

Cooperating on cybersecurity

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE** NETHERLANDS

Timeline

2023 Implementation**2024 Implementation****ID number 46831**

Background

Since the COVID-19 crisis, the use of ICT in education has grown significantly, presenting new challenges in maintaining quality and ensuring secure collaborations between schools and digital learning material suppliers. A series of ransomware attacks, including one targeting a VET college in 2021, has highlighted the urgent need to strengthen the digital security of students and schools. Tackling these challenges will enable VET institutions to harness ICT more effectively, fostering both agility and security in their digital environments.

Objectives

Policy measures regarding digitalisation have two primary objectives:

- (a) to develop an agreement system regarding standardized, secure, and reliable exchange of personal data in the educational context to establish a secure infrastructure for digital teaching and learning resources;
- (b) to ensure the protection of students' and VET schools' private data while enhancing schools' digital resilience against cyber threats.

Description

With regard to the first objective, in 2022, the ten-year programme 'Digital Education Well Organised', now called Edu-V, was allocated EUR 34 million from the National Growth Fund. During its first year, representatives from VET schools and suppliers of digital teaching and learning resources collaborated on developing an agreement system to ensure easy, secure, and reliable access to digital educational resources. By 2024, the agreement system was finalised, and its implementation began with the issuance of 'quality marks' to suppliers who adhered to the established quality and cybersecurity standards. These quality marks provide assurance to schools that their suppliers of digital tools comply with the information security and privacy requirements established in the agreement system. In the years to follow, it is planned that the programme focuses on the continued implementation of the established agreement system and the development of an infrastructure for digital educational materials. This includes the systems, tools, and frameworks necessary to support the creation, distribution, management, and utilisation of digital learning resources in education.

The second objective has been pursued since 2023 through the 'Cybersecurity VET programme', a five-year initiative with a budget of EUR 24 million. This programme brings together ICT experts and schools to share and disseminate knowledge, enabling schools to better identify cyber risks, implement protective measures, and respond effectively to cyber threats.

All listed bodies are initiators in Edu-V and actively participate in relevant working groups.

2023 Implementation

For the programme Edu-V in total eight working groups, consisting of representatives from suppliers of digital teaching and learning resources as well as education stakeholders (e.g., schools), collaborated on topics such as the framework for the agreement system, combining and arranging digital learning materials, evaluation of learning progress, examinations, privacy, and the secure exchange of personal data. In total, 200 different parties participated in formulating agreements.

In addition, the programme Cybersecurity VET (*Programma Cyberveiligheid mbo*), was launched. At the end of the year, a covenant on cyber security measures is signed by the Council for upper secondary VET schools.

2024 Implementation

For Edu-V, the board of the programme approved the first version of the agreement system. Due to this agreement, Edu-V can now issue quality marks to suppliers that comply with the agreements on digital data sharing. More than 50 suppliers applied for the quality marks.

In the Cybersecurity VET programme, a governance study, culminating in the final report on information security governance in late 2023, revealed that VET school boards acknowledge the importance of cybersecurity. However, the study found that the level of actual security is influenced by the board's engagement with the topic. Additionally, VET school boards agreed to initiate 'cyber risk pooling', a shared insurance mechanism for security breaches. Furthermore, the Council for Upper Secondary VET Schools (*MBO Raad*) decided to implement mandatory external cybersecurity audits, replacing the prior practice of internal audits.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- Cooperation organisation of VET colleges on ICT (MBO digitaal)
- Foundation for Education and ICT (Stichting Kennisnet)
- Council for Primary Education (PO-Raad)
- Council for Secondary Education (VO-raad)
- Council for upper secondary VET schools (MBO Raad)
- Trade association Media Education Trade and Science (Branchevereniging Media Educatie Vak en Wetenschap)
- Trade association Digital Education Service Providers (Branchevereniging Vereniging Digitale Onderwijs Dienstverleners)
- Association of Educational Distributors Netherlands (Vereniging Educatieve Distributeurs Nederland)

Target group

Entities providing VET

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

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET

Modernising VET infrastructure

Improving digital infrastructure of VET provision

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET

Further reading

[Edu-V programme website](#)

[News item on Edu-V working groups](#)

[Launch programme Cybersecurity in VET](#)

[News item on approval agreement system](#)

[Governance study on cybersecurity](#)

[Agreement on cyber risk pooling](#)

[Agreement system Edu-V](#)

Related policy developments

2024 Implementation

Npuls: programme to improve VET and HE by using the opportunities of digitalisation

This development consists of an eight-year programme in which all 113 education institutions in upper secondary vocational education (MBO, HBO and WO) and higher education (post-secondary and higher education) cooperate. They are joining forces to enable system transformation in education.

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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