

ZincING aims to promote and support refugee and migrant participation in the design and implementation of integration policies at local, regional, national and European level.

The Shadow Report is a toolkit for wide use for advocates, but specifically for refugee and migrant advocates focusing on the rights of people on the move.

Access to the Workforce

This factsheet explores the challenges newcomers face in **proving** their **professional qualifications**, and therefore their **access to the labor market**.

Many newcomers encounter difficulties in having their diplomas and work experience acknowledged, which can lead to demotivation and the feeling of exclusion. Additionally, Language proficiency is a significant barrier in accessing the job market. This factsheet emphasizes the need for a fair system that recognizes work experiences and provides support for newcomers navigating the workforce. Challenges include:

Recognition of Qualifications

- Many newcomers struggle with having their qualifications recognized, even with master's degrees or extensive experience.
- Lack of diploma recognition can lead to demotivation and feelings of exclusion.
- Job opportunities are often tied to social connections, disadvantaging those without such networks.

Limitations with Applying to Regular Job Openings

- Despite policies granting labor market access, practical reality often falls short.
- Emphasis on certified skills overlooks valuable work experiences.
- Failure to value prior work experiences hampers newcomers' entry into the labor market.

For Newcomers Still in the Asylum Procedure

- Restriction on work time (24 weeks/year) hinders newcomers' integration and access to employment.

- Informal job market becomes the only option, leading to precarious conditions and limited career growth.

Tension Between Participation and Integration Laws

- Tension exists between laws regarding labor market access for newcomers.
- The focus on finding a job quickly can hinder newcomers' integration and preparation for suitable employment.
- Lack of support from organizations and municipalities exacerbates challenges.

Concentration on Specific Jobs for Newcomers

- Newcomers often cluster in certain industries due to allocation practices by municipalities.
- This concentration limits diversity in professions and overlooks long-term solutions.

Inadequate Job Placements for Newcomers

- Workplace placements for newcomers lack quality and fail to support integration.
- Inadequate placements hinder skill development and long-term employment prospects.

Difficulty in Securing Internships

- Language proficiency requirements for internships are a barrier for newcomers.
- Dutch proficiency is often a requirement even in international organizations.

- Obtaining internships is crucial for gaining work experience and building careers.

Absence of Meaningful Social Interactions

- Social isolation negatively impacts newcomers' mental well-being and personal development.
- Lack of social contacts exacerbates feelings of confinement and depression.

Exclusion

- Some newcomers face exclusion based on background or religion, leading to prejudice and assumptions. Exclusion can be more pronounced in smaller towns and villages.
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In conclusion, the Dutch job market can present significant challenges for newcomers, from language barriers to discrimination and lack of recognition of qualifications. These obstacles can impede their career progress and make it difficult to achieve their professional aspirations. Therefore, it is essential to create a more inclusive job market that values diversity and provides opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their background.

The story of Adoney highlights the challenges of knowledge about mental health and how mental health support is not the default.

ADONEY has an appointment with a psychiatrist and two nurses. He dials in an interpreter to translate the conversation. Because of psychotic disorders and complaints, Adoney has been on sleeping medication and tranquilisers for a long time. He still sleeps poorly, and his symptoms are not getting better. Adoney explains the difficulties of reaching his parents and the challenges around family reunification. Due to the length of the procedure, he has not been able to contact his parents for months. These concerns overshadowed his health.

The interpreter noticed that the nurses only addressed the treatment and medication, suggesting they should consider increasing the dosage. This made Adoney frustrated, and he expressed the feeling that he did not feel heard. “Are you trying to overdose me?” he said, frustrated. Although the nurses listened to what he said, they referred him to speak with the psychiatrist later at noon so that they could continue talking about the medication. The nurse clarified that she was not qualified to discuss asylum procedures. The interpreter notices a sense of cultural insensitivity.

Adoney’s frustrations grow, and in despair, he tells him that he will jump off the bridge since there is no reason to live. The interpreter hears chaos in the background, and in a far distance,

Adoney tells the nurse that he is done and that they won’t see him again. The nurse picks up the phone and explains that the patient left the room without his keys. The interpreter addressed her concerns about the entire conversation, and the nurse did not seem to understand. Whatever happened after this phone call is unknown, but the conversation caused a traumatic experience for the interpreter, even though the nurse admitted to having acted wrongly.

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Access to the **(Mental)** **Healthcare**

Access to (mental) health services is crucial to promoting well-being and addressing the challenges individuals face.

However, numerous obstacles hinder this access, leading to adverse effects on newcomers' lives. To address these barriers effectively, it is necessary to identify the obstacles, determine their impact, consider the target groups affected, identify the responsible actors, and gauge the magnitude of the required changes. By understanding these factors, we can develop strategies and initiatives to improve access to mental health services and positively change society.

Policies, Regulations, and Organizational Structures

- The complex asylum process and lack of access to basic necessities impact mental health.
- Navigating bureaucratic systems causes “navigation stress” and lack of guidance.

Mental Health Support as Non-default

- Seeking mental health support can slow asylum procedures, discouraging help-seeking. Asylum procedures lack focus on mental health support from the start.

Knowledge about mental health

- Stigma and cultural beliefs hinder help-seeking and understanding of mental health.
- Education and awareness are needed to create a supportive environment.

Tension Between Participation and

Integration Laws

Tension exists between laws regarding labor market access for newcomers.

- The focus on finding a job quickly can hinder newcomers' integration and preparation for suitable employment.
- Lack of support from organizations and municipalities exacerbates challenges.

Professional Sensitivity

- Professionals often lack expertise in mental well-being support for newcomers.
- Miscommunication and lack of proper mental health assistance are common.

Inflexible Support Systems

- Time constraints, cultural mismatch, and GP inadequacies hinder care. Unwritten rules and financial barriers challenge accessibility.
- Language barriers impact therapy effectiveness and trust.

Limited Range of Services

- Complex trauma and limited services hinder mental health support.
- Loneliness exacerbated by cultural differences affects mental health.
- Diversifying services, such as group therapy, is necessary.

Access to Healthcare Workforce

- Need for expertise, diverse services, and professionals in healthcare.
- Language requirements hinder access to the healthcare workforce.
- Early access through shadowing and tailored education is suggested.

In conclusion, addressing these barriers involves a holistic approach, encompassing policy changes, awareness campaigns, cultural sensitivity, flexible education, and recognizing newcomers' expertise to create a comprehensive and accessible mental health support system for newcomers.

DARYNA and her two kids from Chernivtsi, one of Ukraine's most heavily attacked cities at the beginning of the war, have been hiding in a basement from the Russian attacks. Her youngest son is autistic and can't handle loud noises. The bombing, therefore, has created a negative impact on the mental health of this child, which then caused much stress for Daryna.

When they arrived in the Netherlands, Daryna was responsible for finding schools and arranging everything her children needed. In the meantime, she has not been taking care of herself, therefore neglecting her mental health. In Ukraine, there is a stigma around mental health. Daryna believes she is a strong woman who can handle all her problems. After a while, she started yoga classes through a recommendation from another Ukrainian woman in the Netherlands. She couldn't keep her tears in, and the yoga classes alone relieved her. Since the first positive class, she has been booking classes once a week for six months, positively impacting her mental health and allowing her to focus more on everyday life with her children.



The following story of Ahmed illustrates some exclusions in the current system for people who are above the age of thirty attempting to have access to education.

AHMAD, a 31-year-old newcomer from Syria, exemplifies the obstacles faced by individuals seeking education and financial support. Having fled his home country due to war and conflict, Ahmad arrived in a new country with hopes for a better future. However, his aspirations were met with numerous challenges. Despite his eagerness to pursue higher education in the form of a HBO (Applied Sciences) program, Ahmad discovered that his age rendered him ineligible for available study loans.

This limitation hindered his ability to access the necessary resources to fulfill his educational ambitions. Language limitations further compounded Ahmad's difficulties. When he approached organizations in search of funding, he encountered barriers due to his limited proficiency in the Dutch language. He felt excluded and unable to effectively communicate his qualifications and study plans directly. Frustrated by this experience, Ahmad sought assistance from a volunteer working in an NGO dedicated to helping refugees. Through the intervention of the volunteer, Ahmad's qualifications and experiences were carefully reviewed. The volunteer acted as a liaison, reaching out to the funding organization on his behalf.

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Access to the Education

Newcomers highlighted difficulties in obtaining accurate information about the educational system, language barriers, exclusion based on education and experience, and discouraging behavior from Integration organizations, as described further.

However, numerous obstacles hinder this access, leading to adverse effects on newcomers' lives. To address these barriers effectively, it is necessary to identify the obstacles, determine their impact, consider the target groups affected, identify the responsible actors, and gauge the magnitude of the required changes. By understanding these factors, we can develop strategies and initiatives to improve access to mental health services and positively change society.

Information Accessibility

- Obtaining clear information about the Dutch educational system is a common challenge, leading to misunderstandings and difficulties in accessing it.
- Integration organizations lack the resources to provide tailored guidance.

Exclusion in higher education

- Newcomers face unfair perceptions of lacking education and experience, resulting in exclusion from master's and PhD programs.
- Current educational paths disregard newcomers' skills and knowledge, leading to the need for comprehensive re-education.

Challenges with Bureaucracy

- Newcomers encounter discouraging behavior when seeking guidance from municipalities, case managers, and integration organizations.
- Disparities exist in treatment between newcomers from different countries and Dutch students.

- Limited and concise information from UAF hampers newcomers' access to educational resources and financial support.

Language Proficiency as Barrier

- The emphasis on language proficiency as a strict requirement can lead to isolation and delays in engaging in activities beyond language learning.
- A proposal challenges this assumption to ensure equal access to support regardless of language proficiency level.
- Refugee children's educational prospects are often determined based on assessments that do not consider language and cultural barriers.
- IQ tests used in assessments may not align with newcomers' cultural context, hindering their progress.

In conclusion, Comprehensive reforms are necessary to ensure equitable access to education, including improved information accessibility, fair treatment, tailored support, and streamlined processes. The chapter highlights the need for recognizing newcomers' skills, providing flexible learning paths, and integrating cultural sensitivity into educational policies to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities.