen, the French politician which is the following:

*'In 2018 she made an interview that in 2019 people have to stop from January because we were already using the resources for 2020. What a coincidence, in 2020 we have stopped living.'* (Tomas)

This is in line with the thoughts of Jacob and Dorek. Jacob thinks Corona is something economic. He compares Corona with stocks, he suggests that everything went too good and governments could not make war, so they invented Corona. Dorek thinks that the virus exists but compares Corona with pneumonia, where 4.5 million people die from. He explains that for this disease, no borders were closed or a special injection has been developed, which is strange for him.

The influence of Corona on the work of the men also differs from the experiences of the women. Dorek experienced that friends got fired because of Corona. Which he explains the following:

*'Everybody is blaming Corona for everything. That is part of the thing that we are firing this person because of Corona. This I don't like because it's the most stupid explanation you can get. It only stopped for 2 weeks and still they fired many people. Not only [name company] but I have colleagues from different companies and its works the same way. Everything is explained because of Corona.'* (Dorek)

This quote shows that men experience COVID-19 as a tool companies can use in their advantage. Two participants experienced less working hours. Jacob explains that since Corona, the company he is working for can say that he can only work four or six hours and he has to come back.

In general, COVID-19 did not influence the intentions of the participants. The biggest impossibility Corona gave was that the participants could not visit their family as early and often as before. However, the participants did not consider going back to their home country or decided to settle in the Netherlands sooner because of Corona.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

### 5.1 Strengths and limitations

This research has gathered insights about the experiences and intentions of labour migrants through interviews. This has provided detailed information about these experiences and intentions. This is one of the strengths of this research, as this has led to valuable insights about the experiences and intentions of labour migrants concerning integration. Additionally, this research has given many details about the reasoning of the participants, which is a strength because this has given insights that other research methods could not give. This research has measured what was desired for, namely to explore the experiences, intentions and needs of labour migrants. Therefore, the research is valid.

This research is conducted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the regulations and limitations as a consequence of this pandemic, enough participants are found for the interviews. Furthermore, this research is one of the first studies in which the role of COVID-19 on the experiences is measured. Therefore, the findings concerning COVID-19 are applicable in the present, which is a strength of this research.

The most important limitation of this research is the biased recruitment of participants. In this research, only participants that could speak English or Dutch were interviewed. However, according to the interviewed experts, most of the labour migrants working and living in the Netherlands do not speak English or Dutch. These people are not interviewed in this research due to language barriers with the researcher. The people who could speak English or Dutch are possibly already more highly educated and more integrated in the Netherlands than labour migrants who do not speak these languages. Additionally, the intentions of the people who could speak English or Dutch can differ as well. For example, people who speak English or Dutch have more possibilities on the Dutch labour market than people who speak only Polish, which can influence their intentions. One participant that was spoken with confirms this as well. Therefore, the people interviewed are already privileged in a way or scarce and have an advantage compared with labour migrants who do not speak English or Dutch on the labour market and concerning integration prospects. For these people, it is also easier to connect with Dutch nationals or to understand the Dutch culture or bureaucracy because they can communicate with nationals and institutions more easily. Therefore, these people might be more open for an interview with a Dutch student than people who are less familiar with the Dutch culture and Dutch nationals.

A second limitation of this research is also linked to the participant recruitment. Two of the participants recruited are experts who are eager to develop decent housing for labour migrants. Therefore, these experts want what is best for labour migrants. This is possibly not the case for all the developers of housing for labour migrants and therefore, the interviews with the expert may be biased. Additionally, I wonder what the influence of these experts has been on this research. The added value of the interviews with the experts may be less high than expected in the beginning of this research. However, these experts put the research into perspective which could be useful for recommendations. This also accounts for the participants interviewed, since these participants were found with help of the experts, it is possible that the expert had influence who is interviewed and who is not interviewed and could therefore influence the results of this research. Additionally, most of these participants live in the hotel developed by the experts and therefore, participants who live in very bad housing facilities are already in a way excluded from this research.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Several recommendations concerning the findings can be made for policy makers, agencies or developers for housing. These recommendations are explored in this paragraph. Firstly, the development of better, decent and stable housing facilities is needed. Experts need better cooperation with municipalities in order to realize their initiatives. Doing so, more decent housing facilities are developed earlier and less labour migrants have to live in miserable circumstances on farms, garages or bungalow parks. Therefore, the needs for both the experts and the labour migrants are realized if the municipalities cooperate better with the experts.

In addition, it is recommended that agencies provide better information to labour migrants. Doing so, labour migrants know what their rights and duties are in the Netherlands, which is a need for them. This information provision is needed on almost all facets, from explaining what is taken from their wages, to how their insurance works. Furthermore, the trust in the agencies should be recovered. Agencies can win back this trust by being more transparent about their intentions and they should not abuse their power and knowledge.

Furthermore, agencies should provide better promotion prospects and permanent contracts for labour migrants. Doing so, labour migrants are more willing to integrate in the Netherlands and for example bring their family over, learn the language and buy a house in the Netherlands. This is something local governments want to achieve due to aging in the rural municipalities in the Netherlands, as was explained in paragraph 1.2.

Different ways to let these people learn the Dutch language should be created. I would recommend introducing buddy groups for labour migrants with locals. Doing so, the labour migrants come into contact with natives and can experience the Dutch language and culture more primarily. Additionally, this way is less focused on learning Dutch and is more accessible for labour migrants because they are not tied to obligations.

## 5.3 Future research

Future research could explore whether the insights gathered from this research are generalizable for the whole population. Therefore, quantitative research could be useful. For example, a survey questioning the findings of this research with regard to the intentions and needs in terms of promotion, integration, housing, education and employment, etcetera could confirm or reject the outcomes of this research for the whole population. The research group should include all the labour migrants living in the Netherlands. In order to get unbiased and significant results, the sample size should be large enough. According to Statistics Netherlands (2021), around 400.000 labour migrants live in the Netherlands, therefore the sample size should be at least 1.100. The survey should be available in a great variety of languages and should include easily understandable questions.

Furthermore, a limitation of the research is that the participant recruitment was biased. Therefore, in addition to this research, interviews with participants who do not speak English or Dutch should be held as well. The differences between the labour migrants interviewed in this research and those labour migrants could be highlighted and measured. Doing so, also the experiences of these labour migrants will come to light.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The research question *'What are the experiences and intentions of labour migrants in terms of integration and to which needs lead these experiences and intentions?'* is answered in this paragraph. This research has found several needs that labour migrants have. Some of these

needs were already known while other needs were not expected. The most striking needs found are summarized and criticized in this paragraph.

One of the most relevant needs that comes back in every part of the findings is the guidance of the labour migrant. On almost every aspect, like the arrival in the Netherlands, their welcome, integration, agencies, culture, buying a house, etcetera, highlights that participants need more guidance. Therefore, the most striking need that is found in this research is that labour migrants should receive more guidance in order to integrate better in the Netherlands. None of the used theories mentioned guidance of labour migrants explicitly a characteristic of integration in the Netherlands. The theory of Esser (2004) mentions that national institutions play a role in the intentions of labour migrants but not explicitly that migrants need guidance from these institutions. Heimo et al. (2020) did research on the potential of peer guidance of labour migrants. Peer guidance means that a newly arrived migrant is linked to a migrant that lives in a certain country for a longer period already. This research found that this form of guidance only increases distance between the peer and the migrant, and even strengthens the Otherness between the peer and the labour migrant, since their peerness is only based on sharing a migration background. This research suggests that it would work better if the empowerment and integration of migrants is guided professionally. This empowerment and integration should be part of their education. Therefore, the research of Heimo et al. (2020) and the findings of this study both suggest that guidance in integration has to be done by professionals and should be part of their education. This study takes this recommendation over.

The second most prevailing finding in this research is the role of agencies in the experiences and intentions of labour migrants. The power and knowledge of agencies make that labour migrants do not always trust their agency and that they experience difficulties in terms of promotion, insurance, good housing conditions, fair wages, etcetera. This finding and the finding of guidance have overlap, since the agencies should provide more information for labour migrants and give them more guidance in for example their integration trajectories. However, the role of agencies is not mentioned in the theories used in this research. Sporton (2012) researched the role of agencies in eastern European migration to the UK. She found that the expansion of flexible labour markets contributes to the growth of agency employment that enables labour migrants to fulfil their immigration requirements. However, once the agency is embedded in the network of a migrant, they play a key role in facilitating further migration. This role of the agency becomes even more powerful since migrants are seen as temporary workers. Eventually, this research found that agencies have a key role in the migration of the labour migrants and therefore, acknowledges that agencies are powerful. That result is found in this research as well.

The third most important conclusion of this research are the needs concerning integration in the Netherlands. Labour migrants perceive that knowing the language is one of the most important indicators of being integrated in the Netherlands. Additionally, prospects on a permanent contract and promotion possibilities would increase the integration intentions of labour migrants. However, the participants experience that these prospects are limited and therefore, their integration intentions are limited as well. Hence, the need of these labour migrants is to have more prospects on permanent contracts and promotion in order to integrate faster in the Netherlands and to learn the language, buy a house or bring their family over. This finding is in line with the theory used in this research. The theory of Ager and Strang (2004, 2008) found that the characteristics of the indicators employment and education 'enabling future planning', 'promotion of economic independence', and 'developing language skills' encourage the integration trajectories of labour migrants. Additionally, the research of Constant and Massey

(2002) found that labour migrants who are successful in the host country return less likely and have more intentions to integrate in the Netherlands. Their definition of success is if the labour migrant meets his expectations which are receiving a permanent contract, has promotion possibilities etcetera. Therefore, the conclusion that the needs concerning integration should be met if participants are willing to integrate and not leave to their home country after meeting their earning goal.

Finally, this research found that the participants perceive that COVID-19 did not influence their experiences and intentions regarding integration. The regulations have influence on their daily work but do not affect their employment opportunities. Women are positive regarding the regulations and more willing to stick to the regulations than men. Men experience the rules as stupid and are more vulnerable for conspiracy theories than women. The pandemic highlighted the importance of labour migrants even more. According to Cretan & Light (2020) the pandemic has influenced the employment opportunities of labour migrants. Especially for transnational labour migrants, since these migrants could not leave their home country or return to their home country. For the participants of this research, this is biggest impossibility of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this has not affected their employment opportunities. Therefore, the outcomes of this research are not completely in line with the article of Cretan and Light (2020).



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## Appendix 1: Information letter, letter of consent and interview guide



**Dear interested,**

Thank you very much for taking the time read this letter and to consider to participate in my research!

This research is part of my master thesis, which is part of the master population studies at University of Groningen. Next to that, I am an intern at the legal organization named AROM, they are specialized in spatial planning and interested in housing for labour migrants. I am researching the intentions and expectation of labour migrants in terms of integration and housing in the Netherlands.

I will ask you about your intentions regarding your stay in the Netherlands, your experiences concerning housing and integration and the influence of COVID-19 on your intentions and experiences. This interview takes around 60 minutes, depending on how much information you want to share. I am very much interested in your story, and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to the questions that I ask. If you do not want to answer any question asked in the interview, is that okay, you will be treated the same as any other participant. I would like to hear about your thoughts and experiences.

You as a participant have certain rights. Below, I have listed these rights for you.

Confidentiality and participant rights:

- With your permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded and notes will be taken during the interview. You have the right to have the recording turned off whenever you decide and you may also end the interview at any time. If you don't want to be recorded, you cannot participate to the interviews unfortunately.
- If you wish so, you will be sent a copy of the transcript and you have the opportunity to make corrections or request the erase of any materials you do not wish to be used.
- The information you provide will be kept confidential in a password protected file on my computer up to five years upon completion of my thesis.
- The main use of the information you provide will help me towards my thesis, which upon completion can be e-mailed to you.
- Unless you have given explicit permission to do so, personal names or any other information which would serve to identify you as an informant will not be included in this research or in any future publication or reports resulting from this thesis.

As a participant you have the right to:

- decline to participate;
- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask for the audio-recorder to be turned off at any time;
- end the interview at any time
- withdraw from the study up until three weeks after participating in the research\*;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during and after participation;
- to be informed by the outcomes of this study;
- and ask to erase any of the materials you do not wish to be used in any reports of this study.

\* After three weeks, the results of the interview are integrated in the thesis and cannot be filtered anymore.

Once again I thank you for taking the time to find out more about my research. You can contact me any time if you have questions. You can also contact my supervisors at the address below.

Yours sincerely,

Wies van Heugten

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Wies van Heugten  
+31637005853

date:

Study title: The needs and intentions of CEE labour migrants concerning housing and integration

Researcher: Wies van Heugten

Institution: University of Groningen

I confirm that the researcher has explained the elements of informed consent to the participant.

	Yes/No
I have read and I understand the participant information sheet and had answers to my questions that I am happy with.	
I understand that I have free choice of whether to take part or not and that this will not affect the service that I receive. So you are not treated differently if you decide not to answer a question or if you decide to withdraw from the interview.	
I understand that if I withdraw from the research all the data collected will be erased from the study.	
I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question or discuss any topic that I do not want to talk about.	
I give my permission for the interview to be audio-recorded and the transcript will be archived.	
I understand that what I talk about in the interview will be kept strictly confidential. However, if a researcher has concerns about my safety or the safety of any person, they will raise this with me during the interview, suggest I get in touch with local support service and in some extreme cases have a duty to directly inform the relevant agencies.	
I agree to take part in an in-depth interview	

Researcher Name.....

Researcher signature.....

Participant Name.....

Participant signature.....

**In depth interview:**

Thank you for your cooperation in this interview. My name is Wies van Heugten, master student at the University of Groningen. I am researching the intentions and experiences of labour migrants for my thesis. This study focuses the experiences and intentions of labour migrants. The aim of this research is to analyse to which needs these experiences and intentions lead to.

I will explain the structure of this interview to you. I start with asking you about some personal information. Second, I will ask you some general questions about your experiences, intentions and expectations regarding your stay. Third, I will ask you about your opinion regarding integration and housing. Fourth, I will ask your opinion about the influence of COVID-19 and finally, I will ask you how you identify yourself. The interview takes approx. 60 minutes, depending on how much information you want to provide. You can stop the interview at any point and you can choose which questions you decide to answer. Everything you tell in this interview is only used for this research and will not be shared with others. Also, your name will not be used, to make sure that no one can identify you with any answers. You have already consented to the interview with the consent form. Do you have any further questions before we begin?

First, you could help me a lot by providing me some general information about yourself.

What is your gender?	
In which municipality do you live?	
What is your age in years?	
How many years do you live in the Netherlands? (in total)	
Is this your first time working abroad?	
What is your nationality?	

Second, I would like to ask your opinion about your experiences, expectations and intentions about your stay in the Netherlands.

Please tell me about your experiences with working in the Netherlands?

- Workload/ housing/climate/culture/Dutch people
- Experiences **working/health care/housing/education?**

Notes:

What are reasons for you to come to the Netherlands?

- First time or not; wages/recruitment/workload/  
housing/climate/culture/Dutch people
- Education/housing/health/labour

Notes:

What were your expectations of living in the Netherlands?

- Vs. reality; in line with what you heard?
- Workload/ housing/climate/culture/Dutch people
- **Education/housing/health/labour**

Notes:

What do you want to achieve during your stay in the Netherlands?

- **Education/housing/health/labour**
- How long do you want stay/ do you want to go back?/ stay forever?
- Wages/social achievements/integration/remittances
- **Promotion**/economic independency
- Future planning?
- Does this change over the years?
- Wat do you need to achieve this?



Notes:

Please tell me about your welcome in the Netherlands?

- How do you feel about how you were welcomed?
- Different stakeholders like municipality, employer, landlord, neighbours, colleagues
- What can be done better; by whom?
- Administrative information/ register BRP
- Guidance/ information about culture/ integration possibilities
- Information about legal rights and duties?
- Contact with official services? (municipality)
- **Education/housing/health/labour**

Notes:

Now I would like to know a bit more about your opinion about your personal life and contacts in the Netherlands

What kind of social contacts do you have in the Netherlands?

- In private/ at work
- How do you experience these contacts (positive/negative)

Notes:

Can you tell me how you spend your free time?

- During weekends/ evenings
- Social contacts
- Sports
- Availability of integration
- Facilities

Notes:

Can you tell me a bit about your family?

- Live in NL or not/ migrate them as well
- You returning to them?
- Their visiting you? (influence of COVID)
- Remittances

Notes:

Please, tell me a bit about your education?

- In home country/ received education here
- Opportunities in NL to study (next to your job)
- Intentions for education?

Notes:

Do you want to learn the Dutch language?

- Why(not)?
- Possibilities for this.

Notes:

Have you ever used the Dutch healthcare systems?

- If yes? What is your opinion about it?
- Access to healthcare?
- Good information?
- Language provision?

Notes:

- 

Notes:

Do you want to become more part of the Dutch society?

- Why(not)
- To what extent do you participate in the Dutch society?

- Having Dutch friends/ learning the language/family to NL/ have property/Dutch media/ housing
- **Education/health care/housing and labour market**

Notes:

Can you tell me about your housing situation?

- Size/quality/facilities/security
- Location/type of house/roommates/facilities
- Opinion of house?/ feels like home?
- Who arranged this house for you?
- Contacts with neighbours
- Earlier experiences/possibilities for housing/do you have influence on your housing possibilities?
- Conditions of the house

Notes:

Since COVID-19 has introduced itself in the Netherlands, the whole society has changed. Therefore, can you tell me how you experienced the Covid-19 regulations?

- Influence on housing/ influence on stay in NL/ influence at work
- Workload/ housing/climate/culture/Dutch people
- Do you agree with the regulations?
- Receiving enough information?
- Did it influence your experience in NL?

Notes:

Finally, I have a few more question regarding your life and recommendations

On a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied, how satisfied are you with your life right now?

- Why this mark?
- What would improve this mark?  
(Family/housing/wages/leisure/facilities)
- Things you don't have access to (psychological/physical)
- Education/health/labour/housing

Notes:

On a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied, how satisfied are you with you life in the Netherlands in general?

- Why? /What would you improve?/what is good?

Notes:

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

- In NL/language/family/education/back in home country
- What do you need for this?

Notes:

Is there anything else you want address what is not mentioned in this interview?

Notes:

Thank you for all the interesting information. This is the end of this interview. Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any friends who are interested in joining this study as well, I am very interested in getting into contact with them.

## Appendix 2: Code tree

(Double click on this table and the excel sheet appears)

EXPECT_housing		Expectations		
EXPECT_labour		Expectations		
EXPECT_NL		Expectations		
Family				
Goals of stay		Expectations		
INT_Administration				
INT_Culture				
INT_Dutch_contacts				
INT_DutchMedia				
INT_Education				