



School extension programme

School Ex Programma 2.0

**Netherlands**

DESCRIPTION

Timespan

2009-2011, then the programme was adjusted and reintroduced in 2013.

Stage

FULLY OPERATIONAL

Focus area



MATCHING SKILLS FOR TODAY'S JOB MARKET



FOUNDATIONS

Policy Area



INITIAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The programme helps students in secondary vocational education (MBO levels 1 and 2), to make better decisions regarding a follow up educational programme, or to find work in areas that are more in demand in the labour market, thereby improving their employability prospects.

Policy Goal

The policy goal is to bring together demand of employers and the supply of skills of potential employees. The measure was introduced in 2009 and continued as an important programme in 2013. The aim was to help soften the impacts of the European crisis on youth unemployment. The rationale behind this particular programme is that in times of economic difficulty, it can be more advantageous for an individual to keep studying and learning. As such, the School Ex Programme helps guide the graduates (or leavers) of secondary VET to the next level of study which suits the graduate, for which there is also demand in the labour market. In cases where a graduate wants to work, a suitable job is found via the PES.

Mismatch

PART OF BROADER PROGRAMME, YET WITH EXPLICIT FOCUS

The programme targets skills mismatch amongst VET students, with the overall aim of reducing youth unemployment. The programme has a practical skills mismatch component, but the ultimate aim is to reduce unemployment as opposed to reducing skills mismatches.

Aim of policy instrument



MATCH SKILLS OF YOUNG GRADUATES



UPSKILL AND MATCH SKILLS OF UNEMPLOYED



BROADLY ADDRESS SKILL MISMATCH

Legal basis

OTHER

This is a government programme, implemented in municipalities.

Administrative level

REGIONAL

Main responsible body

Ministry for Education, Culture and Science

Stakeholders



GOVERNMENT (CENTRAL & REGIONAL)



TRAINING PROVIDERS (PUBLIC/PRIVATE)



GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS

Besides the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science, the Dutch Public Employment Service (UWV) also plays a role in implementing the measure. Municipalities and VET institutions are the main implementing parties for the School Ex Programme. Municipalities hold talks and guide graduates from secondary vocational education to a suitable next education level, or if this is not possible, to a suitable job. VET institutions are involved in getting students to a next level of education, and the UWV is involved when VET graduates wish to start working instead.

Funding

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is the source of funding for this instrument. For the school years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, the Dutch government allocated a further €25 million for the implementation of the School Ex Programme. The School Ex programme is funded by different channels: one third comes from the municipalities, one third from the college itself (or the hosting organisation), and one third comes from the government (via the national level sectoral fund). In the case of the Graafschap College, the total financing of the programme amounts to around €150,000 (which is provided here as an example of how the national School Ex programme is implemented in practice at the regional level).

Intended beneficiaries

Intended beneficiaries are graduates from secondary vocational education of up to 27 years of age.

3 PROCESSES

Use of labour market intelligence



INFORM CAREER-MAKING DECISIONS OF STUDENTS



INFORM JOB-SEARCH DECISIONS OF UNEMPLOYED

The measure helps graduates to find work that fits their schooling background, and for which there is demand in the labour market. The measure does so by guiding students to a further education level that prepares them for a job that is in demand, or by guiding graduates to a suitable job directly. The programme specifically focuses on the jobs and related skills that are in demand in the labour market.

Financial schemes

There do not appear to be direct financial incentives involved. The Dutch government makes funds available and these are allocated to municipal governments. These in turn spend resources on implementing the guidance and talks involved under the School Ex Programme. The municipalities, therefore, receive funding to conduct the activities under the School Ex Programme. Graduates and VET institutions do not receive or pay for the service.

Frequency of updates

Every year a national level survey is held by VET institutions amongst exam candidates for MBO levels 1 and 2. Based on the outcomes of the survey, students are helped via the School Ex Programme. In the example of the Graafschap College, the estimation is that out of 2,500 students about to graduate, some 150 students end up making use of the instrument. This is examined annually by the administrators, but does not change much.

Development

The programme started in 2009 and in 2013, the Dutch national government recommitted to the programme, agreeing to allocate funds to this programme during the next policy cycle. The programme changed slightly from its previous form, with the 2013 form including “Ombuigingsgesprekken”, talks to get students with sub-optimal career prospects, to consider follow up education in more in-demand education programmes in job areas more in demand in the labour market. This addition is still in place now as the School Ex Programma 2.0. The approach of the instrument involves its being implemented at municipal levels in the Netherlands. The main approach of guiding graduates and finding a suitable education or job that is in demand in the labour market is the same across municipalities. This is done by having all students in a secondary education programme fill out a survey about their future plans. Those that have doubts are provided with career and education advice from VET institutions and municipalities. The exact approach to conducting the guidance and talks with graduates may vary somewhat per municipality. As such, changes are difficult to identify given that the implementation may vary, as it is due to the way the approach is implemented.

Barriers

Regarding implementation barriers, financing is always a challenge. Keeping the financing intact is a new challenge and a new discussion every time. The Graafschap college for instance takes its as its responsibility, but municipal governments raise the issue every time of whether funding such a programme falls under their mandate and whether it is appropriate for them to fund such an instrument. However, until now the programme financing has been renewed, due to the success of the programme (150 students are helped to the labour market each year and for 75%, this is in a sustainable, long term job). Another barrier, which was overcome, was that the survey that is taken amongst pending graduates was first carried out by a call centre. Calling 2,500 students each year was expensive, and this was outsourced to a group of tertiary education students instead. This is cheaper and works well as the survey takers are closer in age to the pending graduates, which allows for a more effective and supportive survey responses.

Success factors

Success factors include the fact that the programme connects closely with the educational trajectory. During the summer a team of external students (in tertiary education) conduct a telephone survey amongst students in vocational education who are graduating that year. The pending graduates are asked questions concerning their future plans. If a pending graduate indicates they do not have many plans yet, they are registered and the survey asks if the graduate needs support. The survey taker also immediately makes an appointment with the student in question for a follow-up call or appointment with a coach. Another success factor is that the School Ex programme office is in the school at the Graafschap College and is therefore very accessible. Another success factor is that the programme takes a case-by-case approach and delivers tailored, individual guidance to each student. Through the programme, individuals can be helped with making CVs, letters, and searching on the labour market.

Monitoring

Municipalities monitor the number of applicants they have for the programme, the number of graduates that finished their secondary VET, and the number of participants of the programme that left their secondary VET without graduating. Furthermore, the number of applicants, the number that complete their follow up education, and the number of participants that are placed in jobs are monitored. Monitoring of the School Ex programme in Graafschap for instance, is based on tracking the number of graduates who find sustainable jobs in the labour market. A sustainable job in this case is one which lasts for 6 months or more. This is reported to the municipality and to the School Ex programme administrators. The School Ex programme also maintains contact with a graduate for one year and provides support where necessary. If a graduate requires help for more than a year, they get referred to the services provided by the municipality. The programme also monitors the satisfaction of students with the programme. At a national level, evaluations have been commissioned by the national government. These larger, national level evaluations also include a qualitative analysis of what MBO graduates think about the programme.

Innovativeness

VERY INNOVATIVE

The programme can be considered quite innovative in that it targets younger people specifically to help them make sound career choices in line with the needs on the labour market. This is achieved by having all students in a secondary education programme fill out a survey about their future plans. Those students who have doubts receive guidance from the municipality and VET institutions. By ensuring better job prospects for students from secondary vocational education, this policy instrument increases skills matching.

Evidence of effectiveness

In the first period that the School Ex Programme ran, the target for 2009 to 2010, was to help 10,000 graduates between the ages of 18 and 27 to get into another level of education or into work. In 2010, 12,000 graduates or school leavers had been helped. In 2009, 77,000 students in secondary vocation education (MBO in the Netherlands) filled in the national questionnaire, accounting for two thirds of the exam candidates for that level of MBO in the Netherlands. Of this number, 40% went on to receive a personal conversation about their future plans. The benefits have indeed been as expected. A large numbers of students in secondary vocational education have participated in the programme, and due to its success, it was renewed for the school years 2013-2014, and 2014-2015. In the 2014 evaluation of the measure, 66% of students considered the talk and guidance they received via the programme to be “very useful”. An unexpected benefit in 2013 was that students with non-European backgrounds and young women were both groups of focus for the programme. This is because technical professions are notably in demand, and to counter stereotypical attitudes and hiring actions, young women and youths with a non-European background were given more focus within the sectoral approach of the School Ex Programme. As a local example, no real unexpected costs have arisen from the programme in the case of the Graafschap College. The programme in the Graafschap College estimated that around 150 students make use of the programme every year, and calculated the budget accordingly. This estimation was quite good as the number of students remained relatively stable and as a consequence, the budget was sufficient. Furthermore, outsourcing the survey from a call centre to tertiary education students helped reduce costs of contacting 2,500 pending graduates.

Engagement of stakeholders

Vocational education providers collaborate closely to ensure that within a given region students can be guided into programmes that fit their educational background, their preferences and job areas in the labour market that are in high demand. This also requires collaboration with the Dutch PES, the UWV, to know what sort of skills and jobs are and will be in demand in the immediate future. The stakeholders involved are the municipality, the employment services in the region (“Werkbedrijf” in Graafschap), and the vocational education and training institutes (known as ROC’s in the Netherlands). The ROCs and the School Ex programme in Graafschap monitor 18 to 23 year olds in the area and establish which of them are best suited to guide and support which of those young people. Once a month the Graafschap and VET institutes come together to compare their monitoring results and establish how to proceed. The regional stakeholders also come together to produce sectoral plans and make a link with the regional labour market. This sectoral plan is used as input when planning and carrying out the support and guidance activities for young people in the area.

Transferability

EASILY TRANSFERABLE

This measure seems to be transferable in the sense that it requires the collaboration between VET institutions, a proactive PES and municipal governments to design and implement the program. Furthermore, financial and human resources are required to conduct talks and guide the graduates, and to generate expertise of which jobs and skills are in demand. This would seem to require political will at the national level, and a more decentralized governing approach in a country, in order to roll out the programme at the regional and municipal levels, as has been done in the Netherlands. Additionally, good working relationships between municipalities and VET institutions appears to be an important feature. The VET institutions were also involved in initially developing the measure.

Sustainability

The measure does indeed seem sustainable given that the measure was started again in 2013-2014, and in 2014-2015. The measure requires the cooperation of institutions, which in most countries are already in place and work independently, such as municipal governments, VET institutions and PES. The addition of funding by the national government is not exorbitantly high when one considers that the Dutch government allocated a further €250 million to the action plan on craftsman professions as part of the government priorities of reducing skills mismatch. A measure like the School Ex Programme, which is relatively efficient in its resources and effective in its outcomes, also fits within the government's priorities of reducing skills mismatch. From this point of view, it would appear to be quite a sustainable instrument.

