



THE NETHERLANDS

Migration and WOMEN HEALTH WORKERS

In the context of the PSI project "Woman and International Migration in the Health Sector" a pre-decision kit is being assembled containing information about countries that already recruit or will recruit health workers abroad.

ABVAKABO FNV, the Dutch union, takes part in the project, supplying information to nursing staff, care workers and other health workers who are considering a career in the Netherlands.

The information comprises general data on the Netherlands and is available in Dutch, English and Polish. There is also a brochure, which for now is available in Dutch only, with more specific information on working in Dutch health care.

Key Data on the Netherlands (2006)

Form of government	Parliamentary democracy	Religions	50% of the Dutch are no longer members of a church. The remaining 50% are Roman Catholic (25%), protestant (18%) or Muslim (6%)
Head of state	Constitutional monarch, mostly a ceremonial function. Since 1980: Queen Beatrix	Economic growth	2.5 - 3.0% a year
Location	Western Europe, bordering the North Sea, between Belgium and Germany	Inflation	1.5 - 2% a year
Area	41,526 sq. km.	Unemployment	5.5% of the professional population
Language	Dutch. Many people also speak English and/or German.	Climate	Marine climate with cool summers (17 ° C on average with occasional peaks to 30-35 ° C) and mild winters (on average 3° C with occasionally a few weeks of frost). Average precipitation of 780 mm a year. Rather windy, especially in the coastal areas.
Capital	Amsterdam. Other big cities: The Hague (seat government), Rotterdam, Utrecht.		
Population	16,300,00. Median age is 39; average life expectancy: 79.		
Currency	Euro (€). Exchange rate: EUR 1.00 equals USD 1.25.		

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Migration in Health Care

Since World War II the Netherlands has had regular shortages of health workers. One solution was to attract workers abroad. First in the former Dutch colonies of Indonesia and Suriname, later in other countries such as the Philippines, South-Africa, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Poland and Latvia.

International migration to Dutch health care never involves large numbers. The main reason is that to work in Dutch health care, health workers have to speak Dutch.

While some years ago recruitment abroad was common practice, there was hardly any shortage in Dutch health care in 2005 and 2006.

According to prognosis, however, the ageing population will cause a growing shortage of health workers by 2007, mostly in nursing homes, residential care homes and home care. Besides health workers there will be a demand in particular for care workers. This is the reason why in the years to come foreign staff will be attracted.

However, foreign staff often work in sub-standard conditions, i.e. as care workers and not as nursing staff. This is because the shortage of staff is most urgent in the care for the elderly, and because foreign nursing degrees are not always recognised in the Netherlands. This applies in particular to degrees obtained in the countries of former Eastern Europe.

Foreigners who would like to work in the Netherlands need a residence permit. Until 1 January 2007 nationals of non-EU member states and 'new' EU member states need a work permit as well. More information can be found in the brochure: «Werken in de Nederlandse gezondheidszorg» [Working in Dutch Health Care]

Several studies have revealed that in general, employers in the Netherlands treat foreign health workers well. They are being paid the same salary as their Dutch colleagues, their working conditions are good, and the employers pay for Dutch language courses and refresher courses.



Income and Costs

The rights and obligations of employees have been laid down in three levels.

- ◆ In laws (the Dutch Civil Code in particular) that apply to all employees in the Netherlands
- ◆ In Collective Bargaining Agreements ('CAO') that apply to a particular line of industry such as hospitals or nursing homes and residential care homes (see also paragraph 5)
- ◆ In individual employment agreements, the contract between employers and employees.

The salaries of health workers are regulated by CAO. Staff are graded based on their positions and experience. As a newly qualified care worker you will start out at EUR 1,600 gross approx. a month; the starting salary of nursing staff depends on their positions and may vary between EUR 1,680 and EUR 1,900.

All sums mentioned are based on full-time employment of 36 hours a week. Once a year you will be paid 8% of the yearly salary as a holiday allowance, and most collective bargaining agreements provide for an end-of-year bonus of 5% approx. of the yearly salary. You are entitled to approx. 21 days' paid holiday a year. You will be reimbursed for unsocial hours, which means working during weekends, at night and in the evening. These are gross amounts. About one third goes to taxes, social insurances and pension premiums that you are required to pay. Depending on the period of your employment in the Netherlands part of that will be refunded to you when you leave the Netherlands.

If you think these salaries are attractive compared to those in your current country of work, please remember that the cost of living in the Netherlands are likely to be much higher.



Just a few examples (in Euros):

average price of a home	€ 222.000
average rent of house or apartment	€ 880 a month
rent of room starting from	€ 250
gas/water/electricity	€ 100 a month
health insurance	€ 120 a month
washing machine	€ 800
vacuum cleaner	€ 150
microwave	€ 150
refrigerator	€ 300-€ 500
1 litre of petrol Euro 95	€ 1.45
1 ticket for city bus	€ 1.80 - € 2,40
return train fare 2x 50 km	€ 14
theatre ticket	€ 20
cinema ticket	€ 8
meal at a restaurant	€ 20 - € 40

Indication of retail prices:	
1 litre of milk	€ 0.60-€ 1
500 gr. coffee	€ 5 - € 7
1 litre of Coca Cola	€ 1
1 bottle of beer, 1/2 litre	€ 0.75 - € 1,00
1 kilo mince	€ 4,50
500 gr. sausage	€ 6 - € 7
1 kilo pork steak	€ 14
1 head of lettuce	€ 1- € 1.50
1 kilo potatoes	€ 1.50-€ 3
1 pack of rice	€ 2
1 loaf	€ 0.50 - € 2
1 kilo apples	€ 2.70 - € 6
pair of shoes	€ 25 - € 150
pair of jeans	€ 50 - € 75



Foreigners in the Netherlands

Of the more than 16 million inhabitants of the Netherlands 1.4 million come from other Western countries and 1.7 million from non-Western countries. Most people from this last category are from

- ◆ Turkey (364,000),
- ◆ Suriname (331,000)
- ◆ Morocco (323,000).

These groups and the Dutch do not mingle much. About 40% of the residents in the big cities are of non-Dutch origin. The Dutch used to be known for their tolerance and friendliness to foreigners but these past years this has changed a little. After 9/11 in the United States and some incidents in the Netherlands there has been a reversal. Some people are afraid of terrorist attacks, of being replaced by workers from abroad (the 'Polish plumber' has become symbolic) and the influence of the radical Islam.

The accession of ten new member states to the EU is also a factor: Some people fear for their jobs. The government has taken several measures to curb the inflow of undocumented migrants and refugees. The Netherlands, however, still is a country of many cultures. Overt discrimination is rare and violence is exception rather than the rule.

The Union

In the Netherlands every employee and every student of vocational training can become a member of a union. Unions represent their members' interests, including the interests of foreign health workers. On behalf of their members the unions negotiate the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the employers. This is a contract between employers (organisations) and the unions. It lays down the conditions of employment such as salary, days' holiday and leave, but also contains provisions on training, child care and pension.

The agreements are usually valid for one or two years, when the unions and employers will start negotiating again. ABVAKABO FNV is the biggest union in the public sector. With regard to migration in health care, ABVAKABO FNV's main concerns are compliance with agreements and procedures and proper guidance of employees. The union also stimulates the employers to pay for the costs of language course, recruitment and the cost of processing official documents. For the future, the recognition of foreign degrees and career development will be high on the union's agenda.

The union not only promotes joint interests, but also helps you as an individual member with specific questions and problems about your work and income. As a member you can ask questions about the collective bargaining agreement or your working conditions. We will also help you resolve conflicts at work. ABVAKABO FNV provides advice and legal assistance in matters of employment law, pensions, benefits and disciplinary rules. Unions also negotiate with the government about issues that concern employees such as the disability act or employment. You will meet union members at your place of work, usually on the works council ('OR'). Every hospital, nursing home and residential care home has a works council, in which employees and the management discuss general issues.

In Conclusion

If you are considering a career in another country, you will need objective information. PSI and ABVAKABO FNV (for the Netherlands) can give you that information.

Visit our websites:

<http://polen.abvakabo.nl>
www.world-psi.org
www.abvakabofnv.nl

or send an E-mail to: polenproject@abvakabo.nl