In Search of the Unexplained

The perceived effect of soft skills on the labour market position of highly educated employees with a non-western migrant background in the Netherlands

University: Erasmus University Rotterdam
Faculty: Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Department: Public Administration
Programme: MSc. Public Administration Governance of Migration and Diversity
Date of completion: 30 July 2019
Student Name: Amir Ali Abadi BBA BSc.
Student Number: 484241aa
E-mail Address: a.ali.abadi@law.leidenuniv.nl
Supervisor: Prof Dr P.W.A. (Peter) Scholten
Second reader: Dr I. (Ilona) van Breugel
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Perhaps it is a cliché but the most important persons are always thanked last. My parents, brother and sisters and, of course, my girlfriend: Parinaz Ameri. Studying is only possible because the most important people inspire and encourage you to be the best version of yourself. Every single one of you, I owe you bigtime!

When Morgan Freeman, an American actor, in a news programme was asked: ‘how are we going to get rid of racism?’ he replied: ‘Stop talking about it!’ I could not agree with him more. Let us stop talking about what separates us and let us focus on the positives for a while.

This thesis has tried to shed a different – let’s call it a ‘positive’ light – on the issues regarding the labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background in the Netherlands.

For your information:

1. A great number of the respondents for this research are people with non-western migrant backgrounds;
2. Almost all of them are highly educated;
3. All of them have a job.

Let’s share their successes and success stories and see what follows.
Summary

How does current policy explain the disadvantaged labour market position of highly educated Dutch employees with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market and why is the current policy focus insufficiently effective in explaining this? This research aims to see if there are more explanations to the disadvantaged labour market position of Dutch employees with a non-western migrant background besides the one-sided explanation of ‘discrimination’. By non-western migrant background this study takes a wide range of different backgrounds into consideration\(^1\), going beyond the usual policy target groups. Moving away from the ‘discrimination-discourse’ this research argues that the perceived effect of soft skills might be different for employers, employees and policy makers and that because of this a ‘mismatch’ arises on the supply and demand side of the labour market. This has implications for educational and labour market policies, but it also has implications on how policy problems are constructed.

Based on more than twenty conversations with relevant stakeholders, a survey was developed and a quantitative analysis was conducted to test the perception of employers, employees and policy makers about the effect of soft skills on the labour market position of employees with a non-western migrant background (n=237). Furthermore, an extensive literature review was conducted to see how the disadvantaged position of such employees is explained in existing research and policies and what is known about the effect of soft skills on labour market positions.

The policy analysis makes clear that current policies are insufficiently effective in addressing the actual problem. Although there is more agreement that these kind of complex problems can only be dealt with by a cross-sectoral approach and by means of multilevel governance, this is not fully reflected in current policies. This results in policies that are focused on specific groups (e.g. only graduates or only the sales sector) or place too great an emphasis on ethnicity (i.e. only the four major ethnic groups). By recognising that this problem includes a complex network of actors, and that because of this mismatches may occur in the process of finding a solution to the problem, this study has included the relevant stakeholders (employers, employees and policy makers) to find a different explanation – a difference in perceptions of the effect of soft skills – to the disadvantaged position of people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market.

Overall, the data indicate that soft skills are indeed seen as important. This is true for all stakeholders and in all sectors. There are no major differences found between employees with or without a migrant background and also no major differences are found in the importance of certain soft skills over others.

\(^1\) In the scope of this study, non-western migrant background refers to Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian, Moroccan, Turkish, Syrian, Surinamese, Antillean, Algerian, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Somali, Indonesian, Pakistani and South Korean respondents.
The study, however, does find a significant difference in how the effect of soft skills on the labour market position is perceived by employers, employees and policy makers and the study also shows that there is a difference in which stage of the process (appointment/promotion) employers, employees and policy makers think that soft skills will have an effect. When taking ethnicity into account, the data also show that there are only marginal differences, but it is clear that people with a non-western migrant background value soft skills more than people without a non-western migrant background.
List of Tables and Figures

Tables

1. Table 1: soft skills deemed important in various studies
2. Table 2: actions against labour market discrimination of non-western migrants
3. Table 3: policy and research priorities on the theme: soft skills
4. Table 4: policy options: soft skills
5. Table 5: timeline attention and involvement of ministers and ministries in the theme: soft skills
6. Table 6: ranking per soft skill by employers, employees and policy makers
7. Table 7: personal ranking of soft skills by employees and policy makers
8. Table 8: (significantly) different soft skills when tested for ethnicity
9. Table 9: (significantly) different soft skills when tested for ethnicity on a personal level
10. Table 10: who is responsible for the training of soft skills (difference of means with and without migrant background)

Figures

1. Figure 1: conceptual model
2. Figure 2: descriptive data respondents’ background

Statistics

1. $\mu =$ mean
2. $\rho =$ probability/significance
3. $\alpha =$ chance of Type I error
4. $\sigma =$ standard deviation
5. $n =$ population
6. $P =$ probability
# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgements** .................................................................................................................. 2

**Summary** .................................................................................................................................... 3

**List of Tables and Figures** ........................................................................................................... 5

I. **Introduction** ............................................................................................................................... 8

II. **Theoretical exploration** ............................................................................................................. 10
    
    II.I Social and human capital ....................................................................................................... 10
    II.II Soft skills ................................................................................................................................ 11
    II.III Employability ....................................................................................................................... 12

III. **Methodology** ............................................................................................................................ 13
    
    III.I Research question .............................................................................................................. 13
    III.II Sub-questions ...................................................................................................................... 13
    III.III Expectations and aim of the study .................................................................................... 14
    III.IV Ethical considerations ........................................................................................................ 15
    III.V Data ...................................................................................................................................... 15
    III.VI Survey and operationalisation ............................................................................................ 16

IV. **Public policy context** ............................................................................................................... 20
    
    IV.I Non-western migrants on the Dutch labour market ............................................................. 20
    IV.II Groupism, social categorisation and discrimination .......................................................... 21
    IV.III Shifting attention to soft skills .......................................................................................... 23
    IV.IV Policy focus ....................................................................................................................... 25

V. **Survey Results** .......................................................................................................................... 27
    
    V.I Employers .............................................................................................................................. 27
        V.I.I Importance ......................................................................................................................... 27
        V.I.II Difference ......................................................................................................................... 28
        V.I.III Responsibility ............................................................................................................... 28
I. Introduction

Migration and integration and specifically the low participation rates and unfavourable labour market performances of Dutch people with a non-western migrant background (born abroad or (one of the) parents born abroad) are still seen as major social problems in the Netherlands (Cerveny and Van Ours, 2013; European Commission, 2017). Although the educational results and achievements of Dutch people with a non-western migrant background have improved tremendously in recent years, their participation in the labour market and their labour market position remain a concern. Almost half of this group is employed at a lower/basic level of the labour market and overrepresented in flexible jobs (Dagevos and Odé, 1999; Bouma et al., 2011; Council of the European Union, 2017).

For more than forty years, researchers in the Netherlands have been trying to describe and explain the disadvantaged position of people with a non-western migrant background. Various studies have been conducted and a wide range of research methodologies have been used to come to a better understanding of this problem. When reading various studies on labour market participation of people with a non-western migrant background in the Netherlands, one might be tempted to conclude that the main reason for the lack of participation might be the fact that people with a non-western migrant background are treated discriminatorily. Recent studies on the labour market position of employees with a non-western migrant background have primarily focused on the lack of their labour market participation. These studies have tried to explain the lack of labour market participation by people with a non-western migrant background – in the Dutch case, primarily Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese and Antilleans – based on researching (institutional) discrimination, social categorisation, institutional racism, and existing prejudices. While this might be true for the lower educated or newly arrived migrants, it is harder to accept that second and even third generation Dutch people with a non-western migrant background have insufficient language skills or are not fully aware of social codes or have not adapted to the Dutch culture (Jungbluth, 2007). Although these studies are of great value, they appear to only explain part of the puzzle.

As Scholten (2018) rightly argues, from a public policy point of view, it would be very interesting to use different theories to explain such outcomes. For example, one might say from a rational point of view that there is a problem in the way knowledge, information and expertise (or a selection thereof) are used in the policy process. From an institutional point of view, one might argue that there is not enough fine-tuning or matching between the main stakeholders. Moreover, political interests might lead to situations where policies are made without any involvement of the main stakeholders. Furthermore, policy discourses define the roles and positions of the actors in the policy process, often focusing on specific socially constructed groups (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). This also raises questions on how policymaking processes are approached and how complex societal issues can be dealt with. In line with the four problem types introduced by Hisschemöller and Hoppe (1995),
this study will show how the problem of the disadvantaged labour market position of highly educated employees with a non-western migrant background is addressed in a one-sided manner and why the shifting policy attention is insufficiently effective in addressing this complex problem. Integration policies, target group policies and the so-called ‘ethnic lens’ as Scholten (2018) observes, are no longer sufficient to interpret, explain and perhaps tackle these kinds of complex social problems. Furthermore, most of the aforementioned research does not take into account the vast research in business studies, human resources and occupational psychology. Moreover, the notion of ‘labour market discrimination’ not only creates a process of reification but also fails to take other explanatory factors into consideration, such as social networks, soft skills, modes of orientation on the labour market etc. As put forward by several authors, the level of education of Dutch society has increased and people with a non-western migrant background are increasingly highly educated. At the same time, it appears that the labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background is stagnating (Brown et al., 2003; Huijnk, 2013). This study focuses on one of these unexplored factors: the importance of soft skills on the labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background, determining (i) the perception of employees with a non-western migrant background of the importance of soft skills on their labour market position, (ii) the perception of employers of the importance of soft skills on labour market position, and (iii) the perception of policy makers of the importance of soft skills on labour market position.

This study includes important stakeholders in the process of labour market participation: employees, employers and policy makers. By analysing, per group, what the perceived effect of soft skills is on the labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background, this study aims to show whether there are differences between the stakeholders in the perceived level of importance and whether specific soft skills are perceived as being more important than others. This is valuable information, not only because soft skills can be taught and trained but primarily because this might lead to a shift in the current policy focus, have implications for labour market and educational policies and might lead to a better understanding of the different responsibilities of stakeholders in solving this problem.

The study is set out as follows. First, a theoretical framework is given to explore how differences in perceptions about soft skills could explain the disadvantaged position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background. The concept of soft skills will be explored in greater depth based on existing literature and prior research. Moreover, its relation to public policy theories, if there is any, will be explained. Secondly, existing policies and reports from public and private institutions are taken into consideration to assess the importance of soft skills. Thirdly, the results of the surveys and an analysis of the three different questionnaires will be presented. The study concludes with a discussion and possible recommendations for future research.
II. Theoretical exploration

II.1 Social and human capital

A number of reasons in current policy can be identified to explain the disadvantaged position of highly educated employees with a non-western migrant background. One of these reasons concerns the lack of country-specific human capital, such as the lack of knowledge of cultural codes or the lack of knowledge on where to find specific information and how to make best use of that information. Another widely used reason is that employers prefer native Dutch people without a non-western migrant background over people with a non-western migrant background (De Vries and Wolbers, 2002; Lancee, 2012). People with a non-western migrant background have gained more access to the labour market, in particular the second generation (higher level of education and better language skills). One might expect this to have a positive effect on their labour market position, but this is not always the case (Vrooman et al., 2014). This shows that the human capital approach is slightly problematic. Even when people with a non-western migrant background are highly educated, they still have lower positions and have a higher chance of being unemployed (Dagevos and Odé, 1999).

The social capital approach shows more positive effects on the labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background (Berge et al., 2014; Borghans et al., 2014), because through networks they might find a job. For employers it is valuable because they can hire through these social networks (Burt, 1997; McGovern, 2007). By acquiring social capital, human capital is positively affected (Coleman, 1988). Social capital refers to the knowledge, information and resources that an individual or a group achieve through connections with their networks, in particular through their bridging capital (contacts with people outside one’s direct network) and not so much due to their bonding capital (contacts with people within one’s direct network) (Tasan-Kok et al., 2014). Various studies have shown that social contacts with natives and the resources provided through these social contacts are beneficial for people with a non-western migrant background (Martinovic et al., 2009; Kanas et al., 2011; Kanas et al., 2012). Moreover, this bridging social capital – the contact between different groups – improves the relations and decreases prejudices and conflict, leading to better access to the labour market and once on it, to a better position (Martinovic et al., 2009; Lancee, 2012).

Nevertheless, cultural codes and certain (informal) expectations still play an important role in the recruitment and selection processes and promotion procedures. Sometimes employers expect a different attitude than employees with a non-western migrant think the employers expect from them (Petit et al., 2013; Vrooman et al., 2014; Corluy et al., 2015). These personal skills or soft skills are often neglected in research, by policy makers and by employees, while they might shed a different light on the unfavourable position of people with a non-western migrant background.
II.11 Soft skills

Research has also focused on the educational attainment of individuals and the relationship with their labour market position (McIntosh and Vignoles, 2001; Humbug et al., 2013; Humbug et al., 2014). However, it is also widely known that employers put great value on soft skills and when it comes to selection and promotion, soft skills are not only expected but are also becoming increasingly important because of the heightened competition on the labour market (Moss and Tilly, 1996; Bancino and Zevalkink, 2007; Robles, 2012; Gibb, 2014). Moreover, especially for people who have difficulty in becoming employed or who are at a point where they should get a promotion in their organisation, employers are concerned that they do not possess the skills that are valued and expected from them (Andrews and Higson, 2008; Noorani, 2011; Gibb, 2014). In addition, several studies found that there is, or there might be, a positive correlation between the possession of soft skills and higher earnings (Duncan and Dunifon, 1998; Balcar, 2014; Deming, 2017; Friberg and Midtbøen, 2018).

There is no clear definition of the concept ‘soft skills’ and it is often referred to in different terms in the literature and used in different contexts (Peels and Donker van Heel, 2017). For example, soft skills are also known as 21st century skills, non-cognitive skills, social skills and employability skills (Vansteenkiste, 2016). Although the terms may differ, the concepts do not differ much when it comes to what they try to describe. Table 1 gives an overview of soft skills that are mentioned in various studies to test the relationship on labour market outcomes which are deemed important by employers (Moss and Tilly, 1996; Bancino and Zevalkink, 2007; Andrews and Higson, 2008; Robles, 2012; Heckman and Kautz, 2012; Allen and Van der Velden, 2012; Schanzenbach et al., 2016; Deming, 2017; Peels and Donker van Heel, 2017).

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<tr>
<th>Soft Skills</th>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>1. Cooperation</td>
<td>1. Correct attitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to interact</td>
<td>2. Communication</td>
<td>2. Flexibility</td>
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<td>Ability to cope with uncertainty</td>
<td>3. ICT literacy</td>
<td>3. Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to work under pressure</td>
<td>4. Social/cultural skills</td>
<td>4. Professionalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to plan and think strategically</td>
<td>5. Creativity</td>
<td>5. Being on time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capability to communicate and interact with others</td>
<td>6. Problem solving</td>
<td>6. Taking initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good written and verbal communication skills</td>
<td>7. Learning skills</td>
<td>7. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information and communication technology skills</td>
<td>8. Self-management</td>
<td>8. Listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity and self-confidence</td>
<td>9. Flexibility</td>
<td>9. Knowing when to speak and when not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good self-management and time-management skills</td>
<td>10. Risk taking</td>
<td>10. Dealing with feedback and criticism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willingness to learn and accept responsibility</td>
<td>11. Entrepreneurship</td>
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<td>Table 1: soft skills deemed important in various studies</td>
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11
Even though all the above-mentioned soft skills are very important and in some studies even ranked 'extremely important', they are not perceived as being equally important by employers, employees and policy makers in different sectors. As Allen and Van der Velden (2012) argue, there is still a large gap in the knowledge about soft skills by different stakeholders. While in some sectors (e.g. technical and business), the importance of soft skills is clearly demonstrated, in other sectors it is not. Furthermore, it is also argued that people with a migrant background respond differently (i.e. ‘increased conscientiousness’) to what the effects of certain skills might be on their labour market position (Dahmann and Anger, 2014: 24-25). Another study found that the mismatch with regard to soft skills is a decisive reason that some people do not function well in certain positions (Peels and Donker van Heel, 2017).

II.III Employability

The growing knowledge intensity of the changing labour market will need the improvement of competencies and corresponding enhancement of a person’s employability. Employability refers to the maintenance and enhancement of the ability of individuals to stay attractive in the labour market; the ability to keep a job or get a job (Harvey, 2001; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Council of the European Union, 2018). So the mere possession of certain fundamental, conceptual, business, community, personal and interpersonal skills is not enough. Employability is about the capability to exploit these skills, knowledge and attitudes (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Stichting van de Arbeid, 2006; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007; Andrews and Higson, 2008; Robles, 2012; Peels and Donker van Heel, 2017).

Hence, to fully utilise the full potential of the employees in a flexible and knowledge-intensive labour market that no longer offers long-term or fixed employment, training and education and further advancement of employability are essential for individuals to retain a competitive position (Rotwell and Arnold, 2007; Goudswaard and Caminada, 2009). This is even more essential for people with a non-western migrant background (Stichting van de Arbeid, 2006).

It is argued that even though employers stress the importance of soft skills, many graduates lack these skills and although degrees are required for initial employment, the degree adds little to their long-term employability (Lowden et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2016). Training in a particular set of skills increases employability of people with a non-western migrant background. Acquiring the necessary soft skills makes switching to other functions, companies or even sectors easier. In addition, when employees are aware of the necessary soft skills, this also increases the chance for employers to appoint people from other companies or sectors (Klaver et al., 2005; Echtelt and Voogd-Hamelink, 2017). Despite the efforts of national and local government, there are still people who lack the skills for successfully integrating in the changing labour market (Hasanefendic et al., 2015). This disjunction between what research and policy identifies as important, and what the actual practice is for the different stakeholders, is thus not only interesting but also important to explore (Kroll and Moynihan, 2015).
III. Methodology

Based on the above-mentioned theories, this study aims to show whether or not a difference in the perceived effect of soft skills by employers, employees and policy makers could explain this issue beyond the one-sided focus on discrimination which is insufficiently effective in explaining the disadvantaged labour market position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market.

![Conceptual Model](image)

The conceptual model shows that this study will analyse whether there is: i) a perceived effect of soft skills on the labour market position and whether this is different for employers, employees and policy makers; ii) whether certain soft skills (ten soft skills have been selected) are considered more important than other soft skills; and iii) whether there is a connection between the degree of importance given to soft skills and the background variables such as the sector and (non-) migrant background of the respondents.

III.1 Research question

The main research question is: How does current policy explain the disadvantaged position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background in the Dutch labour market and how can this be explained by the differences in the perceived effect of soft skills by employers, employees and policy makers?

III.2 Sub-questions

In the conversations held for the purpose of this research,² it appeared that many people, regardless of their occupation or background, have a negative image of the soft skills set of people with a non-western migrant background. It was said that people with a non-western migrant background have

² See appendix II for the full list.
different expectations of the importance of soft skills and the effect that these skills might have on their labour market position. As discussed earlier, the policy processes around these kinds of complex issues and the ‘categorical focus’ (De Zwart, 2005: 145-146) may have led to insufficiently effective policies. Furthermore, the importance of soft skills is growing and many organisations have started selecting and promoting on the basis of soft skills. This might, thus, have a negative effect on the labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background due to a mismatch in expectations. This leads to five sub-questions:

Sub-question 1: Why is current policy insufficiently effective in explaining the complex issue of the disadvantaged labour market position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background?

Sub-question 2: Is there a difference between the importance given by employers, employees and policy makers in the perceived effect of soft skills on the labour market position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background?

Sub-question 3: Is there a difference between the importance given by employers, employees and policy makers to the perceived effect of certain soft skills over other soft skills?

Sub-question 4: Is there a perceived difference in the set of soft skills possessed by native Dutch people and persons with a non-western migrant background?

Sub-question 5: Whose responsibility is it to train soft skills and what are the implications for policy?

III. III Expectations and aim of the study

The main aim of this study is to explain why current policies are insufficiently effective in addressing the problem of the disadvantaged labour market position of employees with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market, and to see if there are other explanatory factors instead of keeping the focus on ‘discrimination’. This study aims to explore whether there is a mismatch regarding the soft skills that are perceived to be important by employers, employees and policy makers and whether this could partly explain the disadvantaged position of this group. In that sense, this study is indeed in search of the unexplained. Furthermore, one of the other aims of this study is to show that taking into account multiple disciplines (public policy, political science, sociology, economy, social psychology, history) and addressing multiple stakeholders can lead to interesting findings and create other points of view. By doing so, more explanatory factors can be studied and taken into account and both academics and policy makers may benefit from having a broader view on this complex issue.
III.IV Ethical considerations

In this study, non-experimental research was conducted, involving quantitative data that was analysed in SPSS. No conditions were imposed or manipulated; analyses involved means comparison and correlational analyses. In the survey research, all respondents were informed about the purpose of this study, the confidentiality of their responses, how the results will be used and who will have access to the data. Due to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), no names of any of the respondents will be stated in this study.

III.V Data

In essence, this study is structured fairly straightforwardly: different stakeholders might have different perceptions of soft skills on labour market position; this could result in mismatches in the labour market which could be one of the explanatory factors for the disadvantaged position of Dutch employees with a non-western migrant background in the Dutch labour market. The three thematic blocks that will be taken into account are: importance of soft skills, difference in soft skills and whose responsibility is it to deal with this issue.

The (quantitative) survey used for this research was developed after many extensive conversations with all the relevant stakeholders in this complex policy field. These are explicitly called conversations and not interviews because the respondents could then freely and very safely, without any rules and regulations that they were bound to, talk about their perceptions. A large multidisciplinary literature review was conducted to explain the context of this complex policy problem and policy analysis was done to see why former and current policies are insufficiently effective in addressing explanatory factors for the disadvantaged labour market position of employees with a non-western migrant background.

The study is designed without using datasets from The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) or from the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), because there are no datasets to be found which explicitly take soft skills into account. Initially, three different surveys were developed for the three different target groups. These surveys were then combined and put together in Qualtrics. A targeted sample was used in which the population was chosen carefully based on their function (employer/employee/policy maker). In the case of the policy makers, it was ensured that the target group chosen were policy makers who are focused on labour market policy or diversity and inclusion-related issues. A pre-trial was conducted among a few (9) test subjects to filter out possible ambiguities in the survey. The survey was then distributed via LinkedIn and to create a snowball sampling method, each person who was asked to take part in the survey was also asked if they could

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3 See the full list in appendix II.
share the survey with people in their network who would fit in the target group. Inspired by Klaver et al., (2005), to obtain a representative group of respondents, the survey was also sent to the Expertise Centre for Diversity Policy (ECHO), The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV), the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions (CNV), the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW), the Federation of Private Employment Agencies (ABU), the General Employers Association (AWVN), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Min. OCW), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Min. SZW), the Ministry of Economic Affairs (Min. EZ), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Min. BuZa), the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Min. BiZa), the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) and the Social and Economic Council (SER). In doing so, the supply side (employees), the demand side (employers), the intermediaries (recruiters etc.), and the government were involved.

**III.VI Survey and operationalisation**

Before turning to the results of the analysis, this section will elaborate on the structure of the survey to clarify what was presented to the respondents. First of all, it is important to mention that the survey, in its entirety, was in the Dutch language. This is because the topic concerns the Dutch labour market and targets employees, employers and policy makers who are Dutch and familiar with the labour market and its policies.

The survey\(^4\) consists of an introduction page where respondents are asked to indicate whether they want to complete the survey as an employee, employer or policy maker. It is important to note that the category of employee also included self-employed persons and working students; the category of employer included managers, recruiters and human resource-personnel were included; and the category of policy makers also included, policy advisors.

After the category of function was indicated on the introduction page, the respondents proceeded to the section on general questions. These questions were posed to obtain some background data from the respondents and included questions concerning gender, age, place of birth of the respondent and the parents of the respondent, educational background, sector of employment and study, labour market position, organisation size and salary indication. Next, the respondents were presented with a 5-point Likert scale to rate their views. In some cases, this scale ranged from ‘1= not at all’ to ‘5= to a very high degree’, in some ‘1= not important at all’ to ‘5= extremely important’ and in others ‘1= completely disagree’ to ‘5= completely agree’. And even though the survey has also turned these ranges around in some questions, in the SPSS analysis these data are computed to the above-mentioned scales. First, the respondents were asked whether soft skills are perceived as being important in their organisation and in which stage this is perceived as being more important (at the

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\(^4\) See full survey in appendix I.
time of appointment or promotion). Then, several statements were given to see whether soft skills are perceived as being more important than hard skills and if soft skills are perceived as being important, which of the soft skills are more important than others. In the case of employees and policy makers, the survey also questioned whether there is a difference in perceptions of the organisation they work in and their personal perceptions. The last part of the survey was intended to see if there is a perceived difference in the skills of people with and without a non-western migrant background and who is mainly responsible for training soft skills. Of course, at the end of the survey, every respondent was provided a full page on which they could make additional comments.

To get a better idea of the main concepts and/or variables and the way these are measured, a brief outline is provided below:

- **Soft skills**
  The variable soft skills was explained throughout the entire survey. Respondents could click on the ‘soft skills link’ which was mentioned in each question to see what is meant by certain soft skills. The soft skills that were chosen for this study were selected by looking at various studies where soft skills were tested and drawing up a top ten of the most important skills. The respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1-5 the perceived importance of certain skills. These skills were:
  - *professionalism* (businesslike, well dressed, outward presentation, balanced);
  - *flexibility* (adaptable, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adapts);
  - *communication skills* (speaking and writing skills, presenting, listening, IT skills);
  - *work ethic* (willing to work (hard), loyal, initiative-driven, motivated, on time, good presence);
  - *responsibility* (reliable, wanting to get the job done, resourceful, disciplined, wanting to do well, conscientious, common sense);
  - *integrity* (honest, ethical, high morality, has personal values, does what is right);
  - *entrepreneurship* (creativity, taking risks, leadership);
  - *initiative* (cooperative, daring to do something and to take responsibility for choices, supportive);
  - *positive attitude* (nice, personal, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patience, socialising);
  - *self-knowledge* (where are the strengths and weaknesses, learning from your own mistakes).

- **Labour market position**
  This question was asked to see what the position of the respondent was. The respondent could choose between three given categories (director, manager, support staff) or something else that could be filled in.
• Sector
The sectors were chosen based on different studies done by the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV). The sectors mentioned are:
  o Automation and IT
  o Healthcare
  o Commerce and Administration
  o Hospitality and Household
  o Agriculture
  o Society/Non-profit/Interest group
  o Education
  o Public administration
  o Storage and Transport
  o Staff, organisation and strategy
  o Language, media and communication
  o Technology and production
  o Tourism and recreation

• Ethnicity
Ethnicity is not asked as a single question, but is made up of several different questions (i.e. 1) where were you born?, 2) what is the country of birth of parent 1?, 3) what is the country of birth of parent 2?). A list of 252 countries was given to select from. If both parents were born in the Netherlands and the respondent was also born in the Netherlands, then for the purpose of this research, this person is considered a native Dutch person. If one of the parents or the respondent was born abroad in an EU country, then the respondent is considered to be a person with a western migrant background. If one of the parents or the respondent was born outside the EU, then the respondent is considered to be a person with a non-western migrant background.

• Educational attainment
To see establish the educational background of the respondent, the survey included two questions about the highest level of education enjoyed by the respondent and the highest degree obtained by the respondent. The categories they could choose from were MBO (senior secondary vocational education), HBO (higher professional education) and WO (university education).
• Occupation

The occupation of the respondent was the first question of the survey. Based on the choice of occupation, the respondents were given the survey which was specifically targeted to that group. For instance, an employer was not asked the same questions put to an employee or a policy maker. Initially, the idea was to only include general occupations like employer, employee and policy maker, however it was decided to extend the categories. The categories used were:

- Director/employer/recruiter/human resources staff
  While talking to different stakeholders, the point often arose that directors or employers themselves did not have much to do with the selection or promotion cycle within their organisations. This was purportedly done by recruiters and human resources staff. That is why this study explicitly took them into consideration at the level of the director as they have an influential position in the organisation.

- Employee/self-employed/working student
  In order not to create any confusion whether a self-employed or working student would be part of the category ‘employee’, this is explicitly mentioned in the choice.

- Policy maker/policy advisor
  Policy advisors were added to policy makers so that no confusion would arise.

Altogether, this resulted in 237 respondents. The study uses a significance value of $\alpha<0.05$ and in some cases, where a marginal significance is found the value of $\alpha<0.10$ is used. It is worth mentioning that not all the respondents finished the entire survey; hence, in some cases the $n$ is different.

The next chapters will show the results of the survey and explain what these results might mean. Before proceeding to the actual analysis, a list of background variables is given in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Descriptive data respondents’ background](image-url)
The average age of the respondents was 37 years old with a standard deviation of 11.6. The data show that many of the respondents are highly educated females with a non-western migrant background, mainly working in supportive positions at big (semi-public) organisations and earning around 2,000-4,000 euros (gross) per month. What is worth mentioning is that only four of the respondents in the group of employers and only five of the respondents in the group of policy makers, have a non-western migrant background. Before going into the survey results, the public policy context will be given in Chapter IV in which an explanation is formulated on why the current policies insufficiently explain the disadvantaged labour market position of these highly educated employees with a non-western migrant background.

IV. Public policy context

Most policies are developed from a core belief that labour is not only a ticket to economic independence and economic well-being, but is perhaps also the most important way to integrate into Dutch society (Koolmees, 2018a,b,c; Scholten, 2018). Integrating successfully into Dutch society demands both a great deal of one’s own responsibility and a society that offers equal opportunities to everyone. As outlined in the introduction, educational achievements have improved (Cerveny and Van Ours, 2013). The labour market participation and labour market positions of employees with a non-western migrant background, however, have not (Alba and Foner, 2015). This section provides an overview of the position of people with a non-western migrant background on the labour market and the prevailing views in policies and action plans to explain why policies up to now have been insufficiently effective in solving the problem of the disadvantaged labour market position of this particular group.

IV.I Non-western migrants on the Dutch labour market

For a very long time, the Netherlands was known as a welcoming country to people from all over the world with different cultures and religions. Until the 1970s there was no real integration policy as it was expected that the so-called ‘guest workers’ would return to their home countries. They would enjoy all the benefits of the welfare state without the need for integration into Dutch society; cultural preservation and a focus on citizens’ rights were the main policy discourses (Council of the European Union, 2017). This situation changed in the 1990s when the focus shifted from a ‘rights perspective’ to a ‘duties perspective’. In other words, from a ‘support-oriented’ to an ‘incentive-oriented’ approach (Euwals et al., 2007). The shift to an incentive-oriented or participation society requires constant maintenance and full use of human capital. Investments in training and the promotion of employability are paramount, especially for vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities (Goudswaard and Caminada, 2009; Koolmees, 2018a,b,c).
Due to the disadvantaged socio-economic position of especially Dutch people with a Turkish, Surinamese, Moroccan or Antillean background, the government started recognising and stressing the importance of education and integration (Council of the European Union, 2017a). In subsequent years, the Integration Act of 2007 made it obligatory to learn the Dutch language and to do an integration exam to obtain a Dutch residence permit. While the idea was understandable, in practice the policy of multiculturalism still prevailed. This led to situations in which, even though the policy was stimulating and supportive, it was expected that the groups (members of the group) themselves would take responsibility for their own labour market participation and position (Lancee, 2012; Stichting van de Arbeid, 2006).

The change to a more restrictive integration policy and a shift towards a universal model instead of a group-tailored model occurred in 2011. Despite these policies, the low participation rates and unfavourable labour market positions of people with a non-western migrant background remain, even in cases of similar educational attainment and working experience. Compared to the native Dutch, people with a non-western migrant background have a greater risk of unemployment and are also relatively more likely to work under flexible contracts (Dagevos and Odé, 1999; European Commission, 2017). A recent study of the European Centre of Expertise (2017) showed that compared to the six percent (6%) of highly educated native Dutch graduates who were unemployed within eighteen months after graduation, among the highly educated graduates with a non-western migrant background fifteen percent (15%) were still unemployed, which shows that second-generation people with a non-western migrant background generally do better, but there is still a significant difference compared to the native Dutch (Van Gent et al., 2006).

Various studies mention and criticise the negative perceptions of employers of the skills of people with a non-western migrant background (Maliepaard et al., 2010; Kuiper et al., 2015) and stress the importance of cooperation and coordination between all the relevant stakeholders to train and utilise the skills of this group by successfully integrating them into the Dutch labour market (Jungbluth, 2007; Council of the European Union, 2018). According to Kanas et al., this will lead to socio-economic integration and material wellbeing, not only for this generation but also for future generations (2011: 96).

The next section will elaborate on the commonly used discourses to tackle the problem of the unfavourable positions of people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market.

**IV.II Groupism, social categorisation and discrimination**

‘Groupism’, according to Brubaker is the tendency to reify groups (ethnic, national, racial) ‘as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes’ (2002: 164). Groupist terms are routinely used in policy analysis, media reports and
academic writing (Brubaker, 2002: 165; Brubaker, 2003). Even though people belong to a particular group, they may have very different interests and needs, skills and identities (Tasan-Kok et al., 2014; Crul, 2016). Traditional policy frames ignore the fact that traditional groups or categories only describe a small part of how people act and what their chances are in society (Tasan-Kok et al., 2014: 19). As mentioned in the previous section, labour market policies in the Netherlands have primarily focused on groups, and in particular Turks, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antilleans. It is argued that these ‘target populations’ are socially constructed and that this both affects the behaviour of these groups and has a powerful influence on the policy agenda and the actual design of policy (Schneider and Ingram, 1993: 334). These groups are socially constructed and used, not only by public officials but also in the media and the groups themselves (Schneider and Ingram, 1993: 342). Meissner and Vertovec argue that we need ‘to move from analysing diversity to analysing diversifications’ (2014: 550).

In the labour market, group characteristics are mostly used to hire people rather than individual competencies or skills (McGovern, 2007; Friberg and Midtbøen, 2018). This is in line with the findings of Andriessen et al. who very clearly stated that social categorisation creates biases by maximising differences between categories or groups (2012: 241). Another interesting finding is that employers do not ‘distinguish between the ethnic groups, but do seem to draw the line between native Dutch candidates and migrant groups as a whole’ (Andriessen et al., 2012: 255). A process of reification starts when people with a non-western migrant background interpret a rejection for a job as being due to their group categorisation (Jungbluth, 2007). This often leads to feelings of discrimination or stigmatisation (Andriessen et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2017) while this is not always necessarily the case. Furthermore, Legault et al. have shown ‘that people who integrate negative aspects of their group get more relatedness from their group, which satisfies the need for relatedness and increases well-being’ (2017: 697). If this problem is not dealt with properly, this stigmatisation or perceived negative group traits might indeed create discrimination and internalisation (Wang et al., 2017). Individuals who have regular contacts with natives outside their own direct group develop useful networks and additional skills (Alba and Foner, 2015) and might change the negative perceptions of a group by integrating or assimilating into society (Esses et al., 2001). However, as Tajfel et al. argue, individual mobility will not change the low status of a group and even creates a ‘disidentification with the erstwhile in-group’ (1979: 19). To change the negative perceptions of a group, the values assigned to the individuals within these groups should be changed (Tajfel et al., 1979: 20). This could be done by the individuals themselves by reframing negative characteristics ‘from liabilities to assets’ (Wang et al., 2017: 77-78), or it might help to reframe the point of view. For example, where social sciences often describe discrimination in the background of belonging to a particular group (Andriessen et al, 2014: 9), for economists discrimination is seen in ‘unexplained differences in compensation and employment’ (Ashenfelter and Oaxaca, 1987: 322). It might also help
to seek different explanations for the phenomenon of the disadvantaged labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background. In the following section, this shift from discrimination to the impact of soft skills within this policy domain will be introduced.

**IV.III Shifting attention to soft skills**

As mentioned before, as a result of technological developments, digitisation and the changing needs in the labour market through potentially automated jobs, the demand for other skills - including social skills - is growing. Policies should be designed that will activate and motivate employees to maintain a competitive position in the labour market (Levy, 2010; Council of the European Union, 2017a). Policy makers could provide information about future needs in relation to knowledge and skills (Goudswaard and Caminada, 2009). People with a non-western migrant background in particular, should be a major concern as the shift towards new skills might lead to further exclusion on the labour market of groups that are already in an unfavourable position (Bornhall et al., 2017). In research and policy, the focus is mainly targeted towards the discrimination discourse or negative framing of certain groups. By doing so, actions are taken accordingly in academia, policy making and even on the personal level (Rein and Schon, 1993). This study argues that it might be time for a shift of context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Stand van zaken</th>
<th>Toelichting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nieuwe migranten</td>
<td>In het nader uit te werken Integraal Akkoord werk zal in samenwerking met werkgevers, gemeenten en andere relevante maatschappelijke organisaties gekomen worden naar aanpakken gericht op versterking van netwerken en kennishebbing tussen loners en werkgevers die aantoonbaar succes hebben bij migranten.</td>
<td>In uitvoering</td>
<td>De afspraken met gemeenten, scholen en andere maatschappelijke organisaties zijn in eerste instantie vormgegeven binnen de City Deal. Aanstaanbaar effectieve interventies worden verder uitgevoerd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nieuwe migranten</td>
<td>Er wordt overzicht gemaakt van internationaal en nationale “best practices” specifiek op het vlak van de bevordering van de cultuur diversiteit.</td>
<td>Afgerond</td>
<td>Deze onderzoeksrapporten zijn zomer 2015 opgeleverd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nieuwe migranten</td>
<td>Er komt bestuurlijk overleg met de G4 waarin de mogelijkheid wordt verkend om een gezamenlijk project om diversiteit een impuls te geven in aanbestedingen en publieke diensten.</td>
<td>In uitvoering</td>
<td>Er wordt samen met de G4 een verkenning uitgevoerd naar de mogelijkheden om het middels openbare aanbestedingen en opdrachten verder te bevorderen van diversiteit. Fm in opdracht van de minister van SZW uitgevoerd onderzoek naar Europese voorbeelden en de uitvoering daarvan in de praktijk is in april 2016 opgeleverd en zal hiervoor als basis dienen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: actions against labour market discrimination of non-western migrants (Asscher, 2015)

Re-evaluating policies for labour market participation and looking for unexplained factors for the disadvantaged position of people with a non-western migrant background is nowadays common practice, although this does not mean that general and group-specific actions and policies have disappeared. As shown in Table 2 (in Dutch), specific policy actions are focusing on the empowerment of people with a non-western migrant background on the one hand, and cooperation with relevant stakeholders on the other hand. All the stakeholders give different definitions to the problem, but combining the input of all the relevant stakeholders might lead to more tailored and pragmatic solutions in the future (Hisschemöller and Hoppe, 1995; Colebatch, 2009; Schiller, 2014; Bekkers et al., 2017).

De Koning at al. (2009) interviewed around a hundred successful people with a non-western migrant background in their quest for what could explain the successful labour market participation and position of people with a non-western migrant background. The results were interesting on a
number of points: i) policies and especially general policies are not very well known, and if they are known, government policies are not necessarily seen as positive; ii) discrimination is mentioned, but is not seen as a dominant factor; iii) government is partly blamed for the negative image/framing of the group; and perhaps most importantly, iv) almost all respondents agree on the importance of soft skills or a ‘right mix of personal qualities’ in their success on the labour market (De Koning et al., 2009).

In 2018, the report ‘Verdere Integratie op de Arbeidsmarkt’ (Further Integration on the Labour Market) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, posed the question whether a gap exists between employers and employees with a non-western migrant background regarding the importance of soft skills on their labour market position. The conclusion was that people with a non-western migrant background seem to perceive hard skills and actual performance to be more important than social skills, while employers are increasingly looking at soft skills. However, as you can see below in Table 3 (in Dutch), while on the research agenda, looking for other explanatory factors for the disadvantaged position of people with a non-western migrant background was given the highest priority (priority number 1), the training and development of soft skills was given the lowest priority (priority number 5).

In 2018, the report ‘Verdere Integratie op de Arbeidsmarkt’ (Further Integration on the Labour Market) of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, posed the question whether a gap exists between employers and employees with a non-western migrant background regarding the importance of soft skills on their labour market position. The conclusion was that people with a non-western migrant background seem to perceive hard skills and actual performance to be more important than social skills, while employers are increasingly looking at soft skills. However, as you can see below in Table 3 (in Dutch), while on the research agenda, looking for other explanatory factors for the disadvantaged position of people with a non-western migrant background was given the highest priority (priority number 1), the training and development of soft skills was given the lowest priority (priority number 5).

Table 3: policy and research priorities on the theme: soft skills (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thema: Soft skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Beleidsmaat wordt er op dit moment weinig gedaan op het gebied van soft-skills omdat er nog te weinig gedrags-wetenschappelijke inzichten beschikbaar zijn over de vraag: wat werkt om soft-skills te ontwikkelen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Een expert uit de interviewronde stelde dat er weinig inzicht bestaat in welke scheikundige bepaalde soft-skills missen. De meeste bestaande onderzoeken gaan niet diep in op diverse subgroepen en kijken bovendien niet naar de etsche component. Vandaar de vraag om inzicht tot de vraag om MBO-BBL leerlingen andere soft skills hebben dan MBO-BOL leerlingen. En de vraag of de groep met een niet-westerse achtergrond anders set aan soft skills heeft dan de groep zonder migratieachtergrond (en zo ja welke)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. In hoeverre is het soft skills-vraagstuk echt een vraagstuk van onvoldoende kwaliteiten? Of speelt ook de perceptie van de culturele match een rol?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. In hoeverre kunnen de ‘onverklaarde’ achterstanden van de jongeren met een niet-westerse achtergrond op de arbeidsmarkt alsnog verklard worden? Wat zijn de belangrijkste redenen voor deze achterstanden?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: policy and research priorities on the theme: soft skills (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maatregel</th>
<th>Kern</th>
<th>Doelgroep</th>
<th>Effectiviteit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbeteren soft-skills</td>
<td>Soft skills spelen mogelijk een rol bij de arbeidsmarktpositie van personen met een migratieachtergrond, er zou ingezet kunnen worden op het versterken ervan.</td>
<td>Personen met een niet-westerse migratieachtergrond</td>
<td>Onbekend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vergroten bewustzijn over soft skills</td>
<td>Beoordeling van soft skills speelt zowel bij selectie als beoordeling van specifieke en belangrijke rol spelen. De groep met een niet-westerse achtergrond legt zelf vooral de nadruk op hard skills en resultaten. Gevolg: kleinere kans op selectie en promotie. Hier zou verandering in gebracht kunnen worden door in oefeningen en vergroting van bewustzijn dat soft skills een belangrijke rol spelen.</td>
<td>Personen met een niet-westerse migratieachtergrond</td>
<td>Onbekend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investeren in CV en sollicitatiebrief</td>
<td>Vrijwilligerswerk voor mainstream organisaties zou kunnen helpen om vooroordelen weg te nemen, evenals het in de sollicitatiebrieven benadrukken van zaken als soft skills.</td>
<td>Werkzoekenden met een niet-westerse achtergrond</td>
<td>Onbekend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: policy options: soft skills (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2018)
IV.IV Policy focus

The Minister of Social Affairs and Employment repeatedly addressed the concern that the labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background in recent years has not improved, even though the economy is flourishing and there are sufficient job vacancies. Furthermore, employers observe that the career development and upward mobility of employees with a non-western migrant background stagnates at a certain level and does not proceed further to the top of organisations (Van Engelshoven and Koolmees, 2018).

Educational level or study choices can only partly explain the factors that determine the disadvantaged position of employees with a non-western migrant background. Some factors are difficult to measure and some are unexplained, such as the influence of prejudices, the availability or not of a relevant network, (language) skills and effective search behaviour for vacancies (Koolmees, 2018). There is still insufficient scientific evidence about which possible interventions would be effective to improve the labour market position of Dutch people with a non-western migrant background, see also Table 4 (in Dutch).

According to Hillage and Pollard (1998), government policies are mainly focused on vocational skills instead of soft skills. Government policies target job seekers rather than employees and government policies are more concerned with the supply side (employees) than the demand side (employers). To explain the findings of Hillage and Pollard (1998) in this context, the next paragraph will outline the approaches taken by various ministers from various ministries during 2014-2018.

In 2014, after repeated media coverage about the issue of labour market discrimination, the former Minister of Social Affairs and Employment called for tenders and subsidies for diversity policies, focusing on discrimination while acknowledging obstacles like smaller networks and less effective search behaviour of the employees with a non-western migrant background (Asscher, 2014).

A year later, the same minister informed the government that the key to solving this issue was that the (professional) image of employees with a non-western migrant background must improve, their networks expanded, and more training of soft skills, while stressing the importance of a collective approach by employers, employees and government (Asscher, 2015).

Due to rapid technological developments and the shifts that are caused in production processes, in 2016 the government shifted its focus from the problems with individuals to the training and education of new skills and the new demands of the labour market. The demand for non-routine, analytical and interactive skills had become greater than the demand for routine and practical skills (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2016). The concern for growing labour market polarisation (employment in the middle segment falls while employment in the lowest and highest
labour segment rises) was put on the agenda. Moreover, there was a call for a strategy at national level to further develop (mainly generic skills), activate and effectively utilise the knowledge and skills of the labour force (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2016).

This line of reasoning was also maintained by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, who stressed that new insights from education and science practice should be used to tackle the complex issue of ‘key skills’ (Bussemaker, 2017). Meanwhile, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations reported on the achievements of the national action programme against discrimination, stating that there would be stricter inspections and obligatory training for professionals. Furthermore, he underlined the importance and effects of signing charters by the stakeholders (Plasterk, 2017).

In 2018, the current Minister of Social Affairs and Employment shifted the focus to the disadvantaged position of employees with a non-western migrant background and called for an investigation of what would be the ‘right skills’ for sustainable participation in the labour market (Koolmees, 2018). The Minister of Foreign Affairs added that there is a need not only for hard skills, but also for social skills, digital skills and citizenship skills (Blok, 2018).

At that time, more than ever, employability and upward mobility was also questioned and the minister asked the Social Economic Council for advice on how to get more diversity at the top of organisations. The minister stressed the fact that only through a whole-government and multi-stakeholder approach (all relevant public and private actors must be in permanent dialogue), could this issue be tackled (Koolmees, 2018). The Minister of Education, Culture and Science added that the central government policy focuses on the preconditions such as financial opportunities, support in career development etc. However, she stressed that it is first up to the employers and employees to develop themselves (Van Engelsdoven, 2018). In the timetable below (Table 5), it is shown how this issue and in particular the notion of focusing on soft skills (training) was put on the agenda and which ministers/ministries were involved.
As outlined above, a shift in labour market and educational policies has occurred. The importance of looking for another explanatory factor is emphasised over and over again, but it is not entirely clear what the priorities are, who is responsible and how effective the awareness and training of soft skills is. This study has taken a step to explain this, and the survey results for the three groups (employers, employees and policy makers) will be presented in the following chapter.

V. Survey Results

Before going to the next chapter where an analysis will be given and differences and/or similarities will be discussed between sectors and between people with or without a non-western migrant background, this chapter gives an overview of the data generated from the survey, per group. The chapter is divided into three subsections. In section I the importance of soft skills will be presented as perceived by each group. In section II, the results of the value given to certain soft skills over others will be shown and in section III the results will be presented about whose responsibility it is, according to the relevant stakeholders, to train soft skills.

V.I Employers

It is important to mention again that the category of employers also includes directors, recruiters and human resources staff. This category will be called ‘employers’ hereinafter. A total of 34 employers completed the survey, so the population for this set of results is n=34.

V.I.I Importance

The questionnaire presented several statements to test the importance given to soft skills by employers.

Firstly, the employers were asked to indicate to what extent within their organisations, soft skills are taken into account with regard to their HR policy for which the scale was ‘1= not at all’ and ‘5= to a very high degree’. The employers indicated that soft skills are taken into account with regard to their HR policy to a reasonably to high degree: \( \mu=3.7941 \) (sd=0.84493).

Secondly, the employers were asked to what extent soft skills are important at the time of the appointment of an employee and to what extent soft skills are important at the time of the promotion of an employee. Employers indicate that at the appointment of employees, soft skills are important to a high degree: \( \mu=4.1765 \) (sd=0.62622); but even more important at the stage of promotion: \( \mu=4.2059 \) (sd=0.53820).
Lastly, the statement was posed to see whether employers would agree that soft skills are more important than hard skills on a scale where ‘1= strongly disagree’ and ‘5=strongly agree’. The employers indicated that this is neutral: \( \mu=3.1176 \) (sd=0.68599).

V.I.II Difference

To test the importance given to certain soft skills, the employers were asked to indicate from ‘1=not important at all’ to ‘5=extremely important\(^5\), the importance of a list of ten soft skills. The data show that all the soft skills are seen as important, but the highest ranked soft skills are integrity; \( \mu=4.4118 \) (sd=0.70141); professionalism: \( \mu=4.2353 \) (sd=0.69887); and communication skills: \( \mu=4.2059 \) (sd=0.59183). The skills entrepreneurship; \( \mu=3.2647 \) (sd=0.93124); initiative; \( \mu=3.5882 \) (sd=0.82085); and self-knowledge; \( \mu=3.7059 \) (sd=0.83591) are given lower values, but are still considered to be reasonably to very important.

V.I.III Responsibility

The survey posed the statement that soft skills are trainable and asked employers to indicate whether they agree or not. Twenty-two out of thirty-four (22 out of 34) of the employers agreed (to a very high extent) that soft skills are indeed trainable. When asked as a follow up question who is responsible for the training of soft skills - where the employers could choose between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Min. OCW), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Min. SZW), the Ministry of Economic Affairs (Min. EZ), employers themselves, lecturers, parents or the employees themselves, on a scale of ‘1=not at all’ to ‘5=to a very high extent’ - the employers indicated as follows:

1. the employees themselves: \( \mu=4.38 \) (sd=0.69695);
2. the parents: \( \mu=4.26 \) (sd=0.61835);
3. the lecturers: \( \mu=4.00 \) (sd=0.77850);
4. the employers: \( \mu=3.82 \) (sd=0.79661);
5. the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: \( \mu=3.12 \) (sd=1.12181);
6. the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment: \( \mu=2.88 \) (sd=1.12181); and
7. the Ministry of Economic Affairs: \( \mu=2.71 \) (sd=1.05971).

The data thus shows that the training of soft skills is regarded by employers mainly as a person’s own responsibility and to a reasonable extent their responsibility as employers, but barely to any national organisation like a Ministry.

\(^5\) In the original survey, the scale was ‘1=extremely important’ and ‘5=not important at all’, but for the analysis these data were re-coded in SPSS.
V.II Employees

To have a broader view on the category of employees, this category also includes self-employed persons as well as working students. This category will be called ‘employees’ hereinafter. A total of 92 employees completed the survey, so the population for this set of results is n=92.

V.II.I Importance

The questionnaire presented several statements to test the importance given to soft skills by employees.

Firstly, the employees were asked to indicate to what extent soft skills are important for their own labour market position. The employees indicated on a scale of ‘1= not at all’ to ‘5= to a very high degree’ that soft skills are to a very high degree of importance for their labour market position: $\mu=4.2065$ (sd=0.67185).

Secondly, the survey posed a statement to see to what extent employees think that employers take soft skills into account at the appointment of personnel. In other words, are soft skills taken into account with regard to the HR policies of organisations, according to employees for which the scale was ‘1= not at all’ and ‘5= to a very high degree’. The employees indicated they believe that soft skills are taken into account at the appointment stage to a reasonably to high degree: $\mu=3.7065$ (sd=0.84565).

Thirdly, the employees could indicate whether they agree or not with the statements if soft skills are more important than hard skills at the appointment stage or the promotion stage. Employees agree that at the appointment stage, soft skills are slightly more important: $\mu=3.7065$ (sd=0.84565), than at the promotion stage: $\mu=3.6169$ (sd=0.99275).

Lastly, the statement was posed to see whether employees would agree that soft skills are more important than hard skills on a scale where ‘1= strongly disagree’ and ‘5=strongly agree’. The employers indicated that this is neutral: $\mu=3.4348$ (sd=0.79910).

V.II.II Difference

To test the importance given to certain soft skills, the employees were asked to indicate from ‘1=not important at all’ to ‘5=extremely important’\(^6\), the importance of a list of ten soft skills. The employees were not only asked what they themselves deem to be important, but also if they could indicate which of the soft skills are perceived important by employers.

\(^6\) In the original survey, the scale was ‘1=extremely important’ and ‘5=not important at all’, but for the analysis these data were re-coded in SPSS.
The data show employees indicated that employers give the highest values to communication skills: $\mu=4.1087$ (sd=0.74799); responsibility: $\mu=4.0326$ (sd=0.74791); and to professionalism: $\mu=4.0217$ (sd=0.69887). Employees also indicated that they believe employers give the least importance to entrepreneurship: $\mu=3.1957$ (sd=0.82860); self-knowledge: $\mu=3.4457$ (sd=0.93013); and to initiative: $\mu=3.5870$ (sd=0.80044).

When asked which of the soft skills they personally perceive as being important, the employees indicated that communication: $\mu=4.413$ (sd=0.71991); integrity: $\mu=4.3804$ (sd=0.78225); and a positive attitude: $\mu=4.3370$ (sd=0.73045) are most important. Entrepreneurship: $\mu=3.2826$ (sd=0.97582); flexibility: $\mu=3.6413$ (sd=0.79257); and initiative: $\mu=3.8587$ (sd=0.84621) were deemed to be important to a lesser extent.

V.II.III Responsibility

The survey posed the statement that soft skills are trainable and asked employees to indicate whether they agree or not. Sixty-seven out of ninety-two (67 out of 92) of the employees agreed (to a very high extent) that soft skills are indeed trainable. When, as a follow up question they were asked who is responsible for the training of soft skills - where the employees could choose between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Min. OCW), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Min. SZW), the Ministry of Economic Affairs (Min. EZ), the employers, lecturers, parents or the employees themselves, on a scale of ‘1=not at all’ to ‘5=to a very high extent’ - the employees indicated as follows:

1. the employees themselves: $\mu=4.26$ (sd=0.62669);
2. the parents: $\mu=4.15$ (sd=0.70997);
3. the lecturers: $\mu=4.12$ (sd=0.66038);
4. the employers: $\mu=3.77$ (sd=0.71258);
5. the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment: $\mu=3.05$ (sd=1.11300);
6. the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: $\mu=3.01$ (sd=1.10438); and
7. the Ministry of Economic Affairs: $\mu=2.38$ (sd=0.99275).

The data thus shows that the training of soft skills is regarded by employees mainly as their own responsibility, to a reasonable extent the responsibility of employers, and barely to any national organisation like a Ministry.
V.III Policy Makers

The category of policy makers also includes policy advisors. The category will be called ‘policy makers’ hereinafter. A total of 26 policy makers finished the survey, therefore the population is n=26.

V.III.I Importance

The questionnaire presented several statements to test the importance given to soft skills by policy makers. Firstly, the policy makers were asked to indicate to what extent within their organisations soft skills are taken into account with regard to the HR policy, for which the scale was ‘1= not at all’ and ‘5= to a very high degree’. The policy makers indicated that soft skills are taken into account to a reasonably high degree with regard to the HR policy: \( \mu=3.6154 \) (sd=0.85251).

Secondly, the policy makers were asked to what extent soft skills are important at the time of the appointment of an employee and to what extent soft skills are important at the time of the promotion of an employee. Policy makers indicate that at the time of appointment of employees, soft skills are important to a reasonable degree: \( \mu=3.6538 \) (sd=0.84580), and just slightly more important at the stage of promotion: \( \mu=3.7308 \) (sd=0.72430).

Lastly, the statement was posed to see whether policy makers would agree that soft skills are more important than hard skills on a scale where ‘1= strongly disagree’ and ‘5=strongly agree’. The policy makers indicated that this is neutral: \( \mu=3.3421 \) (sd=1.04954).

V.III.II Difference

To test the importance given to certain soft skills, the policy makers were asked to indicate from ‘1=not important at all’ to ‘5=extremely important’, the importance of a list of ten soft skills. The policy makers were not only asked what they themselves deemed to be important, but also if they could indicate which of the soft skills are perceived to be important by employers.

The data show policy makers indicate that employers give the highest values to integrity: \( \mu=4.2308 \) (sd=0.71036); communication skills: \( \mu=4.1154 \) (sd=0.90893); and responsibility: \( \mu=3.8846 \) (sd=0.86380). Policy makers also indicate that least importance is given by employers to entrepreneurship: \( \mu=2.8846 \) (sd=1.21085); self-knowledge: \( \mu=3.3846 \) (sd=0.80384); and to work ethic: \( \mu=3.4231 \) (sd=0.80861).

If then asked which of the soft skills they personally perceived to be important, the policy makers indicated that integrity: \( \mu=4.3846 \) (sd=0.69725); responsibility: \( \mu=4.3077 \) (sd=0.68769); and

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7 In the original survey, the scale was ‘1=extremely important’ and ‘5=not important at all’, but for the analysis these data were re-coded in SPSS.
communication skills: $\mu=4.1923$ (sd=0.74936) are most important. Important to a lesser extent were entrepreneurship: $\mu=3.4615$ (sd=1.10384); flexibility: $\mu=3.8846$ (sd=0.71144); and initiative $\mu=3.8846$ (sd=0.71144).

V.III.III Responsibility

The survey posed the statement that soft skills are trainable and asked policy makers to indicate whether they agree or not. Twenty-three out of twenty-six (23 out of 26) of the policy makers agreed (to a very high extent) that soft skills are indeed trainable. When, as a follow up question they were asked who is responsible for the training of soft skills - where the policy makers could choose between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Min. OCW), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Min. SZW), the Ministry of Economic Affairs (Min. EZ), the employers, lecturers, parents or the employees themselves, on a scale of ‘1=not at all’ to ‘5=to a very high extent’ - the policy makers indicated as follows:

1. the employees themselves: $\mu=4.35$ (sd=0.62880);
2. the parents $\mu=4.31$: (sd=0.67937);
3. the lecturers: $\mu=4.00$ (sd=0.69282);
4. the employers: $\mu=3.92$ (sd=0.79614);
5. the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: $\mu=3.23$ (sd=1.06987);
6. the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment: $\mu=3.19$ (sd=1.05903); and
7. the Ministry of Economic Affairs: $\mu=2.77$ (sd=0.99228).

The data thus shows that the training of soft skills is regarded by policy makers mainly as the employees’ own responsibility, to a reasonable extent the responsibility of employers, and barely to any national organisation like a Ministry.

The survey for the policy makers included several other questions as well. These question were asked to see to what extent policy makers were familiar with policies regarding soft skills and policies regarding labour market discrimination. Twenty-one out of twenty-six (21 out of 26) policy makers mentioned that they were not familiar at all with any policy regarding soft skills and only twelve out of twenty-six (12 out of 26) were familiar with at least one action plan against labour market discrimination. These were selectively sampled policy makers, so it is likely that the average policy maker is even more poorly informed. Two other questions were asked to see whether policy makers were familiar with two words that are frequently used in policies and which are very much related to the field of public administration. These words are: ‘whole-government’ and ‘multi-stakeholder approach’. The concept of ‘whole-government’ was only familiar to three of the twenty-six (3 out of 26) policy makers, while the ‘multi-stakeholder’ approach is more familiar (15 out of 26).
VI. Analysis

Now that the results per group of stakeholders have been shown, this chapter will analyse the results by also adding data on the differences and/or similarities for people with or without a non-western migrant background. This chapter will also analyse whether there are differences in perceptions about the importance of soft skills and their effects on a person’s labour market position when different sectors are taken into account. The population for the following analysis is thus made up of the three groups combined, which is n=152. With this data analysis, this chapter will answer sub questions 2-5 and will come to an answer on how the differences in the perceived effect of soft skills by employers, employees and policy makers can explain the disadvantaged position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market.

This analysis starts with answering the first question: is there a difference between the importance given by employers, employees and policy makers in the perceived effect of soft skills on the labour market position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background? While the means in the data show some gaps in how this is perceived by the different groups (employers: \( \mu=3.8824 \) (sd=0.72883), employees: \( \mu=3.9674 \) (sd=0.90725) and policy makers: \( \mu=4.2308 \) (sd=0.065163)), indicating that policy makers give a much higher importance to the effect of soft skills for people with a non-western migrant background, this is not substantiated by the ANOVA or by the Post Hoc analysis and hence it is not possible to firmly state that there is indeed a significant difference between the groups.

The second question that needs to be analysed: is there a difference in the value given to specific soft skills by the different groups of occupations? Table 6 shows the ranking per soft skill, per occupation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers’ ranking (n=34)</th>
<th>Employees’ ranking (n=92)</th>
<th>Policy makers’ ranking (n=36)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>integrity</td>
<td>communication</td>
<td>integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4118 (sd=0.70141)</td>
<td>4.1087 (sd=0.74799)</td>
<td>4.2038 (sd=0.71036)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionalism</td>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2353 (sd=0.74093)</td>
<td>4.0326 (sd=0.74791)</td>
<td>4.1154 (sd=0.90893)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>professionalism</td>
<td>responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2059 (sd=0.59183)</td>
<td>4.0217 (sd=0.74093)</td>
<td>3.8846 (sd=0.86380)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>positive attitude</td>
<td>professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0882 (sd=0.66822)</td>
<td>3.9891 (sd=0.80513)</td>
<td>3.7692 (sd=0.81524)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flexibility</td>
<td>integrity</td>
<td>initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0588 (sd=0.60006)</td>
<td>3.9239 (sd=1.04022)</td>
<td>3.5769 (sd=1.02657)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive attitude</td>
<td>work ethic</td>
<td>positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0000 (sd=0.77850)</td>
<td>3.8370 (sd=0.84225)</td>
<td>3.5385 (sd=0.81146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work ethic</td>
<td>flexibility</td>
<td>flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0000 (sd=0.65134)</td>
<td>3.7826 (sd=0.76784)</td>
<td>3.5385 (sd=0.85934)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
<td>initiative</td>
<td>work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7059 (sd=0.83591)</td>
<td>3.5870 (sd=0.80044)</td>
<td>3.4231 (sd=0.80861)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiative</td>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5882 (sd=0.82085)</td>
<td>3.4457 (sd=0.93013)</td>
<td>3.3846 (sd=0.80384)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entrepreneurship</td>
<td>entrepreneurship</td>
<td>entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2647 (sd=0.93124)</td>
<td>3.1957 (sd=0.82860)</td>
<td>2.8846 (sd=1.21085)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: ranking per soft skill by employers, employees and policy makers
Overall, the data show clearly that all the soft skills are perceived to be reasonably to very important across all three groups. However, the data also show that employers structurally give higher scores to all the soft skills. After a comparison, the data show several soft skills which are valued significantly differently to others ($p<0.05$). These are flexibility: ($F=3.621$, $p=0.029$); work ethic: ($F=4.065$, $p=0.019$); integrity: ($F=3.844$, $p=0.024$); and positive attitude: ($F=3.463$, $p=0.034$). One soft skill shows a marginal significance ($p<0.10$), which is professionalism: ($F=2.888$, $p=0.059$).

To better understand these differences, a Post Hoc Analysis was done to see which group or groups differ most from each other. For the soft skills ‘professionalism’, ‘flexibility’, ‘work ethic’ and ‘positive attitude’ there is a significant difference between employers and policy makers. All four soft skills are perceived to be (much) more important by employers than by policy makers. For the soft skill ‘work ethic’, there is also a significant difference between employees and policy makers, which is valued higher by the employees than by the policy makers. The soft skill ‘integrity’ significantly differs between employers and employees. Where employers see integrity as the top-priority soft skill, employees perceive it as being less important. Lastly, the soft skill ‘positive attitude’ is also significantly different for employees compared to policy makers and also in this case valued higher by the employees.

The survey also asked the employees and policy makers how they would personally value these soft skills without taking into account what an employer or organisation/company would think of them. This question led to the ranking in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employees’ personal ranking (n=92)</th>
<th>Policy makers’ personal ranking (n=26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4130 (sd=0.61398)</td>
<td>4.3846 (sd=0.69725)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrity</td>
<td>responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3804 (sd=0.78225)</td>
<td>4.3077 (sd=0.61769)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive attitude</td>
<td>communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3370 (sd=0.78347)</td>
<td>4.1923 (sd=0.74936)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3152 (sd=0.62774)</td>
<td>4.1154 (sd=0.71144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
<td>positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1848 (sd=0.78347)</td>
<td>4.0385 (sd=0.72004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionalism</td>
<td>work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1413 (sd=0.71991)</td>
<td>4.0385 (sd=0.77360)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work ethic</td>
<td>professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8804 (sd=0.73891)</td>
<td>3.9615 (sd=0.77360)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiative</td>
<td>initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8587 (sd=0.84621)</td>
<td>3.8846 (sd=0.71144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flexibility</td>
<td>flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6413 (sd=0.79257)</td>
<td>3.8846 (sd=0.71144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entrepreneurship</td>
<td>entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2826 (sd=0.97582)</td>
<td>3.4615 (sd=1.10384)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: personal ranking of soft skills by employees and policy makers

The data show that compared to what employees and policy makers think that the employers deem important, employees personally value the importance of ‘flexibility’ lower than what they think employers do, and for policy makers ‘self-knowledge’ is personally valued higher. This shows that except for ‘flexibility’, all other soft skills are more important to employees and policy makers on a personal level.
The study also checked for any existing differences between the importance given in different sectors and found that, generally speaking, the soft skills ‘professionalism’ (F=1.826, p=0.098), ‘flexibility’ (F=1.997, p=0.070) and ‘integrity’ (F=1.860, p=0.092) show marginal significance (p<0.10). After zooming into these soft skills, it becomes clear that ‘professionalism’ and ‘flexibility’ are valued significantly higher (p<0.05) in the IT sector than in other sectors. Another sector where the scores for the soft skills are very high is the sector ‘Staff, Organisation and Strategy’. The healthcare sector deviates in such a way that it attaches significantly less value to flexibility than four other sectors and the soft skill ‘integrity’ is valued significantly lower in the commerce and administration sector compared to three other sectors.

The third question will take into account another background variable, the most important one for this study: ethnicity. This question is posed to see whether there is a difference in what skills are perceived to be important by people with or without a non-western migrant background. See the means in Table 8.

Table 8: (significantly) different soft skills when tested for ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft skill</th>
<th>with migration background (n=92)</th>
<th>without migration background (n=26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>flexibility</td>
<td>3.9000 (sd=0.75028)</td>
<td>3.6613 (sd=0.76702)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication skills</td>
<td>4.2222 (sd=0.73098)</td>
<td>4.0000 (sd=0.74658)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibility</td>
<td>4.1556 (sd=0.70170)</td>
<td>3.8226 (sd=0.77933)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entrepreneurship</td>
<td>3.2889 (sd=0.91485)</td>
<td>2.9677 (sd=0.92271)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
<td>3.6111 (sd=0.95629)</td>
<td>3.3226 (sd=0.76339)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the ANOVA analysis, the data show that there is a marginal significance (p<0.10) for the skills ‘flexibility’ (F=3.649, p=0.058) and ‘communication skills’ (F=3.334, p=0.070) and that there is a significant difference (p=0.05) for the skills ‘responsibility’ (F=7.549, p=0.007), ‘entrepreneurship’ (F=4.492, p=0.036) and ‘self-knowledge’ (F=3.920, p=0.05). Furthermore, from the ANOVA analysis based on what the people personally think is more important, the study shows a marginal significance (p<0.10) for ‘entrepreneurship’ (F=3.179, p=0.077) and a significant difference (p<0.05) in ‘initiative’ (F=6.063, p=0.015) and ‘positive attitude’ (F=4.288, p=0.041). See the means in Table 9.

Table 9: (significantly) different soft skills when tested for ethnicity on a personal level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft skill</th>
<th>with migration background (n=90)</th>
<th>without migration background (n=62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>entrepreneurship</td>
<td>3.4571 (sd=0.94310)</td>
<td>3.1250 (sd=1.06441)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiative</td>
<td>4.0143 (sd=0.78929)</td>
<td>3.6458 (sd=0.81187)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive attitude</td>
<td>4.3857 (sd=0.72817)</td>
<td>4.1042 (sd=0.72169)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall pattern is that the value given to certain soft skills is higher for people with a non-western migrant background than for people without, albeit sometimes only marginally. This was also tested by another question in the survey that asked whether soft skills are more important than hard skills. Especially at the appointment stage, the study shows a significant difference in that people with a non-western migrant background more often agree (\(\mu=3.39; \, sd=0.971\)) that soft skills are more important than hard skills at the time of appointment (\(F=4.324, \, p=0.040\)) than people without a non-western migrant background (\(\mu=2.97; \, sd=0.836\)). There are no real differences in whether soft skills are important to their current position and whether soft skills are important at the promotion stage. They all agree that soft skills are important.

When the respondents were asked to indicate whether having more soft skills helps to acquire a better position, both the respondents with a non-western migrant background (\(\mu=3.95; \, sd=0.956\)) and those without a non-western migrant background (\(\mu=4.00; \, sd=0.816\)) agree. There are also no differences found in the way they apply for a function. When asked whether there is a difference in the set of skills of people with a non-western migrant background and those without a non-western migrant background, the data show that people with a non-western migrant background, agree to a high level (\(\mu=3.49; \, sd=1.135\)), while people without a non-western migrant background (\(\mu=2.45; \, sd=0.888\)) barely agree. This is a significant difference (\(F=19.833, \, p=0.000\)). Whether this means that people with a non-western migrant background have more or less soft skills than people without a migrant background is also tested, however in the statement there is no clear direction given to test this difference. So it would only be suggestive to state that people with a migrant background may think that they possess less soft skills than people without a migrant background, due to the very low score given on this question (\(\mu=2.72; \, sd=1.067\)).

This leaves only the fourth question to be answered, which is to examine whose responsibility it is to train soft skills, according to employers, employees and policy makers. In the results chapter, the means of these analyses are already given. There are no differences in the responsibility given to the different stakeholders. However, there are differences, almost all significant (\(p<0.05\)), between the level of importance given by people with a non-western migrant background and people without a non-western migrant background.
Overall, the pattern is that people with a non-western migrant background put the responsibility with many more different parties than only themselves, and this is where the major differences are with people without a non-western migrant background. Especially the responsibility given to the various ministries and to the lecturers is significantly higher (see Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>responsible</th>
<th>with migrant background</th>
<th>without migrant background</th>
<th>significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>4.2667 (sd=0.69992)</td>
<td>4.3548 (sd=0.54613)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>4.2222 (sd=0.64959)</td>
<td>3.8548 (sd=0.69770)</td>
<td>F=11.052, p=0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>4.2222 (sd=0.69956)</td>
<td>4.1774 (sd=0.66590)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>3.9000 (sd=0.73515)</td>
<td>3.6774 (sd=0.74160)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. OCW</td>
<td>3.3111 (sd=0.97893)</td>
<td>2.7258 (sd=1.17584)</td>
<td>F=11.121, p=0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. SZW</td>
<td>3.2889 (sd=0.99712)</td>
<td>2.6774 (sd=1.15623)</td>
<td>F=12.108, p=0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min. EZ</td>
<td>2.7111 (sd=1.01941)</td>
<td>2.2419 (sd=0.95274)</td>
<td>F=8.198, p=0.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: who is responsible for the training of soft skills (difference of means with and without migrant background)

This brings the analysis to conclude that while all the stakeholders (employers, employees and policy makers) see the importance of soft skills, and while there are no major differences in the ranking of certain skills over others, the study did find significant differences in the different sectors and when tested for ethnicity. So, to partly answer how the differences in the perceived effect of soft skills by employers, employees and policy makers can explain the disadvantaged position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market, the study showed that while employers are mainly taking soft skills into account at the promotion and appointment phase, employees think that soft skills are mainly important in HR policy and especially important for employees with a non-western migrant background. Policy makers indicate that soft skills are important in general but slightly more important for people with a non-western migrant background. This might be interpreted as an existing mismatch between employers on the one hand and employees and policy makers on the other hand. The study has also tested this question and asked employers, employees and policy makers whether they think that there is a mismatch in what employers deem important skills and what employees deem important. Employers think that there is hardly a mismatch ($\mu=2.9412$; $sd=0.88813$), employees agree more that there might be a mismatch ($\mu=3.3804$; $sd=0.84959$) and policy makers are quite neutral in their indication ($\mu=3.0769$; $sd=0.68836$). This leads to the analysis that there is a significant difference between employers and employees ($F=3.907$, p=0.022).
VII. Conclusion and Discussion

VII.I Conclusion

The conclusion of this study will start by dividing the main question into four separate, though very much related, questions: i) how does current policy explain the disadvantaged position of people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market? ii) why is this explanation insufficiently effective? iii) how can differences in the perceived effect of soft skills explain the disadvantaged labour market position of people with a non-western migrant background? and iv) what implications could that have on policy?

The first question has been extensively discussed and we have found that the main explanation in current policy is based on differences in human and social capital, including a lack of educational and language skills, the unfamiliarity with where to get information, and how to best use this information. Furthermore, and more frequently, discrimination and how to get rid of discrimination on the labour market form the focal points of policy. This study has argued that employability and soft skills theories should be taken more into account when dealing with issues regarding the disadvantaged positions of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market. In line with the categorisation made by Hisschemoller and Hoppe (1995), this policy issue might be categorised as an ‘unstructured problem’. All the stakeholders agree that the situation should and could improve, but there is no certainty about the knowledge, creating a mismatch between the policy makers, employers and employees. This study showed that there is no clear starting point to tackle this problem. Many of the current policies focus on target groups, putting too much emphasis on the social categorisation and discrimination discourse and basically reifying the problem. In line with Scholten (2019), this study argued that these problems could be overcome by:

- including all the relevant stakeholders in the policy process instead of focusing on solutions;
- taking the process of policy making more seriously;
- developing new visions and ideas within strategic alliances or actor networks (research and policy);
- working towards generic approaches instead of addressing certain groups specifically.

In order to discuss or change the narrative/discourse in research and policy, certain convenient ideas and theories should be ‘challenged’. This would allow for interesting insights or new explanatory factors which have not yet been taken into account or only studied from a certain angle. This study was a starting point to try to find other explanatory factors and focused on a mismatch regarding the set of soft skills necessary in the labour market. It has showed that the convenient idea that this problem can be ‘solved’ by introducing quotas or by signing charters in organisations (public
and private) or by introducing anonymous application procedures, is too easy a way out and will definitely not solve the problem. The study further argued that what one solution could be to change the narrative from one that is focusing on the negative sides to one that is focusing on the positive sides, such as employees with a non-western migrant background who are in relatively good positions. Their stories could be a starting point for changing the narrative. This will not help to solve the problem of the disadvantaged labour market position of highly educated employees with a non-western migrant background entirely, but it could be a start.

Furthermore, the literature review showed that there is little to no empirical evidence that focuses on the effect of soft skills or cultural codes on a person’s labour market position, while all the relevant stakeholders always mention these kind of skills in the discussions or interviews. The study concludes, in line with the World Economic Forum and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2017), that it is of utmost importance, in a changing environment and a changing labour market due to relentless technological advancements, to prepare all the stakeholders (supply and demand side including the policy makers) to remain employable. As stated in this study, this cannot be achieved merely by providing training in hard skills. An emphasis on soft skills is needed, especially for the groups in society who are already struggling.

Another very important aim of this study was to try to identify whether people perceive soft skills as being important for their labour market position and by involving all the relevant stakeholders in this process, identifying a possible mismatch in the labour market when it comes to soft skills. Perhaps this could be one of those unexplained factors in this very complex problem and explain the disadvantaged position of highly educated Dutch people with a non-western migrant background. The study concludes that soft skills are indeed considered very important in relation to a person’s labour market position. In all cases, employers value soft skills higher than employees and policy makers. Overall, there are no big differences between the sectors, but it is clear that especially in the IT and HR/Personnel sector, the data show very high values given for specific soft skills, while the Healthcare and Commerce sector give slightly lower values for soft skills. The study did also not find significantly different values to certain soft skills over others. When taking ethnicity into account, the data show that there are only marginal differences, but it is clear that people with a non-western migrant background value soft skills higher than people without a non-western migrant background. This mismatch, although not always significantly demonstrated, might indeed partly explain the disadvantaged position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market.

Moreover, the study also made it clear that tackling complex issues is not something that can be dealt with from top-down or bottom-up only. Both sides need to be involved with all the intermediaries as well. As discussed in this study, dealing with complex issues like the disadvantaged
labour market position of highly educated employees with a non-western migrant background in the Dutch labour market is an issue that involves responsibilities from a multitude of stakeholders. This is certainly not an issue in which the government can prescribe how citizens, companies and other institutions/organisations should function. The policy making and the importance of this issue can be acknowledged and supported in a top-down structure, but the bottom-up structure is in this case perhaps equally important, if not more important. For complex issues like this, support should be created and all relevant stakeholders should be connected. This will lead to diversity of stakeholders and therefore to diversity in thoughts and points of view. This study showed that there is indeed a difference of thought regarding the importance of soft skills on the labour market position of highly educated employees with a non-western migrant background. To remove mismatches, it is recommended to further stimulate knowledge exchange between public and private organisations and to keep reflecting on the policy processes and share learning processes. The data showed that the relevant stakeholders in these kinds of complex issues are primarily the employees themselves, their parents and their lecturers; to a lesser extent employers, and again to a lesser extent the ministries. This could ideally lead to policies and research that take account several points of view from a multitude of stakeholders and from a wide range of disciplines.

Multi-level governance and multidisciplinary research are in this sense the rule instead of the exception, though unfortunately very few policy makers are familiar with these terms. This diversity in policy, research and practice (the stakeholders in the process of governance) will eventually produce diverse views and perspectives on complex problems and then indeed, in the words of Colebatch, it is time to recognise that ‘the practice of governing has become negotiative and collaborative’ (2009: 59). This study showed that a mismatch exists that leads to different expectations and to insufficiently effective explanations and/or solutions for the problem. Furthermore, this study identified a multitude of scientific evidence that soft skills do have an effect on the labour market position of employees and therefore argues for a multi-level and cross-sectoral approach in dealing with this issue. It is definitely not necessary for the relevant parties (local, national or international) to reinvent the wheel. By organising reflexive dialogue, learning throughout the policy process and sharing best practices, a more effective framework can be developed and improved.

The study also discussed that focusing research and targeting policies to specific groups has a negative impact on the image of the members of those particular groups, whether they are part of it or not. Thus, in deliberating what implications this might have on policies, this study concludes that when dealing with this kind of complex problem, multiple disciplines and fields of study and all relevant stakeholders should cooperate. In this way, the production of knowledge during the policy process will be up to date and new frameworks and visions can be developed and moved forward towards a possible solution.
This study ambitiously started out by looking for another explanatory factor instead of discrimination to answer the research question. It required more empirical research on the importance of soft skills, cultural codes and social capital with regard to the disadvantaged position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background on the Dutch labour market.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted, taking into account multiple disciplines. Only by sharing knowledge, can new visions and frameworks be developed. Public policy theory and policy analysis on their own cannot fully explain the disadvantaged position of highly educated people with a non-western background on the Dutch labour market. Insights from occupational psychology, economics, sociology and political science have great value in trying to find other explanations. In accordance with the multi-level governance and cross-sectoral approach, this study has involved the most relevant stakeholders in this process. The result was three surveys that were developed with the input from these actors. By having extensive conversations with employees, employers and policy makers, statements and questions were presented in the survey that came directly from the field. Applying a targeted sample, this survey was sent to employees, employers and policy makers. Although there were many respondents (n=237), unfortunately not all of them completed the entire survey and the final number of respondents was n=198.

The policy analysis conducted in this study showed that current policies are too focused on specific groups and that too much emphasis is placed on discrimination which creates a process of reification. Furthermore, the policy analysis showed that attention for other explanatory factors, like soft skills, is increasing, but that it is not very clear who the main actors are, what the priorities are and what the effect of certain policies could be. A possible explanation is that not all actors are involved in the policy process and that because of this a knowledge gap also exists. Another explanation could be that labour market orientation and training of soft skills necessary for employability are not part of the primary objective of many policies.

The survey analysis tried to find a different explanation and was based on certain expectations, such as: 1) there is a difference in the set of soft skills of employees with a non-western migrant background and employees without a migrant background and this leads to a mismatch in what employers, employees and policy makers deem important. Furthermore, I expected that 2) employees with a migrant background who have developed a set of soft skills have better positions than those who do not. But what I was really concerned about was that 3) policy makers were not fully aware of the importance of finding new explanatory factors.

The survey results show that all three expectations are far more nuanced than I had thought at the start of this research. This is, of course, partly due to the group of respondents. While the response
rates from the different functions was well distributed (employers 23%, employees 60% and policy makers 17%), this research and its research method do have limitations. For example, I was unable to achieve a broader scope and a good mix of high and low educated men and women to participate in the survey. The respondents were mainly middle-aged highly educated women. Almost all ethnicities were represented in the sample, but as I have argued in the context chapter, it might be very useful to lessen the focus on ethnicity and focus policy and research more on the real issue, which in this case is the disadvantaged position of highly educated Dutch people with a non-western migrant background. It should not matter what this ‘non-western migrant background’ means. It is much more important to see how the disadvantaged position can be addressed. As discussed in several studies (Vertovec and Weissendorf, 2010; Dekker et al., 2015; Bekkers et al., 2017; Scholten, 2018), by focusing on specific ethnic categories and thereby creating policy target groups, we are only keeping existing differences in place. Research and policy should focus on the entire society, as inclusive and diverse as it is. Moreover, in policy documents the concept of ‘whole government’ and a ‘multi-stakeholder approach’ are very good ways to present complex issues. That said, if barely any policy maker is aware of the meaning and working of these concepts, this might be problematic in itself.

The survey data showed that a mismatch exists between employers and employees and that the value/importance given to soft skills is different for employees, employers and policy makers. This might partly explain the disadvantaged position. The data did not show that employees with a non-western migrant background with a certain set of soft skills, necessarily have a better labour market position. It did however show that the importance of soft skills is increasing - in some sectors more than in others - and the literature review showed that in the future, especially for groups with a disadvantaged position, soft skills might be essential.

VII.III Reflections for further research & policy

It needs no further clarification that the above creates responsibilities for all stakeholders involved. Our ambition should be to maintain a competitive position in Europe and the world, both economically and socially. A widely agreed strategy regarding lifelong learning or skills that are geared for the future, from all sectors and from all layers of government, including regular interactions between science and policy, with clear responsibilities and actions should be developed. The attendance of all groups in this process should be encouraged and people should be empowered to not only take part in this process, but also to invest in their own future (and yes: it should be made very clear that taking part in research is also an investment in your own future). By means of deliberative platforms, all the different and relevant stakeholders are in a position to contribute to solutions that are pragmatic and sustainable, without excluding or preferring certain groups over others. If this is represented in a scheme, the policy process in complex cases could look as follows:
Great care should also be taken when using data on all kinds of groups who are not being addressed effectively. Institutions like the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), the Social And Economic Council (SER) and the Central Planning Agency (CPB), produce highly important and relevant policy advice and research. However, I do believe that these important institutions should also work together in finding more efficient and effective ways in gathering data from target groups who remain difficult to reach. According to Kjaer (2004), this will increase the legitimacy and accountability of certain policies.

All stakeholders (employees, employers and policy makers, but also politicians and the media) should be aware of the impact of decisions regarding this complex issue. Commitment is not so much created by signing charters. Commitment is achieved by raising awareness and acknowledging the real problem. The aim should be to strive for a multi-level and cross-sectoral approach. Thus multiple levels (from local to global) could be and should be involved in the decision making and policy process. At the EU level, country-specific policy recommendations are given for educational and labour market policies. At a national level, government is trying to stimulate more participation, companies themselves are trying to change their core values and are drafting business plans and guidelines to deal with this issue. At a local level, pragmatic actions are taken to deal with the issue such as organising training and workshops in CV building and motivational letter writing. This study argues that public-private cooperation should be encouraged and that it is paramount that all parties involved cooperate more, or at least are open for a reflexive dialogue, so that policies will be developed that take into account as many insights as possible. All stakeholders should recognize the impact of their policies on the labour market outcome of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background. Based on that recognition, everyone should make the investments necessary for improvement of the situation. Parents should take their responsibility by learning their children about general life skills. Employees themselves should invest in acquiring the necessary skills to become and/or remain employable. Employers should clearly communicate about the skills that are necessary for the job. Recruiters should look beyond CVs and change the common procedures for selection and promotion. Policy makers should involve all the stakeholders in the policy process. Complex issues should be studied from different angles before policy is designed. Involving all stakeholders will lead to different lenses instead of the current negative focus. Researchers must invest more time in finding explanatory factors beyond the usual one of labour market discrimination. The implementation of policies should be orchestrated on all levels of policy making. Actions should be taken accordingly and be monitored constantly by all relevant stakeholders. Actions that have not led to improvements should be changed immediately and the shortcomings should be evaluated so that policy learning can take place. In the end, both policies and the situation of the stakeholders will then be improved. This
might require different structures and different roles in the existing institutions, but as stated before: change is needed for improvement.

A cross-sectional, multi-level and multidisciplinary approach that creates widely accepted and recognised solutions should be considered in the policy making process. It is a loss if problems are tackled from one single policy frame or studied from one single discipline. For educational and labour market policy, I would recommend to start training soft skills from a very early stage in cooperation with employers. Employers know what skills are needed for future jobs. By cooperating with employers, employees can become familiar with the labour market and employers can become familiar with the employees. The focus should especially be on the sectors that involve much interpersonal contact, like healthcare and education, because many of the other sectors are rapidly being automated. Some best practices could perhaps be shared with countries who, in terms of soft skills training, are ahead of the Netherlands, like Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Finland and Germany.

I truly believe that in the coming generations, problems will gradually disappear and the labour market position of highly educated people with a non-western migrant background will improve. This does, however, require effort and commitment from all parties. The responsibility of employers is to invest in empowerment and lifelong learning, transforming recruitment and promotion processes so that talented people, regardless of their background, can get access to the positions they pursue. The government’s responsibility, in the words of Van Vliet, is to, ‘change the social welfare state into a social investment state’ (2019:12). The responsibility of employees is to keep working and learning and to remain employable in a changing labour market. The media also has a great responsibility in shedding light on positive image-building. For the educators and parents, perhaps the most difficult responsibilities are motivating, empowering and supporting this new generation.

VII.IV Limitations

While the initial idea was to get a wide range of employees and employers from different sectors and with large differences in educational attainment and also from different parts of the Netherlands, it became clear that certain sectors were overrepresented in the sample and especially highly educated people from the Randstad (The Hague, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Utrecht) participated in the survey. This makes it very hard to make comparisons between these groups. Furthermore, while a very large group of employees with a non-western migrant background were contacted to take part in the survey, less than half of them did so (46.5%), whilst of those with no migrant background, around 52% participated. As Feskens et al. argue, to be able to make ‘good estimates of subpopulations’, a better ethnic response rate is needed (2007: 388). With regard to the group of lower and higher educated

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male or other underrepresented groups in research, it is also very important to find ways to get them more involved, otherwise this might lead to biases in the research outcomes (Stoop, 2005; Feskens et al., 2007; Dagevos et al., 2013). Lastly, as in any survey, the nature of the questions/statements carries the risk of socially desirable answers. If this study were to be repeated with a larger sample, the results might be slightly different.
VIII. References


Appendix I: survey

Start of Block: Intro

I.1
Beste lezer,

Voor mijn onderzoek naar de effecten van soft skills op arbeidsmarktposities in Nederland, ben ik op zoek naar werknemers, werkgevers en beleidsmakers/beleidsadviseurs. U kunt hieronder in het eerste scherm aangeven of u de enquête als werknemer, werkgever of beleidsmaker/beleidsadviseur wilt invullen.

De enquête zal maximaal 6 (zes) minuten van uw tijd in beslag nemen, en die korte tijd zal mij enorm helpen bij mijn onderzoek. Alle gegevens zullen vanzelfsprekend anoniem worden verwerkt en met de data zal vertrouwelijk worden omgegaan. Alvast heel veel dank voor uw gewaardeerde input.

Hartelijke groet, Amir

☐ Leidinggevende/werkgever/recruiter/hr-personeel

☐ Werknemer/zzp-er/werkstudent

☐ Beleidsmedewerker/beleidsadviseur

End of Block: Intro

Start of Block: Algemene vragen
A.1 Wat is uw geslacht?

- Man
- Vrouw
- Anders

A.2 Wat is uw geboortejaar? Kies uit de lijst:

▼ 1930 ... 2010

A.3 Wat is uw geboorteland? Kies uit de lijst:

▼ Afghanistan ... Zwitserland

A.4 Wat is het geboorteland van uw ouder (1)? Kies uit de lijst:

▼ Afghanistan ... Zwitserland
A.5 Wat is het geboorteland van uw ouder (2)? Kies uit de lijst:

- Afghanistan ...
- Bulgaria
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Duitsland
- Ecuador
- Egypte
- Nederland
- Perzië
- Russische federatie
- Tsjechië
- Zwitserland

A.6 Uw hoogst genoten opleiding:

- Mbo
- Hbo
- Wo
- Anders, namelijk: ________________________________________________

A.7 Uw hoogst behaalde diploma:

- Mbo
- Hbo
- Wo
- Anders, namelijk: ________________________________________________
A.8 Wat is uw studierichting? Kies uit de lijst:

- Aarde en Milieu ... Techniek

A.9 Wat is uw huidige arbeidssituatie?

- Bepaalde Tijd
- Deeltijd
- Freelance / ZZP
- Onbepaalde Tijd
- Stage
- Tijdelijk
- Voltijd
- Vrijwilligerswerk
- Werkzoekend
A.10 Wat is uw huidige arbeidspositie?

- Leidinggevend
- Management
- Ondersteunend/uitvoerend
- Anders, namelijk: ____________________________________________

A.11 Wat is uw huidige sector waarin u werkzaam bent? Kies uit de lijst:

- Automatisering en ICT ...
- Toerisme en recreatie

A.12 Hoe groot is de organisatie waarin uw werkzaam bent?

- micro = minder dan 10
- klein = minder dan 50
- middelgroot = minder dan 250
- groot = meer dan 250
A.13 Wat is uw bruto salarisindicatie?

-  
- 1000-2000
- 2000-3000
- 3000-4000
- 4000-5000
- >5000

End of Block: Algemene vragen

Start of Block: LG

L.1 Binnen onze organisatie wordt er bij keuzes met betrekking tot personeelsbeleid rekening gehouden met soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate
L.2 Soft skills zijn van belang bij het aanstellen van personeel. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate

L.3 Soft skills zijn van belang bij de promotie en/of doorstroom van het personeel. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate
L.4 Soft skills zijn belangrijker dan hard skills (meetbare, functionele of technische vaardigheden). (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens
L.5 In welke mate zijn onderstaande soft skills van belang in uw organisatie? (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft skill</th>
<th>Uitermate belangrijk</th>
<th>Zeer belangrijk</th>
<th>Redelijk belangrijk</th>
<th>Niet erg belangrijk</th>
<th>Helemaal niet belangrijk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionaliteit</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibiliteit</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communicatievaardigheden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arbeidsethos</td>
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<td>Verantwoordelijkheid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integriteit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ondernemerschap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiatiefrijk</td>
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<td>Positieve houding</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Zelfkennis</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
L.6 Soft skills zijn aan te leren. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

☐ zeer mee oneens

☐ mee oneens

☐ neutraal

☐ mee eens

☐ zeer mee eens

L.7 Onze organisatie heeft voldoende inzicht in de soft skills van het personeel. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

☐ zeer mee oneens

☐ mee oneens

☐ neutraal

☐ mee eens

☐ zeer mee eens
L.8 Werknemers met meer soft skills hebben een betere positie dan werknemers met minder soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

○ zeer mee oneens

○ mee oneens

○ neutraal

○ mee eens

○ zeer mee eens

L.9 Werknemers met een migratieachtergrond met meer soft skills hebben een betere positie dan medewerkers met een migratieachtergrond met minder soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

○ zeer mee oneens

○ mee oneens

○ neutraal

○ mee eens

○ zeer mee eens
L.10 Er bestaat een verschil tussen de soft skills-set van werknemers met een migratieachtergrond en werknemers zonder migratieachtergrond. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens

L.11 Er bestaat m.b.t. soft skills een mismatch tussen wat werkgevers belangrijk vinden en wat werknemers belangrijk vinden. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens
L.12 In welke mate is het de verantwoordelijkheid van de volgende actoren om soft skills te trainen? (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actoren</th>
<th>Helemaal niet</th>
<th>Nauwelijks</th>
<th>In redelijke mate</th>
<th>In hoge mate</th>
<th>In zeer hoge mate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministerie van Onderwijs Cultuur &amp; Wetenschap</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministerie van Sociale Zaken &amp; Werkgelegenheid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministerie van Economische Zaken</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Werkgevers</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onderwijzers/docenten</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ouders</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigen verantwoordelijkheid</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E.1 Als u eventuele op-/aanmerkingen heeft, dan kunt u dat hieronder aangeven.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

End of Block: LG

Start of Block: Einde - Email vraag

68
E.2 Als u op de hoogte gehouden wilt worden van de resultaten van dit onderzoek, kunt u hieronder uw emailadres invullen.

________________________________________________________________________

End of Block: Einde - Email vraag

Start of Block: WN

W.1 Soft skills zijn van belang voor mijn arbeidsmarktpositie. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate
W.2 Bedrijven/organisaties houden rekening met soft skills bij het aannemen van personeel. (Klik/tap hier voor de [soft skills beschrijving](#))

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate

W.3 Soft skills zijn belangrijker dan hard skills (meetbare, functionele of technische vaardigheden) [om aangenomen te worden](#). (Klik/tap hier voor de [soft skills beschrijving](#))

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens
W.4 Soft skills zijn belangrijker dan hard skills (meetbare, functionele of technische vaardigheden) bij promotie en doorstroom. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

☐ zeer mee oneens

☐ mee oneens

☐ neutraal

☐ mee eens

☐ zeer mee eens
W.5 Kunt u aangeven welke van de onderstaande soft skills volgens u van belang worden geacht door werkgevers? (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft skills</th>
<th>Uitermate belangrijk</th>
<th>Zeer belangrijk</th>
<th>Redelijk belangrijk</th>
<th>Niet erg belangrijk</th>
<th>Helemaal niet belangrijk</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
W.6 Kunt u aangeven welke van onderstaande soft skills u het belangrijkst vindt? (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft skill</th>
<th>Uitermate belangrijk</th>
<th>Zeer belangrijk</th>
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<th>Niet erg belangrijk</th>
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<tr>
<td>Zelfkennis</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
W.7 Soft skills zijn aan te leren. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens

-------------------------------

W.8 Mijn huidige positie heb ik te danken aan mijn soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens

-------------------------------
W.9 Werknemers met meer soft skills hebben een betere positie dan werknemers met minder soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens

W.10 Werknemers met een migratieachtergrond met meer soft skills hebben een betere positie dan medewerkers met een migratieachtergrond met minder soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens

---
W.11 Er bestaat een verschil tussen de soft skills-set van werknemers met een migratieachtergrond en werknemers zonder migratieachtergrond. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens

- mee oneens

- neutraal

- mee eens

- zeer mee eens

W.12 Werknemers met een migratie achtergrond hebben meer soft skills dan werknemers zonder migratie achtergrond.

- zeer mee oneens

- mee oneens

- neutraal

- mee eens

- zeer mee eens
W.13
Er bestaat m.b.t. soft skills een mismatch tussen wat werkgevers belangrijk vinden en wat werknemers belangrijk vinden. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

☐ zeer mee oneens
☐ mee oneens
☐ neutraal
☐ mee eens
☐ zeer mee eens

W.14 Ik vermeld mijn soft skills op mijn cv. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

☐ Helemaal niet
☐ Nauwelijks
☐ In redelijke mate
☐ In hoge mate
☐ In zeer hoge mate
W.15 Ik vermeld mijn soft skills in mijn motivatiebrief. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

○ Helemaal niet
○ Nauwelijks
○ In redelijke mate
○ In hoge mate
○ In zeer hoge mate

W.16 Het vermelden van soft skills levert een positieve bijdage aan de kansen op de arbeidsmarkt. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

○ zeer mee oneens
○ mee oneens
○ neutraal
○ mee eens
○ zeer mee eens
W.17 In welke mate is het de verantwoordelijkheid van de volgende actoren om soft skills te trainen? (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helemaal niet</th>
<th>Nauwelijks</th>
<th>In redelijke mate</th>
<th>In hoge mate</th>
<th>In zeer hoge mate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministerie van Onderwijs Cultuur &amp; Wetenschap</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministerie van Sociale Zaken &amp; Werkgelegenheid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministerie van Economische Zaken</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Werkgevers</td>
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<td>Eigen verantwoordelijkheid</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
B.1 Binnen onze organisatie wordt er bij keuzes met betrekking tot personeelsbeleid rekening gehouden met soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate

B.2 Soft skills zijn van belang bij het aanstellingsbeleid van personeel. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate
B.3 Soft skills zijn van belang bij de promotie en/of doorstroom van het personeel. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate

B.4 Soft skills zijn belangrijker dan hard skills (meetbare, functionele of technische vaardigheden). (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens
B.5 In welke mate zijn onderstaande soft skills van belang in uw organisatie? (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft skill</th>
<th>Uitermate belangrijk</th>
<th>Zeer belangrijk</th>
<th>Redelijk belangrijk</th>
<th>Niet erg belangrijk</th>
<th>Helemaal niet belangrijk</th>
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<td>Professionaliteit</td>
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</table>
B.6 Kunt u aangeven welke van de onderstaande soft skills het belangrijkst vindt? (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

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<th></th>
<th>Uitermate belangrijk</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
B.7 Soft skills zijn aan te leren. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens

B.8 Werknemers met meer soft skills hebben een betere positie dan werknemers met minder soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens
B.9 Werknemers met een migratieachtergrond met meer soft skills hebben een betere positie dan medewerkers met een migratieachtergrond met minder soft skills. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens

B.10 Er bestaat een verschil tussen de soft skills-set van werknemers met een migratieachtergrond en werknemers zonder migratieachtergrond. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens
B.11 Werknemers met een migratie achtergrond hebben meer soft skills dan werknemers zonder migratie achtergond.

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens

B.12 Er bestaat m.b.t. soft skills een mismatch tussen wat werkgevers belangrijk vinden en wat werknemers belangrijk vinden. (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- zeer mee oneens
- mee oneens
- neutraal
- mee eens
- zeer mee eens
B.13 Bent u bekend met actieplannen van de overheid m.b.t. soft skills? (Klik/tap hier voor de soft skills beschrijving)

- Nee
- Ja, welke? 

B.14 Bent u bekend met actieplannen van de overheid m.b.t. arbeidsmarktdiscriminatie?

- Nee
- Ja, welke?

B.15 In hoeverre bent u bekend met het 'whole-government' concept?

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate
B.16 In hoeverre bent u bekend met de 'multi-stakeholder benadering'?

- Helemaal niet
- Nauwelijks
- In redelijke mate
- In hoge mate
- In zeer hoge mate

B.17 In welke mate is het de verantwoordelijkheid van de volgende actoren om soft skills te trainen? (Klik/tap hier voor de *soft skills beschrijving*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helemaal niet</th>
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<tr>
<td>Eigen verantwoordelijkheid</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

End of Block: BM
Appendix II: list of contacted people

Survey

1 Tax Specialist
2 Account manager & Matchmaker
3 HR Specialist Diversity & Inclusion
4 Founder IT Company
5 Project leader Anti-Discrimination
6 Owner Media Centre
7 Owner Consultancy Agency
8 Business Manager
9 Member of Parliament
10 Travel vlogger
11 HR Advisor
12 PhD Candidate
13 Sales Manager Business
14 Coordinator Student Process Outsourcing
15 Member of Parliament
16 Lecturer
17 Account manager
18 Employer Engagement Advisor
19 Member of Parliament
20 Project Manager Cultural Diversity and Inclusion
21 Member of Parliament
22 Project manager & Consultant Diversity & Inclusion
23 Business Advisor
24 Owner Company
25 Work Supervisor
26 Advisor Diversity & Inclusion
27 Owner & Coach Consultancy Agency
28 Coordinator Ministry
29 Coordinator and Co-founder
30 Recruiter
31 Student and Intern
32 Career Coach Employability
33 Head of Diversity
34 Student
35 Senior Policy Advisor
36 Headhunter IT
37 Senior Corporate Recruiter
38 Member of Parliament
39 Research Coordinator
40 Policy Advisor
41 Alumni & External Relations Officer
42 Senior Policy Advisor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Position</th>
<th></th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Head of Section Employability</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Recruitment Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Diversity and Inclusion Trainer</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Senior Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>IT officer</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Consultant Municipality</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Advisor &amp; Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Consultant Diversity &amp; Inclusion</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Owner Consultancy Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Lecturer Social and Cultural Education</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Forensic IT Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Director Management Consulting</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Owner Policy Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Recruiter</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>PhD Candidate</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Tax Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Corporate Recruiter Consulting</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Student HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Researcher HR and Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Coordinator Education</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Union Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Legal advisor District Court</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Policy Advisor</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Owner Consultancy Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Diversity Consultant/Trainer</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Policy Advisor</td>
</tr>
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<td>58</td>
<td>Lector Inclusive Education</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Strategist</td>
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<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Programme Manager</td>
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<td>HR Policy Advisor/Project Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Senior Career Advisor</td>
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<td>Lecturer</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>Programme Leader Employability</td>
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<td>Project Manager Sustainable Employment</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>Senior Policy Advisor</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>Manager Business Strategy</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>Policy Advisor International Affairs</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Head of Research Sector</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Career &amp; Development Advisor</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Recruiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Manager Employment
Alderman
Head of Diversity & Inclusion
Director
Program Manager Diversity & Inclusion
Account manager Employability
Mediator
Lecturer
Lecturer
Radio and TV Presenter
Policy maker
Policy maker
Psychologist
Senior Researcher
Union Member
Secretary General
Researcher
Coach / Change Manager
Labour Market Specialist
Policy Advisor
Advisor
Labour Market Specialist
Online Marketer
Project Assistant
Coordinator Diversity Policy
Advisor
Advisor
Policy Advisor HRM
Writer
Business Owner
Member of Parliament
Advisor Strategy
University lecturer
Trainer & Coach
Career Advisor
Union Member
Business Owner
Policy Advisor
Lecturer
Owner/Director
Policy Advisor
Senior Policy Advisor Employment
Member of Parliament
Project Manager
Lawyer
Programme Coordinator Diversity & Inclusion
Research associate diversity and inclusion
Senior Advisor Mobility
Project Manager
Policy Advisor Labour Market
Director
Senior Researcher
Member of Parliament
Project Management Officer
University Student
Researcher
Assistant Professor
Business Owner
Inspector General Ministry
Location Manager
Member of Parliament
Lecturer
CEO
Government Recruiter and Advisor
Sales Recruiter Industries
Consultant at a Bank
Partner and Consultant
Labour Market Consultant
Director/Co-owner Business
Mayor
Programme Manager
Youth Development Manager
Head of Social Economic Section
Labour Market Specialist
Managing Director Recruitment Agency
Consultant and Advisor Educational Policy
School Director
Programme Leader Public Policy
University Student
Consultant Municipality
PhD Candidate
Political Scientist
Owner Job Agency
Policy Maker Ministry
Advisor Labour Market Policy Municipality
PhD Candidate
International HR Management Consultant
| 182 | Project Manager | Diversity and Inclusion University |
| 183 | Labour Market Specialist |
| 184 | Senior Associate at Accountancy firm |
| 185 | Poet/Artist |
| 186 | Political Leader |
| 187 | University lecturer |
| 188 | Graduate Recruiter |
| 189 | Journalist & Media Educator |
| 190 | Senior Policy Advisor |
| 191 | Senior Policy Advisor |
| 192 | Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator University |
| 193 | Scientific Director Government Institution |
| 194 | Anchorman Broadcasting station |
| 195 | Corporate Recruiter Municipality |
| 196 | People Development Consultant |
| 197 | Labour Market Support Consultant Municipality |
| 198 | University student |
| 199 | Director Expertise in Labour Mobility |
| 200 | Policy Maker Business Organisation |
| 201 | Project Manager |
| 202 | Academic Skills Coach |
| 203 | Professional Networker |
| 204 | Policy Officer Ministry |
| 205 | Trainer/Coach Employability |
| 206 | Policy Maker Ministry |
| 207 | Account manager Jobs |
| 208 | PhD Candidate |
| 209 | Project Leader/Consultant Diversity |
| 210 | Recruiter Government |
| 211 | Social Worker |
| 212 | Director Corporate Responsibility |
| 213 | Managing Partner |
| 214 | Director |
| 215 | Recruiter |
| 216 | Researcher Public Policy |
| 217 | Policy Advisor Social Stability |
| 218 | Contracting Manager Government |
| 219 | Marketer Labour Market |
| 220 | Diversity and Inclusion Advisor |
| 221 | Recruiter Police Department |
| 222 | Scientist Diversity in Higher Education |
| 223 | Trainer Job applications |
| 224 | Education Professional |
| 225 | PhD Candidate |
| 226 | Film Director |
| 227 | Science Officer Ministry |
| 228 | HR Advisor          | 250 | Professor Economics and Labour Market |
| 229 | Labour Market Specialist | 251 | Director Labour Organisation Randstad |
| 230 | Trainee Coordinator | 252 | Mobility Coordinator |
| 231 | Programme Advisor Employability | 253 | Policy maker Collective Labour Agreements |
| 232 | Science Coordinator Parliament | 254 | Business Consultant |
| 233 | Policy Advisor Anti-discrimination and Integration | 255 | Independent Researcher Labour Market Policy |
| 234 | Manager Labour Development | 256 | Etiquette and Protocol Expert |
| 235 | Manager Diversity and Inclusion Ministry | 257 | Member of Parliament |
| 236 | Youth Ambassador Municipality | 258 | Policy Advisor Migration |
| 237 | PhD Candidate | 259 | Project Leader Labour Market |
| 238 | Policy Advisor Ministry | 260 | Self-employed Policy Researcher |
| 239 | Senior Policy Advisor Ministry | 261 | Sales Manager |
| 240 | Corporate Recruiter Municipality | 262 | Recruiter Government |
| 241 | Chairman NGO Labour Market | 263 | Social Welfare Specialist |
| 242 | Personal Assistant | 264 | Trainee |
| 243 | Account manager Labour Market | 265 | Social Innovator |
| 244 | Member of Parliament | 266 | Policy Advisor Ministry |
| 245 | Sales Recruiter | 267 | Psychologist |
| 246 | Executive Director Policy Institution | 268 | Career Support Officer refugees and internationals |
| 247 | Inspector Education Ministry | 269 | Coordinator Scientific Diversity |
| 248 | HR Advisor | 270 | Project Leader Equal Treatment |
| 249 | Project Manager University |
Personal conversations:

1. Senior Policy Maker – Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
2. Programme manager Diversity and Inclusion – NS
3. Senior Policy Advisor – Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4. Programme Coordinator Diversity and Inclusion - Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
5. Director – ECHO Centre for Expertise
6. Programme Manager – ECHO Centre for Expertise
7. Senior HR Advisor – Municipality of The Hague
8. Director Recruitment – Municipality of The Hague
9. Secretary General - Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
10. Policy Advisor Diversity and Inclusion – Leiden University
11. External Relations Officer – Leiden University
12. Career Advisor – Leiden University
13. Director Refugee Centre – Leiden University
14. Lector – The Hague University of Applied Sciences

Correspondence by email and phone:

1. Director – large matching organisation for highly educated bi-cultural people
2. Researcher – large research institute
3. Inspector – Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
4. Director – large employment organisation

Panel member at:

1. ECHO, expert meeting Municipality The Hague
2. Interviewed by Municipality of the Hague (HR and Recruitment)
3. Interviewed by Municipality of the Hague (Service Punt Arbeid)
4. Presentation at Consultancy Agency

Attended conferences:

1. Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, expert meeting on labour market
2. The Hague University of Applied Sciences, expert meeting on project Laak Vitaal