

## **THE ROLE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY: NGOS IN THE NETHERLANDS**

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### **Abstract**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play an important role in contemporary multicultural countries. Especially in the current era, the number of people living outside their country of birth is larger than at any other time in history. Netherland is a democratic country built by the economic, social and cultural contributions of immigrants and refugees from all parts of the world and plays leading role in implementing values of the civil society through various organizations focused on migration and refugee issues. Dutch NGOs offer important insights regarding the realities of the causes of migration and have a great deal of locally based expertise in resolving social problems that accompany the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees. They are often staffed by the children of immigrants and refugees or by Dutch who were once immigrants or refugees themselves. Therefore, Dutch NGOs have a good understanding of the realities of the immigrant and refugee settlement and integration processes. They could contribute positively to the protection of refugees and the settlement of immigrants. The aim of the paper is to analyze some of the Dutch non-government organizations and to show their positive impact on building solidarity between people with different backgrounds and social status, breaking down stereotypes and prejudices.

**Keywords:** non-governmental organizations, immigrants, refugees, integration

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The issues of immigrants' integration and prevention of their social exclusion are included in the policies of the European Union. Apart from public institutions, those are also being considered by non-governmental organizations operating in all countries of the Union. Also in the Netherlands, those organizations, working towards integration of new citizens with autochthonous society, create support frameworks for governmental strategies that include ethnic, national and religious minorities inhabiting the country. The efforts of Dutch NGOs are outlined by their primary framework category containing their activity profile e.g. Aid for immigrants in terms of their integration to farthest possible extent. The idea of multiculturalism, tarnished by the events that took place in recent years (such as the refugee crisis), seems to be – in case of efforts made by NGOs- a constant element of bridging actions taken by the indigenous, supporting the country's immigration policy organizations to link those NGOs with organizations established by the immigrants themselves. At the same time, the latter are working towards, among others, tighter communal bonds with and cultivation of individual ethnic groups' traditions, by presenting these in a general debate on integration. As a reference, it is worth noting that the idea of foreigners' integration with the admitting society does not constitute, in its intention,

the propagation of multiculturalism alone. The integration of newcomers, in terms of new to them social structures, assumes active support for immigrants by the admitting country/society (with due respect to the aid takers' cultural identity) with the running in parallel necessity of elicitation in terms encouraging them to participate in public life and accept standards and customs of the country they have come to.

Today, integration as the ideological trend is the element of a bigger social politics concept; orientation of contemporary European countries towards programs characterized by multicultural coexistence. Actions of both the public organs and the supporting organizations, i.e. societies, non-governmental organizations, are aimed at enhancing efforts for prevention of social marginalization of immigrants and for restoration of mainstream social life of those who find themselves apart from it. The institutes in question are oriented primarily towards establishing good relations with supporting them immigrant communities, and therefore towards being granted social mandate by them for continuation of the pro-integration activities. At the same time, it seems that neither social protests propagating (or not) the idea of multiculturalism, nor the strategy of absolute assimilation – which in fact does not draw attention of immigrant organizations – appearing more and more frequently in many countries' political projects, have any significant influence on non-profit organizations' activities. Those relatively free from pressure non-governmental formations constantly serve purposes of their support-integration missions. There is a certain problem though, which concerns that relativity, the issue of allocation of European funds for operation of those organizations. The scarcity, or insufficiency of those funds can effectively put the works of non-profit organizations on hold. The centralization of immigration policy, from the point of view of how European Union operates, can therefore limit – to a certain extent – the influence of supportive organizations on the process of forming the immigration-integration policy. Those organizations, depending on external funds, become de facto – entities of a subordinative-executive character, i.e. rule takers, and not partners in administration being analogically – rule makers. It is worth noting that the main asset of a democratic society is the “self-developing man – autonomous citizen (...), taking part in different forms of economic, cultural, domestic and organization activities, which take place in local environment, not limited by any pressures of state authority” (Niewiadomska, 2005, p. 61).

The formula of integrative actions by the widely understood non-governmental organizations focuses around the attempt to get newcomers and the admitting society together. The first stage of those actions is the integration of individual ethnic environments, while the second, the promotion of active participation in multicultural community. Such participation is significant from the point of view of immigrants being in culturally different society and, if applicable, in terms of communication of newcomers with public institutions. Individual aspects, especially in times of massive migrations from North Africa, are the refugees and the problem of their adaptation in the country that has granted them refugee.

Non-governmental organizations operating, among others, in Netherlands (also those founded on the initiative of the immigrants themselves), despite growing problems that in recent years were related to the “refugee problem”, constantly serve the role of “builders” of those relations. They maintain interpersonal relationships; raise social capital while serving the key purposes of socialization of immigrants and stimulation of their activity in public spheres.

## **2. THE ROLE OF NGOS IN CO-GOVERNING THE COUNTRY**

The discussion about citizens contributing to social life and civil society co-governing social systems takes place constantly on the level of democratic theory and its developments in the form of numerous contemporary concepts. Perfecting democracy, e.g. according to Hirst, would require granting public institutions (complex public service states) a relief from the excess of tasks, provided that it would not be at the cost of availability and quality of public services. As a reference, Sorensen claims that in the long run the legalization of the presence of civil entities in social systems might strengthen their position as partners in solution-making and undertaking social challenges, and, therefore, strengthen the idea of democracy. Associative democracy assumes presence of entities, such as civil advisory or counseling bodies, in its governing structure. Sorensen points out, though, a possible risk of improper interpretation of such cooperation. According to her, the essence of functional democracy is the supplementation of representative democracy, not its replacement - that requires maintaining balance between both of its dimensions: functional and representative. Moreover, improperly understood civil participation can contribute to the weakening of political authority and the undermining of its credibility. Therefore, it is believed that contentious issues solving should first take place on the grounds of electoral legitimacy, participated in by the representative authority (Les, 2014, p. 11). One of the propositions to solve the dilemma related to the direct participation in local co-governance is Schmitter's position. According to that author's argumentation, direct influence on the decisions by civil organizations is admissible only, when the traditional mechanisms of

representative democracy have failed. That means, the democratically selected institutions bear the hegemonic role in formulation and fulfillment of the main politics-related responsibilities. In the course of fulfillment of those responsibilities, autonomous civil organizations may join to assist, provided that by doing so, they are not in violation of the public authorities' electoral legitimacy. In the literature on the subject, there is also pointed out that the cooperation of the state with bottom-up organizations has its limitations, because both policymaking and its evaluation belong to the public sector (definition of the cooperation and decision making principles), as well as control and verification of results. If matters were otherwise, that would mean abandonment of the responsibility for certain fields of life, meaning in turn, that these fields of civil services would lose their "public good" status (public interest goods), to which all the citizens have rights. Yet that does not mean, that in those relation phases the cooperation between the state and the citizens is impossible. Meanwhile politics co-development can generate new challenges related to the conflict of interests between the public administration and the bottom-up organizations, and therefore, can give birth to the demand for specific requirements and standards (Les, 2014, p. 12).

The process of co-governing within the framework of the state social politics should be considered as taking place in two dimensions. The first meaning the widening of citizens participation in the decision making for public affairs; while the second, the increasing of their participation in provision of social services. The interest in the so-called "third wave of democracy", i.e. participation democracy, dates back to the 80s of the 20th century, when the specific reconstruction of welfare state was taking place, weakening the social services main provider role of the state, while at the same time raising citizens' interest in creation of social politics. Public institutions, as having been stated, should also promote the development of non-state forms of institutional actions within the social sphere (Hirst, 1994; Peters, 194; Sorensen, 2000; Rifkin, 2004; Pestoff, 2009). An important role in this field serves non-profit organizations. Through interventions (direct and indirect) for people in need, at the same time they teach proper interpretation of the ideas of democracy and civil society. In the concept of civil democracy also highlighted is the role of social organizations, which should not be limited to merely articulating the interests of their members or putting pressure on the representatives of the authorities, and which should also involve individual policies implementation. The implementation control of social politics belongs to the sphere of democracy, as well as, to a significant extent, to the first dimension of political process, i.e., initiation, formulation, programming and decision-making (Les, 2014, p.21). Worth noting is that social organizations are an important medium for social reforms and the mechanism of wider participation of citizens in the modern governing system. By the way, in the European literature on the subject a lot of attention is paid to those very participation reforms (Pestoff, 2009, p. 271-273). The study results also show that interest in citizens' participation in public life grows. As noted by Pestoff, getting citizens and non-profit organizations involved in the provision of social services takes the dialog between the governing and the governed to another level, moreover, citizens can choose a social services provider from among a greater group (Pestoff, 2009).

In each contemporary civil society with constituted democracy there are three types of sectors, i.e. 1) state or public, which serves the purpose of redistribution of goods, carried out in accordance with certain criteria, on the basis of egalitarianism and the safety principle, 2) business and entrepreneurial – constituting the private sphere, based on production, satisfaction of material needs, operation for profit, 3) social or civil sphere, satisfying personal needs in accordance with moral virtues and principles. The motive for that last sphere is the common welfare and social solidarity (Szewczyk, 2006, p. 196). With the rapid increase in the number of associations of different kinds, foundations and many other social initiatives came the use of new terminology. Apart from the, in use until recently, "social organizations" term, increasingly popular were: non-governmental organizations, the non-profit sector and the third sector. Those accentuate the independency of those entities from the state administration (government) and their non-profit orientation. Not rare is also the term "public benefit institutions", indicating activities undertaken for the widely understood common good, e.g. healthcare, education or social aid sphere, or promotion of different kinds of initiatives. Whereas the "third sector" shows, that the segment of public benefit institutions and the state segment are distinct, also from the private one (Sarzała, 2012, p. 264). The third sector consists of entities with different degrees of formalizations and different forms of organization. It constitutes, in a way, the link between the state and the society in the democratic system, and at the same time serving an important role in the process of satisfying social needs. Among the tasks assigned to organizations of the third sector, deserving particular attention is, due to the nature of solutions, the propagation of pluralism and diversity of social life, as well as the fulfilling of individual and social needs in small groups, within a particular atmosphere of kindness and solidarity.

In Europe and around the world operate an uncountable number of non-profit organizations acting for immigrants. The number of those organizations gets higher with each year. Their localization is dependent largely on the places of immigrant settlements or, in case of refugees, the places of their temporary stay.

Those organizations operate not only in their home countries, but even abroad; wherever there are immigrants in need of aid and support. Many organizations act also outside the European continent, e.g. in Asia and Africa, presenting at the same time a wide selection of aid for migrants. An important element of their work is the mutual cooperation for the purpose of their missions. One of the patrons, serving as such cooperator, is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). More than 75 percent of its partners, operating all over the world, are the locally acting non-governmental organizations. They provide expertise on what is going on in a given area; provide quick support in situations requiring immediate response. Layton-Henry points at the five primary functions of non-profit organizations acting for immigrants. The first is the responsibility for the relationships linking home countries of immigrants with their admitting country (supports immigrants in their initial phase of stay); the second takes care of adaptation of immigrants in culturally new environment (their localization); the third, while uniting the newcomers, also represents their public sphere affairs in the admitting country/society; the fourth, maintains relations with the home country and other organizations of given ethnic and national groups existing in other countries, and the fifth, responsible for the development of culture and language - constituents that keep a community together (Lesinska, 2013, p. 97). By the way, that last function often leads to the admitting country making allegations concerning insufficient efforts for integration of newly arrived communities, especially those of Muslim origin, with the country's natives. The allegation focuses mainly around organizations of religious profile, which operate beyond the main political trend and therefore can remain outside the control of the authorities. Often there is an allegation made against them relating to their self-isolation and undemocratic attitude (Scheffer, 2010, p. 530-532). The above mentioned functions of the non-governmental organizations are being supplemented by specific aid offered to immigrants in finding employment, among other things, through facilitating them e.g. access to available job offers, financial support, or educational support (e.g. language learning), as well as understanding of the admitting country's culture. All those efforts indicate the not-to-be-underestimated role of the third sector organizations, because these fill gaps in the system of state aid for immigrants, especially for their particular group, i.e. refugees.

### **3. DUTCH NGOS SUPPORTING IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

Self-organization of the public sphere, as been pointed out previously, is one of the elements of participation in the community of citizens of the democratic countries. Its constituents are the unions formed by the initiative of citizens, as well as associations and organizations, which purpose is, among others, to articulate and represent interests of the concerned social groups. In order for the scope of the self-organization to be as huge as possible, it needs a prerequisite of having multiple possibilities, forms and direct pressure putting mechanisms for use on the authorities by the citizens united. Meanwhile the latter, by piloting the development of those and the same time being engaged in formulation of legal, political and financial standards, have the ability to support them constantly. There are four types of organizations being public life participation canals for ethnic groups. Those are: 1) formal organizations of the admitting country (associations and non-governmental organizations acting for immigrants; churches, human rights organizations); 2) informal organizations of the admitting country (groups and organizations in development on an ad hoc basis, as a reaction of the society to the presence of the immigrants); 3) formal organizations of the immigrants' home-countries (official representative bodies, such as embassies and consulates, or representatives of political parties and trade unions) and, 4) immigrant associations, i.e. all the groups and formations taking care of foreigners that are operating in the admitting country (Barbara Schmitter, 1980). Each of these types creates new organizational forms between immigrant communities and the admitting society or the home-country (Lesinska, 2013, p 96-97).

Netherlands is a country of a rich tradition tied to associations and compound organizational structures supported by active policy of the state. Associations and non-governmental organizations operate in this country under conditions belonging to the most favorable ones in the whole Europe. The majority of its citizens are members of more than one organization. The fields of operation of those organizations are various, e.g. ranging from those focused on the environmental protection, protection of human rights, rights of animals, public availability of information on the international security, to the issues related to the widely understood rights of ethnic and national minorities, including, to a large extent, the rights of immigrants. In the Netherlands, there are many organizations working for that purpose, strongly engaged in helping people in need. Among them the leading ones are: INLIA, Pharos, Johannes Wier Stichting, Steungroep Vrouwen Zonder Verblijfvergunning (SVZV), Stichting LOS (Landelijk Ongedocumenteerden Steunpunt: National Support for Undocumented Migrants), The Foundation for Refugee Students University Assistance Fund (UAF), VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, Stichting Vluchteling, The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration.

Their activity comes down to, among other things, the so-called "street counseling" and aiding of immigrants bearing different legal statuses (e.g. INLIA), supporting observance of human rights in the healthcare sector

(i.e. raising awareness of healthcare workers on rights of patients from culturally different backgrounds, e.g. Johannes Wier Stichting), aiding of immigrants with unsettled legal statuses staying in the country (including consultations and advisory in this regard, as well as organizing information campaigns, e.g. about immigrants situation), lifting their living standards (e.g. SVZV, Stichting LOS), supporting foreigners through international protection, help in undertaking studies in the Netherlands and even financial support of those in need (UAF) (Maciejko, Rejmer, 2014, p 47-48). One of the more interesting NGOs mentioned above is owed a short comment, that is the. Stichting Vluchteling, the roots of which date back to the World War II. Reactivated in the 50s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Cees Brouwer and Gerrit Jan van Heuven, had been aiding refugees on an ad hoc basis. In 1976 became transformed into the Stichting Vluchtelingenhulp, so as to later in 1981 undergo a name change into the one valid to this day, Stichting Vluchteling (SV), cooperating with the IRC network, i.e. International Rescue Committee. The art. 3.1 of the Organization Statute, modified in 2015, precisely defines that organization's mission: "The foundation is to help people survive, give support to the victims of conflicts or natural disasters. It searches for solutions to improve their future. It focuses its efforts on refugees and outcasts. It grants help regardless of religion, race or nationality" (SV, Strategisch Meerjarenplan 2016-2018, p 2-3). The organization directs its efforts in two directions. Those relate to the transmission of information on the needs of refugees and outcasts through presenting that information in the public forum, and also raising funds for the victims. The SV strategy involves: 1) improving of aid actions in terms of Emergency Response fund and Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit, 2) working towards protection of refugees all over the world (including European Union), 3) systematic investment activities in terms of raising funds for those in need from, among others, regular donors 4) strengthening cooperation with the IRC through activities for integration within the area of strong international network while preserving national independence and ability to intervene quickly in own country, 5) strengthening the humanitarian sector in the Netherlands and good relations with the public sector while putting particular emphasis on a debate based on knowledge on refugee problems. Stichting Vluchteling is an example of a non-profit organization cooperating in own sector with many formations of similar nature, that is, among others, with Samenwerkende Hulporganisaties (SHQ), or the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA), being at the same time their member. In particular, the latter organization deserves attention, because it hosts twelve non-government organizations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented by its spokesman. Stichting Vluchteling with determination continues its mission due to the never-ending crisis in some countries, including Turkey (the problem of Syrian refugees), Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Chad and Kenya.

The aid from non-profit organizations, as being stressed previously, concerns also those foreigners, who have settled in Netherlands permanently. If that is the case, those actions are focused mainly on integrating representatives of the migrant communities with the admitting society. Huge urban agglomerations, such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam or Hague are the examples of successful projects in that area, satisfying cooperation between migrant organizations and city authorities. Within the framework of the concept of integration and cooperation through development of civil society structures, the authorities of those cities very actively support the existence and activities of non-governmental organizations oriented at integration of ethnic minorities. The latter have the full right to, among others, regularly participate in deliberations at the municipal authorities, while their representatives are invited to participate in local committees, councils and other advisory-counselling bodies, where they can influence the decision-making concerning directly or indirectly immigrants. Participation in such committees is a sign of integration and it reflects the primary democratic principle of civil participation and responsibility. Worth noting is the changing-over-decades policy of Amsterdam on ethnic minorities inhabiting the city that heads towards developing the best form of their integration. Today, the effects of that integration can already be determined, defining in its spirit the "integrated society", meaning the one that actively participates in public life. Civil participation prevents exclusion of immigrants; their polarization within the city limits and supports their social integrity. Amsterdam in its pro-integration activities focuses on raising knowledge on co-citizens and ethnic diversity of the city; strengthens social capital, promotes tolerance to dissimilarities and counteracts radicalization. One of the projects, which have been initiated in Amsterdam, and which deserves brief attention is the "Platform Amsterdam Samen" program (PAS). It is largely based on the independent initiative-taking by the inhabitants and the implementing of sub-projects by them in the field of cooperation and tolerance. PAS cooperates with both the central city administration and the authorities of individual districts. It is worth noting that Muslims in that project are a special group. Within the framework of the project, the media present Islam and Muslim culture without spreading stereotypes and without creating reluctance or fear. Moreover, in order to promote active citizenship (i.e. participation in cultural, social and political life) the representatives of ethnic minorities are encouraged to take practical actions also within the scope of a non-profit institution. It needs bearing in mind that very often, low proficiency in Dutch language, cultural and religious otherness affect the limited immigrant's trust for public institutions. Hence, thanks to the activity of bottom-up autochthonous

organizations (public benefit organizations), oriented both at individuals and immigrant formations (important actors of social city life), the chance for elicitation of that social group, and therefore its integration, is higher.

#### **4. IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS SERVING AS AID LINKS IN THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION OF ETHNIC MINORITIES**

The development of immigrant associations and organizations in the European countries has been a gradual process. Their characteristics, goals and scope, as well as role and position, have been dependent – alongside the socio-political situation of the country, on the phases of migrant processes in Europe (Lesinska, p. 97). Immigrants were successfully creating formal frameworks for their institutions. They began with discussion meetings especially held near religious and cultural centers, as well as schools. The unions concentrated immigrants through promoting the position of minority communities and presenting that position to the authorities. They served as consultative bodies on all levels (local, regional and national), creating institutional network, the form and the development of which were dependent on, among others, the degree of the state decentralization, magnitude and concentration of immigrant communities, political culture, and existence of corporate and consultative traditions in the country. The longest tradition of institutions of this type is representing by the very Netherlands (Lesinska, p. 100). In Dutch cities we can see now, something that is worth noting, the close connection between the communality level of a given immigration group, political participation, and the level of trust for local political institutions operated by its members (Lesinska, p. 97). Today, those useful canals of participation and mutual contacts, exchange of opinions, consensus development between the local authorities and immigrant communities are, despite growing immigration problems Europe currently has to face, undoubtedly one of the more important stabilization factors of the socio-political system of the multicultural societies, including those in the Netherlands. Worth adding is that even in the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Amsterdam had been giving strong support to the activities of immigrant organizations, in the First Surinamese Stage, by subsidizing office rentals and current efforts of organizations, which in that time focused on supporting parent language education and religious activities. Now, the manner of funding the immigrant organizations has changed and functions on the basis of financing projects, which are required to correspond to the guidelines of the city policy. In 2009, for example, as much as 79 immigrant organizations allocated the city funds to organize 478 events, mostly related to issues of health and emancipation of women (mainly Muslim). Religious organizations operating in the Netherlands have the ability to apply for city budget funding of the already presented projects in order to achieve specific goals. An example of such association is the operating in Amsterdam next to the Al Kabir mosque the Ibno Khaldoun association (Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2013, p 48-49). Worth noting is that cities in the Netherlands slowly withdraw from periodic funding of immigrant organizations' projects that have been presented and which, while being constantly evaluated, have to correspond to the guidelines of integration policy, especially in terms of building intergroup relations.

Tradition of consultations of the state authorities with bodies representing minority groups in the Netherlands is several centuries-long dating back to the 16th century. The key characteristics of the Dutch society, confirmed by, among others, Penninx, Lucassen, Scholten, or Duyvendak, is its national institutionalism of cultural pluralism and the cultural emancipation of ethnic minorities. According to them, those two features are the determinant of the immigrant integration with the accepting society. The tradition of pillarisation, i.e. division of society into segments (religious: protestant and catholic as well as socio-cultural: socialist and liberal), dating back to 1920, was cultivated in the Netherlands till the 60s of the 20th century (Lijphart, 1968, p. 188). Each of those pillars had own complete institutional structure in the area of, among others, politics, education, healthcare, recreation and sports. The purpose of participation of the Dutch in all the above pillars was to govern under principles of the fair distribution of goods and the development of economy as well as social stability, (Wintle, 2000, p. 139-152). The traditional social division in the Netherlands has finally ended in 1970. Yet that does not mean, though, according to Vink, the abandonment of the philosophy of pillarisation in whole. Subsequent years indicate the development of integration strategy by the state in the spirit of that very idea. The policy on immigrants was based on harmonious and long-lasting coexistence of different cultural and religious groups (Vink, 2007, p. 337-350). Worth noting, as pointed out by some scientists (among others Rath, Penninx), is the problem of limited influence of pillarisation on creation of new segments. The Islam pillar (compared to the catholic or protestant one), according to them, was never considered seriously (Rath, Penninx, 1996, p.18). The other point of view is presented by Bartels, who points out the initiative of the Dutch government (in 1980), which covered the construction of Muslim schools, ethnic organizations, press, TV stations and mosques with the state funding policy. Execution of such move by the state, according to the researcher, indicates the acceptance of the development of a new pillar (Bartels, 2008, p. 223). At the same time, the attention must be paid to the important issues concerning the problem of civil participation of ethnic minorities, including the muslim faction inhabiting the Netherlands. In 1985, the

Netherlands as one of the first countries of Europe guaranteed immigrants their passive and active rights to vote in local elections. That first gave ethnic minorities the possibility to represent own environment at the local authorities, and later (after fifteen years) also at the national ones (Matusz-Protasiewicz, p 135-140).

Till 1970 the ethnic minorities in the Netherlands had been represented mainly by religious institutions or organizations acting as their carers. Change of policy on ethnic groups in the 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ethnic Minorities Policy) caused activation of immigrant communities that began developing their own associations (minority organizations), becoming at the same time the representatives of specific ethnic environments in the country that have a real influence on immigration-integration policy. The aim of this minorities policy was to “achieve a society in which the members of minority groups that reside in the Netherlands can each, individually as well as group-wise enjoy an equal position and full opportunities for development” (Urbanus, 1983, p. 12). The example of organization being at the same time a consultative body for the authorities, is the Draft Minorities Memorandum, which successfully cooperated also with other organizations in the Netherlands, among others, with caring institutions (Penninx, Garcés-Masareñas, Scholten, 2015, p. 9). The turning point in terms of development of ethnic organizations was the 1985 foundation of the National Advisory and Consultation Body (LAO) that represented one of the most important in that time immigrant organizations. After several years of operation, i.e. in 1997, LAO transformed into the National Consultation Body for Minorities (LOM). In practice, the advisory role of that organization was limited, though, and was brought down to consultative activities (Penninx, Garcés-Masareñas, Scholten, 2015, p. 9). Similar changes with respect to the operating in the Netherlands minority organizations occurred a few more times, among others, after the tragedy of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001.

Currently in the Netherlands there are hundreds of different immigrant organizations, settled more or less formally. Those gather people mainly from Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese backgrounds. There are also representatives of South Europe, China and – as regards refugees – the whole world. In that group, there is plenty of small unions and associations of similar character spread all over the country. The main goal of those institutions, next to the idea of integration, is the cooperation between different social groups and constituted immigrant organizations. The latter show a high degree of diversity and social activity. Such institutions, among others, are sports, youth or student organizations, or organizations oriented at elicitation of elderly people, women or representatives of professional environments. Those take care of integration of ethnic minorities through education, work, civil participation and other integration-significant elements of coexistence in the society. Immigrant organizations meet many social expectations, including those focusing around advocacy, exchange of experience or knowledge; they play informational role. Among them there are consultative bodies operating, like: “Samenwerkingsverband van Marokkanse Nederlanders (SMN)”, “Inspraak Orgaan Turken (IOT)”, “Surinaams Inspraak Orgaan (SIO)” or “Inspraakorgaan Chinezen (IOC)” and other (Fenya Fischler, 2014, p.11). In the whole Netherlands there are plenty of twin organizations of different sizes, compositions, and which represent different missions. The element connecting them is the desire to incorporate as many as possible people, who are interested in working for those institutions and lifting limitations in joining their ranks. The previously mentioned organization under the name of Samenwerkingsverband van Marokkaanse Nederlanders (SMN) contains in its program, for example, prevention of forced marriages in Muslim communities. A project adapted in 2013 by the SMN, is realized in collaboration with “Vereniging Vluchtelingenorganisaties Nederland (VON)” (Association of Refugee Organisations in the Netherlands) and financed by European Integration Fund (EIF). Another example is the so-called “integration tournament”, a project generated by “Inspraakorgaan Chinezen (IOC)” in 2010, which purpose is to promote participation of inhabitants from Chinese minorities in sports activities and encouraging them that way to be more active in terms of propagation of healthy lifestyle. It is also worth referring to the previous, intergenerational in its nature, endeavor (generated in 2005-2007) of the same organization, which concerns the issue of emancipation and integration of Chinese women (Fenya Fischler, 2014, p. 11). One of the more interesting projects was also the gathering of young, active Muslims from different organizations and training them within the framework of the Network of Key Figures. What important is, in the context of that endeavor, successfully elicited were even the most radical Muslim organizations, e.g. the orthodox mosque El Tawheed, or the Turkish organization Milli Görüs, which had a serious influence on mitigation of internal tensions of that the so diverse ethnic group. Another example is the initiative of the Muslim Jongeren Amsterdam association, strongly supported by the authorities of Amsterdam, focusing around many initiated by those authorities’ debates concerning Islam and the topics related to the activities of Muslims in the Netherlands (Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2013, p. 53). The most organized Muslim group are Turkish (40% of Muslim population in the Netherlands). The most important organization of that community is the Turkish Islamic Cultural Federation (TICF), established in 1979 and cooperating with the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which employs Imams at more than two hundred Turkish mosques (Sunier, p. 228). The previously mentioned Turkish formation, the Milli Görüs, dynamically operating in the

Netherlands, is regarded as if being seen through the prism of orthodox Islam that combines the elements of Turkish nationalism. The organization controls around 30 mosques and 60 youth and women organizations (Pedziwiatr, 2005, p. 106). Turkish immigrant organizations are not the only formations of such type in the Netherlands. Next to them are also Moroccan organizations collaborating with mosques and religious institutions. Moroccan minority creates foundations and associations that are constantly in touch with the Moroccan government in the area of cooperation. The most important of those is the Union of Moroccan Organizations in the Netherlands (Unie van Marokkanse Moslim Organisaties in Nederland, MMON) (Zweiffel, 2013, p. 112).

Participation of immigrants in the public sphere via associations or organizations is on one hand a step of that group towards leaving social isolation, while on the other hand, the opportunity of indirect involvement in the formulation of laws. The role, played therefore by formations consisting of representatives of ethnic minorities, is an important element in the process of integration, especially with respect to the countries renowned for tradition of multicultural coexistence. Yet the problem may be the issue of a certain paradox of that very coexistence in the spirit of integration, because on one hand the goal of immigrant organizations is to take care of own culture, language and tradition (which drags the risk of isolation in own social circle); and on the other hand, to take actions intended for the adaptation of newcomers in the new – culturally different to them – world.

## **5. EPILOGUE**

The process related to the integration of immigrants can be analyzed from the point of view of either the state and its institutions, the immigrants themselves, or non-governmental organizations: autochthonous and immigrant organizations helping immigrants to integrate permanently in the culturally unfamiliar society. The job of the state is to ensure good existential conditions to newcomers, therefore an effectively managed immigration law-oriented policy on labor, education and housing takes place first on the governmental level. Whereas, something that is really important, its realization takes place on the local level, where we can see more and more internal activities of the authorities in response to new problems of immigration and integration-related nature.

Processes of immigrant integration cover several levels. The first relates to the existential problems, such as house, work or education; as well as to the issue of acceptance of newcomers by the admitting environment (different socially as well as culturally). The second is the consolidated-institutional level, structured in terms of activity in the socio-cultural environment. It consists of the so-called general public institutions of the accepting society (national and local), including the educational, employment and healthcare pillars, or – considered more widely – the whole political system. The third, emphasized in this document, are the institutions of the third sector (public benefit institutions) helping immigrants and refugees. Some of them consist of immigrants only (those most commonly are entities operating in the areas of culture and religion), the other ones are developed by autochthonous communities caring for integration of immigrants. The mechanisms functioning on the mentioned levels are indeed diverse, but their outcomes are strictly connected. Institutional systems have considerable influence on the activities of immigrant systems. Whereas those ones, which is worth noting, can inspire, but also limit activities of individuals, while the individuals can change inter-institutional systems or even states of those organizations.

Integration processes take place, from the point of view of immigrants themselves, on the local level. What relevant is, those can differ, but in the end those are priority actions in the strategic context of the state integration policy. It therefore seems that it should support local actions, including non-profit ones. The integration policy is effective only, when it covers the previously mentioned levels: individual, institutional, the level of immigrant organizations and unions that have been founded by the indigenous society for the purpose of aiding foreigners. An especially important role play immigrant formations, which initiatives relate to concretized integration activities, e.g. educational projects: endeavors encouraging the representatives of ethnic minorities to take part in training and language courses or projects related to the knowledge on how to cope on the labor market, or participation of female immigrants in the public life. Non-governmental partners, coming from either the accepting society or immigrant society, are crucial in terms of direct suggestions related to the implementation of particular policy, influence on political atmosphere and participation in the shaping of strategy that enables mutual acceptance under the immigration-integration principles. Those organizations can be extremely important in the fight against the exclusion of ethnic minorities, their discrimination, or xenophobia. Acceptation of foreigners and of their active participation is the key requirement for restoring the integrity of multicultural cities and creating an immigrant-wise country, which in the end should bring positive outcomes connected to the presence of immigrants in the society.



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