

MEM-VOL Migrant and Ethnic Minority Volunteering

Summary: Final Report The Netherlands

A Transnational Exchange Programme in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands and United Kingdom in the framework of the Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion (2002 - 2006)

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1. Introduction

This is a summary of a more extensive Dutch report on the results of research that was undertaken in the first half of 2003 in the context of the European MEM-VOL Project on migrant and ethnic minority volunteering. It presents a state-of-the art inventory on recent literature and research, policy making and programmes as well as some examples of good practice pertaining to volunteering of migrant and ethnic minorities.

2. Migrants and ethnic minorities in the Netherlands

2.1 History of immigration

Throughout centuries, the Netherlands has been both an immigration as well as an emigration country. Since World War II three different types of immigration can be discerned.

- 1) Immigration because of decolonisation. The independence of the former Dutch East Indies territories after the Second World War and Surinam in 1975 led to a consecutive influx of immigrants in the decades after the war. The Caribbean islands Antilles/Aruba still form part of the Netherlands and their citizens therefore hold a Dutch passport and have the right on free settlement in the Netherlands. Since 1980, between 3000 – 7000 Antilleans and Arubans arrive per year in the Netherlands owing to the bad economic situation on the islands.
- 2) Immigration of so-called „guest workers“ recruited by Dutch companies in the Mediterranean countries in the 1960ies owing to labour shortage especially in the Dutch low-skilled workforce. Recruitment was terminated in 1973 and since, labour immigration opportunities have been severely reduced for non-European Union citizens.
- 3) Immigration by refugees and asylum seekers since the nineties, predominantly arriving from Eastern Europe and Third World countries. Access to a full refugee status has been progressively restricted in the past years. Those who are granted asylum with full refugee status fall under the provisions of the Dutch minority policy.

2.2 Ethnic minorities: definitions

The use of the term „ethnic minorities“ and „non-native“ in this report is a reflection of the Dutch use. The Central Bureau for Statistics defines persons as non-natives if they are born in another country and at least one parent was born outside (first generation immigrants). If someone is born in the Netherlands with both parents born in a foreign country they are considered to be second generation immigrants. The term ethnic minorities is mostly used as a synonym. However, in its use in research reports it tends to reflect on the disadvantaged socio-economic position of the different groups in society. The following groups are considered to be minorities and are therefore target groups of integration policy: Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, Antilleans/Arubans, (former) Yugoslav, Italians, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Tunisians, Kapverdeans, Moluccans, Sinti and Roma.

2.3 Countries of origin and demographic developments

According to the Central Bureau for Statistics about 3 million non-natives live in the Netherlands end of 2002, of which 1.6 million are of Western origin, and 1.4 million are of non-Western origin. The total population had increased to slightly over 16 million, and non-natives to 18.5% of the total. The Central Bureau for Statistics bases its distinction between Western and non-Western non-natives on the socio-economic and cultural position of immigrants. Therefore, immigrants from Turkey, Africa, Latin America and Asia with the exception of Indonesia and Japan are counted into the group of non-Western immigrants. Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antilleans/Arubans make up the biggest

groups among ethnic minorities. The influx of these groups has been rising by 7 % between 1999 and 2001 whereas the number of refugees coming from (former civil-)war areas has been rising by 24%. The number of illegal immigrants is unknown and estimated between 46 000 and 116 000. Owing to immigration and labour regulations, immigrants to meet labour needs predominantly come from EU countries and Third Countries. Settlement is allowed under the condition that no alternative candidates for the respective job can be found within the EU.

The ethnic minority population is on average younger than the native population with a higher percentage of males. It is expected by the Central Bureau for Statistics that the figure of non-Western immigrants will increase to nearly 2 million in 2010.

2.4 Legal Status/naturalisation

Acquisition of Dutch citizenship is relatively easy. All immigrants of age and with five years continuing legal residence and work in the Netherlands – or three years in case of marriage to a Dutch citizen - qualify for an unlimited residence permit and can register for naturalisation. Naturalisation is granted on the condition of proficiency of Dutch language, sufficient knowledge of Dutch society, proof of no criminal conviction and necessary documents, such as birth certificate etc.

2.5 Socio-economic situation of immigrants

Education

There are still strong differences in educational achievements between the Dutch and ethnic minority population and also between the different ethnic minority groups. The level of education and educational achievement in general remains low with some progress in the second generation. Especially the Turkish and Moroccan population remain on lower educational levels compared to Surinamese and Antilleans/Arubans. There is an overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in vocational and junior general secondary education and an under-representation in higher education and on the academic level. In addition ethnic minority children tend to leave school earlier than Dutch students. Of those who do succeed with a diploma in higher education, an increasing percentage is moving on to the academic level.

Income

According to figures of the Integration Monitor 2002, low income, poverty and dependency on social benefits are still high among ethnic minorities, with twice as many people living from benefits than among the native Dutch population. Especially the young generation is affected owing to the fact that they leave school earlier than young Dutch people of the same age group. The Poverty Report 2002 of the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau and the Central Bureau for Statistics report that 33% of the non-Western population was living on low income, thrice as much than the native Dutch population with differences among the ethnic minority groups to be taken into account.

Employment

The economic boom of the second half of the nineties brought down unemployment considerably, with ethnic minorities benefiting as well. However, non-western immigrants are still affected by an unemployment rate which is three times as high as among native Dutch people. In addition, unemployment tends to be long-term in nature. Those who are employed often work in low-paid jobs with short-term contracts. It is again the Turkish and Moroccan population which appear to be especially disadvantaged. It is expected that the currently rising unemployment rate will particularly affect ethnic minority groups.

Housing

The ethnic minority population lives overwhelmingly in the urban areas, mainly in the four big cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Utrecht) of the Netherlands. Within the urban areas immigrant communities often live heavily concentrated in impoverished areas where housing is cheap. Owing to regulations, asylum seekers are more spread out over the country and often live in rural areas and smaller towns as well.

Conclusion

The ethnic minority population continues to be a very vulnerable group in society owing to a cumulation of factors such as unemployment and low income, dependency on benefits, lower educational qualifications, employment in low skilled occupations and housing in impoverished areas. It can be expected that the current recession will hit this part of the population especially hard. Whilst employment, education and language competence have always been seen as the key roads to integration, the potential contribution of volunteering for integration still needs to be taken more seriously.

3. Volunteering in the Netherlands: key features and support structure

3.1. Key features

The official definition of volunteering is “work done in any organized context that is carried out without obligation and without pay for other people or the community whereby the person doing the work is not dependent on it for his or her livelihood”.¹ The different forms of volunteering can roughly be distinguished as reciprocal support, service provision, and societal involvement/active citizenship. The diversity of volunteering makes measurement difficult. The Trend Report on Volunteering (NOV/SVM 2002) reports that between 25% and 37% of the population has been volunteering in 2002. According to the figures of the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau, the bulk of volunteering is done by people of age 35 – 50, with a decreasing percentage of young people (since 1995 by 22%). Women tend to be more active in the health and welfare sector, and men as board members and in sports and recreational activities. The participation rates in volunteering seem to be decreasing since the second half of the 1990ies.

3.2 Policy on voluntary work in the Netherlands

The goal of central government policy is to equip the voluntary sector sufficiently so that it can respond to challenges generated by changes in society. Local authorities and the provinces have their own voluntary sector policies. The policy of central government focuses on four elements:

- a) work development, research and support
- b) reinforcement, promotion and image improvement
- c) quality enhancement
- d) facet policy and legislation and regulation.

Government supports the national support and development organization for the voluntary sector, CIVIQ and eight national training centres for volunteers. The 12 provinces mainly disseminate knowledge and information produced at different levels and support voluntary organizations on the provincial level. Owing to decentralisation of social policy, local governments are key players because they are responsible for the implementation of welfare policy, the development of a local policy on voluntary work and subsequent support measures. In 2001, about 24% of the 500 local governments had developed a policy on voluntary work.

In the 1990ies the concept of civil society with a thrust on active participation of all citizens entered public debate and also received great attention in government's policy making. Since the International Year of the Volunteer 2001 central government has developed new measures to stimulate the voluntary sector, including additional funding for local government and provinces until 2004 and the instalment of both an Interdepartmental Contact Group and a commission to stimulate and develop further local government policy on volunteering.

¹ The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Documentation. Policy on Voluntary Work in the Netherlands, Den Haag, January 2001.

Since the middle of the 1990ies volunteering also becomes a instrument to combat poverty and social inclusion in social activation programmes aimed at bringing people with a large distance to the labour market into employment. Pathways into employment may involve voluntary work or other activities that are of use to the community. In 1996, article 144 of the Act on Subsistence Benefit gave about a third of local governments an experimental status for the implementation of special projects in the context of "social activation". Benefit offices are allowed to pay a financial incentive to volunteers participating in social activation projects. In addition, they are not requested to apply for jobs on the labour market. The success of these experiments led to an additional central government measure in 2000 to stimulate more local governments into developing pathways into inclusion.

In the past years, the following trends in society impact, amongst others, the development of voluntary work:

- competing alternatives to spend free time, less availability of time;
- demographic developments such as the ageing society and immigration;
- changing role patterns between men and women;
- individualization of society and a demand for more flexibility, also in volunteering;
- a greater awareness for the need of quality development in voluntary organisations;
- the use of volunteering as an instrument in social policy making;
- increased professionalism in voluntary organisations;
- new forms of cooperation between the for profit and the non-profit sector;
- and a greater thrust on individual motives such as self development and self realization among volunteers.

4. Voluntary commitment of migrants and ethnic minorities

4.1 General features

Voluntary commitment of migrants and ethnic minorities is lived out both at an informal level in extended kinship systems and neighbourhood contexts, and in ethnic self organisations, self help groups as well as mainstream voluntary organisations. In general, every community of new arrivals tends to find out that basic settlement needs are initially best met by self-help voluntary activities and in this way self-organisations emerge in the different ethnic communities. At a second stage of settlement, self-organisations aim at catering for particular needs and furthering emancipation of the respective ethnic groups. At a third stage, self organisations act as go-betweens with other institutions of society and connect with mainstream organisations and networks, mostly in the social policy and economic field. Migrants and ethnic minorities engage in volunteering in these different settings. With a view to the different stages of settlement, volunteering in mainstream voluntary organization should rather be seen as the result of an integration process over generations (Van Daal 2001) which also depends on opportunity structures in the voluntary sector.

Since the early nineties greater attention has been given to the low participation of migrant and ethnic minorities in mainstream voluntary organizations. The Dutch Volunteer Centre (NOV) engaged in research and launched special projects with voluntary organisations to increase participation. However it had to report in 1998, that successive attempts to improve the situation had been disappointing so far (NOV 1998). A number of factors has been identified in literature which may account for the low level of volunteering in mainstream organizations:

- Priority is given to a paid job, since this mostly has been the prime reason for migration.
- Voluntary work does not contribute to giving and increasing status.
- Lack of language skills and different organizational cultures may work as a barrier.
- Different cultural ideas of gender participation may be experienced as incompatible.
- Insufficient knowledge on the different cultural concepts of volunteering may hinder commitment. In addition, connotations linked to volunteering may not always be positive if grounded in experiences of "obligatory" voluntary work combined with an absence of civil society structures in the country of origin.
- The fear to be used as 'token blacks'.
- Lack of contact in the Dutch community which leads to not being asked to join as a volunteer.

Given the demographic changes especially in the big cities, voluntary organizations will come under increasing pressure to adjust their services to the needs of ethnic communities and will have to think about raising the level of participation of migrants and ethnic minorities in the organizations.

4.2. Research

There has been little research so far into the extent of ethnic minorities participation and voluntary commitment, either formal or informal. Regular empirical surveys by the Central Bureau for Statistics,

the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau on spending of time and by the Centre for the Study of Philanthropy and Volunteering at the Free University Amsterdam on giving of time do not take ethnic minorities into account in a representative way. As for volunteering in self organisations there is hardly any quantitative knowledge. Studies on self organisations have rather been of a qualitative nature, focusing on aspects such as organisation formation and development, network analysis, degree of integration, strategic choices, political and discursive opportunity structures and so on.

A recurring key question has been the relation between participation, volunteering and integration into society. Analysis tends to be grounded in theory on social capital (Putnam 1993, 2000) which is supposed to originate from shared feelings of social belonging, trust and reciprocity resulting in both informal and formal interpersonal networks (civic communities). Empirical survey research undertaken in the past years which stimulated discussion has looked at:

Participation and volunteering of migrant and ethnic minorities in Rotterdam (Van Daal, 2001)

This study investigated volunteering and participation (defined as involvement in activities) of both the autochthonous and ethnic minority population in voluntary organizations, both in mainstream and ethnic self organisations. Informal help was also taken into account. It was a replication of an earlier study (1994) commissioned by the Municipality of Rotterdam after which the City intensified its results to increase the level of participation of ethnic communities by various measures. The study of 2001 concluded that participation of ethnic minorities in organisations had fallen significantly owing to secularisation leading to a reduced participation in religious organizations. Volunteering had not undergone significant changes but still continued to take place at a lower rate than among native Dutch. This also accounted for informal help. Differences in voluntary commitment are observed in the various groups depending on gender, age and education.

Participation in sport and patterns of spending one's free time in Rotterdam (Krouwel & Boonstra, 2001)

This study compared patterns of spending one's free time among different ethnic communities in Rotterdam based on the hypothesis, that the use of one's free time for participation in general social and cultural activities is an indicator for integration. The study shows that ethnic minorities tend to engage more in activities of organizations in the religious, political and cultural sphere and less in sports organizations. There is however, a preference for ethnic sports organization. Socio-economic factors such as a high income and education play a stimulating role for the level of participation in organizations. The authors conclude that participation in ethnic organizations does not preclude participation in mainstream organization and may have a gateway function.

Political participation and ethnic communities in Amsterdam (Fennema & Tillie, J. 1999; Fennema & Tillie & Heelsum & Berger & Wolff, 2000)

The study investigated political participation and political trust among ethnic communities in the big cities of the Netherlands. According to the findings, the amount and density of collaborating migrant organisations forming civic communities explain the differences in levels of political participation among ethnic communities. A high level of participation in ethnic self organisation and a dense organizational network creates a high level of political trust and subsequently political participation. The authors argue for giving strong support to ethnic self organisations in order to build social capital and further socio-economic integration of ethnic communities. (Fennema & Tillie, 2001).

Target groups

There is an increasing interest in looking at the participation of particular groups among immigrants and ethnic minorities, in order to understand better motives and subsequent levels of commitment. The Association for Volunteer Management undertook research into volunteering of highly educated refugees (Popovic, 2002) which showed that volunteering in both mainstream and self organisations show strong appreciation for the volunteering experience because it can contribute to familiarization with Dutch society. The study shows, that the Dutch concept of volunteering is unknown in the different countries of origin of the volunteers and needs to be 'translated', since it is not self evident.

Volunteering in non-Christian faith communities, especially the Islamic community, has only recently received greater attention. A recent study into the societal role of the mosques in Rotterdam (Canatan & Ljamai, 2002) has investigated the mobilization of volunteers and different activities generated by the mosques. A follow-up study on a nationwide scale as a cooperative project of the organizations CIVIQ and IHASAN (the Institute for Islamic Societal Mobilization) is in the planning stage.

Conclusions

Systematic research into volunteering of migrant and ethnic minorities so far has been limited. Research on self-organisations has concentrated more on organizational and political aspects than on generating qualitative knowledge on the experience of individual volunteers in these organizations. There is an absence of data and knowledge on how cultural, religious and political traditions of voluntary commitment impact on volunteering in the host country. An obstacle is also the Dutch definition of volunteering which excludes caring for family, neighbours and friends and therefore tends not to look at voluntary commitment in informal social systems including extended kinship networks.

4.3 Policy on migrant and ethnic minority volunteering

Over the years, Dutch integration policy has received a series of different mandates as to the course it should take. The so-called minorities policy of the eighties targeted the promotion of integration whilst regaining own's own culture and identity which promoted the development of category facilities and ethnic self organisations. From the middle of the nineties onwards, the term "active citizenship" with its concomitant rights and duties, was regarded as the decisive guideline for immigrants' participation in society. Greater emphasis was also placed on individual integration into mainstream institutions. Volunteering is seen as a means for incorporation into society which is stressed in several policy documents throughout the nineties. In the past years new policy and programmes have been developed to enhance volunteering of migrant and ethnic communities.

4.3.1 On national level

a) Stap Twee: Implementing diversity² in the voluntary sector

The Ministry for Health, Welfare and Sports supports this five year programme (2001 – 2005) with the goal to implement diversity in the voluntary sector. It has four objectives:

- 1) To stimulate voluntary associations and their support structure to implement diversity in their service delivery;
- 2) To stimulate local governments to put diversity high on the agenda of their policy on volunteering as well as promote it in the local voluntary sector;
- 3) To improve the support structure for voluntary associations so that they are better geared towards working with many different cultures;
- 4) To support voluntary organisations in implementing diversity and recruiting ethnic minority volunteers and board members.

The program is being implemented by CIVIQ and FORUM, the National Institute for Multicultural Development. A series of activities have been generated in the context of this programme, among which pilot projects in several provinces, and projects to implement diversity in national associations and their local affiliations.

b) IPO Diversity Pilot Projects in the context of local social policy

These pilot projects have been set up on the initiative of the Ministry for Health, Welfare and Sports and the Interprovincial Council to implement diversity in the youth, health and welfare sector and to improve necessary co-operation between the various political and institutional levels of the provinces.

c) Support for self organisations of migrants and ethnic minorities

Government supports the National Platform for self organisations with the primary task to support self organisations both financially and practically. The Platform is hosted by FORUM (the National Multicultural Institute) and VON (the National Association of Refugee Self Organisations) The Platform runs a helpdesk, gives advice and training to self-organisations and provides accommodation whenever necessary.

d) Obligatory programmes for 'newcomers'

The Newcomers Integration Act of 1998 applies to all new immigrants from outside the EU and people holding a Dutch passport but staying in the Netherlands permanently for the first time. The act foresees in obligatory integration programmes with an average of 600 hours that provide for Dutch language courses, vocational orientation and social orientation. Social orientation may involve volunteering in civil society organizations. In this way the new immigrant can gain better knowledge on the new society, gain practice and improve on language skills and in addition, acquire skills that might help to gain access to the labour market.

e) The Commission Policy on Voluntary Work

This commission which was established by government to contribute to further stimulation of policy development on volunteering stated in her agenda amongst others to want to help develop policy in a

² In the Netherlands, the term "interculturalization" usually conceptualises what in the Anglo-American world is described as diversity approach: taking individual differences in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, different abilities, sexual preferences etc. into account in the total of organizational management.

way that takes the increasing diversity of the voluntary sector into account. A number of pilot projects have been developed by the Commission that should also contribute to implement this vision statement of the Commission.

4.3.2 On provincial level

The Dutch provinces have been developing a series of projects to further implementation of diversity, some of them in the context of the Stap Twee programme. Projects follow different approaches and focus on different sectors as points of departure with a thrust on transfer of good practice.

4.3.3 On local government level

Especially the big cities have been forerunners in formulating policy and developing projects that help to stimulate volunteering of migrants and ethnic minorities under different policy frames such as integration policy, diversity policy, minority policy and health and welfare policy. In general, there is a parallel approach in that support is given to self organisations and to organisations and projects aiming at promoting participation of ethnic minorities in the voluntary sector. This includes for instance the setting up of data banks of potential board members of different ethnic origin, diversity awards that appreciate the contribution of volunteers from ethnic communities and funding for organisations such as the Centre for Multicultural Participation in Rotterdam, which stimulates the participation of migrant and ethnic minority volunteers in mainstream organizations. In addition, special projects have been developed in the context of “social activation” policy to help increase volunteering of ethnic minority groups as a means to further integration on the labour market.

4.4 Good practices

In the past years, a number of data banks for best practice of self organisations have been set up in the Netherlands. The following selection describes self organisations that have been invited to cooperate in the context of the second phase of the MEM-VOL project. They are organisations well known on local and/or national level for their good work with respect to involving volunteers, organisational development, activities aiming at integration, and networking. They represent the largest minority groups in the Netherlands and develop activities that are also geared towards furthering education and integration into the labour market.

Association M.A.M.A.

The organisation was set up in 1989 to help Antillean and Aruban immigrant women and their families with the objective to make them self-supportive and facilitate integration into Dutch society. This is done by advice and counselling, facilitating information and training courses on education, on success factors and challenges of integration and participation, and developing pathways into labour. A very successful project has been the visitors project, in which women contact and visit new immigrants at home in an informal way to take stock of their needs and act as intermediary between other mainstream institutions in order to initiate further help. Nearly all activities of the association are run by volunteers who also receive training to improve their skills. The City of Amsterdam recently awarded the association with its Diversity Award for the good work it has been doing.

Association UFUK, Amsterdam

The organisation was set up in 2000 in a borough of Amsterdam (Oost-Watergraafsmeer) as a self organisation of Turkish migrants. It emerged from the association SICA (Association Islamic Centre of Amsterdam) which in the context of activities of the local mosque had developed a range of social, educational and cultural activities to promote the well-being, participation and integration of Turkish people. These activities grew to such an extent that it was felt that an own association could better promote these programmes and in addition, develop new ones. UFUK runs a range of subprojects for women, the elderly, and young people including training, educational support and Turkish language lessons. One main subproject is an in-house study centre that offers at the most 50 young people the possibility for further study and educational support with the help of mentors. The centre offers training, social support, joint social activities and also the possibility to stay overnight if necessary. The centre aims to help improve educational performance and prevent truancy. For this purpose it works in close co-operation with schools in the neighbourhood, associations, and other educational initiatives. UFUK participates in BOMO (Bestuurlijk Overleg Migranten Organisaties – the council for migrant organisations of the borough). Most of its activities are run by volunteers with support of a few professionals on subsidised jobs.

Association TANS, Amsterdam

TANS belongs to the generation of “new” self organisations. It was set up in 1998 by a group of five young highly educated Moroccans who wanted to promote a positive image of the Moroccan community where especially young people suffer from stigmatisation and discrimination. The organization does not want to take a “problem-centred” approach but wants to stress the resources of the community by developing activities which promote the chances of highly educated Moroccans in society. TANS set up activities such as

- a multicultural career fair, in which it acted as intermediary between companies and people looking for a job.
- The organisation of a competition for young entrepreneurs in co-operation with the Rabobank
- Regular organisation of seminars, conferences and gala’s to promote networking and career chances.

Association DelMaTur

This is a cooperation network of eight Turkish and Moroccan self organisations in Rotterdam Delfshaven, one of the impoverished areas of the Rotterdam city. It offers help and educational support to Turkish and Moroccan young people in order to prevent school truancy and school drop out by activities such as:

- professional coaching: About 9 staff members support about 160 young people in their social and emotional needs to bring down barriers which prevent them from good educational performance.
- Interactive educational support by on-line classes, a new project started up in 2003;
- Mentoring schemes that match young successful people with young people in needs in order to promote a good role model. Mentors are not only recruited from institutions of higher learning but also from different professional groups such as bakers, chauffeurs, craftsmen etc.
- Training and information for parents to help them in their needs with educational support.
- DelMaTur takes a strong network approach in seeking cooperation with all relevant players in the neighbourhood in order to coordinate activities. The organisation has professionalized its

services over the years, after having started as a voluntary effort. It still recruits volunteers to develop new activities (such as the mentor schemes).

5. The National Meeting

The national meeting on 27th June 2003 brought together key actors and organisations that will continue to co-operate on different levels with the Dutch MEM-VOL Project in a second phase. At the meeting the aims and objectives of the MEM-VOL project were introduced by the European Co-ordinator and initial results in the different countries were presented. The discussion led to a number of key points that were felt to be of importance:

- The definition of volunteering can be limiting and even be of an 'exclusive' nature. Connotations linked to voluntary work in the Dutch context are not at all self evident for people from other cultures. Especially the word "work" contributes to misunderstandings.
- Volunteering in ethnic communities often can be a good point of departure to become committed to volunteering in mainstream organisations as well.
- Language could be a key factor for participation. This might be the reason for the high participation rate of Black and Asian communities (predominantly immigrants from former British colonies) in the British voluntary sector.
- Policy that seeks to support both the development of self organisations and diversity in the voluntary sector should do more right to the need for respect for the various forms of volunteering in the ethnic communities.
- Self organisations can get the impression that they are 'second range voluntary organisation' offering services of apparently minor quality, since their work often is less appreciated, less valued and often not seen in public. These feelings may be enhanced by the fact that self organisations are often seen as gatekeepers to ethnic communities with the task to deliver ethnic clients to mainstream health and welfare organisations.
- Volunteering has no status in ethnic communities which is an important issue in these communities. Greater appreciation and awards for both formal and informal volunteering in ethnic communities might help to improve the status problem.

In developing the MEM-VOL project in the second phase, the following points are important:

- One should not only look at good practice, but also at "bad practice". What are internal problems organizations share and why? How can one learn from one another?
- The transnational group of co-operating MEM-VOL organisations in the second phase is so diverse that it might offer a learning laboratory for mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, also on the group level, and therefore deliver new insights for the overall objectives of the MEM-VOL project as well.

6. Conclusions

Volunteering of migrant and ethnic communities is not a new subject in the Netherlands. It has been on the agenda for a number of years both by policy makers and the organizational support structure for voluntary work. New major programmes have been developed in the past years to promote the issue. In addition, there is a highly developed support structure for self organisations. Although substantial policy and infrastructure are in place, it is generally felt that it is still a long way to go to achieve greater diversity and higher participation of the different ethnic groups in the voluntary sector.

One obstacle for inclusion in the voluntary sector can be the definition of volunteering which is a cultural construct. In the Dutch context it stresses non-paid organized, formalized, non-obligatory work for others or the society as a whole. There is a traditional thrust on service rendering and connotations going along with it preclude a view on forms of mutual support and reciprocity. In developing new questions for future research, the focus therefore is put here on informal ways of voluntary commitment that tend to be undervalued and not yet sufficiently acknowledged. Answers to these question might contribute to acknowledge the diversity of voluntary commitment in different ethnic communities and generate new pathways for inclusion into society.

Research questions

- Which informal mutual support systems contribute to socio-economic integration? (For instance mutual credit systems, alternative banking, mutual support in ethnic entrepreneurship etc.)
- Which informal mutual support systems contribute to educational integration? For instance informal crèches, extended households with children outside the kinship network, informal adoption systems etc..
- Which forms and experiences of voluntary commitment are “transplanted” in the migration process, and change in the process of settlement in the host country? What are the relevant definitions, concepts and connotations to voluntary commitment in the different ethnic communities?
- What forms of voluntary commitment contribute to identity formation and its change both in the country of origin and the host country?
- What is the relationship between inclusion through informal support systems and exclusion by mainstream organisations? What is the additional value of mutual support and reciprocity for the formation of these informal networks?
- How do different stages of the migration process and factors related to it influence forms of voluntary commitment? For example, the individual and collective history of migration, gender, age, religion, culture, education, etc.
- How can recruitment and retention of volunteers better be adjusted to the needs of migrants and ethnic minority communities?
- What can the Dutch voluntary sector, the health and welfare sector and society as a whole learn from voluntary commitment in ethnic communities?

7. Annex: Literature

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