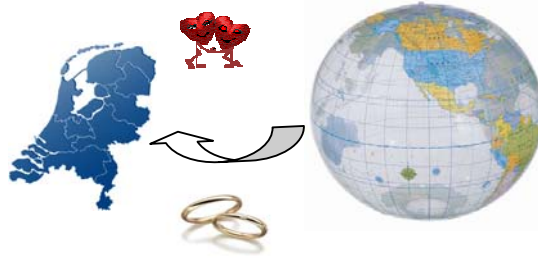


INTERNATIONAL COUPLES and NATIONAL REGULATIONS: Marriage-migration and Influence of Social Networks

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Introduction

In November 2004 the Dutch government introduced *new restrictions* in marriage-migration policy. Slogan behind the new policy was:

- Minimum age for both partners: increased from 18 to 21 years.
- Minimum income the partner already living in the Netherlands has to earn: increased from 100% of the minimum wage to 120% of the minimum wage.

Aim of the research

- To gain insight into the *behavioural strategies* that international couples apply to cope with the new income and age criteria to get a residence permit for the migrating partner in the Netherlands.

Method

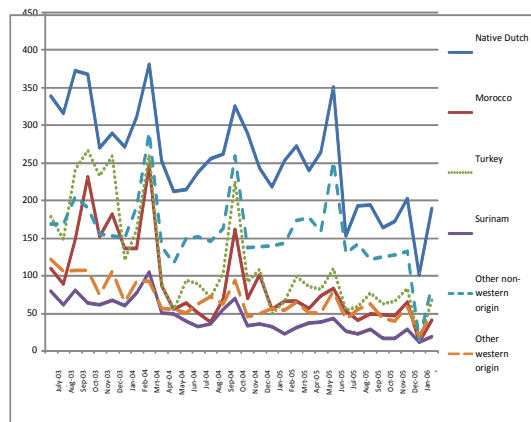
- Face-to-face interviews with 50 international couples unable to meet the higher income and/or age criteria (ethnic homogeneous Turkish and Moroccan couples & ethnic heterogeneous Dutch and Moroccan, Turkish, Thai, Latin American couples).
- Quantitative data from the Information System of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service².

Theoretical framework

- Human behaviour is determined by motivation, capacities and possibilities that people have and the interaction between these factors (triad model).
- Having social networks -within or outside own ethnic group- (*social capital*) at one's disposal and acquiring better social-economic qualifications (*human capital*) can be considered as important aspects of the triad model.
- They are important in explaining the differences in behavioural strategies of Dutch residents wishing to 'import' a foreign partner and who can't immediately fulfil the higher income and age criteria to get a residence permit for their partners.

Results

Number of granted residence permit applications for marriage-migration³



Immigration flows due to marriage migration

- In the 16 months after the implementation of the new income and age criteria the number of immigrants who want to come to the Netherlands for marriage (or a relationship) declined with 37%.
- The decrease is the most pronounced among the Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese couples.
- However, there are recent indications that the flow related to marriage migration is gradually increasing again.

Behavioural strategies related to the higher income criteria

- Negotiating with the employer over a salary increase
- False labour contracts
- Switching to a new job or keeping a job unvoluntarily
- Working more hours
- Quitting or postponing a study
- Emigrating to the country of origin of the partner
- Making use of the 'Europe-route'
- Illegal residence of the foreign partner in the Netherlands
- Switching to another visa-type
- Breaking up with the foreign partner

Behavioural strategies related to the higher age criteria

- Delaying the legal residence of the foreign partner in the Netherlands (mostly after marriage)
 - residence of the foreign partner in the country of origin or
 - illegal residence of the foreign partner in the Netherlands, until the partners are 21.
- (Temporary) emigration to the country of the origin of the partner
- Breaking up with the foreign partner
- Age fraude

Conclusions

- Higher educated Dutch residents (of immigrant origin or native) rely on their human capital to cope with a higher income criteria to import a foreign partner (e.g. obtaining a higher salary through negotiation with the employer, switching to a job with a better pay or making use of the 'European-route').
- Dutch residents of immigrant origin who, in general, acquire lower human capital, rely on their social networks to cope with a higher income criteria. (e.g. in finding a job with a higher income or acquiring false labour-contracts). This is especially the case among residents with Turkish origin.
- Lack of social networks are sometimes a reason for not choosing alternative behavioural strategies (e.g. the 'Europe-route') by Dutch residents of immigrant origin.
- Dutch residents of immigrant origin more often break up their relationship with a potential, foreign partner as a result of higher income and age criteria.
- Delaying the legal residence of the foreign partner in the Netherlands is the most common way of coping with the higher age limit.

'Even someone with a secondary education can't earn this money. The government wants to avoid that Moroccans marry with Turks. They know actually that many people earn this money 'on paper'. They know that many people arrange labour contracts through people they know. In every race people take care of each other'
Turkish female respondent

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² Quantitative part of the research is conducted by the research department of the IND, INDIAC.

³ Source: H. Muermans & J. Lu (2009). *Gezinsvorming in cijfers*. In: Internationale gezinsvorming begrensd? WODC/INDIAC.