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**The EU Fluctuating Migratory Approach Through the Schengen Security Discourses**  
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## INTERVIEW EXCERPT

### INFORMANT 1

**1. Can you describe your interaction with the EU officials, when taking care of your paperwork? Are there things that you do not like about their behavior? How do they talk? Is there anything you dislike about their speeches?**

There are three main organizations you have to communicate with during your asylum application.

The IND, COA, VWN.

The entity responsible for the application is the IND, they were very respectful during my first interview, also the police which usually do a check up before the first interview, however the place is usually over crowded and people feeling intense, during my first interview there weren't people waiting outside in Ter Ape, so things went smoother, this wasn't the case during everyone.

However I don't recall anyone complaining about the IND investigator

**2. In your opinion, to what extent does the government help—if at all—in providing for people in need of protection? Do you think they are showing their utmost effort?**

When it comes to the refugees status in the Netherlands, it is one of the best in Europe, as once you get your status you will have access to all the social benefits and everything like a Dutch Citizen but the right to vote. However the process before doing so ( the asylum seeking) is a different story.

And for the government their concerns start with your application being accepted ( refugee status) not anything before that

**3. You mentioned the Dutch government's lack of commitment to human rights principles. Could you provide further elaboration on this? In your opinion, do you believe the officials are cognizant of the fundamental rights that the EU is meant to uphold?**

I am uncertain about the specific fundamental rights. My understanding is that upon commencing the asylum process, individuals relinquish their right to work, their documents, and essentially everything, surrendering them to the government. They are then placed in an AZC (Asylum Seekers' Center), which is certainly not human rights-friendly—some AZCs are better, but the majority are substandard and unsuitable for long-term stays.

Typically, four people share a room, sometimes eight, for over a year, and occasionally longer. The waiting period for residency varies greatly—some individuals obtain residency within three months, while others wait for up to three years. The government does not offer clear information about the process, and there is no special treatment for those coming from a war zone compared to those from safe countries.

Technically, the Dutch government allows individuals to work after six months in the asylum process without a decision, permitting only part-time employment for six months. However, during this period, one can only secure a manual job because no company will hire someone without proper documentation, which means no background check. Additionally, while this is



true on paper, most municipalities do not provide this opportunity without any clear reasons. COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) claims that laws have changed, but there has been no public or official statement to this effect.

In the realm of human rights, altering the family reunification period after individuals have already applied for asylum, making it exceedingly difficult for families to remain separated for years, is a concern. The government also appears not to address extreme cases of individuals who left their families in a war zone

**4. You also mentioned the government changing your status to political refugees. Could you provide more details about this procedure? Additionally, are there any other aspects of your background that they examine that could also affect their decisions?**

Recently, the Dutch government has ceased granting political status to Syrians fleeing military service or those who were previously detained, though the reasons for this change remain unknown. I find it disheartening that political activists and individuals who faced threats back in Syria, while advocating for human rights or documenting events, endure extended waiting periods, often longer than Syrian refugees coming from Gulf states who have never experienced a day in a war zone.

The IND (Immigration and Naturalization Service) needs to thoroughly verify any stories told by asylum seekers, contributing to longer processing times for activists. Personally, I was placed on hold for 9 months and had to engage in a hunger strike, with substantial public pressure from the municipality, to secure my final extended interview. In contrast, individuals arriving from various locations often receive their status after a single written interview.

**5. During your time in the Netherlands, have you ever felt that the officials do not relate to you? Is there a sense of a barrier between you and these officials?**

It depends on what you mean by "officials." There are COA, IND, POLICE, and VWN.

My experience with COA was traumatic, and I reached a point where I thought returning to my country and risking my life at the border was a better option than staying here. I became suicidal because of them. They have zero understanding of our struggles and context.

I had a near-death experience when I was in Leeuwarden (I've been placed in 3 emergency shelters since I arrived here). The ones in more conservative and, well, racist areas were horrible. I'm sorry, but I can't share my experience in Leeuwarden AZC, as it is too painful for me to revisit. In summary, your life depends on the COA employee; there are no rights. Even if you argue with them using the law, it doesn't matter. At the asylum seeker point, you are just a number

**6. Do you approach interactions with EU officials with caution? What do you believe motivates them when engaging with you?**



You only interact with officials during the IND interview.

I had the first interview one month after applying for asylum. Then, I had the second interview nine months later. Now, I have been asked to undergo an extended face-to-face interview a year and a half after applying for asylum (the maximum waiting period for a decision is supposedly 15 months).

During the first interview, my investigator was polite and maintained a poker face at all times, which is typically the case.



## INFORMANT 2

### **1. Could you share your experiences with the paperwork you had to go through before coming to the EU?**

Well, the first time around it was really simple. I had an acceptance from the University of Amsterdam for my masters and they handle things with the Immigration and Naturalisation Department (IND) in the Netherlands. So, I just had to gather a bunch of documents: such as this acceptance letter, proof of sufficient funds, bank statements, rental contracts and so on, so that I could get my visa upon which I entered the Netherlands. Soon after, I was invited to pick up my residence permit. It was a smooth but time consuming process. Required a lot of documents I remember, including my birth certificate and so on. Was a bit stressful. The second time, my employer, Utrecht University handled everything with regards to the residence permit which I used to enter the Netherlands a second time around.

### **2. What were the obstacles that you faced? Is there anything that helped simplify the paperwork?**

Obstacles were, a lack of appointments at the overcrowded visa office in India, for example. It was very hard to schedule an appointment on time. Also, flights were ridiculously expensive since you could only book them after you had a valid visa to be sure. So this was an uncertain period and cost a lot of patience and money. What helped simplify the process was having either admission to a university or a job.

### **3. Could you share about your experiences with the migration officers?**

It was largely smooth, except for some questions about why I am here and so on (which is normal, I guess). I do feel a lot of anxiety and stress while in the line for immigrations always, but in my experience so far, it has always been somewhat smooth.

### **4. Is there any more paper work or obligation that you had to complete after your arrivals to the EU?**

Yes, after you arrive—this is really strange, but for people from certain countries, including India, you have to do a Tuberculosis Test. This is like an X Ray image of your chest for which you have to book an appointment with the municipality and then you also have to pay for it yourself. It was a strange experience, to be in this office, where there were exclusively only black and brown people who had to undergo this TB test. I guess I understand the rationale, but it was a weird moment within a few weeks of entering the Netherlands. I also had quarantine obligations, because I arrived in August 2021. This meant 5 days of quarantine for me but also this was not mandated for students that came from within the EU or something, I remember. This was strange because the virus was transmitting the same way everywhere really and in any case everyone was in contact with everyone at airports and train stations and so on, so the differential quarantine rules made no sense to me.

### **5. Do you know other non-EU nationals who also migrated to the EU? How were their experiences?**

I do know other non EU nationals, they did have similar experiences in terms of the paperwork. But of course, I wouldn't speak for them.



**6. What do you think about the EU's entry procedures that differ according to individual's background?**

I don't think very positively of them, I don't like the way these borders are created, manned and policed and I feel it even within the "soft borders" of the EU, everytime I cross over into Belgium or France or something.

**7. What do you think about the blue card system in the EU?**

I'm not aware of this system.

**8. In your view, do you think the EU's migration procedure gives privilege to some individuals?**

Yes, definitely.

**9. In your opinion, is there any room for improvement in the migration procedures?**

So much can change. For starters, increasing the porosity of borders for non-EU migrants could be a big task to undertake!