

## Changes in Dutch residence permit application procedures 23/10/2007

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**The Dutch immigration service (IND) is gradually taking over the intake of the new residence permit applications. Immigration expert Patrick Rovers explains the new procedures and the IND's involvement.**

*"We are a family from Belarus and have been living in the Netherlands for three years now. One of our cousins will come to the Netherlands in the spring of 2008. What is the news on the special EU residence card? Is it true that it will be implemented soon? What will be our cousin's chances? Can you inform us on the new procedures for Dutch residence permit applications? Is it true that applications will only be possible through special IND offices? We applied through the local municipality. It was easy, service-minded and quick. Why is the IND getting involved? The municipality was doing such a good job'."*

### **Patrick Rovers replies:**

The autumn in the Netherlands is usually a hectic period. Following a long summer – during which the Tweede Kamer was on recess and most of the civil servants were on holiday – usually a genuine avalanche of new rules, procedures and regulations hits, and this year is no exception.

It is correct that the Dutch immigration service (IND) is gradually taking over the intake of the new residence permit applications. Only a couple of years ago the Dutch municipalities ('gemeenten', currently 433 in total) were made responsible for the intake of new residence permit applications.

These municipalities subsequently submitted these applications at the competent IND offices. This procedure was not applicable to knowledge migrants, asylum seekers and the regular extensions.

A lot of financial resources and time were invested in making sure that the municipalities were able to do a proper job. The unique selling point for foreigners was that they could apply for new residence permits through their local municipality and register locally as new arrivals all in one go. An efficient service for people from abroad who already have enough on their minds dealing with the busy process of relocating.

In September, the transfer of the municipalities' intake duties to regional IND offices started to be phased in. The transfer is expected to be completed in November 2007. IND offices in Zwolle, Utrecht, Rijswijk, Den Haag, Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Den Bosch,

Amsterdam and Hoofddorp will be exclusively competent with regard to new residence permit applications and the subsequent issuance of new residence permits.

However, it is hard to find a realistic justification for this transfer business. A foreigner will have to visit the IND and the local municipality separately: the IND for application and actual issuance, the municipality for local registration. Let's say a family from Canada decides to move to Groningen. The family can apply at the competent IND office in Zwolle (more than 45 kilometres away), register at the local Groningen municipality, and after a while go to Zwolle again for residence permit issuance. Where is the surplus value?

With regard to the EU residence permit, the so-called 'blue card' for knowledge migrants: it is expected that the European Commission will present a proposal in the second half of October. The biggest problem for the European Commission is to come up with a suitable definition for knowledge migrants which will be acceptable to all member states of the European Union. The Parliamentary Undersecretary of Justice, Ms Albayrak, recently informed the Tweede Kamer that the cabinet is looking forward to find out more about the European Commission's exact plans. An understatement or not: it is interesting to find that the Netherlands may have to endure another 'invasion' from Brussels, an invasion that combines labour market and immigration issues. These matters are usually regarded sovereign matters.

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*This column is for informative purposes only, is general in nature and is not intended to be a substitute for competent legal and professional advice. Dutch and European rules and regulations regarding foreigners, policy, work permits, visas, and residence permits are continuously subject to change.*