

Agenda for VET 2023-2027 and VET Internship Pact 2023-27

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 NETHERLANDS

Timeline

2022 Design

2023 Design

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 46704

Background

VET colleges (MBO schools) are full of talented learners and VET is a driving force for critical sectors such as the energy transition, housing construction and health care. Students, teachers, and workplace coaches play a crucial role in our economy and society, with VET talent being in high demand. The '2023-27 Agenda for VET Working Together on Talent' outlines plans to make vocational education in the Netherlands even stronger and more future-proof in the coming years.

The Agenda and the VET internship pact 2023-27, (part of the 2023-27 VET Agenda) succeed the earlier quality agreements. Quality agreements were a (partly) performance-based funding scheme designed to facilitate VET institutions to either improve the quality of VET or provide additional guidance to students. The quality agreements part of for 2019-2022 were concluded in 2022.

Objectives

The Agenda for VET 2023-27 'Working together on talent' outlines the strategic vision and key objectives for vocational education and training (VET) in the Netherlands for the years 2023-27. There are three main priorities, each of which has three to five specific objectives:

Equal opportunities:

- (a) Contributing to the equal treatment of all students in the Netherlands.
- (b) Improving student welfare and strengthen (integral) safety in schools and learning companies. Increasing the accessibility of VET for students with a support need.
- (c) Strengthening guidance in education and in the step from school to work or further education (especially for level 2 students). Slowing down and reversing the increase in the number of early school leavers, towards fewer than 18 000 new early leavers in 2026.
- (d) Strengthening the vocationally oriented learning path.
- (e) VET contributes to reducing low literacy by investing in training programmes for the low-literate.

Improving the connection between education and the labour market:

- (a) More students will make informed choices for education towards promising professions, matching their interests, talents and abilities.

- (b) Students in secondary vocational education (MBO) will receive a quality internship or apprenticeship that matches the student's education and development needs, without placement discrimination from and with appropriate compensation for students. Strengthening the alignment between VET programmes and labour market demands.
- (c) The VET sector will contribute to the (customised, modular and via the dual pathway) further and retraining of workers and jobseekers.

Education for the future.

- (a) We improve the mastery of Dutch and maths among VET students and that quality of teachers for Dutch, mathematics and citizenship is enhanced.
- (b) Citizenship education will be improved, in order to contribute to the general education of the student, for example by supporting the strengthening of social and critical thinking skills.
- (c) Working in VET is and remains attractive, by paying attention to work pressure and career perspectives for education staff. All staff in VET, will have sufficient opportunities for development and professionalisation.
- (d) The VET sector becomes a full and equal partner in research and knowledge networks in the field of research and innovation.

The VET Internship Pact 2023–2027 has been developed as part of the VET Agenda to advance the initiatives under Objective 2.2, which focuses on enhancing practical, work-based learning through internships and apprenticeships. The pact aims to ensure that VET learners have a valuable learning experience during their first encounter with the labour market, which should take place in a safe environment and focusses on four themes:

Improving Internship Supervision: the initiative focuses on enhancing the quality of guidance provided by schools and training companies. At least three structured contact moments are planned between students, schools, and companies, with one taking place on-site. Schools aim to professionalise their internship policies and address the specific needs of students.

Eliminating Internship Discrimination: the pact prioritises measures to prevent and combat discrimination during internships. Schools establish reporting mechanisms, and training companies are expected to create socially safe environments. Non-compliance may lead to accreditation withdrawal.

Realising Sufficient Internship Opportunities: efforts concentrate on addressing internship shortages by aligning supply and demand. Employers and the SBB collaborate to increase internship opportunities and share successful practices. Support from the Ministry of Education ensures better alignment through the practical training subsidy scheme.

Providing Appropriate Compensation: the pact ensures all students receive fair compensation for expenses incurred during internships, such as travel costs and required documentation. Apprenticeship students are entitled to employment contracts and salaries, alongside expense reimbursements.

Description

The Agenda for VET Working Together on Talent is a covenant signed in 2023 by eight key VET stakeholders: the education ministry, Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), Association of Educators in VET (BVMBO), National youth organisation for VET students (JOB), Cooperation organisation for VET and the labour market (SBB), Council for private providers of education and training (NRTO), Council for upper secondary VET schools (MBO Raad) and the National association of employers (VNO-NCW/MKB Nederland).

The Agenda emphasises the importance of close collaboration among students, educators, employers, local authorities, and national stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation. A 'learning approach' is central to this effort, aiming to assess the effectiveness of initiatives and make necessary adjustments as required.

The Agenda allocates an annual budget of EUR 900 million for its implementation, drawn partly from existing resources of the earlier Quality Agreements (approximately EUR 528 million) and partly by new investments (EUR 367 million). Over its term, this amounts to more than EUR 4 billion in total funding.

The new Joint Agenda Working on talent aims to build on the successes of the previous quality agreements while addressing the challenges of the future. According to the Agenda, VET colleges have room to determine how best to improve their Quality. Agreements on this will be laid down in the quality agendas of the VET colleges. These were developed after the presentation of the Agenda for VET, by the VET colleges themselves together with their internal Partners (teachers, students) and external partners (e.g. employers and municipalities). Progress will be closely monitored using measurable objectives, and insights will be shared among stakeholders to promote continuous improvement.

This comprehensive framework reflects a strong commitment to equipping students with the skills and opportunities necessary for sustainable careers while addressing pressing societal challenges, including labour shortages and the demands of digital transformation.

The VET Internship Pact is also a covenant signed by key stakeholders, including the aforementioned parties and several unions. Its focus is on improving students' initial interactions with the labour market and ensuring internships are guided by learning needs and competencies rather than personal characteristics. The pact aims to make internships a safe, equitable, and rewarding experience for all vocational students.

2022 Design

In 2022, the Minister of Education presented the agenda's framework. The Agenda for VET and the VET Internship Pact were further developed by the stakeholders.

2023 Design

In February 2023, both the Agenda for VET as well as the VET Internship Pact were presented and sent to parliament. Following this, VET colleges started developing their individual quality agendas.

2024 Implementation

In June 2024, all quality agendas of the individual VET colleges were published online. The implementation phase of the Agenda for VET started. Additionally, monitoring studies on the Agenda for VET and the VET internship pact commenced, with the first results expected in November 2024.

In December 2024, the education minister reported on the ambitions and planned actions of Dutch VET (mbo) institutions as set out in their newly approved quality agendas, which implement the Werkagenda mbo 2023-2027 and the Stagepact mbo. These national agreements aim to strengthen VET in three priority areas: equal opportunities, labour-market alignment, and quality, research and innovation. The minister notes that institutions are preparing for a major shift and in many areas show a break with previous trends. The quality agendas show a clear break with previous trends. Institutions are committed to substantially reducing early school leaving, tackling one of the most persistent challenges in VET. They also aim to improve the career prospects of teaching staff, including expanding opportunities for teachers to progress to higher salary scales. In addition, VET colleges are implementing measures to eliminate workplace discrimination, ensuring safe and equitable learning and working environments. A further priority is embedding practice-based research as a permanent feature within VET institutions, strengthening their capacity to continuously enhance the quality and relevance of their programmes.

The minister also raises concerns. The alignment between education and future labour-market needs requires stronger focus, especially in sectors facing major societal challenges such as healthcare, energy, construction, childcare and digitalisation. Moreover, many quality agendas lack clear prioritisation, with most

institutions choosing to work on all objectives rather than concentrating on a focused set, and some measures remain insufficiently detailed to achieve the intended ambitions.

2025 Implementation

In the letter on the progress of the BBL-offensive, the education minister reports on the implementation of this national initiative, launched under the Werkagenda MBO 2023–2027 to increase participation in the dual VET pathway (BBL), which forms a strong link between education and work.

More specifically, as announced in the Working Agenda, the education minister aims to increase enrolment in the dual pathway/apprenticeships (beroepsbegeleide leerweg, BBL). Graduates from the dual pathway generally have a stronger labour-market position than those from the school-based route, and transitioning students from the school-based pathway to BBL can also help prevent early leaving. For this reason, the BBL-offensive has been launched in 2023, with the goal of increasing BBL participation from 30% to 35% of all VET students. The initiative focuses on three target groups: initial students for whom working and learning is a better fit than the school-based pathway; second-career professionals who require reskilling; and individuals without qualifications and/or with a vulnerable labour-market position.

The BBL-offensive consists of five action lines. The first is raising awareness of the dual pathway. The second focuses on improving guidance and support for apprentices, particularly in sectors experiencing labour shortages, where limited time for workplace supervision can hinder learning. The third action line uses the BBL pathway strategically to prevent early school leaving, in close cooperation with Ingrado, the organisation of school attendance officers. A fourth line aims at strengthening opportunities for customised and flexible education. Finally, the initiative seeks to improve the financial position of apprentices, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment – for example, by exploring options to increase apprentice salaries, which in some sectors remain below the minimum wages earned by non-apprentice peers of the same age.

Regarding the other objectives of the Agenda for VET and the VET Internship Pact, no new monitoring information became available in 2025.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- Council for private providers of education and training (NRTO)
- National association of employers (VNO-NCW/MKB Nederland)
- Council for upper secondary VET schools (MBO Raad)
- Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)
- Association of Educators in VET (BVMBO)
- Cooperation organisation for VET and the labour market (SBB)
- National youth organization for VET students (JOB)
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
- Organisation for school attendance officers and transfer coaches (Ingrado)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Education professionals

Teachers

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

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Acquiring key competences

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

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

Attractiveness of the teaching and training profession/career

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European and international dimensions of VET

Mobility of learners and staff

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

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

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

Further reading

[Policy letter of Education ministry on investments in VET and lifelong learning](#)

[Policy letter of Education ministry on Agenda for VET](#)

[Agenda for Vocational education and training \(VET\) Working Together on Talent](#)

[Quality agendas 2024-27 secondary vocational education](#)

[VET Internship Pact 2023-27](#)

[Policy letter of Education Ministry on Agenda for VET and VET Internship Pact 2023-27: ambitions and commitment of VET institutions](#)

[Policy letter of Education Ministry on Progress on the BBL-offensive](#)

Related policy developments

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).

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Completed

Partnerships between VET schools and businesses

In July 2015, the 2009 apprenticeship protocol was updated. In August 2015 the responsibility for accreditation of the quality of work placements in companies was transferred from the 17 sector-based centres of expertise to SBB.

 NETHERLANDS

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Agenda for VET 2023-2027 and VET Internship Pact 2023-27: 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/46704>