

Action plan on knowledge infrastructure for education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 NETHERLANDS

Timeline



ID number 36244

Background

To improve the quality of education, the councils of the five education sectors aim to link the worlds of research and education in ever-closer cooperation. Improving the quality of, and equal opportunities in, education requires structural attention. Better use of knowledge can contribute significantly to further develop effective education for all.

Objectives

The objectives of this action plan are:

- (a) the reduction of fragmentation in the field of research;
- (b) the alignment of research with development needs at school level;
- (c) making scientific knowledge retrievable and accessible to users in schools;
- (d) the improvement of education professional's ability to assess education decisions on the basis of scientific insights;
- (e) providing more time and money for research and development (R&D) in education.

Description

In 2019, five associations representing all education sectors launched an action plan to strengthen the knowledge infrastructure in education. A working group will set up an agenda for the near future and will give substance to the aim of strengthening the knowledge infrastructure with the involvement of various parties, such as education researchers, experts and teachers. The working group will advise the sector councils and the education ministry on how to proceed.

2019 Design

This is an initiative by five sectors from all education levels (primary, secondary, upper secondary VET, higher professional education and universities).

An advisory report from the five education councils proposes strengthening the knowledge infrastructure by means of so-called smart connections, and then

establishing them between existing research initiatives, structures, networks and digital facilities. Education councils, together with the education ministry and the Netherlands initiative for education research (NRO) will continue to explore the possibilities for regional and national R&D agendas. In addition, they are putting energy into involving and connecting existing research activities and networks.

2020 Design

In 2020, the education ministry asked for an exploratory study. The study 'For the sake of good education' (*omwille van goed onderwijs*) includes several scenarios on how to improve the knowledge infrastructure. The ministry prefers a combination of regional knowledge hubs and a national knowledge centre. In the regional knowledge hubs joint research, demand-driven knowledge development and knowledge dissemination will take place. In the national knowledge centre scientific knowledge (across the sectors) is collected and organised in such a way that it is useful for teachers (teams), schools and institutions. Such a knowledge infrastructure requires an annual investment of EUR 70 to 85 million. A decision has been postponed to the next government because the term of the current one was coming to its end.

2021 Design

In 2021, a motion was adopted to establish a research network of educational institutions, professionals, and scientists to provide knowledge and good practices and actively to apply and share knowledge.

2022 Implementation

In 2021-22, an exploration of aspirations for the Knowledge Sharing Programme was conducted through conversations with and a survey of education professionals and partner organisations in VET. The programme was launched in October 2022. The goal of the programme is that VET professionals enforce the quality of VET by using research-based knowledge (evidence-informed working). The programme has four main lines.

- (a) Making educational research accessible, findable and usable via a relevant online knowledge hub 'Onderwijskennis.nl'.
- (b) Developing guiding papers as practical recommendations for connecting research and educational practice.
- (c) Knowledge sharing through national thematic meetings to promote evidence-informed practices in education.
- (d) Embedding research-based knowledge and its translation on the relevant online knowledge hub, in guiding papers and meetings about the VET knowledge infrastructure.

Each year, the programme's activities focus around a number of themes relevant to VET.

2023 Implementation

In 2023, the Knowledge Sharing Programme focuses on the following four themes:

- (a) The school as a learning and professional organisation, with an emphasis to evidence-informed education;
- (b) Hybrid learning environments, where workplace learning and school-based learning are integrated;
- (c) Quality of education, specifically focused on the learning process or the interaction between students and teachers;
- (d) Didactics of vocational education, with a specific focus on general education subjects.

In addition, VET teachers are now eligible to apply for Comenius Teaching Fellow grants, enabling them to put their ideas for educational innovation into practice.

Previously, these grants were exclusively available to teachers in higher education.

2024 Implementation

VET plays a crucial role in tackling the social challenges facing the Netherlands. In the working agenda on VET 2023-2027 'Working together on talent', the education ministry and partners have set the ambition to participate as a fully-fledged and equal partner in research and knowledge networks and knowledge infrastructure.

By putting this goal into practice, the Council for upper secondary VET schools in the Netherlands (*MBO Raad*), has joined the Knowledge Coalition (*Kenniscoalitie*), a national partnership comprising knowledge institutions, research funding bodies, and entrepreneurial advocacy organisations. This collaboration aims to stimulate research and innovation, fostering a robust and resilient knowledge-based society. The inclusion of the Council for upper secondary VET schools reflects the increasing role of VET in the Netherlands' knowledge infrastructure.

Regarding the inclusion of VET teachers in the application process for Comenius Teaching Fellow grants starting in 2023, a total of 28 VET teachers were awarded Comenius Teaching Fellow grants in 2024, amounting to EUR 1 400 000 in total to support their one-year projects.

2025 Implementation

Strengthening the national knowledge infrastructure for education aims to ensure that research findings are better utilised in educational practice and policy. In 2023, the Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO) drafted an initial outline of a Knowledge Institute and submitted it to various educational organisations. This consultation round demonstrated broad support for the establishment and further development of the institute. The Knowledge Institute (NKO) focuses on educational practice and contributes to evidence-informed educational policy. In the coming period, the NRO will take the next step in its transition as a Knowledge Institute.

The Knowledge Institute for Education will become an independent national institute for educational practice and policy in 2026. The Knowledge Institute will focus on the entire education system, from preschool to higher education. The Institute will become the national resource for scientific knowledge on major themes in education.

Bodies responsible

- Council for upper secondary VET schools (MBO Raad)
- Council for Primary Education (PO-Raad)
- Council for Secondary Education (VO-raad)
- Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen)
- Association of Universities (VSNU) (until 2022)
- Universities of the Netherlands (UNL)
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO)

Target group

Education professionals

School leaders

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

European priorities in VET

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Action plan on knowledge infrastructure for education](#)

[Exploratory study: For the sake of good education](#)

[Amended motion to establish an education-focused research network](#)

[News item NRO, 20 October 2022 'New knowledge-sharing program promotes evidence-informed education in VET'](#)

[NRO Brochure on Knowledge Sharing Programme](#)

[Website of the online knowledge hub 'Onderwijskennis.nl'](#)

[VET teachers can apply to Comenius Teaching Fellow grants](#)

[Council for upper secondary VET schools joins Knowledge coalition](#)

[New Letter Ministry of Education 13 November 2025](#)

Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Action plan on knowledge infrastructure for education: Netherlands. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/36244>