

Before your asylum procedure begins

Why have you been given this leaflet?

You wish to apply for asylum in the Netherlands. The asylum procedure does not start immediately on your arrival in the Netherlands. You are given time to rest from your journey and to prepare for the General Asylum Procedure. You are also expected to do a number of things: you have at least six days to carry them out.

The leaflet explains to you what happens before the asylum procedure begins, one step at a time.

Step 1: reporting and registering

You report to the application centre in Ter Apel. Officers of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) will record your personal details. And you will fill in a questionnaire, on paper or on the computer. Then you go to the Vreemdelingenpolitie [Aliens Police] in Ter Apel or in another place.



The Vreemdelingenpolitie (Aliens Police, Aliens Police Department, Identification and People Trafficking) (AVIM) is part of the Dutch national police force and is responsible for monitoring foreign nationals in the Netherlands.

They will also examine your clothing and luggage as well as taking photos of you and recording your fingerprints. You will also be given a leaflet explaining why your fingerprints are needed. Officers of the Aliens Police can also ask you questions about your journey, and whether you have applied for asylum in the past, either here or elsewhere in Europe and they will ask you whether you have any family members here or elsewhere in Europe.

Do you have any documents with which you can prove your identity, such as a passport, ID card, birth certificate or a driving licence? Or do you have any documents that can provide evidence of the journey you have taken or the reasons why you are applying for asylum, such as plane tickets, a boarding pass, diplomas, a judgment from the court or a newspaper article? Submit these documents when you register or try to get these documents before your asylum procedure begins. A staff member of the Dutch Council for Refugees can help you with this.



The VluchtelingenWerk Nederland (Dutch Council for Refugees) is an independent human rights organisation, whose aim is to protect the rights of asylum seekers. The Dutch Council for Refugees can give you information and explain the asylum procedure to you, and is there in person to inform and support you as you pass through the asylum procedure; it can also help you if there are any problems with other organisations. It works in close cooperation with your lawyer. The Dutch Council for Refugees takes no part in the decision about your asylum application.

Your documents will be examined by experts to verify their authenticity. The Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) (IND) uses these documents when it assesses your asylum application.

Please note: Your personal details and your documents are important when your asylum application is being assessed. Keep nothing back and check whether the details have been noted fully and correctly. Never discard any personal documents. The Dutch government will never tell the authorities in your country of origin that you have applied for asylum in the Netherlands.

Step 2: tuberculosis screening

Tuberculosis is a serious disease that is common in many parts of the world, possibly also in the country where you have come from. People with 'open' TB can infect others, by coughing or sneezing, for instance. For this reason, you will be screened in Ter Apel when you report there. Tuberculosis is an infectious disease that usually affects the lungs. Therefore, the screening consists of an X-ray of your chest. If you are shown to have TB, you will be given a course of medication as treatment in the Netherlands. The asylum procedure will only begin after the medical treatment has started.

Step 3: registration interview

During the registration interview, the IND usually only asks you questions about your identity and origin. Sometimes they will ask



Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst
Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie

The Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) (IND) is part of the Ministerie van Justitie (Dutch Ministry of Justice). The members of staff at IND will conduct interviews with you about your identity, nationality, your journey to the Netherlands and the reasons why you left your own country. They will consider your personal story and the situation in your country of origin. They will then decide whether you can stay in the Netherlands – sometimes for a temporary period – or whether you must return to your own country or be transferred to another European country.

you extra questions, possibly because you come from a certain country of origin. During this interview, no questions will be asked about the reasons why you have fled to the Netherlands.

Step 4: reception

You will be provided with accommodation, meals and medical care in the Netherlands from the moment you have registered with the Aliens Police. Your reporting, registration and the TB screening will not take longer than three days at the most. The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) has a reception centre close to the Aliens Police office in Ter Apel. This is where you will be accommodated.

After your reporting, registering and registration interview with the IND, you will be taken to another reception centre run by the Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) (COA). This asylum seekers centre will be close to the office of the Immigration and Naturalisation Service where your asylum application will be dealt with.



COA Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers

The Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) (COA) is responsible for the reception and guidance of asylum seekers in the Netherlands. COA makes sure that you are provided with a place to stay, meals and healthcare insurance. If you need help to contact a doctor, the COA can help you. The COA is an independent organisation and does not decide on your asylum application.

When you are staying at a COA reception centre, you will be sent an invitation to have a medical intake interview at the health centre. This interview will be about your health and any medical problems you may have: its aim is to ensure that you are given appropriate medical care during your stay at a COA reception centre.



GezondheidsZorg Asielzoekers (GZA) (Healthcare for Asylum Seekers) is the healthcare organisation that can help you if you are ill or if you have any questions concerning your health. There is a GZA health centre at or near every COA reception centre. GZA can arrange an appointment with a doctor's assistant, nurse, mental health primary care assistant practitioner or a doctor. They have a 24-hour helpline, the *Praktijklijn*, which you can call if you have any medical questions: 088 112 21 12. You can also call this number for other medical questions from Monday to Friday, for example if you need a referral to a specialist.

Step 5: information

At the COA reception centre you can rest from your journey to the Netherlands. And you can also prepare for the General Asylum Procedure. In certain situations, the RVT may be cancelled or ended and you will be taken up in the General Asylum Procedure right away. At the reception centre, the Dutch Council for Refugees will inform you about the asylum procedure and the medical report (see below). An interpreter will also be available during this meeting to translate everything said between you and the person from the Dutch Council for Refugees. You will also be given a leaflet that tells you what will happen during the course of your asylum procedure. Staff at the Dutch Council of Refugees will also assist you and support you during the asylum procedure. The services of the Dutch Council of Refugees are given free of charge. Your information will be treated confidentially.



At the reception centre, you will have an appointment with a nurse from the Forensisch Medische Maatschappij Utrecht (Utrecht Forensic Medical Service) (FMMU). This nurse will ask you if you are willing to undergo a medical examination. The aim of this examination is to ascertain whether you have any mental or physical problems that could affect your interviews with the IND.

Step 6: medical report

The nurse will ask you a number of questions during the medical examination. An interpreter will also be on hand during this appointment to translate everything said between you and the nurse. Very often this is done via the telephone: the interpreter is not present in person. When necessary, the nurse will refer you to a doctor for a further examination. The nurse or the doctor will pass the results of the examination on to the IND. But only with your consent. The IND will take your state of health into consideration during the asylum procedure.

It is important that you are honest about any mental and physical problems you may have and that you tell the nurse or the doctor about them. It is also important that you tell the nurse of any scars you may have. The report of the medical examination is confidential. The medical examination is not compulsory. You do not have to pay for the medical examination.

Tell the nurse if you do not want to have the medical examination. In that case, the IND will not be able to take your state of health into consideration during the asylum procedure. This medical report is separate from the medical care that is available to you when you stay at the COA asylum seekers centre.

Step 7: help from a lawyer

A lawyer will assist you during your asylum procedure. This lawyer works independently of the Dutch government. You don't need to look for a lawyer yourself: you will receive an invitation for an appointment with your lawyer from the Raad voor Rechtsbijstand (Legal Aid Board). The Legal Aid Board makes sure that you are assigned a lawyer in good time because the time limits of the asylum procedure are so strict. If a lawyer is already assisting you, mention this during the registration interview.

Raad voor Rechtsbijstand *legal aid*

The Raad voor Rechtsbijstand (Legal Aid Board) makes sure that you get the help of a lawyer if you can't pay for one yourself. The lawyer is an independent legal assistance counsellor who is there to assist you during your asylum procedure and is not employed by the Legal Aid Board. The lawyer will receive payment from the Legal Aid Board for helping you.

Make sure that you check whether you have mail every day. The first meeting with your lawyer is very important for your asylum procedure: be sure to be there. In this meeting, the lawyer will prepare you for the interviews with the IND. The lawyer will hold this preparatory meeting with you at his office. You will be given a map and directions on how to find the lawyer's office, plus a train or bus ticket to get there. An interpreter will also be available during this appointment to translate everything said between you and your lawyer. You do not have to pay for your lawyer's assistance. Your information will be treated confidentially.

The asylum procedure

After you have reported to the Aliens Police, it takes at least six days before you have the first interview with the IND. In reality, it can also take slightly longer. While you are at the COA's reception centre, you will receive a letter from the IND inviting you to this first interview. You will also receive further information about the asylum procedure from the Dutch Council for Refugees within a few days (see Step 5).

Withdrawing your application

You can withdraw your application any time you wish. If you decide to do so, it is advisable to contact IND directly or your lawyer. One consequence of withdrawing your application from the IND is that you will no longer be entitled to stay in the Netherlands, unless you are allowed to stay for other reasons. Nor will you be entitled to accommodation and related facilities. Are you withdrawing your application? Then an entry ban may possibly be imposed on you. This ban applies in most European countries and you may no longer enter these countries. Nor may you live there. It is possible to apply for asylum once more after you have withdrawn your application for asylum.

Processing your personal data

Personal data is all kinds of information about you. The organisations that have cooperated in this leaflet are listed below. These organisations handle personal data during the processing of your application, notification or request. They ask you for your details and also ask other organisations or people for these, if necessary. These organisations use and store your details and pass them on to other organisations if that is required by law. The privacy legislation contains obligations for organisations that process your data. For example, they must handle your data safely and with due care. The privacy laws also set out your rights, for example:

- to consult the data held by organisations;
 - to know what the organisations do with your data and why;
 - to know to which organisations your data has been passed on.
- Do you want to know more about the processing of your personal data and your rights? Check the websites of the organisations. You can find the web addresses below.

Do you still have a question after reading this information leaflet?

You can put these questions to your lawyer or to one of the members of staff of the COA, IND or the Dutch Council for Refugees.

Do you have a complaint?

All the organisations that are involved in the asylum procedure work professionally and carefully, but you can put in a complaint, if you feel that you haven't been treated properly by one of the organisations. Your lawyer or someone from the Dutch Council for Refugees can help you with this.

This publication is a joint production of:

The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers | www.coa.nl
The Repatriation and Departure Service | www.dienstterugkeerenvertrek.nl
The Immigration and Naturalisation Service | www.ind.nl
The Legal Aid Board | www.rvr.org
The Dutch Council for Refugees | www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl

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