

Dear Mr. Biedron,

On June 15th we read an article from the Dutch news network NOS in which you warned Polish citizens against working in the Netherlands. We fully understand your warning to the Polish people. We, the work group 'Arbeidsmigranten' (migrant workers), are a group of concerned residents of the municipality of Horst aan de Maas in the province of Limburg in the south of the Netherlands. Our municipality lies adjacent to the municipality of Venlo. In our region the problems surrounding labour migration have increased enormously in recent years. The region has a lot of glasshouse horticulture and has gradually developed into a logistics hot spot. As a result, many logistics companies are settling here and the demand for mainly cheap personnel is higher than the region can supply. This has led to an enormous growth in the number of migrant workers. It is expected that our local population will consist of 25% migrant workers in the coming years.

You can imagine that this implies a huge burden on the local housing market, especially when you consider that there is already an enormous housing shortage in the Netherlands. The normal housing supply is not the only source for housing Polish and other labor migrants. The business community has come up with (more profitable) solutions for housing labor migrants. More often we see that 'temporary' homes like container houses/flats or vacation homes are built near the industrial areas, in which several labor migrants have to share their living space on a limited number of square meters without enough privacy. During a tour along some of these housing projects we even found a container in which 6 migrant workers were living under deplorable conditions. The migrants often pay an exorbitant rent, which is deducted directly from their wages by the employer, who is often also the landlord. If workers lose their jobs, they often lose their homes as well. Making it impossible for them to complain about improper working or housing conditions. Another location showed employees living in their truck which is also their work space. They live in these circumstances for 4 weeks in a row, after which they are allowed to go home for 2 weeks. They only have a common room with sanitary facilities. A member of the Dutch parliament, a councilor of the Provincial States in Limburg (both from the Socialist Party) and a municipal council member came along on this tour.

We see on the whole that local politicians tend to cooperate in the plans of investors/employment agencies/employers and in doing so creating the problem. For example, permits for building accommodation for migrant workers are granted without consulting the local population, which is an obligation in our municipality. Local and national politicians have not imposed sufficient rules on themselves in order to manage labour migration. Moreover, they do not keep to these agreements. The business community is not hindered in any way and is even facilitated in exploiting labor migrants.

Two years ago, a report was published by the Roemer Commission which already brought these abuses to light. Unfortunately, little has been done so far with the recommendations in this report, such as a private bedroom for each migrant worker. Moreover, last month Minister van Gennip of Social Affairs and Employment even suggested getting young people from France and Spain, whereas we already cannot take proper care of the current migrant workers living in the Netherlands.

In addition to the suffering that migrant workers are already experiencing in terms of housing, we as locals also see the problem of insufficient integration. Think of the distance that migrant workers have for example to local facilities such as medical care, police and education for their children. This is also increasingly causing a problem with the local population. At present, ghettos are actually forming in our region, where migrant workers are shielded from society as a separate group being housed near the place where they work and cut off from local facilities and people. This is, of course, completely unacceptable.

As you may conclude, we see the same problem you have described and we would like to work with you on eliminating this problem. You will find in attachment to this letter the report of the local tour we made here and a link to the report of the Roemer Commission. We hope that you can use these reports in your fight for a decent treatment of migrant workers in the Netherlands. Perhaps you can also share them with your like-minded colleagues in the European Parliament from other countries that supply many migrant workers to the Netherlands, like Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Finally, if you would like to visit us and see for yourself what the circumstances in which migrant workers live here are like, you will be more than welcome and we will be happy to take you along to visit a number of locations!

Kind regards,

On behalf of the Work Group 'Arbeidsmigranten'

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The link to the Roemer report:

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2020/10/30/tweede-advies-aanjaagteam-bescherming-arbeidsmigranten>