

PANORAMA

Vocational education and training in the Netherlands

Short description

Vocational education and training
in the Netherlands
Short description

Revised edition

Martine Maes

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Introduction

This short description of vocational education and training (VET) in the Netherlands is part of a series featuring vocational training in different countries. It has been prepared to coincide with the EU Council presidency of the Netherlands. It is also an element in Cedefop's continuing work on VET systems in EU member states, which is changing from being mainly based on hard copy descriptions of each national system ⁽¹⁾ to an electronic-based system.

The new Cedefop database, eKnowVet, offers on-line information on initial and continuing vocational training in partner countries. The standard entry format allows country-specific and multi-country searches covering 11 thematic areas in overview (thematic overviews) and in detail. The database is regularly updated by Cedefop's European network of reference and expertise (*ReferNet*).

This document has been prepared by CINOP. In doing so they have used the longer description of the VET system published by Cedefop in English in 2002 ⁽²⁾, the short description published in 2003 ⁽³⁾ and the thematic overview for eKnowVet, all of which they also prepared. The resulting text was then the subject of a short consultation process between CINOP and the social partners, the Dutch Council for Vocational Education and Training (BVE Raad), the association of expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Cedefop staff members have also made comments and suggestions.

The need for brevity means it is not possible to include all elements of the Netherlands VET system. We therefore decided to focus on policy and development issues rather than on more descriptive information about how the system functions. Further details in regard to the latter can be found in eKnowVet ⁽⁴⁾. More detailed information on the education system can be found in Eurybase, the website of Eurydice ⁽⁵⁾.

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⁽¹⁾ <http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/vetsystems/report.asp>

⁽²⁾ http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/vetsystems/report/nl_0601_en.asp

⁽³⁾ http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publication/download/panorama/5142_en.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_Resources/nationalvet/

⁽⁵⁾ http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/frameset_eurybase.html

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The Netherlands, its provinces and principal cities



1. General policy context

1.1. Political and administrative structure

The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy and has had a bicameral parliamentary system since 1815. Central government is the highest layer of administration. Since the 1970s there has been a policy of decentralisation and privatisation. Tasks and responsibilities are progressively being transferred to lower levels of government, such as provinces or municipalities and institutions. There is no regional administrative structure, but cooperation on a geographical basis is common.

The Netherlands has 12 provinces which have their own tasks and responsibilities, but are hardly involved in education and training policy. The 483 municipalities are responsible for administering public schools. On top of that, they play a role in the policy to counteract under-achievement in education, prevention of early school leaving and training and reintegration of the unemployed. Another role of the municipalities is planning adult education and integration courses. The distribution of tasks and finances was one of the issues in the evaluation of the 1996 Adult and Vocational Education Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs*, WEB) (see Chapter 2).

1.2. Population

Country size: 41 526 km²

Number of inhabitants (as of 1 June 2004): 16 271 373

With an average number of inhabitants per km² of 479, the Netherlands is, after Malta, the country with the highest population density in the European Union. The next country in line is Belgium, with 340 inhabitants per km². The average population density in the European Union is 116 inhabitants per km².

Table 1: Population in absolute figures, forecasts for 2010, 2020 and 2025

Age group	2003	2010	2020	2025
0-19	3 969 865	4 008 926	3 895 586	3 851 458
20-64	10 007 694	10 170 947	10 126 504	10 080 974
65+	2 224 275	2 487 258	3 189 830	3 503 710
Total	16 201 839	16 667 122	17 211 923	17 436 141

Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), Statline, February 2003

Table 2: Annual population growth and migration (per 1 000 inhabitants)

Year	Total population growth relative	Natural increase relative	Net migration relative*
1991	7.9	4.6	3.3
1996	4.7	3.3	1.1
2001	7.4	3.9	3.2

* Immigration minus emigration including net administrative corrections.

Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), Statline, February 2003

The number of those seeking asylum in the Netherlands has dropped considerably since 2001, while the number doing so in the European Union as a whole has been quite stable. A new Act on immigration and recent political developments was responsible for the decrease. In 2000, 44 000 persons sought asylum in the Netherlands, while in 2002 the figure was only 19 000 (CBS, 2004).

Table 3: Unemployment and labour market participation, by ethnic origin and educational level, in %

Year	Unemployment rate (in %)					Net labour market participation (in %)				
	Total	Primary education*	vbo/mavo*	mbo/havo/vwo	hbo/wo*	Total	Primary education*	vbo/mavo*	mbo/havo/vwo*	hbo/wo*
2000										
Total	3.7	7.4	4.9	3.1	2.7	64.5	37.9	53.1	71.7	81.6
Autochthones ⁽¹⁾	3	6	4	3	2	67	40	54	73	83
Ethnic minorities ⁽²⁾	11	14	13	8	9	48	30	47	62	73
2001										
Total	3.4	6.6	4.8	2.8	2.3	65.4	38.8	54.8	72.3	81.8
Autochthones	3	5	4	2	2	67	41	56	73	73
Ethnic minorities	9	12	11	7	5	50	32	52	64	72
2002										
Total	4.1	7.6	5.6	3.3	3.2	65.7	38.2	53.2	72.8	81.9
Autochthones	3	6	4	3	3	68	41	54	74	84
Ethnic minorities	10	11	13	7	10	50	32	47	66	66

* For an explanation of educational levels, see Figure 2 and Chapter 4

⁽¹⁾ Indigenous Dutch citizens.

⁽²⁾ All those living in the Netherlands but born in Turkey, Morocco, Surinam, Dutch Antilles, Aruba, former Yugoslavia or other countries in South- or Central America, Africa or Asia (except Japan and former Dutch-Indies). Their children are also included in these figures.

Source: CBS, 2003

1.3. Economy, labour force and unemployment

Dutch per capita GDP is the fifth on the EU ranking list after Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland and Austria. From 2000 onwards however, GDP growth rate was much lower than the EU average. In the first half of 2003 GDP growth was negative (-0.7 %, EU average 1.0 %).

The GDP per capita in Luxembourg, expressed in terms of purchasing power standards (PPS), was more than twice the EU25 average in 2003, while Ireland was about one third above average, and Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and the United Kingdom around 20 % above average. Belgium, France and Sweden were about 15 % above average, and Germany, Italy and Finland were around 10 % above the EU25 average (Source: Eurostat 2003/2004).

The total working population in 2002 was 7 444 000. The table below shows the working population as a percentage of the whole population.

Table 4: Working population, as % of total population, by age group, the Netherlands and the EU, 2002

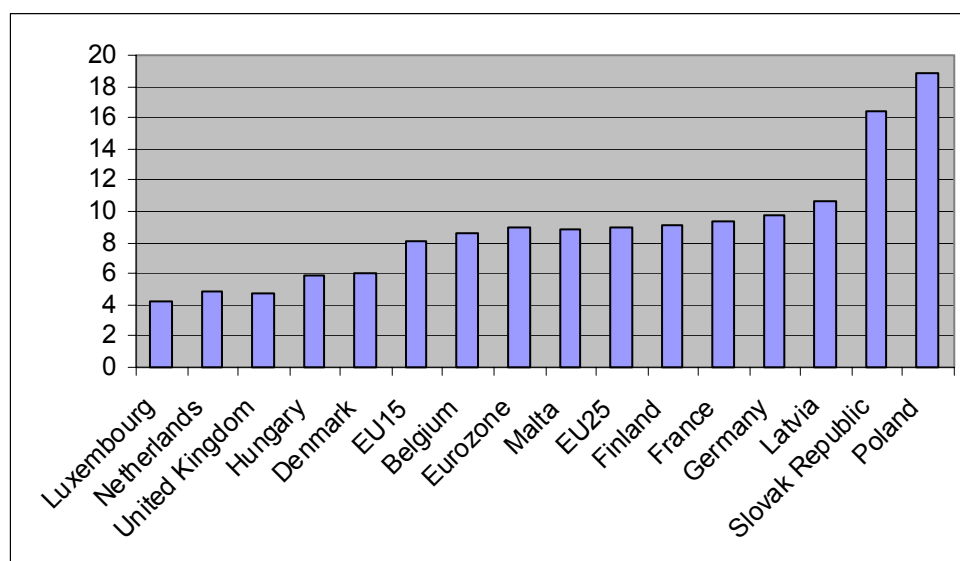
Age group	Men		Women	
	NL	EU*	NL	EU*
15-24	74.5	51.0	68.0	43.6
25-49	94.4	93.2	75.5	73.4
50-64	70.4	66.0	36.4	40.9

*Source: CBS, Statistisch Jaarboek, 2004; * source EU data: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey*

The much higher level of labour market participation of both men and women in the 15-24 age group in the Netherlands is striking.

At the turn of the millennium, unemployment in the Netherlands dropped considerably. In the first half of 2003, the Netherlands had the second lowest unemployment rate in the EU (3.6 % of the working population). The European Union (25) average in the same period was 8.2 % for men and 10.0 % for women. Dutch youth unemployment was, in the first half of 2003, the lowest in the European Union (6.8 %). However, the increase (0.9 %) in unemployment in the first half of 2003 was much higher than the EU average.

Figure 1: Unemployment rate for selected EU countries (in %), May 2004



NB: The data from the Netherlands and Denmark date from April 2004.
The data from the United Kingdom date from March 2004.

Source: Eurostat, 2004

Over the year April 2003 – April 2004, 12 Member States recorded an increase in unemployment, 11 a decrease and two remained the same. The Netherlands (3.6 % in April 2003 to 4.9 % in April 2004), Luxembourg (3.5 % to 4.2 %), Sweden (5.4 % to 6.7 %) and Denmark (5.4 % to 6.0 %) recorded the largest increases, while the largest decreases were observed in Estonia (10.4 % to 9.1 %), Lithuania (13.0 % to 11.5 %) and Cyprus (4.5 % to 4.2 %).

Table 5: Seasonally adjusted unemployment rates, under 25 years, EU and the Netherlands, in %

	April 2003	Oct. 2003	Jan. 2004	March 2004	April 2004
Euro-zone (EU12)	17.1	17.1	17.2	17.3	17.3
EU25	18.4	18.2	18.1	18.2	18.1
EU15	15.8	15.7	15.8	15.9	15.9
NL	7.0	7.0	8.1	9.0	

Source: Eurostat, 2004

According to *Education at a Glance* data (OECD, 2003), the Netherlands has a low percentage of 20-24 year olds in education in comparison to neighbouring countries. In 2001 only 35 % of the Dutch youngsters in this age group were at school, the majority having found a job. Less than 10 % were unemployed or not engaged in the labour market. A high percentage of young women entered the labour market. More than 55 % had a job, whereas most women in other countries still participate in education.

In recent years, the trend of high labour market participation by this age group has led to a rising percentage of youth unemployment (see Section 2.2.3.1).

1.4. Educational attainment level of the population

Table 6 shows educational attainment levels in the Netherlands and some selected EU countries. In comparison to neighbouring countries, the percentage of the population with lower secondary education in the Netherlands is relatively high. A point of policy concern is the number of low skilled persons. The goal is to achieve a smooth and higher transfer from the lower levels of education towards higher secondary or tertiary education (see also Section 2.2.2).

Table 6: *Educational attainment levels of the population, 25-64 years, the Netherlands and selected countries, in %, 2001*

	Primary education	Lower secondary education	Higher secondary education	Tertiary education
Belgium ⁽¹⁾	20	22	31	27
Denmark	-	20	54	27
France	18	18	41	23
Germany	2	16	60	23
Ireland	25	18	22	36
Netherlands ⁽¹⁾	13	22	41	24
Portugal	68	12	11	9
Sweden	9	10	49	32
United Kingdom		17 ⁽²⁾	57	26
United States of America	5	8	50	37

⁽¹⁾ Data from 2000.

⁽²⁾ Including primary education.

Source: *Education at a Glance, 2002 (OECD)*

2. Policy developments

2.1. Objectives and priorities

During the early 1990s, the need arose to make education and training more integrated and national. Important factors were decentralisation, integration of different education and training structures into one national qualification structure and the creation of regional knowledge centres instead of a huge number of small schools. These priorities were implemented through the Act on Vocational and Adult Education (*Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs*, WEB) (see Section 3.2). From 1999 to 2001, a two-year evaluation of the 1996 Act has been carried out, as prescribed in the Act.

The central themes of the study are the responsiveness of the system, flexibility, the quality of teaching and learning processes, regulation of output and the quality of self-regulated institutions. Although a great deal of autonomy and responsibility is given to the players in the field to build a VET system that has optimal flexibility and effectiveness, the reality is rather different (Nijhof and Van Esch (eds), 2004).

In spite of budget cuts in other areas, an additional budget will (provisionally) be available for education and training in the coming years. VET priorities include giving greater autonomy to schools and reducing the administrative load and the number of approved qualifications. Counteracting the shortage of teachers, particularly through action at regional level is an important issue. In December 2002, the Minister of Education sent a Labour market and personnel policy action plan to the Second Chamber, including proposals for function differentiation, better career perspectives for teachers and attracting people from other sectors (see Section 6.1). Further priorities will be streamlining the system to make vertical transfers within VET easier, modernising teaching and learning environments, and emphasising the centrality of the role of the learner (see Section 2.2).

A new cabinet, which was installed in 2003, added two more priorities for their period in government (2004-07). The first is innovation and strengthening the knowledge infrastructure, and should be seen in a broad perspective of development towards the knowledge society including lifelong learning. An ‘innovation platform’ was established in 2003, chaired by the prime minister with members from fields such as education, economy, and science. This platform is expected to bring an impetus to the knowledge society.

The second priority is working towards maximum participation of people in society, in which education, culture and science are to be a binding factor.

In June 2004, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science published a policy document-*Koers BVE* (Steering a course for VET) which provides an overview of trends, agendas and action plans in Dutch vocational and adult education and training. Regional cooperation is the

leading theme and three action areas are considered to be central for VET-policy for the coming years:

- (a) space for innovation;
- (b) space for the learner;
- (c) space for educational institutions.

To measure the new methods of governance that will be introduced, in 2005 the Ministry will introduce a monitor (BVE-barometer) of VET indicators. Monitoring will start on a limited set of (European) indicators. The first results of the monitoring of educational institutions will be published in 2006.

The Netherlands adopted the conclusions of the Lisbon summit (2000) and is actively involved in the open coordination method and the use of benchmarks at European level.

The situation in the Netherlands has been reviewed by the Education Council in relation to the European benchmarks (*Onderwijsraad*, 2003). For the following four benchmarks, the situation will be observed carefully and action undertaken:

- (a) reducing the percentage of early school leavers. The aim is to reduce the drop out rate by 50 % in 2010 (compared to 2000);
- (b) increasing the percentage of students with at least higher secondary education;
- (c) increasing the education level of 15 year olds. The Netherlands is in a good position, but this might be threatened by the shortage of teaching personnel;
- (d) increasing participation in lifelong learning. Although the Netherlands score is twice as high as the EU average, continuing attention is needed. Motivation of the most vulnerable groups is the most difficult point. Important issues are employability, HRM policy, and initiatives like the personal development account.

The Education Council report mentioned the need for a focus on the benchmark on training of more highly skilled technical professionals, scientists and engineers (especially women). This is true not only in technical jobs, but also in healthcare and business. It is important to strengthen the cooperation between education and industry.

2.2. Current issues

2.2.1. Competence based qualification structure

The current knowledge-based, dynamic society and the labour market need professionals with more than just specific technical knowledge. The way of working changes, so learning needs to change as well to prepare future employees for differing requirements, such as working together, planning, entrepreneurship and problem-solving. Radically new teaching methods,

programmes and examinations are needed to develop a new structure better matched to modern society. The switch from thinking in terms of qualifications to thinking in terms of competences is central. The concept of competences is a consistent package of knowledge, skills and attitudes. A new qualification structure is being developed with competences for work, learning and citizenship as central issues. This structure gives more freedom to educational institutions to adopt innovative pedagogical and didactical methods (see Section 7.2).

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science asked *Colo* (the association of national centres of expertise on vocational education and the labour market) to coordinate this renewal of the national qualification structure (*Kwalificatiestructuur Beroepsonderwijs – KSB*). A coordination group, chaired by *Colo*, works together with the *Bve-Raad* and *Paepon* (see Section 3.1.1) on developing and, at a later stage, implementing the new structure. The expertise centres for vocational education, training and labour market are responsible for defining competences. They will also work more and more closely with educational institutions on this. The aim is to introduce, from 2005 on, a well functioning, clear and transparent qualification structure for senior secondary vocational education, which offers the possibilities of constant renewal and is an effective instrument for both the labour market and education (see Section 7.2).

2.2.2. Smooth transfer within vocational education

A well established vocational education route is necessary to respond to the demands of the knowledge society. In addition to streamlining formal requirements, special efforts have been made to coordinate the contents of the courses and develop continuous pathways to ease vertical progression. Furthermore, a new pedagogical-didactical approach for all sectors in vocational education should be developed to create a smooth transfer. A new pedagogical-didactical approach will be designed to respond to this development (De Bruijn, 2003). The career of the student is at the centre of this policy and better cooperation between government departments concerned with youth should guarantee a lower drop-out rate. The prevocational education sector needs extra emphasis and support to improve its quality and image. The government also wishes to cooperate with other EU-countries to increase transparency in international vocational education, e.g. by contributing to the Europass transparency of qualifications framework and guidance (see Section 11).

2.2.3. Operation Young people

Operation Young people (*Operatie Jong*) was initiated in 2003. In it, the Ministries of Health, Welfare and Sports, of Education, Culture and Science, of Justice, of Social Affairs and Employment and of Internal Affairs cooperate to bring more synergy and efficiency to youth policy and to remove obstacles in policy and practice. A youth agenda has been set up to work towards solutions on issues such as reducing youth unemployment, early school leaving,

educational or language disadvantages and youth criminality, and stimulating integration. The two actions below are part of the activities of Operation Young people.

2.2.3.1. *Youth unemployment action plan*

Although unemployment in the Netherlands is relatively low, it is increasing faster than the average of the European Union, especially amongst youngsters. Unemployment in the 15-22 year old age group (excluding students) has increased in 2002 to 8.7 %. In view of the overall ageing population, this group will play an essential role in the (future) labour market. All actors involved agree that school leavers (with or without a basic qualification) should in the coming years keep in shape for the labour market. The Secretaries of State of Education and Social Affairs joined hands, formulated an action plan and installed a Youth Unemployment Taskforce in November 2003.

The aims of the action plan are that:

- youth unemployment should not be more than twice the average percentage of unemployment;
- every unemployed youngster should have a job or re-enter education or training within six months, to prevent long term unemployment.

These aims are in line with the Lisbon aim that the number of citizens younger than 24 without basic qualifications should, in 2010, be reduced by 50 % in comparison with 2000.

The Youth Unemployment Taskforce supports the following goals:

- (a) 40 000 extra youth jobs, e.g. learning on the job, work-apprenticeship, job with (temporary) contract, should be guaranteed and realised by the end of 2007;
- (b) An extra 10 000 youth jobs should be reported at the centres for work and income by the end of 2004;
- (c) 7 500 youngsters should have actually started in a youth job by the end of 2004.

2.2.3.2. *Early school leaving*

Early school leaving is a major concern in the Netherlands. In 2001, about 47 000 youngsters (under 23 years old) left school without a basic qualification (one equivalent to the successful completion of a vocational education and training course at level II of the qualification structure of senior secondary vocational education, see Section 4.5) or to the diploma of senior secondary general education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) (see Section 4.4). According to the OECD's *Education at a Glance* comparative study, the percentage of early school leavers has been reduced from 17.6 % in 1996 to 15.3 % in 2001.

In 1999, the Early School Leaving Action Plan was launched, aiming to stimulate drop-outs to return to school and obtain a basic qualification, or to guide them to as high as possible a

function on the labour market. An analysis and state of affairs report on 2002 gave the following results:

- (a) the registration of early school leavers had improved considerably after the introduction of the Act on registration and coordination (see Section 3.2);
- (b) the guidance and support capacity of the regional registration and coordination centres was at its maximum (20 100 youngsters in 2002);
- (c) the number of early school leavers without any diploma seemed to be quite stable (at that time);
- (d) the regional networks, which should cooperate to fight early school leaving (educational institutions and supporting institutions), seemed to include nearly all the important actors.

Priorities in the coming years are to keep the working and learning career of students in view, to further strengthen cooperation in the regional networks, to give educational institutions more freedom to experiment with tailor-made programmes for these youngsters in line with the youth unemployment action plan, to give better support to students and to increase their responsibility for their own careers.

3. Institutional framework

3.1. Administrative framework

There are, in broad terms, three levels of organisation in the Dutch vocational education and training system:

- (a) national (ministries, umbrella organisations, support or advisory organisations, examination institutions and national social partner organisations);
- (b) sectoral (social partner organisations by sector, national expertise centres for vocational training and the labour market);
- (c) regional/local (schools, private training centres, municipalities, regionally organised social partner organisations).

3.1.1. National level

The following ministries play a role in education and training at central government level:

- (a) the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (*Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap*, OCW) is responsible for the total education system, including vocational education and adult education;
- (b) the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality (*Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Voedselkwaliteit*, LNV) is responsible for education and training in the agricultural sector;
- (c) the Ministry of Economic Affairs (*Ministerie van Economische Zaken*, EZ) is involved in lifelong learning, validation of informal and non-formal learning and employability initiatives;
- (d) the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (*Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid*, SZW) is responsible for training job seekers and the unemployed, takes part in interdepartmental initiatives on lifelong learning and new provisions for achieving a balance between work, family and caring responsibilities and leisure time. It is responsible for social inclusion and gender issues. A specific agency reporting to this Ministry is responsible for the management of the Equal and European Structural Funds programmes;
- (e) since 2002, the Ministry of Justice (*Ministerie van Justitie*) is responsible for the integration of *allochthones* (various generations of immigrants). The Minister of Integration and Immigration, in this Ministry, has taken over the previously-shared (budget) responsibility of the Minister of Welfare and the Minister of Education for the education budgets (see also Sections 5.1.1 and 10.3);

- (f) financial organisation and control and quality control of the implementation of education policy are executed respectively by *Centrale Financiering Instellingen* – CFI (Financing Services Institute) (see Chapter 10) and the Inspectorate of Education (see Chapter 8);
- (g) the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has a policy of decentralisation of responsibilities. It finances and monitors publicly funded institutions. VET institutions receive a lump sum for vocational education and training and are then responsible for the overall management of the institution, including personnel policy.

All regional training centres for vocational education and training (see Section 3.1.3 below) are represented at national level by the Dutch Council for Vocational Education and Training (*BVE Raad*). The same type of construction exists in the agriculture sector, where the AOC Council (*AOC Raad*) represents agricultural regional training centres (see 3.1.3 below). Private training centres (see 3.1.3 below) are represented by the umbrella organisation *Paepon*.

Universities of professional education (education at HBO level, see Section 4.6) are represented at national level by the association of universities of professional education (*HBO Raad*) and the universities by *VSNU* (Association of Universities in the Netherlands). The national expertise centres for vocational training and the labour market (see Section 3.1.2 below) are members of, and represented at national level by, their association *Colo* (*Vereniging van kenniscentra beroepsonderwijs bedrijfsleven*).

3.1.2. Sectoral level

The national expertise centres for vocational training and the labour market (*Kenniscentrum Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven*) are intermediary organisations organised on a branch or sectoral basis. Each of the 19 has a board consisting of representatives of both employers and employees and (in most cases) education. These institutions are quite unique and do not have exact equivalents in other countries. The association *Colo* was established in 1954, and the Adult and vocational education Act of 1996 refined the tasks and legal framework of the predecessors of the national expertise centres.

As intensive cooperation between the organised labour market and education is central to the concept of vocational education and training in the Netherlands, the expertise centres form the essential link between them. The following tasks are formulated by law (Vocational and Adult Education Act):

- to develop and maintain the qualifications for senior secondary vocational education (MBO);
- to recruit a sufficient number of (new) companies offering practical training places and to monitor the quality of these companies (in senior secondary vocational education, HBO and, additionally since 2003, in preparatory senior secondary vocational education, VMBO).

The aim of each expertise centre is to increase quality and professionalism in their branch by providing advice, information and training. Expertise centres also have a role in quantitative staffing in their branch and learn-work trajectories in preparatory senior secondary vocational education (see Section 7.2). At meso level, these centres define occupational profiles and work together with educational representatives to translate these into competence requirements (see Section 2.2). The introduction of the quality centre for examinations (see Section 8.1) changed the examination roles of the actors. The expertise centres are no longer responsible by law for the quality of the examinations. However all 19 expertise centres are now, each in a different way, involved in ensuring the quality of examinations. The expertise centres also act internationally, for example in projects on comparison of qualifications.

Employer and employee organisations are organised by sector and/or region. The biggest employer organisations are *VNO-NCW* and *MKB-Nederland* (see Annex 1). The national association VNO-NCW is the umbrella organisation for the bigger companies. It has five regional departments and around 170 (branch) member organisations in a wide range of economic sectors. MKB-Nederland is an umbrella organisation for around 125 branch organisations in the small and medium sized enterprises sector.

The most important employee organisations are *FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging)*, *CNV (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond)* and *MHP (Vakcentrale voor Middengroepen en Hoger Personeel)*. A number of economic sectors are represented by specialised departments (construction, government, services, transport, sport, catering and hotel, arts, police, etc.). These departments sometimes also represent their members on regional basis.

3.1.3. Regional/local level

In 2003/4, there were 43 regional training centres (*Regionaal Opleidingscentrum, ROC*). The number of trainees in a regional training centre varies from 2 000 to more than 24 000 in the bigger institutions. The average is 10 000.

In 2003/4, there were 12 agricultural regional training centres (*Agrarisch Opleidingscentrum, AOC*), offering preparatory and senior secondary vocational education courses in agriculture. These include nature management, environment and food.

Furthermore, there are 13 professional colleges (*vakschool*) offering courses in specialised branches, such as shipping and transport, graphics, special instruments, creative professions or wood and interior decorations. The average number of participants in a professional college is 1 000.

Other VET institutions include a senior secondary vocational education (MBO) institution merged with a university of professional education (*hogeschool*) and two MBO institutions for deaf students.

At the level of higher education (*hoger onderwijs, HO*, see Section 4.6), there are 47 institutes of professional education (giving training at HBO level), and 13 universities. In addition, the

Open University is open to all learners over 18 without any specific qualification requirements.

There is a large number of private training centres. *Paepon*, the umbrella organisation, represents around 100 of these.

Employer and employee organisations are also structured and organised at regional level to provide support to regional labour markets.

Municipalities are responsible for managing the budget for, and the good quality of, adult education provision.

The task of the regionally and locally structured centres for work and income (*Centrum voor Werk en Inkomen*, CWI) is to match job seeker training to the needs of the regional labour market.

3.2. Legislative framework

This section gives more detailed information on the most important acts governing various aspects of vocational education and training. Legislative acts in the Netherlands mainly provide a broad framework outlining the most important elements. In view of the policy of decentralisation, the government challenges the actors involved to use in the best possible way the possibilities provided by law. In Orders in Council (*algemene maatregel van bestuur*), which can be updated more easily, ministers formulate more detailed regulations.

3.2.1. Act on Vocational and Adult Education

On 1 January 1996, the Act on Vocational and Adult Education (*Wet educatie en beroepsopleiding* – WEB) came into force. This was the first act to bring together all types of secondary vocational education and adult education and aimed at strengthening and further integrating the system of initial and post-initial vocational education and training, and to set it apart from general education. The creation of a small number of large regional training centres out of numerous smaller schools has had a huge impact on the vocational education system. Another major achievement of this Act was the implementation of a national qualification structure. However, a new qualification structure based on competences is now under development (see Section 2.2 and Chapter 7).

A recent change in the Act is that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science's budget for adult education can, from 2006 on, only fund courses for Dutch as a second language at the higher levels. The responsibility for funding the courses at lower levels has been transferred to the Minister of Integration and Immigration (Ministry of Justice) (see also Sections 5.1.1 and 10.3).

3.2.2. Work and Income (Implementation Structure) Act

The Work and Income (Implementation Structure) Act (*Wet Structuur Uitvoering Werk en Inkomen* – SUWI), adopted on 29 November 2001, provides the framework for the training for the unemployed. One of the main characteristics of this act is greater emphasis on work than on income. A Council on Work and Income (*Raad van Werk en Inkomen*) has been established to guarantee a greater involvement of employers, employees and municipalities in policies concerning work and income. Reorganisation has resulted in a new supporting structure in which a large number of implementation bodies and employment agencies have been restructured into the centres for work and income, which act regionally and locally.

The reintegration market in the Netherlands is dynamic and is seen by the government as the final piece of effective reintegration policy. Privatisation has been implemented, but results are not satisfactory yet. Transparency is needed and, for this purpose, a quality mark is developed. Furthermore, the coordinating organisation, the Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body (UWV), has implemented 100 % ‘no cure, no pay’ contracts.

3.2.3. Act on Work and Public Assistance

In 2003, the Act on Work and Public Assistance (*Wet Werk en Bijstand*, WWB) was adopted, with implementation on 1 January 2004. The aim of the new Act, which replaces several older Acts, such as those on public assistance and hiring job seekers, is to activate more intensively those benefiting from public assistance to find paid work. Another aim is to make local authorities the central responsible body to stimulate the reintegration of this group. The starting point is that citizens do everything they can to live independently. Only in cases where this is not possible will the government help and support them. Municipalities are the responsible support body, leading them to work or providing a basic income.

Implementation of the Act is under way and the new arrangements are gradually taking over the arrangements under the old replaced acts.

3.2.4. Act on Regional Registration and Coordination (RMC)

On 13 February 2001, the Act on Regional Registration and Coordination (*Regionale Meld-en Coördinatiewet*, RMC) was adopted. This Act targets those under 23 years old, who are no longer of compulsory school age. It aims to coordinate and fight the problems of early school leaving at regional level. Educational institutions are obliged by law to inform the municipality of all early school leavers, registering and following up the names and trying to lead these youngsters back to education or work. In the annex to the Act, the regions (and municipalities) who should work together for this purpose are listed. Municipalities work together with the centres for work and income, youth care departments, the police, the Public Prosecutor, etc.

3.3. Role of the social partners

The principle of social partner involvement in education and training can be characterised as an important advisory and initiating role in many networks, bodies, councils and boards of institutions. They are involved in important new developments for example the newly established innovation platform supporting the move to the knowledge society, see Section 2.1.

At national level, the Social Economic Council (*Sociaal Economische Raad* – SER) is the main advisory body of the Dutch government and gives advice, solicited or unsolicited, on all major social and economic issues. Its position is anchored in law since 1950 when the Industrial Organisation Act came into force and it took over the main advisory tasks of the Labour Foundation (*Stichting van de Arbeid*). In its influential advisory capacity, the SER represents the interests of trade unions and industry. The Labour Foundation still functions as a platform for the three most important employer organisations and trade unions.

Both government and social partners have their own responsibilities and roles in negotiations. However, they are inter-dependent because they both have access to a part of the policy instruments. For example, the social partners negotiate wage policies, the outcomes of which substantially influence all government expenditure and public charges. Cooperation is essential to achieve collectively defined aims.

Every year, a spring and autumn high level meeting takes place between the social partners (united in the Labour Foundation) and the government. In the Spring Council 2000 an important impulse for vocational education and training was initiated by the social partners. A steering committee, Impulse vocational education and training (*Stuurgroep Impuls Beroepsonderwijs*) was installed to strengthen vocational education, to define a joint responsibility between education and social partners for education and training and to take initiatives for training the employed and unemployed. In 2003 an agreement was signed between government, the Labour Foundation and the Platform Vocational Education and Training (*Platform Beroepsonderwijs*) to make use of the innovative role of vocational education to bring forward the knowledge economy.

At sectoral level, social partners are represented in the board of *Colo*, the association of expertise centres on vocational education, training and the labour market. *Colo* has a tripartite board consisting of a chairman and representatives from employers (two), employees (two) and national expertise centres for vocational education, training and labour market (four). Committees for each branch, where social partners and education representatives have equal representation (the so-called *paritaire commissies*), have been created. These committees define occupational profiles, which are subsequently elaborated by educational institutions into educational profiles.

At regional level, most regional training centres (ROC) have representatives of (regional-level) social partners in their supervisory board.

At enterprise or branch level, social partners are involved in negotiations on collective labour agreements. Training measures increasingly form part of these agreements in terms of human resource management and lifelong learning for employees (see Sections 5.2.3 and 10.4.2).

The social partners are also involved in sectoral platforms to monitor the quality of examinations in vocational education and training (see Section 8.1). They are increasingly involved in, or take initiatives at, branch or local level by stimulating cooperation between education and training and trade and industry. The main idea is to improve the relationship between the demand for, and supply of, labour and skilled personnel (see also Section 7.1).

4. Initial education and training

4.1. Overview

Education is compulsory in the Netherlands from the age of five until the school year in which a pupil becomes 16. Pupils can enter primary education from the age of four (or if the school board allows it, two months before the fourth birthday). Full-time compulsory education is followed by part-time compulsory education, where students are required to attend school for two days a week until the school year in which they reach the age of 17. Those following the block or day-release pathway (*beroepsbegeleidende leerweg*, BBL) in senior secondary vocational education (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, MBO) (see Section 4.5 below) are allowed to attend school for one day a week.

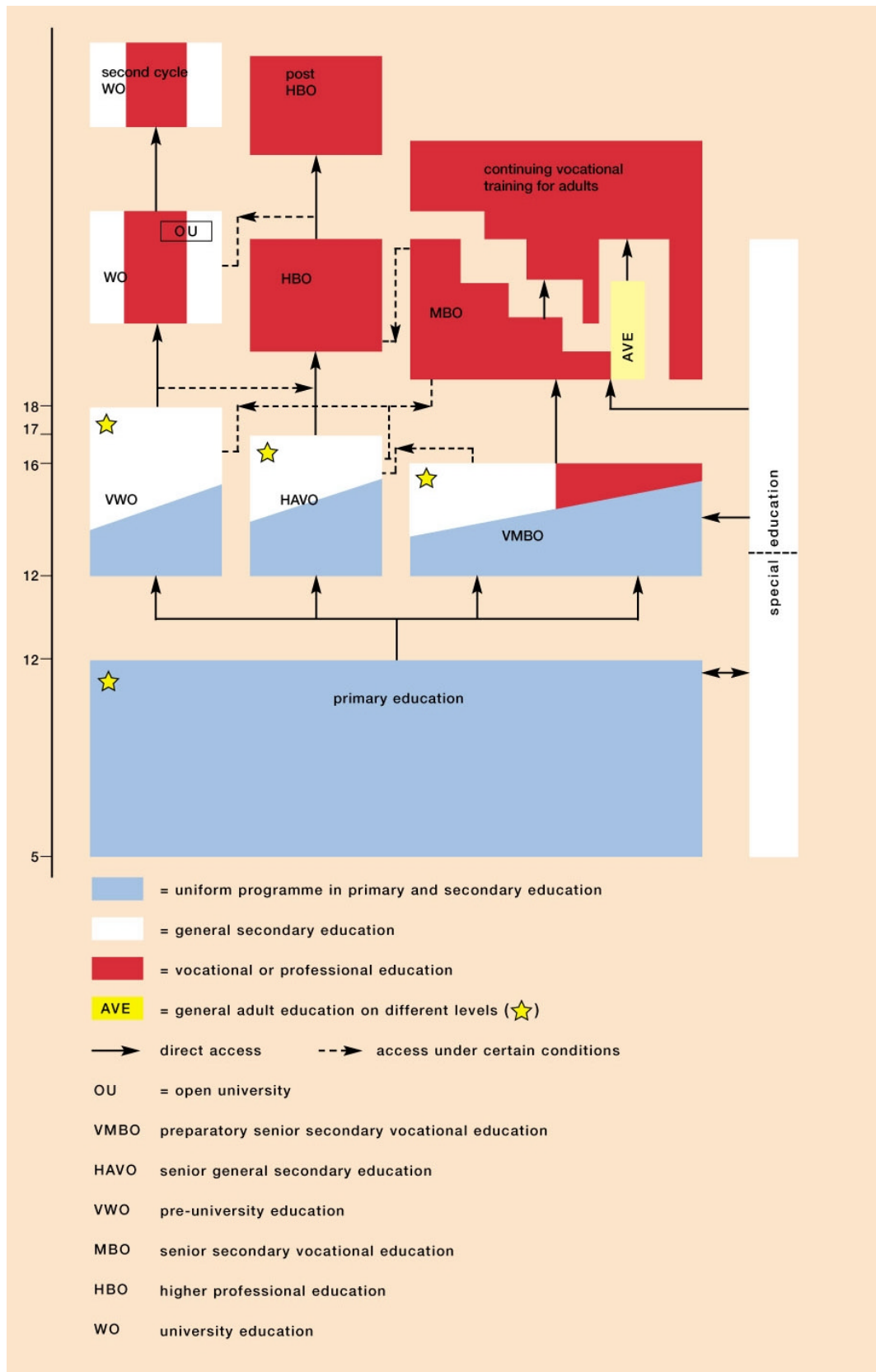
A significant feature of Dutch education is freedom of choice. This includes the freedom to establish schools and organise instruction according to one's own principles. Schools established on this basis are private schools. 'Public schools' are governed by the local authorities, e.g. the municipalities. Both types of school are subsidised by the state and have to fulfil some basic criteria and follow rules laid down by the Ministry of Education.

Five main elements distinguish Dutch education and training (see Figure 2):

- (a) primary education (*basisonderwijs*);
- (b) secondary education (*voortgezet onderwijs*, VO), which has two cycles;
- (c) senior secondary vocational education (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, MBO) and general adult education (*volwasseneneducatie*, corresponding in Figure 2 to AVE);
- (d) higher education, comprising higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, HBO) and university education (*wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, WO);
- (e) special education.

Continuing training for job seekers and employees will be outlined in Chapter 5.

Figure 2: Structure of the education and training system



Source: CINOP, 2004

Table 7: Number of students, by level of education, in thousands

			1999-2000	2001/2	2003/4 ⁽¹⁾
Primary education (PO)	Total PO		1 638.8	1 652.3	1 653.7
Secondary education (VO) This includes VMBO, HAVO and VWO	Total VO		891.0	904.5	924.9
Senior secondary vocational education (MBO)	Total MBO		434.1	455.5	477.7
	BOL ⁽²⁾			297.0	317.1
	<i>Of which:</i>	<i>BOL part-time</i>		27.8	20.5
		<i>BOL-green ⁽³⁾</i>		15.3	14.9
	BBL			158.5	160.6
	<i>Of which:</i>	<i>BBL-green ⁽³⁾</i>		8.4	8.6
Higher professional education (HBO)	Total HBO		302.5	320.8	334.5
	Full-time HBO			248.0	260.3
	Part-time HBO			64.3	65.5
	HBO-green ⁽³⁾			8.5	8.7
University education (WO)	Total WO		163.1	171.9	187.2
	WO			168.1	182.9
	WO-green ⁽³⁾			3.8	4.3
Total			3 429.5	3 505.0	3 578.0

⁽¹⁾ Provisional figures 2003/04.

⁽²⁾ For difference between BOL and BBL pathway, see Section 4.5

⁽³⁾ The agricultural ('green') sector is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality, therefore the number of students is counted separately.

Source: Key Figures 1999-2003, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

The system can be divided into two educational streams:

- (a) the general education stream goes from primary education, via HAVO (secondary general secondary education) and VWO (pre-university education), to higher education. At higher level it is given a partly vocational flavour;
- (b) the vocational education stream goes from preparatory senior secondary vocational education (*voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, VMBO), via senior secondary vocational education (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, MBO), to higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, HBO). Senior secondary vocational education is the pivot in this column.

In the Dutch system, a clear division is made between vocational education on the one side and general education on the other. Choice of one stream or the other can occur at different stages of education. Unlike other European countries (France, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, for instance), integration of, or at least a closer link between, vocational education and general education is not sought. The separation between the two streams has become even more obvious in the past few years, since the strengthening of the vocational stream became a main policy objective (see Section 2.2).

Table 8: Transfers to higher levels in the vocational education column, in thousands

		1996	1999	2001
VMBO to MBO	Total	89.3	85.7	87.0
<i>of which:</i>	without diploma	3.7	6.6	9.9
	with diploma	85.6	79.1	77.1
MBO (levels III and IV) to HBO	Total	17.7	18.1	17.9
<i>of which:</i>	without diploma	0.7	0.8	0.2
	with diploma	17.0	17.3	17.8

Source: Key Figures 2003, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

4.2. Pre-primary education

There is no formal educational provision or public pre-primary schools for children under the age of four. There are, however, childcare facilities for younger children, such as day nurseries, private child minders, company childcare systems, out-of-school care and playgroups, to foster children's social skills. In 2004, specific legislation has been put down in

the Act on Childcare. The Act only provides a framework and aims to promote a self-regulating 'child care market'. The costs are shared by parents, employers and government, of which the parental and governmental part can differ according to the income of the parents. In case employers do not contribute financially, the government will provide compensation, but only for the coming three years. The quality conditions in the Act are only temporary. In 2007, quality conditions will no longer be imposed and the market should regulate itself.

In June 2000, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Minister for Urban Policy and Integration of Minorities published a policy letter on early childhood education. It gives an outline of government policy and lists concrete measures. Early childhood education is geared to children aged two to five who are at risk of educational disadvantage. The aim is partially to integrate this policy with urban and municipal policy on educational disadvantage.

4.3. Primary education

Primary education (ISCED level 1) lasts eight years and is intended for pupils between the ages of 4 and 12. It is compulsory from the age of five, but almost all children start primary school at the age of four. Core objectives describe in broad terms the knowledge, skills and understanding all pupils must have gained at the end of their primary education. Pupils do not receive a certificate or diploma at the end of primary education, but a report on their educational progress at school and their learning capabilities.

4.4. Secondary education

Secondary education (*voortgezet onderwijs*, VO) is targeted at students aged between 12 and 16 or 18. It consists of two cycles: lower and upper secondary education. It is divided into three types of schools, all having a core curriculum of a number of subjects for the first two years (*basisvorming*).

Pre-university education (*voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, VWO) lasts six years and prepares students for university education (*wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, WO) or higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, HBO). It is classified as ISCED levels 2 and 3; the last three school years form part of the second cycle of general secondary education (ISCED 3);

Senior general secondary education (*hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*, HAVO) takes five years. Its aim is to prepare students for higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, HBO). However, many pupils go on to senior secondary vocational education (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, MBO) or transfer to the fifth year of VWO. It is classified as ISCED levels 2 and 3; the last two school years form the second cycle of general secondary education (ISCED level 3).

In the upper cycle of HAVO and VWO, two significant innovations have been implemented recently. Whereas, previously, students could choose freely in which subjects they would take exams, they now select one of the four content-related profiles: nature and technology, nature and health, economics and society, culture and society. In addition, schools have been encouraged gradually to develop into study houses (*studiehuizen*), in which the students will increasingly do their work independently. The focus is on the acquisition of knowledge and skills by the students themselves. The aim of both innovations is better preparation for higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, HBO) and more generally higher education (*hoger onderwijs*, HO).

Preparatory senior secondary vocational education (*voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, VMBO) lasts four years and prepares for training in MBO. The curriculum consists of general subjects and, in the last two school years, vocationally oriented subjects, which can be followed in various learning pathways. This type of education is classified as ISCED level 2.

VMBO came into being in August 2001 when junior general secondary education (*middelbaar algemeen vormend onderwijs*, MAVO) and preparatory vocational education (*voorbereidend beroepsonderwijs*, VBO) were merged. The aim was to strengthen the position of VBO in the system and improve the vocational preparation of students in MAVO. The integration is consistent with the fact that the majority of MAVO students transferred to MBO (upper cycle).

VMBO consists of four learning pathways, each of which offers four fields of study (technology, care and welfare, economics and agriculture):

- (a) theoretical learning pathway. Those qualifying from the theoretical learning pathway can transfer to MBO (short or long course) or continue their education in the fourth year of HAVO;
- (b) mixed learning pathway. This is similar to the theoretical learning pathway but is more vocationally oriented;
- (c) vocationally oriented learning pathway to prepare for the long MBO course;
- (d) vocationally oriented learning pathway to prepare for the short MBO course.

In addition, there is a specific practical pathway for low-achievers, which is geared towards direct preparation for the labour market.

4.5. Senior secondary vocational education

The majority of senior secondary vocational education (MBO) is provided by public institutes (the regional or agricultural training centres, ROC and AOC). Since the implementation of the Act on Vocational and Adult Education in 1996, private educational institutions can also provide education and training related to the national qualification structure (see below).

The age of the participants in vocational education ranges from 16 to 64 (including adult vocational education). However, 95 % of the participants in the main pathway (vocational training pathway with theoretical and practical training) are aged under 22. Participants pay school or course fees and qualify for student financial support in return if they take school-based full-time training (see Chapter 10).

Senior secondary vocational education (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, MBO) has a structure that corresponds to the different sectors in the economy. Training programmes are offered in four different fields: technology, commerce/administration, services/health care and agriculture. Entrepreneurial skills to prepare students to start their own enterprises in any sector are also included in the training programmes. Training is provided, within the framework of the national qualification structure for vocational education (*kwalificatiestructuur beroepsonderwijs*, KSB), at four different levels:

- (a) level I (*assistentenopleiding*, assistant training) lasts for a maximum of one year. It prepares participants to carry out simple executive tasks (ISCED level 2);
- (b) level II (*basisberoepsopleiding*, basic vocational training) lasts two or three years. It prepares people to carry out executive tasks (ISCED level 3);
- (c) level III (*vakopleiding*, vocational training) lasts two to four years (two after completion of level II). It prepares people to carry out tasks completely independently (ISCED level 3);
- (d) level IV (*middenkaderopleiding*, middle-management training) usually lasts four years. It prepares people to carry out specialised tasks completely independently (ISCED level 3). Those who complete the training can transfer to higher professional education.

The specialist course (*specialistenopleiding*) (ISCED 4) is open to students from the vocational training course. This course lasts one to two years, and prepares them to transfer their specialist knowledge to others.

Within senior secondary vocational education (MBO), there are two learning pathways: the block- (or day) release pathway (*beroepsbegeleidende leerweg*, BBL) and the vocational training pathway (*beroepsopleidende leerweg*, BOL).

BBL is a learning pathway which comprises at least 60 % training in a company, and the rest at a school. Students have a contract with the company where they receive practical training. The contract (*leerwerkovereenkomst*) specifies that the student both works and learns within the company. BBL has grown sharply since the mid-1950s and more and more women are taking part. The proportion of students over the age of 20, and particularly over 27, is increasing rapidly. However, in 2003, participation in BBL decreased, due to students leaving, sometimes without diplomas, to fill labour market vacancies. In contrast, participation in the vocational training pathway BOL increased.

BOL is a more theoretical pathway where the percentage of practical occupational training (*beroepspraktijkvorming*, BPV) is between 20 and 60. In principle, it is possible to attend any

training in the qualification structure through both pathways. However, in practice, not all (but most) of the programmes are offered in both pathways, though these possibilities are increasing.

Table 9: Participation in MBO training schemes, in thousands, 1998/99 to 2002/03

	1998/99	2001/02	2002/2003*
MBO – BBL	131.9	155.9	152.0
MBO – BOL (full-time)	255.0	264.5	281.7
MBO – BOL (part-time)	23.4	25.5	20.5
* (provisional figures)			

Source: Key Figures 1999-2003, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Table 10: Participation in MBO agricultural training schemes, in thousands, 1998/99 to 2002/03

	1998/99	2001/02	2002/03*
MBO – BBL agricultural	8.1	8.6	8.6
MBO – BOL agricultural	16.5	15.0	14.9
* (provisional figures)			

Source: Key Figures 1999-2003, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

All training courses included in the qualification structure are in the central register of vocational training courses (*Centraal register beroepsopleidingen, CREBO*).

4.6. Higher education

Higher education is offered at two types of institutions: research universities offering research oriented programmes (*wetenschappelijk onderwijs, WO*) and universities of professional education (*hogescholen*) offering programmes of higher professional education (*hoger beroepsopleiding, HBO*). Since September 2002, higher education has been organised around a three-cycle degree system consisting of bachelor, master and PhD degrees. At the same time the ECTS credit system was adopted as a way of quantifying periods of study.

4.6.1. University education

There are two cycles in university education (*wetenschappelijk onderwijs*, WO) (ISCED level 5). The first cycle lasts four years and prepares for a scientific career or professions requiring an academic level. The second cycle, which has limitations in capacity and admission, provides advanced training for scientific research.

Admission to university is gained on the basis of a diploma in VWO and in some cases in HBO.

The Open University (*Open Universiteit*), on the other hand, as an institution for higher distance education, is open to people aged 18 and over and does not have any other admission requirements. It also provides adult education.

4.6.2. Higher professional education

Higher professional education (*hoger beroepsonderwijs*, HBO) is geared towards theoretical and practical preparation for an occupation. It is provided by universities of professional education (*hogescholen*).

Full-time higher professional education (ISCED level 5) is open to those who have obtained a diploma in VWO, HAVO or the long MBO. This type of training normally lasts four years and is geared towards theoretical and practical preparation for vocational practice, for which high level vocational education is required. Seven fields of training are offered: agriculture, technology, commerce, health care, personal development, art, and training of teachers/trainers.

Table 11: Participation in HBO, in thousands, 1999/2000 to 2003/04

	1999/2000	2001/02	2003/04*
Agricultural courses	8.5	8.3	8.7
All other courses	276.4	299.1	307.5
Total	293.9	307.4	315.9
* (provisional figures)			

Source: Key Figures 1999-2003, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

4.6.2.1. Dual learning

All HBO training schemes contain a practical training part in the form of a training period (*stage*). Dual forms of learning have been developed in the last few years to further improve the match between HBO and work practice. An example of this is the pathway involving

cooperation with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in which the last year of training consists of a combination of learning and working in SMEs.

Enrolment in dual courses is relatively limited, but since the start in 1992/93 the number of students has risen considerably (from 200 in 1992/93 to 2 200 in 2001/02).

4.7. Special education

Special education is open to children from three to (maximum) 20 years old, depending on the type of special education and their requirement for special treatment. Within primary and secondary special education, 11 different types of education are distinguished. These are for: deaf children, hearing-impaired children, children with severe speech disorders, visually handicapped children, physically handicapped children, chronically ill children, children with severe learning difficulties, severely maladjusted children, children in paedological institutes, preschool children with developmental difficulties and multi-handicapped children. There are also programmes for children under seven years old whose parents are from ethnic minorities. The aim is to prevent educational disadvantage.

The overall aim of special education (in all educational sectors) is that as many pupils as possible return to 'ordinary' education. Special schools cooperate with mainstream schools to provide a range of special needs facilities. Alternatively learning support and practical training are introduced in mainstream schools (primary and secondary education). More information is provided in Eurybase (<http://www.eurydice.org>).

5. Continuing vocational education and training for adults

5.1. Policy overview

Geared to the needs of people over 18 and aimed at qualifying them for work or preparing them for further training, this field is as broad and diverse as individuals are. Roughly, a distinction can be made between general adult education and vocationally oriented continuing training (for the unemployed or employed). The largest part is corporate training for the employed, but this is also the hardest sector to define (relatively few figures, research or financial data are available).

In this section, the following classification for continuing (vocational) education and training is used:

- (a) adult education and general secondary education for adults (*voortgezet algemeen volwassenen onderwijs, VAVO*) are the types of education which come under the 1996 Adult and Vocational Education Act (*Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs, WEB*) and are provided at regional training centres;
- (b) training for the unemployed;
- (c) training for the employed (corporate training, privately funded training and part-time vocational education).

The general policy strategy is that the government is responsible for general adult education, which comes under the WEB Act, and training for the unemployed. The Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and of Social Affairs and Employment are the most important actors.

Since 2002, the integration of immigrants (of older generations as well as the ‘newcomers’) is the responsibility of the Minister of Integration and Immigration, residing under the Ministry of Justice.

5.1.1. Adult education

Adult education is primarily targeted at people who are unemployed or wish to rejoin the labour market. Participants must have completed compulsory education to be admitted to general secondary adult education (*voortgezet algemeen volwassenen onderwijs, VAVO*). Additional requirements may be imposed, depending on the type of education. No requirements are necessary to be admitted to basic adult education courses or continuing vocational training for adults.

Adult education has a separate qualification structure (*Kwalificatiestructuur Educatie*, KSE) distinguishing six levels:

- (a) self-reliance level (*redzaamheidsniveau*);
- (b) threshold level (*drempelniveau*);
- (c) basic level (*basisniveau*);
- (d) initial 1 level (*start-1-niveau*);
- (e) initial 2 level (*start-2-niveau*);
- (f) advanced level (*voortgezet niveau*).

Courses at levels 1 – 3 (self-reliance, threshold and basic levels) are aimed at:

- furthering self-reliance;
- providing a broad basic education and social skills;
- imparting Dutch as second language at five different levels (not forming part of the qualification structure for education). An example of this type of course is the educational component of the (compulsory) integration programmes for newly arrived immigrants.

In general secondary adult education, courses are provided at initial levels 1 and 2 and advanced level (see above levels 4 – 6), through which participants can obtain a MAVO (now part of VMBO), HAVO or VWO qualification (see Sections 4.4 and 4.5).

The distribution of adult education tasks under the WEB Act has been reviewed in the framework of the evaluation of the Act in 2001. The results of the evaluation were not very positive:

- cooperation among municipalities and between municipalities and regional training centres is insufficient;
- the difference between the financing of adult education and of vocational education is an obstacle for realising combined pathways and good links between the two sectors, which was the initial aim.

Up to now, it was obligatory for municipalities to outsource the courses for the integration of new immigrants only to the regional training centres (ROCs). Since the responsibility for this target group has shifted from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (following the WEB Act) to the Ministry of Justice, this will change. It is proposed that the available budgets be given to the biggest municipalities in the framework of their social, integration and security policy budgets from 2006 onwards. They subsequently will get more freedom to spend these budgets related to the needs of their citizens.

Outsourcing to ROCs will probably remain common practice, but municipalities will have more freedom in the choice of supplier. The budget for integrating older generation

immigrants ('oldcomers') was never part of the budget of the Ministry of Education, so there is no change in this respect.

5.1.2. Transfer to vocational education

Different levels in adult education provide access to different training courses and qualification levels in vocational education (following the national qualification structure, see Section 4.5). The 'threshold qualification' provides access to 'assistant training' (level I). The 'basic qualification' provides access to 'basic trade practitioner training' (level II). 'Initial 1' qualifications provide access to 'training for trade professionals' and 'middle-management professional training' (levels III and IV). The 'initial 2' qualifications provide access to higher professional education (HBO). The 'advanced qualification' provides access to university education.

5.1.3. Training for the unemployed

Training for the unemployed falls under the responsibility of the municipalities (short-term unemployed) and the *Uitvoering Werknemersverzekeringen* (UWV, Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body) who are accountable for the long-term unemployed and other groups excluded from the labour market. This type of training is an aspect of the broader reintegration process of the unemployed into work. Reintegration is financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The focus is on recognition by the (regional) business community.

5.1.4. Part-time vocational education and training for the employed

The most significant forms of part-time vocational education subsidised by the government are part-time MBO and part-time HBO (see Section 4.5). The participants generally attend these alongside their work.

The most common form of enterprise-based continuing vocational training (CVT) in the Netherlands is corporate training. This training can take the form of courses, on-the-job training or other activities such as job rotation, conferences or distance learning.

Corporate training in enterprises is not organised in any consistent way. Learning routes are highly heterogeneous and recognised by enterprises (not nationally). A distinguishing feature of Dutch continuing vocational training is that employer organisations and employees, through Collective Labour Agreements (*Collectieve Arbeidsovereenkomsten*, CAOs), have taken responsibility for providing and funding continuing training for employees on a relatively large scale and on a voluntary basis. The government is involved, but mostly in an indirect way. The provision of CVT in the Netherlands is, to a large extent, privately organised and funded (see Section 10.4).

5.2. Planning, organising and providing learning

5.2.1. Adult education under the WEB Act

Since 1996, the legal framework for adult education is the Vocational and Adult Education Act (WEB, see Section 3.2).

The regional training centres (ROCs) supply basic adult education and Dutch as a second language. These training programmes are publicly financed and managed by the municipalities. More and other (private) training providers are entering the market for basic adult education and Dutch as a second language.

Most of the ROCs also have a private training institute or commercial department through which they provide continuing training programmes.

There is a trend, established some time ago, towards higher participation in the lower levels of the adult education system. The priorities established by the municipal authorities account for the emphasis on participation by individuals requiring courses at the lower levels. With regard to the (compulsory) integration of newcomers, the emphasis is also on training courses at these levels.

In October 2003, 156 000 adults participated in adult education courses (see Section 5.1.1 for the types of courses). The majority followed courses in Dutch as a second language (65 % mainly at the lower levels), which is a part of the integration courses for immigrants. A further trend visible for a few years now is that the number of participants from ethnic minorities is increasing steadily.

The number of participants in general secondary adult education is decreasing slowly and in 2003 was only 10 % of the total.

5.2.2. Training for the unemployed

The Work and Income (Implementation Structure) Act (*Wet Structuur Uitvoering Werk en Inkomen*, SUWI) provides for training for the unemployed (see Section 3.2).

With the SUWI Act a different organisation of the executive bodies was introduced. The centres for work and income (*Centra voor Werk en Inkomen*, CWI) and the UWV (*Uitvoering Werknemersverzekeringen*, Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body) were introduced in 1999 as new executive bodies for the local authorities and the Ministry of Social Affairs. The local authorities have become responsible for reintegrating the unemployed. The CWIs provide the central desk for registration and advise the local authorities on steps to be undertaken for reintegration, part of which can be training.

The UWVs are responsible by law (WWB, see Section 3.2) for the long-term unemployed and the disabled. The reintegration of these groups is put out to tender and carried out by private reintegration companies (recognised by government). In theory regional training centres (ROCs) could also tender for reintegration, but in practice up to 2000 only one ROC made the effort of seeking accreditation.

5.2.3. Part-time vocational education and training for the employed

Part-time vocational education mostly takes place in dual trajectories, where the school-based part is provided by the ROCs (or universities of professional education, HBO).

Many private training providers are active in continuing vocational training for the employed. Of these, 200 are formally recognised training institutes. Among these institutions are commercial departments of the regional training centres. These formally recognised training institutes have the right to provide training programmes within the framework of the national qualification structure, so participants in these courses can obtain a nationally recognised diploma. However, the majority of training courses are recognised only by the enterprise or sector.

Training for the employed is characterised by collective labour agreements. An important form of funding for corporate training is the sectoral training and development funds (see Section 10.4.2). These are funded by workers and enterprises and are intended to keep the skills and competences of personnel in a certain branch at a high level. Increasing the employability of people, stimulating lifelong learning and maintaining high levels of knowledge in the sector were basic aspects in creating these funds. Training is often provided by sector specific training institutions and linked to an accreditation system for training institutes.

Another measure to stimulate employee training at individual level is the individual learning account (see Section 10.4.3).

6. Training of teachers and trainers

6.1. General

Every five years, the government formulates capability requirements for all teachers and, where possible, other education staff. These requirements are the basis for the training and continuing training programmes for teachers and other personnel. The inspectorate controls the training of teaching staff.

The training of teaching staff and the shortage of teachers is a main policy priority. The shortage of teaching personnel is, particularly in primary and secondary education, a huge problem, but exists to a lesser extent in senior secondary vocational education and in adult education. In this sector, 2 500 to 3 500 extra teachers are needed yearly. These should be recruited from the regular teacher training courses but also from outside the education domain. This is already common practice in vocational education, but only to a lesser extent in primary and secondary education. The Ministry of Education has drafted an ‘Act on the stimulation of recruitment of teaching staff from outside the teaching branch’. The aim is to open up the recruitment ‘market’ for teachers by formulating clear capability requirements. Thus, it will be possible to attain the necessary requirements via accreditation of prior learning and other ways as well as through the regular teacher training courses. Unlike schools in secondary education, regional training centres have a great deal of freedom in appointing their own personnel. Teachers can be appointed on the basis of their proven abilities and competences as a teacher rather than simply for having the right diplomas.

Regional agreements are necessary to cope with the shortage of personnel, especially in the big cities. In April 2002, the social partners in the education sector, united in the SBO (*Sectorbestuur Onderwijsarbeidsmarkt*, Sectoral Board for the labour market in the education sector), took the initiative to start a process to reduce shortages of skilled personnel and to revitalise the sector so as to be able to reach the ambitious aims agreed at European level. The number of unfilled vacancies in secondary education in 2006 will reach 6 000, if there are no policy changes. In Agenda 2006, the sectoral employers’ and employees’ organisations have formulated an agenda with eight main points:

- (a) focus on the professionalism of trainers and teachers;
- (b) the entrepreneurial school;
- (c) professional management;
- (d) strengthening of human resource management policy;
- (e) training of teachers and other personnel in education;
- (f) competitive conditions of employment;
- (g) attractive working environment;

- (h) developing links with other sectors to attract teachers.

A national information point has been opened for those wanting to work in education (in any function) and a website (<http://www.leraar.nl>) is also available. Within the framework of the decentralisation of responsibilities to educational institutions, more importance is attached to the management skills of the (often very large) regional training centres and educational institutions. A large number of in-service short-term courses is offered by various private training providers. These courses are paid for from the lump-sum budgets of these institutions.

6.1.1. Revision of training for teachers and educational staff

The competences asked of teachers are changing rapidly in educational practice, demanding that staff training be adapted in response. The proposed answer is a new structure for education professions which can also help to reduce the shortage of teaching personnel, in both the short and long term. In 2003 the Minister of Education, Culture and Science proposed a new comprehensive structure with basic quality conditions for the various occupations (teachers, teaching assistant, teacher support, etc.). Furthermore, training inside the school will become a more structural element of the (re)training of teachers and of a modern staff development policy. Schools can, under certain conditions, be reimbursed for the extra costs when training in the workplace forms a substantial part of the training of (future) teachers.

6.2. Training of teachers/trainers in educational establishments

Teacher training forms part of higher education and falls under the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act. Since September 2002, it follows the bachelor/master system. The new system is based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Existing initial courses of higher professional education (HBO) have been converted to bachelor courses. Advanced courses offered by HBO institutes will be converted into master's courses, provided they are accredited by the Netherlands Accreditation Organisation.

The following types of teacher training can be distinguished for secondary education:

- (a) teacher training at universities for professional education (HBO), in general subjects for second-grade and first-grade entitlement in secondary education. Second-grade teachers (duration of training: four years full-time, but also possible on a part-time basis) are allowed to teach in the first three years of HAVO and VWO and all years of VMBO and MBO. First-grade teachers (duration of training: three years part-time on top of second-grade entitlement) are allowed to teach throughout secondary education;
- (b) teacher training in technical subjects for a second-grade entitlement at one of the establishments of the Netherlands Fontys technical teacher training college (*Fontys Pedagogische technische hogeschool Nederland*) (duration of training: four years full-time or four to six years part-time);

- (c) teacher training in green (agricultural) subjects at the STOAS agricultural teacher training college (STOAS *hogeschool*);
- (d) teacher training at university level for first-grade entitlement in one of the HAVO/VWO examination subjects (duration of training: one year). This type of training is offered at nine universities (three technical universities and six general universities).

A second-grade certificate is required for teachers in vocational education at secondary level. In this respect, vocational education differs from general education at upper secondary level, for which first-grade entitlement is required. However, in practical occupational training (BPV, see Section 4.5), are teachers with different levels of training, including some who have obtained first-grade qualifications. Teachers for the general subjects of vocational education such as languages or social studies are trained in the same way as teachers for general education. Vocationally-oriented subjects are generally taught by teachers who have followed specific training for this purpose.

6.3. Training of trainers in vocational training establishments: concept of dual learning

Special dual training projects involving cooperation between VET institutions and teacher training institutions have been established for people wanting to work in education as teachers or in another function. The basis for this project initiated by 13 ROCs was threefold:

- ROCs wanted teacher training institutions to take into account the function differentiation in the teaching profession. Before this, teacher training colleges educated their students as second grade teachers and there was no possibility of anticipating new functions;
- ROCs fear a large exodus of their teaching staff in the coming 10 years, mainly due to (early) retirement;
- The educational innovation planned by the ROCs will be made more effective and more motivating by teaching the new standards in groups, rather than letting new teachers try to innovate educational methods at ROCs individually.

The aim of the dual approach is to develop a new, demand-based training and teaching system, with the design of a four year route that takes account of (sub)competences corresponding with the job profiles of the different functions in the ROCs (educational assistants, trainers, coaches and teachers). This provision is competence-based, instead of curriculum oriented, with a central role for learning at the workplace. The student can develop his/her competences in a dual way of learning, coached by the coach from the institute for teacher training as well as by the coach at the workplace (the ROC). Learning by producing is the main methodology, which means that the student develops his/her competences by working on real and useful products. The daily tasks in the working environment of ROC students are the point of departure. During the course the students meet each other – one day a

week - in the training group at the teacher training college to reflect and exchange experiences and learning issues. The ROCs and the teacher training college are both responsible for the quality and organisation of the dual course. Teacher-training institutes have to develop innovative demand-based ways of teaching and training. The needs of the ROCs are well trained educational staff with up-to-date competences and with functions at different levels.

Students in this dual system are a 'new' target group. In the traditional system, students who start in the educational assistant, trainer or coach course would probably not have the opportunity to enter teacher training, because their level of preliminary training is not sufficient. Dual training however provides the opportunity for a student to move, for example, from educational assistant to teacher. In most cases the students have a broad vocational experience and also some training or tutorial experience in the workplace.

In addition, there are specific projects financed by the social partners in the education sector (*SBO-Sectorbestuur onderwijsarbeidsmarkt*) aimed at specific target groups such as ethnic minorities (<http://www.sboinfo.nl>).

6.4. Trainers in the workplace

The expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market (see Section 3.1.2) have formulated criteria for accrediting companies that provide practical training. One of these criteria is that the trainers, who are responsible for guiding and training students in the company, should have didactical skills and know how to instruct, guide, motivate and assess the students. Almost all expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market provide (commercial) courses regularly to train these trainers in the various branches. For some sectors (e.g. security) further criteria related to the skills and qualifications of the trainer are formulated, such as a minimum level of training attained or the obligation to have followed a practical trainer course.

7. Skills and competence development

7.1. Skills anticipation mechanisms

The *Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt*, (ROA, the Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market), specialises in labour market forecasting and skills anticipation. The forecasts aim to increase transparency in the match between education and the labour market, in order to refine the opportunities and risks resulting from future labour supply and demand developments signalled. Two approaches can be distinguished: top-down and bottom-up. In the top-down approach, a general forecasting model for the whole labour market and data from national sources are combined to serve two main functions: policy and information (Van Eijs, 1994). ROA publishes a biennial report on the labour market, by education and occupation. This includes analyses of expected labour market developments in the light of particular policy issues. The bottom-up approach uses partial models of labour market forecasting, such as selected sectors or occupations.

The association of expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market *Colo* (see Chapter 3) works together with ROA to make better use of the available data. Their cooperation has been signalled in a four year contract. The respective expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market publish ‘education and labour market research’ for their own sector, making use of ROA information. These documents contain information on the labour market by sector or branch (the national bodies are branch-oriented), such as expected demand for qualified personnel and the expected availability of places in companies for practical training (as part of vocational education courses). The educational institutions are subsequently responsible for attuning their provision of education at regional and national level with other providers. The regional training centres sometimes carry out their own market research to get insight into expected needs for qualified employees at regional level.

The centres for work and income – CWI (see Section 3.1.3) are also involved in the cooperation between the ROA and *Colo* to match the information on demand and supply in the labour market, at sectoral and regional level.

7.2. New pathways and new education partnerships

The switch of thinking from qualifications to competences can be found in all aspects of vocational education and training (see Section 2.2). The development of a new qualifications structure based on competences relates to the following issues:

- (a) promotion of the transparency of the qualifications structure;
- (b) promotion of flexibility in the qualifications structure;

- (c) innovations and changes in the labour market and in society require continuous adaptation of the qualifications structure;
- (d) strengthening partnership between national expertise centres and educational institutions;
- (e) strengthening dialogue between social partners and educational institutions within the national expertise centres.

A major reform programme is being implemented by CINOP (Centre for Innovation of Education and Training) to develop competence-based learning and training and new teaching methods in senior secondary vocational education, based on two key messages:

- competence-based education is explicitly aimed at the key issues or problems in professions and careers and prepares the learner to deal with them;
- the accent is put on an optimal competence development of the learners, tailored to their personal wishes and capacities.

Experience has shown that this development touches upon all the different aspects of educational organisation and the relationship between school and company. Therefore, the integral approach is adopted. Projects are being carried out together with regional training centres, institutions in the vocational education and training field, companies offering on the job training and other partners. The aim is to develop ‘practice-theory’ examples of approaches to the design of competence-based (vocational) education, such as ICT, guidance, portfolios, role of teachers, etc.

7.2.1. Strengthening learning in the workplace

In 2001, the social partners and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science signed an agreement on learn-work trajectories to strengthen learning in the workplace in preparatory senior secondary vocational education (VMBO) and to serve as a strong basis for vocational education at senior secondary or higher level. Another aim is to reduce the drop-out rate and to increase the chances of youngsters to obtain a basic qualification with education that puts more emphasis on working and learning in practice. This development is the result of closer cooperation between regional labour market authorities and companies and schools for preparatory senior secondary vocational education. In 2003, this agreement was formalised by law. The workplace is the main learning environment.

Given their role as link between working practice, labour market and education, the expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market are an important player in this innovative process. Their tasks are to:

- (a) accredit companies offering places which provide learn-work trajectories for preparatory senior secondary vocational education (VMBO);
- (b) recruit and accredit new companies offering learning places;

- (c) guide and support trainers in the workplace;
- (d) sign and register learn-work agreements.

7.2.2. Competences in practice

New learning environments and new concepts are proposed and implemented (in pilot phases), such as problem-oriented education (*Probleem gestuurd onderwijs*) and occupational task-oriented learning (*Beroepstaak gestuurd leren*).

A recent new didactical design concerns a pilot project with occupational task-oriented learning for the technical sector, level 1 and 2 (see Section 4.5 for qualification levels in the Dutch education system). This concept has been designed to solve the motivation problems of these students, reduce the drop-out rate, improve the image of working in the technical sector, attract more students and adjust the educational courses more to demands from professional practice.

The principles behind this concept are:

- (a) learning is an active process;
- (b) one can learn from experiences;
- (c) knowledge already existent is activated;
- (d) learning is dependent on the context in which one learns;
- (e) the motivation of the learner is essential.

This didactical concept aims to gain and develop competences, and puts the learner at the centre. The occupational tasks form the basis of the course, and can be realised either at school or in a company. These tasks form a coherent and consistent framework of work-based actions derived from practice. Different subjects are integrated in the occupational tasks, and students have to learn to work together, just as in work-place practice.

8. Validation of learning

8.1. Quality assurance

Quality assurance is a central priority in education policy, since the government is leaving more and more responsibilities to the institutions in the field. VET institutions have a great deal of autonomy to design their own quality assurance system. Self-evaluation by institutions is the starting point for external quality assurance under the responsibility of the Inspectorate of Education. Supervision and monitoring by the Inspectorate takes place through yearly visits and is proportional to the self-evaluation; institutions with a well developed quality system are monitored less intensively. The Education report 2003 (Inspectorate of Education) shows that quality assurance in VET institutions is insufficiently developed. The self-correcting function of this system needs improvement. Regional training centres make insufficient use of public accountability to determine their quality. This is seen as an issue requiring action in the overall context of VET policy.

The quality of examinations in the VET sector was not sufficient, according to the Inspectorate, and this threatened the value of diplomas. In reaction to these critical remarks, a steering committee has reviewed examination processes and procedures. The central point in the advice to the Minister is that educational institutions should be fully responsible for their examinations. The way they perform these tasks will be tested externally. In August 2002, a national *Kwaliteitscentrum examinering* (KCE, Quality Centre for Examinations) was established for this purpose by *BVE-raad, Colo* and *Paepon*. In it, education institutions and the labour market cooperate to control the quality of examinations in secondary vocational education. The aim is to improve the quality of the examinations of accredited courses and all related aspects. The tasks of the KCE include:

- defining and maintaining the quality standards for examination;
- external validation of the quality of examinations.

Appointed by law, the KCE is the only institution to control the quality of VET examinations. The role of the Inspectorate for Education will be limited to supervising the KCE.

Standards have been formulated in five domains:

- (a) examination management and organisation;
- (b) professionalism, purchasing and putting out to contract;
- (c) examination process;
- (d) examination products;
- (e) analysis and evaluation.

These standards apply to all examination elements, including practical training in the workplace, dual learning, or other learning methods. The same standards apply for accreditation of prior learning (APL), but implementation might be adjusted to the APL procedures.

The application of these standards is checked by experts during an audit (process and product oriented) in educational institutions. KCE offers the suppliers of examination materials (among others, expertise centres for vocational education, training and labour market) the opportunity to obtain a declaration for the next academic year that their materials are of good quality. They will be audited by more or less the same procedures as educational institutions.

8.1.1. Sectoral standards

At sectoral level, the KCE works with sectoral examination platforms to guarantee best use of existing knowledge in the field. These platforms are composed of experts from educational institutions and the social partners and follow the division into sectors used by *Colo* and the expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market. For a listing of the sectoral platforms, see <http://www.kce.nl>.

Branches and sectors can, where necessary, make specific arrangements concerning examinations with institutions providing education. If these arrangements are made official, KCE takes these measures into account when controlling the quality.

8.2. Facilitating recognition of qualifications

Qualifications and competences acquired at the workplace are an increasingly important part of education and training programmes. Practical activity is an obligatory part of training (see Chapter 4 for the different pathways), and new learn-work trajectories and other methodologies are also being implemented (see Section 7.2). To facilitate the recognition of these qualifications, the quality of the companies providing practical training places is checked and assured by the national expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market. They have set up a scheme for accrediting companies providing practical training places. In addition, they provide training for practical trainers and support to schools in order to improve the on-the-job elements of their programmes.

8.3. Validation of prior learning

Since the 1980s, attention has been paid to increasing opportunities for assessing and accrediting competences acquired outside the framework of regular education. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) has been changing during this period, following new insights and developments. A few years ago, the certifying and qualifying function was central to its

application. Nowadays, more attention is paid to applying APL in the perspective of career development, personal development and the strengthening of the personal qualities of the learner (empowerment). In the recently adopted common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning, this distinction is referred to as the formative and summative function of APL (European Commission, 2004).

In April 2001, the national Expertise Centre for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (*Kenniscentrum EVC, erkenning van verworven competenties*) was created. CINOP (*Centrum voor innovatie van opleidingen, Centre for Innovation of Education and Training*), STOAS (*Dienstverlenende organisatie voor onderwijs en bedrijfsleven, Service organisation for education and trade and industry*) and CITOgroep (*Centraal instituut voor toetsontwikkeling, Central institute for educational measurement*) collaborate in this expertise centre. The Expertise Centre for APL was set up for an initial four-year period (2001-04). By the end of 2004, an evaluation will be carried out.

The aim of the Expertise Centre for APL is to stimulate the use of APL methodology in the Netherlands and to signal and disseminate trends and new developments. Creating a network (nationally and internationally) to facilitate the wide introduction of APL is another goal. An APL platform has been created where 28 members exchange experiences and foster new developments.

Pilot projects have been set up in a variety of settings by various initiators (such as regional training centres, branches or national expertise centres for vocational education, training and the labour market) and for different target groups. Participating sectors include trade and industry, health and welfare, services and technology. Target groups are employees, job seekers, persons returning to the labour market, disabled workers, students and those with a language other than Dutch as mother tongue. Furthermore, APL can be used for various purposes such as recruiting to a new branch, shortening (continuing) training programmes based on earlier acquired competences, retraining persons to start in another branch (a good example is retraining of teachers), implementing a strategy to protect workers from occupational disability and continuing training and upgrading the qualifications of employees (human resource development).

The implementation of APL in the Netherlands started in a small number of sectors and settings, but its application is broadening quickly. The demand from companies is increasing. The implementation of APL and the introduction of competence-based education and training and broader qualifications fit together very well and will produce more and more synergy. Now, emphasis is on the roles of the various actors in the APL process and creating good conditions for a broad introduction. The road towards a central place for competences, more demand-based education and training, and an individual learning route throughout the learning and working career (lifelong learning), has opened.

The main challenge for the coming years is to change the character of APL from a process found mainly in projects with a limited time span to a lasting one firmly embedded in the relevant institutions. Other challenges include raising APL accessibility and improving assessor quality.

9. Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment

9.1. Strategy and provision

The role of career information and guidance is believed to be important in national strategies for enhancing lifelong learning and sustained employability. The government has steered a course of decentralisation and privatisation, but its role has been controversial. Social partners consider career guidance services to be very important. They argue that the government should regulate this field more actively and face up to its responsibilities, for example, in areas of market failure, in assuring the quality of services to end-users and in stimulating the market where needed (OECD, 2002).

Table 12: *Strengths and weaknesses of the guidance system*

Strengths	Weaknesses
Extent and quality of labour market and consumer information	Limited attention to career guidance in general education
Formal affirmation of importance of students' career path	The fragmented nature of the guidance system as a whole
Emerging market in career guidance	Lack of accountability, monitoring and quality assurance
Network of centres for work and income	Lack of clarity regarding the role of the government

Source: OECD, 2002

There are a number of institutions active in career information, career guidance and career support services.

The National Career Service Centre (*Expertisecentrum voor Loopbaanvraagstukken*, LDC) has specific expertise in career information. It has a wide overview of training opportunities in the Netherlands which, in certain cases, it makes available via the internet and CD Roms for career guidance. In addition, it produces written material for career guidance advisors to guide their clients in their choice of career. Free access is given to its database (<http://www.schoolweb.nl>). A second database, which cannot be consulted directly by the general public, can be accessed on request. Questions can be put by telephone or via e-mail.

CINOP is active in VET guidance and career development. In addition, there is the knowledge centre for accreditation of prior learning, (*Kenniscentrum EVC*), which is specialised in stimulating the recognition of skills and competences gained by a participant outside the educational context (see Section 8.3).

In the vocational education sector, the regional training centres (ROCs) and agricultural training centres (AOCs) are the most important guidance providers (see Section 3.1.3).

The purchase of career guidance in the framework of reintegration schemes, is carried out by the UWV (Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body) for those who have had employment, or the municipalities (in social assistance cases).

The number of private reintegration companies has grown substantially in recent years and in 2002 was estimated at over 650 (OECD, 2002). It is expected that this number will be reduced when privatisation of this sector is completed.

In common with many other European countries, the Netherlands has a National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance (NRCVG). This is a partnership project of the association of expertise centres for vocational training and the labour market (*Colo*), LDC and CINOP. The secretariat is located at CINOP. The NRCVG is, in turn, part of the European Euroguidance network, (for further information, see <http://www.euroguidance.org.uk>). The aim of the NRCVG is to increase the European dimension of career guidance.

For training and career opportunities throughout Europe and additional information, the Ploteus database (<http://europa.eu.int/ploteus>) is open to all European citizens.

9.2. Structure of guidance provision

Guidance is provided:

- (a) within the education system itself;
- (b) as part of the services provided for unemployed job seekers, by the centres for work and income (first-level information and advice);
- (c) by some employers and trade unions or by a range of private-sector organisations.

9.2.1. Guidance within the education system

Guidance starts with class mentors and career teachers in primary and secondary education. It is sometimes integrated in course subjects. Entry into a particular form of education is generally not based on a choice of occupation, but on performance in primary education and the result of the final test in primary education, organised by the Central institute for educational measurement (*Centraal instituut voor toetsontwikkeling*, CITO).

Attention to career guidance seems to be growing in senior secondary vocational education (MBO). The objective of a smooth transfer between the different sectors within vocational education has been emphasised in recent years. The career of the individual student is the central point within the education process. Increasing attention is also being given to a more competence-based approach, with fewer fine-grained qualifications and with accreditation of prior learning (see Chapter 8). This gives students a broader base for their career.

Currently, each ROC has a central student services centre, where career information and guidance can be obtained from career specialists and/or other staff. Guidance can also be obtained on entry, or when a student wishes to transfer between the pathways.

Portfolio systems are being introduced within some programmes to enable students to record the development of their competences. ROCs (in cooperation with municipalities) are also committed to following and supporting early school leavers and guiding them back to school or to work if possible.

ROCs are (still) the main provider for running compulsory programmes for new immigrants under the Newcomers Integration Act. Career guidance, including a portfolio and action plan, is part of these courses.

9.2.2. Guidance provision for the unemployed

In 2002, a new Central Organisation for Work and Income was set up, with 131 centres for work and income being established across the country to provide initial ‘one-stop-shops’ for both job-information and benefit-claimant services. Those who are eligible for ‘reintegration’ services, which may include some career guidance, are then channelled via the municipalities or the Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body (UWV) to private-sector reintegration companies from whom these reintegration services are purchased.

The unemployed and job seekers can consult the CWI, which provides a reception facility and, when necessary, offers access to reintegration services. These services may include assessment, guidance, training and job-seeking services. Career guidance is most likely to be offered to those entering the labour market for the first time, or those rejoining the labour market after long term unemployment. In practice, it turns out that both career guidance and training are not yet used as widely as possible as reintegration instruments.

9.2.3. Guidance for the employed

The main services provided are out-placement services or mobility centres in big companies or the public service (to assist movement between ministries). Private guidance centres are active in this field.

At sectoral level, training and development funds can play a role in training schemes (especially for SMEs). Career measures can also be part of collective labour agreements (see Section 10.4.2).

At the start of privatisation of guidance provision, regional guidance offices were created to provide demand-based guidance. However, it turned out to be too difficult for these offices to open and develop new commercial markets, so gradually nearly all the offices have closed. Many of their services now focus on psychological testing services designed to meet institutional rather than individual needs, i.e. for screening and selection rather than guidance purposes.

Certain (bigger) companies use personal development plans or invest in other ways in the employability of their staff (see also Section 5.2.3). More and more companies have earned the Investors in People quality mark.

There is a special project for career guidance in the building and construction sector. The aim is to keep employees, who for various reasons are not happy in their current jobs, within the sector and to guide them to more suitable functions.

9.3. Guidance and counselling personnel

In the last few years, special training courses have become available for career advisors. Currently, courses are available at ISCED level 5 at the Fontys academy in Tilburg, the *Saxion College* in Deventer, the *Hogeschool Windesheim* in Zwolle and at the *Christelijke hogeschool Noord Nederland* [Christian institute for advanced education] in Leeuwarden. In education, these trainers are mainly teachers who have been given extra short-term (dual) training courses specifically for this purpose.

10. Financing investment in human resources

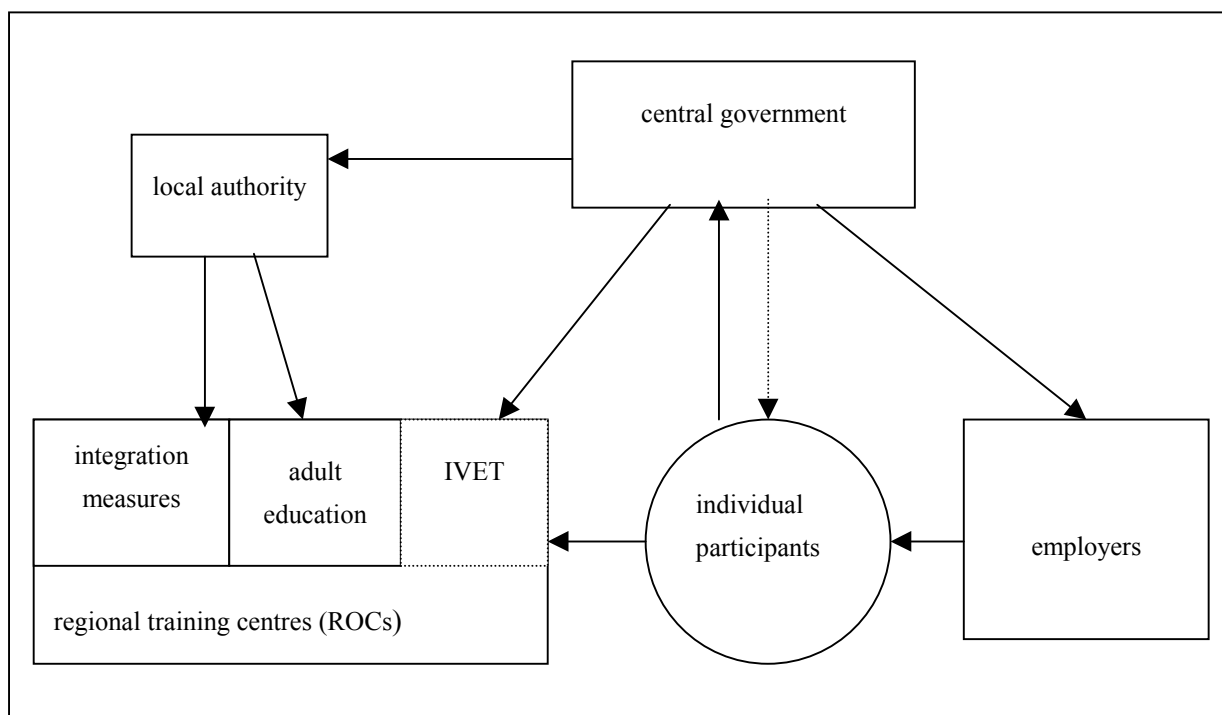
10.1. General overview and funding policy

As further decentralisation is a general policy of the ministries, the division of responsibilities and accountability will continue to shift in the coming years. On the one hand, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will reduce the numbers of rules, regulations and registration measures. On the other hand, greater responsibility for education institutions means that more importance will be attached to results and outcomes, accompanied by sharper monitoring of the quality and emphasis on maintaining the rules.

Expenditure on general education and vocational education and training (including study grants and research) by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science increased from 4.5 % of GDP in 1999, to 5.0 % in 2003. (Key Figures 2003, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science).

The following figure shows the channels for public funding for vocational education and training. Local authorities receive money from central government to finance adult education courses and integration measures, which are mostly provided by regional training centres (ROCs). The flow of funding for integration measures will probably be changed from 2005 onwards (see Sections 5.1.1 and 10.3). The ROCs receive money directly from the government for their initial vocational education and training (IVET) courses. An exchange of money can be seen between government and individual students via course fees and study grants. Finally, central government supports employers through fiscal measures for initial training (see Section 10.4.1).

Figure 3: Flow of funding for publicly funded vocational education and training



Source: Key Figures 2003, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

In addition, there are numerous arrangements between the private and public sectors, leading to varying patterns of mixed (private and public) involvement. This mixed involvement has led to a number of developments including the creation of training networks, special funds and mechanisms for monitoring training demand and supply. There are many examples of such cooperation in continuing vocational training (CVT) between the private (employers and employees, labour unions and sectoral organisations, training providers, etc.) and public (national and local authorities, providers, monitoring institutes, etc.) sectors. The shared responsibility for training and the process of seeking consensus on any controversial issues between parties that have conflicting interests (such as employers and employees), is a typical feature of Dutch society. No specific law or legal framework applies to CVT for the employed.

10.2. Funding of initial vocational training

The funding of initial vocational education and training (IVET) is a public responsibility. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management, and Food Quality (LNV) for the agricultural sector are responsible for financing this sector. The agricultural training centres (AOCs) are directly funded by the Ministry of LNV.

The Financing Services Institute (*Centrale Financiering Instellingen*, CFI) within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science plays a key role in administering and financing IVET. There is a complex, but direct, financing relationship between the CFI and the regional training centres (ROCs). First, the macro budget for all ROCs is determined annually by the central government. Amounts can differ according to current policy priorities. In 2002, EUR 2 billion were spent. Subsequently, a percentage of the macro budget is attributed to each of the ROCs by way of a lump-sum budget. The total budget per ROC is calculated using four factors:

- (a) the input budget;
- (b) the output budget;
- (c) the VOA (*Voorbereidende en Ondersteunende Activiteiten*) budget, for pupils with deficiencies and preventing early school leaving;
- (d) the premises budget.

The input budget accounts for 80 % of the total budget of a ROC. The number of pupils is calculated by weighting the two different training pathways. The block-or day release pathway (BBL) is given a lower weighting than the more school-based pathway (BOL) (see Section 4.5). The different courses in either pathway are also attributed a certain value. For example, business study courses are given lower weighting than technical courses because of the latter's higher costs for educational materials. The output budget is calculated on the basis of the number of diplomas achieved, weighted according to the course and pathway followed (see

Section 4.5). The output and its importance for society and the labour market has become increasingly important. The budget for pupils with deficiencies is related to the number of pupils with the lower educational levels.

The amount spent per student in the senior secondary vocational education sector has increased from EUR 5 490 in 1999 to EUR 6 250 in 2003.

The block-or day release pathway (BBL) (see Section 4.5) consists of a school-based part (one day a week) and a work-based part (four days a week), and consequently has a hybrid structure of financing. The school-based part is funded directly from public funds by the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science. The work-based part is also funded, in part, by central government (Ministry of Finance) through fiscal measures introduced in 1996: enterprise tax can be reduced for employers hiring apprentices. In addition there are contributions from employers in the form of salary or pocket money for students engaged in apprenticeship activities.

Students older than 16 years have to pay course fees, collected centrally by the Information Management Group (*Informatie Beheer Groep*). The level of the fee is annually adjusted and depends on the type of education (full-time or part-time, or adult education). However, students (and their parents) receive money. Until their child is 18 years old, parents receive child benefit. From 18 years on, students receive individual study grants. Additional grants can be obtained depending on the income of the parents of the student.

10.3. Public funding of continuing education and training for adults

There are two major types of publicly funded continuing education and training:

- (a) part-time continuing vocational education and training (CVET);
- (b) adult education.

These types of education and training are a public responsibility and therefore predominantly publicly financed. The main responsible actors are the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the municipalities, following the outline of the legal framework of the Vocational and Adult Education (WEB) Act (see Section 3.2). The Ministry is responsible for part-time continuing vocational education courses which are provided by the regional training centres, ROCs). Municipalities are responsible for adult education within the framework of integration of immigrants programmes and their social policies. In practice, in most cases the training courses are supplied by ROCs.

10.3.1. Part-time CVET

People who wish to improve their labour market position and those who prematurely discontinued their initial education but later wish to obtain a diploma mainly follow part-time CVET courses. Available courses and qualifications are identical to the full-time initial courses in vocational education and training (see Chapter 4). The same two different learning routes are available as in initial education, BOL (vocational training pathway) and BBL (block or day-release pathway) (see Section 4.5). The latter is popular among students who are no longer eligible for student grants.

Financing follows the main rules of initial vocational training. The students participating in part-time CVET are counted among the total number of students participating in initial vocational education courses and the ROCs receive funds on this basis.

10.3.2. Adult education

Adult education within the framework of the WEB legislation (see Section 3.2) is provided at six levels. The first three levels include integration courses for immigrants and general courses in furthering self-reliance and improving command of Dutch. Levels 4-6 provide general secondary adult education (see Section 5.1.1).

Municipalities receive money from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science for adult education. The amount depends on the total number of adult inhabitants, the number of non-native adults and the number of adults with low level qualifications. In 2001, EUR 316.3 million was spent by municipalities on these courses.

From 2005 onwards, EUR 75 million will be transferred from the budget for adult education of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to the Ministry of Justice for courses at the lower levels of Dutch as a second language (levels 1 to 3). The remaining budget in this area from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will only be used for Dutch as a second language courses at the higher levels.

10.4. Funding from other sources for continuing vocational education and training for the employed

10.4.1. National level

The private sector has the dominant role in continuing vocational training (CVT) for the employed. The government takes some responsibility, through financially stimulating training in enterprises. However, some of the fiscal measures for employers (such as tax deductions for training employees) have been abolished recently. Companies can still benefit from tax deductions when providing vocational training to their employees and when hiring apprentices

for apprenticeship-based CVT (students following the block- or day-release pathway BBL, see Section 4.5).

At central government level, it is not only the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science which contributes to the funding of continuing training but also the Ministries of Agriculture, of Economic Affairs and of Welfare and Health for specific training areas.

10.4.2. Branch and enterprise level

Arrangements for enterprise-based training are often made within the context of collective labour agreements (CAOs). These agreements are made within each sector of industry and are preceded by negotiations between employers and employees. They last for a specified period of time - usually two years. Some of these sectoral arrangements contain extra provisions to accommodate specific regional needs or circumstances. Financial arrangements in CAOs specifically pertaining to CVT are made through funds reserved for training and/or research and development. The most prominent of these funds are the *Onderzoek en Ontwikkelingsfondsen* (training and development funds), which are financed through a levy on the gross wage bill of the firms in the individual sector. The percentage of the contributions to the funds varies, but is usually between 0.1 % and 0.64 %. According to a study by Waterreus the reserves of these funds were on average EUR 1 million in 1999.

The funds were established in order to create a more solid foundation for training, to ensure that training became embedded within the various sectors of the economy and the individual companies within these sectors. However, implementing sectoral training agreements is often difficult, in particular for smaller firms, although it seemed in 1999 that training initiatives from the sectoral level reached these firms more often than previously (Waterreus, 2002).

About 40 % of Dutch enterprises are associated with one of the training and development (O&O) funds. Companies in agriculture, manufacturing industry and catering are particularly likely to be associated with, and about two thirds of them obtained subsidies from, these funds. In some sectors, special agreements are made for the benefit of specific target groups, such as women, employees with a low level of education and migrants.

Companies in the financial and business consultancy sectors form an exception in the use of Training and Development funds. Instead the companies arrange their own enterprise-based training, on which they are estimated to spend EUR 1.2 million per annum.

The following table gives an indication of the expenditure by enterprises in relation to continuing training for their employees.

Table 13: Cost of CVT courses as % of total labour costs, by type of cost, all enterprises, the Netherlands and EU 15 (1999)

	Total costs ⁽¹⁾	Direct costs ⁽²⁾	Labour costs of participants
EU 15	2.3	1.4	0.8
Netherlands	2.8	1.7	1.1

⁽¹⁾ Total costs: sum of direct costs, staff time costs and balance of contributions to national or regional training funds and receipts from national or other funding arrangements.

⁽²⁾ Direct costs: costs of CVT courses.

Source: Eurostat, Newcronos, 2nd Continuing Vocational Training Survey in enterprises (CVTS).

10.4.3. Individual level

Private training is, by definition, privately funded, through the contributions of the individual participants.

A public funding programme (by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) that was targeted at individuals to support both employability and non-job related training is the individual learning accounts subsidy programme. The pilot project lasted from 2000-04, with a budget of nearly EUR 1.2 million. The idea is that employees use their own funds for (further) education, with the Ministry making EUR 450 available for each account. Of the training followed, 59 % was directly related to the learner's profession, while the remaining funds were spent on aspects such as computer or language courses. The pilot project was positively evaluated by both individuals and companies.

The pilot organisations in the projects were responsible for appointing account holders for the ILAs. A total of 2 500 accounts were opened in two phases by employees or job seekers, with participation by 223 firms in diverse sectors and branches.

10.5. Funding of training for the unemployed and socially-excluded

Local authorities and the *Uitvoering Werknemersverzekeringen* (UWVs, Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body) share the responsibility for reintegrating the unemployed and other groups that are excluded from the labour market. The UWVs are executive bodies of the Ministry of Social Affairs (see Chapter 5 for detailed information).

Reintegration funding for the two groups of unemployed (long-term unemployed plus disabled and short-term unemployed) is regulated by two acts: the Work and Income (Implementation

Structure) Act (SUWI) and the Act on Work and Public Assistance (WWB) (see Section 3.2). The first regulates the funding of the reintegration initiated by the UWVs, the latter regulates the funding of reintegration activities of local authorities. The Ministry of Social Affairs funds both kinds of activities. Part of these reintegration activities can be education or training activities, but there is no overview of how much money is actually spent on education and training in this perspective.

In the framework of combating unemployment, the government has also introduced new fiscal measures for employers, especially for hiring employees without a starting qualification.

11. International dimension: towards a European area of lifelong learning

11.1. National strategy related to policy and programme initiatives at EU level

In the framework of more European cooperation in vocational education and training, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science actively supports European initiatives, such as international benchmarking, the aims of Lisbon, the development of a European area of lifelong learning and a European framework for accrediting qualifications.

In European benchmark comparisons, the Netherlands occupies fifth place for participation in post initial training. However, strenuous efforts are continuously needed.

Specific obstacles on the labour market are:

- too many people have left education without basic qualifications;
- the threat of a structural shortage of highly trained professionals (especially in the technical sector);
- low percentage of participation in work and training by women and older employees;
- increasing youth unemployment.

11.1.1. Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning and employability are still high on the social partner agenda. In 2003, which was economically difficult, it again became clear that lower qualified employees are very vulnerable in the labour market. The social partners continued, through their collective agreements, to include and improve framework conditions for learning.

The national strategy on lifelong learning focuses on the aim of maintaining and raising the knowledge level of the population. It is seen as an important key in increasing productivity and improving social cohesion. The policy agenda *Lifelong Learning* (April 2002) and the Social Economic Council advisory document on lifelong learning (June 2002) are important publications in this respect. In 2004, an agenda for lifelong learning will be set up with specific actions to produce measurable results and strengthen the conditions for lifelong learning. Furthermore, a lifelong learning platform will be established; the functions of this are currently being negotiated.

The 2003 Lifelong learning Eurobarometer survey module (commissioned by Cedefop in cooperation with DG EAC) shows an overall response pattern which may suggest the Dutch have a realistic approach to both the potential and limitations of lifelong learning. They see it as an important way to adapt to the challenges of current economic and social change but do not expect it to solve all the problems individuals, societies and economies face (Chisholm, 2004). To a greater extent than in much of the EU, the Netherlands is the home of well educated active learning citizens who move more flexibly between employment, education and training, and civic and family activities.

Actions launched to support the implementation of lifelong learning include:

- (a) the steering committee on ‘impulse’ vocational education and training, initiated by the social partners in 2000, continues its activities (see Section 3.3);
- (b) innovatory initiatives at regional or sectoral level by education and industry to reduce the drop-out rate, and enhance cooperation between the various actors. The government invested EUR 10 million in 2003;
- (c) further implementation of accreditation of prior learning (APL). The *Kenniscentrum EVC* (Knowledge Centre APL) has been set up to support this (see Chapter 8);
- (d) combinations of learning and working for difficult target groups. The aim is to guide these groups to obtain a basic qualification. Support can be used from ESF 3 measures;
- (e) individual learning account experiments (see Section 10.4.3);
- (f) the Youth Unemployment Action Plan, aimed at the realisation of 40 000 extra youth jobs and practical training places for unemployed youngsters (see Section 2.2).

Other actions aim at raising the number of adults with a basic qualification and the number of highly trained professionals, stimulating informal and non-formal learning, continuing accreditation of prior learning and promoting dual learning. The overall aim is to invest more and more effectively in lifelong learning.

11.2. Impact of internationalisation on education and training

With regard to internationalisation policy, a policy paper *Onderwijs voor wereldburgers* (Education for world citizens) was published in January 2002.

Three main goals are identified for education policy in an international perspective:

- stimulate the opportunities for international orientation of learners;
- enhance the profile of Dutch educational institutions on the international education and training market;

- stimulate actors to learn from and cooperate with each other in an international framework.

Bilateral agreements include long term cooperation with Flanders, in the framework of the GENT agreements. Currently, the GENT 6 agreement is being realised.

Bilateral agreements have been signed with North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony. Furthermore, a Dutch-German agreement for intensive cooperation in education and science was renewed in September 2001 by the respective national Ministers of Education. In 2002, the two countries took the initiative in the framework of this agreement for a conference on mobility in vocational education and training with the participation of Austria, Denmark and Flanders. This conference took place in Aachen, Germany, and can be seen as an excellent example of a bottom-up multilateral initiative for increased cooperation between Member States as provided for in the Bruges process and the Copenhagen agreement.

The neighbouring countries are prioritised, but cooperation at government level will also be sought with the countries which joined the EU in May 2004, and with countries such as Morocco, Surinam and Turkey, because many (parents of) students in VET have their cultural origins in these regions. In this respect, the combination of interculturalisation and internationalisation will be stimulated.

The representative councils in the VET sector are major stakeholders in this process: the Dutch Council for Vocational Education and Training (*BVE Raad*), the Association of agricultural training centres (*AOC Raad*), the Association of national expertise centres on vocational education and the labour market (*Colo*) and intermediary organisations like CINOP. The social partners are involved in the national Leonardo da Vinci programme agency and they engage in various activities related to international policy and mobility.

Specific targets for VET are to cooperate actively and bring forward European cooperation, to define international dimensions in qualifications, to ensure synergy between initiatives on recognition of qualifications and diplomas or accreditation of prior learning at European level and to develop further the Europass framework in this respect. An overall goal is to stimulate and enlarge international mobility for all students in the VET sector.

Initiatives such as Europass, the European computer driving licence and the European format for curriculum vitae are being implemented. In 2001, the language portfolio was adapted to the national situation (including the VET sector) and was recognised by the Council of Europe as one of the first national portfolios.

At branch level, some instruments have been developed to increase the transparency of qualifications in an international perspective, e.g. Euro-certificates, modules implemented in different countries. One specific example in the metal sector is the creation of the *EMU Berufspass*. This initiative has been taken by the employers' organisation *Metaalunie* (Metal Union), and is recognised in the metal sector in a number of European countries. The personal

Berufspass contains information on the level of competences and skills of the employee and can be updated throughout his or her entire working life.

A few initiatives have been, or are being, taken in the border region with Germany to develop bilateral modules for which the students receive two national diplomas (*bi-diplomering*). For example, a regional training centre in the south of the Netherlands developed a bilateral module in the laboratory technical branch and agreed with the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Aachen (*Industrie- und Handelskammer zu Aachen*) that the students received both a Dutch and German certificate. A small number of students has benefited from this initiative, but it has not yet been taken further. Other initiatives are at the moment being developed in the Euregio region (covering parts of Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands), but are in the first stages of development.

Annex 1: Acronyms/abbreviations

AOC	Agrarisch OpleidingsCentrum Agricultural training centre
BBL	Beroepsbegeleidende leerweg Block or day-release pathway
BOL	Beroepsopleidende leerweg Vocational training pathway
BPV	Beroepspraktijkvorming Practical occupational training
BVE	Beroepsonderwijs en volwasseneneducatie Vocational and adult education and training
CAO	Collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst Collective labour agreement
CBS	Centraal bureau voor de statistiek Central bureau for statistics
CFI	Centrale Financiering Instellingen Financing Services Institute
CINOP	Centrum voor innovatie van opleidingen Centre for the Innovation of Education and Training
CITO	Centraal instituut voor toetsontwikkeling Central institute for educational measurement
Colo	Vereniging van kenniscentra voor beroepsonderwijs bedrijfsleven Association of national expertise centres for vocational education and the labour market
CREBO	Centraal register beroepsopleidingen Central register of vocational training courses
CV(E)T	Continuing vocational (education and) training
CWI	Centrum voor Werk en Inkomen Centre for Work and Income
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ESF	European Social Fund
EVC	Erkenning van verworven competenties
(APL)	Accreditation of prior learning
EZ	(Ministerie van) Economische Zaken (Ministry of) Economic Affairs
HAVO	Hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs Senior general secondary education
HBO	Hoger beroepsonderwijs Higher professional education
HO	Hoger onderwijs Higher education
Hogeschool	University of professional education
ISCED	International Standard Classification on Education
IV(E)T	Initial vocational (education and) training
Kenniscentrum	Kenniscentrum beroepsonderwijs bedrijfsleven National Expertise Centres for vocational education, training and the labour market (formerly known as national bodies for education and training)

KCE	Kwaliteitscentrum examinering Quality centre for examinations
KSB	Kwalificatiestructuur beroepsonderwijs Qualification structure in vocational education and training
KSE	Kwalificatiestructuur educatie Qualification structure in adult education
LDC	Expertisecentrum voor Loopbaanvraagstukken Expertise centre for Career Guidance
LNV	(Ministerie van) Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en Voedselkwaliteit (Ministry of) Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality
MBO	Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs Senior secondary vocational education
MHP	(Vakcentrale voor) Middengroepen en Hoger Personeel (Trade union for) Middle and higher management functions
MKB- Nederland	Midden- en Klein Bedrijf Nederland Dutch umbrella organisation for the small and medium-sized business sector
NRCVG	National Resource Centre for Vocational Guidance
OCW	(Ministerie van) Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (Ministry of) Education, Culture and Science
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
Paepon	Platform van Erkende Particuliere Onderwijsinstellingen in Nederland Association of accredited private training centres in the Netherlands
ROA	Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en Arbeidsmarkt Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market
SBO	Sectorbestuur Onderwijsarbeidsmarkt Sectoral board for the labour market in the educational sector
SME	Small and medium sized enterprises
STOAS	Dienstverlenende organisatie voor onderwijs en bedrijfsleven Service organisation for education and trade and industry
SUWI	(Wet) Structuur Uitvoering Werk en Inkomen Work and Income Implementation Structure (Act)
SZW	(Ministerie van) Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (Ministry of) Social Affairs and Employment
UWV	Uitvoering Werknemersverzekeringen Employee insurance schemes implementing body
VAVO	Voortgezet algemeen volwassenen onderwijs General secondary adult education
VMBO	Vorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs Preparatory senior secondary vocational education
VNO-NCW	Vereniging VNO-NCW Umbrella organisation for employers (bigger companies)
VWO	Vorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs Pre-university education
WEB	Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs Adult and vocational education act
WO	Wetenschappelijk onderwijs University education
WWB	Wet Werk en Bijstand Act on Work and Public Assistance

Annex 2: Sources for further information

A. Legislation

The integral texts of all Acts can be found and downloaded from the website <http://wetten.overheid.nl> (in Dutch) or via the relevant ministerial websites.

Adult and vocational education Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs* – WEB)

Brochure (in Dutch) with the Act in highlights:
<http://www.minocw.nl/web/brochure1/index.html>

Act on Regional Registration and Coordination RMC – (*Regionale Meld- en Coördinatiewet* – RMC)

Explanatory note to text of Act on Regional Registration and Coordination:
<http://www.minocw.nl/brief2k/2002/doc/30657b.pdf>

Act on Work and Public Assistance (*Wet Werk en Bijstand* – WWB)

Text of Act on Work and Public Assistance (WWB):
http://docs.szw.nl/pdf/35/2003/35_2003_3_3679.pdf

Explanatory note to text of Act: http://docs.szw.nl/pdf/35/2003/35_2003_3_3806.pdf

Work and Income (Implementation Structure) Act *Wet Structuur Uitvoering Werk en Inkomen* – SUWI

Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment:
http://docs.szw.nl/pdf/35/2004/35_2004_3_5006.pdf

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Max Goote BVE Kenniscentrum. [Max Goote Centre for Vocational education and Training]. Available from Internet: <http://www.maxgoote.nl> [cited 15.7.2004.]

Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. [Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science]. Available from Internet: <http://www.minocw.nl> [cited 15.7.2004.]

Kennisnet. Available from Internet: <http://www.kennisnet.nl> [cited 15.7.2004.]

Annex 3: Main organisations

I. Relevant ministries

Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality

PO Box 20401
2500 EK Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 70) 378 68 68
Fax (31 70) 378 61 00
<http://www.minlnv.nl>

Ministry of Economic Affairs

PO Box 20101
2500 EC Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 70) 379 89 11
<http://www.minez.nl>

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

PO Box 16375
2500 BJ Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 70) 412 34 56
Fax (31 70) 412 34 50
<http://www.minocw.nl>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PO Box 20061
2500 EB Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 70) 348 64 86
Fax (31-70) 348 48 48
<http://www.minbuza.nl>

Ministry of Justice

PO Box 20301
2500 EH Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 70) 370 79 11
Fax (31 70) 370 75 94
<http://www.justitie.nl>

Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment

PO Box 90801
2509 LV Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 70) 333 44 44
Fax (31 70) 333 40 33
<http://www.minszw.nl>

II. Intermediary/umbrella organisations

AOC Raad (Umbrella organisation for agricultural training centres)

PO Box 458

6710 BL Ede

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 318) 64 89 00

Fax (31 318) 64 11 84

<http://www.aocraad.nl>

Contact this organisation for a list of all agricultural training centres

Colo – Vereniging van kenniscentra voor beroepsonderwijs bedrijfsleven

(Association of national expertise centres for vocational education and labour market)

PO Box 7259

2701 AG Zoetermeer

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 79) 352 30 00

Fax (31 79) 351 54 78

<http://www.colo.nl>

Contact this organisation for a list of all national expertise centres on vocational education, training and the labour market)

Paepon - Platform van Erkende Particuliere Onderwijsinstellingen in Nederland

(Association of accredited private training centres)

Prins Hendriklaan 72

3721 AT Bilthoven

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 30) 225 95 27

Fax (31 30) 225 03 62

<http://www.paepon.nl>

Contact this organisation for a list of all member private training centres

Bve Raad

(Dutch Council for Vocational Education and Training)

PO Box 196

3730 AD De Bilt

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 30) 221 98 11

Fax (31 30) 220 25 06

<http://www.bveraad.nl>

Contact this organisation for a list of all regional training centres and other vocational educational institutions

HBO-raad – landelijke vereniging van hogescholen voor beroepsonderwijs

(National association of universities of professional education)

PO Box 123

2501 CC Den Haag

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 70) 312 21 21

Fax (31 70) 312 21 00

<http://www.HBO-raad.nl>

Contact this organisation for a list of all universities of higher professional education

VSNU – Vereniging van Universiteiten

(Association of Universities in the Netherlands)

Leidseveer 35

PO Box 19270

3501 DG Utrecht

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 30) 236 38 88

Fax (31 30) 233 35 40

<http://www.vsnu.nl>

Contact this organisation for a list of all universities

III. Social partner organisations

Christelijk nationaal vakverbond

(National federation of Christian trade unions)

PO Box 2475

3500 GL Utrecht

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 30) 291 39 11

Fax (31 30) 294 65 44

<http://www.cnv.nl>

FNV – Federatie Nederlandse vakverenigingen

(Federation of Dutch trade unions)

PO Box 8456

1005 AL Amsterdam

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 20) 581 63 00

Fax (31 20) 684 45 41

<http://www.fnv.nl>

MHP – Vakcentrale voor Middengroepen en Hoger Personeel

(Trade union for middle and higher management functions)

PO Box 575

4100 AN Culemborg

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 345) 85 19 00

Fax (31 345) 85 19 15

<http://www.vakcentralemhp.nl>

MKB-Nederland

(Federation of small and medium-sized enterprises)

PO Box 5096

2600 GB Delft

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 15) 219 12 12

Fax (31 15) 219 14 14

<http://www.mkb.nl>

Vereniging VNO-NCW

(Federation of employers in trade and industry)

PO Box 93002

2509 AA Den Haag

The Netherlands

Tel. (31 70) 349 03 49

Fax (31 70) 349 03 00

<http://www.vno-ncw.nl>

IV. Various

APS (Advisory body for educational sector)

PO Box 85475
3508 AL Utrecht
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 30) 285 66 00
Fax (31 30) 285 68 88
<http://www.aps.nl>

Centraal bureau voor de statistiek – CBS

(Central Bureau for Statistics Netherlands)
Prinses Beatrixlaan 428
2273 XZ Voorburg
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 70) 337 38 00
Fax (31 70) 387 74 29
<http://www.cbs.nl>

Centrum voor innovatie van opleidingen in het beroepsonderwijs – CINOP

(Centre for the innovation of education and training)
PO Box 1585
5200 BP Den Bosch
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 73) 680 08 00
Fax (31 73) 612 34 25
<http://www.cinop.nl>

CPS (Development and advice in education)

PO Box 1592
3800 BN Amersfoort
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 33) 453 43 43
Fax (31 33) 453 43 53
<http://www.cps.nl>

Centraal instituut voor toetsontwikkeling

– **Cito** (Central institute for educational measurement)
PO Box 1034
6801 MG Arnhem
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 26) 352 11 11
Fax (31 26) 352 11 35
<http://www.citogroep.nl>

Centrum voor werk en inkomen (CWI)

(Centre for work and income)
CWI Head Office
Naritaweg 1245
1043 BP Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel.(31 20) 75 50 00
Fax (31 20) 75 15 099
<http://www.cwinet.nl>

KPC group (Advisory body for education and training)

Kooikersweg 2
5223 KA 's-Hertogenbosch
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 73) 624 72 47
Fax (31 73) 624 72 94
<http://www.kpcgroep.nl>

**Jongeren Organisatie Beroepsonderwijs –
JOB**

PO Box 17061
1001 JB Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 20) 330 26 14
Fax (31 20) 638 89 69
<http://www.job-site.nl>

**Researchcentrum voor Onderwijs en
Arbeidsmarkt (ROA)**

Research Centre for Education and the Labour
Market
PO Box 616
6200 MD Maastricht
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 43) 388 36 47
Fax (31 43) 388 49 14
E-mail: secretary@roa.unimaas.nl
<http://www.fdewb.unimaas.nl/roa/>

Sociaal Economische Raad (SER)

Social Economic Council
PO Box 90405
2509 LK Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 70) 349 94 99
Fax (31 70) 383 25 35
<http://www.ser.nl>

Stichting van de Arbeid (Labour Foundation)

Same address as SER
<http://www.stvda.nl>

Max Goote kenniscentrum BVE
(Max Goote Knowledge Centre on Adult
and Vocational Education)

Wibautstraat 4
1091 GM Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 20) 525 12 45
Fax (31 20) 525 12 70
<http://www.maxgoote.nl>

Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling (SLO)

PO Box 2041
7500 CA ENSCHEDE
The Netherlands
Tel. (31 53)484 08 40
Fax (31 53) 430 76 92
<http://www.slo.nl>

Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)

Vocational education and training in the Netherlands: Short description. Revised edition

Martine Maes

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2004 – VI, 79 pp. – 21 x 29.7 cm

(Cedefop Panorama series; 96 – ISSN 1562-6180)

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Vocational education and training in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is often cited as one of the European countries which has most successfully coped with the challenges of globalisation. The Dutch model, with government, social partners and other bodies involved in consensus building, has provided a framework in which the labour market has been made more flexible and, at the same time, has recognised and met the needs of disadvantaged groups. The population's education and training levels are relatively high in international comparisons. However, there is concern about the number of adults with low levels of qualification.

One of the distinguishing marks of Dutch vocational education and training is that there is a deliberate policy to develop VET as a separate and distinct pathway to high level qualifications. Another feature is a very high level of regionalisation and decentralisation, which results in education and training institutions being given a great deal of freedom and responsibility in resource management, both human and financial. A comprehensive competence-based qualification structure is also being introduced.

In this short document, it is not possible to cover all the details of a complex system which is very different from other EU member states. However, the report includes annexes which provide detailed sources for further information.

Vocational education and training in the Netherlands

Short description



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