



## Justice and Home Affairs Committee

### Corrected oral evidence: The Life in the UK Test

Tuesday 5 April 2022

10 am

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Members present: Baroness Hamwee (The Chair); Lord Blunkett; Baroness Chakrabarti; Lord Dholakia; Baroness Hallett; Lord Hunt of Wirral; Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws; Baroness Primarolo; Lord Ricketts; Baroness Sanderson of Welton; Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia.

Evidence Session No. 2

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Questions 10 - 19

#### Witnesses

I: Prof. dr. Ricky van Oers, Professor of Immigrant Integration and Law, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences; Dr Djordje Sredanovic, GERME Department, Université libre de Bruxelles; Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop, Senior Researcher and Lecturer in Government and Policy Research, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg.

#### USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on [www.parliamentlive.tv](http://www.parliamentlive.tv).

## Examination of witnesses

Prof dr Ricky van Oers, Dr Djordje Sredanovic and Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop.

**Q10 The Chair:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to a meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Committee in the House of Lords for an evidence session related to our inquiry on the Life in the UK Test. I am delighted to welcome three witnesses who will give us an international perspective and who are online with us, as are some of our members. We have apologies from Baroness Pidding.

In countries where prospective citizens are expected to demonstrate their civic knowledge, and here we are looking for, according to the legislation, “sufficient knowledge”, how is that assessed—test, interview, course or anything else? Perhaps each of you could give details of what you are aware of through your work.

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** Thank you for the invitation to speak at this evidence session. I will start with the country I am living in, the Netherlands. There is an integration requirement for naturalisation, and applicants can fulfil that if they pass a naturalisation test or they can present a Dutch diploma of high school level or higher. The naturalisation test is currently similar to the integration examination, which newcomers with an obligation under the Integration Act need to pass, and this examination is also a requirement for permanent residents.

A knowledge of society test is part of this integration examination, as are modules on the employment market and the participation trajectory, which consists of following a course on Dutch values and signing a declaration of participation. The examination consists of four language tests, speaking, listening, reading and writing Dutch at level A2. The costs of the exam amount to €290 in total. The civic part, the knowledge of society test, is a multiple choice test that is taken on a computer. The test questions are not published. Two mock tests are published on the official government website. For the rest, the content of the test is kept secret.

Immigrants who want to fulfil the requirements for naturalisation, especially the knowledge requirements, can prepare for this by following a course. Participation in this course is not obliged. The only obligation is to pass this test. The organisation of the course has been left to the market, to commercial parties, so there is no official involvement of the Government in that respect. There is only a mechanism of quality control that has been set up. Immigrants have to find a course that will best suit them to prepare for this test themselves, but, since the beginning of 2022, those with an obligation to integrate under the Integration Act will receive support from the local government in that respect.

Immigrants have to pay for the courses and the test themselves. The only exception applies to those with an asylum-related residence permit, who have an obligation to integrate under the Integration Act. The Government pay for the courses and the test for them, but all others will have to pay for the courses and the test themselves. The average amount is estimated at between €3,000 and €4,000. The average amount of the loan which is taken by immigrants to fulfil their integration obligation under the Integration Act is €3,600. The length of the course, on average,

is one year, but, depending on your background, this may take longer, so the lower someone's levels of skills at the start, the longer it will take and the more they will have to invest to reach the level required. In that sense, the greatest burden, at least in terms of time and money, is placed on the weakest's shoulders.

To illustrate this, of all the immigrants with an obligation to integrate, which started in 2017, four years later, 20% still had not reached the level required, so they did not fulfil their integration obligation under the Integration Act, nor can they apply for permanent residence or naturalisation, even though they might fulfil all other requirements for naturalisation or permanent residence. In terms of money, in 2021, 3,500 asylum seekers or those with an asylum-related residence permit had taken out a loan of €10,000 without having fulfilled their integration obligations, so they spent €10,000 to prepare for the test without having succeeded in passing it and, hence, without having fulfilled their integration obligation.

There are possibilities to get some allowance for childcare for those with children in order to be able to follow courses. Whether this allowance is granted will depend on whether the school where the courses are followed has been acknowledged by the Government. The allowance will be awarded only to those with an integration obligation, so not to those who are interested in passing this test because they want to apply for naturalisation or permanent residence without having an integration obligation under the Integration Act. Some municipalities will pay the cost for travel to and from the language schools, but not all of them. It depends on where you are living in the Netherlands.

There is a brief overview of the requirements in the Netherlands. I have some information on Germany as well, but it might be better to let Elisabeth elaborate on the German perspective. I can also tell you something about the Norwegian requirements as I am partly based in Norway.

**The Chair:** Perhaps we can weave those into responses to other questions.

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** Perfect, yes.

**The Chair:** I am sure we will come back to what integration obligations are and how they are tested. Let me move to Elisabeth Badenhoop. Would you like to start us off from your perspective and your experience?

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** Yes, I can speak about the German case. In Germany, there has been a civic knowledge requirement, both for naturalisation and for permanent residence, since 2004. In the German Nationality Act, it is stipulated that applicants must demonstrate "knowledge of the legal system, society and living conditions in Germany". This knowledge is assessed through two main mechanisms. There is the naturalisation test, which was introduced in 2008, and a so-called integration course, which is concluded by what is called the "Life in Germany" test. The two tests are actually the same. They ask the same questions, so, when, during the course of the session, I refer to the German test, I mean both tests. These are two equal avenues to citizenship.

Let me first give you some details about the test, i.e., the citizenship test or "Life in Germany" test. You see already from the wording that it is similar to the British case, the Life in the UK Test, but there are some significant differences. As in the UK and, from what I heard, the Netherlands, it is a multiple choice test that consists of 33 questions, 17 of which must be answered correctly within 60 minutes, so about 56% of the questions must be answered correctly. In the UK, the hurdle is a little higher. It is 18 out of 24 questions that must be passed within 45 minutes.

The test in Germany is regulated by law. There is a specific naturalisation test regulation that also includes the entire catalogue of all 300 questions. These are the general questions, and, in addition, there are 160 state-specific questions relating to each of the 16 states or "Länder". All these questions are published, not just in this law but also online, free of charge, by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The German abbreviation is BAMF, so I refer to the BAMF. The BAMF offers an online test centre which it is a self-assessment tool that anybody can access. You can click through the entire question catalogue, and they also offer a sample test. It shows you the correct answers and gives you some background information on why they are correct.

This seems to be a key and unique feature of the German case compared to the British and the Dutch cases, in that all actual test questions are published and have always been published in law and online. Taking the test costs €25, and the test can be taken repeatedly, indefinitely, although the pass rate is actually very high with more than 90% compared to around 70% in the UK. The test can be taken at several hundred local test centres across Germany. The test is then sent to the BAMF in Nuremberg, which marks all the tests and issues the test certificates, so it is regulated and administered at a central federal level. You can take a test in pretty much every major city.

The test itself is mandatory for all citizenship applicants in Germany except when you can demonstrate a German school or university degree. There are also exemptions for those with a physical or mental impairment or due to old age.

Now, the course that I mentioned, the second option, the integration course, consists of two main elements. It is basically a language course, with 600 hours of language learning, followed by a so-called orientation course, which is another 100 hours where you cover civic knowledge. The civic knowledge is then assessed through the "Life in Germany" test at the very end. You would normally take such an integration course for six months or longer. There is a language exam after the language course and then the "Life in Germany" test at the end of the orientation course.

What is also interesting is that, in the German case, they offer specialised courses targeted at different audiences, for example for women only, for parents and young adults, as well as for those who are illiterate or have little literacy skills. These courses may then be longer. There are also fast-track courses for people who already have a certain level of language skills. The group size is usually 20 to a

maximum of 25 participants. As of January 2022, there is also childcare support, so there are special integration courses with childcare. They offer different options, so either there is childcare provided at the local course centre or there is funding available if you already have somebody looking after your child at home. This is for people who have children who do not yet go to school and who are waiting to get a place at nursery.

The course is a different model. It is offered, so it is voluntary. It is actually an entitlement for newly arrived migrants. Since 2005, most of them have an entitlement to take such a course. Some may be required either by the local foreigner authorities in order to gain a certain residence title or by the employment agencies. The law contains an element of discretion. If the authorities consider somebody to be, as it is called in the law, “unable to communicate in German at least in a basic manner”, or if they are deemed to be “in special need of integration”, migrants may also be required to take such a course. This requirement is stipulated by the Residence Act, but the course is really seen as an offer or an entitlement, and this is also due to the way it is regulated and funded. The regulation and funding seem to be the key differences compared to the other countries.

In Germany, there is public funding for these integration courses. It works through co-funding. There is public funding and individual funding by the individual migrant, so the calculation is this. Nowadays, a participant pays €2.20 per hour, so, for a whole course of those 700 hours, it amounts to €1,540 in total. This is supposed to cover half of the costs of the actual administration and implementation of the course. The other half is covered by the state.

Now, there is an incentive, for migrants to successfully complete the course in time. If they do, they can get 50% of those costs reimbursed afterwards, in which case the individual costs for the course are only €770 in total. There is also the option to apply for transport costs, like in the Netherlands. The course, like the test, is regulated by law and is administered at the federal level by the BAMF, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, which certifies all the local course and test centres. It is responsible for the accreditation of the course teachers, content and curricula et cetera, but the implementation is done by local language colleges and centres, both public and private. You have the option to repeat the course, and this is also funded if you can demonstrate regular attendance.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. I get the impression from all that that Germany wants people to pass and be integrated. Shall we move to Brussels and Djordje Sredanovic?

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** Thank you very much for the invitation. I will perhaps present the two countries I am familiar with, which are Belgium and Italy. Belgium does not have a test, strictly speaking, for citizenship. It has requirements of economic, social and linguistic integration. However, there are several ways to prove those requirements. For example, if the applicant has five years of residence

and, in these five years, he or she has been continuously in employment, education or training, this is automatically considered to fulfil all three requirements of linguistic, social and economic integration. If this is not the case, one of the options is to take an integration course, which can cover the social and linguistic integration requirements.

There are other options, so where people have either a Belgian degree in one of the three national languages, or a degree in one of the three national languages obtained elsewhere in the European Union, this counts as proof of linguistic integration. One of the options to prove linguistic integration is to undergo the standard type of language test that is usually used by Belgian citizens to prove competence in one of the three national languages. There are several ways, but there is no test, strictly speaking, and there is no component of civic knowledge. There is a need to prove integration but no specific need to prove knowledge of Belgian culture, institutions and laws.

Along with this, however, at this point, the whole Belgian territory has mandatory integration courses for most newcomers. European citizens are exempt, as are some assimilated profiles. For example, Turkish workers and their families are always exempt from this requirement. The situation is quite complex because there are actually five different integration policies in Belgium. There is the Dutch-speaking Flemish policy, the French-speaking Walloon policy, the policy of the German-speaking community and the two different policies in the Brussels region for the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking communities. Generally, in all cases, you have a mandatory course in language and a mandatory course of actual "citizenship", which is rights, duties and the workings of the Belgian institutions.

There is a separate option for citizenship for those who have at least 10 years of residence in Belgium. In this case, the requirements are more limited. The applicant still has to prove knowledge of one of the three national languages, but the economic and social integration requirements are not applied. The applicant has to prove participation in the life of the community, which usually takes the form of writing a letter discussing their economic activity, volunteering or any other activities that do not reach the requirements for the five years but can prove that the applicant is active within the local community.

This is Belgium. Belgium is extremely complex because of the internal differences in languages. I can give more detail on this, but, generally speaking, there are no formal tests. The integration courses are managed, usually, by partnerships between local authorities and local NGOs, but the actual courses are then contracted either to local associations or to public institutions, which, however, are regulated by private law. By the way, there is no requirement to fulfil integration for settlement, so this is excluded.

As for Italy, until recently, Italy had basically no requirement at all in terms of proving a knowledge of the language, culture or institutions for citizenship. The only way in which this was tested is regulated by quite an obscure ministerial circular

that was published in the 1990s, which entails that the integration level of the applicant should be proved by way of an interview, but this, to my knowledge, is not done uniformly across the national territory.

The new measure, introduced a few years ago, specifies that, if the applicant for citizenship has not already passed a language test or requirement before, they need to prove a B1 level of language competence. This can be obtained either by gaining a degree or by passing a test that is administered mainly by the two universities for foreigners in Italy and the Società Dante Alighieri, which is the equivalent of the Alliance Française, so it is the public institution that promotes the language in Italy and abroad.

Again, Italy has no specific test for citizenship. There is a test of language for settlement, and there is a mandatory integration requirement for those obtaining the first legal status longer than a year in Italy. This includes the fact that, within two to three years from the obtention of the first legal status, the applicant has to prove competence in the language, usually by completing a course that is offered in the network of what once were the schools for adult education, and to attend a course of civic knowledge and pass a test of civic knowledge linked to this course.

Having done some comparative work in Europe, I can say that, at the moment, there are four countries in Europe that have no requirements whatsoever of culture, language and so on for citizenship. These are Ireland, Sweden, Serbia and Cyprus. If you want, I can give some details about France, which is not a country in which I have worked directly, but it is a country from which we have some literature that helps understand the situation.

**The Chair:** Perhaps we can come back to those as examples if they are relevant in the rest of the session. We only have another hour. I quite deliberately allowed the answer to the first question to be detailed because we get a good flavour of what is happening in your three main countries and others, but we are going to have to gallop along a bit more, I am afraid, for the rest of it.

Q11 **Baroness Primarolo:** Thank you very much and good morning. You have given very full answers and covered some of the points I wanted to address. It is quite a short question that I want to ask you to try to draw out the differences. This is with regard to who is usually expected to take the test or the alternative test. Are prospective permanent residents expected to take the same test as those applying for citizenship? Could you go through each one, say yes or no, and tell us the difference? Could you then say whether you think they should be taking the same test regardless of their reason for applying?

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** Thank you for your very interesting question. I will try to keep it as short as possible. In the Netherlands, the language and integration requirements for citizenship are currently similar to those that apply for a permanent residence permit, so there is no difference. In fact, those newcomers with an integration obligation not applying for either status are also obliged to pass this examination.

I would like to focus on what I call the process of path dependency, which eventually led to the introduction of a formalised test for citizenship. This process also occurred in Germany and in other countries that have, in the last 20 years, introduced formalised tests for immigrants, notably in a framework of citizenship.

In the Netherlands, a citizenship test was introduced in 2003, and this test was preceded by the introduction of a test for newcomers in 1998. According to some politicians, it was the world turned upside down that more was expected from newcomers than from future Dutch nationals. The introduction of the citizenship test, hence, is the result of a process of path dependency. A test introduced in the framework of another Act directed at the integration of newcomers exerted an upward pressure on the level required for naturalisation. Once introduced, the requirements, typically, are only made stricter. A recent example: the coalition Government in the Netherlands, who have been installed recently, have announced plans to raise the language level required for naturalisation from A2 to B1 to make a difference between the different stages in the integration process. Naturalisation is seen as the crown or the finalisation of a completed integration, hence the requirements should be higher than those for permanent residence according to proponents of increasing the requirements for citizenship.

This process of path dependency also occurred in Germany. To observe a gradual rise in integration policy, a language requirement and a knowledge of society test were introduced for citizenship after more or less similar requirements were introduced for permanent residency. I would like to stress that, guided by this process of path dependency, politicians in the Netherlands and Germany, but also in other countries, have failed to take account of the consequences that striving for higher levels of knowledge and skills would entail.

Past experience with formalised tests has shown that considerable parts of the immigrant population did not manage to pass these tests. After the introduction of citizenship tests, numbers of naturalisations, indeed, diminished in the Netherlands. They have even halved since the formalisation of the integration requirements for citizenship in 2003. The tests form barriers to some categories of immigrants. From experience with formalised language and knowledge of society tests in the framework of other acts directed at the integration of immigrants, politicians in the Netherlands and in Germany knowingly accepted that these effects would occur in the framework of naturalisation and, in some cases, even welcomed this selective effect. I know also that, in the UK, after the introduction of knowledge requirements for citizenship, permanent residence and indefinite leave to remain, the goal of managing migration was ascribed to these requirements after their entry into force, so they are actually used not necessarily to promote integration but also to manage migration.

If you ask whether the requirements for citizenship should be higher than those for permanent residence, the main point that I would like to make is that they lead to exclusion. The fact that in some countries the level required for naturalisation is higher than that required for permanent residency, can be explained by the process

of path dependency: once a decision has been taken to present formalised tests, the requirements are only made stricter. However, as a consequence, the selective effect that occurs will only increase.

**Baroness Primarolo:** Does either of the other two witnesses want to comment on that point? There seems to be a divergence occurring. The question is whether they should both take the same test or whether the sequence of tests finalising in citizenship should be where we end. In the UK, it is the same test.

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** Since you asked for a short answer to this clear question, on the first part about who is usually expected to take the test, in Germany, like I said, it is mandatory for anybody who is applying for citizenship unless they have a school or university degree or an exemption due to disability or age.

Permanent residents are encouraged and entitled to take the tests, and they gain an advantage if they do the course and take the test in their early phase of arrival and settlement, as they can use the test later when they apply for citizenship, so they do not have to do it again. This is another form of incentive. It also provides some kind of prospect; it is not just for those immediate benefits of gaining a residence permit or permanent residence, but you can utilise it again later for the citizenship application.

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** In Belgium, as I mentioned, there is no test. People above 65 are entirely exempt from integration requirements, as are people with specific disabilities. In Italy, the situation is quite paradoxical. The highest requirements are for those obtaining the first legal status, and the consequences are much more severe. If someone fails to fulfil the integration requirements, they can be, theoretically, expelled after three years, whereas people advancing in the legal status, even if they fail to pass a language test or do not have a different proof of language, can still fall back on the previous status.

There are no exemptions for citizenship. There are exemptions specifically for what are considered highly qualified workers, which include posted workers and researchers. Specifically diplomats and journalists are exempt for the integration requirement that is applied to anybody else except, again, EU citizens, when they apply for the first status.

Yes, generally, there are issues with introducing tests. A part of the population is impacted disproportionately by the difficulty of passing the test. Even if you have tests for permanent residence of a lesser level than for citizenship, this can create significant problems that hold part of the migrant population continuously back from the potential to settle and have a life that is not conditioned by the sequence of short-term leaves to stay in the country. There can be discussions about whether we need proof or requirements for citizenship, but there are significant reasons not to have integration requirements for settlement.

Q12 **Baroness Chakrabarti:** My question is about regional variations within states. Are there any states where the test or other requirement is different on a regional

basis? If there are, in such cases, how does this affect, for example, the public perception of the validity and relevance of the test?

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** I will focus on the Dutch situation. Actually, in the Netherlands but also in Germany — and Elisabeth can say a bit more about that, I presume — uniformity in the application of the requirement to have sufficient knowledge of language and society for naturalisation has been an important argument put forward by proponents of formalised tests. A divergent application of the integration requirements for naturalisation existed prior to the introduction of these citizenship tests.

With the introduction of formalised citizenship tests, regional differences more or less belong to the past, even though some details in the application will still exist. Uniformisation and standardisation was one of the main arguments used in these countries to introduce formalised citizenship tests. The main reason was that the divergent application that used to exist when local officials would check in an informal interview whether somebody had sufficiently integrated to become a citizen led to inequalities, because whether you would be able to naturalise depended a lot on which local official interviewed you. In some municipalities in the Netherlands, you would be required to read a little bit of an article from a newspaper, whereas, in another municipality, it would suffice if you were able to fill out the application form independently.

To put a stop to these differences, to increase equality between naturalisation applicants, it was decided to formalise the requirements. However, formalisation of the requirements also led to an increase in the level required and fewer possibilities to take into account individual circumstances to prevent disproportionate harshness. Paradoxically, uniformisation and standardisation of the requirements has increased, not diminished, inequality. A formalised test presents a barrier for certain categories of immigrants to be able to naturalise, for instance where they cannot pass it because of having had little prior schooling, or because of their high age. In the Netherlands, there is no exemption because of age. If you are 65 or over, you still have to pass the test.

There are, in the Netherlands, no more regional differences. I think, in Germany also, regional differences more or less belong to the past after the requirements were standardised. Compared to the past, there is more inequality because, under the old requirements, when local officials would test whether somebody had sufficiently integrated, this integration requirement hardly ever led to a denial of a naturalisation application, whereas now many people struggle to pass this formalised test.

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** The German case is an example that shows that centralisation, formalisation and standardisation of the test itself makes it less exclusionary compared to the previous situation. Today, the test is the same across Germany. It is a federal test administered uniformly across the 16 states since 2008. There are very few minor regional differences. Out of those 33 test questions, three at the very end consider just the specific state where you live, and this is formal

knowledge for example, of the crest, the flag or the capital city of that particular state.

The standardisation is the result of a process. In 2006, two states rushed ahead with different models that gave rise to political debate and eventually led to the introduction of this federal test. First, Baden-Württemberg, in 2006, introduced an interview guide that included questions on attitudes towards terrorism, homosexuality and gender equality. It was applied only to citizenship applicants from Muslim countries. Subsequently, it was highly criticised not just by Muslim organisations but also by the Green Party and the Social Democrats for being discriminatory and incompatible with the German Basic Law and, basically, just an attitude check subject to appeal.

Hesse as a second state rushed after and introduced a similar interview guide. They introduced only questions and no answers, which shows how contingent and half-baked the whole process was. It was not a clear assessment. The questions were misleading and ill formulated. Again, this was criticised and, consequently, the Interior Ministers of the 16 states agreed on introducing a federal test with standardised questions across Germany, which then came into force in 2008. However, the interview guide in Baden-Württemberg was still in place and in force. It was used until 2011 when the Green and Social Democrat Government abolished it.

The German case is this an example which demonstrates that agreeing on standardised questions across the whole country can make the process less contingent, less discriminatory or arbitrary than it previously was.

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** In Belgium, there are different integration policies across the country, which means that, if an applicant tries to prove the integration requirements for citizenship through an integration course, the kind of requirement within the course can be quite different. The Flemish community has recently voted for an obligation not only of attendance of the course but of results, so reaching a certain competence. Also, Belgium has a decentralised procedure for evaluating applications for nationality that entail differences in local interpretations of law, which means that the same kind of applicant from two different areas of Belgium can end up being refused or accepted for nationality depending on the local interpretation of the law by the magistrates.

In Italy, there is the issue of the integration interview, which, however, is not really something we have data on. This is at the level of each province, and it is conducted differently. I am not aware of how these interviews are used to take the decision in Rome at the Ministry of the Interior. There is also a historical problem of different regions offering very different levels in terms of how easy it is to have a course in the Italian language, so there is this kind of inequality.

Local legitimacy is not much of an issue in public debates either in Belgium or in Italy, but I can say that the integration requirements are far more popular among the political actors in Flanders than they are in the rest of the country.

**The Chair:** I will move to Lord Hunt to ask about language. I think you covered quite a bit of it already, so we do not need you to repeat anything.

Q13 **Lord Hunt of Wirral:** I suppose I should declare an interest because I was, for quite a long time, global chair of the English-Speaking Union. I wanted to probe about language requirements, particularly, Dr Sredanovic, your reference to the different languages in Belgium. I just wondered whether you could give us a feel of what degree of language proficiency candidates are expected to reach. What sort of support is there available to help them meet that requirement?

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** Generally, in Belgium, for citizenship, there is theoretically an A2 requirement. I think, for ESL, it is entry level 3, if I am not wrong. In any case, it is rather limited, but this is not necessarily the case, because whatever level of language is offered by the linguistic community in the integration course becomes the kind of requirement that can be used for citizenship. For example, French-speaking Wallonia had an A1 level integration course at a certain point, and this was enough to be considered linguistically to have met the requirement of linguistic integration. Now Flanders is moving to a B1 level, so people are expected to get a higher level of competence than required by the nationality law.

In terms of support, it is essentially an integration course, so the main way to be able to access a language test is to enrol in an integration course. Once you are enrolled, even if you are not part of the population for which it is mandatory, you still have to complete the whole course, which can create some problems for people who are applying directly for nationality, who would just need to prove they know the language, but they might need to take the whole integration course with all the hours involved and so on.

I have to say that, compared to other languages, the Flemish community in particular has invested a lot in teaching the Dutch language. You can have several hundreds of hours and it is free of charge, in the rest of Belgium. Now, there is a charge of potentially €360 for the integration course in Flanders.

In Italy, if you have not reached the A2 level, which is needed for settlement, you need to reach B1 level for citizenship. Again, the main way to obtain this is to apply for settlement and fulfil the language requirement at that stage because, in that case, you can access, free of charge, the kind of language courses that are offered at the network of schools for adult education. If, for some reason, you do not meet that requirement before applying for citizenship at this point, theoretically, you should be self-reliant to learn Italian and pass, with a small charge, a language test at one of the institutions that are enabled to give you certification of language for this purpose.

**Lord Hunt of Wirral:** Dr Badenhoop, how well do you need to speak German?

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** For citizenship, the language requirement is set at level B1 of the common European reference framework, which is considered to be the first level of independent language speaking and writing.

**Lord Hunt of Wirral:** What support do you get to help you reach that level if you do not speak German at all and you have arrived?

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** German is not the easiest language to acquire; that is for sure. It is generally by going through this integration course where you have the opportunity, first of all, to learn the language, so these 600 hours of language learning are split up, again, into two parts. With the first 300 hours, the idea is that you reach level A1, the first basic level, and with the other 300 hours you get to level A2, so that, once you take the “Life in Germany” test at the end of the orientation course, ideally, you have reached either level A2 or B1. You will later need level B1 for permanent residence and citizenship.

**Lord Hunt of Wirral:** Dr van Oers, it is many years since I even tried to speak Dutch. I had great difficulty. What level of proficiency is required, and what support do you get?

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** In the Netherlands, it is level A2, so it is one level below the required level in Germany. All four parts, so speaking, listening, reading and writing, are tested, and the support you get is very different from the German situation. I would like to agree with what the Chair was saying at the beginning of the session. It seems that Germany really wants people to integrate by offering courses at very low cost. Like Elisabeth said, it is €2.20 per hour taught, and you get half of the cost back if you pass in time.

It is very different in the Netherlands where immigrants generally have to pay for the courses themselves, even though, since the beginning of this year, the Government have started to pay the cost for those with an asylum-related residence permit who have an obligation to integrate under the integration Act. For everyone else, it is not free of charge.

As I stated, the costs, on average, amount to between €3,000 and €4,000, but will be higher if you need more time to reach the level required, so that is a big difference. Even though the situation is better in Germany in this sense, I have seen that, from information published by the BAMF, from 2018 until 2020, half of all people who participated in these courses have managed to reach the level required for permanent residence and naturalisation. This means that the other half have not managed, even though they have been following these courses. Even though preparation is offered and free of charge, the fact that this level of language is required does still constitute a barrier for some of those interested in naturalisation.

Q14 **The Chair:** I have a question for Elisabeth Badenhoop. How soon after you have arrived in Germany is the tuition, if I can call it that, made available, paid for by the state? Do you have to have been a resident for a certain period?

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** Do you mean in order to start the course?

**The Chair:** Yes, in order to access the course.

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** I am not entirely sure. This depends on your status, normally as soon as you register with the local foreigner authorities you can apply to participate in an integration course. The demand might be higher and waiting times possibly longer now with the arrival of people from Ukraine.

Last night, I checked the numbers of the BAMF again, and I found figures from 2021 showing that, despite the pandemic, a total of 67% reached level B1 and 26% reached A2, so, in total, more than 90% reached those levels. Of course, I agree that learning a language and participating in a course is still a high hurdle and depends very much on your individual situation and background, but, overall, the figures are still encouraging.

Q15 **Baroness Sanderson of Welton:** In this country, we have not found much research into the experience of those who are actually taking the test, so we would be very interested to know about the experience of those taking either the test or alternatives in other countries, and the benefits or not thereof, both practically speaking and perhaps more widely.

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** I welcome this question because it very much speaks to my research. I conducted over 100 interviews with various people, mainly migrants who go through the naturalisation process but also state actors who administer it, civil servants, politicians and teachers of these integration courses or ESOL courses. I conducted research both in the UK and in Germany, across various locations. The short answer to the question of what we know about the experiences of those taking the test or the course is that they are highly ambivalent. This is true for both the UK and Germany.

For the purpose of systematisation, I would speak of three types of perceptions of the test and the course. This is also true for the wider naturalisation process because, of course, the test and the course are key elements in that process. I call these three perceptions “embrace”, “contestation” and “disaffection”. On the one hand, migrants I interviewed welcomed taking the test and the course as an opportunity to learn the language and get to know interesting or useful information about the country. They embraced it as a useful source of personal empowerment, of learning about their rights, and they found it to be practical support in their settlement process. For some, it even facilitated some kind of emotional attachment. One participant in a German course said, “It made me feel closer to Germany”, going through that course.

Now, on the other hand, migrants also experienced both the course and the test as unpleasant or unwelcoming. The course, some felt, was like a lecture and not useful, conveyed boring knowledge, and was a form of state surveillance, suspicion and identity control. For example, a participant of a German integration course said, “I hated it. It felt like being back at school”. We are talking about adult learners here.

What was expressed in both countries, again, was a sense of bewilderment, bemusement and alienation. Of course, everybody noted that nationals by birth

were not asked to go through either the course or the test, and that the majority of their neighbours and colleagues would not pass. Some felt that the test questions were difficult and, actually, that they were designed to trick you, given the way they were written or the answers that were given. Many expressed that they were treated like newcomers again. We are talking not only about adult learners but people who have been living in the country for years, so these are really permanent residents. They felt that their previous or existing integration efforts were being ignored and that they were being asked again to confirm their loyalty, knowledge and so on.

The third response was a pragmatic approach, so migrants were sometimes unimpressed by all this, and they neither particularly welcomed it nor criticised it. It was more like background noise, and they just wanted to get through and get the passport to make life a little easier. It is important to stress that these three perceptions were found in the two countries, but they were not mutually exclusive. Sometimes, people at different stages of the process would adopt two or even three of these perceptions.

Based on this data, looking to the UK and what lessons could be learned, I would suggest that, if the test content was perhaps more related to the everyday lives of people, or considered to be more useful and perhaps less nostalgic, we would possibly see more of these responses of embrace and the pragmatic approach, and less contestation.

**Baroness Sanderson of Welton:** Thank you. That is really interesting. Yes, clearly we need some more research. It is very interesting to hear the results of yours.

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** Perhaps I could add that the interviews were conducted with a highly diverse group including both women and men, different age groups and over 30 nationalities, so these results are not specific to one group or another.

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** The UK is actually the country for which we know most about the experiences of those taking the test, so I am able to give you the references of a number of projects I am aware of, including Dr Badenhoop's, on those experiences.

We know much less about the countries on which I have worked. I would say that, again, this is not a test in Belgium. It is a mandatory integration course. The main issue is that people appreciate the possibility of attending a course, but the fact that it is mandatory creates a number of issues, so there is a sector of those for whom it is mandatory who do not have the level to benefit from the course, particularly if they are not literate. There is, on the other hand, quite a large number of people who have to, for one reason or another, attend the course and do not need it at all, so the mandatory nature creates a lot of issues.

There are also some practical issues in terms of being able to attend. I am not aware of any uniform measures taken to allow people to attend the course. It is more managed at the level of exempting people from having to attend. Certainly if they

are employed, but also if they have care responsibilities, there are usually some adjustments in order that the person does not have to attend if they have no opportunity to do so.

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** My research, which focused on the Netherlands, Germany and the UK, has shown that the test does not lead to an improved integration of two problem categories. Like Elisabeth, I also conducted interviews, 163 in total, with immigrants with diverse backgrounds. The two problem categories I am referring to are, on the one hand, those for whom the test constitutes an insurmountable barrier and, on the other hand, those who have already integrated well, for instance via long residence in the country. For both categories, the test does not lead to better integration.

The first category concerns immigrants in vulnerable positions who will struggle to pass a test, for instance, because of limited cognitive capacities. Think of people with little or no formal education in the country of origin. Think of traumatised refugees. Think of women in disadvantaged positions. Think of the elderly. I can give you a quote of an elderly Iraqi couple I interviewed.

**The Chair:** I think we are going to have to skip some of this.

**Dr Ricky van Oers:** Then I will wrap it up. For the second category of those who are already integrated well, I would like to add to what Elisabeth has said. They feel alienated and frustrated and belittled because they are obliged to take this test when they want to become fully fledged members of society. They feel that their integration is not taken seriously.

**The Chair:** I am going to ask you at the end whether there is anything that you would like to add, because we need to skip through the next five questions, at least, quite quickly. Perhaps you could email that quote to us because we would like to see that.

Q16 **Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia:** I wonder whether you could educate us as to consequences of failure if applicants do not succeed. I would also like to know whether it is like a driving test and you can take it however many times, subject to financial constraints, until you actually get it. What do you think the consequences of failure should be? Who would like to kick off? Are there any volunteers?

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** I can start with the German case. What are the consequences? Legally speaking, the test is a mandatory requirement for citizenship, so, unless you have a school or university degree or an exemption, you need to pass it. You can repeat it indefinitely, if you want, at your own cost, of course. Failure to pass it in time for permanent residence may complicate further immigration applications. However, like I mentioned earlier, the pass rate suggests that this might not be such a big an issue in the German case as, for example, in the United Kingdom.

I would also like to highlight the wider societal consequences that I observed as part of my research. Generally speaking, the introduction of language and civic

knowledge requirements profoundly changed the immigration and settlement process in all countries, but especially with regard to naturalisation. Naturalisation, in the UK certainly, used to be a bureaucratic process dealt with on paper behind closed doors. Now, these tests, courses and ceremonies require migrants to make a credible performance of their language skills, knowledge and loyalty, so what was previously assumed as a given or perhaps checked by some local case worker or registrar is nowadays a standardised assessment.

It amounts to overburdening expectations on migrants to be political, economic and cultural assets. I argue, based on my research, that naturalisation procedures, nowadays, suggest an idealised figure of what I call the “Super Citizen”. This is a critical concept, which refers to the overburdening expectations regarding the merits and achievements that migrants should strive for, but which are hardly ever fully met. I also found in my interview data that the increased level of testing and assessment in general has effects on migrants’ self-understanding, and how they perceive other migrants and national-born citizens.

I already talked about the alienation. There is an effect of deterrence. Some people I interviewed derived a sense of pride and superiority from passing the test, but, then again, disappointment and alienation when they realised that even state officials who processed their application would not pass all these questions. Also, I found there was an element of competition. In a way, it encouraged a new dynamic of competition for state recognition because, ultimately, of course, this process of naturalisation leads to legally equal membership. What happens when, for example, migrants feel that their personal efforts are not being recognised compared to others? It encourages a new form of competition, and the creation of new hierarchies of worthiness and deservingness. There is a real risk that the way the process is designed may facilitate socially perceived inequalities, not just legal inclusion.

**Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia:** Would anyone else like to comment on the consequences of failure?

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** In Belgium, again, it is a failure to attend mostly, and the consequence is a fine rather than losing the status. As the Flemish community has now introduced an obligation of result, I am not sure if failing the final test would entail having to pay a monetary fine.

**Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia:** I am not clear on that answer. Do you mean, if you fail, you get fined? That might be cheaper than doing multiple tests.

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** It is not clear because it has been voted for very recently. The Flemish community has shifted from an obligation of attendance of a course to an obligation of result, so that is with a course and a test that is successfully passed. It is not entirely clear how this will work, but the idea is that, now, you have to pass. Again, if you failed to pass a number of times, this would probably lead to a fine, but I am not sure about this because this is quite a recent evolution. There are no implementation instruments that can help us understand the actual results.

Another thing that has been voted in in Belgium, but has not been implemented, is signing an agreement of integration at the obtention of the first legal status. Failing to prove a will to integrate, which is to attend the integration courses, theoretically could, in the future, mean that the permit is not renewed. Again, this has not been implemented and it might never be implemented even though it has been voted for, because there is no longer political will to go further with this measure.

In Italy, the situation, as I mentioned, can be quite problematic. You have three years in which to attend the language course and pass the civics test. Theoretically, if, after three years, you still have not fulfilled your integration requirement, you can lose your status and be expelled. Again, I am not sure whether anyone has been put in this situation of having the permit to stay revoked because of failure to integrate and, therefore, facing expulsion, but, theoretically, this is what the letter of the law says.

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** If you ask what the consequences of failing a test should be, in the Netherlands, like in Germany, you can retake the test as many times as necessary. You will have to pay each time you try, but you can take as many tests as you want. Not passing it means that you will be excluded from citizenship. Considerable parts of the permanently residing immigrant population in the Netherlands currently struggle to pass this test and, hence, remain stuck in a sort of second-class citizenship status meaning, for instance, that they are excluded from the process of political decision-making because they are not allowed to vote.

Whether this is a desirable effect will depend on one's views of what criteria a country should fulfil to be able to call itself a liberal democracy. What the consequences of failing should be and whether exclusion of a considerable part of the permanently resident immigrant population in a country from fully fledged membership is a desirable consequence depend on one's perceptions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. It is almost 11.15 am, and later where our witnesses are. If they are available to stay on for another 10 minutes or so beyond the scheduled time, we will give ourselves that extra 10 minutes, but we still have quite a lot to go, I am afraid, if possible. We have heard a lot about the purpose of the tests, so I am not sure that we need to go into that any further. Lord Dholakia, I think you wanted to ask about public reaction.

Q17 **Lord Dholakia:** I would be very interested to find out how you measure the satisfaction levels of those taking part in these tests. Germany has a large number of people from the Indian subcontinent, so maybe Dr Elisabeth can start on this.

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** How do you measure the satisfaction? My research was a qualitative, empirical research project. The sample is not representative. The citizenship applicants I interviewed were 64 in total, 32 in each country, and I conducted semi-structured interviews, so I had an interview guide, but these were open-ended questions. I would usually ask them the open-ended question as to what their experience was of taking the test and/or the course. Then they would

give me detailed answers, so I did not quantify in any way their reactions or perceptions, if this is what you are hinting at.

The BAMF, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, in Germany is very thorough in continuously evaluating and measuring not just the success rates but various aspects of both the test and the course, so that is a point one could look at for further research.

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** It could be interesting to take a look at the pass rates in the tests per nationality. In those cases, you will see significant differences between nationalities, and you can draw some conclusions. For instance, for people coming from countries where the schooling system is different or where not everybody is able to enjoy any formal schooling in their childhood, the pass rates in the test are much lower than those for applicants coming from a country such as the US. You would see huge differences between pass rates between US citizens applying for British citizenship compared to, for instance, those coming from Barbados, even though English is a majority language in both countries.

You will also see lower pass rates for people originating from countries with a different script, so certain nationalities are affected more negatively by the introduction of formalised requirements than others. I could send you more information if you would be interested.

**Lord Dholakia:** That would be helpful.

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** From the UK perspective, there used to be two routes to fulfilling the knowledge requirements for citizenship. You could either take the test route, which is still in force today, or follow the course route, which has been abolished. The course route was specifically designed for people for whom it was thought that the test would be too demanding and they could follow a course. They had to demonstrate that they had improved their language skills by one ESOL level, and then they would also fulfil the knowledge requirements and apply for citizenship.

About 13% of all applicants for indefinite leave to remain relied on this course route instead of the test route. Off the top of my head, the majority of Yemenites, Afghan and Somali nationals followed the course route than the test route, so, by abolishing this possibility, for these groups there is now a barrier to apply for citizenship and indefinite leave to remain.

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** One should take into consideration that this is quite an emotional procedure, having to take a test that can have a significant impact on the life opportunities of the person. What many colleagues have done, especially in the UK, is talk to people who have taken the test in order to understand what role the test had in their life; the degree to which they felt welcome or felt they were jumping through hoops just to obtain equal rights to people born in the UK; and the impact of the testing experience, learning for and passing the test and not knowing what will happen at the moment of testing.

There is quite a lot of literature in the UK showing that there is a mix of anxiety about the procedure and people not being sure whether they are learning something because they will actually benefit from this, or whether they are just required to prove something they are very sure they already have, whereas people who are citizens by birth did not have to go through this trial to see whether they were fit to live in the UK, stay indefinitely or have equal rights.

**The Chair:** I wonder whether any of you are aware of research about the support for the tests or the course and different approaches among the general public, rather than among the migrants themselves who are actually taking the test. If you do, could you perhaps let us know so that we can have a look at it from this end?

**Q18 Lord Ricketts:** Thank you very much indeed. We have heard an enormous amount of really helpful empirical evidence today. I have a more comparative question, if anyone fancies responding to it. Not all three have to feel that they need to, given that the time we now have is very limited. It is whether one or other of the various paths we have discussed—tests, whether civic knowledge or language, as against courses—is more appropriate or better in avoiding discrimination or exclusion. In Belgium, it does not really apply because there is only the courses approach. Do you have views as a result of your research on which is the better or most appropriate way of achieving what we are trying to achieve here? Does anybody fancy a comparative answer?

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** From the fact that many countries in Europe have, in the past two decades, introduced formalised language and knowledge of society requirements in the form of the citizenship test, the idea could emerge that these requirements are helpful in promoting integration of prospective citizens. However, a clear link between actual integration and the fact that prospective citizens need to pass these formalised tests is lacking. We have however seen considerable numbers of permanently residing immigrants being barred from becoming fully fledged citizens because of the existence of these tests as requirements for naturalisation. They are presenting an insurmountable hurdle for them, for some categories more than others, as I have already explained.

There is a 2020 report, commissioned by the Council of Europe. The authors said, “If the goal is to promote the societal integration of migrants, it is recommended to focus on learning opportunities rather than on tests. Courses are likely to be more effective than obligatory language tests to foster and facilitate the process of integration”. I would say that, if better integration is the goal, it would be more efficient to invest public money in courses rather than exams. In case selecting who becomes a citizen or not is the main goal, exams will be the more appropriate means.

**Lord Ricketts:** That is very interesting. We must look up the Council of Europe report. Thank you. That is very clear.

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** I can send you the details.

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** I would echo or follow on from what Ricky van Oers just said. These are different mechanisms, and the question is which means is the best for which end. If you look specifically at the tests and the course, the tests, like we discussed already, have the advantage, certainly in the German case, of being a standardised assessment that reduces the risk of subjective, arbitrary, contingent assessment that may occur in an individual interview, as used to be the case in Baden-Württemberg before the introduction of the federal test in 2008. It is also easier to roll out. It is low cost and large scale.

It requires a different form of learning. It requires individual self-study at home, and provides a set of given answers to these questions, if it is done in this multiple choice format that we see across most countries. The question is how effective this form of testing is. I know that, last week, you had a discussion on the values. Looking specifically at the British and German cases, in the specific test question design, there are some variations. Of course, nobody knows the official questions in the British test because they are not published, but, based on the sample questions the Home Office publishes, it often seems to be the type where the applicant is asked to either confirm or reject a statement, so say true or false.

With the German test questions, there are always four possible answers, and they do not just ask you to reject or affirm a statement, but you need to identify the reason why this is the case. For example, we know gender equality is an issue in all these cases we have discussed. One of the Home Office practice questions goes like this: "It is common for employers to ask women to leave their jobs when they marry". You can either affirm ("true") or reject ("false") that statement.

A similar question in the German test goes like this. "A woman in Germany loses her job. Which reason for this redundancy is unlawful?" Then you have to choose from four different answers: "The woman has been ill for a long time and is not fit for work"; "The woman often arrives late at work"; "The woman does private business at work"; "The woman is pregnant and her boss knows that". As I said earlier, the BAMF online tool also provides you background information on why an answer is correct. You can deduce, possibly, that this test question makes it more educative or informative, but perhaps also more demanding.

The course is a completely different mechanism. It is interactive, discursive and takes place a group setting. It is a collective learning process, based on encounters with other migrants and teachers. It is a learning process over a certain period of time, not just one single moment. These may be advantages, but, then again, it depends on how it is run, administered, and funded. It tends to be more expensive for both the state and for migrants It is sometimes difficult to steer group dynamics. Teachers play a crucial role in these courses, not only but also in applying and interpreting and the course material. That raises questions on how you ensure consistency.

Regarding the normative element of the question, I would recommend keeping the option of the two, whichever is more suitable, a course route or a test route,

according to the individual situation. I would also recommend not just keeping both options, but offering support to pass both the test and the course. This includes the financial support to make it accessible.

**Lord Ricketts:** Thank you very much. I wonder whether Dr Sredanovic would allow me to pass straight back to the Chair, because I know we only have about 10 minutes and two more questions to go.

**The Chair:** In fact, I am going to couple the last two prepared questions, so I will ask Lord Blunkett to ask his and then immediately ask Baroness Hallett to ask hers. You can probably answer the two together.

Q19 **Lord Blunkett:** I ought to confess to our witnesses that I was responsible, as the Home Secretary at the time, for the introduction of the courses and the tests. There was, in the early stages, the assessment that you have referred to. My question was about the most important lessons that we might take from other jurisdictions. It might be useful, Chair, if our witnesses were able to write to us on that. Some of it has already just come out. Courses are intended for a purpose, tests may well not achieve the goal required, and, therefore, assessment might be a better way of doing that. If it helps you, I am happy for people to respond in writing and then hand over to Baroness Hallett.

**The Chair:** Let us see if we can get a little bit of oral evidence on that, and I will, in any event, ask our witnesses to contact us after this session if there are things that they want to add.

**Baroness Hallett:** You may have answered this to an extent already during the session. Seen from abroad, is there anything particularly noteworthy about the life in the United Kingdom test? Obviously, that relates very much to Lord Blunkett's question as well.

**Dr Djordje Sredanovic:** To answer the last question, the current version of the Life in the UK Test is conceptually similar to something that you can find elsewhere in Europe. The earlier version before 2013 was set apart by the fact that it was really focused only on institutions and procedures, so it was culturally neutral. It did not push forward so much a specific vision of the society. It was more a way to learn how to move around in the society. This was perhaps an advantage of the old version when compared to the one that exists elsewhere in similar situations.

The main lesson is, I would agree, that courses have advantages that tests do not. The main lesson from Belgium is that, if the course is mandatory, you will always have the paradox that you are requiring people who do not need the test or the course to attend it, and that this can take away resources from people who are willing and need this but are not obligated to take it. People might not be able to access it because you are using those resources for people for whom they are mandatory but not actually necessary.

More generally, voluntary courses have the great advantage that you offer things for people and they do not feel they are jumping through hoops, so there is not this

process of de-identification with the society of which you are becoming a member because you had to go through certain trials. This is the main thing I would like to say.

**Dr Elisabeth Badenhoop:** I would like to respond to the two last questions in combination, what lessons we can learn from the German case and what is noteworthy about the British case, since I am familiar with the two cases.

Not everything is a bed of roses in Germany, but I would suggest that there are five key lessons we can learn. First, in Germany, the test questions are published by law online free of charge, which makes them accessible. Everybody knows what to expect. It is like a driving licence test. You can rehearse and repeat it infinitely before you take it. This lowers the barriers.

Secondly, in Germany, the test questions and the course curriculum were developed by independent academic experts, not the same group but different people at different stages. They are stipulated by law, reviewed, and updated. This means that the risk of political interference or ideological struggles is reduced. As we saw in the UK, and as Djordje already mentioned, after 2013, the Life in the UK handbook was significantly revised, and this brings me to one of my points about what is noteworthy about the British case by comparison.

This does not come as a surprise, in light of your discussion with last week's witnesses, but parts of the content of the Life in the UK handbook and the Test convey a very nostalgic portrayal of the British state. There seems to be little reflection on sensitive issues. For example, just two out of 55 pages are dedicated to the slave trade and imperialism. In Germany, one of three modules covers the Nazi regime and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). There used to be more, but nowadays there is little pragmatic information in the UK textbook on how to access services and how to claim rights. It focuses more on responsibilities. This discrepancy is noteworthy about the current test and handbook content in the UK.

Thirdly, what has come out in this discussion as a key advantage of the German naturalisation system is that public funding is provided, especially for the courses. If you successfully complete it, you can get 50% of the costs reimbursed, which provides a significant incentive. Fourthly, there is childcare support. Fifthly, I will conclude with the fees. Now, we talked about the fees for the test and the courses which are key elements, of the wider naturalisation process. In Germany the fee for the test is €25. The fee for German citizenship is €255. By comparison, in the UK, the fee for the test is £50 and another £1,330 for the citizenship application. This is simply not affordable for many families, young people and many others. That is the final key lesson I will finish with.

**The Chair:** We are trying to focus on the test and to resist making comments about the fees. It is quite difficult.

**Prof dr Ricky van Oers:** I will keep it very short. I have four important lessons. First, there is no evidence that formalised tests promote integration of those subjected to

them. Secondly, there is evidence that tests select those who can become and cannot become fully fledged members of society. Thirdly, tests affect certain categories of permanently residing immigrants more negatively than others. For some, they present an insurmountable barrier, leaving them in a status of second-class citizenship.

Fourthly, standardisation does not necessarily lead to less inequality or promote equality in the application of the requirements, because the tests lead to exclusion. I would like to make a short sidenote on that. The 67% who reached the level of B1 in Germany in 2021 is a nice figure, especially compared to the Netherlands where the numbers are much lower and level B1 is not even achieved. Level A2 is very difficult already for people, probably because they have to make their big financial investments themselves.

I would say that 67% is nice, but, still, one-third do not manage to reach the level required for citizenship, leaving them being non-fully-fledged members of society and unable to participate in the process of political decision-making. The question is whether that is desirable. That is open for you to answer, maybe.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Can I check whether members of the committee feel that there is anything that we should be asking of our witnesses?

**Lord Blunkett:** There will be things that our witnesses have thought of after the session. I wonder whether they could write to us.

**The Chair:** I am going to ask them to do exactly that and to bear with us if we come back to them with any questions. Is there anything that our witnesses would like to add at this point? It has provoked all sorts of questions in my mind. I would love to have a discussion about how moves in the politics in different countries have led to the changes in the approach, but I had better not start on that.

**Lord Blunkett:** However, it is interesting that the early 2000s was a time right across Europe where this issue was being addressed. I was not fully aware, even when involved, of just what was happening in other countries, which I should have been.

**Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws:** It is also interesting that, in Germany, which seems to have the best system, its Government have been pretty stable for many years and right of centre. It is not to do with being soft-hearted liberals.

**The Chair:** Germany has a particular attitude about immigration.

**Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws:** Yes, and trying to welcome people. I do not agree with the general sentiment that money is of no consequence here. When things are expensive, it is divisive and it has a consequence, so the idea of only looking at the test without looking at the funding seems, to me, a bit of a nonsense.

**The Chair:** Thank you all very much indeed. This concludes the public evidence session.