

# Action plan for equal opportunities in education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 NETHERLANDS

## Timeline



ID number 28442

## Objectives

The main objectives of the action plan are to:

- (a) support MBO graduates to successfully complete their first year of higher professional education;
- (b) develop networks for experience sharing;
- (c) strengthen parental involvement;
- (d) invest in cultural education in pre-vocational education;
- (e) fund initiatives to involve role models (senior students) from higher professional education or universities in supporting young people who, given their socio-economic background, are not familiar with higher education.

## Description

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. As of October 2017, schools, municipalities and other regional institutes could apply for a grant for the development of interventions, research and knowledge sharing to support equal opportunities. An additional budget of (EUR 4 million in 2017 and EUR 14 million in 2018) was made available for VET schools or higher professional education institutes. The conditions for this funding were published in March 2017. Schools could apply for this grant from August till September 2017. Their proposals were based on plans developed by students in the so-called student labs where students would design approaches for successful transition. The plans were published in a brochure. The education ministry initiated the Alliance for Equal Opportunities (*Gelijke Kansen Alliantie*). Parents, teachers, school directors, researchers, employers and social institutions are encouraged to join the alliance. An online platform enables the sharing of experiences and learning from other initiatives. The alliance has been operational since August 2017. The subject of equal opportunities is also included in the Quality Agreements 2019-22, concluded between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and upper secondary VET schools.

## 2016 Legislative process

## 2017 Implementation

## 2018 Implementation

## 2019 Implementation

In 2019, parliament decided to terminate a condition that enabled higher professional education (HBO) schools to reject VET students wishing to progress to HBO schools if the content of the course they wished to enrol in was not connected to the content of their previous VET course. As of 1 September 2020, students who had obtained a VET EQF level 4 diploma could enrol in every course in higher professional education. The reason this condition has been abolished was that it proved to be an obstacle for VET students who wanted to proceed in technology or care, which are sectors with major shortages.

A better transition from upper secondary VET to higher professional education (HBO) is also expected to prevent social segregation in Dutch society. In July 2019, an agreement was concluded between the Council for upper secondary VET schools (MBO Raad) and the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen, HBO). Both associations have expressed their intention to better prepare VET students to progress to HBO and guide them more intensively in their first year. Regional cooperation between VET and HBO will be strengthened and good practice disseminated.

## 2020 Implementation

Under the umbrella of the action plan, a campaign was launched in autumn 2020 to prevent internship discrimination (see policy document on Combating discrimination in the workplace).

The education and labour ministries, in collaboration with the Council for upper secondary VET schools, are launching a knowledge centre for equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion (*Kennispunt GDKI*) to promote equal opportunities for students with a migration background and/or low socioeconomic status. This three-year project will build on the results and knowledge gained within the CEG Equal opportunities project (*LOB - gelijke kansen*). The Knowledge Centre, GDKI, also supports VET schools in promoting equal opportunities. The e-learning training course, Internship? Everyone equal opportunities!, is available for VET teachers and internship supervisors.

## 2021 Implementation

The measure is operational and runs as a regular practice.

Equal opportunities in education are more topical than ever. The COVID-19 crisis highlights and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities. Therefore, equal opportunities in education play a significant part in the newly introduced measures to deal with the challenges caused by COVID-19 and mitigate consequences.

## 2022 Implementation

The measure is operational and runs as a regular practice.

## 2023 Implementation

An evaluation of the 'Action plan for equal opportunities in education, concluded that none of the four measures proved effective. On the contrary, the interventions increased inequality of opportunity during the transition from VET to Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO). Additionally, funding wasn't based on substantive criteria.

## 2024 Completed

The Knowledge Centre for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion (*Kennispunt GDKI*), established in 2020, will cease operations as of 1 August 2024. This decision aligns with the ongoing development of the Council for Upper Secondary VET Schools (*MBO Raad*). While the Knowledge Centre will no longer exist as a standalone entity, the *MBO Raad* remains committed to these themes, integrating them into broader policy topics within the Council. Additionally, equal opportunities continue to be a key focus in the *Agenda for VET 2023-2027: Working Together on Talent*, (Joint Agenda).

## Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- Cooperation organisation for VET and the labour market (SBB)
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
- Council for upper secondary VET schools (MBO Raad)
- Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen)

## Target group

### Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices  
Learners with migrant background, including refugees

## Thematic categories

### Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

## Subsystem

IVET CVET

## Further reading

[Plans](#)

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[Brochure](#)

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[Online platform](#)

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[Advancement of VET graduates to universities of applied sciences](#)

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[Policy letter on the availability of internships and apprenticeships and equal opportunities for internships, 2 October 2020](#)

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[News item on the continuation of the Alliance for Equal Opportunities, 27 May 2021](#)

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[News item on the evaluation of the action plan](#)

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[News item, Termination of the knowledge centre for equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion and new focus on equal opportunities theme within the Council for upper secondary VET schools \(MBO Raad\), 21 June 2024](#)

## Related policy developments

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2024 Completed

### National support programme to mitigate COVID-19 consequences in education

COVID-19 caused a delay in studies for many students.

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#### Type of development

Strategy/Action plan

#### Subsystem

IVET

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2024 Implementation

### Improving access to VET

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.

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#### Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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2024 Implementation

### Combating discrimination in the workplace

In 2015, within the City deals programme, the labour ministry concluded agreements with the Netherlands' five main cities: Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven, Leeuwarden, Zaanstad (including: their municipalities, schools, the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), employers and intermediate organisations

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#### Type of development

Practical measure/Initiative

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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2024 **Completed**

## Quality agreements

Quality agreements centre on a (partly) performance-based funding scheme introduced in 2015. They were concluded between public upper secondary VET schools (MBO schools) and the education ministry and monitored by account managers (ministry officials).

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### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

### Subsystem

IVET CVET

### “ ... ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). Action plan for equal opportunities in education: Netherlands. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2025). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2024 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28442>