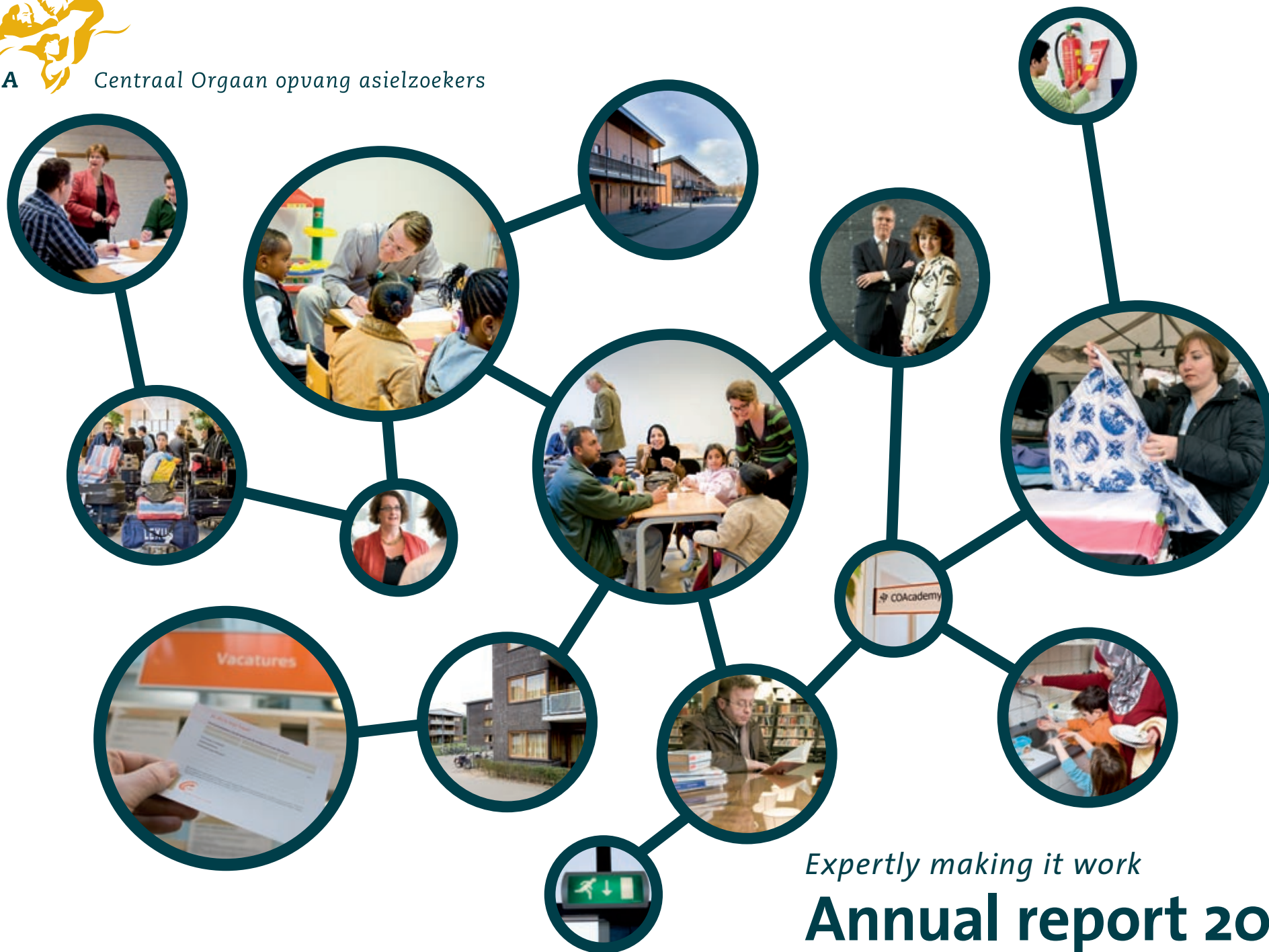




Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers



Expertly making it work

Annual report 2007

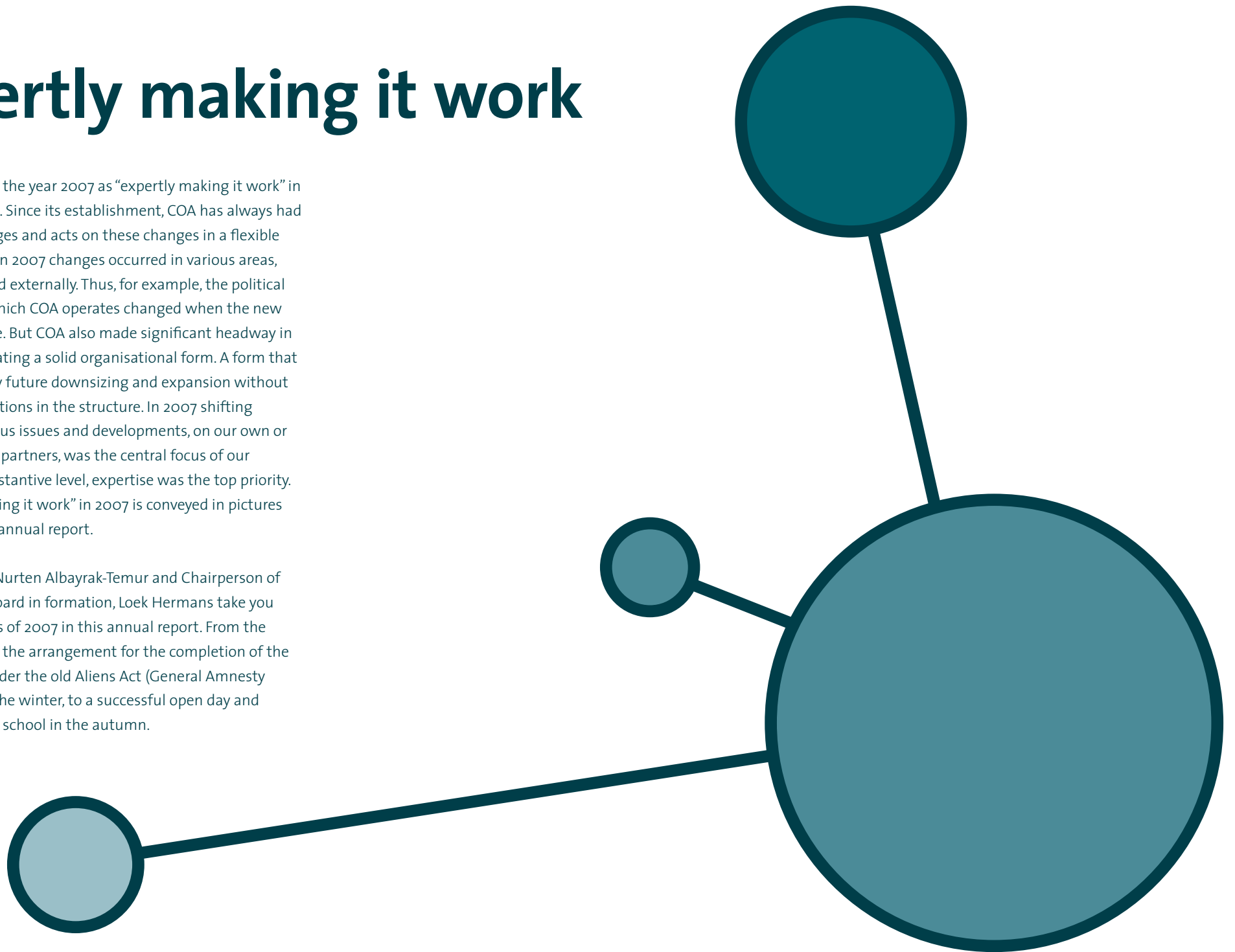
Contents

Expertly making it work	5
Winter	7
An independent start in the Netherlands	8
Safe environment	10
Spring	13
Reception capacity as a challenge	14
Speedily prepared for a large group	16
Other countries look and learn	18
Summer	21
Reorganisations offer tailor-made approach	22
“Our own kitchen”	24
Being clear about return	26
Autumn and winter	29
Open about ourselves	30
Sharing internal knowledge	32
Together we stand strong	34
Facts and figures	36
Colophon	45

Expertly making it work

COA characterises the year 2007 as “expertly making it work” in this annual report. Since its establishment, COA has always had to deal with changes and acts on these changes in a flexible and decisive way. In 2007 changes occurred in various areas, both internally and externally. Thus, for example, the political environment in which COA operates changed when the new cabinet took office. But COA also made significant headway in the process of creating a solid organisational form. A form that can withstand any future downsizing and expansion without requiring interventions in the structure. In 2007 shifting between the various issues and developments, on our own or together with our partners, was the central focus of our activities; at a substantive level, expertise was the top priority. The “expertly making it work” in 2007 is conveyed in pictures and words in this annual report.

General Director, Nurten Albayrak-Temur and Chairperson of the Supervisory Board in formation, Loek Hermans take you through the topics of 2007 in this annual report. From the announcement of the arrangement for the completion of the legacy of cases under the old Aliens Act (General Amnesty Arrangement) in the winter, to a successful open day and our own company school in the autumn.



Winter



At the beginning of January 2007, Nurten Albayrak-Temur anticipated that the formation of a new cabinet and the prior announcement of a General Amnesty Arrangement (the arrangement for clearance of the legacy of cases under the old Aliens Act) were forebodings of a rather unpredictable year ahead. She predicted that COA would be facing major challenges. Looking back, she says: "COA has the gift of reducing uncertainty to manageable proportions. In 2007 we managed, once again, to successfully tackle these challenges."

After the new cabinet took office on 22 February 2007, COA set to work on implementing the General Amnesty Arrangement and developed an information and orientation programme for the residents eligible for amnesty. In addition to this, case managers and programme supervisors were trained to assist and guide the residents to prepare themselves for a stay in the Netherlands instead of a return to their country of origin. Loek Hermans greatly values the way in which COA prepared itself in a short space of time for the General Amnesty Arrangement. "Employees are facing unimaginable challenges. It is not about products, but about people; how do you deal with residents who are eligible for amnesty and those who are not. I enormously admire the adaptive capacity, the tailor-made approach and the flexibility of COA and its employees."

Albayrak-Temur and Hermans have this to say in respect to the investments made to increase (fire) safety, liveability and social safety: "The safety of residents and employees is a number one priority for COA. COA invests in safety and the perception of safety, which also includes physical circumstances, such as lighting in toilet facilities or information and empowerment training courses for vulnerable groups. The residents may expect that COA will make every effort to provide a safe environment. This is a prerequisite for the good reception of asylum seekers."



An independent start in the Netherlands

What the General Amnesty Arrangement would look like, was not yet known in March 2007. It was known however that the arrangement would be taking place and moreover, that its implementation would have an enormous impact on COA. COA decided to prepare itself in advance.



“What arrangements do we have to make in order to be able to implement the General Amnesty Arrangement? How are we going to tackle this and with whom? The answers to these questions form the basis for our preparations”, says Petra Ginjaar, programme director for the General Amnesty Arrangement. “We have an enormous job ahead of us as of June 2007. Though the precise details of the arrangement will not be announced before June, we want to be well prepared. And therefore, we prepare ourselves not only on the basis of facts already known to us, but on our own knowledge and experience as well.”

Tailor-made approach with modules

The starting points were quickly determined. In activating the residents and providing them with support and guidance, COA focuses on individual tailoring. “The group is large; it is even expected to amount to 50% of our residents. Moreover, it is a very varied group: single persons and families, each with their own term of stay in the reception centre, age, ambitions, educational level and knowledge of Dutch”, says Ginjaar. “A tailor-made approach is necessary. We decide to develop a basic programme: the information and orientation programme, which consists of various modules.”

The programme was devoted to housing, work, learning and care. Ginjaar: “Housing is focussed on housing in the municipalities, work and learning stimulates the residents’ independence and self-reliance. We also make sure that the care needed will be continued. This care can consist of treatment in a hospital, an adapted house or daily home care. This combined approach enables an independent start in the Netherlands.”

Normal but special

The implementation of the General Amnesty Arrangement was part of COA’s normal work, but in a special situation. The group was large and the time frame for implementing the arrangement short. “The situation is also special because at present most COA employees are mainly holding return coaching

sessions with residents who, as from June, probably have a future in the Netherlands, and therefore need to be coached in terms of integration. This requires enormous flexibility from the employees to be able to make this switch”, says Ginjaar. “We decide to prepare employees for this switch by training one employee at each centre. In accordance with the train-the-trainer principle, this employee passes on the knowledge to its co-workers. Then the knowledge spreads amongst the employees.”

At centres

“Because we work with different stages in the asylum procedure, we have centres focussed on return and centres focussed on orientation & integration”, says Ginjaar. “We opt to continue this approach and to provide the information and orientation programme at the centres focussed on return. This saves the residents having to move.” This has an impact on the centres, as permit holders and asylum seekers awaiting return lived side by side. Ginjaar: “We devote special attention to the relationship between these two groups and liveability at the centres by discussing these issues with the residents.”

In addition to this, we appealed to the creativity of COA employees. “For example”, says Ginjaar, “we need classrooms for the information and orientation programme but there are none at return centres. Employees search, very pragmatically, for solutions to these kinds of problems.”

“During the preparations and later in the implementation too, the various managements and departments of COA found one another”, comments Ginjaar. “It is marvellous to see how everyone joins forces. The General Amnesty Arrangement affects every part of the organisation, such as: reception, policy, ICT, goods logistics, accommodation. Together they make it work.”

And then it was June

Up to June most of the preparatory work took place behind the scenes. “We are not going to wait until the General Amnesty

Arrangement had been put into place, but want to inform our employees sooner. They have many questions and also receive many questions from the residents”, according to Ginjaar. “At the end of May we organise a number of personnel meetings to enable the employees to get to work on a plan for each centre. Each centre has its specific features, each plan is different. After the meetings the employees get to work full speed ahead.”

“The employee’s enthusiasm is amazing.” Ginjaar admires the employees for their effort and commitment. “They organise their work and the facilities at the centres with enormous passion and enthusiasm. There are information meetings for the residents. Everyone is prepared. When the General Amnesty Arrangement becomes effective, we as an organisation are prepared for it.”

New partners

“We work together, both internally and externally”, explains Ginjaar. “Providing a good start in the Netherlands for such a large group in a relatively short time is not something that you do on your own. We intensify the cooperation with existing partners and at the same time seek new partners, such as the Centre for Work and Income (CWI) in order to help permit holders find a job more quickly”, according to Ginjaar. “The cooperation is proceeding very satisfactorily with all partners. We jointly explore the possibilities and rely on each other’s expertise.”

Later in the year, during the implementation, COA continued to further develop and intensify the support and guidance for the permit holders. More than 5000 residents followed the information and orientation programme and 4000 permit holders exchanged their stay at COA for their own home at the end of the year. Ginjaar: “We end 2007 with a positive feeling that will enable us to continue working on the implementation of the General Amnesty Arrangement with just as much commitment in 2008.”

Safe environment

Safety is a prerequisite for providing good reception. COA makes every effort to provide this safe environment for the residents and the employees. They can rely on this.



Safety entails more than safe buildings and a disaster plan. It is about feeling strong, trusting one another and being able to speak freely. It also entails a good aid and assistance in the event of disasters with trained in-house emergency response workers. And evacuation drills with the employees and external parties, such as the fire brigade and the police. COA continued the care for safety in 2007. All-important aspects were taken into account and COA appointed a programme manager who is responsible for continued attention and alertness in the field of safety. The programme manager further ensures that initiatives and projects are well geared to one another, whereby he works closely with the employees at the centres and with policy advisers. They combine their expertise and create safe centres for the residents and employees. In this way COA invests in a safe environment in 2007.

Project leader Fred Mutsaers on the safety of accommodation blocks:

“We ensure that all our accommodation blocks meet the statutory building construction requirements for fire safety. Safety inspections are regularly carried out at the centres. In 2007 these inspections were carried out by an independent agency. They scan all buildings for fire resistance. The agency recommends cladding the balustrades of the wooden access balconies and stairs with aluminium and applying fire-resistant cladding to the eaves to prevent fire-taking hold. COA makes these adaptations to all its buildings.”

“In addition to this, COA seals the holes for pipes/wires/cables in walls, floors and ceilings in all (semi-)permanent accommodation blocks. It prevents fire and smoke spreading to other rooms. This way, the escape routes remain intact for a longer period and that extends the escape time.”

Hans Kuster, facility affairs staff member in Utrecht, on a good in-house emergency response team:

“The annual in-house emergency response plan of the Utrecht cluster devotes considerable attention to information and prevention, whereby an important role is reserved for the in-house emergency response worker. The in-house emergency response workers have prevention tasks such as keeping emergency routes open and checking door springs. They also call people to account for their behaviour. In addition to this, all employees in the cluster, including employees of the medical reception and volunteers, follow a training course for communication in the event of disasters. The procedure is practised in this course, so that everyone is able to clearly and concisely communicate and knows who takes the decisions.”

“Just as the fire brigade, we work with a drill letter, in which a description is given of a specific disaster and how it has to be dealt with. After the drill we describe the actual implementation and the learning points. In 2007 we practised, for example, descending stairs while carrying a stretcher and how to deal with aggression. Local cooperation is essential during evacuation drills. Thus the fire brigade and the police learn to deal with non-native speakers and to judge the effect of their acts on the residents.”

Staff member Leonie ten Hove on safety and vulnerable groups:

“Some residents are more vulnerable than others and this hinders their independence. COA has an empowerment-training course for them. The aim is to physically and mentally empower people. Women learn, for example, that they have the same rights as men in the Netherlands. They also receive body language training to improve assertiveness and they practise escape techniques. Empowerment training courses were also provided, for first time, to men in 2007. These courses deal with, for example, controlling aggression and informing homosexual residents on where they can find help or advice.”

“The empowerment training courses were enthusiastically received. The residents feel that they are taken seriously; the employees notice that a previously submissive woman or uncertain man is much more self-assured. Moreover, the success motivates our cooperation partners. Thus azc Leersum has the Lover boys workshop, which was developed together with the regional vice police. Azc Dongen has the project for children of parents with psychological problems, in which the youth health care (JGZ) and local schools also participate. This large degree of commitment shows that safety and encouraging empowerment in vulnerable groups are well-anchored points on the COA agenda.”

Wil Roeffen, accommodation supervisor azc Venlo, on his role as in-house emergency response team leader:

“At the beginning of 2007, I followed, together with other co-workers, the Identifying Unsafe Situations training course. Azc Venlo is an open centre with nine accommodation blocks spread over large grounds. During the training course we observed that some of the buildings were less visible to the security service and us than others. That is why (single) women and children are now living within the sight of the reception desk. The playground has also been built at a central location to enable the women to keep an eye on their children. In addition to this, lighting in the landings has been improved by installing extra lights.”

“The majority of the women and some men at the centre follow an empowerment training course. Furthermore, women are given information about the domestic violence hotline. We tell the men that they are not allowed to hit their wives/girlfriends. The police run this hotline. The team leader is responsible for coordinating this process. I also explain to the residents how they should use a fire extinguisher or fire blanket when the pan catches fire. Safety covers many facets at COA.”

Spring

In the spring the number of residents, after years of downsizing, remained the same. Nurten Albayrak-Temur: “In 2007 COA again showed its flexibility in dealing with changes in the influx and outflux of residents. The organisation is equipped to deal with such movements.”

The opening and closure of centres is a continuous process, essential in this is good cooperation with external partners, in particular, the municipalities. COA has always had a constructive relationship with the municipalities, according to Albayrak-Temur. “The municipalities are a vital link for COA. A good relationship reaps benefits in the transfer of our residents from the centres to the municipalities. The employees of COA know who to contact in the municipalities. And as far as COA is concerned, our provision of assistance and guidance to the resident does not end after he or she has moved to a municipality.”

COA supports a durable return for the foreign national who has to return to their country of origin, according to Albayrak-Temur. “We have the in-house expertise that is required to assist and guide foreign nationals awaiting return. Moreover, we exchange knowledge with other countries that are looking for “durable solutions”. Cooperation is also essential for return. COA has international partners, such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), UNHCR and embassies, and we have positive experiences with these partners.”

Loek Hermans: “People who again see a future, with opportunities, in their country of origin who are able to pick themselves up and return proudly. The assistance and guidance of people in returning to their country of origin, together with other partners, is one of the strengths of COA.”

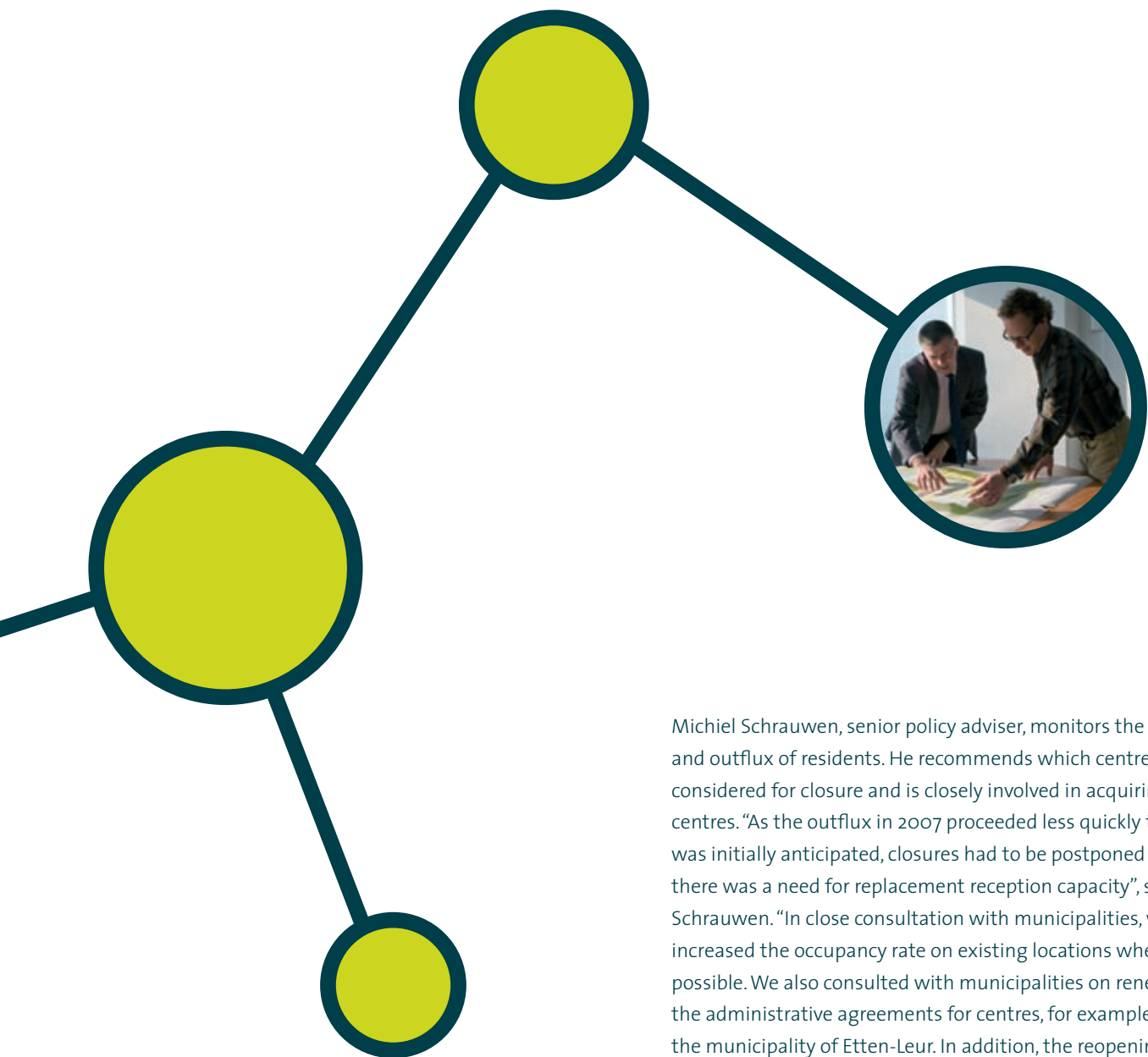


Reception capacity as a challenge

Over the year, COA has proven many times that it is a flexible reception organisation. In times of expansion and downsizing, COA always managed to adapt.

In 2007, COA also faced up to the challenge of finding suitable solutions for reception capacity problems.





Michiel Schrauwen, senior policy adviser, monitors the influx and outflux of residents. He recommends which centres can be considered for closure and is closely involved in acquiring new centres. "As the outflux in 2007 proceeded less quickly than was initially anticipated, closures had to be postponed and there was a need for replacement reception capacity", says Schrauwen. "In close consultation with municipalities, we increased the occupancy rate on existing locations where possible. We also consulted with municipalities on renewing the administrative agreements for centres, for example with the municipality of Etten-Leur. In addition, the reopening of azc Crailo was agreed with the municipality of Laren. When undertaking these activities COA considers whether a centre meets all requirements of, for example, safety and liveability."

A decision to separate the strategic and operational tasks of the Housing department was taken in the course of 2007. The strategic tasks will be placed in "Property & Capacity". "COA wishes to have sufficient qualitatively suitable reception capacity for the amount of residents to be accommodated. This will be the core task of "Property & Capacity", says Hans Buijing, quartermaster of "Property & Capacity". "The first assignment is to acquire fourteen centres. COA is consulting with several municipalities on this matter."

The reopening of Crailo

A good real-life example of 2007 is the reopening of azc Crailo. Heleen van Dijke, case manager, was involved with this. She says: "On 1 April 2005 azc Crailo was closed down. In the summer of 2007 this centre, which may accommodate 900 residents, is reopened for a maximum of five years. All buildings have to meet the criteria in the field of safety and hygiene. At the request of the municipality, the area medical and health service (GGD) carries out this inspection. At the end of August the first of five buildings are made available for occupation and a group of around one hundred residents moved in. The following months the buildings are completed one by one. There will also be two schools on the premises, a primary school and an International Intermediate Class. Upon the completion of each building, we check whether the centre has sufficient facilities for the number of residents to be accommodated." Van Dijke tells how the first group is received: "We ask a caterer to prepare a meal for this group of people from Afghanistan and Iraq. It is a special feeling to sit round one big table with all these new residents." COA successfully manages to deal with reception capacity problems, concludes Van Dijke. "Of course, we already had so much experience with downsizing and expansion. COA is able to flexibly respond to such developments and is adept at devising creative solutions."

Speedily prepared for a large group

The General Amnesty Arrangement has led to a considerable increase in the number of integration coaching sessions. The employees managed to adapt quickly to this new development. They enthusiastically set to work and strengthen one another by sharing their experiences.





The majority of all residents of COA received, after many years, a residence permit in 2007. This meant that employees held integration coaching sessions with more residents. Case managers emphasise that there is very little difference between an integration and return coaching session. In the words of Biserka Kreso, case manager azc Baexem: “I am coaching people to prepare themselves for a future, which may be in the Netherlands, in their country of origin or elsewhere.” “I am satisfied if I have contributed to helping people make a conscious choice”, says Adrie Walen, case manager of Haaglanden. “I help them by informing, motivating and encouraging them. There is a different atmosphere during an integration coaching session. Asylum seekers have come to the Netherlands to stay. As soon as they have received their residence permit card, they are energised.”

Training-the-trainer

Case managers Marian van de Kraats (azc Wageningen) and Miranda Mooibroek (azc Zweeklo) have been involved in integration coaching since 2004. Mooibroek: “It used to be a few residence permits. At present more than half of all residents in our reception centre have been granted a residence permit.” In her opinion, COA is responding flexibly and creatively to this situation. COA uses, for example, the train-the-trainer method in order to quickly inform and familiarise all employees with the work processes. Van de Kraats is one of those employees, who passes on her knowledge to her co-workers. She is enthusiastic about the method. “You very quickly become an expert. Moreover, the training courses lead to further improvement of the working methods.”

Positive reactions

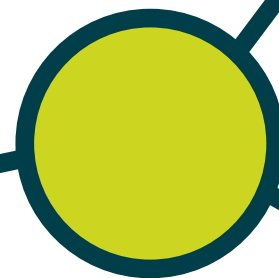
The motivation to implement the General Amnesty Arrangement is high. Van de Kraats: “Real-life practice at the centres is always the starting point. For example, I see that the suggestions made by case managers, programme and accommodation supervisors have been picked up and included in the information and orientation programme. And you willingly implement something that you have helped to devise.” Walen agrees with her. “It is so special to organise the coaching of thousands of permit holders in such a small space of time the coaching of thousands of asylum seekers given amnesty. It strengthens solidarity.” He is also encouraged by the positive reactions received from the municipalities. “We show them that we are a professional organisation. Municipalities and other agencies appreciate the added value of our information and orientation programme and the transfer file, containing the personal integration plan, which we give to our residents to take with them. In addition to this, we make agreements on housing with the local authorities. This cordial transfer helps the integration of the permit holders.”

Encouraging self-reliance

COA is ambitiously tackling the implementation of the General Amnesty Arrangement. Kreso: “Our aim is to support and guide all permit holders in our reception centre in order to enable them to build an independent future in the Netherlands. This experience, with such a large group, enables us to now provide a wider range of our tailor-made services.” COA continues, specifically in the individual coaching sessions, to encourage self-reliance on the part of residents, such as for example in the updated coaching of permit holders training course. The most important lesson from this training course, according to the case managers: “Particularly ask questions that get a person thinking. Immediately giving advice is well intentioned, but does not help the people concerned to think for themselves. After all, he or she will soon have to do this on her own.”

Other countries look and learn

COA already has years of experience in receiving, assisting and guiding invited refugees. COA shares this experience with reception organisations from other European countries in the project “Durable Solutions in Practice”.





The European Union is working on a joint asylum policy. Part of that policy is the reception of invited refugees. The Netherlands is one of the countries around the world that are taking part in the UNHCR's resettlement programme. Under this programme, UNHCR proposes refugees who are being received in the region of origin but cannot return to their own country. During a mission the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) selects from the proposed persons the refugees who come to the Netherlands (since 2005 five hundred per year) and COA prepares them for their new life in the Netherlands. COA then arranges reception and assistance in the Netherlands. With the project "Durable Solutions in Practice" COA is now allowing other countries to share in this experience. COA profits from the insights of foreign reception organisations, and thus supports at the same time the European plea for stimulation of assistance and guidance for invited refugees. In 2007 and 2008 colleagues from Belgium, the Czech Republic and Romania come to look and learn how COA implements this programme in practice. The project is financed by the European Union.

The kick-off

Durable Solutions started with a joint kick-off in the Netherlands in June 2007. COA gave a general presentation on assistance and guidance, reception and transfer from reception centre to municipalities of the invited refugees. The guiding principle of COA's working method is, first of all, intensive cooperation with the chain partners. The international colleagues also talked to representatives of, for example, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Secondly, COA sets great store by a sound preparation of the IND selection missions and a thorough preparation of the refugees for their new life in the Netherlands. Careful assistance and guidance and personal attention are necessary in order to ensure that these people can find their way in Dutch society, because invited refugees have often spent many years in a

refugee camp and have been through a lot. In addition to this, COA oversees the cooperation between all parties concerned in the municipality where the invited refugees will be living. When the international colleagues visited the municipality of Barneveld, which housed a group of invited refugees in the past, they were able to see how the assistance and guidance given by COA to the refugees works out in practice. The new residents have quickly found their way around Barneveld.

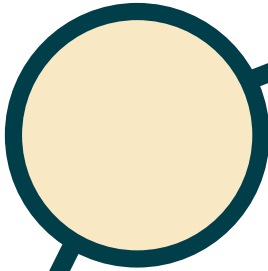
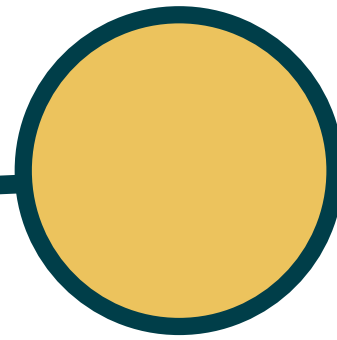
Vision of their own

In 2007 the colleagues from the Czech Republic were the first ones to experience the working method of COA from A tot Z. The COA let them participate in all phases, from the briefings for employees to the contacts with the housing associations about accommodation and they were given every opportunity to ask questions. COA encouraged the international colleagues to use all information in order to develop their own vision and approach. A method that works well in the Netherlands, might work out completely differently in the Czech Republic. COA would like to have other reception organisations learn from its experiences, it is definitely not out to sell a comprehensive process, and as was said, to continue to learn itself, because the many questions posed by international colleagues, keep us focussed.

Open attitude

At the end of 2007 the Czechs rounded off the Durable Solutions project. The Belgians have since been to Thailand with a selection mission of the IND. The Romanians will be going with a selection mission to Jordan at the beginning of 2008. All participants in the Durable Solutions project are enthusiastic. This enthusiasm gives COA-employees the energy that they need to accompany and guide their international colleagues and at the same time to perform their responsible task. The open attitude towards learning from one another is what makes this project so valuable.

Summer



The essence of the “Moving on Ambition” reorganisation is that the organisation can be, without further reorganisation, continuously adapted to varying numbers of residents and centres, according to Nurten Albayrak-Temur. “COA does not reorganise for the sake of reorganising, but to create a strong, flexible organisation, in which expertise can freely develop.

In 2007 COA took major steps in this direction.”

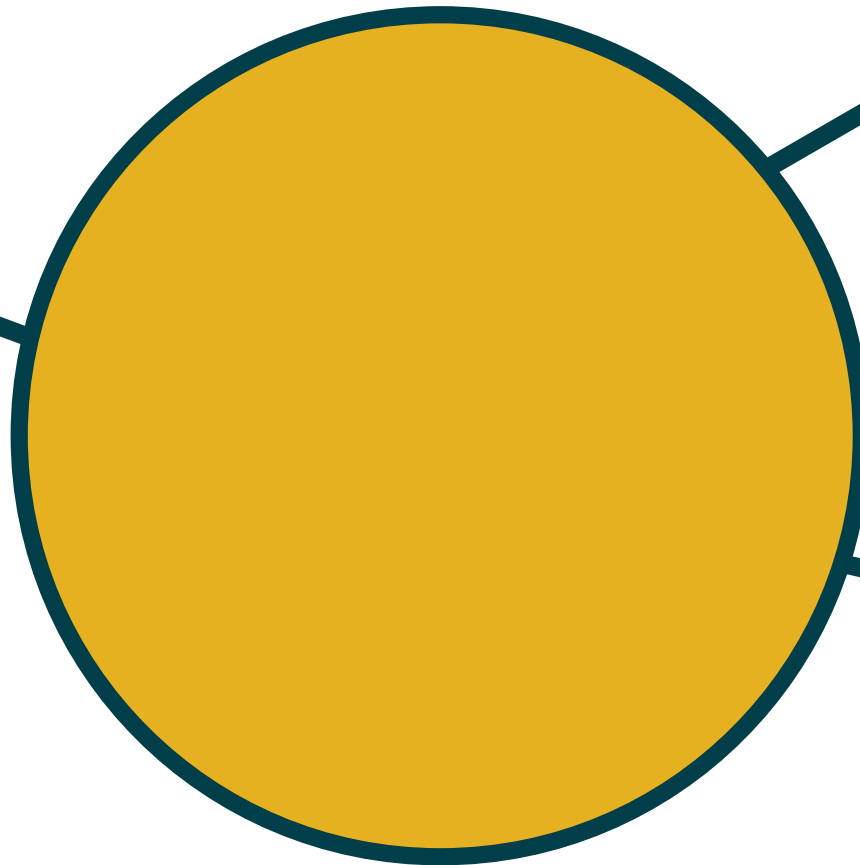
Loek Hermans describes the role of the Supervisory Board in formation in reorganisations: “The Board supervises whether the agreements remain within the agreed budget, whether the objectives of the reorganisation have been achieved and whether this has been satisfactorily communicated to the employees. We take a critical look at these aspects and can conclude that COA achieves these objectives.”

As the year progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the information and orientation programme is an extremely valuable instrument. Albayrak-Temur is proud of this programme: “More than 5000 persons eligible for amnesty follow the programme and consent to transfer of their file to the municipality.” The various modules in this programme provide a solid basis from which the municipalities clearly benefit too. When the first transfers to the municipalities took place at the end of the summer, the programme proved to be of great value to the residents and the municipalities.

Hermans says that the Supervisory Board in formation also devotes attention to the impact of the General Amnesty Arrangement on employees, on residents who have a residence permit and on residents awaiting return. “This is an important point on the agenda throughout the year and we always keep our finger on the pulse. No further action is required on our part, because COA deals with this issue in a careful and professional way in relation to both groups.”

Reorganisations offer tailor-made approach

COA is a decisive organisation, in which expertise is a top priority. It has an organisational structure that is suitable to withstand future developments and can cope with strong fluctuations. This has been partly enabled by the reorganisations, which were initiated earlier and are now completed.



Mirjam Geurtsen is reception director. She talks about the “Moving on Ambition” reorganisation at the reception centre. “This reorganisation has made COA an organisation that can cope even better with downsizing and expansion and can act more flexibly and decisively. The removal of a management layer has increased responsiveness. The new management positions are those of cluster manager, location manager and team leader services.” The increase in responsiveness will not only be noticeable internally. “Centre managers have more explicit contact with the chain partners and other partners. They will notice that our centre managers are able to act more quickly”, explains Geurtsen. Because we are able to act more rapidly in the organisation, it will be easier to increase the tailor-made solutions available. And that helps the resident.

Expanding or downsizing in tune with developments

“Moving on Ambition” is a model that creates space to expand or downsize in tune with the number of residents and centres without having to continually make further organisational interventions”, explains Geurtsen. “A number of clusters are combined because a slight reduction in the size of COA is anticipated in the coming two years. If COA starts to expand again then the number of clusters could also increase again. And this reorganisation fulfils another ambition of COA, namely the reception helpdesk, where knowledge and experience of reception as a profession are systematically secured and shared. The helpdesk also links knowledge and skill.”

At the end of 2007 all preparations for “Moving on Ambition” were completed in order to be able to set to work with the new organisational structure in the coming year.

Housing

A reorganisation is also being prepared at the Housing department. Major steps were taken in 2007.

The housing director, Frank van Engelen, describes the essence of this reorganisation: “In the past years a lot of work was contracted out. We want to have the knowledge in house.

In addition to this, it was decided to separate the strategic and operational tasks. After this separation Property & Capacity set to work on the acquisition or disposal of centres. The core task of Property & Capacity is to ensure that COA has sufficient qualitatively suitable capacity for the number of residents to be accommodated.

Management, maintenance and placement remain under the auspices of the Housing department. Close cooperation and good consultation between strategy and implementation and with the reception is essential after the separation.

A major advantage of the reorganisation for the chain partners is that they know who their contact person is. They do not have to deal with different people and parties in COA.

Property & Capacity has the important task of strengthening relations with the municipalities. Employees, who are experienced in maintaining relations with the municipalities, work on this assignment. They explored the willingness and the possibilities of the municipalities to establish centres.” According to Van Engelen, COA has something to offer the municipalities. “In addition to the reception of asylum seekers, COA can make an essential contribution to liveability problems in the municipalities. COA has the expertise and ambitions to achieve this.”

In 2007, COA started with the reorganisation of the Housing department, which will be formally completed in 2008.

“Our own kitchen”

The Kurbardovic family was granted a residence permit under the General Amnesty Arrangement. This is a family that always looks ahead, never gives up. They found their dream house in the municipality of Oss and various jobs were in the offing.





Test passed

Once the couple receives the residence permit, they follow the information and orientation programme of COA for residents who are eligible for amnesty under the General Amnesty Arrangement. The programme introduction is held in August and in September they followed the first modules. At the introduction they immediately sign the consent forms for the transfer of their files to the municipality. Edina Kurbardovic-Ajdarpašić: “We follow the modules and sit the test. A whole afternoon: reading, listening, writing, talking and an intelligence test. My word, it is difficult but at the same time enjoyably challenging!”

Own network

In Grave 260 adult residents are eligible for amnesty under the General Amnesty Arrangement. At the end of 2007, 80 left for various municipalities. Case manager Karen Maas maintains, together with others, contact with the local administrative contacts. “This enables local matching. Residents from azc Grave mainly want to live in Oost-Brabant and Gelderland. They often take the initiative themselves. They have usually built up their own network.” Maas also maintains contacts with the municipality of Oss, where the Kurbardovic family has found a house. She knows that the municipality “is willing to take people into the municipality who would like to live and work in Oss.”

Dream house

The family finds the house of their dreams. Edina Kurbardovic: “We were registered via Internet with a housing association. We were given our own password and registration number. We responded to every offer. We also saw this house, but we

thought we were aiming too high. We responded nevertheless. After one and a half weeks we got a call; would we like to come and look at the house, because we could have it. We said that we did not even have to come and look at it, that we wanted it right now but, of course, that’s not how things work. A week later we signed the contract!”

Choice of occupation

De Bruijn keeps telling the family: “Think in terms of your own abilities, because then you will certainly make it.” Edina Kurbardovic: “We have many ideas, many plans. At present we are receiving social benefit but we want to get off benefit as quickly as possible. We want to get to work. My husband already has the choice of three jobs.” De Bruijn hopes that Mr Kurbardovic will find a job as electro technician, his original profession. “That is the job that he deserves with his capacities”, adds Maas. “An on-the-job training programme is also a good option for him. In that case he will initially earn less but he will soon make this up once he has completed his training. And Mrs Kurbardovic aspires to work as an interpreter/translator. Her Dutch is good. She is searching for a job via Internet.”

Actually getting to work

The placement of the Kurbardovic family in Oss is a good example of a local matching, according to Maas. “The family was keen to live in Oss. They have friends just round the corner, acquaintances and family nearby and the children live five minute’s walking distance from school. Edina Kurbardovic is very happy with the efforts made by COA, the municipality of Oss and the Work and Income Centre (CWI). “They perfectly arranged, explained and thought of everything. Now we can really get going, for example by looking for a job. But we and the children too, still have to get used to the new situation. Recently, our middle child asked whether the kitchen is really for us alone or whether we would be sharing it with other people!”

The family, three children, the father is from Montenegro and the mother from Kosovo, have been living in the Netherlands since 1998 and since 2003 in azc Grave. Louis de Bruijn was their case manager. De Bruijn: “What is the secret of this family’s success? The family members themselves! Especially Mrs Kurbardovic-Ajdarpašić, she tackles every problem that she encounters. She takes the lead. She is an example of self-reliance.”

Being clear about return

Asylum seekers who are not eligible for a residence permit have to leave the Netherlands. COA assists them in their preparation, whereby the emphasis lies on voluntary return. It is crucial that our assistance is tailored to the needs of the individual asylum seeker.





From the first moment of the asylum seeker's arrival at the reception centre, the COA employee discusses with him/her the future: integration or return. When the asylum application has been rejected, COA actively assists and guides the resident with his/her departure from the Netherlands. Case manager Marianne van Dijk of azc Wageningen describes which assistance and guidance she can provide to residents who have to return. "I have coaching discussions with the resident in which I mainly focus on mapping out the future prospects of the resident who has exhausted all legal remedies. The aim of these one-to-one discussions is, for example, to encourage voluntary return, to remove practical obstacles and to work on durable return in the country of origin."

According to Van Dijk, the residents have many questions when their asylum application is rejected and they can take these questions to the case manager. "People who stay in the reception centre continue to hope that they will be allowed to stay in the Netherlands. Their first response to the rejection of their asylum application is usually one of denial. Residents who stay at our reception centre for a few months also strongly believe in their opportunities in the Netherlands." Van Dijk is clear: the core task of COA is to assist and guide people to build up a future for themselves, even if they have to return. "Once the rejection has been issued, the assistance and guidance will focus on a future in the country of origin. Assisting and guiding these residents, who have exhausted all legal remedies, is also a core task of COA."

Tailor-made approach

COA works together with the Return and Departure Service (DT&V) on preparing and effectuating the departure. Henk Driessen, lead person DT&V, describes the cooperation: "The DT&V carries out, together with COA and the Aliens Police, the return interviews, in which we follow the guidelines of the joint line of action "Return and Departure". The chain partners work together intensively and multidisciplinary and make use of one

another's knowledge. Our foremost aim is to achieve the joint objective, namely a durable, preferably voluntary, return."

A return strategy is drawn up for each asylum seeker who has exhausted all legal remedies. This is always a tailor-made strategy; not every resident works with the same willingness and motivation on his/her return. Moreover, each person has different chances and prospects. Van Dijk and Driessen believe that: "It is crucial to provide assistance and guidance that is tailored to the individual needs of the person awaiting return and therefore this is given primary priority at each stage of the return and departure process." All parties involved work with the departure strategy and ensure that there is optimal clarity for the asylum seeker.

In preparing his or her return the resident can rely on the case managers of COA. Van Dijk: "In working on return, the resident prepares a plan. I discuss with the resident which possibilities he/she has and which obstacles he/she experiences. These one-to-one discussions provide a new perspective."

Durable return

In Driessen's opinion, residents who must return have their future in their own hands. "If someone asks for help, then we will always try to help him or her. For example, just recently a resident was helped with a computer for his own Internet cafe in the country of origin. Another resident collected money for a turntable; he wishes to start a small disco." Support can also be provided, if this is necessary, even after return, according to Van Dijk. In that case the parties with which COA cooperates, such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Cordaid provide this support. The asylum seeker continues to be the director of his/her own process. Van Dijk: "As case manager I always assume that the initiative lies with the resident. This applies for both integration and return. When a person is convinced of his/her opportunities in the country of origin, this increases the chance of durable return."

Autumn and winter

According to Nurten Albayrak-Temur, each encounter with a colleague is a form of knowledge sharing. COA sees the importance of the exchange of knowledge and this topic also received considerable attention in 2007. She says: “COA can excel in our expertise because we believe that expertise is a common property. COA has been encouraging knowledge sharing for years, i.e. we should not keep expertise to ourselves but share it with colleagues. And now this has been embedded in our organisation.”

In 2007 the well-attended and valued two-day return conference and the work conferences underlined the success of knowledge sharing within COA. At the end of 2007 a cherished wish came true. COA will get its own company school, which combines knowledge and skill: the COAcademy.

More than 16,000 people visited one of the COA centres during the “Day of the azc” on 3 November. The open day was a great success. People living in the neighbourhood, interested parties, students and contacts of COA made use of the opportunity to come and have a look in the centre. Nurten Albayrak-Temur says that the open day was an absolute high point. According to

Loek Hermans, the open day partially contributes to dispelling prejudices. “Get to know the centre, the employees and the residents. Talk to asylum seekers, listen to their experiences and their ambitions.”

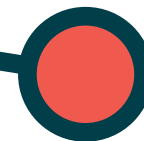
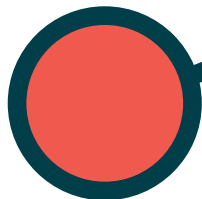
Looking back on the entire year, both Albayrak-Temur and Loek Hermans conclude that at the end of 2007 COA is in a stronger shape. Although 2007 began as a rather unpredictable year, COA expertly made it work and coped with the change in reception capacity and professionally implemented both the General Amnesty Arrangement and the assistance and guidance of residents awaiting return. It invested a lot in the organisational structure and worked on international cooperation. Furthermore, the interaction between COA and the municipalities and cooperation partners has been improved. Albayrak-Temur: “We end 2007 with, once again, newly gained experiences. COA’s actions have always revolved around people, whether they are residents or employees. This will not change in 2008.”





Open about ourselves

COA is open and transparent for everyone, whether they are people living in the neighbourhood or external contacts. COA also works hard to achieve this in 2007 and a high point of the year was the 'Day of the azc', which was held on 3 November. More than 16,000 people visited a COA centre on this open day.





This was the first time that COA had organised a national day on such a scale, whereby virtually all centres opened their doors to the public. The Day of the azc of 3 November was a perfect chance for the public to become further acquainted with all the day-to-day aspects of life at an asylum seekers centre in the Netherlands. At 34 centres the public was informed about the work of COA. State Secretary, Nebahat Albayrak, visited the azc in Leiden. She was given a tour and gave part of the civic integration course to Somali women.

The Day of the azc coincided with “Make a Difference Day”, the national day for volunteers. Prince Constantijn and Princess Laurentien visited in that context the azc in Alkmaar. The Royal couple was impressed by the work of the employees and volunteers and participated in various activities. They jointly helped in the playgroup and after this, Prince Constantijn assisted in the basic Dutch lesson intended for asylum seekers who have recently arrived in the Netherlands. Princess Laurentien talked to women from Somalia, Eritrea and Iraq. The princess was moved: “Each person has a story. We sometimes forget about the educational skills and experiences that they bring with them and that they are special people, every one of them.”



During this day at the various centres people applied to come and work as a volunteer at COA.

Public brochure

The new public brochure of COA is presented in the autumn. The brochure was completely revised in light of the many changes in the past years; not only has the working method of CAO evolved but CAO had also undergone an organisational change. The public brochure presents a clear picture of what COA stands for: receiving and activating the occupants in order to enable them to continue building a future for themselves, in or outside the Netherlands. The brochure is intended for the Dutch public.

COA in beeld

The first edition of “COA in beeld” (COA in focus), the public relations magazine of COA, appeared in the summer of 2007. The magazine is a quarterly publication. The magazine covers issues ranging from “reception centre in focus” to special functions of COA. There are also interviews with third parties and articles on cooperation. The magazine appears in Dutch.

Sharing internal knowledge

Reception is a profession that is best learned in practice. After all, there is no academy where it can be studied. That is why COA encourages employees to exchange their experiences with one another. At the new company school, the COAcademy, training courses are being developed by and for employees. The Reception helpdesk is specifically responsible for securing knowledge about the reception profession.





COA is an organisation that continuously adapts to the changing demand from politicians and society and this requires expert employees who can quickly familiarise themselves with new processes. Many aspects of the reception profession are unique and especially have to be learned in practice. Employees learn a lot from one another and this enables them to better respond to the day-to-day practice. In 2007 COA developed its own company school in order to systematically organise the process of internal knowledge development and sharing for all employees.

Our own training courses

In 2007 COA fulfilled a cherished desire: the COAcademy. The day-to-day work of COA is the starting point of this new company school. At the COAcademy training courses are developed by and for employees. Training courses which are closely in line with the day-to-day practice. During the preparations of the company school, colleagues worked enthusiastically together on developing the first training courses. For example, employees were involved in preparing the Political and Administrative Actors and Institutions in the Netherlands training course. The COA International workshop is developed for colleagues who wish to accompany an international mission and was given by employees with foreign experience. COA not only trains its own employees in the company school. The COAcademy developed, together with the

Return and Departure Service and the Aliens Police, a chain training course aimed at strengthening cooperation.

Meetings

As from 2008, the COAcademy will also be regularly organising meetings for colleagues with equivalent functions, teams and management and supervisory staff. On-the-job training is also a possibility. Having our own training courses is a good way of enabling employees to grow in their profession. However, skills training courses, such as advice skills or coaching permit holders, require keeping some professional distance from the course participants. This can be achieved more easily in cooperation with an external training institute. The training courses are mainly given at the azc's, near to the day-to-day practice. The COAcademy has its own premises in Almere and has two practical training locations at its disposal.

Best practices

At the COAcademy the emphasis lies on training and instructing all employees. The reception helpdesk specifically focuses on employees working in reception. Moreover, the helpdesk will be developed in 2007 in order to exchange successful practical experiences. The new integral helpdesk replaces all existing helpdesks. This enables all centres to benefit from experiences, wherever gained. And the helpdesk does more than realise the exchange of knowledge. It also ensures that knowledge is retained within the reception department. One way of doing this is by systematically registering all questions and answers.

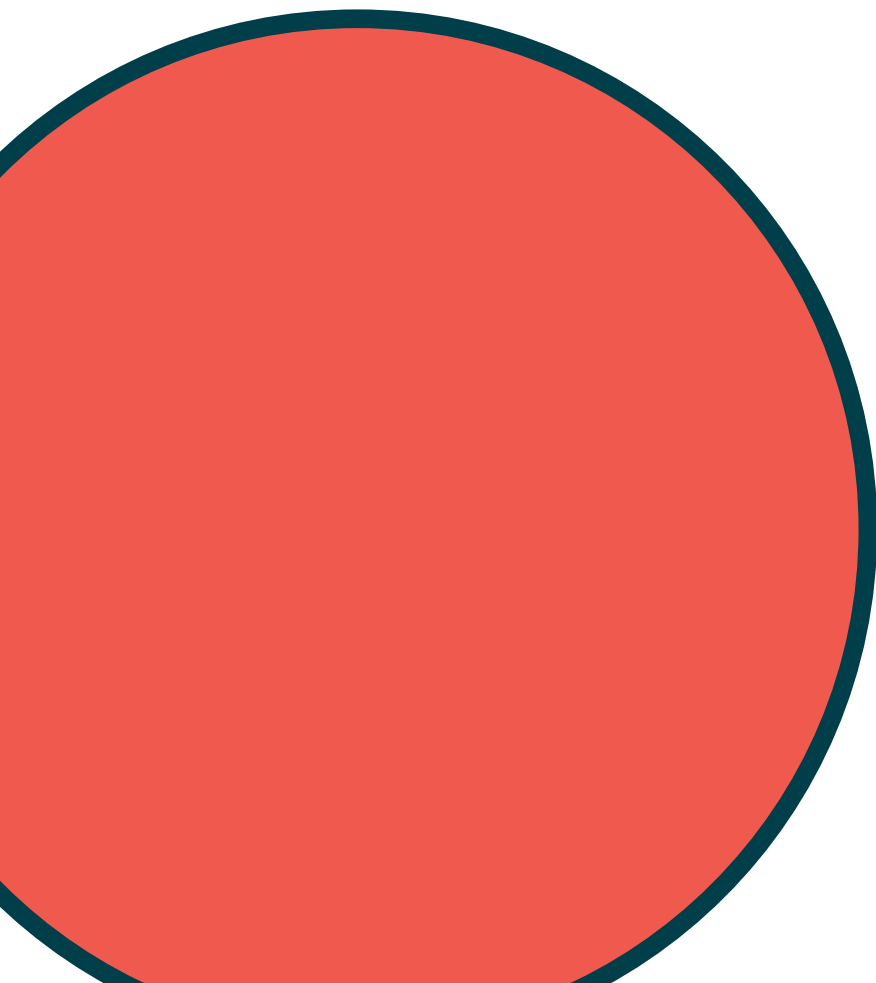
Anticipating the day-to-day practice

By means of the company school and the reception helpdesk, COA organises and stimulates the development of its employees and with them, the entire organisation. The residents and chain partners also reap benefits from these activities.



Together we stand strong

Cooperation. COA believes: together we stand strong. The knowledge and skill of the chain partners and of COA strengthen one another, whether in the case of, for example, return or integration.



For asylum seekers who have to return to their country of origin, cooperation took concrete shape in the Return and Departure Service, “the DT&V” in 2007. Exploratory talks with COA had already started in 2006, according to René Roodzant, departure preparation director, one of the three departments of DT&V. “The basis for determining the form of voluntary return of the foreign national is laid with the “Return & Departure” guideline. The challenge is then to bind other parties. Cooperation with COA is special because of the speed with which we have put this cooperation into place. For 2007 this cooperation scores ten out of ten!”

The guideline was further developed at the coordination meeting. The aim is controlled return, preferably voluntarily, if necessary forced. The DT&V officially commenced its activities in January 2007. DT&V, the Aliens Police and COA quickly managed to assume their own task in the cooperation. Maarten Askamp, return manager, is closely involved on behalf

of COA in the development of DT&V. He sees a considerable improvement in the return chain: “You must not all want to do the same or to assume one another’s role. Strengthen one another. The cooperation between the case managers of COA and the DT&V is going well. Each party knows by now what its role is.” The case manager assists, guides and activates the resident. The case manager knows the resident because they have lived with us during the entire procedure. For that reason, a case manager knows what the prospects are of a specific resident and what this resident needs in order to be able to return. The DT&V staff member becomes involved as soon as it is clear that a resident has to leave the Netherlands and oversees, with contributions from the COA staff member, the return strategy process of the asylum seekers.

Roodzant and Askamp share their vision on the added value of the chain cooperation for asylum seekers and municipalities. “From the outset the foreign national is clearly and unambiguously told what their position is. The focus will have to lie on preparing for a future in the country of origin. An added value is that the foreign national can be repatriated with dignity. And we actively involve the municipalities in this process. What steps do we take, which activities does the foreign national undertake and what is the following step? What are the stages of the return process? We invite the municipalities to consult with us at case level.”

In the implementation of the General Amnesty Arrangement COA also worked together with chain partners in various areas. For example with Aedes, the industry and trade association for housing associations.

Director Henk van Heuven of Aedes, industry and trade association for housing associations came into contact with COA in 2007. “We looked at how we could help one another in the implementation of the General Amnesty Arrangement.

Cooperation was felt to be more than desirable. The associations are particularly good at providing accommodation and COA is particularly good at assisting and guiding people. Together we stand stronger because this enables better matching for suitable accommodation. The initiative was taken, together with various other social organisations, to prepare a joint action plan. This plan has to ensure that people eligible for amnesty under the General Amnesty Arrangement can quickly participate in society in a positive manner. Housing associations consider it their social responsibility to facilitate this group in finding a good starting position in Dutch society.

The “Working together on a New Start for New Dutch citizens” plan was presented to Minister Vogelaar for Housing, Communities and Integration (WWI) on 12 July 2007. All organisations wish to implement the General Amnesty Arrangement humanely and speedily in areas such as housing, education, work and care. In order to achieve this, they coordinate working methods, processes and good examples with one another so that the process can proceed efficiently. Each social organisation involved assumes its own responsibility for what it is good at. COA’s strength is, in my opinion, that it is, by nature, prepared to consider matters from the perspective of the problems and prospects of people.” Van Heuven concludes: “Finding suitable accommodation is not only a matter of speed, but also of the dynamic of the process. It is to everyone’s benefit that, in addition to finding suitable accommodation, there is also the prospect of work, care, education and welfare. This increases the chance of successful integration.”

COA is very satisfied with the cooperation with Aedes. Azc’s, municipalities and housing associations have made or are going to make good local agreements. This will impact positively on finding suitable housing and this tailor-made approach will, of course, greatly benefit the residents of COA.



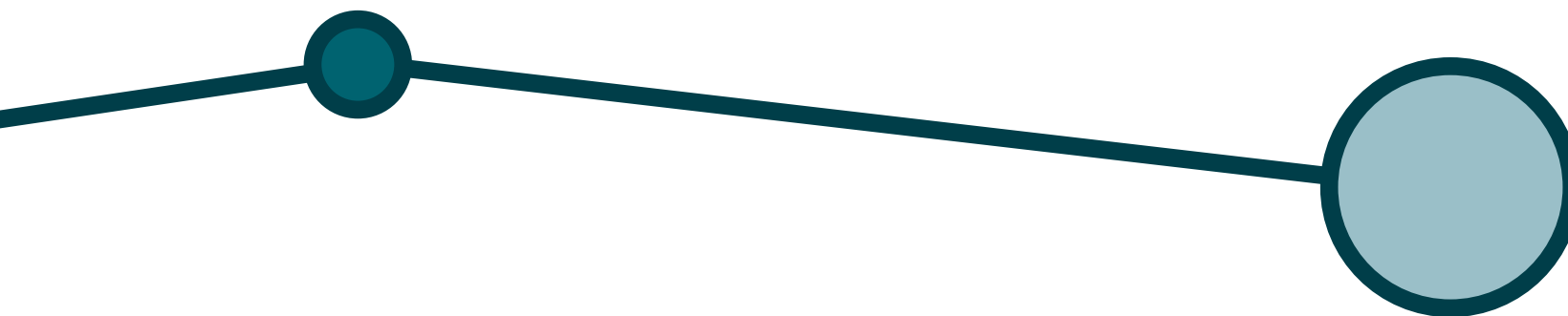
Balance

(values x 1,000 euro)	31-12-2007	31-12-2006
Fixed Assets		
Intangible fixed assets	5,938	5,531
Tangible fixed assets	160,974	162,354
Current Assets		
Receivables	29,598	16,264
Liquid assets	93,476	63,735
Total Fixed Assets	289,986	247,884

(values x 1,000 euro)	31-12-2007	31-12-2006
Liabilities		
Equity capital	28,810	36,602
Assets at the disposal of the Ministry of Justice	1,921	4,812
Equalisation account	67,124	70,961
Provisions	53,906	42,902
Current liabilities	138,225	92,607
Total Liabilities	289,986	247,884



(values x 1,000 euro)	Realisation 2007	Realisation 2006
Income commissioning authority DVB (excl. downsizing)	441,093	437,939
Other income	26,624	38,064
Special receipts (downsizing)	1,511	24,908
Total income	469,228	500,911
Staff	138,906	131,379
Equipment	125,790	126,938
Interest and depreciation	20,170	18,641
Medical expenses and MOA	105,383	122,563
Programme expenses	72,211	63,483
Extraordinary expenditures (downsizing)	10,508	40,342
Total expenditure	472,968	503,346
Net operating result	-3,740	-2,435
Project expenses to the debit of the reserve fund for policy intensification	4,010	3,841
Withdrawal from the reserve fund for policy intensification	-4,010	-3,841
Remaining net operating result	-3,740	-2,435



Reception Centres 2007

azc Aalten, azc Alkmaar, azc Almelo, azc Amersfoort, *azc Amsterdam Bos en Lommer**, *azc Amsterdam-Noord**, azc Apeldoorn NoordWest, azc Appelscha, azc Arnhem-Vreedenburgh (Zuid), azc Azelo, azc Baexem, azc Bellingwolde ‘De Grenshof’, *azc Burgh Haamstede**, azc Burgum, *azc Crailo**, azc Delfzijl, azc Den Helder, azc Dokkum, azc Dongen, azc Drachten, azc Dronten, azc Echt, azc Eindhoven (Beatrix), azc Emmen, *azc Etten-Leur**, *azc Franeker**, azc Geeuwenbrug, azc Geeuwenbrug (AMOG), azc Gilze en Rijen, azc Grave, *azc Heemskerk**, azc Heerlen, azc Leersum, azc Leiden, *azc Lemmer**, azc Leusden, azc Luttelgeest, azc Markelo, azc Middelburg, azc Musselkanaal, azc Nijmegen, azc Oisterwijk, azc Oude Pekela, azc Raalte, azc Rotterdam, azc Sambeek, azc Schagen, azc Schalkhaar, azc’s-Gravendeel, *azc Slagharen**, azc St. Annaparochie, azc Sweikhuizen, azc Utrecht, azc Venlo, azc Vught, azc Wageningen, *azc Wapenveld**, azc Winschoten (Schutse), azc Winterswijk, azc Zweeloo

** Closed in 2007*

** Opened in 2007*

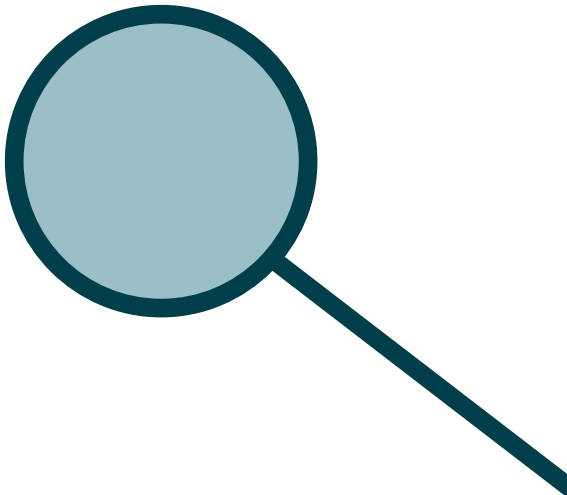
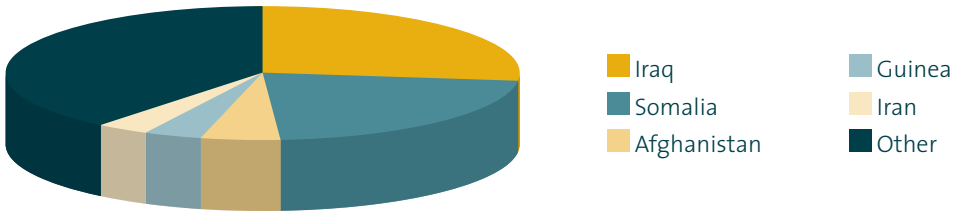
Development in reception

Influx central reception as from 2000 to 2007

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Influx	33,634	25,273	12,916	8,529	5,324	5,381	7,772	8,977

In 2007 the persons who entered the central reception mainly came from:

Country of origin	Influx
Iraq	2,424
Somalia	1,960
Afghanistan	445
Guinea	342
Iran	287
Other	3,519
Total	8,977

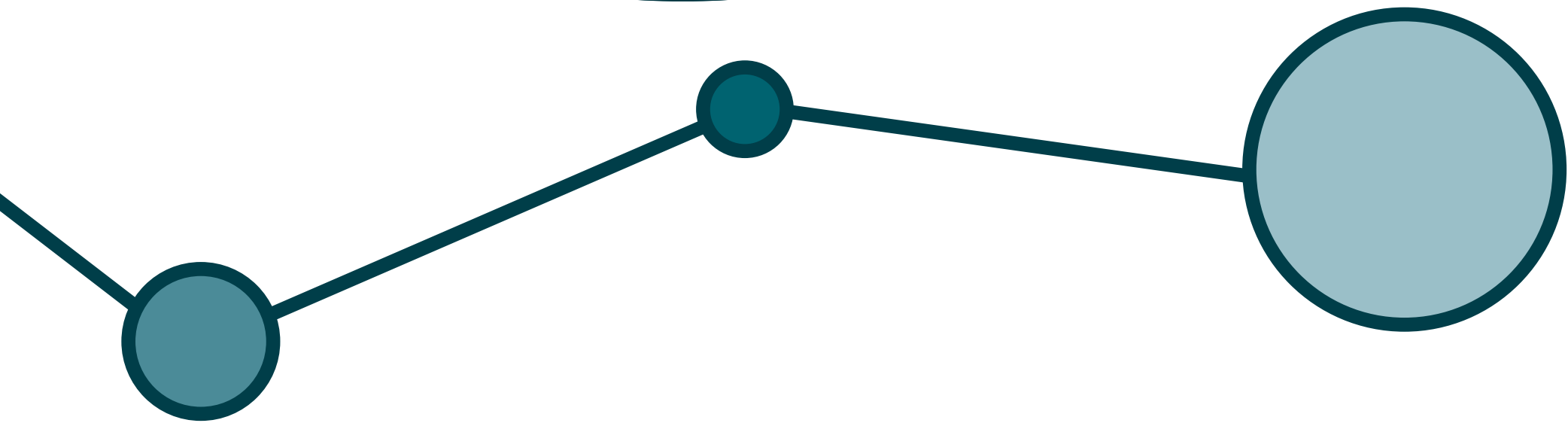
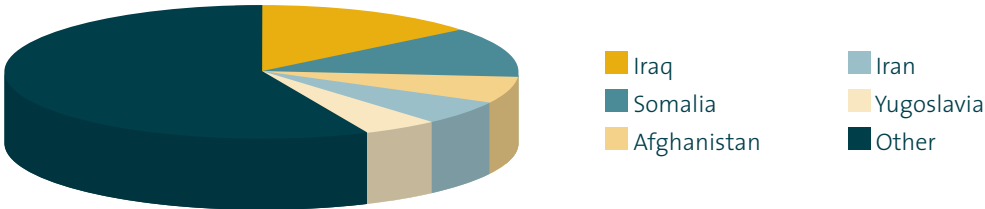


Outflux central reception as from 2000 to 2007

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Outflux	19,940	19,625	26,936	25,329	16,955	17,170	13,190	10,308

In 2007 the persons who left the central reception mainly came from:

Country of origin	Outflux
Iraq	1,454
Somalia	1,269
Afghanistan	657
Iran	597
Yugoslavia	478
Other	5,853
Total	10,308

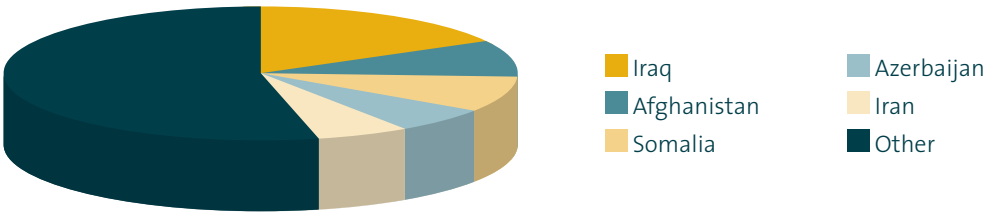


Occupancy central reception as from 2000 to 2007

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Occupancy	78,246	83,801	69,752	52,714	40,761	28,730	23,232	21,698

In 2007 the occupancy in de central reception mainly consisted of persons from:

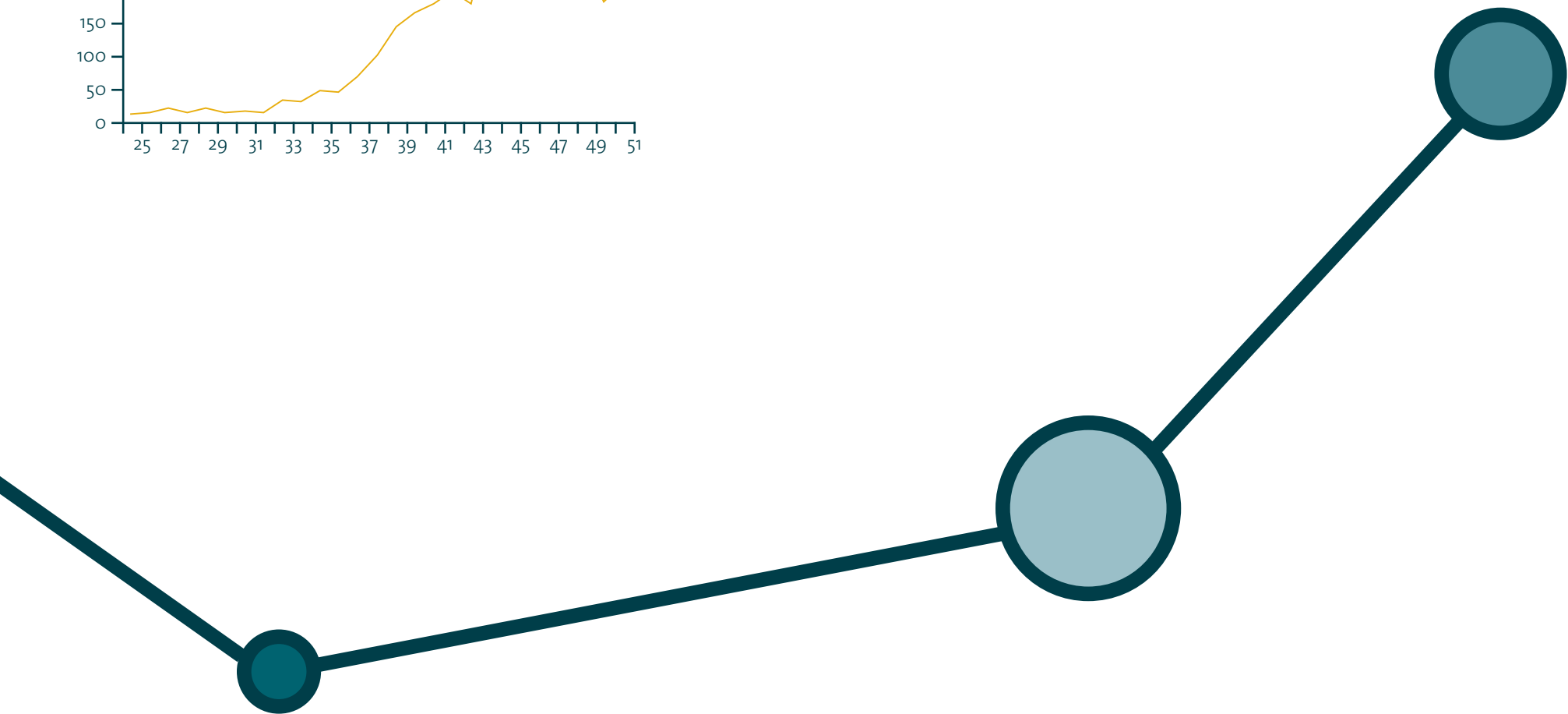
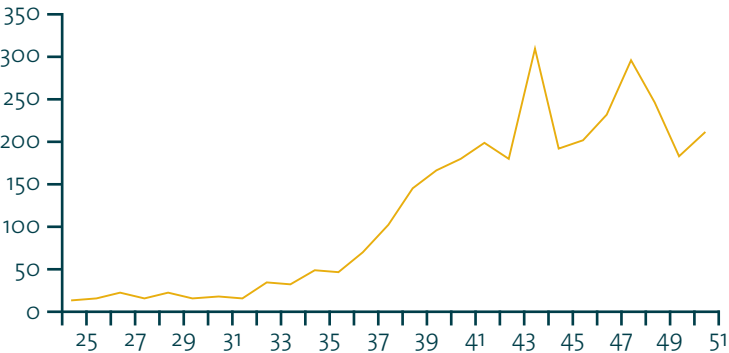
Country of origin	Occupancy
Iraq	3,697
Afghanistan	1,899
Somalia	1,875
Azerbaijan	1,305
Iran	1,273
Other	11,649
Total	21,698



Amount of persons eligible for amnesty in the central reception

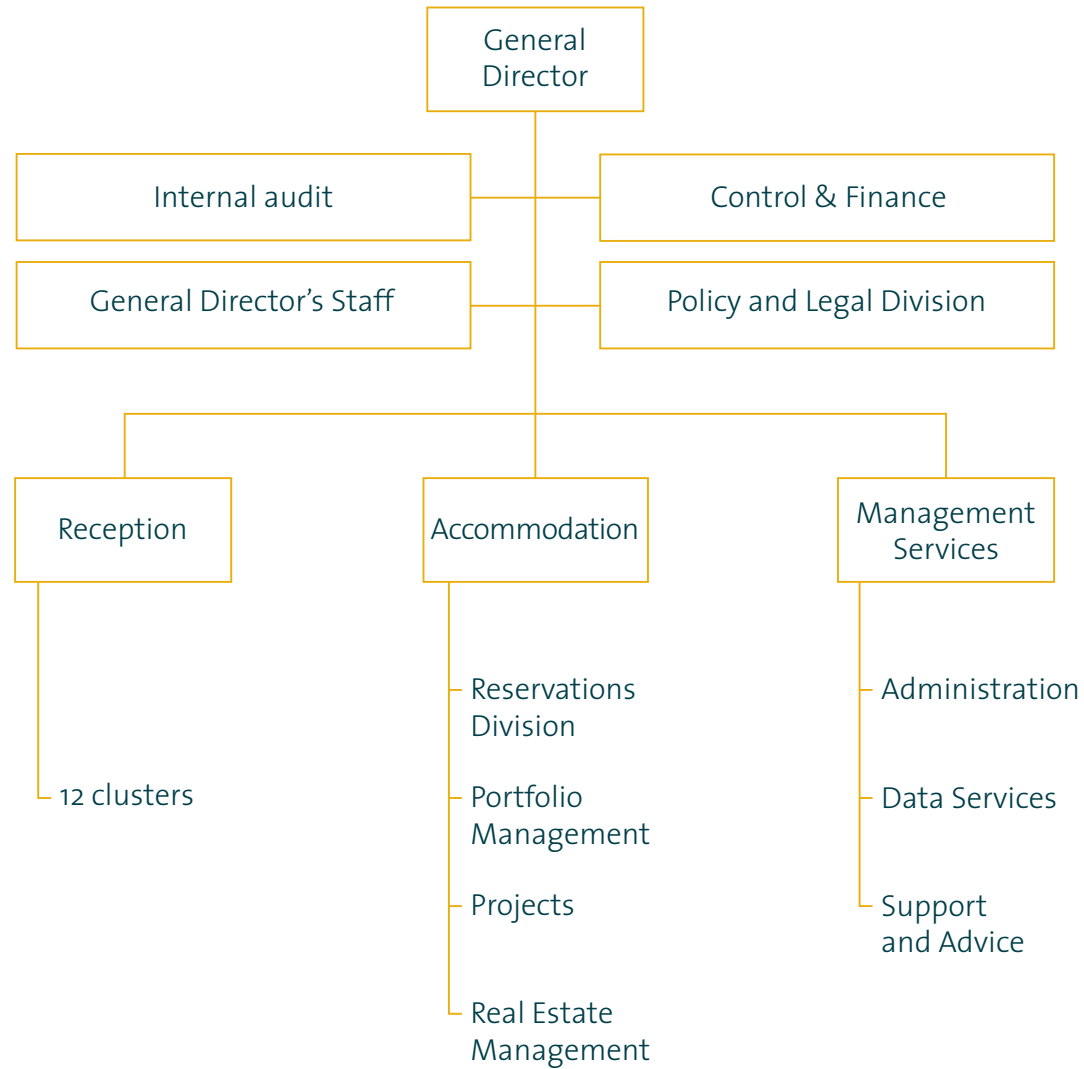
Age category	< 18	18-65	> 65	Total
Numbers on 15 June 2007	4,488	8,592	216	13,296
Numbers on 31 December 2007	3,421	6,786	160	10,367

Outflux of persons eligible for amnesty under the General Amnesty Arrangement, week 25 to 51



Organisation

Organogram at 31 December 2007



Board 2007

Loek Hermans	<i>Chairperson</i>
Jaap Besemer	<i>Vice-Chairperson</i>
Anne-Wil Duthler	<i>Secretary and Member of the Audit Committee</i>
Rein Willems	<i>Member and Chairperson of the Audit Committee</i>
Adjiedj Bakas	<i>Member</i>

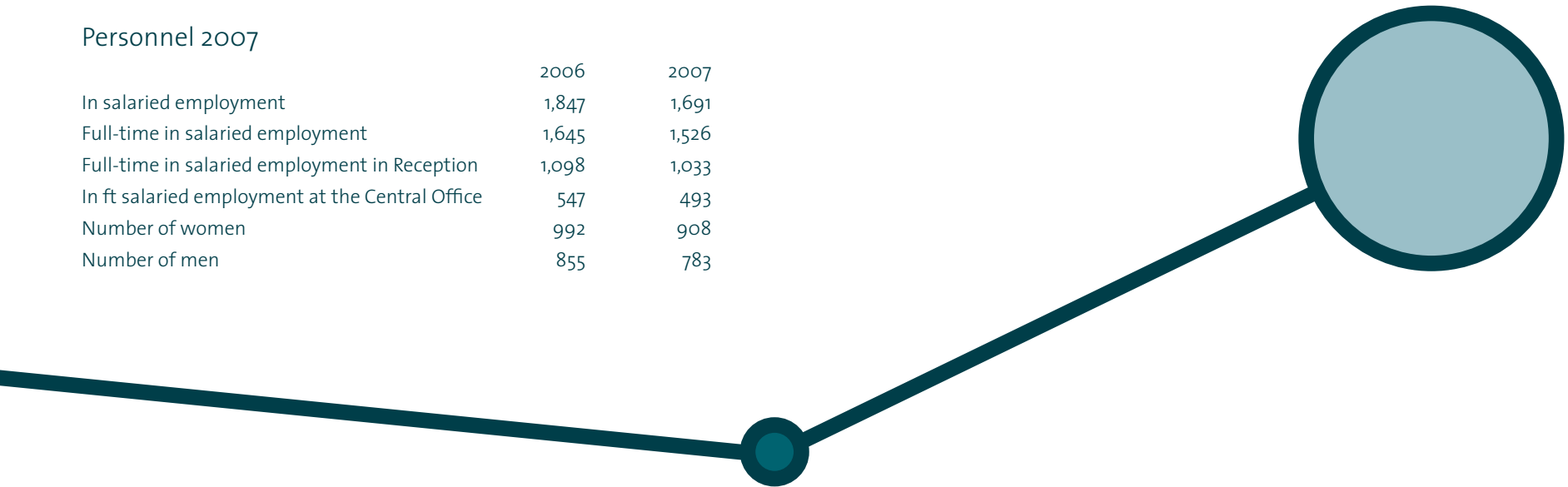
The Board of COA acts as a Supervisory Board in formation.

Management at 31 December 2007

Nurten Albayrak-Temur	<i>General Director</i>
Ed Heijnen	<i>Managing Director Steering, Control & Finance and Acting Managing Director Policy & Legal Division</i>
Mirjam Geurtsen	<i>Managing Director Projects and Acting Managing Director Reception</i>
Petra Ginjaar	<i>Managing Director General Director's Staff</i>
Herman van der Meulen	<i>Managing Director Management Services</i>
Frank van Engelen	<i>Managing Director Housing</i>
Gerard Wolters	<i>Head of the Internal Audit Department</i>

Personnel 2007

	2006	2007
In salaried employment	1,847	1,691
Full-time in salaried employment	1,645	1,526
Full-time in salaried employment in Reception	1,098	1,033
In ft salaried employment at the Central Office	547	493
Number of women	992	908
Number of men	855	783



Mission and vision

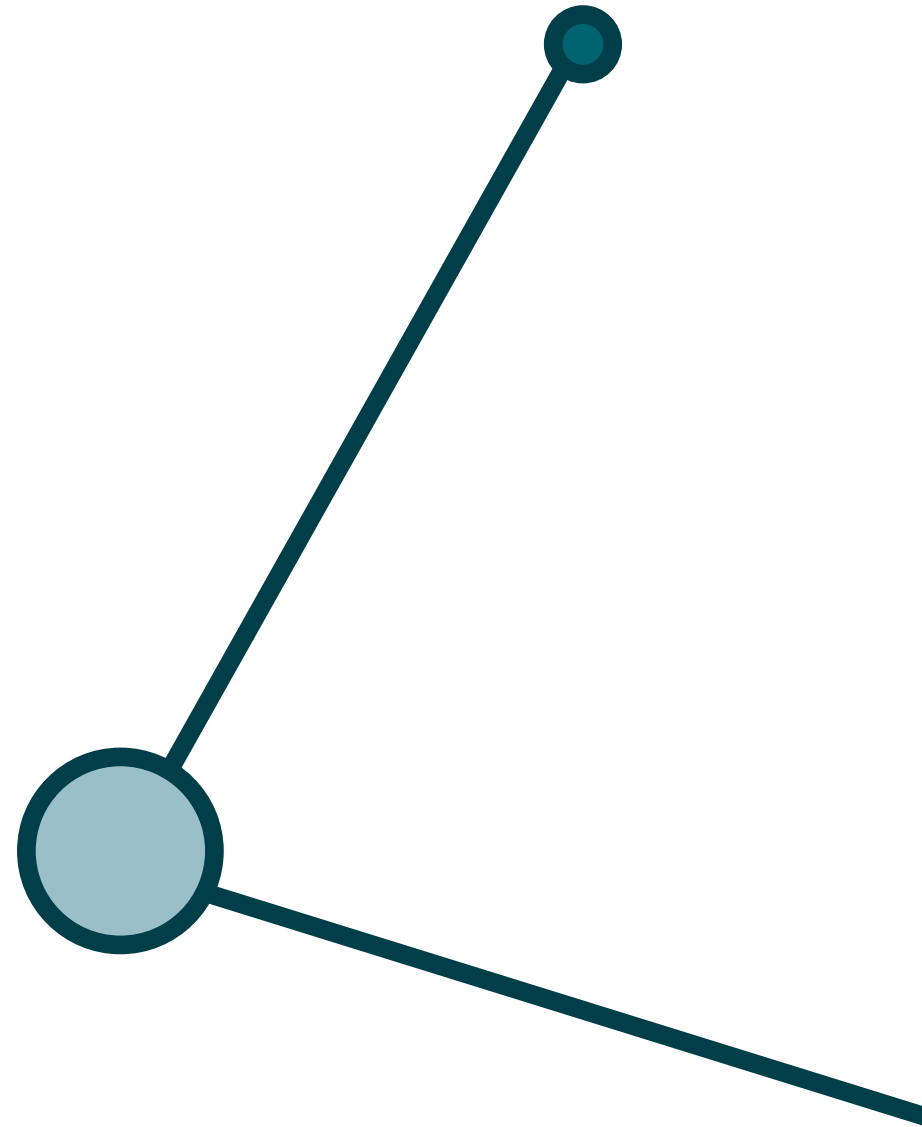
COA is the central organisation in the Netherlands for the reception, assistance and guidance of people who are in need of temporary accommodation where they prepare themselves for their future, either in the Netherlands or elsewhere.

We perform this task with a high degree of social commitment; it is not important whether the assignment is of a local, national or international nature. What is important is that sensitive dossiers remain manageable for politicians and society.

In the reception, assistance and guidance process responsibility lies with the resident; they are the director of their own process. Independence and self-reliance are key concepts. Our services consist of providing temporary accommodation, programme-specific assistance and guidance in terms of housing, education, emancipation and integration.

COA can best be characterised as a socially engaged organisation which, together with (chain) partners, can provide the solution for a decisive approach to the issues society is grappling with.

COA primarily focuses on the issues at hand concerning asylum seekers or other issues linked to its current assignment. COA can also play an important role outside the Netherlands.



Colophon

Published by

Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers [Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers]

P.O. Box 3002

2280 ME Rijswijk

The Netherlands

Telefoon (070) 372 70 00

Issued by

General Director's staff, COA

Text

COA, Rijswijk

Design

VDM reklame [VDM Advertising], Rotterdam

Photography

Elri van Dijk, Almere

Rick Keus, Rotterdam

Print

OBT, The Hague

May 2008

