Summary

From East to West

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Summary and conclusions

Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian children in the Netherlands: parents on the social situation of their children

This report presents the findings of a survey of parents of Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian children. The study was prompted by findings of mainly qualitative research suggesting that these children face problems when growing up. Although lots of things are going well, it would seem that teenagers born in the country of origin are especially susceptible to problem behaviour. Language problems, difficulty connecting with Dutch native friends, educational difficulties and low attention from parents are some of the issues highlighted in the qualitative studies.

S.1 Survey of parents entered in the population registers

In 2015, there were 30,000 children (aged 0-18 years) of Polish origin entered in the Dutch population registers. The numbers of children of Bulgarian and Romanian origin are lower (5,300 and 4,700, respectively). To gain a clearer picture of the social situation of these children, a survey was conducted among 444 parents of Polish children, 328 parents of Bulgarian children and 436 parents of Romanian children. Respondents were asked about children aged 0-3 years, 4-11 years and 12-17 years.

This study focuses on a specific selection of the Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian population in the Netherlands (see Box S.1), namely parents (and children) who are entered in the Dutch population registers. For many of them, this is linked to the intention to remain in the Netherlands for an extended period. That intention is also evident from the fact that the children are in the Netherlands. This group of settling families is important for both Dutch policy and society.

Box S.1 Study of registered migrants

The study sample was drawn from the Municipal Personal Records Database (BRP), which means that the study relates to people who have registered with their local authority in the Netherlands. Not all EU migrants do this: only people who live in the Netherlands for more than four months are required to register; people who stay in the Netherlands for less than four months do not need to register. Many EU migrants, for example those who come to the Netherlands to do seasonal work, do not register. Research by Van der Heijden et al. (2013) shows that in 2010 an estimated 28% of Poles, 35% of Bulgarians and 12% of Romanians were entered in the personal records database. It may be assumed that the registration rate has increased since 2010, and it is likely that households with children will have registered. Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of migrants from Poland, Bulgaria and Romania are not registered, and are therefore not included in this study. It is not known how many children are excluded as a result, though it is probable that children living in the Netherlands are more likely to be registered than not.

Earlier studies have shown that registered migrants from Central and Eastern Europe have the profile of a group intending to settle, and differ in terms of characteristics such as housing and employment situation from migrants who come to the Netherlands for a short period (Dagevos 2011; Engbersen et al. 2011; Gijsberts en Lubbers 2013, 2015a; Gijsberts et al. 2015). The same picture emerges from this study: for example, the vast majority of respondents live independently, rather than in homes that are shared with other households.

S.2 Summary

Household characteristics: complete families intending to settle in the Netherlands

Most of the children in this study are growing up in a household with two parents and one or two children. 15% of Polish children live in a single-parent family, as do roughly one in ten Bulgarian and Romanian children (Table S.1). Polish and – especially – Romanian children relatively often live in mixed households (one parent from the country of origin, the other from a different country, often the Netherlands). The majority of families are 'complete': around 10% of parents report that they have children living outside the home; these also include children who have left the parental home or who live with a different parent because of a separation or divorce.

Fathers generally have moved to the Netherlands before their partner. As children often come to the Netherlands with their mother, some of them have spent a period growing up without one of their parents. Not all children are first-generation migrants; half the children in this study were born in the Netherlands. This is particularly true of the youngest age group (0-3 years), nine out of ten of whom were born in the Netherlands. The situation reverses for those aged 12-17 years; here, roughly nine out of ten were born in the country of origin. Young children (0-3 years) who were not born in the Netherlands have by definition only been in the Netherlands for a short period. A large majority of young people aged 12-17 years have lived in the Netherlands for nine years or longer. A high proportion of the children in this study were either born in the Netherlands or have lived here for a substantial part of their lives.

Polish and Bulgarian men generally come to the Netherlands for work, and this also applies for around half the Polish women. The Romanian parents in this survey relatively often moved to the Netherlands for study or other reasons. The image of a group intending to settle is clearly reflected in the length of time that parents envisage staying in the Netherlands, with around eight out of ten thinking they will still be living here in five years' time.

Most parents of Bulgarian children have a lower or intermediate education level. A quarter of households have no income from employment. Those Bulgarian households which do earn an income from employment contain a high proportion of single earners and a relatively large number of self-employed workers. Fathers often work full-time or more. Mothers work less often, but when they do work they are often in (small and large) part-time jobs. Of the three migrant groups in this study, Bulgarian households have the lowest disposable household income.

Parents of Romanian children often have a higher education background. Nonetheless, a substantial proportion of these households have no income from employment. As with the Bulgarian group, single-earner households in which the man works are relatively common. Again similarly to the Bulgarian group, Romanian mothers who work are in (small and large) part-time jobs. The average disposable household income is comparable to that of Polish households.

Polish households are characterised by their high labour participation rate: around 90% of households have an income from employment, and often both partners work. Women are generally employed in large part-time jobs, while fathers work full-time (or more). Their household income is at the same level as Romanian households, whereas they are more often double-earner households and work longer hours. It is likely that their hourly pay rates are lower.

Table S.1

Some household characteristics, by origin of child, 2015 (in percentages[a])

	Polish	Bulgarian	Romanian
household composition			
single parent	15	12	9
couple with same country of origin	61	68	41
couple: one parent from the Netherlands	16	8	34
couple: one parent from a different country	8	12	16
migration characteristics			
migration motive = work (men)	90	80	61
migration motive = work (women)	49	39	19
lived in NL before partner (men)	76	67	47
thinks will still be in NL in 5 years' time	80	77	79
socio-economic characteristics			
higher education mother	30	22	55
higher education father	19	12	45
double-earner household	50	23	39
no paid employment in household	9	25	17
disposable household income	17,900	11,400	17,400
no independent housing	5	5	4

a Except for the standardised disposable household income, which is in euros.

Source: SCP/CBS (KML'15)

There are clear differences in parental education levels, labour participation rate and income between households of Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian children. However, there are also a number of important similarities. Most families are complete (parents and children living together), most households are intending to stay for an extended period and

most live independently. The fact that this study focuses on a select group of migrants who are entered in the population registers will play a role here. This also gives rise to a different picture from the image that often prevails about migrants, characterised by lots of back-and-forth migration, incomplete families and poor housing conditions in shared homes and on caravan and chalet sites. We know from other research that these are often seasonal migrants, many of whom do not register with the local authority (Engbersen et al. 2011; Van der Heijden et al. 2013). The group of registered migrants in this study are more or less settled, and this reduces the risk factors for the social situation of the children.
It is striking that Dutch is often spoken in these households: this is often or always the case in half the households with Romanian children, and is related to the frequent occurrence of mixed-origin couples. Roughly a third of households with Polish and Bulgarian children always or often speak Dutch. The fact that the majority of households live independently also means that almost all children (nine out of ten) have their own room where they can do their homework. Children living in the – small – group of households that do not live independently less often have their own room.

Parents satisfied with parenting

Parents are very satisfied with the parenting of their children. Virtually all parents are happy with their children and feel their children listen to them. The majority of parents also report that they have a very good idea of what their child gets up to. Around one in six parents have concerns about their parenting. Parental satisfaction is lower when the children are older, with feelings of uncertainty and worries about parenting more common among parents of teenagers than those with younger children. These parents do not appear to differ from native Dutch parents in this regard.

Informal support and advice often provided by family; most are satisfied with it

Parents of Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian children prefer to receive informal support in bringing up their child, though relatives and friends do not always live nearby, or else those willing to provide support lack knowledge about Dutch rules and customs. Some four out of ten parents seek help from family members and around a quarter turn to friends and acquaintances. As well as informal channels, parents also use formal support, especially those in the Romanian group. Parents of the youngest children (0-3 years, mostly second generation) seek more parenting support, both informal and formal, the latter mostly from Youth and Family Support Centres (CJGs) and child healthcare centres. This formal support is used more often by families with a parent born in the Netherlands. The satisfaction with the support offered (formal and informal) is fairly high: only one in ten consider it inadequate, partly due to perceived language problems or insufficient knowledge and information about who people can go to for help.

Infrequent use of formal childcare; costs appear to play a subordinate role

Day nurseries and pre-school playgroups are commonly used forms of paid care for young children in the Netherlands. A number of playgroups run special pre-school and early-school education programmes aimed at preventing educational disadvantage in vulnerable groups of children. Later, when the children go to primary school, they are eligible for out-of-school care. Other forms of paid care are childminders and paying family, friends or acquaintances to look after the children. Parents of Bulgarian children, in particular, make little use of these forms of paid childcare. Just under half of Polish and Romanian children go to a pre-school playgroup; substantially fewer Bulgarian children do this.

The main reason for parents not using paid childcare is that they do not consider it necessary because there is a parent at home; parents of Polish children cite this reason less often. Family and friends also look after the children. The costs are cited by a fifth of parents of Polish and Romanian children as a reason for not using paid childcare; parents of Bulgarian children give this reason less often. A small number of parents report that they do not use paid childcare because the children are able to stay at home on their own; in almost all cases, these children are at least 10 years old. Elsewhere in the questionnaire, parents (including those who do use paid childcare) report that older siblings look after a younger child, but this is also a form of childcare that is barely used. Looking after younger brothers or sisters is however a regular task for children in the family, but this entails much more than simply minding them (e.g. collecting them from school, taking them to bed and feeding them). The observation by professionals and experts that children of Central and Eastern European migrants are often left at home alone at an early age is thus not confirmed by the parents in this study. The socio-economic composition of the household also plays a role: double-earners make most use of paid childcare.

Family networks are important in the care of children; as we have just noted, this is a reason for not using paid childcare. Unpaid childcare is provided in the majority of cases by relatives (around 80% – excluding the parents). This illustrates that these parents of Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian children are firmly embedded in existing family networks in the Netherlands.

Majority of parents feel that children have a good command of Dutch, but also report problems

In this survey, children's command of Dutch was measured based on the opinion of their parents. Clearly, this is a fairly general measurement. According to parents, the majority of children aged 4-11 years and 12-17 years never have difficulty with the Dutch language. Yet there is also a relatively high proportion of parents who report that their children (sometimes) have problems with language. Just under half the parents of Polish and Bulgarian children in the 4-11 age group report this, and a third of parents of Romanian children. Almost a quarter of parents of Polish children aged 12-17 years are less positive about their children's command of Dutch, and the same applies for around a third of the two other groups.

School and ties with the country of origin

Virtually all the children aged 4-17 years are currently following education in the Netherlands. The occasional child that is not doing so has either completed their education or has

(thus far) never been to school in the Netherlands. Although the first-generation children have often lived in the Netherlands for a long time, most of the 12-17 year-olds went to school in their country of origin. Around a third of Polish and Romanian 12-17 year-olds and just under two-fifths of Bulgarian children in this age group who were not born in the Netherlands went to school for at least five years in the country of origin.
The ties with the country of origin are strong, as evidenced by the high proportion of children who have visited their country of origin in the past twelve months, often for holidays and family visits (this applies for around three-quarters, but for Polish children more often than the other two groups). Something that is mentioned much less often, but is still worth noting, is that Polish children also go to Poland for medical care (4% of parents cite this as a motive for going to the country of origin). Most visits take place during the school holidays, but 17% of parents of Polish children aged four years and older have also been to Poland outside the school holiday periods. This is much less common in the other two groups.

Many children enjoy going to school

The vast majority of parents think their children are doing well at school (Table S.2). Around nine out of ten children enjoy going to school according to their parents. Although older children are less enthusiastic, this is something that applies for all children, including Dutch natives. A small proportion of children are doing less well at school according to their parents, either because they feel excluded due to their origin or because they are bullied at school. There are no differences between the migrant groups on this point.

Table S.2
Parents' views on how their child (4-17 years) is performing at school, by origin of child, 2015 (in percentages agree/agree completely)

	Polish	Bulgarian	Romanian
enjoys going to school	90	92	94
feels excluded due to origin	6	7	10
is bullied at school	5	4	4
never plays truant	82	87	95
thinks it is important to get good marks	85	91	88

Source: SCP/CBS (KML'15)

It is uncertain whether parents have a clear idea of how often their children play truant, but if we compare the three groups with each other, Polish children play truant more often according to their parents than children from the other two groups. Truancy is an indication of problems, and according to the parents it appears that these problems are indeed present: children who play truant and/or are late for school in the morning are more often children who do not enjoy going to school, do not get on well at school, do not consider it important to get good marks and/or are bullied at school.

High confidence in education

The majority of parents have great confidence in the quality of their children's education. This applies more for primary school than secondary school. Parents of Bulgarian children are more remote from their children's school than the other parents (less often able to assess the quality of secondary education). The majority of parents also believe that they would be able to talk to the school if problems should occur. This applies slightly less for the Polish group than for the other groups. Parents are more involved with their children's primary school than with the secondary school, parents of younger children are more involved than parents of older children, and highly educated parents are more involved than lower-educated parents. That is no different than native Dutch parents.

Lots of friends, but fewer club memberships

Parents have a positive impression of their children's social contacts at school (Table S.3). Most parents observe that their children have lots of friends at school. The proportion of children with no friends outside school is slightly higher (approximately 8%), but here again the dominant picture is one of a wide social network. There are hardly any children who associate only with children from the same country of origin; their social contacts are often mixed or predominantly native Dutch. Bulgarian children least often have friends who are predominantly Dutch natives.

Table S.3

Share of children (4-17 years) who according to their parents have lots of friends at school and outside school, and the ethnic background of those friends, by origin of child, 2015 (in percentages)

	Polish	Bulgarian	Romanian
lots of friends at school	61	57	51
lots of friends outside school	41	42	36
ethnic background of friends			
mainly native Dutch	43	25	52
mainly from country of origin	4	6	1
various backgrounds	54	69	47

Source: SCP/CBS (KML'15)

Just over half the Bulgarian and Romanian children aged 4-17 years are members of a sports club; that is a smaller proportion than among Dutch native schoolchildren (three-quarters). Polish children are less often members (four out of ten) than children from the other two Central and Eastern European population groups. The reason given for this by parents of Polish children relatively often is that their children do not enjoy the sports club. The high costs are also cited. A quarter of children aged 12-17 years from the three migrant groups have not had swimming lessons (by way of comparison, only 5% of native Dutch children of the same age do not have a swimming certificate). Children in households where one parent was born in the Netherlands are more often members of a sports club and have (had) swimming lessons more often than children in households where both parents are migrants.

Children feel happy in the Netherlands

Parents are generally very positive regarding the well-being of their children (Table S.4). On a scale from 0 ('worst life that my child can imagine') to 10 ('best life that my child can imagine), parents award a score of around 8.5. A very small proportion of parents (less than 5% in all three groups) give a score of 5 or less. The vast majority of parents thus believe that their children have a pleasant life. The ratings are of the same order as those given by (native) Dutch children and teenagers in the Netherlands themselves. Just over 10% of children feel homesick, and a smaller proportion would like to live in their country of origin according to their parents.

Table S.4

Well-being of children (0-17 years) according to their parents, and share of children (4-17 years) who according to their parents feel at home in the Netherlands, by origin of child, 2015 (in rating scores and percentages agree/agree completely)

	Polish	Bulgarian	Romanian
well-being score	8.4	8.6	8.9
feels at home in the Netherlands	88	88	93
often feels homesick	13	11	11
would like to live in country of origin	8	8	7

Source: SCP/CBS (KML'15)

Children who were born in the Netherlands more often feel at home there than children who have migrated to the Netherlands. Children in households where both parents have a higher education background feel less at home in the Netherlands. We may be dealing here with a variant of the 'integration paradox', where highly educated migrants are more gloomy about the social opportunities of migrant groups and more often feel subject to discrimination.

Children in good health, though more often overweight

The health status of the majority of children is good to excellent according to their parents (Table S.5). Despite this, parents of around one in twelve children report that their child has a long-term illness or disability. That is in line with earlier research among parents of all children in the Netherlands. Approximately one in twenty children are compromised in their daily lives by their illness or disability.

Table S.5
Health (0-17 years) and Body Mass Index (2-17 years) of children according to their parents, by origin of child, 2015 (in percentages)

	Polish	Bulgarian	Romanian
health			
general health good/excellent	95	96	97
long-term illness or disability	10	7	7
compromised by illness/disability	8	4	6
Body Mass Index			
BMI overweight (including obesity)	20	24	15
BMI obesity	5	5	6

Source: SCP/CBS (KML'15)

Based on information provided by their parents, just over a fifth of the Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian children are overweight according to the BMI criteria. That is roughly one and a half times higher than the figure for native Dutch children. Children of highly educated parents and children who were born in the Netherlands (around a sixth), are less often (seriously) overweight than their peers with lower-educated parents or who were born in the country of origin (just under a quarter in both cases).

Mental health problems no more frequent than among native Dutch children

The survey collected information on various mental health problems or – for young children – possible symptoms of problems. Taken as a whole, parents take a positive view of the behaviour of their babies and toddlers, and do not differ in their opinions from native Dutch parents. Around one in eleven parents, for example, report that their child cries (or cried) a lot; that is comparable with what native Dutch parents report. There are also no indications that young children (0-3 years) of Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian origin are often gloomy. Most children are able to play readily with other children, and here again there is no difference compared with native Dutch children. More than half the young children can concentrate on an activity for a long period; this is something with which native Dutch children have more difficulty.

Among 4-17 year-olds, the differences in mental health problems compared with native Dutch children are also relatively small, and these problems are by no means always worse in Polish, Bulgarian or Romanian children (Table S.6). The percentage of emotional and behavioural problems reported by parents is of the same order, and there are also no differences between the three migrant groups on this point, though Bulgarian children do more often appear to have problems connecting with children in their own age group. Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian children less often display hyperactive behaviour (noisy, lacking in concentration) than native Dutch children. Parents of toddlers also report that their children are able to concentrate on an activity for a relatively long period.

Table S.6

Mental health problems of children (4-17 years, SDQ[a]) in the last six months according to parents, by origin of child, 2015 (in percentages)

	Polish	Bulgarian	Romanian
emotional problems	11	11	11
behavioural problems	11	12	14
hyperactive behaviour	3	3	7
problems with peers	15	25	16
total problems[b]	14	13	13

a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman et al. 2000b).

b ‘Total problems’ is based on the sum of the four problem scales (emotional problems, behavioural problems, hyperactivity and problems with peers).

Source: SCP/CBS (KML’15)

Access to social and other media (4-17 years)

According to their parents, a large majority of children in the study have good access to communication resources such as a PC/laptop, tablet and mobile phone. Bulgarian children have less access to a PC/laptop than children in the other two groups, while Romanian children less often have a mobile phone. Roughly one in ten children are avid gamers (more than three hours per day) according to their parents. The percentage of older children (12-17 years) who spend an excessive amount of time playing games or who are active on social media is higher, but does not appear to be any higher than among the native Dutch peers.

Smoking, drinking and using cannabis (12-17 year-olds)

According to their parents, Polish children have much more often smoked and used cannabis than Romanian youngsters: 20% versus 10%, according to their parents’ reports. Just over a third of parents say their children have occasionally drunk alcohol. There are no differences on this point between the three migrant groups. Based on reports by the parents of Central and Eastern European children, around a quarter of youngsters who sometimes consume (or have consumed) alcohol drink to excess (five or more alcoholic drinks in one session).

The true percentage of children who have at some time smoked, used cannabis and/or drunk alcohol is probably higher, because parents have only a limited oversight of their children’s behaviour. For want of a better method, if we compare the use of these substances according to parents’ reports with the self-report by Dutch youngsters, a number of points stand out. (A comparison using parental data from the HBSC (Health Behaviour in School-aged Children) study, held mainly among native Dutch schoolchildren, is also difficult, because these parents are a selective group, i.e. parents of ‘better-behaved’ children). The share of Polish children who smoke according to their parents is comparable with what native Dutch school pupils themselves report. Assuming that the parental reports are an underestimate, this suggests that the percentage of Polish youngsters who smoke is higher than among their native Dutch peers. As half of Dutch native schoolchildren say they have consumed alcohol at some point, the consumption reported by parents of Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian children (just over a third) is also likely to be an underestimate.

Parents use medical facilities in the Netherlands as well as in the country of origin

Like native Dutch parents, the majority of parents of young Bulgarian and Romanian children (0-3 years) visit child healthcare centres. Parents of children with a Polish background do this slightly less, possibly because they have their children vaccinated in the country of origin and also use other medical services there.

Over three-quarters of all parents say their child has visited a doctor in the Netherlands in the past year. Just over one in ten children have visited a doctor in the country of origin in the past year; there is no difference here between the migrant groups. Children who have visited a doctor in the country of origin have usually also seen a doctor in the Netherlands; it is uncommon for them to have visited a doctor only in the country of origin. Almost one in five children have had no contact with a doctor in the past year, either in the Netherlands or in another country.

Around eight out of ten parents say their child has visited a dentist in the Netherlands in the past year. One in eight Polish children visited a dentist (only or additionally) in their country of origin; the figure in the other two groups is slightly lower. Finally, roughly one in eight children have not visited a dentist in the past year, either in the Netherlands or in another country.

Virtually all children have medical insurance in the Netherlands (sometimes in addition to the country of origin). The percentage of children who are only insured in the country of origin is very small.

S.3 Conclusions

Positive picture according to parents

According to their parents, the majority of children with a Bulgarian, Romanian or Polish background who are entered in the Dutch population registers are doing well. The vast majority of parents say they are satisfied with the way their children are growing up and believe they have a good relationship with them. Children with a Polish, Bulgarian or Romanian background feel at home in the Netherlands, have lots of friends and enjoy going to school. When asked to give a rating out of 10, parents from the three migrant groups give an average of 8.5. Most of the children are also in good health; long-term illnesses or disabilities appear to be no more prevalent than among native Dutch children, and the same applies for problem behaviour – in fact, hyperactive behaviour actually appears to be less common among children of Central and Eastern European origin than native Dutch children. According to their parents, a minority of children have at some time smoked (roughly one in seven), drunk alcohol (one in three) or used cannabis (one in 25).

No indications of non-use or inaccessibility of services

Information was also gathered in this study on the use and appreciation of facilities such as school, childcare and medical provisions. Here again, the picture is a predominantly positive one. The exception is the limited use of paid childcare, especially pre-school playgroups. Parents are satisfied with the available parenting support and advice According to their own reports, they have lots of contact with their children's school, have great confidence in their education and feel they would be able to engage in dialogue with the school in the event of problems. Parents are familiar with child healthcare centres and are generally able to find a doctor in the Netherlands. These findings therefore do not suggest high rates of non-use or inaccessibility of these facilities. A further indication of this is that parents make limited use of medical facilities in the country of origin. The fact that virtually all children in this study have medical insurance in the Netherlands further supports the finding that parents have no difficulty accessing facilities in the Netherlands.

Set against this positive picture is the view of professionals and experts that parents are difficult to reach, partly because of language problems. However, it is unclear whether these are the same groups of parents (see §S.4).

A few caveats to the positive picture

Despite the rosy picture painted here, there are some areas and some groups were things are not always going as well. For example, children from Central and Eastern Europe are one and a half times more likely to be overweight than (native) Dutch children. Moreover, overweight is more common in families with low-educated parents and first-generation children. A substantial proportion of children also have difficulties with the Dutch language.

We also see an increase in unhealthy behaviours and a reduction in well-being in older children in all three migrant groups; teenagers drink, smoke and use more cannabis. Parents have less sight of the behaviour of older children and worry about them more. On the other hand, the latter situation is no different for native Dutch children.

Polish children do less well in a number of areas than the Bulgarian and, especially, the Romanian children, though the differences are not very large in most cases. The youngest children do not listen to their parents quite so diligently, and teenagers smoke and use cannabis more. The parents of Polish children are also slightly less often involved with their child's school, while Polish children play truant more often and more often visit the country of origin outside school holidays. Polish children also less often visit child healthcare centres and doctors in the Netherlands, and more often use medical facilities in the country of origin (to see a dentist and probably also for vaccinations).

According to their parents, Bulgarian children find it relatively difficult to connect with peers and less often have a circle of friends consisting predominantly of native Dutch children. Bulgarian children live in families that are in the least favourable socio-economic position of the three groups studied here.

Future of children appears positive, but needs monitoring

Many of the parents who took part in this study have a partner who was born in the Netherlands. Many parents have a high education level and half the children, especially the youngest, were born in the Netherlands. Their parents report few if any problems concerning these children, especially parents of Romanian children. These groups of children are likely to become well established in the Netherlands.

Children who moved to the Netherlands at an older age and children whose parents are both from the country of origin are in a less favourable socio-economic position and do less well in a number of areas than the groups referred to above. It remains to be seen whether they are all able to find their place in the Netherlands without problems.

The same can be said about children who will move to the Netherlands in the near future. Although the parents who took part in this study do not appear to be overly concerned about their children, including first-generation teenagers, and report problems to only a limited extent, we believe it is advisable to monitor the situation. Professionals and experts continue to refer to the greater risks for this group of children, as for example in a recent letter to the NRC newspaper (2016). Particularly where there is an accumulation of risk factors, they see an increased risk of problem behaviour.

S.4 Limitations of this study and suggestions for new research

A detailed study of registered and unregistered parents would have produced a broad picture of the social situation of their children. The funds needed to commission such a study were however not available. There are also restrictions in approaching young children for surveys. For these reasons, the study was carried out only among registered migrants and it was decided only to survey the parents. As a consequence, the study does not provide a total picture. Rather, it paints a picture of a specific group due to the selection of registered parents, the fact that information was collected via parents and the fact that the survey was conducted largely online (which it is known more often attracts responses from registered migrants).

Findings of exploratory studies and this study

Broadly speaking, this study presents a fairly positive picture, which appears to contrast with the more worrying findings of qualitative and exploratory studies. We do not believe that these findings are contradictory: the design and perspective chosen lead to different outcomes, which can stand alongside each other. The qualitative studies are often based on interviews with professionals, whose role means they come into contact with problem behaviour. It would seem that many of the problems highlighted by professionals (e.g. due to long working hours, poor housing conditions, frequent back-and-forth migration and incomplete families) relate to circular migrants (e.g. seasonal workers), who are often not entered in the population registers.

Our survey is based on the perspective of parents, who will be more inclined to give positive responses and who probably do not see everything that their children do. Here again, however, a number of concerns emerge (not exclusively though more often involving teenagers). A key conclusion to emerge from this study is that, after settlement, children enter calmer waters and most of them then do relatively well.

This and other studies add further pieces to the puzzle, but there is more to do. Surveying children themselves directly, the ability to make systematic comparisons with other population groups and the further development of an integrated research design for use among EU migrants are the main ambitions. We will look at each of these points briefly below.

Obtaining information from children themselves

A good deal of information has now been collected about children from various relevant actors (experts, professionals and parents), but thus far not from children themselves. While it is not really feasible to survey (very) young children directly, in this study we would have liked to put our questions directly to older children. Unfortunately, the available budget did not permit this. Collecting information via the parents has probably given the picture a positive slant, since parents are not always aware of problematic behaviour by their children, such as playing truant or excessive drinking. Supplementary information from the children themselves would therefore be extremely valuable.

Comparison with other groups

To obtain clarity about how far the situation of children of Central and Eastern European origin differs from or corresponds with that of children from other migrant groups or native Dutch children, it is important to include those groups as control groups. That too was not possible in our study due to the available budget, and it was therefore decided to align as far as possible with the findings of earlier research. That was partially successful. However, in order to determine the relative position of Central and Eastern European children, the inclusion of control groups in a future research design is highly desirable.

Better study design for research among EU migrants

Since a proportion of EU migrants do not register with the local authority, carrying out a study of this group is not a simple undertaking. In a joint memorandum, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), Utrecht University (UU) and Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) called for the development of a research strategy which would enable quantitative statements to be made about the entire group, including those not entered in the population registers (Gijsberts et al. 2015). To make this possible, it would be necessary to assess to what extent Respondent Driven Sampling[1] and employee data could be used to obtain a picture of unregistered migrants. We would therefore advocate that a follow-up study be designed in a way that includes the entire group of EU migrants.

Note

[1] Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) is a sophisticated form of snowball sampling (Heckathorn 1997). Research populations that are difficult to find or to select (hidden populations, such as unregistered migrants) are approached through controlled selection of respondents via respondents themselves. For example, respondent A recruits three other respondents from the target group; in our case they would be three unregistered migrants from Poland, Bulgaria or Romania. After successful participation in the

survey, respondents B, C and D are in turn each asked to recruit three further respondents from their network. The design and response must meet certain conditions, which are not always easy to achieve (e.g. adequate distribution across the different subgroups (Heckathorn et al. 2002)), but the RDS approach is seen as a usable method for studying hard to reach or very small groups in a way that is methodologically sound. It is however a fairly expensive method, in terms of both time and money. The costs could be reduced by replacing face-to-face interviews with online surveys, but that introduces problems of its own.