



Panel discussion: Lessons learned and future reflections – Netherlands

Introductory statement: There was a major scheme (STAP) recently implemented in the Netherlands; however, it was terminated shortly after the implementation, in part due to budget cuts but also in part due to public criticism of the programme. We also know that you are busy evaluating the outcomes of the scheme (even if the programme was running only for a short period) and reflecting on the possible future actions.

Question: Thus, what would be the main lessons you take from this earlier experience and how do you envisage public financing for adult learning and especially demand-driven instruments evolving in the future in the Netherlands?

Answer (Elize de Bar, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment):

We took 3 main lessons from our experience:

1. Financial support for adult learning does have an effect.

The interim results of our evaluation of STAP scheme showed that it had direct effects, especially attracting practically educated people to apply and to undertake further education and training. Also, their position on the labour market improved after participating in the scheme. Indirectly, the scheme induced them to think more about further learning. More training was taken up, even without the subsidy.

2. The need to set clear conditions regarding the type of training to be funded from public budget.

The main criteria to select programmes supported by the scheme were the relevance for the labour market and a good quality mark for non-formal training. Although it is not exactly a quality mark, in the Netherlands, we use the national EQF-classification (NLQF) now. NLQF classification has a legal base and is independent and objective. This helps ensure that the supported training programmes are relevant for the labour market.

3. The need to set clear conditions for training providers.

Ensure the appropriate balance between market interventions and efficiency of the ILA-budget. This is necessary to prevent funding training delivered by training providers that have as their main goal the profit motive.



We also already started with the reflections about the future. In the beginning of this year (i.e. 2025), we started a new, small scheme (SLIM *Scholingssubsidie*) for employers who can apply and use the money received for training their current or new employees. The scheme is based on Development Paths. A Development Path is a sequence of positions or jobs showcasing how people can enter or develop in a particular sector or industry.

This scheme funds training that is necessary to make the step to the next position in such a Development Path. The scheme covers 90% of training costs at EQF-levels 1-3, it covers 40% of training costs at EQF-levels 4 and higher. The remaining 10% and 60% must be provided by the employer. At the moment, we use the scheme only for selected key sectors like care, education, technology and IT.

We hope to learn from this scheme how to frame the training options and how to set conditions for training providers. We would also like to use these experiences in an ILA. We shall start an exploratory research project on individual learning account shortly.

The potential introduction of an ILA will also depend on the government. In 2026, there will be a new government. Everybody agrees adult learning is important, but it's hard to get dedicated public funding for that purpose.