Master thesis

Designing for the issue of labour exploitation

A systemic intervention to empower labour migrants

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Industrial Design Engineering
Delft University of Technology

In collaboration with the Public Prosecution Service
(*Het Openbaar Ministerie*)

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Summary

The issue of labour exploitation in the Netherlands has been gaining more attention lately. Regularly stories appear in the news in which employees are treated inhumanely by their employer, work in unsafe conditions, or live in unhealthy accommodations. The issue has also been gaining attention in politics. The advice of Aanjaagteam Bescherming Arbeidsmigranten, which was presented in 2020, marks an important milestone. Partially inspired by this advice, multiple major developments have been taking place recently. For example, the modification of the definition of labour exploitation in criminal law (Rijksoverheid, 2023), the compulsory certification of employment agencies as of 2025 (Rijksoverheid, 2022), and the separation of working- and housing contracts (ABU, 2023).

While these developments are a step forward, they will not completely tackle labour exploitation. Due to the complex nature of the phenomenon, multiple solutions are required to bring about systemic change.

This project explores what systemic design could offer to the issue of labour exploitation in the Westland area. Through different research methods, an understanding of the system surrounding labour migration and labour exploitation was created. Insights were yielded on the nature of the phenomenon, different response strategies and involved stakeholders, and the Westland context. Based on these insights, three search areas were identified and explored more in-depth.

Next, the final focus for the design phase was determined and formulated into a design goal: empowering labour migrants through an intervention that gives them a sense of control over their own lives.

Finally, an online buddy platform that facilitates the exchange of experiences among migrants was designed. The interaction aims to build awareness about healthy (in)direct working conditions in the Netherlands and potential helplines. With this knowledge, migrants can prevent risks proactively, identify problematic situations quicker, and have the tools to deal with them.

Evaluation of the concept with the target group and relevant experts indicated that it provides a valuable intervention to empower labour migrants. However, further development and evaluation as discussed in the recommendations are necessary. In addition, this intervention should be seen as one of many necessary to systematically improve the situation of labour migrants.

Preface

Dear reader,

I am happy to share my graduation project thesis with you! Throughout my last years as an industrial design engineering student I have become increasingly interested in the possibilities of applying design in less conventional contexts and became an advocate of the importance of *designing the right things* instead of only focussing on *designing the things right*. I was therefore enthusiastic to apply everything I had learned during my years at IDE to make a positive contribution to a social issue. Looking back on the last six months, I can say with certainty that I learned a lot, both professionally and personally. As this would not have been possible without those who have been part of my journey, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors. Nynke, thank you for your expertise and sharp feedback which encouraged me to get the most out of myself and my project. Willemijn, thank you for your guidance and motivation in my process, and the personal support from time to time.

I am also extremely grateful for the involvement and guidance of Senna, my daily company mentor, who fulfilled a very helpful combination of client, former IDE student and designer in the governmental safety sector. You helped me find my way at the Public Prosecution Service, trust the process, and not be fearful of making decisions.

Next, I would like to thank Geerten, my other company mentor, for his expertise. You have been a great help in understanding the complex phenomenon of labour exploitation and getting in touch with relevant stakeholders. I am also very grateful for the design freedom you gave me.

My gratitude goes to all stakeholders that have participated in my project and are dedicated to making a difference on the topic of labour exploitation. Without the help of these experts in interviews, brainstorming sessions, a field visit, and (the arrangement of) evaluation sessions I would not have been able to make sense of the topic. In particular, I would like to thank the migrants that were willing to share their personal stories with me.

Finally, a huge thank you to my fellow students, friends, boyfriend, and family for supporting me, listening to my stories, and offering the needed distraction every now and then.

Enjoy the read!

Sophie

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Glossary

Technical terms and translations

Subversive crime	Ondermijnende criminaliteit
Undermining	Ondermijning
Human trafficking	Mensenhandel
Labour exploitation	Arbeidsuitbuiting
Serious disadvantage	Ernstige benadeling

Stakeholder translations and abbreviations

Centre for Crime Prevention and Safety	Centrum voor Criminaliteits-preventie en Veiligheid	CCV
Coordination Centre against Human Trafficking	Coördinatiecentrum tegen Mensenhandel	CoMensha
Dutch Federation of Private Employment Agencies	Algemene Bond Uitzendondernemingen	ABU
Foundation for Compliance with the Collective Labour Agreement for Temporary Agency Workers	Stichting Naleving CAO voor Uitzendkrachten	SNCU
Netherlands Labour Authority	Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie	NLA
Netherlands Trade Union Confederation	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging	FNV
Public Prosecution Service	Openbaar Ministerie	OM
Regional Information and Expertise Centre	Regionaal Informatie- en Expertise Centrum	RIEC

Chapter 1

Introduction

The context of the project is illustrated by introducing the problem background, involved stakeholders, and project assignment.

1.1 Problem background
1.2 Project stakeholders
1.3 Project assignment

Introduction

1.1 Problem background

The safety sector faces increasingly complex problems, some of which belong to the category of subversive crime. Subversive crime entails the use of legal companies and services for illegal activities, which causes the interweaving of the upper and underworld (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, n.d.-b). Subversive crime includes many types of crime and associated activities, which share the consequence of damaging social structures and/or confidence in them (Openbaar Ministerie, n.d.).

This project focuses on the subversive phenomenon of labour exploitation. Each year large numbers of labour migrants come to the Netherlands to work in horticulture, distribution, construction, and other sectors. Due to the dependency of these employees on their employer, issues such as underpaid work, substandard housing, unsafe working conditions, and intimidation are not uncommon.

In addition to these adverse effects on the victimised employees, labour exploitation also results in social- and system damage.

A broad range of efforts is made throughout the stakeholder network to prevent and control labour exploitation. These efforts include (multidisciplinary) projects and initiatives, research, and (international) partnerships. However, due to the complex nature of the phenomenon, the intended impact is not always achieved. Large numbers of stakeholders with conflicting interests, scattered views on responsibilities and complicated regulations and legislation are some of the elements which complicate the fight against labour exploitation.

Introduction

1.2 Project stakeholders

This project is in collaboration with the Public Prosecution Service (*Het Openbaar Ministerie*). The Public Prosecution Service is the governmental body responsible for investigating and prosecuting criminal offences. Figure 1 gives an overview of the stakeholders involved in the project.

Fieldlab GoWest

As part of their efforts in tackling complex problems, the Public Prosecution Service has initiated multiple Fieldlabs, which are multidisciplinary teams of public and private stakeholders working on a specific topic. The Fieldlabs serve as experimental 'transition arenas' for new insights, inspiration, and solutions. Fieldlab GoWest is the partnering Fieldlab for this project. Fieldlab GoWest focuses on labour exploitation in the Westland area, a region in the southwest of the Netherlands known for its greenhouse horticulture.

Fieldlab GoWest is a shared effort of the Public Prosecution Service, police, Netherlands Labour Authority (*NLA*), Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (*FNV*), Dutch Federation of Private Employment Agencies (*ABU*), and Glastuinbouw Nederland.

TestlabOM

The other main stakeholder of the project is TestlabOM, the innovation department of the Public Prosecution Service. TestlabOM investigates potential applications for innovations within the Public Prosecution Service by facilitating experiments with problem owners from other departments throughout the organisation.

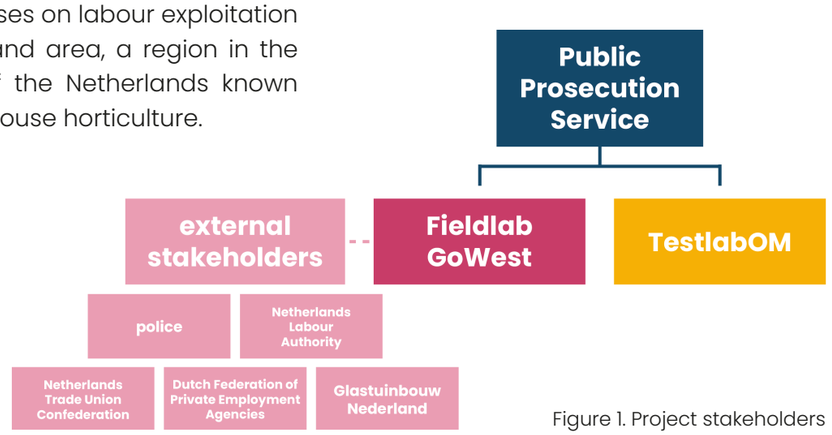


Figure 1. Project stakeholders

Introduction

Project assignment

1.3

The objective of this project is to analyse the issue of labour exploitation in the Westland area from different design and system thinking perspectives, in order to design an impactful intervention. The project aims to translate the knowledge obtained by Fieldlab GoWest and other parties over the years into actionable insights and a concept.

The Westland area, indicated in Figure 2, is chosen as the context to narrow the scope and make the project more manageable. The Westland area is interesting due to its high concentration of labour migrants and related issues. In addition, the stakeholders in this context are accessible via the network of Fieldlab GoWest.

Figure 2. Westland location

Chapter 2

Design approach

The design approach used in the project is covered. The complex nature of labour exploitation is described first, whereupon the orientation to apply systemic design is presented. Finally, the design process of the project is presented.

2.1 Labour exploitation as a complex problem
2.2 Systemic design
2.3 Design process

Design approach

2.1 Labour exploitation as a complex problem

As described in the Cynefin framework of Snowden and Boone (2007) in Figure 3, issues can be sorted into five contexts: *simple*, *complicated*, *complex*, *chaotic*, and *disorder*. These categories differ in the nature of their relationship between cause and effect. Snowden and Boone argue that it is valuable to sense what context you are dealing with to manage the issue better.

Simple contexts are those with a clear relationship between cause and effect. They are also referred to as the realm of "known knowns". In complicated contexts, there is also a relationship between cause and effect, but the relationship is not always instantly clear. This realm of "unknown knowns" often asks for expertise. In complex contexts, the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and consequently, cause and effect relationships are not easily predictable or understood. These contexts are referred to as "unknown unknowns". For chaotic contexts, it is impossible to determine the relationship between cause and effect because they constantly change without following a pattern. A context is characterised as disorder when it is impossible to determine which of the other four contexts is predominant.

Figure 3. Cynefin framework

Labour exploitation can be categorised as a complex problem. The system surrounding labour migration and labour exploitation consists of many aspects that influence each other: stakeholders and their interests, socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, regulations, and (international) organisational structures. Furthermore, the system doesn't have a steady state, but constantly changes due to internal and external developments which adds an element of unpredictability. Lastly, labour exploitation not only affects the employees and employers involved, but also has consequences on community groups and broader societal systems. Designing for the topic of labour exploitation requires a holistic understanding of the system's dynamics, perspectives and uncertainties.

Snowden and Boone state that in complex contexts at least one right solution exists, but they can't be ferreted out since the effects of specific influences can sometimes be only understood in retrospect (2007). Therefore, experimentation is an important means to uncover informative patterns. For this reason, the final phase of this project will be focused on evaluating the concept to identify its value and points of improvement.

Design approach

Systemic design

2.2

This project applies a systemic design approach. Systemic design combines systems thinking and design thinking, as they share their orientation to effect changes in situations of complex problems. Where systems thinking mainly aims to create an understanding of a specific complex problem through analysis, design thinking has a more action-oriented approach aimed at creating human-centred solutions (Jones, 2014). Systemic design should not be viewed as a design discipline, but rather as an orientation including different methods and principles. In this project, systemic design is mainly used to build a systemic understanding of the issues surrounding labour exploitation, and to be able to forecast the potential systemic impact of specific design choices.

Based on a case study of expert practitioners using systemic design in public - and social innovation contexts, Van der Bijl-Brouwer and Malcolm (2020) present five systemic design principles, which are used to guide the design process of this project:

1. Opening up and acknowledging the interrelatedness of problems
2. Developing empathy with the system
3. Strengthening human relationships to enable creativity and learning
4. Influencing mental models to enable change
5. Adopting an evolutionary design approach to desired systemic change

In addition, the following methods to design interventions for complex problems based on systemic practice, proposed by Jones (2014), are integrated into different activities throughout the project:

- Human-centeredness

Enable understanding of human activity and - concerns through research and design methods

- Convening stakeholders

Build resonance by involving stakeholders that have a stake in the outcome of the intervention

- Dialogic process

Involve stakeholders in dialogue to achieve a collective systems view of high-complexity problem areas

- Iterative inquiry

Allow for learning and re-integration of new thinking over successive explorations and exchanges

- Multiple design actions over time

Use multiple methods that explore a problem over its full dimension over the period of inquiry

Design approach

Design process

2.3

This project applied an exploratory approach which allowed the process to emerge based on findings along the way. Instead of predefining a specific focus, the project's scope gradually became more narrow over time based on informative patterns. This allowed for the understanding of the problem and potential solutions to co-evolve. Eventually, one subpart of the system surrounding labour exploitation was chosen, for which an intervention concept was created. The design process, which is visualised in Figure 4, can be described as follows:

1. Explore the scope of the system
Chapters 3 + 4
The first project phase aimed to build an understanding of the system surrounding labour exploitation in the Netherlands. Different methods, including literature and desk research, interviews, and a field visit were used to build a theoretical understanding, develop empathy with the system, and explore its complexity. In addition, the project context of the Westland area was analysed.

2. Define and explore search areas
Chapter 5
In the next phase, multiple search areas were identified based on the key insights from the exploration phase. These areas served as boundaries to frame specific sub-parts of the system. After defining the areas, they were explored more in-depth using different design - and systems thinking sensemaking tools.

3. Define the design goal
Chapter 5
The search areas were then used as input for an expert focus group session to validate the sensemaking efforts, gain input for defining the design direction, and collect ideas on potential interventions. Based on the session's output the final focus was chosen and detailed into the design goal.

4. Explore the final focus
Chapter 6
Based on the formulated design goal, the final exploration took place. In this final exploration, previous and new insights relevant to the design goal were synthesised into (visual) summaries and used to formulate preconditions for the final design.

5. Design an intervention
Chapter 7
Different intervention ideas were created based on the insights from the final exploration. Through an iterative process of detailing and evaluating these ideas, one concept direction was chosen which was then detailed into the final concept and prototype.

6. Evaluate and finalise the concept
Chapters 7 + 8
The final phase of the design process aimed to evaluate the intervention concept with the target audience and relevant stakeholders. From the evaluations, multiple key insights were concluded, which were implemented in the final iteration and recommendations.

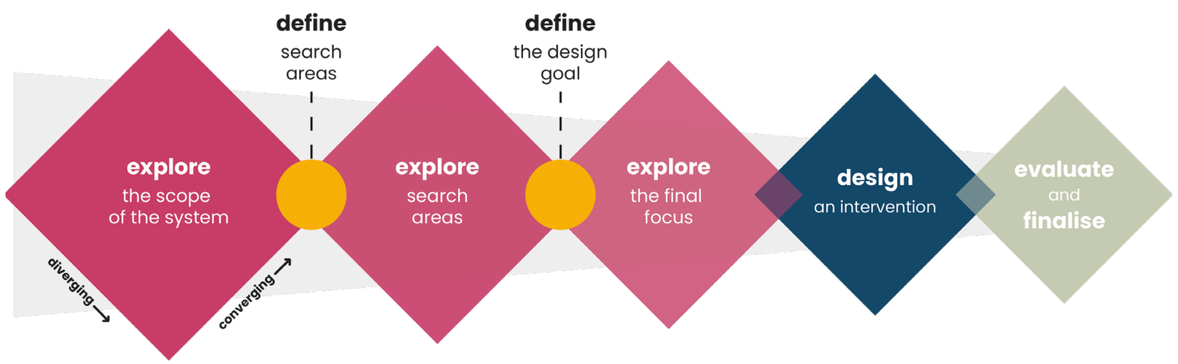


Figure 4. Design process

Chapter 3

Labour exploitation in the Netherlands

3.1 Research approach
3.2 What is labour exploitation?
3.3 Current response
3.4 Key insights

The exploration of the phenomenon of labour exploitation in the Netherlands performed to build a theoretical understanding and develop empathy with the system is presented. After illustrating the research approach, the definition of labour exploitation and some characteristics are discussed. Next, the current response to labour exploitation is touched upon. This includes the approaches used to prevent and control the phenomenon, the stakeholders involved, and the main obstacles of these approaches. Lastly, the key insights are presented.

Labour exploitation in the Netherlands

3.1 Research approach

Research objectives

The exploration of the topic of labour exploitation aimed to achieve multiple objectives:

- Understand the essential definitions and characteristics related to labour exploitation
- Build an understanding of the system underlying labour migration and labour exploitation
- Develop empathy with the stakeholders, dynamics, and problems in the system
- Identify input for the final intervention concept(s)

Research methods

Multiple research methods were used to achieve these objectives:

- Literature research consisting of reports, books and news articles
- Desk research consisting of online sources and government-published data (see Appendix 3 for sources used to empathise with the life of migrants)
- Interviews with the stakeholders and experts in Figure 5 (see Appendix 2 for the interview method)
- Field visit to a housing complex for labour migrants in Vlaardingen

Figure 5. Overview of interviews

Labour exploitation in the Netherlands

3.2 What is labour exploitation?

3.2.1 Stories of victims

For each reader of this report the term 'labour exploitation' likely evokes different associations. This is not strange as very few people come into direct contact with the phenomenon due to its hidden nature. Therefore, most people's knowledge of labour exploitation is largely based on media images.

To illustrate what labour exploitation in the Netherlands can look like, some real-life stories of victims are presented on the following pages. They serve as a starting point before diving into the definition and characteristics later on. The stories are sourced from the Coordination Centre against Human Trafficking (Comensha, n.d.-c).

These stories show that labour exploitation can take many shapes. It occurs in multiple sectors, offenders use different working methods, and each victim has a unique background. However, similarities can also be observed in these stories. First of all, the victims were all faced with bad working and/or living conditions. Another recurring pattern is the dependency of employees on their employer. Lastly, all stories reveal barriers the victims experienced to step out of their situation.

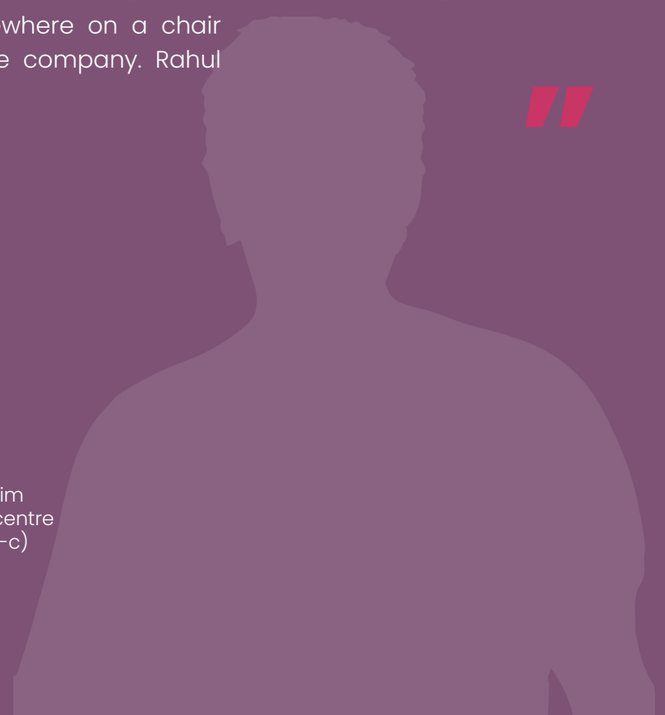
The story of
Rahul

Rahul is sent to the Netherlands by his family to study. He is the **hope of his family**. However, shortly after Rahul starts his studies, his father gets into a serious accident which leaves him unable to work and pay for Rahul's education. Rahul has to look for a job to support himself.

After a long search, Rahul finds a job in the kitchen of a small company that sells exotic snacks. Rahul's working days get longer and longer, and after the first month, his **salary is continuously postponed**.

At one point Rahul is **working 18 to 20 hours a day for seven days a week**. He does not get paid but is promised his salary the following month. He doesn't have a house. Rahul hardly sleeps, and when he does it is in the kitchen or somewhere on a chair of the company. Rahul is stuck in this situation for three years. He has no money and **doesn't dare to leave or go back home**.

Finally, the police rescue Rahul. Rahul is terrified as he is an illegal immigrant and has no idea of his rights. But he is well taken care of and now hopes for a better future with a quiet life and a normal job to take care of his father.



All stories are derived from the real-life victim stories on the website of the coordination centre against human trafficking (Comensha, n.d.-c)

The story of
Hristo

Hristo comes from a village in Bulgaria. There is little work in the area so many people move to Western Europe to work in agriculture and horticulture. A man from an employment agency tells Hristo that he can arrange something for him: help is always needed with the harvest, and in Western Europe **you earn much more** than in Bulgaria.

To be able to work in the Netherlands, Hristo needs a permit. The man from the employment agency arranges all the paperwork and Hristo leaves with ten other men by bus to the Netherlands.

After arriving in the Netherlands the man of the employment agency hands over the paperwork and **Hristo's passport** to the owner of the company.

The men can sleep in a caravan. The rent of the caravan is deducted from the salary, just like the costs for the various insurance policies.

Hristo works more than **twelve hours a day**. If he starts too late or takes too long a break to smoke, a fine is deducted from his salary. He works **every day of the week** regardless of the weather conditions.

The story of
Leo

Leo works for a transport company in the Netherlands, but at some point, he gets told to go back to his home country. At home, Leo is **unable to support his family** and send his children to school.

One day Leo gets a call from an unknown man about a Dutch company that wants to hire Leo. Leo arranges his papers which have to be sent via an Eastern European agency.

Leo waits for his permit for several months and is **not allowed to take on any other work** in the meantime. He gets into trouble as he has no income. Finally, Leo gets his permit via the agency, but there is no work and therefore still no income.

Three months later Leo is told to work for his previous employer, but this time via the agency. For months Leo **lives in his truck**.

He has no money to send to his family and needs the few euros he earns to take care of himself. Every month there is a new reason to **withhold money from his salary**.

After six months Leo finds other men in similar situations via the media. Together they file a report and hope to earn money in an honest way to provide for their families.

The story of
Shao

Shao is born in China and is persuaded to go to the Netherlands when she is nineteen years old.

With the **prospect of a good job and a better life** for herself and her daughter, who stays behind with family, Shoa goes to the Netherlands.

She gets a job as a textile worker. The promised salary is 800 euros per month, much more than she ever hoped for.

Shao now works **sixteen hours a day** and is only allowed to leave the factory to go to the small apartment she shares with several employees. She has **no residence permit** and doesn't have access to her **passport**.

Shoa does not receive the promised salary and gets **just enough money to buy food** now and then.

Shao doesn't know the name of the city where she works and **knows nobody** in the Netherlands.

3.2.2 Defining labour exploitation

As touched upon earlier, a big part of most people's knowledge of labour exploitation is based on media images. As the articles in Figure 6 illustrate, issues surrounding labour exploitation have been getting regular attention in media and politics recently.

These articles bring us to an important step in the exploration, namely defining labour exploitation. This is crucial because the media coverage of labour exploitation doesn't only lead to different associations, but possibly also different perceptions of the phenomenon.

Of course, employment practices can't simply be divided into good and bad, as issues concerning the infringement of the norms and values around labour can differ in severity. Employment practices should rather be seen as a continuous spectrum with different gradations of which labour exploitation is placed on the most extreme end. However, what is referred to as labour exploitation in the vernacular is not always legally classified as such. Before diving into the topic, it is therefore important to give background on some terms and definitions.

Figure 6. News articles on labour exploitation

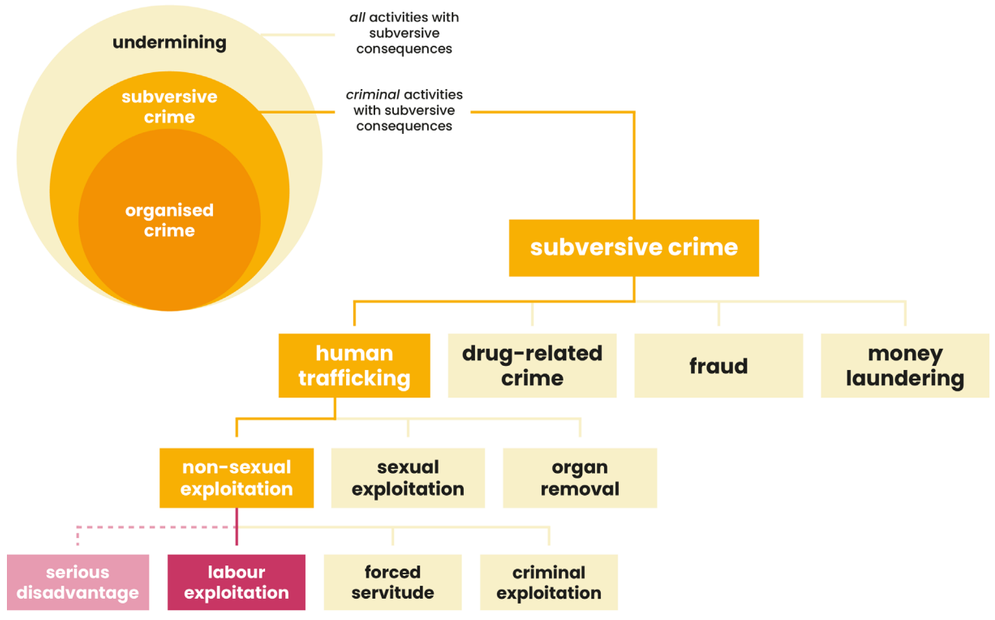


Figure 7. Labour exploitation in relation to other terms
Based on: (Lam et al., 2018) (Landelijk Informatie en Expertise Centrum, 2019)

Figure 7 places labour exploitation into perspective by illustrating the relationships between the phenomenon and some terms it is often referred to in combination with. Labour exploitation is non-sexual exploitation that takes place in the domain of work and income (Landelijk Informatie en Expertise Centrum, 2019). It is often characterised by a formal relationship between employee and employer. The Dutch legal definition in Article 273f "Crimes against personal freedom" (Wetboek van Strafrecht, n.d.) that is used to assess labour exploitation cases is in line with the definition of human trafficking (European Commission, n.d.).

Combining this definition with the domain of labour exploitation results in the definition on the next page.

An important distinction to be aware of is the distinction between *labour exploitation* and *serious disadvantage* (*ernstige benadeling*). Serious disadvantage is the term used by the Netherlands Labour Authority for bad employment practices that are similar to labour exploitation but can not be legally assessed as such, for example, due to a lack of detection indicators. For these cases, the terms *employee / seriously disadvantaged* and *employer* are used instead of *victim* and *offender*.

Definition
Labour exploitation

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation in the domain of work and income.

3.2.3 Grasping the scale of labour exploitation in the Netherlands

With this knowledge of definitions, it is possible to take a look at the scale of labour exploitation in the Netherlands. Naturally, it is hard to get a complete picture of the scale as labour exploitation concerns a criminal offence and is thus of hidden nature (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, 2022). For outsiders, labour exploitation cannot always be distinguished from regular labour due to its subtle character. Active searching or reporting by victims are therefore prerequisites to uncovering issues.

Research by Tilburg University and University of Utrecht (2021) provides the most recent estimation of human trafficking victims in the Netherlands. The research performed a Multiple Systems Estimation based on a dataset of victim reports in 2016-2019. The dataset, which is maintained by the Coordination Centre against Human Trafficking (*CoMensha*), includes reports from both public and private institutions. The research estimates around 5000 victims of human trafficking in 2019, of which approximately **3000** are related to non-sexual exploitation.

Another source that provides insight into the scale of labour exploitation in the Netherlands is the data of the Netherlands Labour Authority. However, in addition to the general side note that reported victims only make up a part of the actual victim group, an additional disclaimer has to be taken into account for the NLA data. Namely, the fact that some victims report to ngo's and don't give permission to inform other authorities. Still, the latest report on 2020-2021 data gives some insight into the scale of labour exploitation and serious disadvantage in the Netherlands, see Figure 8.

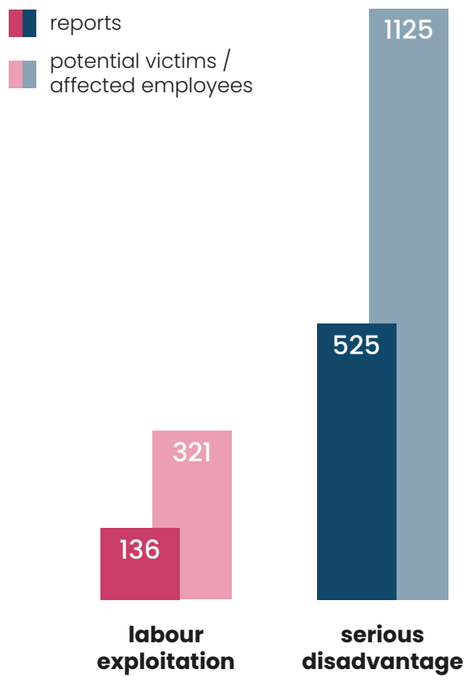


Figure 8. Data Netherlands Labour Authority 2021-2022

3.2.4 Understanding the effects of labour exploitation

The effects of labour exploitation can be observed on three different levels (Landelijk Informatie en Expertise Centrum, 2019). First of all, victims are directly affected on the *individual* level. Next, *social* damage can affect big groups of people. Lastly, *system* damage can affect the whole society.

The effects of non-sexual exploitation on the *individual, business, government, system*, and *living environment* as identified in the National Threat Assessment are presented in Figure 9 (Inspectie Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2016). These effects do not only relate to labour exploitation but also to the two other forms of non-sexual exploitation (forced servitude and criminal exploitation).

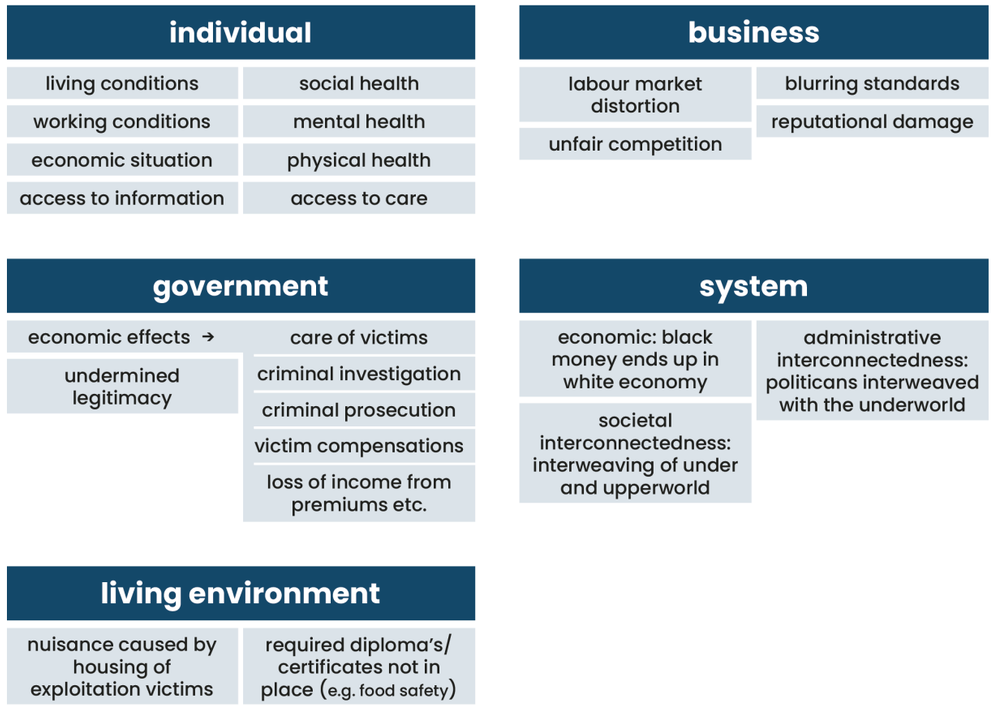


Figure 9. Effects of non-sexual exploitation

3.3 Current response

3.3.1 Approaches to prevent and control labour exploitation

In this section, an overview of approaches used to prevent and control labour exploitation as identified in the stakeholder interviews and desk research is presented. The stakeholders involved are visualised in Figure 10. Detailed stakeholder descriptions can be found in Appendix 4.

Criminal investigation and prosecution

Criminal investigations into labour exploitation are led by the Labour Authority's Investigation department (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, n.d.) under the authority of a public prosecutor. The public prosecutor decides about the deployment of (special) investigative resources, progress, and ultimately prosecution. Due to the complex nature of labour exploitation cases, they are handled by a specific unit of the Public Prosecution Service: *het Functioneel Parket*.

Based on the investigation outcome, a criminal procedure can be started. This is a court case between a suspect and the Public Prosecution Service (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, n.d.-a). A judge decides whether the suspect is proven guilty. The maximum prison sentence for labour exploitation is twelve years, and lifelong for labour exploitation resulting in the death of the victim (Wetboek van Strafrecht, n.d.). The standard penalty for labour exploitation offenders is 9 months per victim (Openbaar Ministerie, 2021).

Administrative law procedures

Serious disadvantage cases are handled by special inspectors of the Netherlands Labour Authority (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, n.d.). They look into the possibility of inspecting an employer's compliance with labour laws relevant to labour market fraud such as The Minimum Wage and Holiday Allowance Act, The Working Hours Act and The Aliens Employment Act. If a violation of labour laws is established, potential measures include official warnings, suspending work, fines, and periodic penalty payments (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, n.d.-c).

Integral collaboration

Interviewed stakeholders mentioned investing in collaboration with other stakeholders to identify cases of labour exploitation. Examples include integral controls as a shared effort of police, municipalities and the Netherlands Labour Authority, the public–private partnership of Fieldlab GoWest, and international Joint Action Days, when foreign police, Europol, foreign Labour Authorities and the European Labour Authority work together on human trafficking cases.

Taking care of victims

There are multiple systems in place to help victims. First of all, municipalities are required to arrange care and shelter (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, n.d.-b). When victims need physical or psychological help, they can go to regular care providers, such as general practitioners, the GGD and the GGZ, or specialised organisations (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, n.d.-f).

Victims without lawful residence can apply for (temporary) residence, for example, to be able to cooperate with criminal investigations (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, n.d.-e). In addition, victims can claim financial compensation to mitigate their emotional, physical, and/or material harm. They can do this through criminal prosecution against the suspect, through civil proceedings, or via the Violent Offences Compensation Fund (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, n.d.-c). For legal assistance, victims can go to different organisations (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, n.d.-a).

Lastly, victims can turn to multiple organisations for assistance in the return to and/or reintegration into their country of origin (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, n.d.-d).

Spreading awareness and informing stakeholders

Interviewed stakeholders mentioned focusing on spreading awareness about labour exploitation to stimulate more conscious behaviour. An example is CoMensha's #OpenYourEyes campaign, which is a photo exhibition of human trafficking victim stories that travels through the Netherlands (CoMensha, n.d.-a). Ngo's CoMensha and Fairwork also provide information, training, and education to employees of chain partners (CoMensha, n.d.-b) (FairWork, n.d.).

The trade organisations interviewed also mentioned efforts to inform employers about good employership. Members of the Dutch Federation of Private Employment Agencies have to comply with their Fair Employment Code (ABU, n.d.). Glastuinbouw Nederland has information sources available for informing their members on safe and healthy working conditions (Glastuinbouw Nederland, n.d.), and regulations concerning international employees (Glastuinbouw Nederland, 2023).

affected stakeholders

direct indirect

acting stakeholders

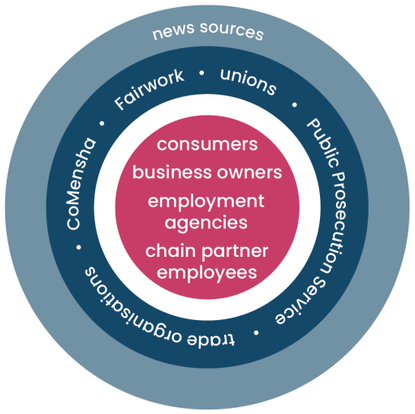
direct indirect

criminal investigation and prosecution

integral collaboration

administrative law procedures

taking care of victims



spreading awareness and informing stakeholders

Figure 10. Stakeholder maps

3.3.2 Obstacles in the prevention and control of labour exploitation

The research also identified a few obstacles in the prevention and control of labour exploitation. The main obstacles are described below.

Motives to cross the boundaries of fair work

In their analysis of the characteristics of offenders, the Netherlands Labour Authority identified multiple potential motives linked to labour exploitation. Some employers act mainly based on economic motives. The high demand for labour in some sectors allows for big profits to be made and due to the invisibility of labour exploitation, the chance of being caught is relatively low (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, 2022). The working methods of this group facilitate earning money over the back of their employees. As a result of the low prices offered by this group, some other employers also feel the need to save (or even earn) money on labour to survive in competition. Especially for labour-intensive products, such as fruit and vegetables, this has big effects on the conditions of employees (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, 2022).

Willingness to report

As labour exploitation is an invisible phenomenon, exploitative situations will only be uncovered when searching for them, or when they are reported about (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, 2022). However, in practice, employees can be hindered in their willingness to report due to different vulnerabilities (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, 2022). In addition, some employees are not aware of their rights and therefore don't know when to report. If employees do want to report, they are not always successful as they might not know where to go, have little trust in governmental organisations, or are hindered by a language barrier.

Stakeholders' capacity

Another often-mentioned obstacle is the limited capacity of stakeholders. Staff shortages limit the potential to act upon signals and prosecute offenders. This further reduces the perceived chance of getting caught. As labour exploitation is a complex problem that requires skill to recognize, good education of employees is also very important.

Another hindering factor is the complexity of employer administrations (e.g. employees work in country A, are on the payroll of an employment agency located in country B, and live in country C). These situations require access to information from other countries, which in practice turns out to be hard due to bureaucracy.

Proving labour exploitation

A big obstacle is the difficulty of proving labour exploitation. The Dutch legal definition in Article 273f can be simplified into three main prerequisites: the use of *leverage*, the *act* itself, and the *purpose* of exploitation. Especially on the first prerequisite case law is not always uniform (Inspectie Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2016). This causes cases to be played safe, dismissed, or not convicted.

Divided views on responsibility

A last obstacle that was identified is the question of responsibility for labour exploitation. When analysing the direct stakeholders in the system surrounding labour exploitation, the obvious parties to point out as (partially) responsible are the employers or employment agencies which exploit their employees. However, when you consider indirect stakeholders as well, the answer is less black and white. To illustrate this: the products and services offered by the aforementioned employers are in the end purchased by consumers. Furthermore, responsibility could also be (partially) sought in politics, as exploitative employers can get away with generally few consequences. This divided view on responsibility can influence vigour in tackling labour exploitation.

Labour exploitation in the Netherlands

Key insights

3.4

3.2.1 Stories of victims

- Labour exploitation can take **many shapes**
- Labour exploitation stories also often show similarities, namely **bad working and/or living conditions**, **dependency** on employers and different **barriers** experienced by employees to step out of the situation

3.2.2 Defining labour exploitation

- Multiple different **associations** and perceptions of the term 'labour exploitation' co-exist
- Employment practices can't simply be divided into **good and bad**
- Labour exploitation is the most **extreme end** of a spectrum of employment practices
- Labour exploitation is one of the non-sexual types of **human trafficking**
- Bad employment practices similar to labour exploitation which can't be legally assessed as such are referred to as **serious disadvantage**

3.2.3 Grasping the scale of labour exploitation in the Netherlands

- Labour exploitation is an **invisible** phenomenon
- It is impossible to get a grip on the actual scale of labour exploitation in the Netherlands
- Due to this hidden nature, **active searching** or **reports from victims** are prerequisites to uncovering situations
- If issues are uncovered, victims can be helped and potential offenders can be investigated

3.2.4 Understanding the effects of labour exploitation

- Labour exploitation has both direct and indirect **effects** on multiple **system levels** and **stakeholder groups**

3.3.1 Approaches to prevent and control labour exploitation

- Labour exploitation is a **complex** phenomenon
- Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, **numerous approaches** are used to try to tackle labour exploitation
- **Large numbers of stakeholders** with different expertise and knowledge are involved in the prevention and control of labour exploitation
- The amount of stakeholders involved differs per approach

3.3.2 Obstacles in the prevention and control of labour exploitation

- Current **competition** among businesses offering products and services is mainly **based on price**
- The **chance of being caught** with labour exploitation is relatively low and big profits can be earned
- Some employment agencies **exploit** their employees, which **pressures** other businesses to also reduce prices
- For **labour-intensive products**, cost-saving threatens the position of employees
- Different factors can make employees **vulnerable**
- Employees in exploitive situations can experience different **barriers** that prevent them from reporting issues they face
- It can be hard for employees to estimate **when to report** if they don't know their rights
- It is not always clear for employees **where and how to report**
- Good **collaboration**, sufficient **capacity** and good **education** are required to uncover exploitative situations
- (International) **bureaucracy** and the many subsystems involved hinder an effective integral approach
- The complexity of the phenomenon and related legislation make it very **hard to prove labour exploitation** and convict offenders
- The **views on responsibility** for labour exploitation are not black and white
- The system surrounding labour migration contains many stakeholders, not only direct but also indirect

Chapter 4

Context analysis of the Westland area

An analysis of the project context is provided. After some general characteristics of the Westland area, more background on the horticulture sector in the area is presented. Lastly, information on labour exploitation in the area is covered.

4.1 Characteristics of the Westland area
4.2 The Glass City
4.3 Labour exploitation in the Westland area

Context analysis

Characteristics of the Westland area

4.1

Westland refers to both a region and a municipality situated in the southwest of the Netherlands. The Westland region covers the area between the north of the Nieuwe Waterweg, the south of The Hague, the east of Hook of Holland, and the west of Delft. The municipality of Westland has 112.448 inhabitants (Gemeente Westland, n.d.-b).

The municipality estimates that the number of migrants working in Westland is approximately **12.000** (Gemeente Westland, n.d.-a). As most jobs performed by labour migrants are seasonal, the amount fluctuates throughout the year. Around **16.000** migrants are estimated to work in the area during peak seasons. The number of labour migrants living in the municipality is approximately 4.500. Many migrants working in the Westland live in neighbouring areas.

Context analysis

The Glass City

4.2

Westland is home to a long history of horticulture. Glass was first used in the area around 1915 to enhance the growth of grapes (Gemeente Westland & Provincie Zuid-Holland, 2016). In the following years, the amount of greenhouses has vastly grown, making it one of the most important greenhouse horticulture areas in the world. Westland is therefore also referred to as the Glass City.

The most important cultivation types in the area include vegetables, plants, and flowers. In addition to the horticulture itself, the trade and logistics of the sector also play an important role in the area.

Context analysis

Labour exploitation in the Westland area

4.3

Due to the high concentration of (migrant) workers in the area, the risk of labour exploitation is relatively high. As it is hard to grasp the scale of the phenomenon, the available data is scarce. The data of the Netherlands Labour Authority provides one of the few sources of information. In their 2020-2021 review, Westland comes out as the fourth Dutch municipality in terms of mentions in labour exploitation and serious disadvantage reports (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, 2022). The other municipalities with more mentions are the Dutch cities The Hague, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam.

In an exploration commissioned by the municipality of Westland, the Regional Information and Expertise Centre (RIEC) The Hague states that Westland has an ample opportunity structure (*gelegenheidsstructuur*) for labour exploitation and associated rule violations (RIEC Den-Haag, n.d.). The findings touch upon the following opportunity structures:

Large numbers of labour migrants
High demand for flexible and seasonal work in the greenhouse horticulture sector. Many jobs are fulfilled by labour migrants. A big part of these labour migrants only works in the Netherlands temporarily.

Housing shortage
Regardless of efforts made by the municipality and private sector, there is a shortage of housing for labour migrants.

Big cities nearby
Labour migrants can also be housed in municipalities nearby such as Vlaardingen, Schiedam, The Hague, and Rotterdam. These municipalities are located in different police units, which hinders the integral approach.

The stock of properties in Westland
Houses and other properties such as recreational facilities and industrial areas in Westland are used to (illegally) house labour migrants.

Local culture
The local habit is to 'keep the government at a distance'.

Policy shortcomings
Economy is sometimes prioritised over security policy. Efforts to improve the situation are being made, but there are still numerous practical limitations.

Chapter 5

Design direction

5.1 Exploration of search areas
5.2 Search area choice
5.3 From search area to design goal
5.4 Final design goal

The first exploration phase of the project is connected to the design phase by defining the design direction. First, the three search areas identified from the initial exploration insights are presented, as well as a more in-depth exploration of the areas. Next, the analysis of the search areas in a focus group session is discussed, after which one area is chosen to focus on. Lastly, the process of further refining the search area into the final design goal is presented.

Design direction

Exploration of search areas

5.1

By clustering and analysing the relationships between the insights of the exploration phase, three search areas were identified. Search areas are relevant pieces of information in which the potential for innovation is possible (Buijs, 2012). The areas served as boundaries to analyse specific sub-parts of the system surrounding labour exploitation more in-depth to build a systemic understanding of the challenges. For each area, a different sensemaking tool was used to (visually) analyse the insights and communicate these during the organised focus group session (see Figures 11, 12 and 13). In addition, a 'How might we-statement' was formulated for each area to serve as a starting point for ideation.

1. The role of the consumer in tackling labour exploitation

Key-insights

- Current competition among businesses offering products and services is mainly based on price
- The chance of being caught with labour exploitation is relatively low and big profits can be earned
- Some employment agencies exploit their employees, which pressures other businesses to also reduce prices
- For labour-intensive products, cost-saving threatens the position of employees
- The system surrounding labour migration contains many stakeholders, not only direct but also indirect
- The views on responsibility for labour exploitation are not black and white
- Labour exploitation is an invisible phenomenon

How might we..

How might we use the role of consumers to improve the situation of employees?

Sensemaking

Connection circle cause-and-effect analysis of variables influencing the working conditions of employees

2. Empowerment of employees to expose labour exploitation

Key-insights

- Labour exploitation is an invisible phenomenon
- Active searching or reporting by victims are prerequisites to uncover issues
- If issues are uncovered, victims can be helped and potential offenders can be investigated
- Different factors can make employees vulnerable
- Employees in exploitive situations can experience different barriers that prevent them from reporting issues they face
- It can be hard for employees to estimate when to report if they do not know their rights
- It is not always clear for employees where and how to report

How might we..

How might we empower employees to expose labour exploitation?

Sensemaking

Analysis of barriers and drivers experienced by employees for reporting potential issues they face

3. Joining forces to tackle labour exploitation

Key-insights

- Labour exploitation is an invisible phenomenon
- Labour exploitation is a complex phenomenon
- Numerous approaches are used to try to tackle labour exploitation
- Large numbers of stakeholders with different expertise and knowledge are involved in the prevention and control of labour exploitation
- Good collaboration, sufficient capacity and good education are required to uncover exploitative situations
- (International) bureaucracy and the many subsystems involved hinder an effective integral approach

How might we..

How might we use collaboration among stakeholders to improve the speed and strength of efforts to tackle labour exploitation?

Sensemaking

Mapping of stakeholders in the system surrounding labour migration and labour exploitation

Sensemaking area 1
The role of the consumer in tackling labour exploitation

Connection circle cause-and-effect analysis of variables influencing the working conditions of employees

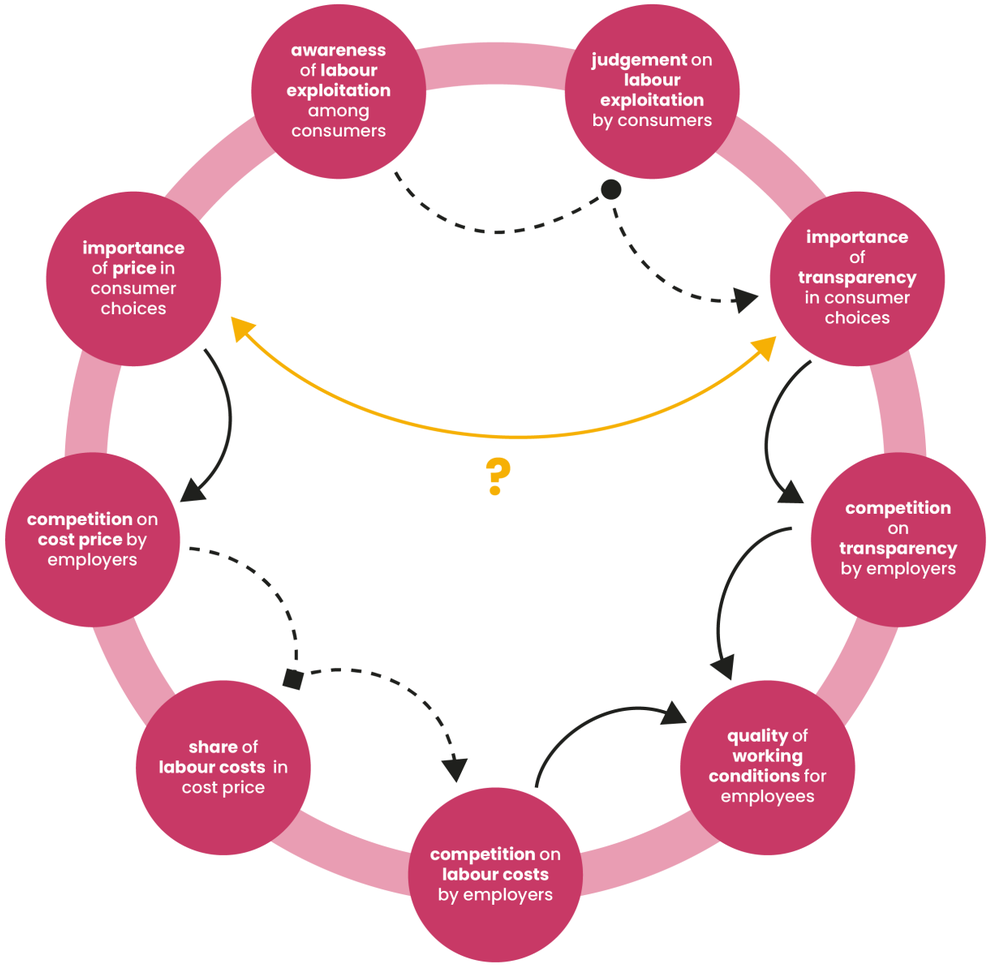


Figure 11. Sensemaking area 1

Sensemaking area 2
Empowerment of employees to expose labour exploitation

Analysis of barriers and drivers experienced by employees for reporting potential issues

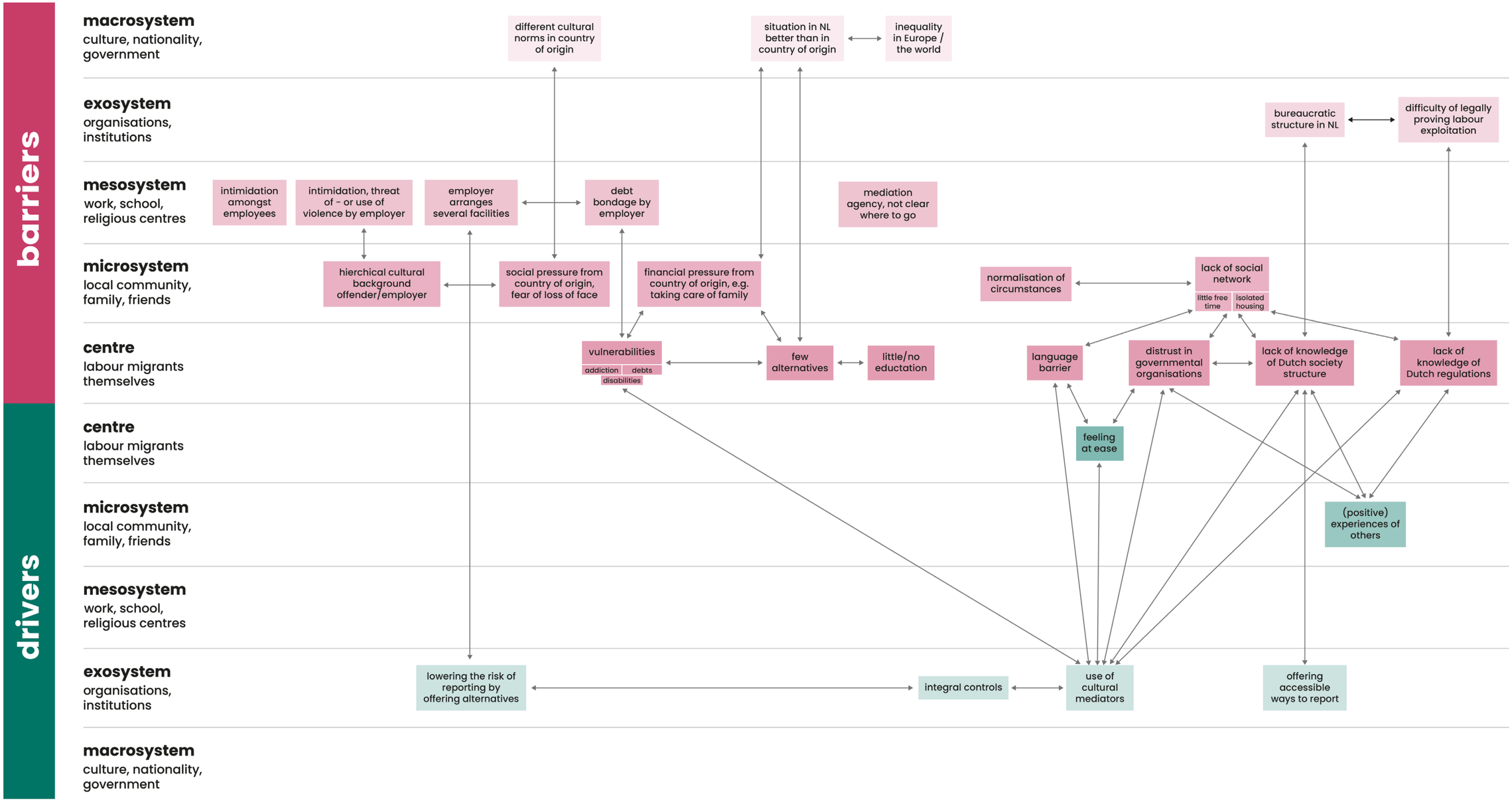


Figure 12. Sensemaking area 2

Sensemaking area 3
Joining forces to tackle labour exploitation

Mapping of stakeholders in the system surrounding labour migration and labour exploitation

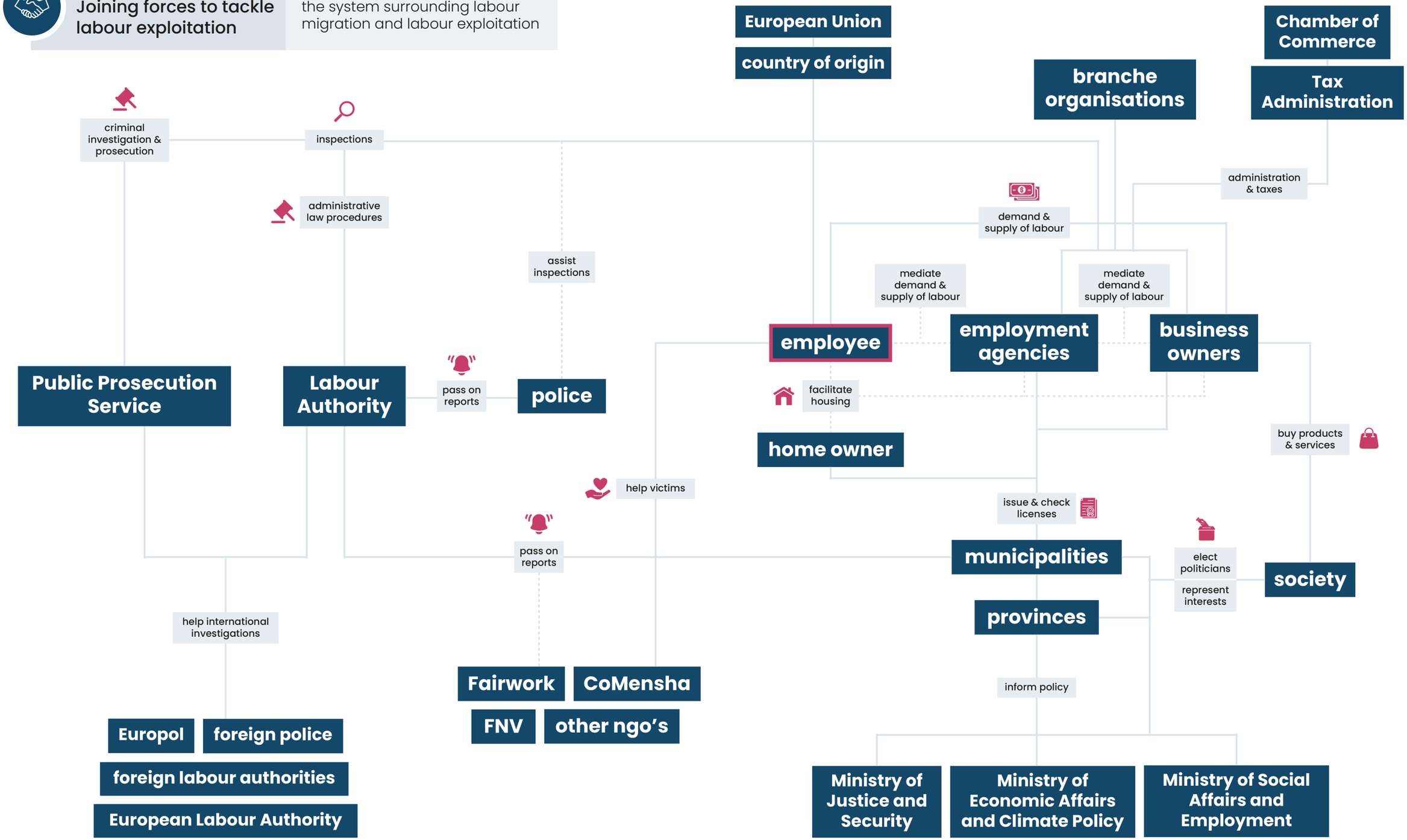


Figure 13. Sensemaking area 3

Design direction

Search area choice

5.2

A focus group session was organised to analyse the search areas. Representatives of the Public Prosecution Service, Netherlands Labour Authority, and Glastuinbouw Nederland participated in the session. The session's objectives included validating the sensemaking, gaining input for the formulation of the design direction, and collecting ideas on potential interventions. A detailed description of the focus group session can be found in Appendix 5.

Area 3, *Joining forces to tackle labour exploitation*, was not discussed in the session due to the limited number of stakeholders present at the session. This practical issue limited the potential for insights. In addition, the Public Prosecution Service is currently already exploring approaches to improve stakeholder collaboration, so therefore this direction is less relevant to the project's objective of exploring new perspectives. Because of these reasons, the choice was made to exclude this direction.

The focus group session output was used to inform the decision between the remaining two areas: *The role of consumers in tackling labour exploitation* (area 1) and *Empowerment of employees to expose labour exploitation* (area 2). When asked which area they found most inspiring, all participants voted for area 1. However, when asked about the area with the biggest impact potential, the answers were more mixed. The main concern with area 1 was the risk of designing a 'window dressing' intervention of which the actual impact is a lot less than presented.

The experts expressed that even if an intervention would succeed in stimulating consumers to demand more transparency, the changes required to guarantee this transparency would be enormous. A fundamental transformation of the whole supply system of products and services would be needed. Due to the scale and complexity of this transformation, it has a big political element to it and will probably take a long time. Even though this direction is considered very interesting and relevant, the complexity and requirement of political reformations make it less fit with the time constraints of the graduation project as well as the characteristics of Strategic Product Design.

Area 2 on the other hand shows a more direct link with the design approach. It was considered that the human-centred design approach could lead to valuable new insights about key stakeholders: the labour migrants themselves. These insights could be used to design an intervention that directly improves the situation of migrants, either as individuals or more systemically as a collective. In addition, this direction would allow for a more direct evaluation of the impact of a proposed intervention. Furthermore, this area is more fit with the scope of influence of the Fieldlab members.

Considering these insights and arguments, the **empowerment** direction is chosen, but with the additional remark that empowerment could also be looked at from a broader perspective. Ideation during the focus group session focussed specifically on stimulating migrants to report (potential) issues, but participants mentioned that there is also a lot of potential for improvement earlier on in the process. This sparked the idea of considering the role of migrants in preventing problems, rather than only stimulating them to report once they face a problem.

Design direction

From search area to design goal

5.3

To be able to formulate an actionable design goal, the search area was further explored to define a specific focus. During this process, it quickly became apparent that empowerment can be characterised as a so-called 'container concept'. In other words, empowerment is a concept without a clear-cut meaning that can be interpreted in multiple different ways.

The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines empowerment as the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you. When translating this definition to the context of labour migration, the author defines empowerment as:

Giving migrants that come to the Netherlands to work the (figurative) tools that enable them to do so in an acceptable way.

This interpretation is based on the potential mismatch of expectations and reality in the context of labour migration, as illustrated in Figure 14. Migrants come to the Netherlands with optimistic expectations: they expect to find a good job to earn money to build their future. However, in reality, they risk facing issues such as bad working and/or living conditions, inhumane working hours, underpayment, and potentially intimidation or violence.

expectation

(possible)
reality

Figure 14. Potential mismatch between migrants' expectations and reality

~~PLAN A~~

eliminate unhealthy situations in NL

~~PLAN B~~

avoid migrants from coming to NL

PLAN C

skill migrants to deal with risks

Figure 15. Strategies to respond to potential mismatch between expectation and reality

The existence of this mismatch gives rise to multiple potential response strategies to improve the situation of migrants, which are illustrated in Figure 15. Naturally, the most effective strategy would be to focus on eliminating unhealthy, exploitative situations at all (*plan A*). However, as described in the previous chapters, there are numerous practical, legislative, and economic factors which complicate the fight against labour exploitation.

If we assume that it is currently impossible to eliminate unhealthy situations in the Netherlands, another potential strategy to prevent harm would be to avoid migrants from coming here (*plan B*). A big issue with this strategy is the lack of feedback among current and potential labour migrants. The stories that go around in countries such as Poland are far from honest; most people only hear of the successes of their compatriots that went to work abroad. Furthermore, some people simply don't have any prospects in their country of origin and will come anyway due to a lack of alternatives.

The next response strategy would be to skill migrants who decide to come to work in the Netherlands to deal with the inherent risks (*plan C*). This strategy, in which migrants are empowered to take an active role in controlling what happens to them, is chosen as the focus of this project.

Within the chosen strategy of empowering migrants by skilling them to deal with risks related to working in the Netherlands, the main challenge lies in enabling migrants facing an unhealthy situation to manoeuvre out of it. The flowchart in Appendix 6 gives a simplified representation of the different steps and scenarios in this process. In this flowchart the grey steps are determined by external influences and the coloured steps are within the control of the migrants themselves. From this flowchart, three main requirements on the part of the migrants can be distilled, which are visualised in Figure 16.

These requirements were used to inform the formulation of the final design goal, in which the choice was made to only focus on the first two requirements. The third requirement was excluded because it is most action-oriented and therefore asks for more access to the target group. To be able to create an incentive for migrants in this complex context, a very sound understanding of their interests, needs, and pains is a must. However, during the first part of the project it unfortunately already became apparent how difficult it is to get in touch with the target group. Due to the limited design input in combination with the time constraints of the project, the resulting potential impact was estimated to be lower compared to the other two requirements.

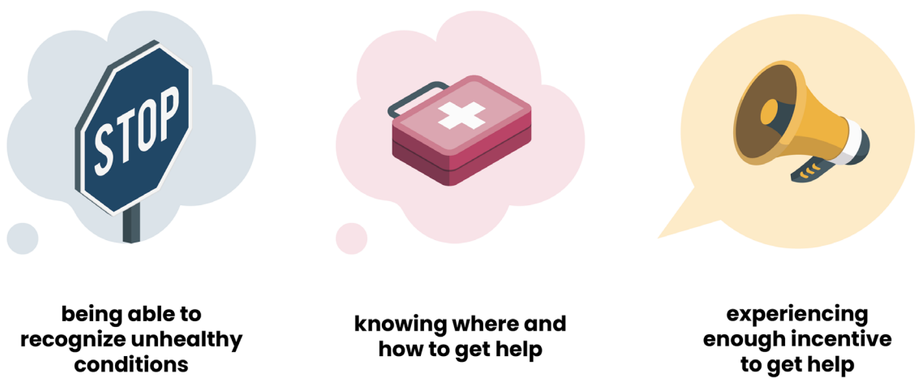


Figure 16. Requirements for migrants to manoeuvre out of an unhealthy situation

Design direction

Final design goal

5.4

Give labour migrants who (temporarily) work in the Westland a sense of control over their own lives by creating awareness about healthy (in)direct working conditions in the Netherlands and potential helplines, through a systemic intervention.

Who **What** **Why** **How**

Definitions and explanations

The target group are non-Dutch employees, as these generally have a disadvantage to Dutch employees, for example, due to language barriers and limited knowledge of the society structure and institutions. The 2020-2021 data of the Netherlands Labour Authority shows that 98% of victims and seriously disadvantaged have a non-Dutch nationality (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, 2022). Conversations with experts conveyed that a big part of labour migrants in the Westland has an Eastern European background.

(In)direct working conditions refers to aspects that are directly or indirectly related to the working situation of employees.

Healthy conditions are those that are seen as normal according to the Dutch standard.

Potential helplines refers to ways employees can seek help in case of problems.

Chapter 6

Empowerment of labour migrants

6.1 Migrant journey
6.2 Key journey steps
6.3 Design preconditions

The world of labour migrants is explored more in-depth to generate the final input for the design phase. A migrant journey is created to structurize the information on the life and motivations of labour migrants. From this journey, a few key steps are identified, which are used to formulate preconditions for the final design.

Empowerment of employees

Migrant journey

6.1

The migrant journey in Figure 17 was created to give insight into the phases which migrants go through from their decision to come to the Netherlands to potential attempts to improve their situation. It is similar to a customer journey and includes different information categories per phase.

Journey phase Which step of the experience is described?	**Decision to come to the Netherlands**	**Travel to the Netherlands**	**Entrance in the Netherlands**	**Contract and administration**	**Housing**	**Work**	**Daily life**	**Attempt to approve the situation**
Context What is the context of this phase?	• Most labour migrants who work in the Westland are Eastern European • Recruitment mainly takes place in the migrants' country of origin • Connections and similarities in culture and language play a role in recruitment • Most labour migrants work via an employment agency	• Some employment agencies work with an 'all-inclusive' package that includes the necessary paperwork, the journey to the Netherlands, accommodation, and a job • The work and living situation are presented as a win-win situation • Migrants from the EU/EEA usually come to the Netherlands by car or passenger bus	• European migrants have valid residence due to the Freedom of movement for workers in the European Union • Migrants who work in NL for less than 4 months must report to the RNI* to receive a BSN** • Migrants who work in NL for more than 4 months must also register in the BRP*** • Identity documents are sometimes confiscated by the employer	• Employment agencies use flexible contracts on the boundaries of laws and regulations (bogus contracts, dubious (freelance) constructions) • Contracts are regularly only drawn up in Dutch and are not explained to the migrants • Some migrants have to sign declarations for the use pesticides without instructions	• Housing is often organized by the employer e.g. in homes, within the company, or at holiday parks • Poor housing with unhealthy conditions • High rental prices (+/- €100,- per week) • Strict housing rules with fines	• Long working days (+/- 07.00-21.00) • Bad working conditions (dirty, dangerous and/or humiliating) • Generally unskilled or low-skilled labour • No control over working hours, few breaks, and little days off • Transport between accommodation and work often organized by the employer	• Due to the long working days, the migrant workers have little free time	• Some migrants underestimate their situation due to the normalization of conditions • Employers try to bind their employees in different ways, so the migrants experience different barriers to improve their situation
Actions What does the migrant do?	⇒ Show interest when recruited by an employment agency ⇒ Approach an employment agency (e.g. after hearing stories from acquaintances or reading an advertisement)	⇒ Agree to the conditions of the employer ⇒ Prepare for the journey to the Netherlands ⇒ Make the journey to the Netherlands	⇒ Register in the RNI or BRP	⇒ Sign contract(s) (without fully understanding them)	⇒ Live in the allocated housing	⇒ Work for (end) employer	⇒ Household duties (groceries, cleaning etc.) ⇒ (Digital) social activities ⇒ Recreation (sports, cultural activities, going to church) ⇒ Learning Dutch	⇒ Discuss issues with employer or others ⇒ Find help to improve the situation
Needs & Painpoints What does the migrant want to achieve or avoid?	Build a better future; Pay off debts; Provide family with income; Hopeless future in country of origin; Financial problems	Minimise worries / administrative work; Start work as soon as possible; No knowledge of Dutch language, regulations and standards; Debt due to transport costs	BSN (in order to receive salary); Uncertainty about registration (what, how and where); Language barrier; Distrust in government organizations	Fair pay; Clarity about agreements; Language barrier; No knowledge of Dutch regulations and standards	Space; Privacy; Housing of lower quality than promised; Unpleasant experiences with housemates (nuisance, violence, drinking/drugs); Isolated living environment	Earn money; Bad working conditions; Being treated inhumanely	Relaxation; Social contact; Practical needs (food, clean clothes etc.); Little free time; Difficulty in building a social network due to isolated living environment	Information about helplines; Safety; Multiple dependence for income and housing; Financial binding; Cultural binding; Violence; Psychological intimidation
Stakeholders & Touchpoints With whom or what does the migrant come into contact?	Employees of employment agency; Acquaintances; Social media (recruitment); Internet (advertisements)	Employees of employment agency; Fellow travelers (other migrants)	Municipality (RNI / BRP desk)	Employment agency; Work contract; Rental contract	Housemates; Housing manager (via employer); Local residents (limited); Municipality (limited); Police (limited)	End employer; Employment agency; Colleagues	Friends/family in home country; (New) friends in NL; Local residents; Ngo's; Churches; Supermarkets; Meeting places	End employer / employment agency; Municipality; Police; NLA; Public Prosecution Service; FNV; Ngo's (CoMensha, Fairwork)
Feeling What does the migrant experience?	Optimism Hope	Unburdening	Unclarity	Unclarity Confusion	Discomfort	Horror	Fatigue	Fear
Quotes	"I have no idea why I thought of the Netherlands. I knew nothing about the country, didn't speak the language, didn't know anyone there, but wanted to make an effort to pay off the student debts I had built up in Poland as quickly as possible." "I worked at a daycare and earned very little. When a friend told me about the Dutch employment agency she worked for and what she earned, I was immediately interested. People always paint a very idealistic picture of other countries. I thought I would find mountains of gold here."	"At the time I came to the Netherlands I did this at my own expense. The Romanians who are now being recruited have their travel financed by the employment agencies, after which they have to work for free for three months to pay off the debts."	"It's easy if you can stay in the country where you were born. So much is self-evident: the language, the rules, the people, the culture. We have to learn everything all over again." "To understand the experience of migrant workers like me, it is important to know that the problems start with the language. If you don't speak the language, that means you don't know what the rules are, what your rights are, how things are supposed to go and how not. You are completely in the dark." * RNI = Registratie Niet-Ingezetenen = Registry of Non-Residents ** BSN = Burgerservicenummer = Citizen service number *** BRP = Basisregistratie Personen = Municipal Personal Records Database	"We receive the pay slips in Dutch and therefore cannot check what exactly is being deducted. The way employment agencies communicate with us is often shrouded in mystery. Much remains unclear and if you ask for an explanation, you rarely get a clear answer."	"The work is the same for everyone, but the people who do the work vary widely. Nevertheless they are lumped together, or crammed together in one bungalow park." "The park where we were accommodated was unlivable. I had to share a tiny room with two other people. There was a ten centimeter space between our beds, we had no privacy. The rooms were poorly maintained. You had to live with complete strangers."	"You are nothing. You are not seen as a colleague, not appreciated. You are replaceable. For you ten others. They literally tell you that." "You are treated differently. As if you are less, less human. Not only by the job coach and coordinators, but also by colleagues who have been working there for some time." "Many coordinators are Polish themselves, but don't think that makes them any more understanding. The pleasure with which they belittle and destroy people is downright sadistic."	"The schedule we have to work with is unpredictable. It can just happen that you have night shift today and morning shift the next day." "When you come home you're exhausted because you had to get up so early. So you have no energy left to do anything. I'm trying to learn Dutch, but I don't have the energy for it." "So many people who drink away their worries with alcohol, which makes the problems worse. It's a vicious circle."	"So many people with so much that weighs on their hearts, but who don't have the courage to step forward and speak up. Who swallow their worries and complaints day after day, because they feel there is no choice. Working and little money or not working and no money. Working and living or not working and being homeless. Swallow or choke. That's what it comes down to for most of us."

Figure 17. Migrant journey

The journey is a synthesis of information derived from: (CoMensha, 2023), (Nederlandse Arbeidsinspectie, 2022), (Inspectie Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2016), (Centrum voor Criminaliteitspreventie en Veiligheid, n.d.-b), (Bouazza, 2022), the field visit, the exploration sources in Appendix 3, and expert interviews with CoMensha, the municipality of Rotterdam and the FNV (see Appendix 2). All quotes are derived from personal testimonies in Bouazza's book 'Labour migrants in the Netherlands', but some are shortened.

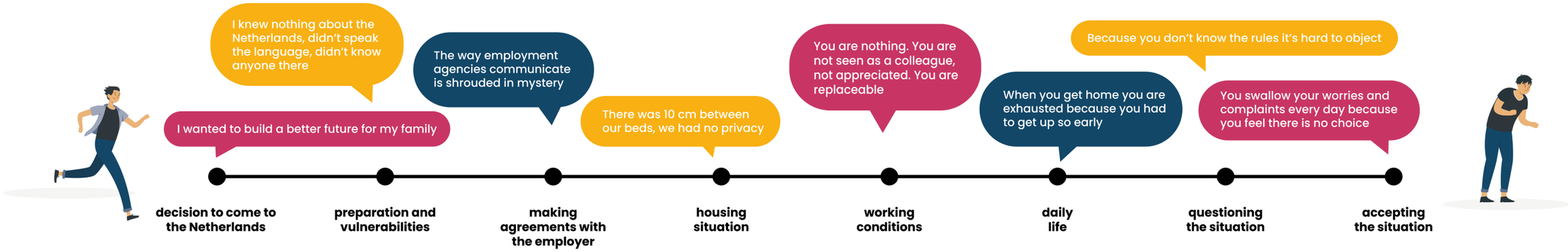


Figure 18. Key steps in the migrant journey

Empowerment of employees

6.2 Key journey steps

From the migrant journey, a few key steps were identified. These steps and accompanying (fictional) quotes are summarised in Figure 18.

Decision to come to the Netherlands

Intending to improve their situation, labour migrants leave their country of origin and travel to the Netherlands. The success stories from acquaintances or recruiters make them optimistic. They dream of a better future, without debts or with more chances for their children for example.

Preparation and vulnerabilities

Migrants often come to the Netherlands without a lot of preparation. They often don't speak English, let alone Dutch, and are unaware of the Dutch standards and regulations. Some migrants are extra vulnerable, for example, because of a history of addiction.

Making agreements with the employer

Most migrants work via an employment agency. These agencies often use flexible contracts on the boundaries of regulations. In addition, contracts are often only drawn up in Dutch. Migrants sign the contracts and other declarations related to their work, for example about the use of pesticides, without (fully) understanding them.

Housing situation

Housing is often organised by the employer as part of the contract. The conditions are often of way lower quality than promised whilst rent prices are high. Space is limited, people have to share facilities (or even rooms), and conditions are unhealthy. Friction among housemates can cause unpleasant experiences. In addition, migrants often live in an isolated area, for example at a holiday park.

Working conditions

Migrants have to make long days and work around 12-14h per day with very few breaks. People have little control over their working hours and regularly have to work for long periods without a day off. Migrants often perform jobs that require no to little education and working conditions are often dirty, dangerous and/or humiliating. Coordinators often treat employees inhumanely. The salary is a lot less than expected.

Daily life

Due to the long working hours, migrants have little free time. When they arrive home they are exhausted. In the little free time they also have to do household duties, so there's little time for relaxation or other things. In addition, most people have a limited social network in the Netherlands.

Questioning the situation

Because most migrants are unaware of the Dutch standards it can be hard for them to judge if their situation is normal or not. Even if migrants do want to improve their personal situation they don't always know how to do so. They don't know where to get advice or help. For some the bureaucratic Dutch society structure can be overwhelming and some migrants don't trust governmental organisations.

Accepting the situation

Some migrants underestimate their situation because of gradually worsening circumstances, standardisation of the circumstances, or the fact that the circumstances are still an improvement compared to their country of origin. Even if migrants are aware that their situation is not okay, the multiple dependency on their employer (e.g. for housing and residency status, or even confiscated bank accounts or identity documents) might prevent them from doing something about it. The same goes for physical or psychological intimidation by the employer. Some migrants don't want to go back to their country of origin because they fear loss of face.

Quotes from
Migrants

It's easy if you can stay in the country where you were born. So much is self-evident: the language, the rules, the people, the culture. We have to learn everything all over again. Work harder to understand everything. We have to find a new house, make new contacts, build a new network. Nothing is known, everything is strange and uncertain, and we all deal with it with the weight of our past weighing on us.

Sam

Because you don't know the rules, it's hard to object. To say "I don't like this", or "This is not okay". Because then what? You can't go anywhere else, you don't know anyone, where do you find other work? Moreover, you see a lot of other people around you in exactly the same situation. You assume it is normal. You are left to your own devices.

Lukasz

Over time everything has deteriorated. The homes where people are housed, the way they are treated. You used to get some guidance, but nowadays labour migrants can only count on themselves.

Janusz

All quotes are derived from the personal stories of labour migrants in the book 'Labour migrants in the Netherlands' (Bouazza, 2022)

Empowerment of employees
Design preconditions

6.3

From these key journey steps, the simplified visual summary of the everyday world of migrants in Figure 19 was created.

From the information explored, a number of preconditions were formulated that should be taken into account in the final design.

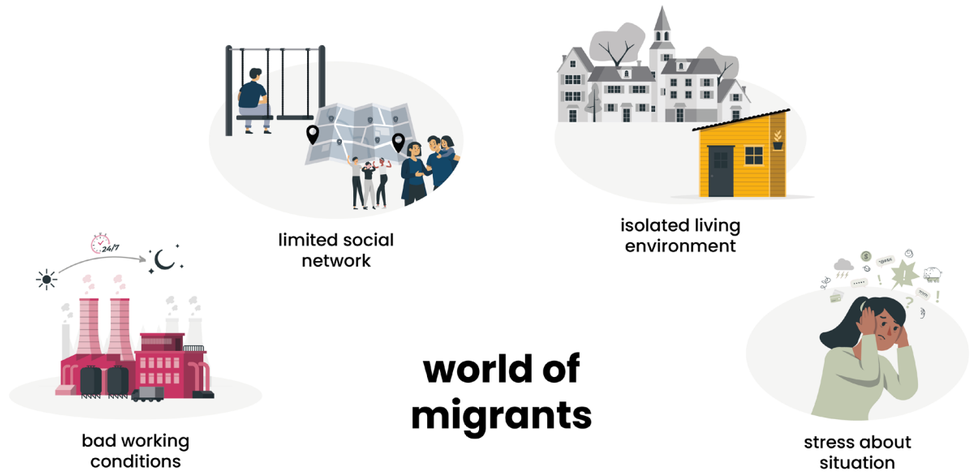


Figure 19. Summary of the everyday world of migrants

Practical
The intervention must take into account that the target group generally ..

- does not speak Dutch or English
- has little knowledge of Dutch standards, regulations, and the society structure
- is low- or uneducated
- has limited financial means
- has little free time
- has an irregular schedule
- has limited privacy
- has an isolated living environment
- has a limited social network

Cultural
The intervention must take into account that the target group generally ..

- has less trust in governmental organisations

Chapter 7

Intervention design

The designed intervention for the system surrounding labour migration is presented. After describing the design process, the proposed intervention and conceptualisation are presented. Lastly, the evaluation of the concept is described followed by an overview of the incorporation of the outcomes in the final iteration.

7.1 Design of a systemic intervention
7.2 Intervention proposal
7.3 Intervention conceptualisation
7.4 Implementation
7.5 Evaluation
7.6 Iteration

Intervention design

Design of a systemic intervention

7.1

After exploring more information on labour migration and labour exploitation relevant to the final direction of the project, the objective of the next phase was to design an intervention concept. It is important to keep in mind that this concept is aimed to be a step towards the end goal of tackling labour exploitation in the Netherlands, but that achieving this goal naturally requires a combination of developments and interventions. From a systems thinking perspective, complex problems can not simply be reduced to single causes because of their dynamic and interconnected nature, and can therefore also not be solved by simple solutions (Design Council, 2021). The final concept should therefore be seen as one of the multiple interventions necessary to achieve systemic change.

The design goal presented in Chapter 5.4 and the understanding of the target group discussed in Chapter 6 were used as starting points for the ideation phase. In addition, existing interventions relevant to the design direction and the outcomes of the focus group session were analysed as design input. Multiple ideation tools and methods were used to generate the first ideas, both individually as well as in collaborative brainstorming sessions.

Analysing these first ideas using the C-box method (Van Boeijen et al., 2013), in which they were ranked on innovativeness and feasibility, led to the creation of four clusters: *low-hanging fruit* ideas which could be implemented on a short-term, *next step* ideas that should be considered next, *future horizon* ideas that require more time and/or resource investments, and finally *irrelevant* ideas which are either not feasible, or were expected to have too little impact.

As the *next step* and *future horizon* ideas were considered to be most interesting for the project's scope, these were further analysed and discussed with the problem owner. From this, four potential concept directions were identified. These were further explored using the SCAMPER method (Van Boeijen et al., 2013). Finally, the four concept directions were evaluated on feasibility, viability and desirability, after which the buddy platform concept direction was chosen. This concept direction was then further detailed into a full concept.

A more detailed description of the ideation process, as well as some results, can be found in Appendix 7.

Intervention design

Intervention proposal

7.2

Proposed intervention
An online buddy platform to facilitate the exchange of experiences among migrants

Figure 20. Intended effects of intervention

Where in the system is the intervention intended to be placed?

The intervention focuses on the exchange of knowledge among migrants. This exchange aims to build awareness about healthy (in)direct working conditions in the Netherlands and potential helplines. This awareness should give migrants more control over what happens to them as they can prevent risks more proactively and identify problematic situations quicker. If necessary, the migrants possess the tools to deal with potential problems. All in all, this lowers the risk of problematic, exploitative situations. Figure 20 gives a simplified representation of the intended effects of the intervention.

Who are the target users of the intervention?

The intervention targets both migrants who are new in the Netherlands as well as migrants who have been in the Netherlands for a while. The target users are motivated to learn more about working and living in the Netherlands and want to get in touch with other migrants.

A basis for the concept is the idea that expertise among migrants is not directly linked to the period they have been in the Netherlands. Rather, the knowledge of a person about a specific topic depends on their background and individual situation. Therefore, migrants who are relatively new could possess knowledge that is relevant to other migrants who have already been here for a while.

How is the intervention intended to achieve change?

Via the online platform migrants can explore the experiences of other migrants to inform themselves on multiple topics. In addition, the platform also offers expert tips suggested by non-migrant experts. Lastly, the platform stimulates online social interaction among migrants, which could also stimulate offline interaction.

Figure 21 illustrates the scopes of impact of the intervention. Interaction via the platform intends to have a positive impact on the situation of individual users as they learn new things through the local community structure that it facilitates. On the system level, the increased awareness created by this exchange improves the position of migrants as a collective.

What form will the intervention take?

The intervention is designed as an online platform application. This makes the intervention easily accessible and stimulates frequent use. More details on the form of the final concept are presented later.

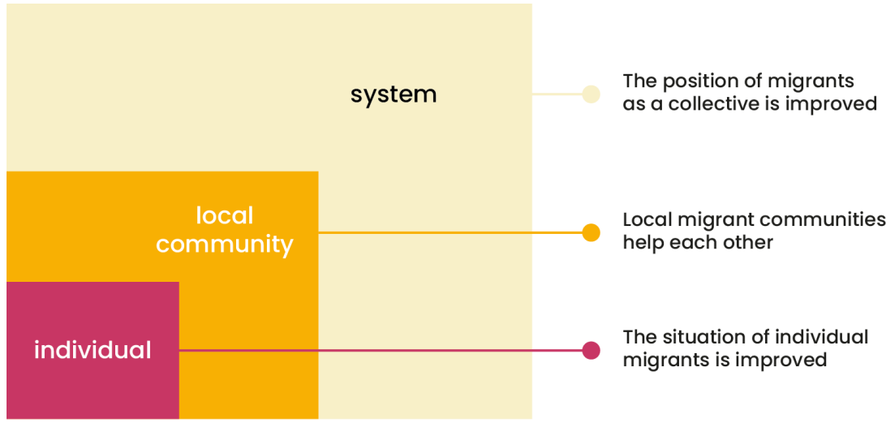


Figure 21. Intended impact scopes of intervention

Intervention design

Intervention conceptualisation

7.3

eMpower

The buddy platform for labour migrants

7.3.1 Explanation of idea

The app is built around the idea of reflecting on statements. Each day users receive a new statement, which can be on multiple topics such as work, housing, or daily life. Users fill out their personal response to the statement, which is then (anonymously) shared with others.

Via the feed, users can explore the responses of others via different categories: popular responses, responses in their area, and responses of friends. It is possible to like the responses of others, save them, comment on them, and share them with friends. In addition, expert tips relevant to the statement of the day can be found in the feed. Previous statements per topic can be consulted via the knowledge base.

Furthermore, users can get in touch with others via the platform. They can send (anonymous) chat requests to other users to ask questions about a specific topic and add others as friends and chat via the app. Lastly, the app provides users with suggestions on relevant community groups based on the details in their profile.

7.3.2 Prototype

To communicate the idea of the intervention, a prototype was created. The prototype consists of several interfaces of the application which are presented using a poster format, see Figure 22. The posters, which consist of the screen interfaces and some annotations, take viewers along the usage flow of the app. This format was chosen instead of a clickable prototype to prevent the risk of viewers getting overwhelmed or lost. For the interfaces, the visual style was kept rather minimalistic to also prevent viewers from getting overwhelmed and to not distract from the core of the intervention concept. In the prototype the interfaces are English, but the app can be used in multiple languages.

Daily statement

Reflect on personal experience

Statements on multiple topics

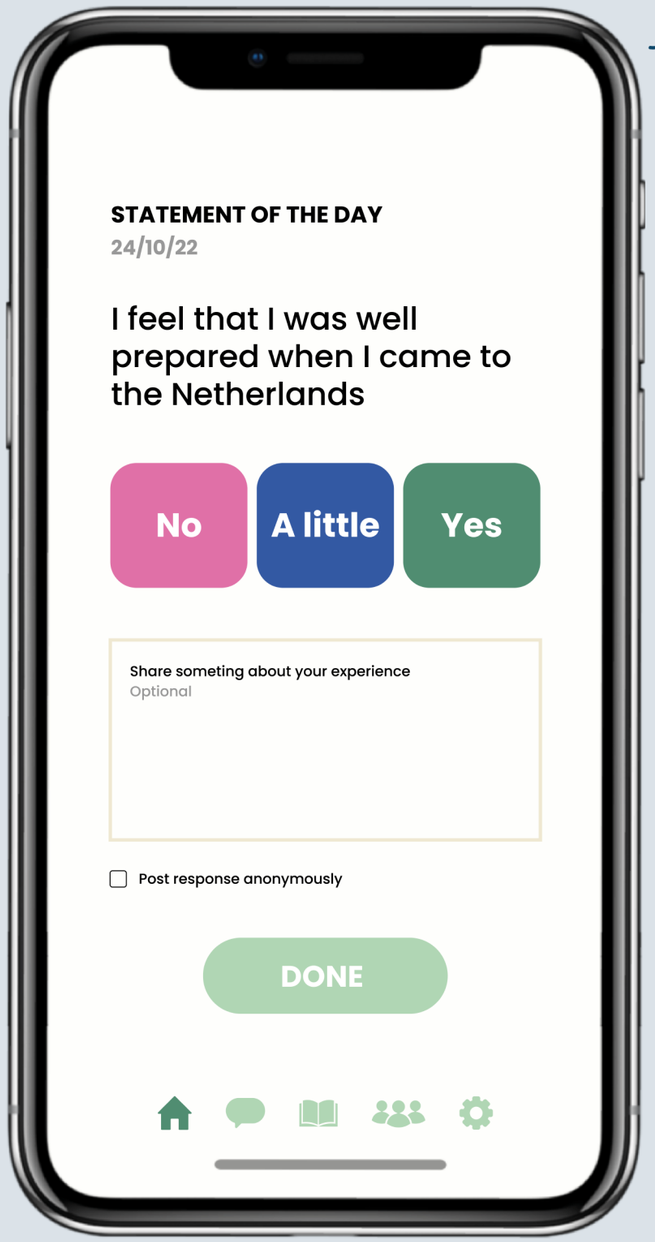


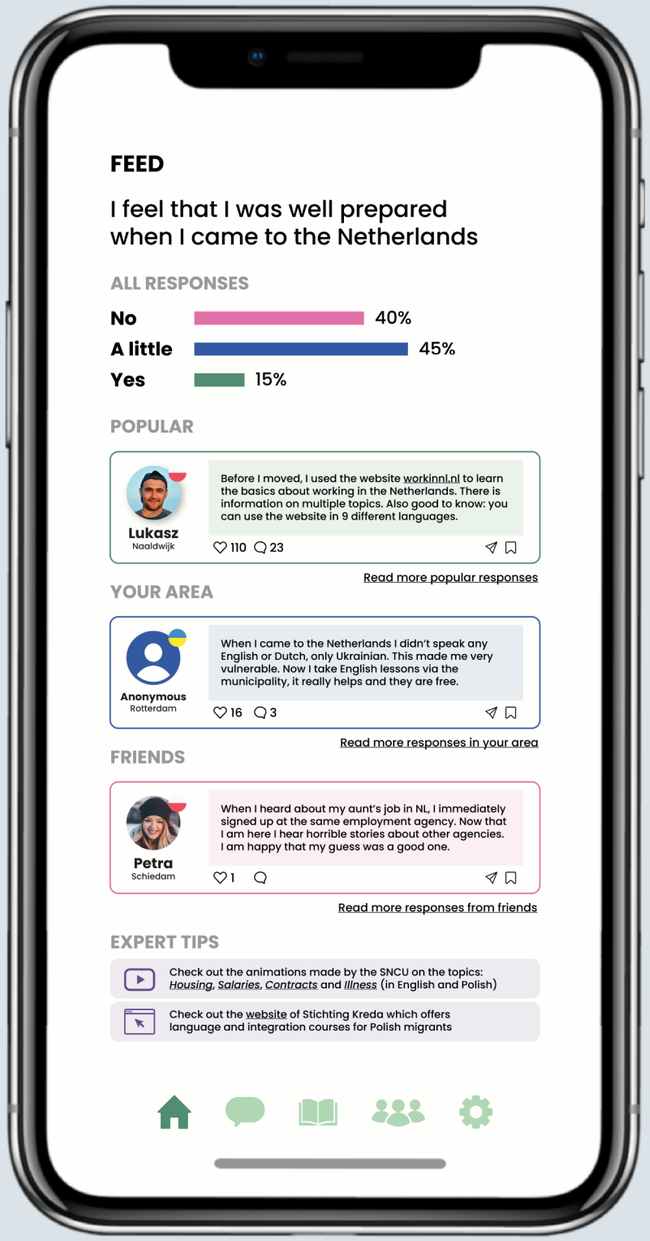
Figure 22a. Prototype poster

Personalised feed

Explore responses of others

- *Popular*
- *Area*
- *Friends*

Tips from experts



Comment on others & save relevant responses

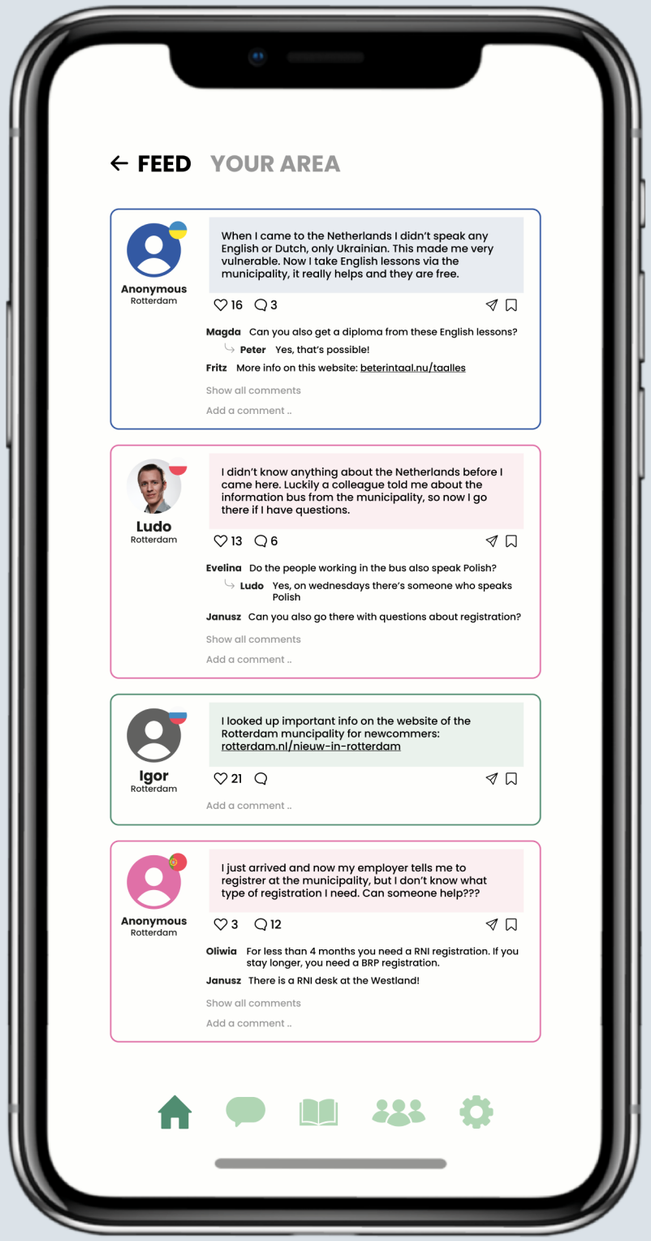
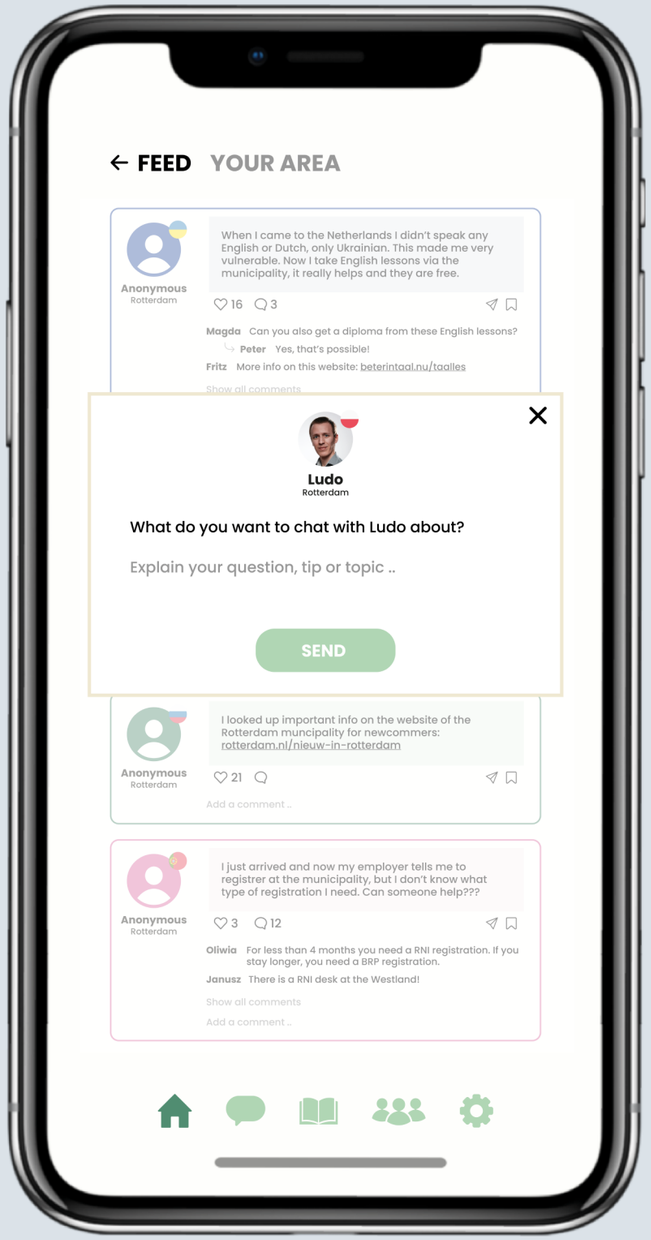


Figure 22b. Prototype poster

Get in touch

Chat with (new) friends

Sent chat requests for personal questions



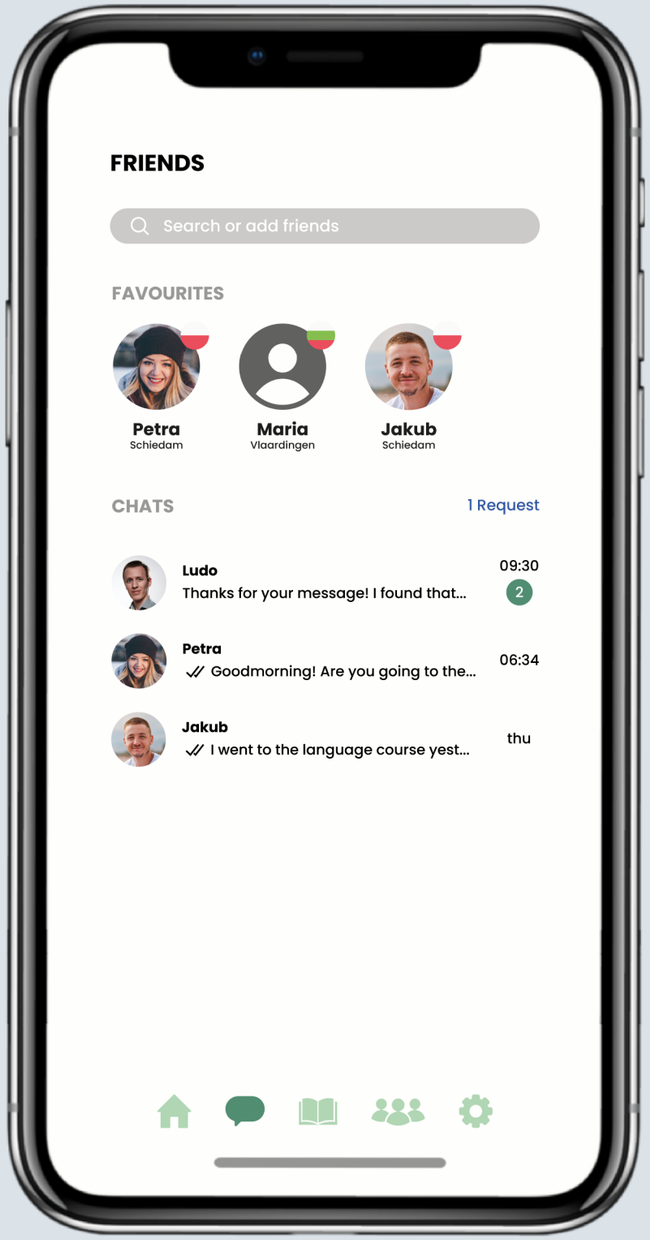
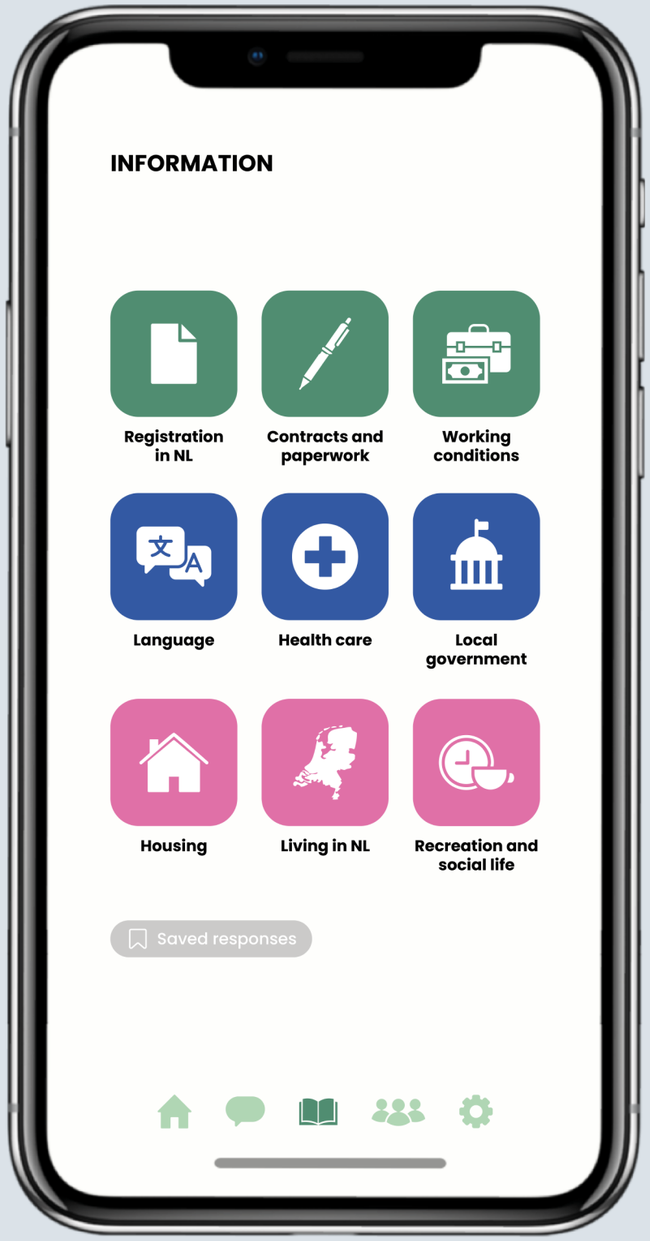


Figure 22c. Prototype poster

Knowledge base

Info organised per topic

Saved responses



Explore previous statements

Tips from experts

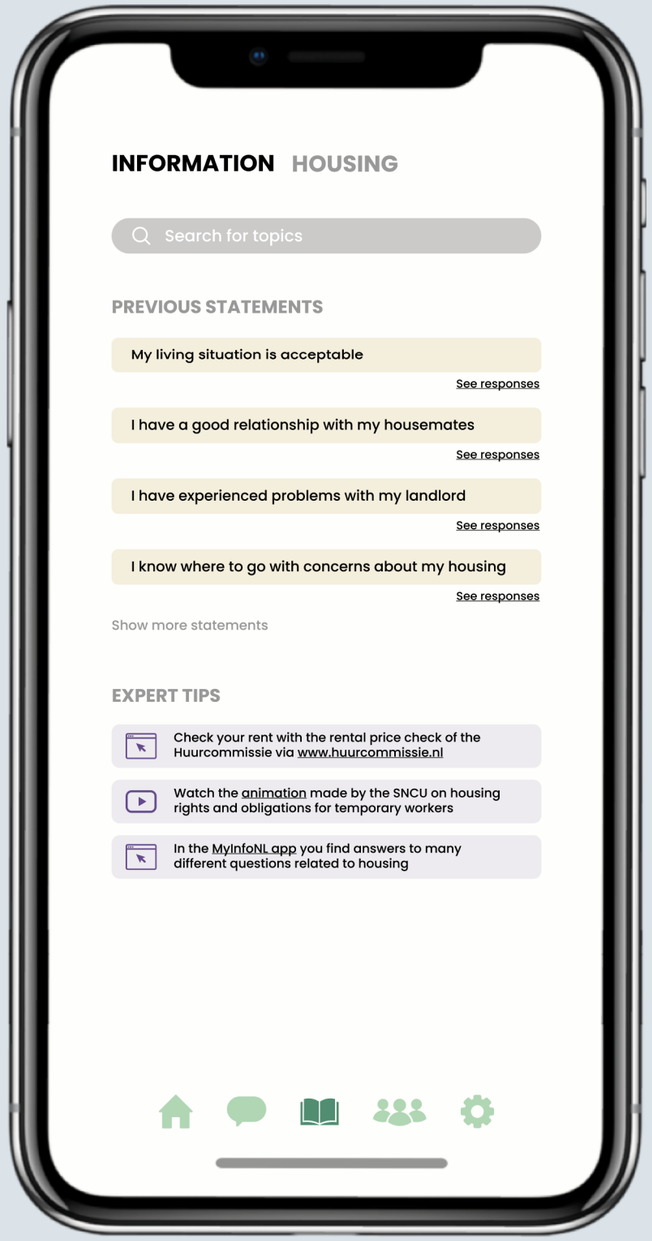
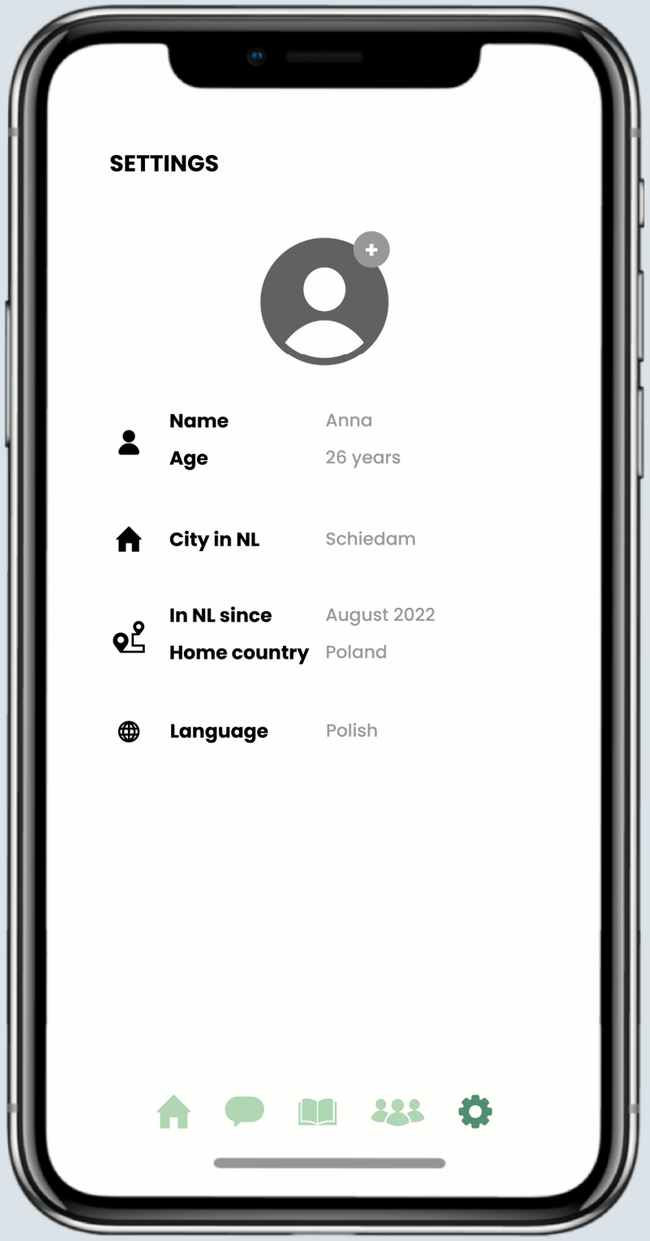
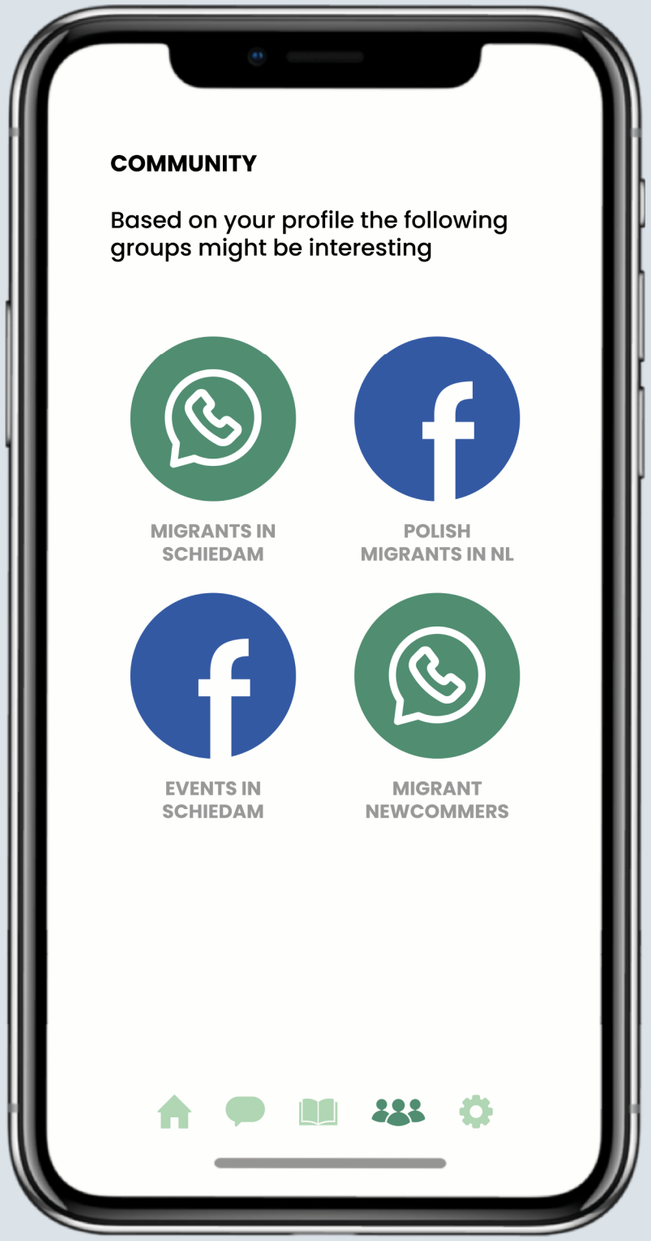


Figure 22d. Prototype poster

Connect

Set up your personal profile





Group suggestions based on profile

Figure 22e. Prototype poster

7.3.3 Key aspects of eMpower

For users

Informative

Via the platform, users can reflect on their own experiences and explore the experiences of others on multiple topics. This can preventively create awareness of potential risks and provide relevant tips. In addition, the platform can help users who have questions or experience difficulties by providing them with answers, tips, and/or emotional support from other users. Finally, the expert tips provide users with valuable insights.

Accessible

Using apps and social media is familiar to a big part of the target group. The app has a translation function and can thus be used in multiple languages. There are no financial barriers as the app can be downloaded and used for free. Finally, it is possible to post experiences, responses, comments, and chat requests anonymously.

Engaging

The personal element of the platform allows users to get in touch with others and exchange experiences. As users are mutually interdependent, they are stimulated to share their experiences. Daily statements promote regular interaction.

Community building

Via the platform, users can grow their social network and keep in touch with new people they meet. Interaction on the platform could potentially stimulate offline meet-ups as well. The community suggestions also help broaden the social network of users based on their individual profile.

For facilitators

Reaching the migrant population

The platform facilitates direct access to the migrant population, which is normally a very hard-to-reach group. This access allows facilitating stakeholders to distribute relevant information among users of the platform, for example, via the expert tips or by responding to posts and comments. In addition, partaking in the platform spreads awareness about the facilitating stakeholders among migrants.

Insights about the migrant population

The content posted on the platform gives insight into key topics among migrants (in specific regions). As the migrant population is a rather 'hidden' group and is less likely to report issues by themselves, this is a valuable resource. The platform's content gives insight into hidden unhealthy (in)direct working conditions and other questions or problems among migrants, which allows key stakeholders to adequately respond to these signals.

Intervention design

Implementation

7.4

For the implementation of the intervention, four main stakeholder groups were identified, see Figure 23:

Figure 23. Stakeholder groups concept

Users

What is the role of this stakeholder?

Naturally, the users are the ones to make use of the platform. They should engage with each other via the app and share experiences.

Who could fill this role?

Due to the context of the project, the user group is narrowed down to labour migrants in the Westland area.

Promoters

What is the role of this stakeholder?

The promoters should bring the platform to the attention of potential users via information at digital or physical touch points, or personal one-on-one promotion.

Who could fill this role?

Relevant promoting organisations include foundations targeted towards labour migrants (e.g. Polka, Kreda and Barca), municipalities, FNV, employers, branche organisations for employment agencies and temporary workers (e.g. ABU and SNCU), branche organisations relevant to sectors in the Westland area (e.g. Glastuinbouw Nederland), and ngo's focussed on labour exploitation (e.g. CoMensha and Fairwork). In terms of touchpoints, especially physical touchpoints should be considered. Relevant places include the RNI and BRP desks of municipalities where migrants have to register for a BSN, local (cultural) meeting places such as churches or community centres, and lastly (international) supermarkets.

Funder

What is the role of this stakeholder?

The funder should cover the costs for the development and maintenance of the platform so that it can be offered to users free of charge.

Who could fill this role?

A logical funder for the platform is the Ministry of Justice and Safety, as this governmental body has direct links with multiple stakeholders that profit from the implementation of the platform, such as the Public Prosecution Service and the Netherlands Labour Authority.

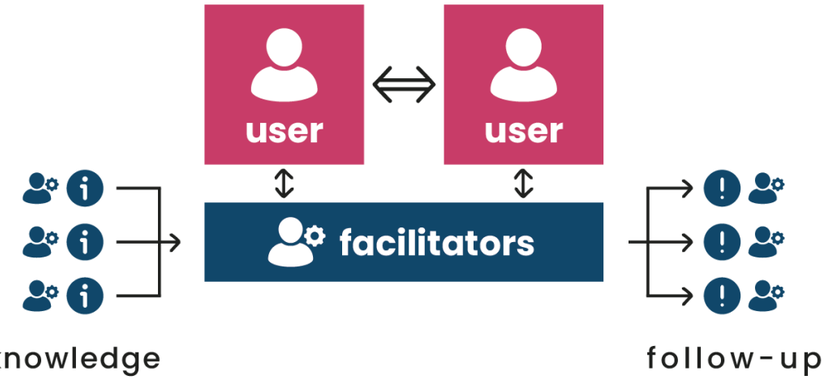


Figure 24. Information flows among users and facilitators

Facilitators

What is the role of this stakeholder?

The facilitators manage the platform which includes posting daily statements, providing expert tips, and proposing community groups to suggest to users. In addition, the facilitators have access to the content discussed on the platform which is valuable to identify relevant signals and provide an adequate follow-up.

Who could fill this role?

As the topics covered on the app are rather broad, there is not one organisation that could fulfil the role of facilitator on its own. A collaboration of a few stakeholders is required, with each their own expertise. This guarantees relevant expert tips and an adequate follow-up to signals. A systematic visualisation of the exchange of information between the users and facilitators is presented in Figure 24.

To fill the facilitator role a collaboration between the Netherlands Labour Authority, FNV and the municipalities of Westland, Rotterdam and the Hague is proposed. This collaboration provides coverage of expertise on multiple topics and is also chosen due to the mix of governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Intervention design

Evaluation

7.5

7.5.1 Set-up and objectives

The intervention concept was evaluated in threefold:

1. Evaluation with the target group (labour migrants)
   Focus: problem understanding, problem-concept fit, interaction aspects and implementation plan
2. Evaluation with stakeholders relevant for the implementation
   Focus: problem understanding, problem-concept fit and implementation plan
3. Evaluation with a behavioural - and UX researcher
   Focus: interaction aspects

Appendix 8 provides a detailed explanation of the evaluation.

7.5.2 Key insights

The evaluation sessions resulted in multiple insights and feedback points on the impact, interaction, and implementation plan of the concept.

IMPACT

Positive responses to the concept
In general, the target group was very enthusiastic about the intervention concept. One interviewee mentioned knowing very little about (working in) the Netherlands when she came here and experienced a hard time. "*When you come here for the first time it is not nice. I knew nothing about living here, about the rules, the government, healthcare, doctors. I knew nothing.*" She expressed how nice it would have been if the app would have existed when she came to the Netherlands. Another interviewee mentioned that the app gives you insights into the figurative roads taken by others, both good and bad, so not everyone has to find the best way individually. This was perceived to save time and can help prevent negative experiences.

Personal interaction is key
The target group interviewees expressed that the personal element of the platform is crucial. To build their knowledge they would prefer using the eMpower app over reading information on a website because of the personal element. They liked that the name, picture, and nationality of other users are visible. They also liked the chat function, as it allows for more in-depth contact.

In addition to the sharing of experiences and tips, one interviewee mentioned that simply getting in touch with other migrants is also very valuable, as she experienced this as a difficulty herself. "*I didn't know any people. I didn't have anyone that could help me with my problems.*"

The interviewed migrants had mixed views on meeting up in person with people they would meet on the platform. One interviewee who would be interested expressed that she would be most open to meeting people from the same country and therefore likes the nationality icon.

Mutual dependency of users
The responses from the interviewed migrants show that they would be interested in reading other people's experiences. However, to achieve the concept's intended impact not only the demand for experiences should be in place, but also the supply of those experiences. In further iterations, it should be considered how the platform could actively stimulate users to share their experiences to empower others.

Relevancy in the long term
One of the interviewed migrants who has been in the Netherlands for more than 10 years expressed no interest in using the app in her current situation. She stated that after some years you don't feel a certain information need anymore and have already built a social network. Therefore, it is important to mainly target newcomers. But the app can also be relevant for migrants who have been in the Netherlands for a few years.

Competition with other social media
Evaluation with experts highlighted the importance of positioning the platform. As there currently already exist other platforms for migrants to get in touch, such as Facebook, it is important to clearly communicate the focus and added value of the eMpower app.

INTERACTION

Importance of language
All evaluation sessions highlighted the importance of offering the app in multiple languages. Both the target group and experts stressed the problematic language barrier that many migrants face.

Providing a safe space
It was discussed during the evaluation sessions that the app should feel like a safe space for users to prevent them from not sharing relevant experiences that could help others because they fear potential consequences.

Preventing a negative environment
The interviewed expert from the FNV highlighted the importance of looking into how the app can remain a constructive and informative environment, rather than a place where users heavily complain about their

situation. Of course, users' negative experiences could help prevent other users from facing the same risks, but intense negativity such as cursing could set a bad tone and scare off users.

Relevancy of statements

The added value of collecting input from migrants to identify statements relevant to them was expressed.

Quality of responses

It was discussed that the like function is an interesting tool to identify relevant responses among users. However, it was also expressed that since responses are not verified, there is a risk of misinformation.

Tips from facilitators

In the current concept, the main knowledge exchange takes place among migrants and only a few general expert tips are given per daily statement. However, both potential target users and experts expressed that it could be valuable to consider expanding the role of the facilitator organisations to also give tips based on individual responses.

IMPLEMENTATION

Promoting the app

The evaluations highlighted the importance of the app's promotion strategy as reaching the target audience is a must to achieve the intended impact. Evaluation with the target group highlighted the importance of accessible physical promotion touchpoints, especially local (cultural) venues. Evaluation with experts highlighted the importance of using neutral organisations to promote the app. It was advised to prevent links between the app and employers or employment agencies as much as possible as this could create a negative association. Lastly, it was discussed that already existing community groups of migrants (e.g. on Facebook) are also a valuable place to promote the eMpower app.

Funding of the concept

In the original implementation proposal, the Ministry of Justice and Safety was proposed as the funder. However, evaluation with experts identified that it might be more logical to link the concept to a stakeholder in the preventative realm.

Identifying suitable facilitators

A crucial part of the implementation plan is the choice of relevant facilitator organisations. All interviewed experts agreed on the importance of making the facilitator role a shared effort as there is not one ideal stakeholder that contains expertise on all topics.

As research brought up the distrust in governmental organisations among migrants, the number of governmental organisations involved was kept to a minimum (with municipalities and the Netherlands Labour Authority as exceptions). When discussed with the target group an interviewee expressed that this would be no problem, as the distrust is mainly towards the police.

In addition, the expert from the FNV expressed the importance of offering the app via neutral organisations which are not directly affiliated with the employers of labour migrants, as this would scare off potential users.

Stakeholder responses

FNV

The interviewed expert from the FNV expressed seeing potential in the concept. She liked the idea of migrants making each other stronger. About the link with the FNV she stated: "*We can certainly offer something for the target group. For example in terms of tips. People are often looking for something that is a simple question for me, but is very complicated for them.*"

Public Prosecution Service

The app format of the concept is perceived as a good fit with the target group. "*Even though migrants often live isolated, they are digitally very well connected to keep in touch with their friends and family back home. The concept makes good use of this opportunity structure.*" It is interesting how the concept facilitates the creation of a collective. It could also have a positive influence on migrants' willingness to report.

Fairwork

The interviewed expert from Fairwork saw an interesting link between the platform and the expertise of Fairwork. In addition, she expressed that it is valuable that the platform offers insight into topics relevant to migrants. However, further detailing of the responsibilities and required time commitments from facilitators are certainly still deemed necessary.

Intervention design

Iteration

7.6

From the key insights, several points of improvement were translated into the intervention concept, some of which have been visualised in Figure 25.

INTERACTION

Stimulating the exchange of experiences

To achieve the intended impact of the concept, users must be willing to share their personal experiences. Responding to the statement of the day is a must to be able to see the feed. However, the main value lies in users' explanations. To enlarge the drive of users to share these explanations, different design iterations were made. The iterations are derived from brainstorming, benchmarking with other community platforms, and insights from the expert evaluation.

First of all, a loading page with the slogan of the app, an onboarding tutorial for first-time users including an animated video about the platform and some house rules, and the use of stimulative language in the interfaces are proposed. These iterations aim to communicate the empowering principle of the platform more explicitly by communicating the value and importance of active participation.

In addition, an 'appreciation function' is added through which users can thank other users for sharing information. This direct feedback loop among users aims to make the impact of individual contributions more explicit and emphasise the personal element of the app.

Next, it is recommended to lower the barrier to share experiences as much as possible. Users should feel that every addition is valuable, which is for example expressed via stimulative quotes in the screens. In addition, the choice is made not to add an 'expertise ranking' among users, as such a mark could demotivate people to share their experiences because they feel it is not relevant enough. Also, an 'expertise ranking' goes against the platform's philosophy that expertise is not absolute but differs per topic.

Lastly, it is proposed to personally target individual users to share some background on their answers (even after submitting them). These personal requests should be targeted towards users with a specific answer/ background that is underrepresented in terms of responses for the statement of the day. This personal approach could offer an incentive for users to fill an information gap.

Transparency about the usage of information

To provide clarity into the treatment of information posted on the app, a simplified terms and conditions page is shown during the registration process. This page states that potential signals will always be anonymously shared with relevant stakeholders. It will also be communicated that it is possible to post responses and comments anonymously and send anonymous chat requests to other users in case of sensitive and personal questions.

Creating a constructive environment

As discussed earlier, it should be considered wisely how to deal with negativity on the platform. To prevent excessive negativity an option will be offered to report responses containing foul language. This gives moderators the option to hide uninformative and excessively negative responses, get in touch with users who structurally spread negativity (to optionally advise on their personal situation), or block these users as a last resort.

Identifying intruders

Moderators should also actively look for employers that have joined the platform (e.g. for recruitment), so that it can remain a space where migrants feel safe to share their stories.

Preventing the spread of misinformation

A risk identified during the evaluation is the spread of misinformation via the platform. Therefore, a function was created that allows users to report misinformation. Once a response or comment is flagged, it should be hidden from the platform until checked by moderators.

Allow for user input

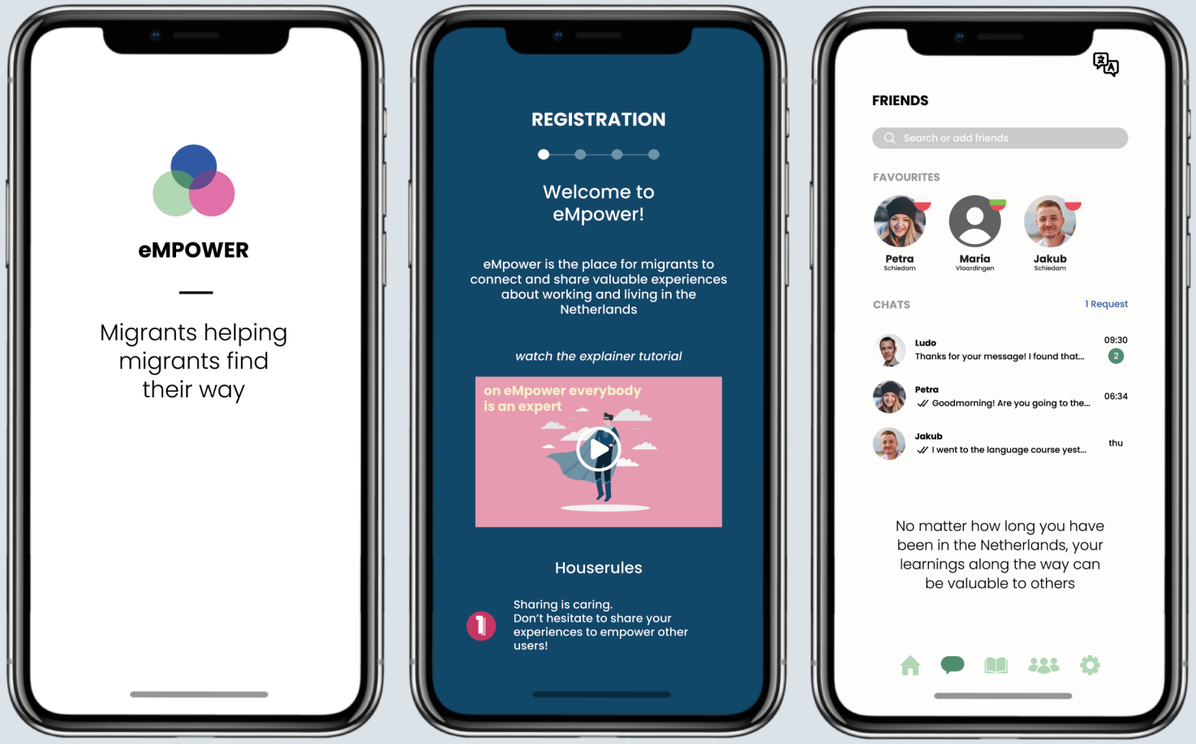
In addition to the statements chosen by the facilitators, the app now also provides a place for users to give input for statements or topics relevant to them.

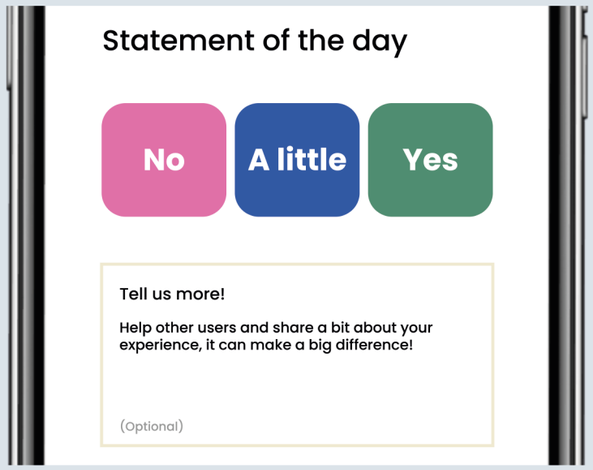
Offer more search options

To enable users to find relevant information more easily, two small iterations in terms of information accessibility are proposed. First of all, it is recommended to offer a filter function on the feed page to only see comments of people with a specific answer. Next, it is advised to offer a search function to look for specific terms in the feed.

Iterations

Stimulating the exchange of experiences





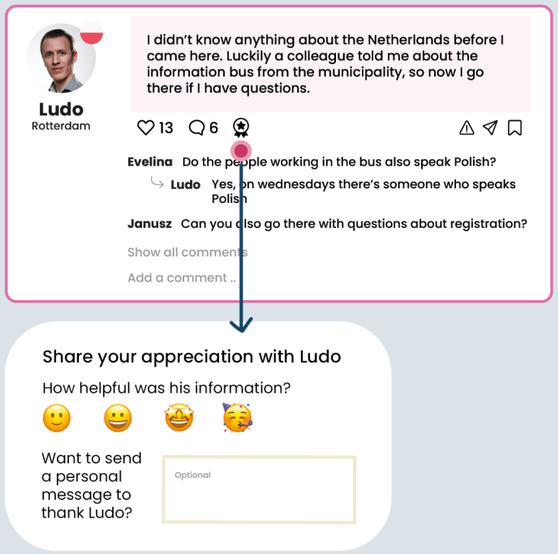
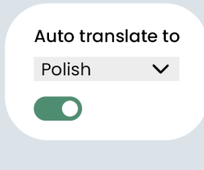
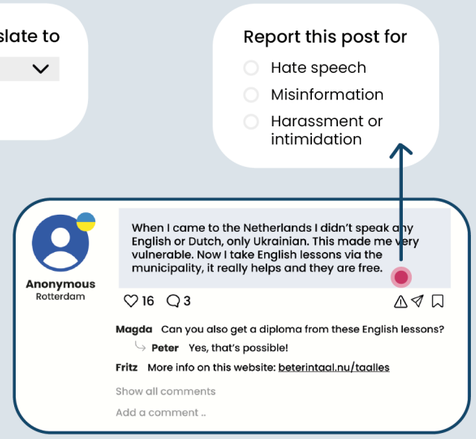


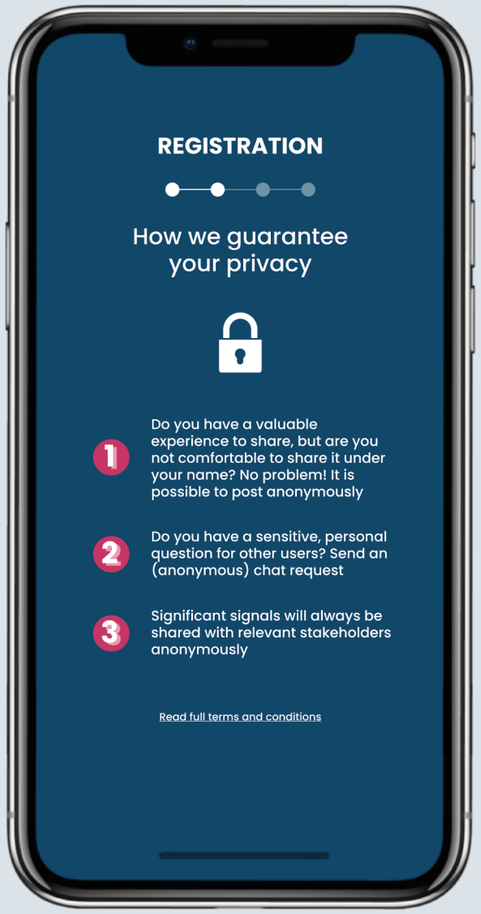
Figure 25. Iterations

Translation function



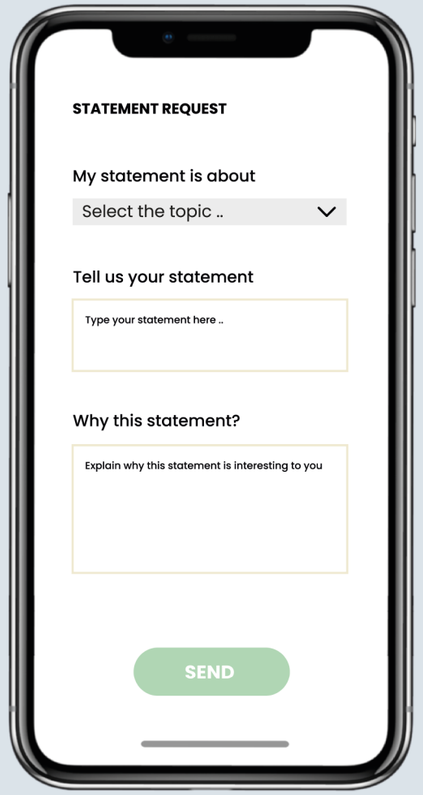


Transparency about the usage of information



Creating a constructive environment and preventing the spread of misinformation

Allow for user input



IMPLEMENTATION

Alterations to promotion strategy

Evaluation of the concept highlighted the importance of a neutral promotion strategy. Initially, employers, branche organisations for employment agencies and temporary workers (e.g. ABU and SNCU) and branche organisations relevant to sectors in the Westland area (e.g. Glastuinbouw Nederland) were considered as interesting parties to promote the app among the target group. But after consideration, this is refrained from. Lastly, two stakeholders are added to the list of potential promoter organisations: embassies (both in the Netherlands and in popular countries of origin) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, migrant Facebook groups are added as an interesting promotion touchpoint.

Alterations to funding strategy

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are proposed as interesting funding parties that are linked to the beginning of the migrant journey rather than the end.

Alterations to facilitating strategy

Evaluation with experts also identified the Foundation for Compliance with the Collective Labour Agreement for Temporary Agency Workers (Stichting Naleving CAO voor Uitzendkrachten (SNCU)) and Stichting Normeren Flexwonen as potential facilitator organisations.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The conclusion of the project is presented by reflecting upon the initial project assignment and outcomes. Next, recommendations for future research based on the project's learning are put forth. The chapter closes with a personal reflection.

8.1 Conclusion
8.2 Limitations
8.3 Recommendations
8.4 Personal reflection

8.1 Conclusion

The initial assignment of this project was formulated as follows: **design an intervention concept that brings about change in the system surrounding the exploitation of labour migrants using systemic design**. This broad objective allowed for the process and focus of the project to emerge over time based on relevant identified insights.

Due to the broad starting point, making sense of the topic and identifying a valuable design direction made up an important part of the project. The project started with a general exploration of the topic of labour exploitation, and as the scope became more narrow over time, subsequent exploration phases became increasingly focused to generate relevant design input.

After initial exploration of the scope of the system, three search areas were identified from the key insights. After exploring these more in-depth and analysing them in an expert focus group session, the direction of empowering labour migrants was chosen. As it quickly became apparent that the term empowerment can be broadly interpreted, the direction was further refined before formulating the design goal.

The final design goal was formulated as follows: **Give labour migrants who (temporarily) work in the Westland a sense of control over their own lives by creating awareness about healthy (in)direct working conditions and potential helplines, through a systemic intervention.**

The design goal is based on the potential mismatch between migrants' expectations and realities. While most migrants come to the Netherlands to build a better future, some face unacceptable situations such as bad working and/or living conditions, inhumane working hours, underpayment, and potentially intimidation or violence. Skilling labour migrants to deal with the inherent risks by giving them the (figurative) tools to take an active role in controlling what happens to them was identified as a relevant response strategy. Within this strategy, the biggest challenge lies in enabling migrants facing an unhealthy situation to manoeuvre out of it. As being able to recognize unhealthy conditions and knowing where and how to get help are key prerequisites on the migrants' part, these were chosen as the focus of the design goal. Increased awareness among migrants allows them to prevent risks more proactively and, if faced with problematic situations, identify them quicker and have the tools to deal with them.

After exploring the world and daily life of labour migrants more in-depth and translating the insights into a migrant journey and some design preconditions, the design phase aimed to translate the insights into an intervention concept. Different ideas were iteratively explored and evaluated, which finally led to the direction of designing a buddy platform to facilitate the exchange of experiences among migrants.

This direction was further detailed into an intervention proposal: the eMpower app. In the app, migrants can exchange experiences based on daily statements about different topics. The interaction among migrants aims to build awareness about healthy (in)direct working conditions in the Netherlands and potential helplines through examples of others' experiences. Via the platform, migrants can share tips, ask questions and explore expert tips suggested by non-expert stakeholders. In addition, the platform stimulates online social interaction among migrants, which could also stimulate offline interaction. The conceptualisation of the idea aimed to create an informative, engaging and accessible intervention. Furthermore, the platform gives facilitating stakeholders the opportunity to reach the migrant population to distribute information, as well as gather relevant insights and signals to respond to.

To communicate and evaluate the concept, a prototype was created. The prototype consists of several interfaces of the application which are presented using a poster format. Evaluation of the concept with the target group and experts resulted in valuable insights about the concept, problem-concept fit and implementation. The evaluations indicated that the concept provides a valuable intervention to empower labour migrants and provided key learnings for further improving and detailing the concept proposition. Lastly, discussion with experts and labour migrants pointed out once more that this intervention should be seen as one of many necessary to systematically improve the situation of labour migrants.

Conclusion

Limitations

8.2

Access to the main stakeholder
A big limitation of the project was the limited access to the main stakeholder in the system surrounding labour migration and labour exploitation: labour migrants. This group was not directly accessible via the personal network of the author, nor that of the Public Prosecution Service. Therefore, different approaches were used to try to get in touch. Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent that this would be more challenging than expected. Due to the isolated living environment, language barrier, and busy schedule of labour migrants, getting in touch at physical places they visit in their everyday life was not successful. Therefore, access to the target group was very dependent on the help of other stakeholders who are in more close contact with migrants.

Eventually, employees of the Municipality of Rotterdam played a key role in finding some migrants to meet up with to evaluate the concept. However, due to the language barrier and available time (in terms of project timeline and availability of participants), the number of migrants spoken to was limited. In addition, the language and cultural barrier also influenced the quality of the sessions to some extent.

The target group was only consulted at the end of the project when evaluating the final direction and intervention concept. This was possible due to new connections built throughout the process of the project. The main sources used to build empathy with the target group throughout the first part of the project were knowledge from experts, personal stories from Bouazza's book 'Arbeidsmigranten in Nederland' (2022), and other online sources (see Appendix 3). The final evaluation sessions with the target group did allow for the main insights to be validated to some extent.

Participant sampling
For different activities during the project, external participants were consulted: stakeholder interviews, the focus group and the evaluation sessions. Due to limited accessibility and availability, it was unavoidably impossible to be fully representative in terms of size and selection of participants within the system of interest. To achieve the most valuable insights, it was attempted to include a mix in terms of participant archetypes on characteristics such as public vs private.

Impact of the intervention
The intervention should be seen as one of many necessary to systematically improve the situation of labour migrants. During the process of defining the design direction, multiple directions were considered. Finally, the choice was made to focus on the role of migrants in dealing with the risk of exploitative situations, but from a systemic perspective, it is naturally more effective to focus on preventing exploitative situations. Whilst this poses a very complex challenge, it should still be seen as the main objective.

Conclusion

Recommendations

8.3

Evaluating with the target group
As discussed, access to the target group during the project was limited. Therefore, big steps should still be made on evaluating the concept with potential users. This could lead to more valuable insights for the improvement of the concept. Access to the target group should be used to evaluate the intervention's impact, practical aspects of the app, and the implementation strategy.

First of all, the interest in the platform among migrants should be further validated. As there currently already exist platforms where migrants can get in touch, it is recommended to research the current interaction streams among migrants more extensively. These insights about the current exchange of experiences should be used to improve the concept and value proposition. Pilot tests with the target group should be used to identify their interest and motivation to (not) participate in the platform.

Furthermore, it is important to have a sound validation of users' willingness to share experiences as the platform is built around the idea of users' mutual interdependence. Further evaluation of this aspect is therefore crucial. It is suggested to use an action-based evaluation strategy rather than the discussion format used during this project. Asking the participants to actively use a prototype will likely lead to more valuable insights about their willingness and interest to (not) share experiences versus only asking them.

Next to the evaluation of users' interest in exchanging experiences, pilot tests with the target group should point out in what way interaction on the platform affects users' awareness of healthy conditions and helplines, and whether this stimulates behavioural change over time.

As stimulating migrants to use the app is crucial to achieve the intended impact, it would be valuable to gather more feedback from the target group on effective promotion strategies. Insights from the target group should be used to identify the most important added value for users to communicate, as well as interesting promotion stakeholders and touchpoints.

In addition, insights from the target group should be used to gain insight into the most relevant topics.

For future evaluations, it is important to guarantee a diverse group of interviewees in terms of personal background, country of origin, and period in the Netherlands. In addition, it is suggested to evaluate with the target group in their first language and with a cultural mediator.

Detailing the app
The proposed intervention should be considered as a concept that still requires further detailing and testing. In terms of user interaction aspects, further expert consultation and target group evaluation should give insight into improvements to create a collaborative and constructive environment. As discussed earlier, it is crucial to look more into stimulating users to exchange experiences in future iterations. In addition, it should be considered what can be done to prevent the platform from becoming a place for complaints. Also, the branding and visual design of the app should be further detailed.

In terms of technical feasibility, evaluation of the app's functionalities should give insight into the final information architecture. This then makes it possible to discuss its development and maintenance with a platform developer. In addition, as the importance of offering the app in multiple languages was repeatedly pointed out during the evaluation, it is important to look into how to technically facilitate this, for example by using artificial intelligence.

Iterating the implementation plan
Another important aspect of the concept that requires more development is the proposed implementation plan. The proposed structure and suggested stakeholders should be seen as a starting point for future iterations.

Promotors
Evaluation with the target group should identify the most effective promotion strategies and related stakeholders.

Funder

The funding structure needs further detailing as the required financial investments are largely dependent on the final details of the concept such as the required functionalities of the app and the scale of implementation. In addition, interest among the proposed financing stakeholders should be evaluated. Since the proposed financing stakeholders are all governmental organisations, it is possible to explore a collaborative funding structure between different parties who benefit from the implementation of the concept.

Facilitators

Big steps are still required in terms of detailing the facilitator role. To maximise the impact of the platform it is crucial to identify relevant facilitators, both in terms of offering valuable knowledge to users as well as creating adequate follow-up to signals on the platform. Further insight into topics relevant to the target group will help evaluate the proposed facilitator organisations on relevancy. In addition, the scale of the platform should be further detailed to identify relevant facilitators, for example, in terms of involving individual municipalities and/or the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (*Vereniging Nederlands Gemeenten*).

Motivating facilitator organisations to join the platform and actively participate is the next step for which it is important to further detail (personalised) value propositions. It should be clearly communicated that the facilitator role not only serves the users but also provides the unique opportunity to reach the migrant population and gather insight about them. As it was not possible to discuss the concept with all proposed facilitator organisations, this is an important next step.

Lastly, it is important to detail the collaboration structure, responsibilities, and required involvement of the facilitator role. As the role will be a shared effort of multiple organisations, it is considered valuable to research the option of having one person in charge of keeping the general overview. This person could be the one to select daily statements, manage the knowledge base and community overview, and ask the other stakeholders for input for the expert tips. In addition, a suitable structure for identifying, sharing, and responding to signals should be further detailed with the involved organisations. The following principles for effective learning and collaboration in consortia, based on learnings in climate projects, could be used as a starting point in the further detailing of the facilitator role (Koelle et al., 2019):

1. Build on existing efforts
2. Be clear on desired impact
3. Provide sufficient time and flexibility for concept development
4. Early discussions on joint vision, expectations, and clear responsibilities are the basis for effective engagement
5. Build trust and strong relationships
6. Address diversity in the consortium by establishing a shared and transparent governance structure
7. Maintain motivation, connection, and team spirit
8. Create and implement appropriate mechanisms for reflection, learning, and course correction

Conclusion

Personal reflection

8.4

My graduation has been a project of many firsts: getting in touch with the phenomenon of labour exploitation, designing for a social issue, applying systemic design, designing at a governmental organisation, and last but not least doing a big project individually. All of these factors have made my graduation an educational experience and I am very grateful for my learnings and explorations along the way.

Working on a topic that I personally had no experience with was an educational experience. It forced me to build an understanding of the topic by carefully collecting puzzle pieces from different sources throughout the surrounding system. A factor that made this more challenging was the limited access to the target group. Whereas talking to the target group normally makes up an important part of design projects, I had to design for a group that I couldn't easily talk to. I had to come up with methods to build empathy from a distance, which taught me to explore outside-of-the-box methods to gather insights about my target group.

Other main learning experiences are those related to structuring my design process. Throughout the first weeks, I quickly became aware of the complexity of the phenomenon of labour exploitation. After an optimistic start with many research questions and identified information sources, I quickly realised that I could spend months exploring the topic. This taught me the importance of making decisions and setting boundaries to drive the process. The same goes for defining the final design direction. I had a lot of freedom in navigating the design direction and outcomes, which allowed me to identify the most impactful path, but also created uncertainty. As I am naturally a very organised and punctual person, the project was therefore a good lesson in flexibility. I learned more about the balance between actively directing and intuitively trusting the process, whilst managing my own project timeline and the schedules of the stakeholders involved.

As for the systemic approach I chose to apply, I found the holistic mindset of unravelling phenomena through the lens of exploring elements, interactions, and objectives very helpful. It stimulated my ability to look at the topic from different perspectives to be able to identify opportunities for change. I particularly enjoyed the exploration of the three search areas and think the systemic approach forced me to structurize my insights into a visual form. However, it was also challenging to make sense of all available resources, tools, and methods on systemic design when applying it for the first time in such a big project.

Topic-wise my graduation project has been a big eye-opener. What I had read about labour exploitation in the news before starting my project turned out to be only the tip of the iceberg. Researching the topic and talking to experts revealed the scale and severity of labour exploitation and other forms of unhealthy (in)direct working conditions in the Netherlands. It showed me the 'parallel reality' that is much closer to home than I think most people are aware of. Knowing about the working conditions of migrants made me reflect on my own lifestyle and instantly revealed an important issue: the limited impact as an individual consumer. Even if you know the stories of how people are treated in some sectors, you still feel powerless due to the lack of transparency that hinders the option to make a better choice. Big changes in the system are needed, which takes time and has its figurative and literal costs. My project also showed me the dedication of some individual stakeholders to make a positive change by helping those affected, raising awareness, and stimulating changes in the system. I hope the inspiring work of these individuals creates a movement towards future change.

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Pictures

Almost all pictures in this thesis are sourced from Unsplash.com, these are marked with an asterisk*.

Picture pages

(In order of appearance)

Greenhouse with tomatoes -Markus Spiske *

Flowers - Kwang Mathurosemontri *

Construction site - Jacek Dylag *

Lady Justice statue - Tingey Injury Law Firm *

Greenhouse - Erwan Hesry *

Truck - Sven Brandsma *

Shopping carts - Gabrielle Ribeiro *

iPhone mock-up - Sarah Dorweiler *

Journey

(From left to right)

Building - Lorenz Hoffmann *

Truck - Sven Brandsma *

RNI desk - Website of the municipality of Westland

Contracts - Gabrielle Henderson *

Housing - Anton Murygin *

Construction worker - Guilherme Cunha *

Stressed man - Christian Erfurt *

Conversation - LinkedIn Sales Solutions *

Prototype

Picture Lukasz - Irene Strong *

Picture Petra - Freestocks *

Picture Ludo - Ludovic Migneault *

Picture Jakub - Irene Strong *

Visuals

Visuals in this thesis have been created with resources from thenounproject.com, storyset.com and freepik.com.