

Improving access to VET



Timeline



ID number 28445

Objectives

- (a) to tackle problems in the transition from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to upper secondary VET; and
- (b) to strengthen the position of learners.

Description

Almost in parallel to the introduction of the Action plan for equal opportunities, new legislation to ensure the right of enrolment in VET for all (*Wetsvoorstel aanmelddatum en toelatingsrecht MBO*) was adopted in October 2016 and came into force in August 2017. The law paved the way for better guidance before and during transition. It brought forward the registration date (1 April) for all students moving from pre-vocational secondary education to upper secondary VET. This change was intended to give schools more time to support students in their choice of VET programme and more time to react if students did not register for any VET study programme, thus giving schools a chance to reduce the risk of early school leaving. As of September 2018, legislation also granted students the right to enrol in their preferred programme. It described the respective responsibilities of pre-vocational secondary and upper secondary VET schools, students, and municipalities. Schools and municipalities were obliged to exchange information about students who were moving towards upper secondary VET.

The legislation also introduced binding study advice (BSA) (*bindend studieadvies*), which formalised a time scheme within the first year of the study programme in which students would receive positive or negative binding study advice. If negative, it would result in not being allowed to continue the programme into the second year.

In May 2017 the councils for primary education, secondary education and VET and the Association for Dutch Municipalities signed a code of conduct about how to cooperate in the transition to VET (MBO).



2018 Implementation

2019 Implementation

Implementation continues

2020 Implementation

Because of the COVID-19 crisis, the registration deadline for the study year 2020/21 was pushed back from 1 April to 1 May.

The second part of the report of the Monitoring and evaluative research programme was published in April 2020. It concluded that the execution of the new legislation was generally going well. In the previous year, students had registered more often before 1 April. Students were mostly satisfied with the information they had received about the study programmes and their introduction into a VET programme. It turned out that students who registered after 1 April were often still granted access to the VET programme they chose. Further, more students were allowed into study programmes who would not have been granted access without the new legislation.

Three points of improvement were put forward:

- (a) students indicated that their rights concerning study choice information and rights of access had not always been explained to them;
- (b) there appeared to be confusion about the entry procedures and the fixed maximum number of students allowed into a programme;
- (c) schools struggled with the implementation of the binding study advice and its effect was still unclear.

2021 Implementation

The Minister for Education instructed VET schools not to issue any binding study advice this year. This means that first-year students are allowed to continue the programme into the second year, despite possible delays resulting from the COVID-19 crisis; otherwise they would have had to leave the programme.

2022 Implementation

In 2022, a new report of the Monitoring and evaluative research programme on the right of enrolment in VET for all (*Wetsvoorstel aanmelddatum en toelatingsrecht MBO*) and the way it is used by VET schools was published. The overall conclusion was that the implementation of the new legislation was generally going well. A new conclusion that can be drawn from this report is that it is not always clear what the earlier registration date means for the students' selection process, since bringing forward the date itself does not change much. It is important to understand what adjustments VET schools make as a result of the earlier registration date. It is also stated that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic make it not yet possible to draw final conclusions on the legislation, since it had a major impact on VET schools. After the third and last evaluation the minister will, in dialogue with the sector and JOB (the Youth Organisation for VET), use the outcomes to work on better accessible VET in the future.

2023 Implementation

In a letter to Parliament on improving the binding study advice (BSA) in VET, the Minister of Education outlined measures to enhance the implementation of the BSA in the Netherlands. These measures were prompted by the observation that, in recent years - particularly during the pandemic - there was limited issuance of negative BSAs, leading to a lack of comprehensive insights into how schools apply the system.

The letter proposed the following measures for improvement:

- (a) monitoring the binding study advice in VET to gain better insight and control over its implementation;
- (b) adapting and clarifying the handbook on binding study advice in VET for VET schools;
- (c) strengthening communication with VET schools regarding the effective implementation of the binding study advice;
- (d) conducting a study on VET schools' implementation and understanding of policies concerning the binding study advice.

2024 Implementation

The Ministry of Education has approved a revised guide for the Binding Study Advice (BSA) in VET. The updated guide, shaped by practical feedback and discussions with schools, introduces key changes to enhance clarity and usability. These include:

- (a) Legal Nuances: Alignment with current laws and educational developments.
- (b) Simplification: A more concise and user-friendly document.
- (c) Visual Support: Addition of a detailed flowchart to clarify the BSA process.

The guide is seen as an important tool to streamline the BSA process and make it more transparent for both educational institutions and students. With the validation by the education ministry schools can confidently apply the guide in practice.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Thematic categories

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Legislation to ensure the right of enrolment in VET](#)

[Policy letter, education ministry, 6 April 2020, about the second part of the report of the Monitoring and evaluative research programme](#)

[Policy letter with response to motions and commitments MBO, Education Ministry, 2 July 2021](#)

[Decision note on the consultation on the new report of the Monitoring and evaluative](#)

Related policy developments

2024 **Completed**

Action plan for equal opportunities in education

In response to a range of surveys showing that students do not always have equal opportunities, and the trend of growing inequality, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science submitted to parliament in October 2016 an action plan for equal opportunities in education.

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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