



Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–19

THE NETHERLANDS



Cedefop monitoring of vocational education and training policies and systems

Progress towards the medium-term deliverables
of the Riga conclusions

Country chapter

THE NETHERLANDS

Developments in vocational education and training policy
in 2015-19

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Introduction

In June 2015, the ministers in charge of vocational education and training in the EU Member States, the candidate countries and the European Economic Area countries, convened in Riga, agreed on objectives for vocational education and training (VET) policies for 2015-20 ⁽¹⁾.

Cedefop has been entrusted with monitoring the countries' policies implemented towards reaching these objectives.

This country chapter is part of the monitoring process. It was drafted based on input from the national ReferNet team. It presents an overview of the major policy developments that have taken place in the country in 2015-19, in the areas covered by the Riga medium-term deliverables (MTDs).

The country chapter is structured as follows:

- (a) the introductory section Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015 briefly sketches the VET context in the country in 2015, highlighting selected figures and major policy initiatives that were just being adopted or started at that time. This introductory section is targeted at setting a baseline to put in perspective the policy choices and developments that have taken place since the beginning of the Riga cycle;
- (b) five thematic chapters then follow, devoted to the five respective MTDs outlined in the Riga conclusions. Each thematic chapter also begins with a 2015 baseline, more specifically addressing the MTD-related topics. The baseline is followed by the presentation of the major policy developments in the MTD since 2015;
- (c) the country chapter ends with a conclusion summarising the main lines of the 2015-19 policy developments and highlighting possible priorities for the future.

This country chapter is part of the information which the European Commission used to prepare the European Semester exercises ⁽²⁾ in 2017-19. The chapter also informs the work of Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF) in preparing a joint monitoring report on the implementation of the Riga conclusions. Both the joint report and the country chapter are aimed at

⁽¹⁾ *Riga conclusions 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-20, as a result of the review of short-term deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges communiqué:*

https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/RigaConclusions_2015.pdf

⁽²⁾ European Semester: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en

informing the work of EU Member States' Directors General for Vocational Training (DGVTS) and Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) on taking stock of the outcomes of the Riga conclusions and preparing the next steps for the EU VET policy for the next few years.

Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015

In 2015, the Netherlands was pursuing its vocational education and training (VET) reform previously engaged. In 2014, the country had taken initiatives to improve the match between upper secondary VET (from now on: VET) and the needs of regional labour markets (European Commission, 2015). Employers had been offered incentives to provide more and better-quality internships. Revision of the qualification structure in VET had been initiated, to allow for the introduction of optional subjects through which educational institutions can develop innovative approaches and take on board regional and local conditions (European Commission, 2015). From 2013 to 2015, the proportion of secondary-level students participating in VET had increased from 67.1% to 69% ⁽³⁾, while the EU average had been moving from 48.9% to 47%. However, the share of upper secondary VET learners in work-based programmes was lower, at 24.8% in 2014 against 34% on average in the EU (Cedefop 2017a, p. 101). The employment rate of recent VET graduates was well above the EU average: 83.4% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015) and 85.8% in 2015 (European Commission, 2015), compared to 70.8% and 74.1% on average in the EU in respective years. Adult participation in lifelong learning was also high: 17.8% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015) and 18.9% in 2015 compared to 10.7% on average in the EU in both years (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 101) (Table 1).

In 2015, additional funding options were set up by the Regional Investment Fund to give VET schools more room for taking innovative actions, developing partnerships with companies, and improving the labour market relevance of VET programmes. Steps have been taken to improve the quality of examination processes in VET schools (European Commission, 2015) and actions have also been initiated on the lifelong learning side.

⁽³⁾ Eurostat, data for 2015.

Table 1. Framework data: score on VET indicators in the Netherlands and in the EU: 2010-15

Indicator label	2010		2015(*)		Trend in 2011-2015 (per year)		
	NL ^f	EU ^f	Yr	NL ^f	EU ^f	Range	NL EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility							
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	66.4 ^F	48.0 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▪ -0.6 ▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	24.8 ^F	34.0 ^b _{E2}	'13-'14	▪ -3.5 ▪ 0.1
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14		69.2 ^{E3}		
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	39.0	38.0 ^e	'10	39.0	38.0 ^e		
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	14.0	20.0 ^e	'10	14.0	20.0 ^e		
Adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	18.9 ^b	10.7 ^b	'13-'15	↗ 0.5 → 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	79.0	66.0 ^e	'10	79.0	66.0 ^e		
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	64.7 ^F	42.7 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▪ -0.5 ▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	29.0	25.0 ^e	'10	29.0	25.0 ^e		
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	50.4 ^b	33.0 ^b	'14-'15	▪ 2.0 ▪ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	10.1	5.3	'15	13.5	6.9	'10-'15	↗ 0.7 ↗ 0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	9.3 ^b _C	4.3 ^b _C	'13-'15	↗ 0.1 ↘ -0.1
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)			'15	18.3 ^b	9.5 ^b	'13-'15	↗ 0.6 ↘ -0.4
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	9.4 ^B	9.5 ^e _B	'11	9.4	9.5 ^e		
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	87.0 ^B	80.2 ^e _B	'11	87.0	80.2 ^e		
Skill development and labour market relevance							
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.81 ^b	0.56 ^b _{E4}	'12-'13	▪ 0.01 ▪ -0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	8.5 ^b	6.4 ^b _{E5}	'12-'13	▪ 0.2 ▪ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	1.2	0.8 ^e	'10	1.2	0.8 ^e		
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14		1.0 ^b _{E6}		
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14	17.1 ^b	30.0 ^b _{E7}	'13-'14	▪ -0.1 ▪ -0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14	1.6	9.3 ^{E8}	'13-'14	▪ 0.1 ▪ 0.4
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	39.2	41.5 ^{E9}	'12		41.6 ^{E9}		
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	84.1 ^b	77.2 ^b	'14-'15	▪ 0.6 ▪ 0.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	6.4 ^b	5.3 ^b	'14-'15	▪ -5.3 ▪ -1.0

Indicator label	2010		2015(*)			Trend in 2011-2015 (per year)		
	NL ^f	EU ^f	Yr	NL ^f	EU ^f	Range	NL	EU
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	16.0 ^b	23.7 ^b	'14-'15	▪ -5.3	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	81.8	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	56.3	55.2	'15	59.2	57.3	'10-'15	▪ 0.6	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)		13.9	'15	8.2 ^b _C	11.0 ^C	'13-'15	↘ -0.5	↘ -0.5
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)		33.8	'15	46.3 ^b _C	38.7 ^C	'13-'15	↗ 1.5	↗ 0.8
NEET rate for 18- to 24-year-olds (%)		16.6	'15	6.2 ^b	15.8	'13-'15	↘ -0.6	↘ -0.7
Unemployment rate for 20- to 34-year-olds (%)		13.1	'15	6.8 ^b	12.9	'11-'15	↗ 0.4	↘ -0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)		77.4	'15	88.2 ^b _C	76.9 ^C	'13-'15	↗ 1.1	↗ 0.7
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)		27.3	'15	23.6 ^b _C	23.5 ^C	'13-'15	↘ -0.3	↘ -0.7
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)		68.6	'15	76.4 ^b	70.0	'13-'15	↗ 0.2	↗ 0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)		53.4	'15	59.8 ^b _C	52.6 ^C	'13-'15	↘ -0.3	↗ 0.6
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	80.0 ^D	82.8 ^D			

(*) The data in this column are the data available in 2016. Where 2015 data were not available, data from previous years were used.

(^A) UOE (UNESCO OECD Eurostat) back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED (international standard classification of education) 2011 not yet available.

(^B) AES (adult education survey) 2011, used as proxy for 2010 baseline.

(^C) 2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata.

(^D) Forecast made in 2016.

(^{E1}) Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

(^{E2}) Based on 25 countries (missing: ES, PL, RO); partial information for NL.

(^{E3}) Based on 27 countries (missing: NL); partial information for EL, IT.

(^{E4}) Based on 19 countries (missing: BE, DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT, SK).

(^{E5}) Based on 21 countries (missing: DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT).

(^{E6}) Partial information for NL.

(^{E7}) Based on 25 countries (missing: HR, IT, UK).

(^{E8}) Based on 23 countries (missing: BE, IE, FR, CY, UK).

(^{E9}) Based on 22 countries (missing: DE, IE, EL, NL, SI, UK).

(^b) Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

(^u) Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

(^z) Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

(^e) Eurostat: 'estimated'.

NB: Definitions in the indicators table differ from those used in national legislation.

EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified. Arrows ↗ or ↘ signal a positive or negative trend based on more than two data points and of magnitude 0.1 per year or more. Trends based on more than two data points but of smaller magnitude are indicated by →; trends based on two points only are marked •. Trends are estimated by means of regression models.

Source: Cedefop, 2017a, p. 101.

CHAPTER 1.

MTD 1 – All forms of work-based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

1.1. 2015 Baseline

In the Netherlands, school-based (BOL, *beroepsopleidende leerweg*) and work-based ((BBL, *beroepsbegeleidende leerweg*; apprenticeships) VET programmes have existed since the 19th century. The work-based learning requirements in VET are regulated by law ⁽⁴⁾. Pre-vocational programmes (VMBO) for learners aged 13 to 16 are available in lower secondary. Upper secondary VET programmes (MBO) are offered in school-based and/or dual (BBL) tracks, at four European qualifications framework (EQF) levels, from entry and basic programmes (levels 1 and 2 respectively) to professional education and middle-management VET programmes (levels 3 and 4). A main characteristic of VET in the Netherlands is that both tracks lead to the same qualifications. Learning methods include simulated or real business experiences, while practical training in companies (internships) occupies a significant part covering 20 to 59% of the school-based track and at least 60% in the dual VET track. Only accredited companies can offer work placements. Also, to enrol in dual VET, students must conclude an (employment) contract with a company and receive the minimum youth wage.

These upper secondary initial vocational education and training (IVET) programmes also function as continuing vocational education and training (CVET). Participants in the school-based pathway are mainly youngsters, while almost 50% of those following a dual pathway are 24 or over ⁽⁵⁾. In the Netherlands, the distinction between IVET and CVET is not so straightforward. All IVET courses may be followed by adults (in practice mostly the dual track), but adults do not depend on the supply of IVET courses if they, or their company, would like to get involved in further training. Publicly funded schools for IVET are allowed to act as CVET providers by offering IVET courses, or tailor-made courses, to companies as well as private persons. Conditions for enrolment may vary in terms of fees, minimum/maximum age, content or allowances for study costs. CVET operates on market principles; private persons and companies are

⁽⁴⁾ The adult and vocational education Act, 1996 and the VET and education Law, 2006.

⁽⁵⁾ See Cedefop, 2016a, Section 2.3.2.1.

free to choose from what's offered by training companies. In some sectors, CVET is regulated by social partners through the provision of facilities for on-the job training and sector-based training funds.

As the number of students enrolled in dual VET is decreasing steadily, the Ministry has asked the Social and Economic Council for the Netherlands (SER) to advise how to stop this decline. Measures on how to attract more students were under debate (Section 1.3.1).

At the beginning of the reporting period one of the strengths of the Dutch VET system was the strong involvement of social partners (employers and trade unions) in VET design, delivery and monitoring of work-based training through their participation in main VET bodies: they participate in the Joint Commissions advising the Centres of expertise (until 2015) and sit in the board of the SBB⁽⁶⁾, its advisory committee on work placements and the eight sector chambers operating within SBB (50% social partners and 50% VET schools reps). In April 2013 the social partners and the government signed a Social Pact which would introduce measures to reduce unemployment, and encourage employers to offer more apprenticeships places ⁽⁷⁾.

1.2. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The Netherlands assigned overall a medium priority to the work related to this MTD compared to the other MTDs agreed in Riga conclusions. The country's priorities in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for Vocational Education and Training (DGVt), are to:

- (a) further improve the quality of apprenticeships and internships;
- (b) pilot experiments to combine the two models of Dutch VET, starting with school-based periods and finishing the programme with work-based learning periods in a company/with an employment contract;
- (c) guarantee a sufficient number of work placements (either internships or apprenticeships).

⁽⁶⁾ SBB, Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven, the Foundation for cooperation of VET and labour market

⁽⁷⁾ Cedefop (2014). *ACVT survey on progress towards the Bruges objectives and future priorities*. [unpublished].

1.3. Main actions taken in 2015-19

1.3.1. Strategic study on work-based learning and its future

Due to the decreasing number of students in the dual (BBL) VET programmes ⁽⁸⁾, worries of labour market polarisation, and concerns about the employability prospects of upper secondary VET graduates (at levels 2 and 3, where apprenticeships are predominantly found), the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) was instructed by the government to look closely into labour market changes and developments (including potential impact on recent education choices by students) and to reflect how to improve workplace learning (to be) offered in both VET pathways (school-based and apprenticeship). Preliminary findings published in October 2016 ⁽⁹⁾ present possible explanations for the declining number of dual VET students, such as the economic crisis, increased participation in general education, and negative image of dual VET. Reference is also made to a number of government measures such as the intensification of certain subjects (central exams being introduced for language and maths) or the 2014 cascade funding scheme ⁽¹⁰⁾ that might have caused uncertainty among employers. The study was completed in November 2017 pointing to several recommendations under four themes:

- (a) encourage workplace learning both in school-based and dual VET;
- (b) stimulate VET-institutes to take a major role in lifelong learning and development;
- (c) encourage cooperation between schools and the business community;
- (d) work on a strong learning climate for professionals in the VET schools.

In March 2018 the minister of education announced the abolishment of the cascade funding scheme as of January 2019 as a measure to promote equal opportunities. This might also support the attractiveness of the dual track (BBL) for employers and students ⁽¹¹⁾.

⁽⁸⁾ From 170 000 in 2009/10 to less than 100 000 in 2015/16.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://www.ser.nl/nl/publicaties/adviezen/2010-2019/2016/toekomstbestendig-beroepsonderwijs.aspx>

⁽¹⁰⁾ See Cedefop, 2016a, Section 2.2.4. In the cascade scheme, funding decreases when students stay for a long time in vocational education.

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-onderwijs-cultuur-en-wetenschap/documenten/kamerstukken/2018/03/06/kamerbrief-over-afschaffen-cascadebesteding-in-het-mbo>

1.3.2. Experiments to combine the two VET tracks

As a follow-up of the *Nationaal techniekpact* (technology pact) and the action plan *Focus on craftsmanship* (*Focus op vakmanschap*) 2011-15, experiments ⁽¹²⁾ to integrate the school-based (BOL) and dual/apprenticeship track (BBL) of Dutch VET were planned to take place between May 2015 and July 2021 in upper secondary VET schools (MBO levels 2 to 4). Students would start in the school-based track and switch to the dual track after having obtained the relevant theoretical and practical skills. The experiment is intended to address the need of VET schools and companies for more flexibility between both tracks and to stimulate cooperation between schools and companies to offer good quality training that suits labour market needs. First results show that, although the number of participants is still low (23 VET courses, 300 participants) ⁽¹³⁾, the experiments meet the needs of employers and learners ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The government has called on all VET actors to collaborate to offer more dual training places, especially in sectors where dual VET is less common or has no historical roots.

A portal ⁽¹⁵⁾ has been developed, and is now fully operational, by the Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (*Stichting Beroepsonderwijs en Bedrijfsleven*, SBB) offering comprehensive and updated information on VET programmes and learning pathways, VET qualifications and labour market perspectives, to help learners make informed career choices.

1.3.3. Assisting the search for internships

Following the technology pact (*Nationaal Techniekpact 2013*), a technology education portal has been created to enable young students in higher education to find an internship or work/study place ^(16,17). The technology pact will be operational at least until 2020. Partners (employers, education and government) have agreed to work on several topics: increasing the number of apprenticeships in the technology sector; increasing the number of students in technology

⁽¹²⁾ <https://www.overheid.nl/english>

⁽¹³⁾ <https://www.nro.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Evaluatie-experiment-beroepsopleiding-gecombineerde-leerwegen-bol-bbl.pdf>

⁽¹⁴⁾ <https://www.nro.nl/nieuwe-gecombineerde-leerweg-in-het-mbo-voorziet-in-behoefte/>

⁽¹⁵⁾ <http://www.beroepeninbeeld.nl/>
<https://www.s-bb.nl/onderwijs/studie-cijfers>

⁽¹⁶⁾ <https://www.topsectorbeurzen.nl/home>

⁽¹⁷⁾ <https://www.techniekpact.nl/nationaal-techniekpact-2020>

education; and strengthening the quality of workplace learning and establishing practice-based (technological) learning environments ⁽¹⁸⁾.

1.3.4. Incentives for employers to increase involvement in work-based learning

To raise the attractiveness of work-based learning among employers, minimum wages for dual track students were not increased. Further, as of 2017-18, the existing subsidy scheme for companies to cover costs of offering learning places to BBL students ⁽¹⁹⁾ has been extended to covering the costs related to learners enrolled in secondary special needs education (*special voortgezet onderwijs*), practical education (*praktijkonderwijs*) and upper secondary VET (*Entrée opleiding*) EQF level 1 programmes ⁽²⁰⁾. On December 2018 it was decided to extend the duration of this subsidy scheme for employers to 2023 ⁽²¹⁾. Work-based learning is subsidised not only for VET students in the dual track (BBL), but also for higher education students in dual tracks in technology, care and agriculture.

1.3.5. Increasing social partner involvement

To guarantee a sufficient number of work placements, either internships or apprenticeship, the 2009 apprenticeship protocol was updated in July 2015 ⁽²²⁾. Since August 2015 the responsibility for accreditation of quality of work placements in companies was transferred from the 17 sector-based centres of expertise to the Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB). SBB was established in 2012 and works at sectoral, regional and national levels. Via its eight sector chambers, it acts as intermediary between training institutions and companies to guarantee ⁽²³⁾ appropriate work placements in both (BOL and BBL) VET tracks. It is responsible for maintaining (updating) the qualification framework for secondary vocational education; accrediting and coaching work placement companies ⁽²⁴⁾, and

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/brochures/2018/06/04/nationaal-techniepact-focus-en-versnellen>

⁽¹⁹⁾ Applicable to VMBO, MBO and higher professional education (HBO) VET programmes.

⁽²⁰⁾ <https://www.s-bb.nl/nieuws/subsidieregeling-praktijkleren-verlengd-tot-2023> and <https://www.rvo.nl/subsidies-regelingen/subsidieregeling-praktijkleren>

⁽²¹⁾ <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2018-68387.html>

⁽²²⁾ See <https://www.s-bb.nl/bpvprotocol> *Reglement erkenning leerbedrijven SBB*.

⁽²³⁾ *Stage-en-leerbanenoffensief*.

⁽²⁴⁾ www.stagemarkt.nl provides an overview of all accredited companies.

monitoring and informing on (qualitative and quantitative) labour market developments ⁽²⁵⁾. VET and social partners are equally represented in sector chamber discussions; in labour market developments and their translation into new courses; the efficiency of the range of courses; and prospects on the job market ⁽²⁶⁾. The new regulation ⁽²⁷⁾ on the accreditation of work placements in companies came into effect in June 2015.

Between June and October 2016, SBB ran a campaign among employers to raise awareness and promote active involvement in workplace learning, achieving positive results; twice as many training places were offered in August 2016 compared to August 2015. In 2018 the Minister asked the SBB to prolong this campaign aimed to raise awareness and promote workplace learning.

In addition, new public-private partnerships pursue, among other aims, stronger cooperation of VET schools with regional and local businesses in innovative sectors ⁽²⁸⁾. In 2018, 125 public-private partnerships were operational ⁽²⁹⁾. In November 2018 the minister decided to extend the duration of this scheme to promote partnerships to 2022. Besides promoting stronger cooperation between VET, regional and local business, the agenda of the subsidy scheme also supports the policy aims concluded in the overall quality agreement between VET colleges and the ministry and the bilateral regional quality agenda to be concluded between each VET college and the Ministry of Education (Section 2.2). Cooperation between public and private partners should therefore include at least one of the following topics: further professionalisation of teachers, the development of research skills in teacher staff in VET colleges, stimulation of lifelong learning, and optimising links between education at EQF level 1 in upper secondary VET (Entreeopleiding) and the labour market ⁽³⁰⁾.

⁽²⁵⁾ Information is available via www.kansopwerk.nl

⁽²⁶⁾ For a comprehensive list, see www.s-bb.nl/samenwerking

⁽²⁷⁾ <https://www.s-bb.nl/bedrijven/erkenning/voorwaarden-voor-erkenning/reglement-erkenning-leerbedrijven-sbb>

⁽²⁸⁾ Cedefop Refernet Netherlands (2018). *Public-private partnerships will promote innovation in VET*. National news on VET; 20.3.2018.
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/netherlands-public-private-partnerships-will-promote-innovation-vet>

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://www.techniekpact.nl/>

⁽³⁰⁾ <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2018Z12693&did=2018D36674>

1.3.6. Improving apprenticeship and internship quality

Quality agreements ⁽³¹⁾ centre on a performance-based funding scheme introduced in 2015. They are concluded between public upper secondary VET schools and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and are monitored by account managers and ministry officials. The aim is to support rapid implementation of measures and the professionalisation of teachers, and to tackle early leaving from education. Employer organisations, the student organisation JOB, and the Professional Association of Teachers (BVMBO) have a consultative and supportive role.

Quality agreements on workplace learning (*beroepspraktijkvorming*) were introduced in March 2016 between the Ministry and the council of MBO schools (*MBO Raad*) and are effective from 2017 onward. Within the agreements, VET schools develop a plan on how to improve the quality of work-based learning (and related guidance activities) in both school-based and dual tracks, to ease transition to the labour market. In 2017 and 2018 the schools were assessed against three specific criteria:

- (a) submission/approval of a realistic school plan with measurable and achievable goals;
- (b) progress made in 2017 and 2018 in achieving these goals;
- (c) participation in a peer reviewing exercise.

Based on their performance, schools receive extra funding. The total amount allocated is EUR 58 million ⁽³²⁾. A midterm evaluation of the quality agreements (published in July 2017) ^(33, 34) shows that these agreements provide VET schools with the opportunity to improve their quality. It was concluded that most of the VET schools have achieved their goals. However VET schools prefer to work on themes that are considered important by the institutions themselves.

⁽³¹⁾ <https://www.kwaliteitsafsprakenmbo.nl/themas/beroepspraktijkvorming>

⁽³²⁾ Regulation of 19.7.2016: www.officielebekendmakingen.nl

⁽³³⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2017/07/18/kamerbrief-bij-tussenevaluatie-kwaliteitsafspraken-mbo-en-externe-verantwoording-door-mbo-instellingen>

⁽³⁴⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2017/12/04/kamerbrief-over-stand-van-zaken-moties-over-het-mbo>

CHAPTER 2.

MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET

2.1. 2015 Baseline

A quality assurance national reference point (QANRP) was established in 2010 and operates under an independent agency funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science ⁽³⁵⁾. A national approach to quality assurance was developed in 1996 and is aligned to the European quality assurance in vocational education and training (EQAVET) quality cycle, indicative descriptors and indicators. It applies to IVET and CVET and related work-based learning. The quality assurance approach provides for the external review of VET providers for both IVET and CVET. The VET Law requires that VET providers set up their own quality assurance system: the inspectorate of education reviews the quality delivered by the VET providers in a three-year cycle. If VET providers fail to meet the requirements stipulated by the law, the licence can be withdrawn by the Ministry. Since 2013, many VET providers have joined a network for collaboration on quality assurance. They have jointly developed an audit system on top of the quality assurance system that is in place at institutional and national levels.

Public and private VET providers and the Minister for Education have agreed on an agenda on examination quality in Dutch VET for 2015-20 (Sections 2.2, 3.3.4.1 and 4.3.1.3). The agenda includes the validation of exams by an external body and the independence of the committee that issues VET diplomas. These arrangements will not apply to all exams, only to those that are not developed according to agreements in which schools participate.

Extra funding (partly performance-based) has been provided between 2015 and 2018 to raise VET quality. Based on quality agreements with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Section 1.3.6), public VET providers have set goals and made plans to improve quality. These agreements include raising the quality of the teachers, improving workplace learning and preventing early school leaving. *MBO in bedrijf* (VET in business) is an organisation operating at national

⁽³⁵⁾ <https://www.cinop.nl/>

level set up to stimulate quality assurance at VET-provider level by advising on the implementation of bilaterally quality agreements concluded between the provider and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. It monitors and supports VET providers in achieving their goals, for example by organising peer-learning activities.

The quality assurance framework in place does not distinguish between IVET and CVET but applies to the VET sector as a whole. Therefore, the information given above also applies to CVET.

The national approach to quality assurance in VET includes a system that collects information relating to graduates who complete IVET and CVET. Information on labour market outcomes, competences and further study activities is collected yearly by Statistics Netherlands and is also shared with VET providers to inform continuous improvement such as adjusting learning methods.

At the beginning of the reporting period, there were a number of initiatives to forecast labour market demand. Surveys were conducted by the research institute ROA to monitor graduates, about their level and type of education and their first steps into the labour market. The public employment service (PES) also collected data on labour market trends per economic sector and per region; and the Bureau for Policy Analysis (CPB), published ad-hoc reports on skills mismatches (EEPO, 2015).

Since 2015, the SBB has provided advice on VET policy to the Ministry and offered a single contact point that draws up recommendations and advice on education and the labour market (Section 1.2.5).

In 2014, EUR 100 million were allocated for 2014-17 to establish regional public-private partnerships between MBO, companies, municipalities and other partners. Public-private partnerships focus on closer collaboration between VET schools and industries at a regional level.

2.2. Quality assurance in line with EQAVET in 2015-19

The Netherlands assigned overall a medium priority on the work related to this MTD compared to the other MTDs agreed in the Riga conclusions. For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Director General for Vocational Education and Training, are:

- (a) that all (recognised) VET institutions should have a system to assess the quality of their education;
- (b) to stimulate self-regulation by the institutions in this respect.

These priorities will remain a focal point for the inspectorate of education, as has been the case since 2012. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will support a quality network in VET and provide hands-on support to schools through the QANRP.

Improving the quality assurance approach is a continuous process. The inspectorate of education, which monitors school quality and compliance with central rules and regulations, has been developing a new inspection framework in close collaboration with stakeholders. This new framework has been in place since August 2017. In addition to its supervisory role, the inspectorate will have a more supporting role, assisting VET providers to improve education and training quality. The QANRP has been contributing to this new concept of quality culture.

An amendment to the adult education and vocational education Act *Tightening requirements for examination boards in upper secondary VET* ⁽³⁶⁾ (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs, WEB*) came into force in September 2017 (Sections 3.3.4.1 and 4.3.1.3). This amendment aims at improving the quality of the work of school-based examination boards in upper secondary VET. Stricter statutory requirements for members of programme-based examination committees have been introduced to raise the competences of its members, such as becoming more objective in their judgement, or capable of carrying out their tasks more effectively. To improve the quality and independence of the boards, at least one teacher and one external expert should be members.

In February 2018 a new agreement ⁽³⁷⁾ was signed between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and VET schools for the period 2018-22. As part of the performance-based funding scheme in place, VET schools should elaborate strategic plans for 2019-22 aiming to improve the quality of the VET offer in line with regional needs and in close collaboration with regional stakeholders. Under the quality agreements 2019-22 initiative, each secondary vocational education school (mbo) determines its own strategy and priorities in consultation with regional partners. Schools should focus on one or more of the following topics:

- (a) improve labour market outcomes of upper secondary VET;
- (b) improve equal opportunities in education and training;
- (c) support young people from disadvantaged groups.

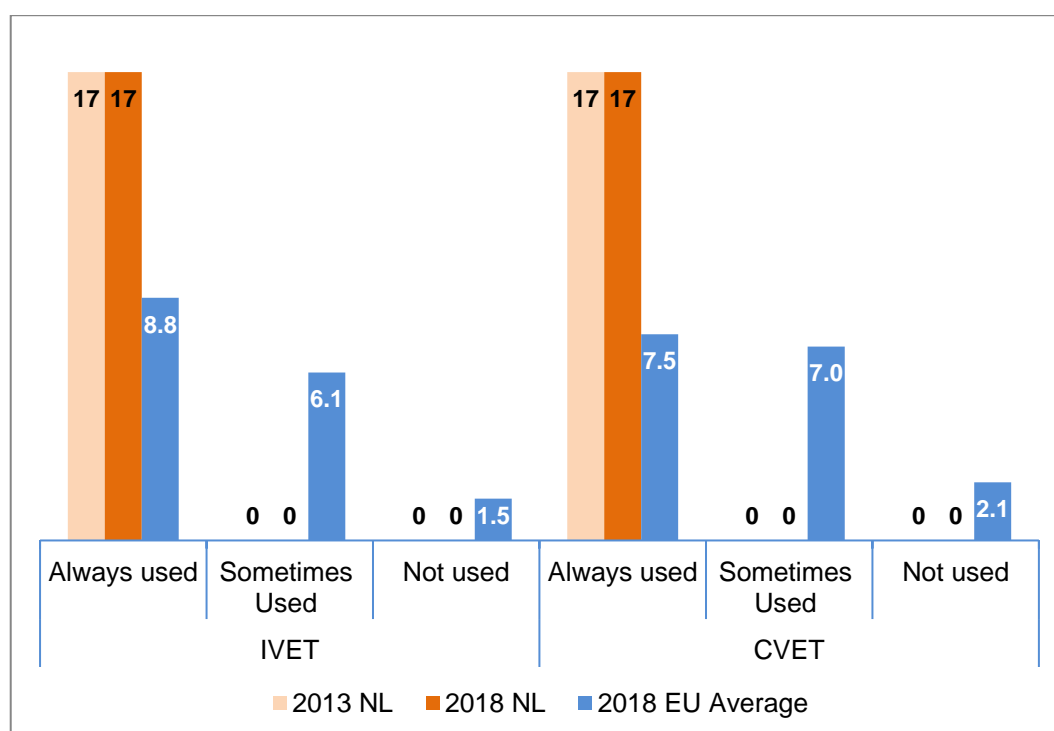
⁽³⁶⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/02/01/wetsvoorstel-aanscherping-eisen-examencommissies-mbo>

⁽³⁷⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/convenanten/2018/02/07/bestuursakkoord-mbo-2018-2022-trots-vertrouwen-en-lef> (in Dutch)

Schools have prepared and submitted their quality agendas in October 2018. In 2019, an independent commission will assess the agendas; it will also monitor midterm progress and final results. Funding of approximately EUR 400 million is available annually for quality agreements; 25% of the budget is performance based.

All indicators suggested in the EQAVET recommendation are systematically used. In 2018, the Netherlands was above the EU average in IVET and CVET.

Figure 1. **Use of EQAVET indicators**



NB: All of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 and 2018 in the Netherlands, compared to 8.8 in the EU on average in 2018.

EU average was calculated based on available information for 31 out of 35 VET systems.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on EQAVET Secretariat surveys for 2013 and 2018 data.

During the reporting period the Netherlands is using Erasmus+ funding to support quality culture in VET schools by focusing on the involvement of students and graduates in the school's quality assurance system. It will also look into collecting and using data on VET graduate tracking to inform VET better.

2.3. Continuous information and feedback loops in IVET and CVET in 2015-19

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this matter, as set by the Director General for Vocational Education and Training, is to stress the importance of a culture of quality in VET, with special emphasis on the quality of examinations. Use will be made of the quality network in VET and the QANRP.

Between 2014 and 2018, 125 public-private partnerships were established using the regional investment fund. The fund has strengthened cooperation between education and labour market stakeholders. In 2018, after positive evaluation ⁽³⁸⁾, the measure was prolonged until 2022 (Section 1.3.5). Each year EUR 25 million is available, totalling EUR 100 million from 2019 to 2022 ⁽³⁹⁾. Most of the newly established public-private partnerships focus on the joint design of VET curricula, cooperation in the professionalisation of VET teachers, and the development and redesign of training programmes for people in employment. In addition to these partnerships, and in line with the 2016 National technology pact 2020 to ensure a well-trained workforce, skilled technicians for the jobs of today and tomorrow, VET and higher education partnerships, are financially supported by grants from the Education Ministry.

As of the 2017/18 school year, and in addition to the revision of the qualification system, more experimentation will be allowed to develop cross-over qualifications combining elements of several qualifications from different domains and to create innovative training programmes. This measure will allow MBO, VET schools and companies to respond quickly to emerging cross-sectoral occupations, developing new qualifications in cooperation with local industries rather than acting only at national level through SBB.

A new initiative of 2018 ⁽⁴⁰⁾ allows VET colleges to draw up regional elements in national qualifications ⁽⁴¹⁾ in cooperation with the (regional) business community. The new qualifications would be based on national qualifications (sixty percent of the teaching time should be based on the national qualification) providing substantial room for addressing regional needs. This pilot will start in August 2020 and end in July 2026 for 20 qualifications ⁽⁴²⁾.

⁽³⁸⁾ See the relevant regulation [here](#).

⁽³⁹⁾ <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2018Z12693&did=2018D36674>

⁽⁴⁰⁾ A public consultation took place in February 2018 expecting implementation as of January 2019.

⁽⁴¹⁾ <https://www.internetconsultatie.nl/experimentkwalificatiestructuur>

⁽⁴²⁾ <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-2019-2>

CHAPTER 3.

MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

3.1. 2015 Baseline

At the beginning of the reporting period the main challenge the country faced was to improve the numeracy skills of VET students and make guidance a topic in all schools from primary to higher education. This objective would be addressed through an overarching Guidance Plan (prepared in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment). In 2015, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science enabled earlier registration to upper secondary VET (MBO) to help young people in seeking career advice earlier.

Revision of the qualification structure in upper secondary vocational education was introduced to reduce the number of qualifications, better focus on the core of professions, and make qualifications more flexible and easier to update. Optional subjects could be introduced to increase institution capacity to take on board innovative approaches and the regional/local context (Section 4.3.1.2). Experiments with the workmanship pathway – involving a continuing line of education from the third year of pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to MBO level 2 and 3 in all sectors and to level 4 (vocational or technological pathway) – had started in 2014 and will last until 2022 ⁽⁴³⁾. Entry level courses financed by the government to attract students without a pre-vocational diploma were set up to replace the first level of VET courses as of 2015. A budget of EUR 25 million was allocated to *School Ex*, a programme to encourage final year students in secondary vocational education to continue studying once they have gained their diploma; this aims to increase options on the labour market by choosing programmes in areas with good job prospects (such as engineering, technology).

In December 2014, an action plan for education for vulnerable students was launched aimed at improving the transition between pre-VET and VET,

⁽⁴³⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2016/12/01/rapport-experimenten-vakmanschap-en-technologieroute>

developing tailor made solutions for upper secondary VET at lower levels and establishing a comprehensive regional safety net for youth at risk.

A comprehensive qualifications framework of the Netherlands (NLQF) was set up in September 2011 and was referenced to the EQF in October 2011. A new Dutch national policy on validation of non-formal and informal learning was also presented in early 2014. The outcome of this reorientation was closely linked to making validation of prior learning (VPL) ⁽⁴⁴⁾ a successful tool in both learning and employment ⁽⁴⁵⁾. A national coordination point for ECVET (NCP-ECVET) was set up and became part of the Dutch partnership for lifelong learning on January 2015 ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Further action consisted in making associate degree (AD) programmes (EQF level 5) more attractive for young people and adults, VET graduates in particular. AD programmes were introduced in September 2013 as part of bachelor programmes, thus allowing for further progression in higher education.

Overall at the beginning of the reporting period, the Netherlands has taken various steps to promote access to VET and qualifications for all mainly with initiating reforms in guidance, and improving permeability.

3.2. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The Netherlands assigned overall a high priority on the work related to this MTD compared to the other MTDs agreed in the Riga conclusions. The country's priorities in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for Vocational Education and Training, are threefold:

- (a) for young people:
 - (i) ensure the right to enrolment in VET for all;
 - (ii) establishing the distinction between diplomas entitling students to pursue a higher education degree and those valid only for the labour market;
- (b) for adults:
 - (i) ensuring the right to enrolment in VET for all (through the Law on right of enrolment in VET for all);

⁽⁴⁴⁾ In Dutch: Erkenning van Verworven Competenties (EVC).

⁽⁴⁵⁾ The input is from the European Inventory on NQFs:
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/netherlands-european-inventory-nqf-2016>

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Source: the ECVET Users' Group Members.

- (ii) further developing the lifelong learning strategy with a strong focus on basic skills and flexible pathways;
- (c) make guidance a topic in all schools from primary to higher education.

3.3. Main actions taken in 2015-19

3.3.1. Promoting equal opportunity

3.3.1.1. Action plan for equal opportunities

In response to a range of surveys showing that students do not always have equal opportunities, and the trend of growing inequality, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science submitted to the parliament in October 2016 an action plan for equal opportunities in education ⁽⁴⁷⁾. As of October 2017, schools, municipalities and other regional institutes can apply for a grant for the development of interventions, research and knowledge sharing to support equal opportunities ⁽⁴⁸⁾. Additional budget (EUR 4 million in 2017 and EUR 14 million in 2018) has been made available for VET schools or higher professional education institutes. The conditions for this funding were published in March 2017. The grant supports activities contributing to successful completion by MBO graduates of their first year of higher professional education. Schools could apply for this grant in August to September 2017. Their proposals are based on plans developed by students in the so-called student labs where students would design approaches for successful transition. The plans ⁽⁴⁹⁾ are published in a brochure ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The action plan also aims to develop networks for experience sharing. To that end, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has initiated an alliance for equal opportunities (*Gelijke Kansen Alliantie*). Parents, teachers, school directors, researchers, employers and social institutions are encouraged to join the alliance. An online platform ⁽⁵¹⁾ enables sharing experiences and learning from other initiatives. Complementary approaches are foreseen:

⁽⁴⁷⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/10/31/kamerbrief-over-actieplan-gelijke-kansen-in-het-onderwijs>

⁽⁴⁸⁾ <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2017-58760.html#d17e469>

⁽⁴⁹⁾ <https://goo.gl/AvSRwh>

⁽⁵⁰⁾ <https://www.dus-i.nl/subsidies/d/doorstroom-mbo-hbo/documenten/publicaties/2017/05/14/studentlab-brochure>

⁽⁵¹⁾ www.gelijke-kansen.nl

- (a) strengthening parent involvement;
- (b) investing in cultural education in pre-vocational education;
- (c) funding initiatives to involve role models (senior students) from higher professional education or universities in supporting young people who, given their socioeconomic background, are not familiar with higher education.

The alliance has been operational since August 2017. The subject of equal opportunities is also included in the Quality agreements 2019-22, concluded between the Ministry of Education and upper secondary VET schools (Section 2.2).

3.3.1.2. *Law on right to enrolment for all*

Almost in parallel to the introduction of the action plan for equal opportunities, new legislation to ensure the right of enrolment in VET for all (*Wetsvoorstel aanmelddatum en toelatingsrecht MBO*) was adopted in October 2016 and came into force in August 2017. This legislation aims to tackle problems in the transition from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to upper secondary VET and to strengthen the position of learners. The law paves the way for better (study) guidance before and during transition. It brings forward the registration date (1 April) for all students moving from pre-vocational secondary education to upper secondary VET. This change is intended to give schools more time to support students in their choice of VET programme and to react if students do not register in MBO; this gives schools a chance to reduce the risk of early school leaving. As of September 2018, legislation also grants students the right to enrol in a programme according to their preference. It describes the respective responsibilities of pre-vocational secondary and upper secondary VET schools, students and municipalities. Schools and municipalities are obliged to exchange information about students who are moving towards upper secondary VET. In May 2017 the councils for primary education, secondary education and VET and the association for Dutch municipalities signed a code of conduct on how to cooperate in the transition to VET (MBO).

3.3.2. Guidance

In a letter on career orientation and guidance sent to parliament in November 2015, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs stated that career guidance still deserves attention in education; they announced a follow-up letter about guidance in all education sectors (general lower and upper secondary education, VET and higher education). Despite much effort in recent years, improvement is still needed to support students in making an appropriate study choice, to professionalise teachers in career guidance, and to support transitions from pre-

vocational education to upper secondary vocational and higher professional education. In September 2016, the Secretary of State for Education announced in a letter to parliament how to improve career orientation and guidance ⁽⁵²⁾ in general and vocational education. The most important implemented actions are:

- (a) in collaboration with stakeholders (sector councils, teacher associations, education institutions, experts, the expertise centre for guidance, teachers' unions, SBB, the education inspectorate, Euroguidance), competence profiles of experts in career orientation and guidance working in schools are designed. Also, an overview has been produced of the training courses and training providers in the field of career orientation;
- (b) as of August 2017, career orientation and guidance is included in the template which the inspectorate of education uses to assess the quality of education/education programmes in primary, secondary general education and upper secondary VET;
- (c) a study undertaken by the VO (*voortgezet onderwijs*, secondary education) council assessed the feasibility of a cross-sectoral centre of knowledge and expertise on guidance.

From 2011 to 2016, career orientation and guidance in VET had been promoted through the project *Stimuleringsproject LOB in het mbo*, which helped VET-schools cooperate to develop and implement career orientation and guidance, and resulted in a website, subsidised by the Ministry of Education, with practical knowledge and tools. In July 2017 a cross-sectoral centre of expertise (*expertisepunt LOB*) on the topic of guidance began operating. This is based at the Netherlands association of VET colleges (*MBO Raad* ⁽⁵³⁾) and aims to exchange information and good practices between all education sectors (primary, secondary general, pre-vocational, upper secondary VET and higher education) and to ensure efficient career guidance for students.

⁽⁵²⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/09/28/kamerbrief-over-loopbaanorientatie-en-loopbaanbegeleiding>

⁽⁵³⁾ <https://www.mboraad.nl/nieuws/minister-van-engelshoven-lanceert-nieuw-mbo-portal-kiesmboni>

3.3.3. Permeability and flexibility

3.3.3.1. *Amendments to secondary education Act*

Amendments to the secondary education Act⁽⁵⁴⁾ (*Wet op het Voortgezet Onderwijs, WVO*) entered into force in August 2016. The amendments are the result of an intensive VMBO (pre-vocational secondary education) renewal debate with teachers, school leaders, administrators, and businesses, started in 2010. New programmes were introduced in August 2016, renewing contents (in line with modern occupational practice and curriculum developments in MBO) and structure (over 30 programmes will be replaced by 10 flexible profiles) to address the decline in student numbers and fragmentation. The reform puts VMBO in a better position to respond to changes and needs in further education and the regional labour market. Each programme consists of a general part (the same subjects for the four areas of study), a profile part (*profieldeel*) and optional modules, and offers good career orientation and guidance.

3.3.3.2. *Voucher experiments and partial diploma/qualifications for adults*

In letters⁽⁵⁵⁾ to parliament (2015 and 2016) on the progress of lifelong learning policy, the Cabinet has announced its intention to make upper secondary VET and higher education programs more flexible and tailor-made. This would be done through voucher experiments in higher education and the introduction of certificates (parts of a full diploma/qualification) in upper secondary not-publicly financed VET; such measures are intended to make VET more accessible for adults. Private VET suppliers would be allowed to award parts of a qualification only, in order to make VET more accessible for adult learners. The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB) identified optional subjects (*keuzedelen*) that can be awarded in this way and a first set of 38 of these optional subjects was selected in 2016 (including entrepreneurship and leadership). By February 2019 certification⁽⁵⁶⁾ was possible for 120 of these optional subjects, for not-publicly funded VET institutes only.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-onderwijs-cultuur-en-wetenschap/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/03/30/wetsvoorstel-invoering-profielen-vmbo-en-vernieuwing-beroepsgerichte-examenprogramma-s>

⁽⁵⁵⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-onderwijs-cultuur-en-wetenschap/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/10/26/kamerbrief-over-voortgang-leven-lang-leren>

⁽⁵⁶⁾ <https://goo.gl/MXSnyb>

In September 2016, a commission ⁽⁵⁷⁾ (*Commissie Sap*) was installed to prepare advice for the government on vouchers in upper secondary VET. The commission was invited to come up with suggestions on how to promote lifelong learning in upper secondary VET; and determine what the advantages and disadvantages of financial incentives for adult learners are. The commission delivered its advice in April 2017. The advice identified conditions to support adults in lifelong learning: financial resources; sufficient time available; a transparent and high-quality education and training offer that fits the needs of adults; and an environment that stimulates education and development. Creating these conditions is a joint responsibility of government, employers, training institutions and adults themselves. The commission concluded that funding the demand side is an effective tool to support lifelong learning for adults. Three funding options were suggested ⁽⁵⁸⁾:

- (a) tax facilities;
- (a) training vouchers;
- (b) individual learning accounts.

As a follow up to the commission advice, the education and labour ministries have launched a multiannual programme for lifelong learning (LLL) aiming to raise awareness, promote LLL programmes and help individuals participate in LLL. A total of EUR 10.15 million is earmarked for 2019 for:

- (a) developing a portal providing an overview of available training programmes (EUR 1.4 million);
- (b) promoting LLL in SMEs (EUR 1.5 million);
- (c) upgrading the Working & learning desks programme supporting job-seekers and employers (EUR 1.4 million);
- (d) introducing flexible education paths for adults in secondary VET (EUR 5 million);
- (e) monitoring and evaluating activities (EUR 0.85 million). After 2019, the budget will be adjusted, if necessary.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ <https://levenlangontwikkelen.nl/publicaties/sap-advies-commissie-vraagfinanciering-mbo-doorleren-werkt/> ; <http://www.magazine-on-the-spot.nl/doorlerenwerkt/>

⁽⁵⁸⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2017/04/04/doorleren-werkt.-samen-investeren-in-nieuwe-zekerheid>

3.3.4. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.3.4.1. *Reform of examination boards in upper secondary VET*

An amendment to the adult education and vocational education Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs, WEB*) ⁽⁵⁹⁾ *tightening requirements examination boards in VET-schools* was accepted in February 2017 and came into force as of September 2017. It aims at improving the quality of examination boards in upper secondary VET (Sections 2.2 and 4.3.1.3) with stricter statutory requirements for examination committees to make them more objective and capable of carrying out their tasks more effectively.

The legislation also regulates that the examination board must – on request of the student when leaving education – issue a declaration in which it is stated what parts of the programme have been completed, though a diploma or certificate cannot be awarded. The purpose of this obligation is to give the MBO participant more legal protection. Such declarations also help other schools to decide on granting exemptions, and a student who has not obtained a diploma is able to show to an employer what parts of a course have been completed.

3.3.4.2. *ECVET* ⁽⁶⁰⁾

A national team of European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) experts is in place. A national coordination point for ECVET (NCP-ECVET) was set up and became part of the Dutch partnership for lifelong learning on 1 January 2015. ECVET has been piloted in mobility projects where learning outcomes acquired abroad are transferred between the participating countries. In 2015, 10 pilot projects were run with the aim of supporting adult transition from work to work, reintegration into the labour market, and updating skills and competences in an efficient and cost-effective way. The projects were implemented in health care, social services, pedicure, and the army. These pilot projects have been finalised and were disseminated via a handbook. Two new projects in disability care at secondary and higher professional VET levels started in 2016-17 and aim at the recognition of certification units in the Dutch healthcare and welfare sector. Pilots demonstrate that it is possible for people with work experience, or work-related training to obtain a level 3 or 4 qualification within a year.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/02/01/wetsvoorstel-aanscherping-eisen-examencommissies-mbo>

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Source: the ECVET users' group members.

3.3.4.3. *Validation of non-formal and informal learning* ⁽⁶¹⁾

A new Dutch national policy on validation of non-formal and informal learning was presented in early 2014. The outcome of this reorientation is closely linked to making validation of prior learning (VPL) ⁽⁶²⁾ a successful tool in both learning and employment. The system of VPL has been evaluated and, since 2016, the results have led to developing a new system in which there are two different paths for validating prior learning:

- (a) the labour market route, where VPL is aimed at career guidance for adults on the labour market and prior individual learning outcomes are validated against sector/industry standards;
- (b) the education route, where individual learning and competences are validated against a national qualification standard to obtain a formal VET or higher education qualification.

VPL tools include intake-assessment, e-portfolio, competence tests, and ECVET methods. If a formal VPL procedure is followed, the result can also be an *ervaringscertificaat* (experience certificate). Since January 2016, *Servicepunt Examinering* (examination support body) supports VET schools in validating competences. In January 2018 this body merged with the support body for the implementation of the qualification framework into the Expertise Centre for Examination and Education (Kennispunt Onderwijs & Examinering) ⁽⁶³⁾.

3.3.5. Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups

In the Quality agreements 2019-22, concluded between the Ministry of Education and upper secondary VET schools, schools are urgently invited to pay more attention to young people in vulnerable positions. Activities for this group should have priority in the quality plans, such as to reduce early school leaving (Section 2.2). In addition a number of other initiatives address vulnerable groups:

3.3.5.1. *Work-based learning and coaching to tackle youth unemployment*

Within the youth unemployment action plan (*Aanpak jeugdwerkloosheid*) 2015-16, work agreements (*werkakkoorden*) have been concluded (75 in 2015, ended in 2017) between employer organisations, trade unions, large employers, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. In these agreements, employers express their intention to support young people in finding a job by offering them a place to learn. Employers are

⁽⁶¹⁾ Source: Cedefop, 2017b; Dukevot, R., 2016.

⁽⁶²⁾ In Dutch: *Erkenning van Verworven Competenties* (EVC).

⁽⁶³⁾ <https://onderwijsenexaminering.nl/>

also invited to open up jobs to school leavers or young people (18 to 27 years old); to prepare young people for the labour market by supporting their career and education choices; and to help them to develop skills for work, by coaching youngsters in finding a job and by recruiting young people from different backgrounds.

3.3.5.2. *Work-based learning to combat youth unemployment among migrants*

In 2015, within the *City deals* programme, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment concluded agreements with the five bigger cities ⁽⁶⁴⁾ (including their municipalities, schools, the employee insurance agency (UWV), employers, and intermediate organisations) to combat high youth unemployment among migrants confronted with difficulties in finding an internship. Measures already developed include awareness-raising meetings in schools, training courses for internship coordinators, teachers and students. A toolbox ⁽⁶⁵⁾ of methods to tackle the problem has been published. In 2017, the Minister of Education, on behalf of vocational education and the business community, launched the workplace discrimination hotline (*Meldpunt Stagediscriminatie*) on the SBB website ⁽⁶⁶⁾. Any reports of discriminations will be followed up immediately by SBB. The most severe sanction will be to withdraw a company's 'training company' licence. Between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, the hotline received seventeen reports of incidents. SBB has investigated all incidents.

3.3.6. **Increasing the attractiveness of VET**

3.3.6.1. *Raising the profile of associate degrees*

Action consisted of making associate degree programmes more attractive for young people and adults. Associate degrees (AD) are two-year higher vocational programmes at EQF level 5 offered by institutes for higher education (universities of applied sciences) with an accredited diploma targeted at training high-level staff according to specific business needs. AD programmes were introduced in September 2013 as part of bachelor programmes, allowing further progression in higher education. In 2016, the Ministry of Education proposed ending this connection and giving AD a stand-alone position. In February 2017, the higher education and scientific research Act (*Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en*

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven, Leeuwarden, Zaanstad.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ <https://www.discriminatie.nl/#/home>

⁽⁶⁶⁾ <https://www.s-bb.nl/nieuws/meld-stagediscriminatie>

Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, WHW) was amended. The legislative changes aim to give AD programmes this independent profile and position.

3.3.6.2. *Strengthening the position of pre-vocational education and upper secondary VET*

In February 2017 and May 2018, the Ministry of Education sent a letter to parliament on the subject of strong VET (*Sterk beroepsonderwijs*) ⁽⁶⁷⁾ ⁽⁶⁸⁾. Following the advice of the education council in June 2015, and in response to the manifest for the future of secondary vocational education issued by the council of VET colleges (*MBO Raad*, April 2016), measures to redesign and reposition pre-vocational education were explored. All stakeholders were consulted on how to strengthen the position of pre-vocational education and upper secondary VET in the education system. Measures include:

- (a) strong regional cooperation between upper secondary VET schools, pre-vocational schools and the business community; to smoothen the transition from pre-vocational education to upper secondary VET, to share expertise and facilities of other schools in the region and to support labour market relevance of (pre-)vocational education;
- (b) adapt existing legislation as an incentive for schools to develop consecutive learning routes encompassing pre-vocational education and upper secondary VET. A legislative proposal is expected to be submitted within 2019;
- (c) merge in 2021 the two programme types (general education and general/vocational) in pre-vocational education. In this new pathway theoretical learning will be enriched with practical/vocational components to improve the transition to upper secondary VET and upper secondary general education (HAVO).

⁽⁶⁷⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2017/02/20/kamerbrief-over-versterken-vmbo>

⁽⁶⁸⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/middelbaar-beroepsonderwijs/documenten/kamerstukken/2018/05/28/kamerbrief-over-programma-versterking-vmbo-mbo>

CHAPTER 4.

MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

4.1. Baseline 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period all eight key competences could be found in the initial VET curricula, albeit not under a separate heading or in a standardised form. In 2008, it was agreed that in all school types, including VET, students had to attain a standard level in the mother tongue and maths to progress through the system. In 2012, English and math became compulsory subjects in VET at level 4. At lower levels, English could be part of the curriculum only if mastering of this language was included in the occupational standards (national qualifications framework) of a particular course.

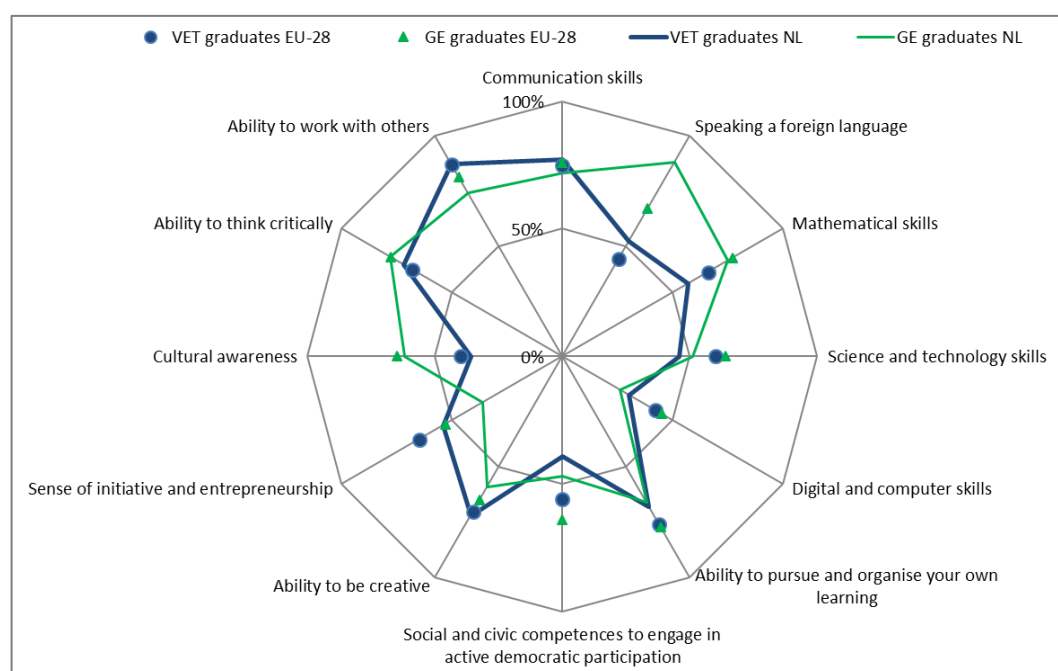
Citizenship and further learning, learning-to-learn and interpersonal, intercultural and social competences as well as civic competence were compulsory elements of all VET curricula since the 1996 VET Law. Entrepreneurship was compulsory only for some VET programmes, for example in retail. Since 2013, VET schools had been stimulated to provide entrepreneurship modules in curricula at qualification levels 3 and 4 of the Dutch qualifications framework. With the introduction of the renewed qualifications framework in 2014, entrepreneurship modules became optional in VET courses. Cultural expression was not a compulsory subject in VET, except for programmes preparing for specific occupations (for example in design, artist, audio-visual productions). The 'creative expression' module was available in the renewed qualifications framework since 2014 and learners could opt for it if offered by VET school as optional subject.

In 2015, national qualifications framework's level descriptors included communication, problem solving, learning and personal development skills. Learning methods included self-directed learning, the application of knowledge and workplace learning in various forms. In most cases, schools decided how to include key competences in their programmes.

Regarding literacy and numeracy of adults with low levels of basic skills, the 2012-15 Action Plan focussed on improving the quality of basic skills training, developing better testing and monitoring instruments and reaching out to new target groups (European Commission, 2015). Compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes feel they have (Cedefop, 2017c):

- (a) stronger:
 - (i) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
 - (ii) ability to be creative;
 - (iii) ability to work with others;
- (b) weaker:
 - (i) foreign language knowledge;
 - (ii) cultural awareness;
 - (iii) mathematical skills (Figure 2).

Figure 2. **Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET**



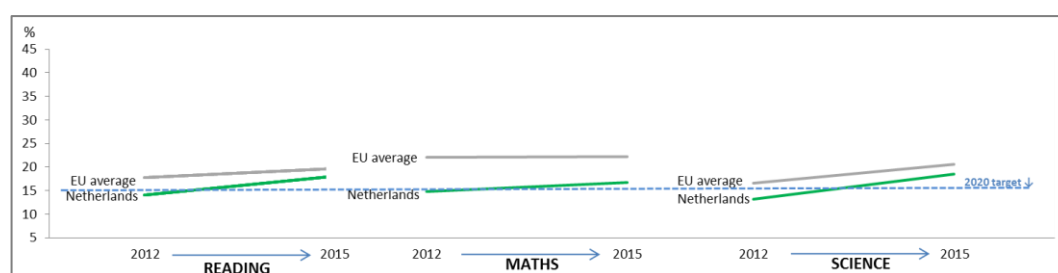
NB: GE stands for general education.

Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.

Source: Cedefop, 2017c.

The context of key competences in 2015 was mainly characterised by an increasing share of young low achievers in reading, maths and science compared to 2012 (Figure 3). Despite this trend, the share of low achievers in the Netherlands was smaller than in the EU on average.

Figure 3. **Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**



NB: Low achievement means failing level 2 on the PISA (programme for international student assessment) scale.

Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

As VET enrolls 69% of all upper secondary learners in the country ⁽⁶⁹⁾, this trend was likely to be reflected in the key competences in VET programmes ⁽⁷⁰⁾. VET was not limited to occupational (technical-instrumental) skills. Key competences were embedded in curricula and some, such as English and maths at upper VET levels, were introduced as compulsory subjects ⁽⁷¹⁾.

At the beginning of the reporting period, the Government was aiming to raise the competence level of all VET students and to reflect on the competences that VET should offer to learners in technology, occupational structures and career paths. The implementation of the renewed qualifications framework and its effect on VET courses had to be evaluated to assess whether more attention to these competences had to be paid. In addition, VET was seen as a vehicle for the integration of a variety of groups into Dutch society and in employment. Hence, VET schools were considered important for the development of civic competences and for social integration.

4.2. **Key competences addressed in the reporting period**

Table 2 outlines / gives a summary of key competences in initial and continuing VET that were addressed in the reporting period. A description of policies is provided in the following sections.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Calculated from Eurostat, data for 2015.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ For more information see Westerhuis, 2016.

⁽⁷¹⁾ For more information see Westerhuis, 2016.

Table 2. **Key competences addressed in 2015-19**

	IVET	CVET
Country language(s) and literacy	YES	YES
Foreign languages	YES	
Digital competence		YES
Maths	YES	YES
Science		
Technology		
Social and civic competences	YES	
Learning to learn		
Financial literacy		
Entrepreneurship competence		YES
Cultural awareness and expression		
Key competences as a package	YES	

NB: The list derives from the 2006 EU key competences framework for lifelong learning; it has been restructured and expanded with additional competences that can be considered key.

Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet input.

4.3. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The Netherlands assigned overall a high priority on the work related to key competences compared to the other MTDs agreed in the Riga conclusions. The country's priority in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for Vocational Education and Training, consists of redesigning the VET qualification structure for better responsiveness and flexibility. This will be carried out through introducing comprehensive qualification profiles composed of three parts: basic, specific, and optional (additional; not regulated) ⁽⁷²⁾. Both the basic and specific part will include key competences. Social partners will be involved.

4.4. Main actions taken in 2015-19

4.4.1. Key competences in initial VET

4.4.1.1. VET and 21st century skills

In a September 2015 policy letter (*Kamerbrief met visie op mbo*), the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science drew attention to 21st century skills, their relevance for VET and ways to develop them. The letter announces evaluation of

⁽⁷²⁾ According to Act on renewal of the qualifications structure (2016).

the implementation process (Section 4.4.1.2) of the renewed qualifications framework and its effect on VET courses in the coming years, to assess whether further steps are needed to adapt VET qualifications to the future.

4.4.1.2. *Redesigning the VET qualification structure*

Following the area priority, the revised structure of VET qualifications was introduced in August 2016. The number of VET qualifications has been reduced by 30%, which makes the structure more transparent and practical. Qualification definitions have also been broadened to give VET colleges more leeway to adapt curricula to labour-market needs. Optional modules were introduced to ensure the labour market relevance of curricula; these are relevant for several qualifications simultaneously. Companies and education institutions jointly develop them to respond quickly to innovations or emerging needs within their region. The first evaluation results of the implementation in 2018 show that most VET schools expect positive effects from the new qualification structure (including optional modules for the first time) for the transfer to further education, student satisfaction and possibilities to respond to the needs of the labour market. Expectations are moderate for satisfaction with the training companies and the quality of education in VET. Still uncertain is to what extent the bottlenecks which are currently experienced (organisational and administrative issues) will turn out to be of a temporary or structural nature ⁽⁷³⁾.

4.4.1.3. *Reform of examinations*

Amendments (December 2016) to the adult education and VET Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs, WEB*) aimed at improving the quality of examination (boards) in VET (Sections 2.2 and 3.3.4.1). They guarantee from 2017 onwards the right for VET learners not complying with language and maths examination requirements to obtain a school (VET) certificate, so they can enter the labour market.

A new law on differentiating examination requirements in languages and maths has also been proposed. Not all (VET) learners are able to meet the complete set of examination requirements in Dutch, English and mathematics. In 2016, the government drafted a new law to differentiate these requirements for specific learner groups ⁽⁷⁴⁾ to keep them motivated and positively challenged by

⁽⁷³⁾ <https://www.nro.nl/mbbo-gematigd-positief-over-invoering-van-doelmatige-leerwegen-en-voorbereiding-herziening-kwalificatiestructuur/>

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Learners in secondary pre-VET, pre-university programmes; in upper-secondary VET, who plan to enrol in teacher training; with entry-level VET qualifications. Learn more [here](#).

offering feasible examination requirements. After public consultation ⁽⁷⁵⁾ completed in September 2016, the law is expected to come into force in 2019.

4.4.2. Maths agenda

The 2016 maths agenda ⁽⁷⁶⁾, agreed by the Education Ministry, education providers and social partners, aims to improve maths education in secondary education and in VET. The agenda introduces several initiatives to motivate, facilitate and stimulate teachers and learners to improve the quality of teaching and results in maths and languages. In addition to EUR 52 million distributed to VET schools annually, the Education Ministry provides extra funding for research on this topic.

A VET language and maths ‘knowledge point’, was launched in March 2019, to inform schools about developments in language and arithmetic (‘maths’), and support them in clarifying any queries they may have. In addition, the ‘knowledge point’ organises flash meetings for teachers, policy officers and school management. Also VET teachers can use the maths teacher platform (Platform Rekendocenten) to get support in teaching maths and raise the quality of the content for this subject.

4.4.2.1. Civic competence agenda

In 2017, the Education Ministry and the association of VET colleges (*MBO Raad*) representing all VET schools, launched an agenda ⁽⁷⁷⁾ to strengthen civic competences of VET learners by updating VET curricula. In cooperation with the Knowledge Point Citizenship in VET ⁽⁷⁸⁾, which is aided by the association of VET colleges (*MBO Raad*), schools are supported with the implementation of the 2017 Civic Agenda.

4.4.3. Key competences in continuing VET

Municipalities are legally obliged ⁽⁷⁹⁾ to provide adult education (language, numeracy and – from 1 January 2018 – digital skills courses) for residents with low basic skills levels (citizens aged 18 and over). Adult learning is, therefore, part of the literacy policy of the municipalities. Municipalities, together with

⁽⁷⁵⁾ <https://www.internetconsultatie.nl/differentiatieexameneisen/details>

⁽⁷⁶⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/convenanten/2016/07/08/agenda-rekenonderwijs-vo-mbo>

⁽⁷⁷⁾ <https://www.mбораad.nl/nieuws/mbo-raad-lanceert-burgerschapsagenda>

⁽⁷⁸⁾ <https://burgerschapmbo.nl/>

⁽⁷⁹⁾ <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2017-54468.html>

regional municipalities, should draw up and implement a regional adult learning plan.

Since 2016, private VET providers are allowed to award partial qualifications for several optional subjects (*keuzedelen*), such as entrepreneurship and leadership, to make VET more accessible for adults (Section 3.3.3.2).

In the reporting period, policy developments have focused on supporting parents with low literacy levels and adults lacking numeracy and digital skills. The *Count on language action plan 2016-19*⁽⁸⁰⁾ (*Tel Mee met Taal*, EUR 18 million annually during 2016-19) introduces a joint action programme of several ministries to improve social and labour market participation of adults with insufficient literacy skills. In 2016-17, innovative projects supporting adults lacking literacy, numeracy and digital skills were started and research projects on literacy and the promotion of reading were launched. This initiative also supported parents in providing better educational guidance for their children, including VET learners. Language training was provided to around 10 000 parents with low literacy levels, with support and coaching to help them with the educational support of their children. The *Count on language action plan* has been extended for one year until the end of 2019.

As a follow-up to the 2016-19 *Count on language action plan*, the government announced on 18 March 2019 the allocation of EUR 425 million in the period 2020-24 to tackle illiteracy. This is EUR 35 million above the budget in the period 2015-19. Part of the new approach is to reach out to illiterate people who have Dutch as their native language. The new approach to tackling illiteracy also includes more emphasis on digital skills for adults. Municipalities will receive more money to increase the scope and quality of their (language) courses. Each region will draft a plan for the coming years. The extra budget for municipalities will amount to EUR 7.3 million per year in 2024. Annually, EUR 3 million will be made available to employers to offer language, numeracy and digital skills courses to employees. A point of expertise on basic skills will also be established, which will serve as a source of information for legislation and regulations in the field of adult education, training schemes and subsidies. For the further design and implementation of this new approach, the Dutch Government will collaborate with municipalities, employers and employees, libraries and several social organisations⁽⁸¹⁾.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ <https://www.nro.nl/onderzoeksprojecten/tel-mee-met-taal/>

⁽⁸¹⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2019/03/18/nieuwe-ambities-voor-aanpak-laaggeletterdheid>

CHAPTER 5.

MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers

5.1. 2015 Baseline

At the beginning of the reporting period several policy documents had focused on raising professional standards of teachers, while substantial resources had been invested. Main challenges included shortage of skilled /competent and authorised teachers; aging teaching population; and raising teacher flexibility to meet changing labour market needs;

The following main groups of teachers and trainers exist in VET programmes:

- (a) teacher;
- (b) student teacher;
- (c) teaching assisting jobs, i.e. teacher assistant, instructor;
- (d) management with teaching task;
- (e) in-company trainers

5.1.1. Access to VET school teaching: entry requirements and initial training

Teachers in upper secondary vocational education had to have either a first-degree teaching licence (from a university), or a second degree teaching licence (from a university of professional education) or a teaching certificate. This teaching certificate required a higher education diploma and could be obtained by following a work-based course of one year (640 study hours), covering both pedagogical and educational subjects.

In 2012 the education ministry announced three measures aiming to train better and raise the number of VET teachers. These included introducing two graduation tracks (general education and vocational education) at second degree teacher training institutes and quality criteria for entering the teaching profession from another background.

5.1.2. In-company trainers: entry requirements and initial training

Companies offering work placements to VET students had to be accredited as venues for learning by the Foundation for Cooperation between Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB) ⁽⁸²⁾. One of the criteria for accreditation was the availability of a trained in-company trainer. Such trainers had to be qualified at least at the same level for which they were supervising work-based learning and to have didactic skills such as being able to instruct, guide, motivate and assess the students/apprentices (validated by diplomas/certificates). Until 2015, knowledge centres regularly provided (commercial) courses to train in-company trainers.

5.1.3. VET school teachers: main lines for CPD

VET institutions had relative freedom in their approach to professional development of teaching staff. Teachers were entitled to 59 hours of training and professional development annually, complemented by additional training depending on the discipline of their expertise ⁽⁸³⁾. Teachers also received a personal budget for professional development of 0.8% of their annual salary. The 2013 national technology pact foresaw increased funding for teacher training focused on technology. Enterprises were offering short internships for VET teachers and trainers. VET teacher continuing professional development (CPD) was also promoted through regional partnerships between VET institutes and teacher training institutes. In addition, VET teachers had access to funding to help them acquire a master qualification that corresponded to the subject they were teaching ⁽⁸⁴⁾.

5.2. Initial training for teaching/training staff in VET schools in 2015-19

The Netherlands assigned overall a high priority on the work related to VET teachers compared to the other MTDs agreed in the Riga conclusions. For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area, as set by the Director General for Vocational Education and Training, are to:

- (a) ensure that all teachers are authorised and competent;

⁽⁸²⁾ National law on VET (1996).

⁽⁸³⁾ In VET institutions teachers of different disciplines are working in teams responsible for delivering educational programmes to one or more subgroups of students.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ DGVT survey on progress towards the Bruges objectives and future priorities.

- (b) improve the pedagogical and didactical skills of teachers moving over from the business world.

The action plan of the teacher agenda 2013-20 was updated in November 2015, with attention turning to improving initial education of VET teachers, as prospective VET teachers were less satisfied with their preparation compared to general education teachers. Managers in VET schools were also less satisfied with new teachers. As a result, from 2016 onwards, teacher training colleges (higher professional education) offer programmes for VET teaching qualification at bachelor level. The aim of this specialisation is to prepare teachers adequately for pre-vocational secondary education and upper secondary vocational education.

A revision of teacher requirements was proposed by the national teacher body *Onderwijscoöperatie*, which represents the teaching profession. The revised requirements were approved by the Ministry of Education in 2015 and have become effective as of 2017. Formal requirements were divided into three categories:

- (a) subject content requirements;
- (a) didactical requirements;
- (b) pedagogical requirements.

The 2015 teacher register Law, that made registration of teachers mandatory from 2017 onwards, was amended in 2017. This measure was expected to come into effect in August 2018 ⁽⁸⁵⁾ but was cancelled in February 2018. The initial aim of the register was to encourage teachers to maintain and improve their professional competences and professional standards. However, teachers and schools resisted the top-down approach (compulsory registration) and did not support the implementation process. In a letter ⁽⁸⁶⁾ to parliament January 2019, the Ministry of Education took stock of the current situation and announced in the amendment of the Act the aim to strengthen the teaching profession.

In February 2017, the Ministry of Education published an action plan on teacher shortage. There is a shortage of teachers in secondary education for specific subjects (such as foreign languages, physics, mathematics). A shortage of teachers for foreign languages, and technical science subjects is also expected for upper secondary vocational education. A plan is being implemented to encourage regional stakeholders to stimulate circular careers and hybrid teaching to tackle shortages of (technical) teachers. From 2019, VET schools

⁽⁸⁵⁾ <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-34458-H>

⁽⁸⁶⁾ See [here](#).

and general secondary education schools in the region can apply for a subsidy to tackle teacher shortages in their region. VET schools and general secondary schools have to submit a joint plan in order to claim subsidy. The subsidy for an action plan in the secondary education sector amounts to a maximum of EUR 250 000 per region. If one or more school boards from upper secondary vocational education participate, an additional subsidy of up to EUR 75 000 per region could be granted ⁽⁸⁷⁾.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science imposed more stringent quality requirements for second-career teachers in May 2016. Second-career teachers (*zij-instromers*) are able to enter the teaching profession in primary, secondary, and upper secondary vocational education, following an aptitude test. After the test and satisfying other qualifications, second career teachers can teach temporarily. They have to obtain a teaching licence within a two-year period.

School-higher education partnerships were encouraged at national level within the policy measure *Reinforcement of collaboration between initial teacher training institutes and schools 2013-16*. The partnerships aimed at collaboratively designing initial teacher training curricula and coordinating internships. In 2016, six upper secondary vocational education partnerships between initial teacher training institutes and (regional) schools were organised and granted a subsidy. The scheme ended in 2017 ⁽⁸⁸⁾ and an evaluation report was published in June 2018. A good return, especially for VET, is the fact that many partnerships have developed themselves into (market-driven) (prospective) training institutes.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education approved the introduction of specific competence requirements for instructors wanting to work in VET. From August 2018, specific professional, didactic and pedagogical competences are needed to work as an instructor. The requirements have been developed by BVMBO, the professional association for VET teachers and trainers in the Netherlands ⁽⁸⁹⁾.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ See [here](#).

⁽⁸⁸⁾ <https://www.dus-i.nl/subsidies>

⁽⁸⁹⁾ <https://www.mboraad.nl/publicaties/kwaliteitskader-bekwaamheidseisen-voor-instructeurs>

5.3. CPD for teaching/training staff in VET schools in 2015-19

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area, as set by the Director General for Vocational Education and Training, is to professionalise teaching staff, ensuring better exchange between teachers and the business world.

Teachers who want to attend extra training or continuing professional education can apply for government funding (such as teacher development grants). The funded quality agreements introduced in 2015 (Section 5.2) also apply to CPD.

Statistical overview: 2019 update

Table 3 updates the figures that were provided in Table 1. Although Table 1 may contain data for 2015, these are not systematically repeated here. In some cases, not repeating is due to breaks in time series, which prevent comparability. In other cases, values differ due to methodological changes.

Table 3. **Score on VET indicators in the Netherlands and in the EU: 2015, last available year and recent change**

Indicator label	2015				Last available year					Recent change		
	NL	f	EU	f	Yr	NL	f	EU	f	Range	NL	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility												
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	68.5		47.3	ce	'17	68.2		47.8	ce	'15-'17	-0.3	0.5
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	21.3	a	28.3	ce	'17	21.6	a	27.9	ce	'15-'17	0.2	-0.5
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET	47.2		68.1	ce	'17	49.8		68.6	ce	'15-'17	2.6	0.4
Workers participating in CVT courses (%)	41.4		40.8		'15	41.4		40.8				
Workers participating in on-the-job training (%)	38		34		'15	38		34				
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	18.9		10.7		'18	19.1		11.1		'15-'18	0.2	0.4
Enterprises providing training (%)	85		72.6		'15	85		72.6				
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	67.7		42	ce	'17	67.2		42.7	ce	'15-'17	-0.5	0.7
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	34.1		30		'15	34.1		30				
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)	50.4		33		'18	49.6		33		'15-'18	-0.8	0
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	13.5		6.9		'18	13.2		7.3		'15-'18	-0.3	0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)	9.3		4.3		'18	9.9		4.3		'15-'18	0.6	0
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	18.3		9.5		'18	18.6		10.7		'15-'18	0.3	1.2
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)					'16	7.1		11.4				
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)					'16	79		79.4				

Indicator label	2015				Last available year				Recent change			
	NL	f	EU	f	Yr	NL	f	EU	f	Range	NL	EU
Skill development and labour market relevance												
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)	0.7		0.5	ce	'16	0.8		0.5	ce	'15-'16	0	0
IVET public expenditure per student (1000 PPS units)	9.3		7.1	ce	'16	9.7		7.4	ce	'15-'16	0.3	0.3
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	1.3		0.9		'15	1.3		0.9				
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	0.9		1	ce	'17	0.9		1	ce	'15-'17		0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	18.5		29.2	ce	'17	19		29.1	ce	'15-'17	0.6	0
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates	1.8				'17	1.7		14.3	b ce	'15-'17	-0.1	
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)					'16	51.6		37.7				
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds)	84.1		77.2		'18	88.1		80.5		'15-'18	4	3.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)	6.4		5.4		'18	3.9		6.6		'15-'18	-2.5	1.2
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)	16		23.7		'18	20.4		23.3		'15-'18	4.4	-0.4
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)	81.8		83.7		'15	81.8		83.7				
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	59		57		'15	59		57				
Overall transitions and labour market trends												
Early leavers from education and training (%)	8.2		11		'18	7.3		10.6		'15-'18	-0.9	-0.4
30-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	46.3		38.7		'18	49.4		40.7		'15-'18	3.1	2
NEET rate for 18-24 year-olds (%)	6.2		15.8		'18	5.4		13.7		'15-'18	-0.8	-2.1
Unemployment rate for 20-34 year-olds (%)	6.8		12.9		'18	3.7		9.4		'15-'18	-3	-3.5
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	86.6		75.9		'18	90.5		80.6		'15-'18	3.9	4.7
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	23.6		23.5		'18	21		21.9		'15-'18	-2.6	-1.6
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	76.4		70		'18	79.2		73.1		'15-'18	2.8	3.1
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	59.8		52.6		'18	62.6		56.1		'15-'18	2.8	3.5
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2030 (% of total)					'18	85.2	D	85.8	D			

EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified.

(D) Forecast made in 2018.

(ce) Cedefop estimate based on available country data

(b) Eurostat: 'break in time series'.

(u) Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

(z) Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

(e) Eurostat: 'estimated'.

(d) Eurostat: 'definition differs'.

Source: Cedefop, 2020.

In 2017, 68.2% of all upper secondary students in the Netherlands were enrolled in IVET. This percentage is 20.4 points above the EU average. It appears, however, that the percentage of upper secondary students in IVET is lower by 0.3 points compared to the situation in the country in 2015.

In 2017, 21.6% of all upper secondary IVET students were enrolled in a work-based learning setting, which is slightly higher (0.2 points more) than in 2015. In contrast the EU average is 27.9%.

In 2018, 19.1 % of adults participated in lifelong learning activities, which is slightly higher (0.2 points more) than in 2015. The EU average is 11.1%.

In 2018, the employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 years old) was 88.1%. It appears that the employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 years old) is higher by 4 points compared to the situation in the country in 2015. The EU average is 80.5%.

Conclusion

Since 2015, the Netherlands has taken steps to reinforce its work-based training, apprenticeship (BBL track in upper secondary VET) and internship. Quality assurance mechanisms and the information system to guide the development of VET provision have been strengthened. Access for all to VET and qualifications has been promoted, with emphasis on equal opportunities, initiating reforms in guidance, and improving permeability. Progress has been made in further developing ECVET and the validation system. The country has also been active in supporting further developments of key competences in VET, and the initial and continuing training of VET school teachers.

Compared to 2015-16, the main development in 2017 was related to providing opportunities to VET providers to develop regional qualifications, in close cooperation with the business community, to address regional needs. In 2018 developments in the country focused on the VET schools quality agreements to improve the quality of VET, the multi-annual programme for lifelong learning and the new approach to addressing adult illiteracy.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions, and especially the country's policy priorities for the 2016-20 period, are being addressed. Information available to Cedefop at the time suggests that initial and continuing training of in-company trainers could benefit from further consideration.

Acronyms

AD	associate degree
AES	adult education survey
BBL	<i>beroepsbegeleidende leerweg</i> [dual/apprenticeship pathway]
BOL	<i>beroepsopleidende leerweg</i> [school-based programme]
BVMBO	Professional Association of Teachers
CPD	continuing professional development
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DGVT	Director General for Vocational Education and Training
ECTS	European credit transfer and accumulation system
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
Eurostat	statistical office of the European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	general education
HAVO	<i>hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs</i> [upper secondary general education]
HBO	<i>hoger beroepsonderwijs</i> [higher professional education]
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
MBO	<i>middelbaar beroepsonderwijs</i> [upper secondary VET]
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCP-ECVET	national coordination point for ECVET
NEET	not in education, employment, or training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
SBB	<i>Stichting Beroepsonderwijs en Bedrijfsleven</i> [Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market]
SER	Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands
STEM	science, technology, engineering and math programmes
UOE	UNESCO OECD Eurostat
VET	vocational education and training
VMBO	<i>voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs</i> [pre-vocational education]
VO	<i>voortgezet onderwijs</i> [secondary education]
VPL	validation of prior learning

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