



COA Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers

Annual report 2006



The work we



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“We are prepared for any change”

“To excel at what we are good at, and seeking continuous improvement wherever we can,” this was the leitmotif in 2006 as far as General Director Nurten Albayrak was concerned. “What we do well, very well indeed, is receiving people in a vulnerable position. The expertise this requires is particularly evidenced in our daily work. COA is therefore pleased to use this annual report to give you an inside view of the work we do.”

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“We have proved these past few years that we are able to act on such external changes as downsizing in both a professional and flexible manner. In the second half of 2006, the cutbacks levelled off. For the first time in four years we could speak of a turn-round. COA has anticipated developments wonderfully. Previously by means of the Reception Model, now by means of a model which guarantees a minimum reception capacity whereby COA “downsizes after the fact”. In 2006, we have clearly demonstrated that we are prepared for whatever changes may come our way. Don’t let it drive you mad, but always keep your wits about you.”

Sharing expertise

“In 2006 we demonstrated once again where our strengths lie: the reception and guidance of people who are in need of temporary accommodation and who are preparing themselves for their future, either in the Netherlands or elsewhere. We have taken a number of leaps forward. Take for example the successful introduction of the notification require-

ment through biometrics. It has advantages for both the asylum seeker and COA and has enhanced the collaboration with one of our chain partners. The Malta missions allow us to pass on our expertise and share our knowledge on a European level by training and teaching them how to organise reception on a local level for people who sometimes literally wash ashore there. I am also proud of Social Integration and Repatriation. Tasks which started out as a project and have by now become firmly established in our daily activities.”

Quality of life

“These examples clearly show that not the process but the asylum seeker is our goal. The process only forms the framework. I aim for the quality of life of the people we receive through the way we work. I also want to give people room for this. Social Integration and Repatriation is as successful as it is because the employees showed more daring than was expected of them. I am convinced that the talent we possess is above average. We must treasure all that talent and make it visible.

I do think it is a prerequisite that asylum seekers get the same treatment everywhere at COA. By presenting a united front, we contribute to COA's visibility and quality. This is why we invested a lot in employees in 2006, a central theme within our organisation. Empowering people so as to strengthen the entire COA."

Cost-conscious

"Its track record has established COA as a social company which offers a good price-quality ratio. We focus on seizing opportunities, guided by cost-consciousness and the optimal use of staff and facilities. A case in point is the rapid realisation of emergency accommodation for evacuees from Lebanon in the summer of 2006. The first emergency accommodation was made available within 24 hours. Now that is what is called decisive action, which is so characteristic of COA."

New Board

With this annual report COA offers an inside view of the work it does, with descriptions of special projects and regular tasks. Pieces of the puzzle which fit effortlessly to provide a clear and consistent picture of COA. Those descriptions come to you from inside COA. But how does the

outside world experience COA? Halfway through 2006 a decision was made for a new form of governance. In anticipation of the new Central Reception Organisation for Asylum Seekers Act, the Board stepped down and Mr. Loek Hermans joined as chairperson of the new Supervisory Board in formation. And as a relative outsider with a fresh view, he holds his own view of COA.

The reception organisation

Hermans: "COA is an open and enterprising organisation. Enormous improvements have been made in a large number of areas, such as (fire) safety. In 2006, this subject was frequently in the news on account of the fire at Schiphol. COA has made considerable investments to minimise the likelihood of such incidents; COA is "in control". Although this is not a guarantee that nothing can happen, it is a guarantee that, in the event of an incident, COA will be well prepared to deal with it. Even within the changing political climate surrounding the elections of November 2006, COA held firm to its tasks. Quite admirable. Late 2006 COA was also praised by Minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin of the Ministry of Justice. In 2006 COA proved to be an indispensable partner and has definitely established itself as the foremost reception organisation."

Case manager important link in social integration

By offering the means to social integration in reception facilities, COA gives permit holders the opportunity to make a good start in the Netherlands at an early stage. Over a period of thirteen weeks, they receive an education and put together their own portfolio for the transfer to the municipality. The case manager assists them with this. Social integration in the central reception facilities was developed further in 2006. From 2007 onwards it forms part of COA's regular services.

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Occupants can start with the social integration programme as soon as they receive a residence permit, allowing them to prepare themselves optimally for their future in the Netherlands at an early stage. Participation in the programme is on a voluntary basis. Throughout the programme, from intake to transfer to a municipality, COA case managers offer permit holders both guidance and coaching. But, at the same time, permit holders do have to do the work themselves. The enthusiasm and motivation are generally speaking considerable.

Education

The permit holders are taught “Dutch as a second language” (NT2) and “Knowledge of Dutch Society” (KNS). The lessons are given five days a week by lecturers from the Regional Training Centres (ROC's). A great advantage is that the course is given at the asylum seekers' centre. The intensive programme contains such elements as computer-aided learning, but also carrying on a discussion in Dutch. During the computer-aided language training, everyone is able to work at his own pace.



That gives the lecturer room to give the less independent or new students extra guidance. The case manager regularly drops in on the class, allowing him to provide the right personal guidance.

Portfolio

Apart from receiving an education, permit holders have six what are referred to as “monitoring conversations” with the case manager, who also assists them with putting together their personal portfolio. In the portfolio, the permit holder keeps a record of what his ambitions are, how the courses are progressing and what his experience is. Working on

the portfolio also prepares him for the social integration exam. When the permit holder moves to a municipality, the portfolio, along with a transfer file, gives the municipality enough insight in what has already been arranged and how much progress someone has made with the educational programme as to determine the follow up steps.

This morning we started with bingo. I had never heard of it. Alma, the teacher, draws numbers, reads them out in Dutch and we have to cross them off on a sheet. I hesitate between fifty and fifteen. Go on, fifteen. Thank goodness, I understood right. Still two numbers to go. Then a classmate suddenly calls out “bingo”! I understand the numbers alright. But what I still can't figure out is when you have to use “de”, “het” or “een” and “die”, “dat” or “deze”. Some language lessons I find easy, others I find difficult. We now receive language instruction on a computer. I like working on a computer. In the meantime, Alma explains the basic grammar to us on the blackboard.”

“We take a break at twelve thirty. I usually cook during the lunch hour. Today it's rice with chicken. The afternoon programme begins at one thirty. Today we will learn how to pay the rent and how to take out insurance. I'm glad to have three other Somali women in my class. Today we round off with lessons about Dutch society. Although the corresponding book is difficult to read, it is very amusing. I have almost completed the Social Integration Programme. On Thursday I have another conversation with Jan, the case manager. We are going to prepare my visit to a house in Eindhoven.

Sadiyo, 30 years old, of Somali origin and residing in the Netherlands since August 2006

Social Integration Programme? Bingo!



Wij zijn
jullie

“Goede Tijden, Slechte Tijden”

I have been teaching a class in Leiden for a few weeks. Four mornings and all of Wednesday. I have been teaching Dutch as a second language (NT2) for a year now. It is an intensive but well composed programme and great fun to teach. I am originally a lecturer in Dutch. NT2 is an altogether different course. There are both illiterate persons and highly educated people in my class. I usually start the morning lesson in a playful manner. I usually do not have their complete attention at this early hour. Today we play bingo with words. A few days ago, we started with a poster displaying farm animals. I asked the students to make a sentence with an animal in it. Then we all looked at the sentences, for example, at the verbs they contained. By the way, the subject quickly shifted from farm animals to “food”. Fine, of course. As long as the discussion is in Dutch!”

“After the break, we cover subjects dealing with Dutch society. Likewise, only in Dutch. The other day we talked about Dutch television. The Somali ladies all watch the Dutch soap “Goede tijden, Slechte tijden”. That eventually led us to such topics as politics and the royal family. It’s nice to see that

almost all the students take part in the discussions and dare to make language errors. We conclude once again with computer-aided lessons: a large number of language exercises, but also audio CDs. Everyone can work at his own pace. That gives me the opportunity to provide extra guidance to the less independent or new students.

Alma Zomer, primary school teacher Social Integration Programme

New Social Integration Act

The new Social Integration Act is effective as of 2007. Those who receive a residence permit must meet the obligation to participate in a social integration programme. Under the new law, this obligation is satisfied when the social integration exam has been passed. Social integration is no longer a matter of choice, but obliges the permit holder to attain a certain result. Therefore, as of 2007, the programme forms part: the programme is integrated in COA’s regular services. Employees from all ranks of the organisation made important contributions to ensure the social integration programme could start in 2007. Practical matters, such as calculating and realising the required number of classrooms and

contracting out the educational component, were also addressed. COA’s Policy & Legal Affairs Department took all the experience gained from the Social Integration pilot at the central reception facilities into account when it realised the final product. The chain partners also contributed. The Institute of Intercultural Evaluation (ICE), which developed the social integration exam for the Ministry of Justice, tested COA’s curriculum.



Investing in accommodation

COA offers occupants safe and proper accommodation. If the outflow of asylum seekers exceeded the inflow these past few years, they were practically equal in 2006. This meant that, in addition to closing down facilities, COA also invested in expansion. COA realised sufficient accommodation, without making concessions in the area of liveableness, (social) safety and controllability.

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In 2006, a number of administrative agreements with municipalities expired, as a result of which the closing down of various facilities became inevitable. By increasing the reception capacity at the existing facilities, postponing – wherever possible – the closing dates of the existing facilities and reopening facilities which had previously been closed down, it became possible to organise proper accommodation for everyone. Due to these measures, it was still possible to move school-going children during holidays and to minimise the number of moves for occupants. This allowed COA to keep sight of the human element in the reception facility, for both asylum seekers and employees.

In order to be able to also act swiftly on fluctuations in the reception in the long term, COA is developing a set of measures which, amongst others, guarantees a stable lower limit for the reception capacity. To this effect, COA works together with various parties, such as municipalities and the judicial authorities.

Safety

COA has as basic principle the safety of the occupants and employees. The social aspect of safety revolves around a sense of security. COA therefore invests not only in assertiveness training for women and girls, but for employees as well. Physical safety is the other aspect: fire safety, in-house emergency and first-aid service, a company emergency plan and evacuation instructions and maintenance affairs in the area of safety. Safety is a human effort and may never be taken for granted. That is the reason COA also invests visibly in physical safety. A Safety Programme Manager charged with the coordination of all the initiatives in this area

was appointed on November 1, 2006. He also manages a research project on the further optimisation of physical safety within COA. This should result in a concrete action plan in the first half of 2007.

Since 2006, asylum seekers who are allowed to stay in the Netherlands can even state their preference with regard to municipalities' supply of living accommodation. This new service provided by COA increases the likelihood that permit holders will end up in the municipality and house for which they have a preference. This prevents houses from being rejected.

Early in October, the coa.nl website was expanded with a separate entry for asylum seekers who have been granted a residence permit. They usually live in an asylum seekers' centre until they can move into their own house. On the website, every permit holder can look for a house in the Netherlands on his own. In case there is more than one interested party, the house will be allocated to the candidate who has been staying in the COA reception facility the longest. In the old housing allocation system, COA allocated a house on the basis of a number of criteria, taking into account such matters as the place of residence of the parents, partners or children as well as work, schooling and medical

conditions. When these factors were not decisive, the place of residence was determined by the municipal supply of available living accommodation. It may therefore have come about that an asylum seeker who, for example, had lived many years in COA reception facilities in the south of the Netherlands was allocated a house in the north.

Making reasoned choices

As a result a relatively large number of permit holders refused a house. The system is attractive for municipalities because the new residents are able to make a motivated choice for that municipality as a place of residence. The supply of available houses on the site is maintained by the municipalities themselves. According to the Housing Allocation Act, every municipality in the Netherlands is obliged to make a number of houses available each year for the accommodation of permit holders. The more residents a municipality has, the more permit holders it has to accommodate. However, permit holders who do not actively search themselves or who are not able to choose from the available supply do in the end have to agree to a house which has been allocated to them.

Both models of allocating houses are currently being used side by side. The new supply model will be developed further until July 2007. In the second half of 2007, the use of the system will be encouraged more and more, amongst others through COA's programme supervisors and case managers.

Repatriation: COA focuses on the individual

COA helps asylum seekers prepare for their future, even if it does not lie in the Netherlands.

Every asylum seeker warrants a tailor-made approach. That is why the COA case manager

focuses – in all cases – on the individual asylum seeker when supervising him. Furthermore,

a good collaboration in the chain is an important factor for a successful repatriation.

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COA provides facilities to all those whose future most probably does not lie in the Netherlands, so that they will once again be able to build a future in their native country. The COA case managers look at (case by case) what the particular needs of these people are in order to be able to repatriate. At times a simple solution such as providing them with medicine can remove an important obstacle. Others are assisted with work or schooling in their country of origin. In this respect, COA collaborates closely with the (international) chain partners.

Creativity and insight

To provide clarity and refrain from raising false hopes are important objectives in our dealings with asylum seekers who have exhausted all legal means. This is evident, amongst other things, in the personal conversations between the case manager and the asylum seeker. Relying on creativity and insight, he looks (together with the asylum seeker) for ways of literally and figuratively extending the boundaries. In training provided by COA, the asylum seekers learn in groups to contemplate the future. Furthermore, the open learning centre gives them access to a fax machine, telephone and the Internet for, for example, getting in touch with family in the country of origin or collecting information so that they can make the right choices on their own. In this way, the asylum seeker is clear about the implications of his stay here and the consequences of failing to act.

Housing facility

In 2006, a housing facility was opened in the departure centre in Vught.

It was intended for asylum seekers who fall under the new Aliens Act and who have exhausted all legal means. Families which clearly wish to cooperate with regard to their repatriation are given twelve additional weeks for leaving the Netherlands. That is on top of the 28 days which are normally set aside for making preparations, such as obtaining (original) identity papers. Meanwhile, they live in the housing facility.

The expertise which COA has so far built up in the area of repatriation, including that which was gained during the Repatriation Project on the basis of the old asylum reception act, is recognised throughout the entire chain.

Five conversations have been scheduled for today. Five of the more than hundred people in my case-load, people who still fall under the old law, but also people who are not taking part in the Repatriation Project. I regularly have conversations with all concerned in order to get them to make a realistic appraisal of their prospects in the Netherlands or elsewhere. The resistance is at times persistent, sometimes you really see something happen.

I have fond recollections of an Angolan boy I supported until his laissez-passer for Angola was a fact. This boy was highly motivated. He assembled a toolkit through the "Working Around the Globe" project. He procured – all by himself – a small loan from a bank as well as a van for starting a small business in Angola. Together we looked at ways of furthering his cause. He often stopped by to let us know how he was getting on. I heard through the grapevine that he is doing well.

As a case manager, you try to offer clarity and provide tailor-made solutions. I want to make sure that people are aware of the implications of the choices they are making throughout the process and what COA can

offer them by way of support. Most of the people know that when, for example, COA gives notice of a termination of the provision of reception facilities, this will actually be carried out.

It's time for today's first conversation. You need to find a unique approach for each and everyone. One cannot compare a conversation with a former unaccompanied minor asylum seeker who is living by himself with financial support from the NIDOS Foundation with a conversation with a family staying in the asylum seekers' centre. Each person has a unique frame of reference, personal opportunities and external parties assisting them. The conversations will never once become an automatism.

*Case manager
Amanda Steeneveld,
Amsterdam*



Toolkit for Angola: Building a new future

Invited refugees start integration even before coming to the Netherlands

Since January 1, 2006, all invited refugees are received in the purpose-built azc (asylum seekers' centre) Amersfoort. COA goes to work for them even before they come to the Netherlands. After at most six months in the asylum seekers' centre, the invited refugees move in to their own house. As of the summer of 2006, COA also opts for group-wise transfers to a municipality.

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The invited refugees are immediately given a residence permit. In order to be able to find their way with greater ease in Dutch society, the refugees follow an orientation programme providing a lot of information on the Netherlands during the first five weeks of their stay in azc Amersfoort. Even before they arrive, COA employees prepare them as well as possible for their new life, with an emphasis on very practical matters. Many, for example, have never seen something like a flush toilet before. The social integration lessons in Amersfoort also place an emphasis on everyday life and the way Dutch people interact. For instance, in addition to language training, the people also learn, amongst other things, to ride a bicycle. COA calls in additional housing and programme supervisors for this intensive approach. Moreover, this asylum seekers' centre was purpose-built.

Group-wise transfer

Since the summer of 2006, the invited refugees are also transferred group-wise to municipalities. Group-wise transfer has a number of advantages. A COA employee supervises the actual transfer from the reception facility to a municipality and personally explains all the files of the transferred refugees at the same time. This enables the municipality to offer social guidance, integration and education more effectively. It is also practical for the municipality involved to arrange these matters for a large group in one single effort. As for the invited refugees, group-wise transfer implies that they will be able to support and help each other

with the integration and finding their way when building a future for themselves.

A motley bunch

In February and March 2006, ninety Burundians came to the Netherlands. 28 of them have been transferred group-wise to the municipality of Horst aan de Maas. Nine Burundian families arrived from a camp in Tanzania. Most of them have a mixed Hutu/Tutsi background and don't feel safe anywhere. Some of them had been in the camp as long as nine years. On June 15, 2006, they saw their new place of residence for the first time with their very own eyes and were shown around at companies which could possibly offer them work. And, a very important event, the Burundians were registered in their new place of residence and the lease agreements were signed.

The invitation

the Netherlands is one of eighteen countries around the world which are taking part in UNHCR's "resettlement programme" for the reception of refugees who can neither be repatriated to their own country nor become integrated in the region where they have been received. The Dutch government has established that 500 refugees may be invited annually over the period 2005-2007.

Selection mission

The selection of refugees takes place in the refugee camps or on the basis of a recommendation based on exceptional (humanitarian) grounds. The Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) goes on selection missions to UNHCR camps, which sometimes accommodate as many as 60,000 people. Case managers represent COA in the selection missions organised by IND. They see to the preparations for and realisation of the reception and guidance of invited refugees, collaborating closely with the chain partners and other parties involved, such as the Organisation for the Medical Care of Asylum Seekers (MOA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the NIDOS Foundation and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Becoming acquainted with the Netherlands

Representatives of the organisations involved have put together the "Invited Refugees Manual". This contains a chain-wide description of the process, including the selection, inbound journey and arrival. COA offers the selected refugees a Cultural Orientation Training before coming to the Netherlands, providing them with knowledge of, amongst other things, Dutch society, acquainting them with the Dutch language, telling them what is expected of them in the Netherlands and giving them the opportunity to create an initial network. The refugees are also prepared for their temporary stay in azc Amersfoort.

Worth repeating

December 2006: Our first group of new residents – containing at least one participant from each family – has started a work-study programme. In cooperation with our reintegration agency and the Regional Training Centre in the province of Limburg, we have mapped out a route to help them build a future for themselves in Horst aan de Maas. During the first phase, we test the people in several respects to see what they are good at. The people have a mixed background. There is a truck driver, an economics student and someone who would have liked to become a journalist, but was not permitted to do so as a refugee in Tanzania and therefore became a teacher in the camp. A number of people have a background in farming.

I still recall the people arriving, all ready to go. We had to arrange additional transport for all the luggage in a hurry. The housing association, the Regional Training Centre, the welfare organisation and, last but not least, a large group of volunteers had seen to it that the houses were up to scratch, that family doctors and schools had been arranged and that the people were in a position to receive benefits. The families have settled in fine, so that the actual social integration can now begin. We would very much like our new neighbours to really form part of the social networks of the ten villages which make up Horst aan de Maas, so that the children will, for example, become members of the soccer club. That is what we will devote our energy to during the coming months. As for the number of newcomers we are obliged to receive, we have already exceeded our target. But, as far as we are concerned, accommodating invited refugees is worth repeating.

Alderman Arie Stas, municipality of Horst aan de Maas



WELKOM!

COA Board takes its leave at “Migration Flows”

On June 14, 2006, COA took its leave of the Board with a mini-symposium on “Migration Flows”.

People who have directed COA through periods of substantial growth and extreme downsizing to what it is now: a company which has proved that it is not easily alarmed. Which, in the words of former chairperson Mrs. Kraaijeveld-Wouters, “knows how to turn something negative into something positive,”.

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Significant social susceptibilities, shifts in public opinion, political views which take on a different slant and tone, international developments; all of these have had a steady influence on COA and, consequently, the Board these past few years. All the board members have exerted themselves energetically for many years to help give shape to the implementation of Dutch asylum policy, always acting in COA's best interests. Not always in the foreground, but always manifest behind the scenes. Four board members took their leave of us in 2006: Jeltien Kraaijeveld-Wouters, Leny van Rijn-Vellekoop, Michiel van Haersma Buma and Hans Nieukerke. Only Adjiedj Bakas will carry his experience over to the new Supervisory Board in formation.

Looking back

The “Migratory Flows” mini-symposium was COA's parting gift to the esteemed Board. Naturally, time was taken to look back during the symposium. At the gigantic operation for dealing with the explosive growth of asylum seekers – as many as 84,000 – and COA's solid

ambition to provide each and every one with shelter. At the tremendous efforts towards gaining support in a large number of towns and villages for the establishment of an asylum seekers' centre. At the incredible cut-backs: scrapping some 60,000 reception places within the space of three years – and what that involves when doing so as an organisation, not only in a short space of time but also with as much care as possible. And at the switch from largely providing support to providing reception facilities and specific guidance to the independent asylum seeker when defining and directing his own process.

Gaining momentum

Time was also taken for looking ahead: at the current issue of migratory flows which has gained momentum, the theme of the mini-symposium. A development in which COA also plays an important role where the initial reception is concerned. The answers to the questions concerning the challenge which migration poses to the world and our immediate society and the role COA could play therein will remain current during the coming years, for COA and the supervisory board alike. Jointly, they will continue to develop the foremost organisation for the reception and guidance of people who are in need of temporary housing and are preparing themselves for their future in the Netherlands or elsewhere.

Test case for the quality and level of solidarity of the Netherlands

Four COA directors are leaving the arena. With very warm feelings about this Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers. And thus with a sense of sadness. But nevertheless very cheerful. The organisation is in good shape, organisationally, financially and in other respects. Its vision and mission are contemporary and are still being supported and realised by highly motivated, professional and creative employees. Moreover, a new team of able directors/members of the supervisory board in formation is ready to take over from us.

Our prime motivation as members of the Board for exerting ourselves for COA is related to the asylum seekers and the situation in which they find themselves. To be able to make a difference for these people – who are usually saddled with considerable problems and horrible experiences, who are allowed to stay here temporarily and wait in suspense for what the future holds – that is the heart of the matter. To offer the asylum seekers safety and to support them adequately. By means of conversations, so that they will also come to consider repatriation as a realistic option. By means of counselling programmes and innovative methods to assist them with their attempts at getting a view of and grip on their future themself-

ves. This was the main reason for taking on the challenge of this management position.

The four of us now courageously take our leave of COA. Even though we have every confidence in the future of COA which no longer includes us, it takes some effort to hand our responsibility for this interesting organisation over to others. I would very much like to make two recommendations (which are also my aspirations) to COA and the partners and involved parties in politics and public office that it works with: in the reception of asylum seekers, be sure to act in a particularly businesslike, professional and enterprising manner – but do not switch off your emotions in the process and never fail to approach asylum seekers as fellow human beings! Our reception and guidance of asylum seekers form a test case for the quality and level of solidarity of Dutch society. Work together to maintain our high score!

Mrs. Jeltien Kraaijeveld-Wouters during her farewell speech on June 14, 2006

Supervisory Board in formation

At the request of the Minister of Alien Affairs and Integration, and in anticipation of the much-needed amendment of the current Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers Act, the new Board, which was installed on July 1, is acting as a Supervisory Board in formation.

Composition

The minister appointed Mr. Loek Hermans as chairperson per July 1, 2006. Mr. Jaap Besemer, Mrs. Anne-Wil Duthler, Mr. Rein Willems and Mr. Adjiedj Bakas were appointed as members. Mr. Bakas was reappointed.



Biometrics: This we have at our fingertips

A successful introduction, an excellent collaboration with the Aliens Police and, above all, satisfied asylum seekers; these are in short the successes of the introduction of biometrics for the notification requirement for asylum seekers. Owing to this technical progress, they no longer have to wait in long queues at both the Aliens Police and COA. A couple of minutes at one of COA's information desks are enough to meet their notification requirement.

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How can aliens report more efficiently and how can their identities be verified in a more simple manner? This was the assignment which COA and the Aliens Police received in December 2004 from the Ministry of Justice. At that time, the joint registration office of the Alien Police and COA in Rotterdam already featured a “stand-alone” biometrics point. Biometry is a way of establishing someone’s identity with the aid of unique body characteristics, such as fingerprints in this case. In Rotterdam, biometrics already provided insight into the actual place of residence of asylum seekers and into their availability for government activities which are necessary for assessing their admission application or repatriation. Moreover, biometrics counters identity fraud.

Fingerprint recognition

The obvious question was therefore: why not create a national database of fingerprint identification, linked in a single system for the Aliens Police and COA? After all, the Aliens Police already had the fingerprints of all asylum seekers at its disposal. The new system is based on a combination of the Reporting- or W-document and checking the fingerprints of asylum seekers at one of the COA facilities. The fingerprints are compared with those which have been stored in the database of COA's Biometrics Register. The existing reporting processes of COA and the Aliens Police were combined for this purpose. When entering their data asylum seekers are instructed by means of pictograms on a screen: simple and self-explanatory images that help them in a clear and step-by-step manner.

Pilots

Having investigated all the (im)possibilities in 2005, 2006 was noted for its pilots and the actual introduction. The reporting and verification system was thoroughly tested in the asylum seekers' residence centres in Alkmaar and Middelburg and the joint registration office of COA and the Aliens Police in Rotterdam. After the summer, biometrics was introduced nationwide. Specialists were insourced for a number of months to teach everyone – employees and asylum seekers alike – how to make quick and easy use of the new technology. The system has been up and running at all the facilities since late 2006.

COA and Aliens Police at the forefront

“Notification Requirement & Biometrics” is the first large-scale application of biometrics within the judiciary system and the police force. Worldwide, 168 countries, including the Netherlands, have chosen to introduce biometrics in travel documents. “Notification Requirement & Biometrics” has further enhanced collaboration with the Aliens Police.

April. How are we going to pull this off? We had hoped to be able to start with the roll-out now, but the conversion of the facilities is taking up more time due to technical bottlenecks. I feel slightly disappointed, but we remain realistic. Because if we roll out now, and it doesn't work, then we will only provoke resistance. It has to be done sensibly.

July. It's hot outside. The link between the operational processes of COA and the AP is not entirely going without a hitch. We have come up against a “no go”. The pilots are nevertheless started at three COA facilities. The first positive notes are heard. Great respect for the “teckies” who have managed to get all this done. The links between the systems are in place and are working satisfactory. The fingerprint registrations are pouring in. Very satisfying indeed!

September. We are going to roll! I was often at the facilities. It works! The mutual collaboration between the police and the COA employees at the facilities is flourishing.

Christmas. The start of a wonderful period. Biometrics: we're ready for it! At COA, “Notification Requirement & Biometrics” has now transcended the status of pilot. It is up and running. Looking back, I am filled with pride. Proud of the collaboration between the Aliens Police and COA. Proud of the realisation of this technology. Proud of the fact that more organisations have become aware of the possibilities of biometrics, also in collaboration

with chain partners. For example, the processing of passports at the Home Department or the foreign posts of Foreign Affairs, where we serve as a good example.

2006: for me, the year in which it became possible to realise such a complex matter as biometrics with chain partners.

Guido Mulders, head of the Aliens Police unit for the region Central and West Brabant. He represents the five southern police forces in the strategic policy group for Alien Affairs, being charged with the “Identification and Verification” portfolio.

Biometrics connects



Reception evacuees from Lebanon: At the drop of a hat

“Arrange temporary accommodation forthwith for Dutch people repatriated from Lebanon.”

That was COA's brief in late 2006 when a war was raging between Israel and the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon and the northern part of Israel. Within 24 hours, COA realised the desired reception. The groups which arrived later that week were also received competently. A feat which surpassed expectations.

Old times were brought to mind for the COA employees. Within 24 hours, they saw to the complete furnishing of fourteen apartments, right down to cleaning utensils and essential foodstuffs. Within a day following the notification of their arrival, the first group of evacuees moved into the apartments. Other groups did likewise during the days which followed. Ultimately COA received over 250 people. This proved once again COA's strength as the one organisation in the Netherlands able to arrange a reception on such a scale at such short notice.

Interpreters

The COA employees received the groups of repatriated Dutch people and provided them with a lot of information. Because of the unexpectedly large number of people from the Antilles, we were not able to get by with Dutch and English; a relatively large number of people spoke only Papiamentu and Arabic. Interpreters were quickly called in through the COA network. They sometimes even offered their services voluntarily, like a Lebanese interpreter from Almere who very much wanted to make a contribution.

Collaboration

COA played a key role in the process and entered into a collaboration with chain partners and other parties involved. Upon the arrival of the evacuees at Eindhoven Airport, the municipality of Eindhoven took charge of the registration and arranged the first reception in hotels. In Almere, the municipality and various partners were immediately on stand-by. All the chain partners involved, such as Social Affairs for the finance and the Home Department for questions relating to tickets and suchlike, worked together constructively. A fine example of a flexible, swift and concerted operation, which also led to positive reactions and coverage in the media.

Actions, not words

Monday, July 17, 16.50 hrs.: we receive the first phone call from the director of Housing: the minister of the Home Department wants us to receive forty evacuees forthwith. Even though it is now after office hours, the entire machinery is set in motion. Three hours later the removal vans pull up in Almere and the first apartments are furnished. Later that evening we receive a message that the group could well consist of 200 people.

Tuesday, July 18, 10.00 hrs.: consultation with crisis coordinators from all the departments involved. I report: medical reception has been arranged and the remaining beds are being put in place. Everything in Almere is under control. Each phone call is marked by an enthusiastic response. At 17.00 hrs. we leave The Hague in two cars under police escort for Eindhoven, where we get acquainted with the crisis manager. The evacuees arrive at 19.00 hrs. Some emotion here and there, but surprisingly enough a predominantly good atmosphere. Kept things nice and easy and gave people the opportunity to ask questions. We are homeward bound at 21.00 hrs.

Wednesday, July 19: Today's the day! The bus arrives in Almere at 14.30 hrs. When the doors swing open, the children clasped the lunch boxes they have been given to their chests and run straight for the tricycles which had been put there. There's a gathering of people in the recreation room. People move into the apartments. There's a communal dinner at 18.00 hrs. My work's done for the day.

Thursday, July 20: The number of compliments we are getting at the National Crisis Centre makes us blush. COA receives the request to respond to

possible scenarios. How many can we manage? In the afternoon I can't help but notice the big smiles on the faces of the COA employees. Satisfaction, pride, creative solutions.

Friday, July 21: The National Crisis Centre reports that the next two planes have been planned. Some eighty people are expected on Saturday.

Saturday, July 22: arranging the facilities for the last group almost seems to be a routine task. We are nevertheless surprised by the large number of babies and toddlers. We decide to open the playgroup. When I try to start a conversation with an elderly lady, we literally have to use both hands and feet: she takes my hand and blows kisses. Sometimes words are superfluous.

Jos Houtakkers, Project manager at the Housing Department



Missions to Malta: Unique European collaboration

“There were times when we didn’t quite know how to proceed. Nevertheless, COA’s presence as an external party helped to implement changes,” Alexander Tortell of the Maltese Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity said when speaking of the intensive collaboration, whereby 25 experienced COA employees shared their knowledge and experience and helped the Maltese reception facility to a higher level.



In a short period of time, the isle of Malta was flooded with a large number of asylum seekers, mainly from Africa. Malta, for whom the problems of reception were entirely new, asked Europe for assistance. Part of that aid was support from COA which took the form of several training-on-the-job missions; an extraordinary example of European collaboration.

First mission

During the first mission to Malta in June 2006, which lasted two and a half weeks, the COA employees encountered a situation which reminded them of the enormous influx into the Netherlands in the early nineties, when emergency accommodation had to be arranged everywhere. In Malta, they are also converting old school buildings and erecting camps. COA employees first analysed the Maltese reception facility. On the basis of a number of themes, such as basic needs (bed, bath, bread, safety), information provision, activation (schooling, work) administration and dealing with vulnerable groups, they examined where and how improvements could possibly be made. The centres in Malta vary greatly. The suggestions therefore differed from centre to centre. They did have one thing in common: a uniform system for benefits in kind, registration and food supply.

Practical improvements

The presence of COA employees proved to be a great help for the local “facility coordinators”, who often have to deal with matters on their

own. In such cases, it is of great value to be able to take a step back and reflect on the work with a “colleague from the field”. Ever since the first mission, changes have been set in motion based on the advice from the COA employees. These often concerned very practical matters, such as morning consultations and transfer, feedback on occupants meetings, a competency check-list for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and a simple work scheme. They also assist in implementing a central registration system for the open centres. By means of a portfolio workshop, the Maltese were able to gain empathy for the asylum seekers: imagine fleeing to Australia and getting stuck in Tanzania. What can you do there with all your skills and experience? For COA, portfolios in which asylum seekers themselves describe and demonstrate their skills and competences are one of the most important instruments in the social integration trajectory.

Organisation for Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers

The missions assisted in structuring the reception of asylum seekers on Malta. And that was of great help and importance to the Maltese government as they intent to establish their own “COA” in 2007. Under the name “Organisation for Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers”, the organisation will continue to work on a competent reception policy. One cannot speak of a copy of the Dutch approach; the local situation will continue to be the point of departure.

Malta Member of the European Network of Asylum Reception Organisations (ENARO)

The Malta project – which was co-financed by the European ARGO programme under the title “Intra-European burden-sharing in the field of asylum” – will continue until (the) spring (of) 2007. Shortly before this term expired, the Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity, which is responsible for the open centres, paid an informal visit to COA. The fifth mission to the open centres in February 2007 wrapped things up. COA will remain in touch, however, through ENARO, the European Network of Asylum Reception Organisations, which Malta joined on January 1, 2007. COA is one of the initiators of this network, which focuses on the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

The missions:

- Mission 1 to Open and Closed Centres: June 6 – 24, 2006
- Mission 2 to Open Centres: Augustus 31 – September 14, 2006
- MFSS Workshop: October 11 – 12, 2006
- Mission 3 to Open Centres: October 24 – November 4, 2006
- Integration Workshop: November 20 – 21, 2006
- Mission 4 to Open Centres: December 5 – 16, 2006

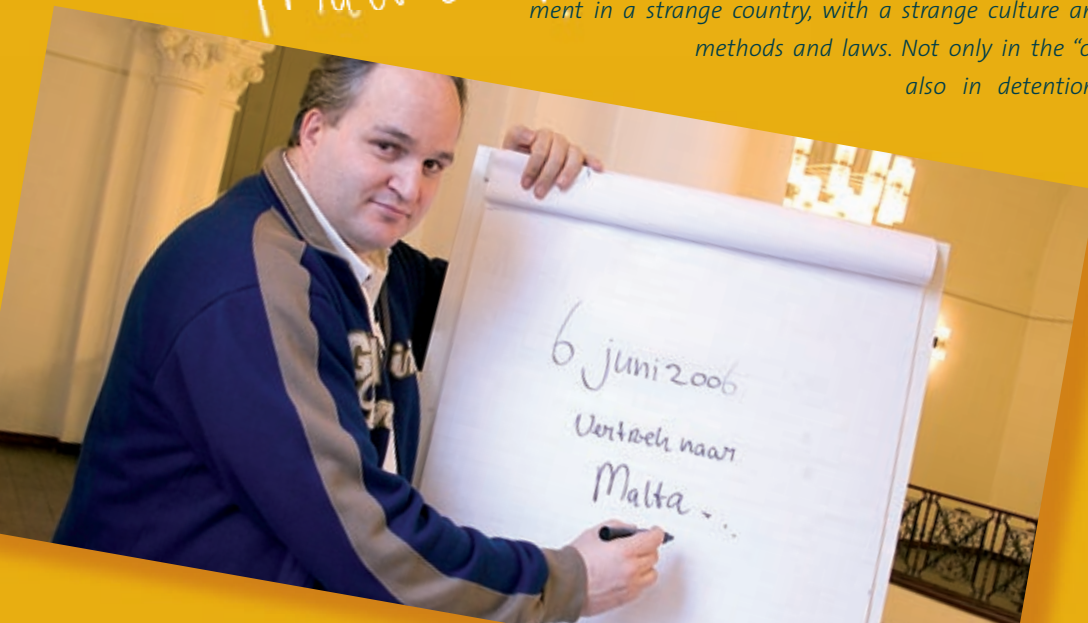
6 juni 2006
Vertrek naar
Malta ..

The light in Malta is so bright that it is impossible to focus in a single effort on what one is looking at. That is pretty much the story of our carefully planned mission to Malta; nothing is what it seems at first. You only truly see things the way you may have thought at first (but were not able to see in perspective) after blinking once or twice. Fortunately, to analyse and put into perspective complex structures and substructures is one of the things we came for. With a total of eight COA experts and a team-leader – totalling over 100 years of COA experience – we try to do the impossible within just one week: coming up with suggestions for improvement in a strange country, with a strange culture and other working methods and laws. Not only in the “open” centres, but also in detention centres, where illegal immi-

grants await the outcome of their asylum procedure. Our proposals are embraced – sometimes hesitantly, sometimes eagerly – by volunteers, soldiers, social workers, nuns, managers, officers, expatriates, lawyers, psychologists and others involved in reception. The fruits of our labours can often be seen directly on a small scale, but sometimes require more than one mission to ripen. It’s also nice to see nine COA colleagues, who often only knew each other from the intensive selection and preparation period, form a close-knit team in just a matter of days. We work together from early morning to late at night. Work remains the most important topic of conversation, even during the ever so important Rest and Relaxation, which we spend reading, looking for Maltese hip-hop and imitating Texan tourists. COA International now truly exists for me, and has made a good start. A world of opportunities has opened up for our organisation, which is adapting itself to the changing circumstances.

Jan Vranken, during the first mission to Malta

Nothing is what it seems
at first



Investing in people and resources

Flexibility is in COA's DNA. In order to prepare employees for the future, the projects and layers should be linked at all times. The "Investing in People" programme lets employees discover for themselves what they are good at, what they want and how they can use those qualities for the benefit of COA. This programme consists of "Management Development", "Working on competences" and "Working with confidence: a matter of doing!"

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The programme is aimed at bolstering the employees and their expertise, thus promoting the further development of COA as a whole. That movement was initiated in 2006 at the management level by means of the "Develop the Future Programme". Through personal development, managers get to know themselves better and thus to get the best out of their employees.

Working on competences

Working on competences should help managers and employees to give more shape to their own development. In 2006, competences were developed for each and every role and function and for COA as a whole. These form the basis for the spring and autumn talks which are held between employees and their managers. In the future, employees will be able to strengthen certain competences by sparring with a more experienced colleague, by taking part in a project, by taking a course geared towards their competences or through coaching.



Behavioural campaign

When identifying the competences, use was made of the behavioural characteristics of the “Working with confidence: a matter of doing!” campaign which was launched in 2005. The general COA competences – integrity, constructive and goal-oriented – correspond to the behavioural characteristics. The substantialisation differs per function or organisational unit. The goal of the campaign is for employees to enter into a dialogue on behaviour and collaboration. In 2006, attention was also given in a number of different ways to what people think of the behavioural characteristics and how they are put to use in practice.

In 2006, COA invested not only in the development of people but also in systems designed to improve our work, such as SAP, which was introduced on January 1, 2007, and ICT New Reception Model. It became particularly apparent in the reception facility that there is a thin line between investing in people and investing in resources.

In 2006, we continued with phase 2 of the Reorganisation of Operational Management. The reorganisation intended to bring about a good fit between policy and the developments in the primary process, the Reception. In phase 2, the focus was on the Management Services Department. This department provides support services and resources to the other organisational units. Within Management Services, the Data Services Department (Administration of Occupants, Accounts and Personnel Administration) and Administration Department (Purchasing, Human Resources Management, Management Communication, ICT, Facility Management and Documentary Information Services) took more shape in 2006. Not as stand-alone units, but vis-à-vis each other, so that they can strengthen and support each other, like the systems which were developed in line with this.

SAP: Back to the source

SAP replaces the various, often obsolete systems COA used in the past. The big advantage of this system: all the information of the financial, logistical, purchasing and sales processes can be entered in only one way: at the source. This also applies to mutations. As a result, everyone – from the Purchasing staff to the Financial Administration staff – works with the same, up-to-date information. This yields reliable management information, necessary for properly managing the line organisation. SAP thus supports phase 2 of the Reorganisation of Operational Management. A system can only be used to full advantage when the people who work with it know the system from A to Z. In October, the first group of employees was trained to work with SAP. These people then fanned out in “mobile teams” to teach their colleagues the tricks of the trade at their respective workplaces. The implementation per January 1, 2007 is more of a starting point than a deadline; actual practice has taught us that it takes time to coordinate systems, processes and people.

ICT in the reception facility

ICT is also becoming increasingly important in the reception facility itself. The fact that a computer is only a tool holds most true here: usage should lead to, amongst other things, greater time efficiency, ease of use and a more uniform provision of information. This is why COA opted not only for a structured methodology for the implementation of ICT New Reception Model, the application which supports the Reception Model introduced in 2005, but also for a fast one; delivery is always made within two months.

The methodology's strength lay in breaking down the applications into easily manageable chunks, so-called “pallets”.

A new team of ICT specialists and employees from the various clusters was assembled for each pallet. The people from the reception facility decided on the input and ICT did the actual building, a collaboration between Reception and the Central Bureau which is very much to our liking.



A deal is a deal

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Monday 14.00 hrs.: according to my diary, it's time for our multi-disciplinary consultations. Just when I was getting into the swing of a report. I nevertheless save my document, grab the things I need and make room in the office. Right at that moment our mini-team's housing supervisor and warden walk in. The programme supervisor turns out to be sick, but the three of us nevertheless manage to make considerable headway. Within the context of the Reception Model, we all try to get a better view of the occupants. We work through a list of action points and items for consideration, a good way of structuring our work. In our ad hoc line of work, these kind of meeting appointments are likely to become diluted. The temptation to cancel is at times on a par with our case-load – which is considerable, I can tell you.

I believe the fact that we meet punctually every week is closely connected to the "Working with confidence: a matter of doing!" campaign. Behavioural rules are normally confined to a booklet which simply sits on the shelf, scarcely consulted. But with all the attention given to this campaign, there is simply no avoiding it. What I consider to be first and foremost is the realisation that the behavioural rules have everything to do with the

quality of me as a person, of the team and of the organisation.

I was most struck by the behavioural characteristic "professional". Keeping the agreements you have made with others. Because of day-to-day affairs, we often let ourselves get easily carried away by important matters. Agreements are then sometimes forgotten. One's professionalism will determine whether one deals with this in a proper manner. As far as I'm concerned, the focus may shift to a more individual level. What am I good at and what are my relative weaknesses? To handle things correctly and with respect, that suits me fine. But how am I supposed to work as a case manager in an organisation-oriented way?

Case manager Hans Kok, 's-Gravendeel





“COA revolves around people who matter”

This annual report has given you an insight into the work of COA. In 2007 we once again wish to show community – on an international, a regional as well as a local level – what COA does and what it does well. Nurten Albayrak, General Director, and Loek Hermans, Chairperson of the Supervisory Board in formation, look ahead: a glimpse of the future.

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“COA works with and for people,” says Nurten Albayrak. “For 2007, COA has chosen “to connect and secure” as its theme: we wish to secure and expand the knowledge we possess. And we consider it important that the employees, with all their expertise, feel even more connected to our company.”

Room for a greater depth of expertise

Loek Hermans: “The employees are an important asset for COA. Their knowledge and commitment are of incalculable value. These are people whose work matters: COA revolves around people who matter. I am of the opinion that when one can speak of expertise on the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers – and COA certainly has that expertise – there is also room for elaborating the current tasks and, possibly, for adding new tasks. There is so much knowledge at COA, also there were tasks overlap that it may not be left untapped. COA will prove that it is a reliable partner who does not only provide quality for chain partners, municipalities, administrators and councillors but for entrepre-

neurs, schools and neighbours as well.

Key role

COA is prepared for the outcomes of the new coalition agreement. Nurten Albayrak: “An organisation like COA is always subject to political changes. That is what we have prepared ourselves for. COA is well and ready where both capacity and intrinsic problems are concerned. A general pardon will not take us by surprise. I also see opportunities for COA internationally. COA can play a key role in exchanging experiences at a European level. I look upon 2007 as a challenging and promising year.” Loek Hermans: “COA wants to be the foremost reception organisation in the Netherlands. As far as I am concerned, COA is that already. We possess a lot of in-house knowledge and quality. Many ministers would be only too glad to have such a team of people. I believe the Netherlands can count itself lucky for having such a reception organisation.”

Balance

(values x 1,000 euro)	2006	2005
Fixed Assets		
Intangible fixed assets	5,531	1,446
Tangible fixed assets	162,354	192,844
Current Assets		
Receivables	16,264	30,342
Liquid assets	63,735	83,684
Total Fixed Assets	247,884	308,316

(values x 1,000 euro)	2006	2005
Liabilities		
Equity capital	36,602	47,689
Assets at the disposal of the Ministry of Justice	4,812	28,168
Equalisation account	70,961	93,563
Provisions	42,902	39,430
Current liabilities	92,607	99,466
Total Liabilities	247,884	308,316

(values x 1,000 euro)	Realisation 2006	Realisation 2005
Income commissioning authority DVB (excl. downsizing)	437,939	511,507
Other income	38,064	33,255
Special receipts (downsizing)	24,908	53,448
Total income	500,911	598,210
Staff	131,379	162,578
Equipment	126,938	120,837
Interest and depreciation	18,641	22,132
Medical expenses and MOA	122,563	126,813
Programme expenses	63,483	75,838
Extraordinary expenditures (downsizing)	40,342	63,646
Total expenditure	503,346	571,844
Net operating result	-2,435	26,366
Allocation to the equalisation reserve fund	-	-
Project expenses to the debit of the rerverve fund for policy intensification	3,841	909
Withdrawal from the rerverve fund for policy intensification	-3,841	-909
Allocation to the rerverve fund for policy intensification	-	5,273
Remaining net operating result	-2,435	21,093

Overview of locations in 2006

azc Aalten; azc Alkmaar; azc Almelo; **azc Almere** *; azc Amersfoort; azc Amsterdam-Bos en Lommer; azc Amsterdam-Noord; azc Apeldoorn-Noord-West; **azc Apeldoorn-Zuidbroek** *; azc Appelscha; azc Arnhem-Vreedenburgh (Zuid); azc Azelo; azc Baexem; **azc Bellingwolde 'De Grenshof'** *; azc Burgh Haamstede'; azc Burgum; azc Delfzijl; azc Den Helder; **azc Doetinchem** *; azc Dokkum; azc Dongen; azc Drachten; azc Dronten; azc Echt; azc Eindhoven (Beatrixoord); azc Emmen; azc Etten-Leur; azc Geeuwenbrug (AMOG); azc Gilze en Rijen; azc Grave; **azc Haren** *; azc Heemskerk; azc Heerlen; **azc Hellevoetsluis** *; azc Leersum; azc Leiden; azc Lemmer; azc Leusden; azc Luttelgeest; azc Markelo; **azc Medemblik** *; azc Middelburg; azc Musselkanaal; azc Nijmegen; azc Oisterwijk; azc Oude Pekela; **azc Papendrecht** *; azc Raalte; azc Rotterdam; azc Schagen; **azc Schaijk, De Holenberg** *; azc Schalkhaar; azc 's-Gravendeel; azc St. Annaparochie; azc Sweikhuizen; **azc Ulrum** *; azc Utrecht; **azc Veldhoven** *; azc Venlo; azc Vlagtwedde; azc Vught; azc Wageningen; azc Wapenveld; azc Winschoten (Schutse); azc Winterswijk; azc Zweeloo; **azc Zwolle** *

* closed in 2006

Personnel 2006

	2005	2006
In salaried employment	2109	1847
Full-time in salaried employment	1872	1645
Full-time in salaried employment in Reception	1393	1098
Full-time in salaried employment at the Central Office	469	547
Amount of women	1.136	992
Amount of men	973	855
Absenteeism	8,6%	7,8%

Movement in reception

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Influx as from 2000 untill 2006

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Influx	33,634	25,273	12,916	8,529	5,324	5,381	7,772

Top five influx 2006 countries of origin

Nationality	Amount
Iraq	2,088
Somalia	1,094
Iran	483
Afghanistan	444
Burundi	353
Other	3,310
Total	7,772



Outflux as from 2000 until 2006

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Outflux	19,940	19,625	26,936	25,329	16,955	17,170	13,190

Top five outflux 2006 countries of origin

Nationality	Amount
Iraq	2,203
Somalia	1,201
Afghanistan	965
Angola	613
Azarbaijan	562
Other	7,646
Total	13,190

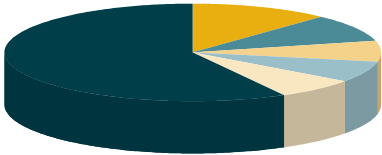


Occupancy as from 2000 untill 2006

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Occupancy	78,246	83,801	69,752	52,714	40,761	28,730	23,232

Occupancy Top five nationality on January 1, 2007

Nationality	Total
Iraq	2,763
Afghanistan	2,116
Azarbaijan	1,632
Iran	1,603
Yugoslavia	1,600
Other	13,518
Total	23,232



Average stay of permit holders in reception 2006 *

1st quarter 2006
177 days

2nd quarter 2006
183 days

3rd quarter 2006
188 days

4th quarter 2006
169 days

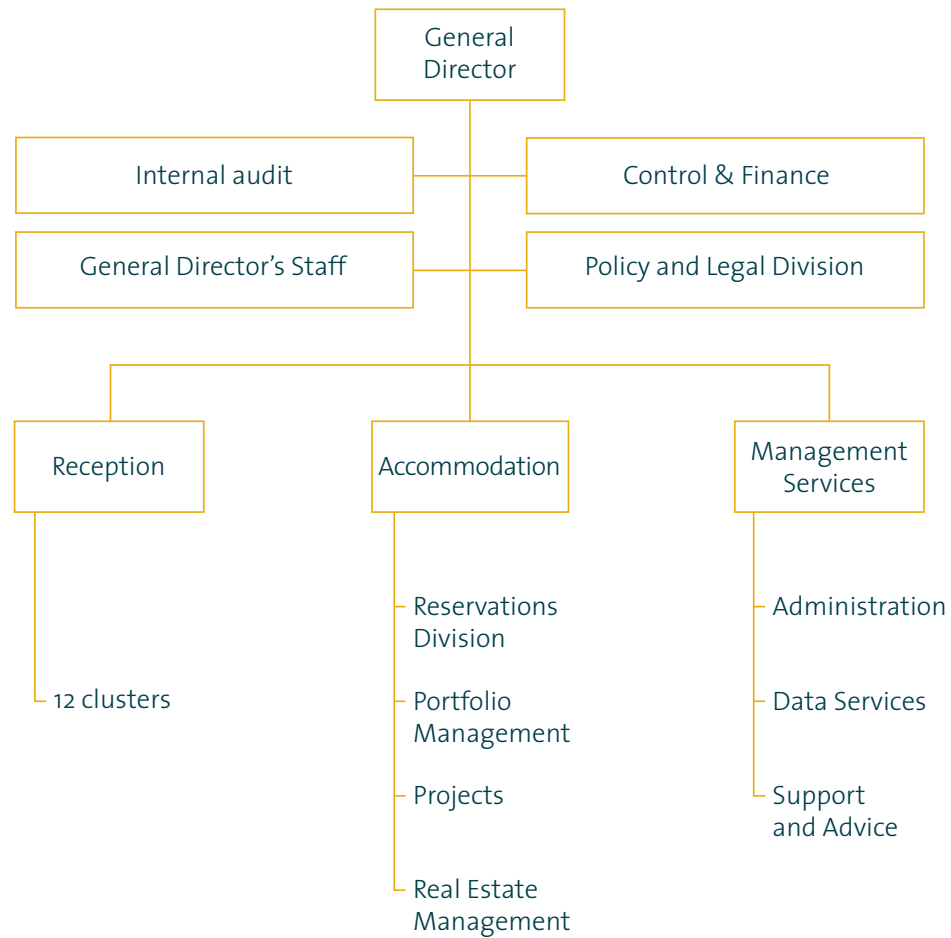
average 2006
179 days

* as from date of issue permit until outflux to the community

Figures stated in the Annual report of 2005 may, due to corrections, diverge in retrospect from figures as stated in this Annual report.

Organisation chart

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Management of COA in 2006

Nurten Albayrak-Temur	<i>General Director</i>
Huub Torremans untill March 2006	<i>Managing Director Northern Region</i>
Richard Andringa as from April 2006	
Maarten van Beek	<i>Managing Director Southern Region</i>
Ino Cooijmans untill March 2006	<i>Managing Director Control & Finance</i>
Ed Heijnen a.i. as from March 7 2006	
Frank van Engelen	<i>Managing Director Policy & Legal Division</i>
Petra Ginjaar	<i>Managing Director General Director's Staff</i>
Rob Agterhof	<i>Managing Director Management Services</i>
Jaap Eikelboom	<i>Managing Director Accommodation</i>
Gerard Wolters	<i>Head of the Internal Audit Department</i>

Colophon

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