

Dutch migration policy

POLICY OUTLINE

Missing migrants in the Netherlands, prevention measures and search mechanisms

The European Migration Network (EMN) published a comparative Inform on the policy measures and practical approaches taken by EU Member States and Norway to prevent and manage the risks of third-country nationals going missing and their separation from family members. EMN Netherlands provided input on the Dutch situation which is shortly described in this policy outline. What prevention measures are in place when arriving and staying in the Netherlands as an (irregular) migrant and in the case of return? How and by whom can a missing migrant be reported? And what mechanisms are used and who is involved in the search?

Prevention measures for the separation of families

Arrival in the Netherlands

When identifying migrants at airport controls and just **within Dutch borders**, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (*Koninklijke Marechaussee - KMar*) will conduct a **screening to establish family relationships**. If the relationship is confirmed, the **family will stay together** and is transported to the registration centre in Ter Apel or, if a custodial measure

is imposed, to the GGV (*Gesloten Gezinsvoorziening - secure family facility*) in Zeist.

Migrants, including families, who report at a **police station** to seek asylum will receive a **train ticket** to go to the registration centre in Ter Apel. If **all family members are under age**, **transportation by taxi** is provided. A temporary accommodation might be arranged in the case of arrival at night. Both **registration centres** in the Netherlands have **child-friendly family rooms** where registration of families take place and families can stay together during the registration process.

PREVENTION MEASURES

- Placement unity: migrant families who travelled together are placed in reception together.
- Migrant families can stay in special child-friendly family rooms in the registration centres and before removal in the case of return.
- If a family member absconds in the case of forced removal, the return ticket remains available to rejoin the rest of the family later.

SEARCH MECHANISMS

- The same procedures apply in searching for a missing migrant as to those for missing persons in general.
- Safe reporting policy: irregularly staying migrants can safely report someone missing in any police station.
- The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (*Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers - COA*) and Red Cross covenant: the legal exchange of information if someone from outside the Netherlands is looking for a missing person who might be at a location of COA.

International protection procedure

Throughout the process from registration until placement in a **reception centre**, COA applies the concept of '**placement unity**': families who travelled together as a group are placed in reception together. Families who entered separately will be united as soon as possible. During transfers between COA facilities families will remain together as well.

Return procedure

In the case of return, families will be placed in an **open family location** (*Gezinslocatie - GL*) or, under exceptional circumstances, be detained together in a **family unit in the GGV**. The hours before removal by plane, families are placed in a **special family room**. During the departure procedure the Repatriation and Departure Service (*Dienst Terugkeer & Vertrek - DT&V*) **keeps families together** when they depart. If a family member absconds, the DT&V ensures that the **return ticket remains available**, to give the family member the opportunity to rejoin the family.

Mechanisms to search for a migrant reported missing

Reporting a missing migrant

COA reports the missing person to the police if the person was staying at one of the reception centres. A picture will be shared with other reception centres and other inhabitants will be asked whether they know where the person might have gone to. If there are suspicions of trafficking in human beings or human smuggling a notification is given to the KMar.

Irregular migrants who would like to report a missing person can do so safely, without being asked about their irregular stay in the Netherlands themselves because of the so called 'safe reporting' policy. This means that irregularly staying migrants can walk freely into any police station to report a missing person and walk freely out of the police station again.

Organisations involved in the search

The Foreign Nationals Identification and Human Trafficking unit (*Afdeling Vreemdelingenpolitie, Identificatie en Mensenhandel - AVIM*) of the National Police is primarily involved in

the search and identification of missing migrants, they work together on the cases with the help of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (*Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst - IND*), COA, the DT&V and the Dutch Council for Refugees. NGOs who actively help refugees and migrants can be contacted by the police to help in the search by using their network or to provide emotional support to family or friends of the missing person.

COA also helps with locating persons in case of tracing requests by a legal aid or a lawyer in the Netherlands.

COA and the Red Cross have a covenant to legally exchange information if someone from outside the Netherlands is looking for a missing person who might be at a location of COA.

Search procedure

There are no significant differences between the procedures for searching for a missing migrant and those for missing persons in general. However, if the AVIM has important information that might benefit the search for the missing migrant, this information is shared within the National Police.

EMN INFORMS

EMN Informs compare EU Member State policies on different subjects related to migration. This policy outline is a summary of the Dutch input to the Inform 'Separated and missing migrants: Member States approaches to prevent family separation and search mechanisms for missing migrants'. If you are interested in how Dutch policy compares to other Member States' approaches, please consult the full [Inform](#).

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