

Summary and conclusions

Settling in in the Netherlands

Developments in the social situation of Polish and Bulgarian migrants to the Netherlands in the first years following migration

5.1 Panel survey of migrants from Poland and Bulgaria

Since the accession of Poland (in 2004) and Bulgaria (in 2007) to the European Union, migration to the Netherlands from both countries has increased. The central focus of this report is how these migrants are settling into Dutch society. Is their stay in the Netherlands temporary or extended? How do they fare in building relationships? How well do they learn the Dutch language? And what is their position on the Dutch labour market? To find an answer to these questions a new project was launched in 2010. Migrants from Poland and Bulgaria who were entered in the Dutch population register (Municipal Personal Records Database) for the first time in 2009 and 2010 were asked to take part in a survey at the end of 2010 and early 2011, conducted jointly by Radboud University (RU), Utrecht University (UU), the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) and Statistics Netherlands (CBS). The survey led to the publication in summer of 2013 of a report on recently migrated Poles and Bulgarians: 'New in the Netherlands. The lives of recently migrated Bulgarians and Poles' (*Nieuw in Nederland. Het leven van recent gemigreerde Bulgaren en Polen* (Gijsberts & Lubbers 2013). That report discussed the social situation of migrants shortly after their arrival in the Netherlands and compared it with the situation prior to migration, in their country of origin. What makes the project unique is that for the first time, these recent migrants to the Netherlands were surveyed a second time: 18 months after the first survey, the same migrants were re-interviewed between April 2012 and January 2013 in order to ascertain how their social situation had changed in the short time they had lived in the Netherlands. That has not been possible in the past with most integration indicators used in the Netherlands; but internationally, too, research which tracks migrants' lives through the first post-migration phase is rare.

This study design enabled us to see which migrants have remained in the Netherlands and which left again fairly soon after first settling here. We were also able to study whether the picture about their social situation that emerged from the first report was confirmed or had changed. It emerged from the first survey, as well as from other studies (Dagevos 2011; Engbersen et al. 2011), that by no means all migration from Central and Eastern Europe is temporary labour migration. There is also settlement migration: Poles and Bulgarians who move to the Netherlands with a partner and/or children and who intend to settle. We also found that the Bulgarian group, in particular, was highly diverse: there was a large

group of study migrants, a substantial proportion of Bulgarians of Turkish origin with a Muslim background from the rural regions of Bulgaria, and a group mainly originating from the Sofia region. The data obtained in the second survey enable us to describe how these migrants have fared throughout their stay in the Netherlands.

We compared Polish and Bulgarian migrants with recent migrants from Turkey who settled in the Netherlands in the same period as the Poles and Bulgarians studied here. As in the first publication, the aim of this comparison is to ascertain whether the integration trajectories of new groups from Eastern Europe are different from those of migrant groups who have been coming to the Netherlands for longer and about which more is known. The comparison group is also relevant because a high proportion of Bulgarian migrants are found to have a Turkish background.

This study concentrated exclusively on migrants who are entered in the Dutch population register. It is known from other research that by no means everyone registers (e.g. Van der Heijden et al. 2013), which means that non-registered migrants are not represented in our study. In both the first and second surveys, migrants were visited by an interviewer in their home. The interviews were conducted in the language of their country of origin. A particular feature of panel research is that it enables migrants to be tracked over time. However, panel research also has disadvantages, the principal one being the selectivity of the panel attrition (migrants who take part in the first but not the second interview). A part of the selectivity has our interest, since it is caused by migrants leaving the country, making it possible to study which migrants are more likely to leave in the first period after migration to the Netherlands. However, another part of attrition is caused by selectivity in non-response among those who stayed in the Netherlands. We also found indications of selective panel attrition in our study, in particular a higher dropout rate by Polish men, slightly higher attrition of lower-educated Poles and the higher dropout of Bulgarian labour and study migrants between the two panel study waves. A substantial proportion of this dropout was caused by migrants leaving the Netherlands. A drawback of our panel study is that the number of Bulgarians who took part in the second wave was low, which meant that some analyses by background characteristics could not be repeated. For example, where in the first study we were able to report on Bulgarian study migrants, this group had become rather small in the second study, partly because those concerned had left the Netherlands. On the other hand, it is worth stressing that this is the first time such a longitudinal study has been carried out in the Netherlands among these groups, and that the research method used enables this report to provide new insights into the integration process.

In this report we describe the extent to which people's position on key integration indicators, such as work and command of the language, changed between the first and second measurements. The first question that we are also able to answer is which migrants have left the Netherlands, and how far this group differs from those still living in the Nether-

lands 18 months after the first survey (and an average of three years after being entered in the population register)?

5.2 Which migrants leave the Netherlands?

In the second survey it was found that 27% of the Bulgarian migrants were no longer registered in the Municipal Personal Records Database. The figure was lower among the Polish group, at 17%. These are not particularly high numbers in themselves, but it should be remembered that there were only 18 months between the two surveys. It is likely that the percentage of departed migrants is actually higher than this, since it is probable that not all Poles and Bulgarians removed themselves from the population register before leaving. If we look at the characteristics of these departed migrants, we see that men have left more often than women and that labour migrants – who are mostly men – have left the Netherlands substantially more often than family migrants (this applies more for Bulgarian labour migrants than for their Polish counterparts). Migrants whose partner and children live in the Netherlands less often leave the country than migrants without children or a partner.

Highly skilled migrants are found to have left the Netherlands more often than the lower-skilled, in both the Polish and Bulgarian groups. A third of the Bulgarian study migrants left the Netherlands between the two surveys, moving elsewhere after completing their studies. We saw in the first report that most of these migrants intended to stay temporarily in the Netherlands – logical, since they were in the Netherlands to study. The majority of Bulgarian study migrants still living in the Netherlands at the time of the second survey were still studying. A small proportion had found work in the Netherlands, but almost the same proportion reported that they were unemployed. The higher departure rate of highly skilled migrants and students found in this study runs counter to the current policy of retaining highly skilled migrants in the Netherlands, and also contradicts recent findings by Luthra and Platt (2015) for Great-Britain, which suggest that studying in Great-Britain enables migrants to take advantage of the opportunity to settle there.

We also looked at the relationship between indicators of sociocultural integration and departure from the Netherlands, and found that better social integration in the Netherlands (more contact with Dutch natives) is associated with a smaller chance of departing. We found no relationship with perceived discrimination: it is not the case that those who experience discrimination more often leave the country more often.

5.3 How has the social situation of Polish and Bulgarian migrants developed?

Frequent relocation in the first phase after migration

This survey not only provides insights into which migrants leave the Netherlands, but also the extent to which recent migrants relocate within the Netherlands. By the time of the

second survey 18 months after the first interviews, almost a third of the Bulgarians and a quarter of the Polish group had moved house within the Netherlands. A similar proportion of recent migrants from Turkey had moved house within the Netherlands. By way of comparison: 9% of all Dutch citizens moved house in 2013. What is striking is that Bulgarian labour migrants moved house within the Netherlands much more often than family migrants.

Relationship-formation among Bulgarian migrants

Polish and Bulgarian migrants to the Netherlands are relatively young. It is thus likely that there will be changes in respect of relationship and family formation in the initial period of residence. There is little evidence of this in the Polish group, however, though we see a clear increase in relationship formation in the Bulgarian group: the proportion who got married (to someone from their own country of origin) between the two surveys increased and the number of singles declined. A large majority of migrants have a partner from their own ethnic group, including those in new relationships. During this first post-migration period, we see only a slight increase in the percentage of migrants with children. It is thus not the case that these migrants got children in this initial period after migration. It is still a relatively short period, but the difference between the Polish and Bulgarian groups compared with those from Turkey is striking; the percentage of the latter group with children does increase sharply. This group more often came to the Netherlands as marriage migrants, and relationship and family formation is thus further advanced among recent migrants from Turkey than among recent migrants from Poland and Bulgaria.

Improving command of Dutch

Polish and Bulgarian migrants have improved their command of the Dutch language. Bulgarians (according to self-report) have made more progress than Poles. Polish migrants reported in the first interview that they were often following language courses. The percentage of Bulgarian migrants doing this increased mainly between the first and second surveys. And as further analysis shows, this is important: following a language course is the most important predictor of increased language proficiency. This seems obvious, but among migrants from Turkey it makes virtually no contribution to better language competence. Ethnic Bulgarians have made more progress in their command of Dutch than Bulgarians of Turkish origin, and the same applies for higher-educated Bulgarians compared to their lower-educated compatriots. The comparison with recent migrants from Turkey shows that the command and use of the Dutch language has improved more among Poles and Bulgarians than among migrants from Turkey.

Tentative improvement in labour market position over time

It emerged from the first survey in 2010/2011 (Gijsberts & Lubbers 2013) that the vast majority of Polish migrants had work in the Netherlands. The situation was different for the Bulgarians, a majority of whom had no work. In fact the labour market position of the Bulgarian group proved to be extremely weak. This follow-up study reveals that Polish and

Bulgarian migrants who have remained in the Netherlands have consolidated or slightly improved their labour market position. That is striking in a period when the Netherlands was going through an economic crisis and unemployment in the native Dutch population rose sharply. The Polish group sustained their high labour participation rate, but the position of the Bulgarian group remains worrying. The percentage of Bulgarian migrants with no paid work is alarmingly high, and the position of Bulgarian women, in particular, remains weak. Bulgarian men more often found work in the 18 months between the two surveys, but this does not apply for Bulgarian women. Moreover, those Bulgarians who do work still report that their working hours are limited. Whereas a quarter of the Polish group work more than 40 hours a week, the majority of Bulgarians say they work for less than ten hours. Bulgarians and Poles have largely remained in the same employment sectors: Bulgarian women mainly work in the cleaning sector, and Bulgarian men mainly in construction. Poles are mostly employed in manufacturing and industry. One striking finding is that higher-skilled migrants and migrants whose command of Dutch has improved do *not* have a better chance of finding work after a longer period of residence in the Netherlands. The change in the proportion in work is limited, despite the significant improvement in their language proficiency. We suspect that the competition for better jobs requiring a higher skill level and a good command of Dutch is still too great for these migrants. Another finding is that having a larger network within one's own ethnic group in the Netherlands reduces the risk of being out of work.

Nonetheless, there is evidence that the occupational status of Bulgarians and Poles is improving very tentatively. Whereas in the first study we found that the occupational status immediately after migration was much lower than in the country of origin, 18 months later it had improved slightly. This improvement is found mainly among men and the higher-skilled. There is also a trend for Poles (both high and low-skilled) to be less often employed on temporary contracts.

No increase in contacts with Dutch natives

Contacts between the Bulgarian group and the native Dutch population did not change between the first and second surveys; among the Polish migrants they actually declined, as they did among migrants from Turkey. The number of hours that Polish migrants work and their poor command of Dutch are associated with a decline in contact. Interestingly, Poles also report a decline in the frequency of contact with other Poles. It seems as if contacts with Dutch natives may initially have been seen as unusual and were reported as 'contact', or perhaps contacts with representatives of Dutch agencies or employers were also counted, while in the second survey respondents may have been more focused on their work and family, giving the appearance that there has been a decline in contact. Migrants from Turkey are the most orientated towards their own group. This has also emerged in earlier research among Turkish migrants to the Netherlands (e.g. Huijnk en Dagevos 2012), but is also found to apply for recent migrants from Turkey.

Bulgarian migrants less religious and more progressive than Polish migrants

In the first study, immediately post-migration, Bulgarian migrants (both ethnic and of Turkish origin) were found to be less religious and hold more progressive views on moral issues (such as homosexuality and abortion) than Polish migrants who came to the Netherlands in the same period. This difference still existed 18 months later, and had actually widened slightly. Poles had become less progressive, used Dutch media less often and were more dissatisfied with Dutch society. However, the differences between Poles and Bulgarians are small if we compare them with migrants from Turkey. The latter are more religious than migrants from Poland or Bulgaria and are the only group who have started going to a place of worship more often than in the period immediately after migration to the Netherlands. They also hold much less progressive views on moral issues, and their attitude to homosexuality, in particular, has become more negative.

Initial optimism about social situation after migration has been tempered

The initial optimism about their social situation appears to be tempered after a longer period of residence in the Netherlands; 18 months after the first survey, a majority of migrants from Poland and Bulgaria are still satisfied with their income, but less so than when they were newly arrived in the Netherlands. Precisely the group whose occupational status has risen most sharply (men and higher-skilled migrants) are most often dissatisfied with their income. The proportion who feel at home in the Netherlands also declined between the two surveys, though a large majority of Poles are still satisfied with their life in the Netherlands. By contrast, that satisfaction has fallen sharply among low-skilled Bulgarians in particular: just after migration 81% were satisfied, but 18 months later this had fallen to 48%.

Also sharp increase in experienced discrimination

It is striking that experiences of discrimination increase over the period studied. Those experiences were already fairly high, but show a substantial increase 18 months later. This applies for both Polish and Bulgarian migrants, but far more for the latter. By contrast, the proportion of migrants from Turkey who feel that their group is subject to discrimination declined over the study period. There are indications that the social climate for Poles and Bulgarians in the Netherlands has deteriorated in the years before the second wave. The commotion surrounding the *Polenmeldpunt* website which was set up between the two surveys by the radical-right-wing *pvv* party, which people could use to submit complaints about nuisance caused by Polish immigrants and which received a great deal of media attention, appears to have contributed to the increase in perceived discrimination. That increase was due not just to greater exposure to the (negative) media reports about these migrants, but also to an actual increase in negative experiences after a longer period spent in the Netherlands. Particularly striking is the increase in the proportion of Bulgarian migrants reporting poor treatment by official bodies in the Netherlands.

Ethnic Bulgarians much more negative than Turkish Bulgarians about life in the Netherlands

There is a clear difference within the Bulgarian group in experiences with and within the Netherlands. Bulgarians of Turkish origin were more positive about life in the Netherlands immediately post-migration, and the contrast with ethnic Bulgarians sharpened further in the ensuing 18 months. Among Bulgarians of Turkish origin, 89% thought their lives were better in 2012/13 than in their country of origin, compared with 68% of ethnic Bulgarians. Ethnic Bulgarians also feel much less at home in the Netherlands and perceive a greater increase in discrimination – far more than Bulgarians of Turkish origin. Ethnic Bulgarians also saw greater changes after their migration; they had a better starting position in Bulgaria, and ended up in a minority position in the Netherlands, whereas Bulgarians of Turkish origin were already ‘accustomed’ to being in that position in Bulgaria and may therefore have had lower expectations.

Bulgarians of Turkish origin increasingly wish to remain in the Netherlands after an extended period of residence

Do migrants who have been in the Netherlands for longer plan to remain here more often than newly arrived migrants, or are they affected by the negative experiences cited above? Little has changed in the Polish group; roughly half still expect to continue living in the Netherlands. There is a bigger change in the Bulgarian group, with the proportion expecting to remain in the Netherlands rising from a third to half. This pattern towards more ‘settlement’ can also be seen in other dimensions: relationship formation has increased in the Bulgarian group, they less often send money to Bulgaria and they have more often sold their home in Bulgaria. Interest in Dutch politics has also increased in this migrant group. The proportion of Turkish Bulgarians wishing to stay in the Netherlands has increased much more quickly than among ethnic Bulgarians, and they are also much more satisfied with their lives in the Netherlands than the ethnic Bulgarians.

5.4 Conclusions

The international literature on migration describes the first post-migration phase as essential for the further integration process in the host country (Phinney 2001). This period is generally one of many changes. Our study shows which changes affect recent Polish and Bulgarian migrants in their first period of residence in the Netherlands. The differences between the Bulgarian and Polish migrant groups are already considerable shortly after migration, and remain so. The first survey showed that migrants from Poland are well educated: the majority have an education level equivalent to a Dutch basic qualification. This high education level has a positive effect on their labour market position: the labour participation rate of Poles immediately after migration is very high, and remains so. In the first interview of Bulgarian migrants we found that their education level was predominantly low – much lower than the Polish group – and this applied both for Turkish and ethnic Bulgarians who came to the Netherlands as labour or family migrants.

Unlike the Polish group, they also spoke little Dutch, English or German and were very often out of work. In the second survey we found that their position on the labour market remains worrying: they are often unemployed and if they do have work it is at the lower end of the labour market, often in unskilled jobs in the cleaning or construction sectors. On the other hand, the position of both the Polish and Bulgarian groups did not deteriorate in the 18 months following the first interview, despite this being an economically turbulent period. The employment rate in the Polish group is exceptionally high; almost none of them have lost their jobs and a quarter still work more than 40 hours a week. Their occupational status has moreover improved and the number on temporary contracts has declined after a longer period of residence. The position of the Bulgarian migrant group was described as worrying above; although that situation has barely improved, it also did not get any worse during the economic recession. Relevant here is the difference between Bulgarian men and women: whereas Bulgarian men found an improvement in employment, Bulgarian women reported no improvement in their employment situation.

For both Bulgarians and Poles, there has been a substantial improvement in Dutch language proficiency. Language courses pay off for Bulgarians and Poles, something we did not find for migrants from Turkey. This is valuable information for policy. Promoting and offering language courses for recent migrants is an effective way of improving Dutch language proficiency and thereby fostering independence. Nonetheless, we found no spin-off from greater language proficiency on the Dutch labour market. This may suggest that (higher-skilled) migrants will need to gain an even better command of Dutch in order to be able to compete for the higher and more senior positions on the Dutch labour market. Our findings also highlight a degree of dissatisfaction. Although a majority of migrants are still satisfied with their income in the Netherlands, that satisfaction has fallen substantially since the first interview. A large majority of these migrants still consider their lives in the Netherlands to be better than in their country of origin, but that satisfaction too has fallen substantially. People feel less at home in the Netherlands than they did at first. Moreover, both the Polish and Bulgarian groups feel their group is subject to much more discrimination and report more personal experiences of discrimination than immediately post-migration. The initial optimism about the Netherlands and Dutch society has diminished considerably. It is relevant to ask here whether this is due mainly to exposure to negative media reports about migrants from these countries (the commotion surrounding the *Polenmeldpunt* website arose between the two surveys), or more to actual negative experiences, for example with employers or other agencies in the Netherlands. Both explanations would seem to be important. But whichever is the case, these groups feel a certain disappointment with their situation in the Netherlands. In addition, the Polish group has become less orientated towards the Netherlands (both as regards contacts and media use). Despite the stability of their economic position, the picture on the sociocultural front is less positive. A further factor will be that building a new life in another coun-

try costs time and energy. Poles who work long hours have fewer contacts with Dutch natives; and Poles who have families have fewer contacts with other Poles.

In the international literature on developments in occupational status after migration, a hypothesis is currently that this development follows a kind of U-curve: higher status before migration, then a sharp fall, and then rising again after a longer period in the host country (Chiswick et al. 2005). That pattern is present for the Polish migrants studied here. According to Chiswick et al., this pattern arises because the human capital that migrants have built up in their country of origin is inadequately matched to the qualifications needed on the unfamiliar host country labour market (e.g. in terms of qualifications and language proficiency). However, if migrants invest in the capital that is specific for the host country, their occupational status will rise back to the same level as in their country of origin just prior to migration. Chiswick et al. (2005) found this pattern in Australia and Akresh (2006) found it in the United States. Lubbers and Gijsberts (2013) reported on the decline in occupational status compared with the pre-migration period among Bulgarians and Poles in the Netherlands, and in our study we found further evidence for the U-curve thesis in the rise in the occupational status of migrants who have been in the Netherlands for a longer period. Further research will be needed to determine whether this trend continues.

Despite this positive development on the labour market, the way Poles perceive their situation post-migration shows the opposite trend – what might be called an inverse U-curve. Whereas their satisfaction with their income and standard of living just after migration was substantially higher than pre-migration, that satisfaction has clearly reduced 18 months later. This picture is reinforced if we look at two other indicators touched on earlier: Polish migrants felt much less at home in the Netherlands in the second interviews, and perceived discrimination had increased sharply, at both group and individual level.

The more negative view of the Netherlands is not yet strongly associated with a desire to leave the Netherlands or to return to their home country. Our study makes clear that, in addition to the flow of temporary migrants from Poland and Bulgaria, for example seasonal agricultural or horticultural workers, there is also clear evidence of settlement migration. By no means all these migrants intended to stay for a long time when they came to the Netherlands, but many of them have done so because they enjoy life in the Netherlands owing to their better income or living conditions, because they have formed a relationship in the Netherlands or because they have children going to a Dutch school. In the first survey we found substantial differences between Turkish and ethnic Bulgarians. Both were found to be in a vulnerable position in the Netherlands, but the Turkish group much more so than the ethnic Bulgarians. That position has remained roughly unchanged as regards language proficiency and labour market position. However, it is striking that the views of the ethnic Bulgarians on life in the Netherlands turned much more negative between the two surveys than those of Turkish Bulgarians. The latter are

substantially more satisfied with their lives than the ethnic Bulgarians after a lengthy stay in the Netherlands, despite them being in the most vulnerable socio-economic position.

Recent migrants from Turkey served as a control group in this report. They were asked precisely the same questions in the survey as the Polish and Bulgarian migrants. The responses show that recent migrants from Turkey have undergone the least sociocultural development. It should however be borne in mind here that the recent migrants from Turkey are a different group (more family migration) and are able to integrate with their own ethnic community more readily than migrants from Poland and Bulgaria (they know more people already in the Netherlands and the group is much larger). But where Poles and Bulgarians have improved their Dutch language proficiency, for example, this hardly applies for recent migrants from Turkey. Their focus is mainly on their own – Turkish – group. Mosque attendance increased between the two surveys, and Turkish migrants report less progressive values than in the first interview shortly after migration. This matches the findings of earlier research among established Turkish migrants in the Netherlands. This report does not explore this in any further detail, but it does appear wise to devote more attention to this. The comparison with Turkish Bulgarians is also relevant here; socio-economically, Turkish migrants from Turkey are in a better position than Turkish migrants from Bulgaria, but socioculturally Turkish Bulgarians make more progress than migrants from Turkey.

Another conclusion that can be drawn based on the analyses in this study is that highly skilled migrants have seen their socio-economic position improve more than their lower-skilled counterparts. They appear to do much better after migration, whereas lower-skilled migrants appear to remain in their vulnerable position at the bottom of the labour market. This echoes findings for other migrant groups in many earlier studies, and is an important conclusion for policy. It is no coincidence that countries such as Canada and Australia select migrants among other things on the basis of education/skill level and that the Netherlands is increasingly focusing on attracting and retaining highly skilled workers. However, the exodus of Bulgarian study migrants, in particular, is not promising in this regard. They may of course have left the Netherlands having successfully completed their studies, but they also show little inclination to take the opportunity to seek work in the Netherlands after graduating. It would seem that the Netherlands is unable to tempt them to stay. This is a focus area for policy. If the Netherlands fails to retain these migrants after having attracted them, this undermines the goal of more high-skilled migration, despite the increase in the numbers initially coming to the Netherlands. The improvements in the labour market position of the highly skilled group are not however accompanied by greater satisfaction with life in the Netherlands. On the contrary: immediately post-migration they were more satisfied with their income and standard of living than the lower-skilled, but after an extended period that satisfaction has fallen more sharply. There appears to be a parallel here with the integration paradox observed earlier for highly skilled migrants and their descendants: increasing integration in Dutch

society is accompanied by more disappointment, unmet expectations and growing feelings of not being accepted and of discrimination (see e.g. Gijsberts & Vervoort 2009).

For the present, more Bulgarians than Poles leave the Netherlands, but the negative experiences reported by Polish migrants do increase the likelihood that some of this group, with their strong focus on the Dutch labour market, will also turn their backs on the Netherlands. Poles increasingly feel subject to discrimination, both personal and at group level, have become more dissatisfied with their lives and income and feel that the Netherlands is less hospitable than when they first settled here. Half the Polish group is therefore considering returning to Poland. The picture is different among Bulgarians who came to the Netherlands as labour or family migrants. Although their optimism has also faded, those who have remained in the Netherlands meet the picture of settlement migrant more closely: a rise in the proportion wishing to stay in the Netherlands (from a third to half) and more relationship formation in the Netherlands. This latter finding appears to be a precursor of family formation and a longer stay in the Netherlands.

The labour market position of Bulgarians remains concerning. This applies especially for Bulgarian women, who were in a very weak position shortly after migration and whose labour market position has not improved. The second interviews took place while Bulgarians still needed a work permit. This does not appear to have prevented Bulgarians coming to the Netherlands (see also the first report by Gijsberts and Lubbers 2013), though the work permit requirement is likely to have made it difficult for Bulgarians doing lots of temporary jobs to find work. It appeared in the second interview that they were still regularly working in the black economy, in the cleaning sector and hospitality industry. They also reported being self-employed more often than in the first survey. The ending of the work permit requirement is likely to make it easier for Bulgarians to find (legitimate) work. It is important to continue monitoring the position of migrants from both Bulgaria, not just to see what impact the abolition of the work permit requirement will have, but also to see whether the improving labour market will help them strengthen their labour market position. Many Bulgarians appear to have a long way to go to move out of their vulnerable position in the Netherlands, and the negative perceptions of this group in Dutch society are also a hindrance – though this also applies for the Polish group. The Netherlands does not always seem to be the most hospitable country for migrants from other European countries. The perceptions of both migrant groups in the Dutch population are negative, and both Poles and Bulgarians report many negative experiences. That does nothing to improve mutual relations.