Process renewal in the immigration chain:
Process innovation inspired by GE's workout

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Introduction
Due to the geopolitical situation, the changing international asylum policy, crises and natural disasters, the influx of asylum seekers into the Netherlands is constantly changing in terms of composition and size. If it is not possible to respond adequately to these fluctuations, problems such as a lack of capacity in reception and backlogs in the processing of asylum applications may arise. In order to be able to respond adequately to these fluctuations, flexibility is needed within the asylum process. This requires capacity and reception locations that can be scaled up and down sufficiently, as well as an asylum process that is able to respond flexibly to the current influx of asylum seekers.

The above ambition requires close cooperation and direction between the various organizations working within the immigration chain. How do you jointly ensure that 'the asylum company' is able to respond flexibly to these changes? The Galan Group, together with the various organizations, was allowed to work on this question and, using the workout method, worked on a redesign of a number of sub-processes within the asylum process.
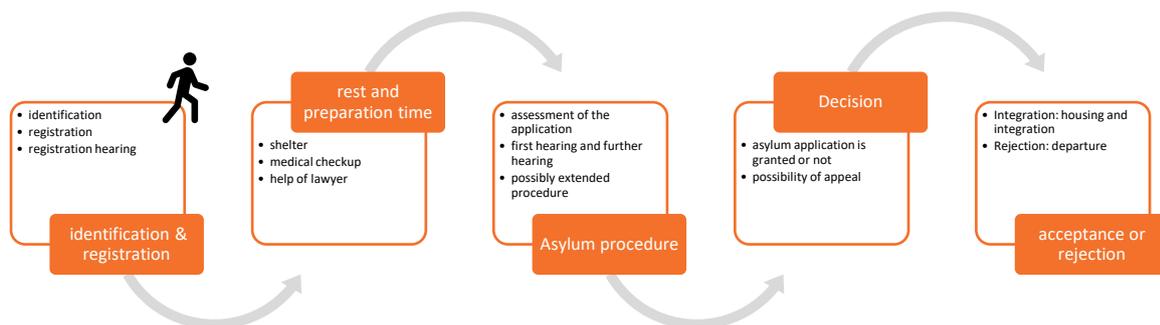

Figure 1 Brief outline of the asylum process (Source: IND)

The asylum process as a process-chain
The asylum process consists of a number of phases (see Figure 1) in which the implementation is divided among various organizations (see box). The term 'immigration chain' suggests a tight and logical organization of systems and processes. In practice, however, the chain as a whole also complies well with the classification of 'loosely coupled systems' as described by Karl Weick. In this concept every organization has its own dynamics and work process. Goals are not always clear and interests do not always run parallel. Despite the fact that the importance of coordination and cooperation is recognized, in practice it is difficult to achieve effective coordination and direction. Especially when (new) problems or risks emerge, a first reflex often is to focus on your own organization and to solve your own problems first. This is a natural reaction. Because of the large dependencies in the chain, this often results in new bottlenecks. Therefore, when preparing and implementing new measures within the processes it is essential to work and to think chain-wide.

The approach: workout method

The redesign started with the first step in the asylum process, which is the identification and registration process by the police (Figure 1). The aim was to improve the quality of the process, to increase flexibility and to stimulate learning and development.

The police emphatically gave us space to discuss all and everything and to come up with a new process design. In this process we wanted to work with directly involved professionals from the work floor, complemented with other experts on the asylum process. We worked according to the 'workout method' we have often applied. This approach is inspired by the 'GE Workout' which originates from the American company General Electric and helps to renew existing processes, prioritize initiatives, speed up decision-making and implementation, develop visible and measurable improvements and build ownership and empowerment among the employees involved. The following principles make the workout method suitable for solving complex issues. The principles are summarized as follows:

1. 'Grassroot solutions': The employees who are most involved with the problem to be solved will be jointly responsible for executing the developmental assignment. During the redesign phase, we therefore worked with multidisciplinary teams of people directly involved from the various organizations in the chain.

2. Support of top management and a clear, specific assignment. In the first phase the national program director Immigration & Migration Crime of the police commissioned the assignment and together we made this assignment specific and then it was established. In addition, he ensured that sufficient capacity would be reserved to work on the redesign. He also acted as an ambassador and 'heat shield' to the surrounding area. In later phases the assignment was broadened, and the program director of the program Flexibilization Asylum fulfilled this role, together with a line of directors of the chain partners who acted as a steering committee.

3. 'All that will emerge, we will actually do.' It is important that an assignment like this does not get bogged down in yet another workgroup that writes a more or less noncommittal report with theoretical recommendations. To

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The main organizations in the asylum process.

The identification and registration of asylum seekers is carried out by the Police and the KMar, who also have a responsibility in the area of national security, human trafficking and human smuggling.

The IND is responsible for processing asylum applications and deciding whether or not to grant someone a permit to stay in the Netherlands.

COA takes care of the reception and day care of asylum seekers and offers various reception modalities for this purpose.

DT&V is the Repatriation and Departure Service, responsible for ensuring that foreign nationals return to their country of origin when the application is rejected. Municipalities are responsible for facilitating housing and integration if a permit has been issued.

Various other (social) partners are active in the implementation of the asylum process, such as DJI when it concerns immigration detention, Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland for the guidance of asylum seekers and NIDOS, which is responsible for the task of guardianship of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers.

The Ministry of Justice and Security is responsible for the migration policy and for managing the immigration chain. The person that is politically responsible is the State Secretary of Justice and Security.

prevent this, in principle the top management promises that the solution they come up with will also be implemented. Provided, of course, that the assignment has been carried out within the frameworks and that there is sufficient 'proof' that it works. This requires not only a design, but also a solution that has been implemented and tested in practice and that meets the requirements.

In the redesign we carried out, we rearranged the identification process and introduced a chain-wide triage and control point at the beginning of the process. This makes it possible to differentiate the influx of asylum seekers to e.g. complex and simple cases. It also makes it possible to go from a tight and linear process to a more cyclic one, in order to make corrections and adjustments possible while it will not lead to longer procedures.

4. An iterative development process with prototyping and experiments. In a complex environment with many dependencies like that of the chain of immigrants, an analysis does not result one on one in a design of the perfect solution. A solution like this is created step by step by doing multiple experiments, testing, evaluating and adjusting the solution on the basis of an analysis and a first design. This is called an iterative process. That is why we have worked in several rounds towards the redesign as outlined above. These rounds consisted of analysis, redesign, experiment and evaluation.

5. Visible, measurable results and reports. In order to realize the support of the top (and the current management), 'proof' is needed that the redesign works. Transparent reporting was essential to meet these conditions. This was even more important given the political relevance of the proposed solutions. Reports and designs were shared and discussed from the operational level up to the level of the responsible Secretary of State. For each subsequent phase, support was needed from all implementing organizations.

So we had to handle the operational reality, direct the interplay in the chain as well as attend to the political reality. By providing an evaluation of each iteration, the top management was able to monitor progress and to commission specifically for the next phase.

The workout method consists of a number of steps that are iteratively completed with the project team (see Figure 2) and that make the complexity manageable. This step-by-step approach ensures a well-founded working method from analysis to experimentation and a realistic and working practice. Currently, a number of parts of the redesign are being implemented with the support of all chain partners and secured in the regular working methods and processes.
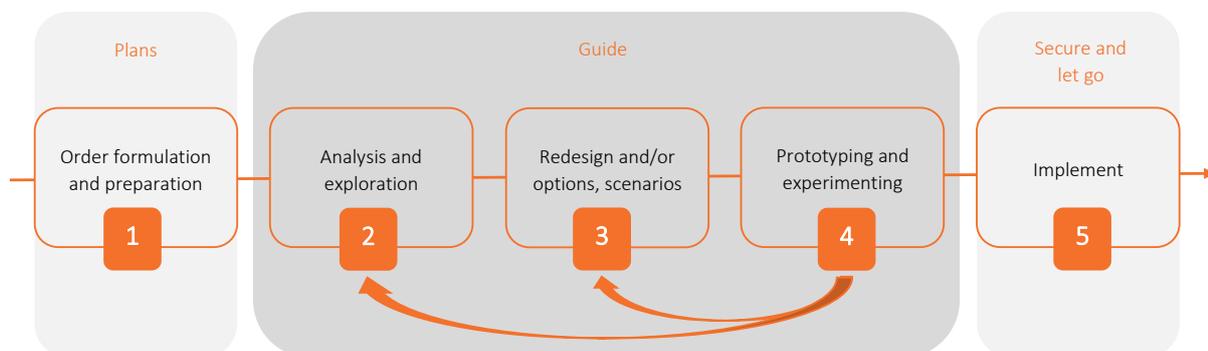
Phases in the workout mehod

Figure 2 Phases in the workout method