# The Netherlands

## Education and training in figures

### Employment rates of graduates by programme orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Orientation</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of 20 to 34 year-olds with medium-level general or vocational education (ISCED 3-4) employed and not in education and training, 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>BE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>91.0</td>
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### Lifelong learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>25.7</td>
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### Early leavers from education and training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of early leavers from education and training, 2014</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>31.7</td>
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</table>

### Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification and whose highest level of education involved some learning at a workplace (%), 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>BE</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>EU-28</th>
<th>SI</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Further information


This spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Netherlands.
VET in the Netherlands

Study results and advice from school determine the type of secondary education that learners follow after leaving primary education at age 12. In the third year of secondary education, 32% of students follow lower secondary pre-vocational programmes (VMBO). Half of VMBO students are in vocationally oriented programmes; the rest follow general programmes offered by VMBO schools. VMBO is the main route to upper secondary vocational education and training (VET). For the first time in lower secondary pre-vocational programmes, there are also general programmes that prepare students for higher education: integrated lower and upper secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). Some 40% of students in the third year of secondary education take part in one of these programmes. Labour-oriented practical training (ploegonderwijs) is available for learners not capable of entering pre-vocational education.

Upper secondary VET

Learners aged 15 or above can enter upper secondary VET (MBO). Three structural elements determine provision of MBO programmes, with differentiation according to:

- level: upper secondary vocational education has four levels leading to EQF levels 3 to 1.
- area: study of upper secondary VET programmes includes a sector (sector’s) green/green, agriculture, technology, economics and care/welfare;
- pathway: the education pathway has a school-based pathway (BOU) and a dual pathway (BBL). In the school-based pathway, work placements in companies make up at least 25% of study time. In the dual pathway (apprenticeship), students combine work-based learning with school-based instruction; this often involves learning at work four days a week and one day at school.

In upper secondary VET, the desired outcomes of qualifications are defined in the national qualification system. Occupational standards cover one qualification profile or several interrelated ones. Social partners and education institutions represented in sectoral committees have legal responsibility to develop and maintain these standards. Once approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (the Ministry of Economic Affairs for agricultural programmes), they are introduced in schools – in cooperation with enterprises providing work-based learning – develop curricula based on the qualification profiles.

Tertiary VET

Higher professional education (tertiary level VET, HBO) is open to students with upper secondary general education diplomas and graduates of level 4 upper secondary VET programmes. Around 50% of such VET graduates enter the job market; the rest continue to higher professional education. Most pursue a four-year professional bachelor degree programmes which, on completion, can give access to a professional master degree programme, an option not yet extensively used. Also, two-year associate degree programmes (short-cycle higher education) open to MBO level 4 graduates and leading to EQF 5 have recently been developed. Three principles, to some extent conflicting, are crucial for the VET system: accessibility, quality and efficiency. Central testing of these basic skills is mandatory. Admission to level 1 qualifications while ensuring their availability and accessibility across the country. Efficiency is also achieved by reducing the number of programmes in upper secondary VET, and by introducing new funding principles for VET programmes. The budget is determined per capita funding with incentives rewarding faster completion programmes.

Guaranteeing the VET system’s accessibility was high on the VET policy agenda until 2010. Since then, efficiency and quality have been receiving more attention.

VET in the Dutch education and training system

The heterogeneous and multifunctional nature of upper secondary VET in the Netherlands is a challenge for quality and efficiency. Positive policy responses to this challenge include:

- the Netherlands promotes a culture of lifelong learning, knowledge sharing, VET teachers have opportunities to present their research projects and findings to a wide VET audience, for instance during teacher days.
- education institutions have a relatively high responsibility to develop and maintain these standards, implementation of key elements at system level; institutions receive a lump sum for their tasks; institutions receive a lump sum for their tasks; they are the main partner for lifelong learning.
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VET in the Netherlands

Study results and advice from school determine the type of secondary education that learners follow after leaving primary education at age 12. In the third year of secondary education, 33% of students follow lower secondary pre-vocational programmes (VMBO). Half of VMBO students are in vocationally oriented programmes; the rest follow general programmes offered by VMBO schools. VMBO is the main route to upper secondary vocational education and training (VET). Within the lower secondary pre-VET programmes, there are also general programmes that prepare students for higher education: integrated lower and upper secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). Some 40% of students in the third year of secondary education take part in one of these programmes. Labour-oriented practical training (praktijkonderwijs) is available for learners not capable of entering pre-vocational education.

Upper secondary VET

Learners aged 15 or above can enter upper secondary VET (MBO). Three structural elements determine provision of MBO programmes, with differentiation according to:

- area of study: upper secondary VET
- differentiation according to: secondary VET (MBO). Three structural elements capable of entering pre-vocational education.

In upper secondary VET, the desired outcomes of qualifications are defined in the national qualification system. Occupational standards cover one qualification profile or several interrelated ones. Social partners and education institutions represented in sectoral committees have legal responsibility to develop and maintain these standards. Once approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (the Ministry of Economic Affairs for agriculture and horticulture schools – in cooperation with enterprises) providing work-based learning – develop curricula based on the qualification profiles.

Tertiary VET

Higher professional education (tertiary level VET, HBO) is open to students with upper secondary general education diplomas and graduates of level 4 upper secondary VET programmes. Around 50% of such VET graduates enter the job market, the rest continue to higher professional education. Most pursue a four-year professional bachelor degree programme which, on completion, gives access to a professional master degree programme, an option not yet extensively used. Also, two-year associate degree programmes (short-cycle higher education) open to MBO level 4 graduates and leading to EQF 5 have recently been developed.

Continuing VET

There is no institutional framework for continuing vocational education and training (CvET). Provision is market-driven with many suppliers. Dual VET (the BBL pathway) can also function as CvET for adults. Social partners stimulate CvET through sectoral training and development funds.

In 2014, there were about 120 such funds. Most approach and finance training in an employer-friendly way. They help employers or other training providers (even outside sectors, offer special arrangements for older workers, and support the development of effective human resource management policies at sector level. Most funds also support projects that help young people find employment or take initiatives to sustain or expand apprentice-ships places.

VET in the Dutch education and training system

The heterogeneous and multifunctional nature of upper secondary VET in the Netherlands is another challenge. Quality, efficiency, and the need for a good balance between theory and practice so that each is applied optimally is a constant challenge.

In practical terms, this means that Dutch upper secondary VET works towards developing talents of a highly heterogeneous student population, from students who transfer to higher education to those for whom obtaining a basic qualification is difficult. VET and the qualifications it leads to have to be accessible to all target groups.

At the same time, the challenge is to raise the quality and effectiveness of upper secondary VET. Key objectives are to reduce early school leaving and to increase programme completion. Recently, basic skills requirements (language, elementary mathematics) were made stricter to improve quality.

Central testing of these basic skills is currently being implemented in VET. The challenge for the VET programmes is to keep a good balance between transversal skills and job-specific knowledge and skills. Référence 2020 is a core aim of the ‘teacher 2020’ action plan launched by the Education Ministry and the VET sector, which encourages VET teachers to obtain a master degree and offers them flexible opportunities to do so.

A third challenge is to increase VET efficiency by moving towards an all-embracing streamlined qualification system for medium-level vocations and corresponding upper secondary VET programmes. Recent policies seek to narrow the gap between the number of occupations, all medium-level qualifications while ensuring their availability across the country. More efficiency is also achieved by reducing the nominal duration of programmes in upper secondary VET, and by introducing new funding principles for VET. The shift to a funding model per capita instead of per student with incentives rewarding faster programme completion.

Guaranteeing the VET system’s accessibility was high on the VET policy agenda until 2010. Since then, efficiency and quality have been receiving more attention.

Distinctive features of VET

Challenges and policy responses

Three principles, to some extent conflicting, are crucial for the VET system: accessibility, quality, and its efficiency. Shifting the good balance so that each is applied optimally is a constant challenge.

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Guaranteeing the VET system’s accessibility was high on the VET policy agenda until 2010. Since then, efficiency and quality have been receiving more attention.
VET in the Netherlands

Study results and advice from social determine the type of secondary education that learners follow after leaving primary education at age 12. In the third year of secondary education, 12% of students follow lower secondary pre-vocational programmes (VMBO). Half of VMBO students are in vocationally oriented programmes; the next follow general programmes offered by HBO schools. VMBO is the main route to upper secondary vocational education and training (VET). In lower secondary vocational education programmes, there are also general programmes that prepare students for higher education: integrated lower and upper secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). Some 45% of students in the third year of secondary education take part in one of these programmes.

Labour-oriented practical training (praktisch-beroepsonderwijs) is available for students not capable of entering pre-vocational education.

Upper secondary VET

Learners aged 15 or older can enter upper secondary VET (MBO). Three structural elements determine provision of MBO programmes, with differentiation according to:

- level upper secondary vocational education has four levels leading to EQF levels 1 to 4. Student admission to a level depends on the diploma obtained in prior education. Access from level 1 programmes is limited to learners without a prior qualification at lower secondary level. It is possible to progress within upper secondary VET and the highest level (leading to EQF 4) gives access to higher vocational programmes offered by universities of applied sciences.
- area of study: upper secondary VET comprises and training areas (sectoral) other than agriculture, technology, economics and care/welfare;
- learning pathway: upper secondary VET has a school-based pathway (BBL) and a dual pathway (BB). In the school-based pathway, work placements in companies make up at least 25% of study time. In the dual pathway (apprenticeship), students combine work-based learning with school-based instruction; this often involves learning at work for four days a week and one day at school.

In upper secondary VET, the desired outcomes of qualifications are defined in the national qualification system. Occupational standards cover one qualification profile or several interrelated ones. Social partners and education institutions represented in sectoral committees have legal responsibility to develop and maintain these standards. Once approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (the Ministry of Economic Affairs for agriculture and horticulture), they apply to all training institutions in the sector – in cooperation with enterprises providing work-based learning – develop curricula based on the qualification profiles.

Tertiary VET

Higher professional education (tertiary level VET, HBO) is open to students with upper secondary general education diplomas and graduates of level 4 upper secondary VET programmes. Around 50% of such VET graduates enter the job market; the rest continue to higher professional education. Most pursue a four-year professional bachelor degree programmes which, on completion, give access to a professional master degree programme, an option not yet extensively used. Also, two-year associate degree programmes (short-cycle higher education) open to HBO level 4 graduates and leading to EQF 5 have recently been developed.

Continuing VET

There is no institutional framework for continuing vocational education and training (C-VET). Provision is market-driven with many suppliers. Dual VET (the BBL pathway) can also function as C-VET for adults. Social partners stimulate C-VET through sectoral training and development funds. In 2014, there were about 120 such funds. Most approach and finance training from an employability perspective. They help employees, often in their own firms, acquire new skills even in sectors, offer special arrangements for older workers, and support the development of effective human resource management policies at sector level. Most funds also support projects that help young people find employment or take initiatives to sustain or expand apprenticeship places.

The heterogeneous and multifunctional nature of upper secondary VET in the Netherlands is a challenge for policymakers. Key objectives are to reduce early leaving and to increase programme completion. Some basic skills requirements were made stricter to improve quality. Central testing of these basic skills is currently being implemented in VET. The challenge for the VET programmes is to keep a good balance between transversal skills and job-specific knowledge and skills. Parking quality is also a core aim of the ‘teacher 2020’ and plan launched by the Education Ministry and the VET sector, which encourages VET teachers to obtain a master degree and offers them flexible opportunities to do so.

A third challenge is to increase VET efficiency by moving towards an all-embracing streamlined qualification system for medium-level vocations and corresponding upper secondary VET programmes. Recent policies in the Netherlands focus on removing number qualifications while ensuring their availability across the country. More efficiency is also achieved by reducing the nominal duration of programmes in upper secondary VET, and by introducing new funding principles for VET programmes. An increase in the amount of public funding is being accompanied by incentives rewarding faster programme completion.

Guaranteeing the VET system’s accessibility was high on the VET policy agenda until 2010; since then, efficiency and quality have been receiving more attention.

VET in the Dutch education and training system

TERTIARY LEVEL

- Academic education programmes
- Vocational programmes
- Programmes combining VET and general education
- Non-academic programmes (offered to non-diploma holders)
- Lower secondary education programmes
- HBO programmes

ADULT LEARNING CONTINUING TRAINING

- HBO programmes
- Bridging programmes
- Specialising programmes
- Practical, work-based learning

POST-SECONDARY LEVEL

- Specialised programmes offered following training

The Netherlands

Spotlight on VET

Some 45% of students in the third year of secondary education take part in one of these programmes.}

Challenges and policy responses

Three principles, to some extent conflicting, are crucial for the VET system: accessibility, quality, and equity. Shifting the good balance so that each is applied optimally is a constant challenge.

In practical terms, this means that Dutch upper secondary VET works towards developing learning pathways for a highly heterogeneous student population, from students who transfer to higher education to those for whom obtaining a basic qualification is difficult. VET and the qualifications it leads to have to be accessible to all target groups.

At the same time, the challenge is to raise the quality and effectiveness of upper secondary VET. Key objectives are to reduce early leaving and to increase programme completion. Recently, basic skills requirements were made stricter to improve quality. Central testing of these basic skills is currently being implemented in VET. The challenge for the VET programmes is to keep a good balance between transversal skills and job-specific knowledge and skills. Parking quality is also a core aim of the ‘teacher 2020’ and plan launched by the Education Ministry and the VET sector, which encourages VET teachers to obtain a master degree and offers them flexible opportunities to do so.

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Further information


Employment rates of graduates by programme orientation % of 20 to 34 year-olds with medium-level general or vocational education (ISCED 3-4) employed and not in education and training, 2014

Lifelong learning % of population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2014

Early leavers from education and training % of early leavers from education and training, 2014

Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification and whose highest level of education involved some learning at a workplace (%), 2014

This spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Netherlands.

www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ocw Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ez Ministry of Economic Affairs

www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/szw Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment

www.uwv.nl Social security and labour market services agency

www.underzoekraad.nl Education Council

www.cbs.nl Statistics Netherlands

www.statline.cbs.nl Statistical information

www.s-bb.nl Cooperation Organisation for VET and the Labour Market

www.s-co.nl Dutch Council for Secondary Education

www.nimmeraat.nl The Netherlands Association of VET Colleges

www.neunegingeprofileerend.nl Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences

www.uva.nl/maasdr/uni/Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market

www.cedefop.europa.eu European centre for the development of vocational training

Visit our portal www.cedefop.europa.eu

This spotlight is based on input from ReferNet Netherlands.
**The Netherlands**

**Spotlight on VET**

**Education and training in figures**

**Further information**


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**Life learning rates of graduates by programme orientation**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Orientation</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Vocational</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
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<td>65.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
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<td>70.0</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
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<td>Luxembourg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Share of employees (aged 24 to 65) with medium-level education (ISCED 3-4) who obtained a vocational qualification and whose highest level of education involved some learning at a workplace (%) in 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Share of Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>60.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ireland</td>
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