

Green Skills

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 NETHERLANDS

Timeline

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 47378

Background

Globally, the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent. This has prompted the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 as part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, endorsed by all UN Member States. These goals are outlined in the document Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which the Netherlands is committed. In the fight against climate change, the government aims to foster an enterprising, innovative, and sustainable society. Education plays a crucial role in this effort, training professionals for tasks such as installing solar panels. Additionally, the SDGs influence the sustainability of infrastructure, including school buildings.

Objectives

The government aims to contribute to achieving SDG 13 (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact) by:

- (a) reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 55-60%;
- (b) achieving 1 million professionals educated in ICT by 2030, focusing on skills and knowledge relevant to implementing sustainable digital technologies, promoting energy-efficient solutions, and aligning with the content outlined in the policy's development framework.

Description

To advance efforts in urgently combating climate change and its impacts, in 2023 the government introduced the 'National programme for circular economy 2023-2030'. The ambition laid down in this programme is to become a circular economy by 2050. In all parts of the economy and society initiatives will be developed, amongst which education and labour market. Labour market ambitions are outlined in the 'Action plan for green and digital jobs', by Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. Education related plans are further elaborated in the 'Implementation agenda climate & energy' of the education ministry (*Uitvoeringsagenda Klimaat & Energie*), which launched in October 2023. The agenda comprises 70 actions designed to achieve national climate goals.

In the context of VET, the Implementation agenda of the Education Ministry focuses on the

following four areas:

- (a) promoting sustainability in education:
 - (i) developing an overarching strategy for sustainability in education;
 - (ii) including energy transition and climate adaptation when the Cooperation Organisation for VET and the Labour Market (SBB) develops new qualifications;
 - (iii) supporting VET institutions to integrate sustainability into citizenship education.
- (b) training professionals and addressing shortages in engineering and ICT sectors to achieve climate and digital transition goals through five actions:
 - (i) Promoting lifelong learning (LLL) through the LLL catalyst;
 - (ii) Strengthening cooperation between education and industry;
 - (iii) Enhancing the accessibility and labour market relevance of courses;
 - (iv) Increasing the number of STEM teachers;
 - (v) encouraging youth participation in STEM education.
- (c) transitioning to sustainable housing for VET institutions:
 - (i) supporting educational institutions through subsidies and facilitating cooperation and knowledge sharing.
- (d) enhancing sectoral inclusivity:
 - (i) promoting the participation of women in the engineering sector.

2023 Implementation

In February 2023, the policy letter about the 'Action plan for green and digital jobs', issued by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, was sent to the parliament. The purpose of the initiative is to address labour market shortages in sectors critical to the green and digital transitions—such as technology, construction, energy, and ICT—while aligning efforts with the Netherlands' goals of achieving climate neutrality by 2050 and maintaining leadership in the European Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). It focuses on four cornerstones:

- (a) increasing enrolment in STEM education (for example by emphasising early exposure to technical fields, especially for girls);
- (b) retaining and attracting talent (for example by promoting modern employment practices with better primary and secondary working conditions);
- (c) enhancing productivity through innovation (for example by investing in programmes like Digital Workplaces, and AI initiatives);
- (d) strengthening governance (for example by centralising coordination to reduce fragmentation and align regional, national, and sectoral efforts).

In the Action plan, collaboration with industry coalitions plays an important role, while special attention is given to linking the plan to broader labour market policies. Future steps include monitoring progress through data-driven systems, strengthening funding via regional partnerships and EU support, and providing Parliament with updates by mid-2023.

In October 2023, the policy letter on the 'Implementation agenda for climate and energy', issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (OCW) was received by the parliament. The policy letter highlights the commitment of the education ministry to addressing climate change and contributing to the energy transition through its sectors. It emphasises the role of education in training skilled professionals, the importance of scientific research in providing critical knowledge, and the impact of creative industries (design, media, advertising, architecture, etc.) in engaging the public and driving societal change.

The 'Implementation agenda for climate and energy' was developed through extensive consultations with experts and stakeholders, underlining the collaborative approach of the education ministry in aligning its efforts with other ministries and networks. It outlines specific strategies to integrate climate and energy goals within the policy domains of the education ministry (education, culture and creative industries, science)

and commits to ongoing partnerships and knowledge expansion in these areas. The letter reflects the OCW's proactive role in contributing to national and global climate goals through education, innovation, and collaboration.

In December 2023, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate informed the parliament about the implementation of the 'Action plan for green and digital jobs'. More specifically, progress has been made in addressing labour shortages in technical and ICT sectors critical to the green and digital transitions. Through targeted investments, public-private partnerships, and innovative initiatives, the plan is fostering workforce development and aligning education with labour market needs. However, continued efforts in governance, regional collaboration, and monitoring are essential to sustain momentum and achieve the ambitious climate and digital transition goals by 2030.

2024 Implementation

The 'Action plan for green and digital jobs' and the 'Implementation agenda for climate and energy' remain active and operational. No significant developments or updates have been reported this year.

2025 Implementation

In a Letter to Parliament the new government stated that the 'Action plan for green and digital jobs' focuses on addressing the shortages of technicians and digital professionals. This is a prerequisite for achieving the goals of the green and digital transitions, and for a competitive and resilient economy. The Government programme states that the Action plan will continue. However, the Action plan does not have its own budget, and no new measures are announced. The current letter therefore takes the form of a biennial progress update, as previously committed to both the former and the current House of Representatives. The Ministry of Economic Affairs is the coordinating ministry.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Adult learners
Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)
Unemployed and jobseekers
Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers
School leaders
Adult educators

Entities providing VET

Companies
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET infrastructure

Making VET institutions sustainable and green

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Integrating green transition and sustainability in VET curricula and programmes

Integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula and programmes

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Policy Letter of Ministry of Economic Affairs, 3 February 2023](#)

[Policy Letter of Ministry of Education, October 2023](#)

[Implementation Agenda Climate & Energy, October 2023](#)

[Policy Letter of Ministry of Economic Affairs, December 2023](#)

[National Programme on Circular Economy 2023-30, 3 February 2023](#)

[Letter to Parliament, 3 July 2025](#)

“ … ” Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Green Skills: 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/47378>