



Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en  
Wetenschap

# Upskilling Pathways in the Netherlands

Policy Learning Forum  
**Upskilling pathways: a vision  
for the future**

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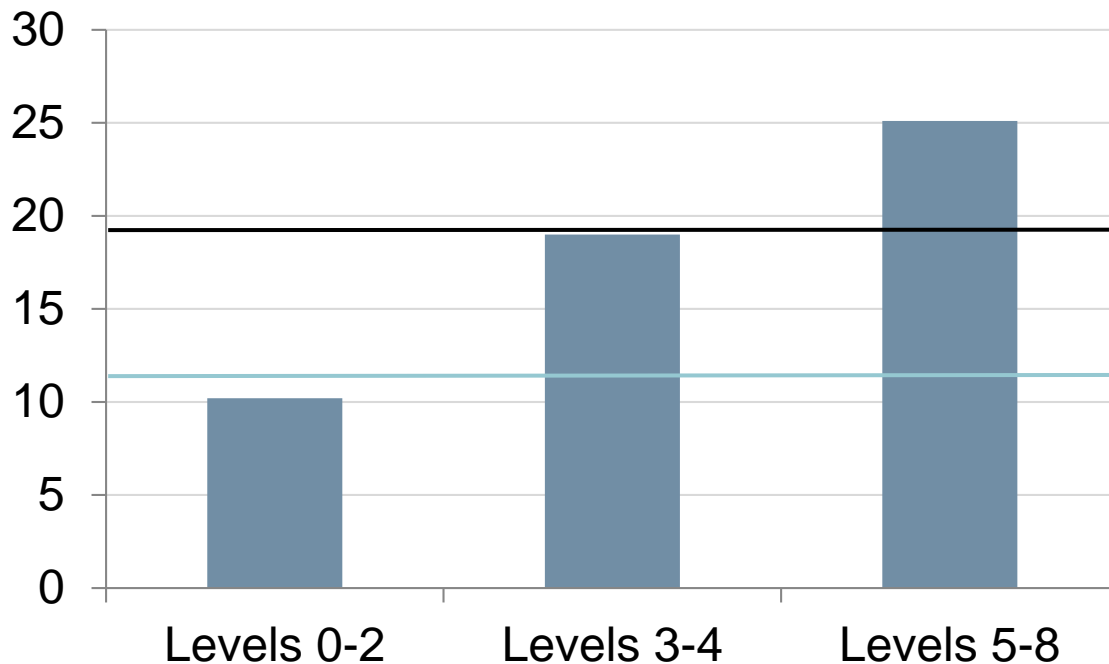
## Adult Learning in the Netherlands: Facts, Figures & Principles (1/3)

- The most important act governing adult education in the Netherlands is the **Adult and Vocational Education Act** (WEB, 1995).
  - The Act covers both vocational education and training and the basic skills learning offer.
  - Educational institutions are free under the terms of the Act to devise tailored learning pathways.
  - No age limit exists concerning public funding for diploma-oriented trajectories.
- The Netherlands has a decentralised system, with a large degree of autonomy for educational institutions.
- Separate governance structures exist for basic skills and the remainder of adult learning.



## Adult Learning in The Netherlands: Facts, Figures & Principles (2/3)

Participation rate of adults in learning (25-65 y/o, 2019; Eurostat)

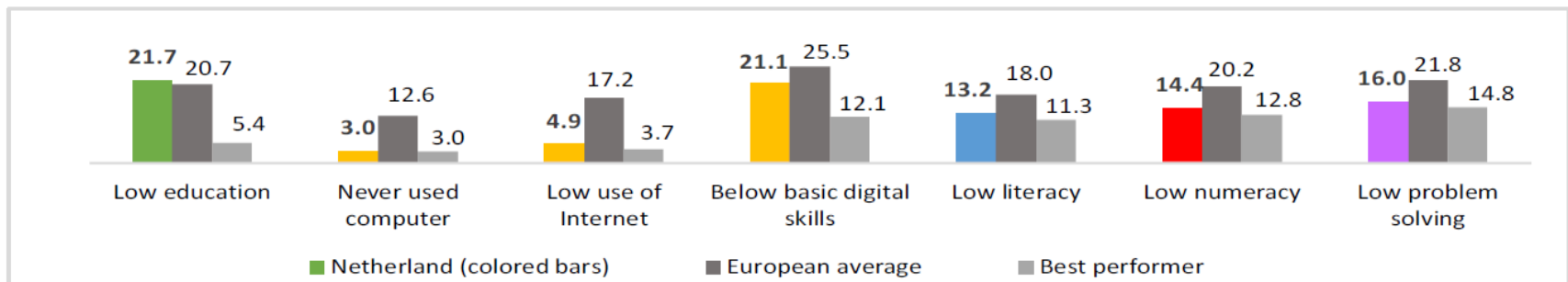


*NL: 19.5%*  
*EU-average: 11.3%*



# Adult Learning in The Netherlands: Facts, Figures & Principles (3/3)

Incidence of low skilling among adults aged 25-64 by type of skills (%)



Note: European average: unweighted average of EU28+ countries for which data are available. Best performer countries (those with reliable data) with the lowest share of low-skilled adult population aged 25-64. Best performer: Low education (LT), Never used computer (NL), Low use of Internet (FI), Below basic digital skills (LU), Low literacy (FI), Low numeracy (CZ), Low problem solving in technology-rich environments (NO)

Source: Cedefop country factsheet 'Adult population in potential need of upskilling: Netherlands' (2019)



“ A breakthrough in adult learning is required. ”

Coalition Agreement Rutte III, October 2017



## Upskilling pathways in the NL: decision-making level (1/2)



<2005

**Limited  
action**

Individuals,  
employers

Limited

Limited



2005-2010

**Push  
forward**

Individuals,  
employers,  
government

Structural

Foundational



2011-2017

**Loss of  
momentum**

Individuals,  
employers

Moderate

Limited



2017-now

**Break-  
through**

Individuals,  
employers,  
government

Intensive

Comprehensive

**View on  
Responsibility**

**Cooperation**

**Actions**



## Upskilling pathways in the NL: decision-making level (2/2)

### Current situation

- Adult learning as a joint responsibility of amongst others all levels of government, education, employment and individuals.
- Focus on an integrated, multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach.
- Inter-ministerial programme on adult learning, including five strands of action and various new measures.
- Inter-ministerial action programme on the prevention of low literacy and the promotion of basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills).
  - 2006-2010, 2012-2015, 2016-2019 & 2020-2024





# Upskilling pathways in the NL: support level

## Financial and non-financial support

- STAP-budget: an individual learning budget for adults, foreseen to be implemented in January 2022.
- Online portal with learning and financial opportunities (2022).
- SLIM: subsidy measure to stimulate adult learning in SMEs.
- Count on Skills subsidy: subsidy measure for employers to provide their employees with basic skills training (2021-2024).

## Outreach

- Including the learner's voice: Adult Learning Labs (2018-2019).
- National campaign (2021).





# Upskilling pathways in the NL: implementation level

## Tailored learning offer

- Subsidy measure on the flexibilisation of the learning offer.
- Legally-recognised certificates for minors and a pilot with legally-recognised certificates for profession-oriented components of degrees.
- EU-funded project on Upskilling Pathways: supporting education and training providers to flexibilise their learning offer for adults.
  - 1-on-1 meetings
  - Thematic national and regional meetings
  - Service documents



# The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Challenges

- A large part of education and training has to take place online. This is challenging for people with low basic skills and with regards to the practical components of VET.
- An increasing shortage of apprenticeships and internships.
- Jobs change and disappear.

## Measures

- Embrasive support by the government:
  - Subsidy measures for employers.
  - 1.4 billion euros for a 'social package,' including substantial investment in education, training and guidance.
  - Action plan on apprenticeships and internships by the Foundation for Cooperation on Vocational Education, Training and Labour Market (SBB).



# Looking ahead: lessons learned & challenges

## Lessons learned

- There is an important role for **government** in ensuring the accessibility of adult learning, especially for low-educated and low-skilled adults.
- Taking the **perspective of the learner and practice** as a starting point in our thinking, instead of policies and instruments, fosters cooperation and coordination.
- Enabling and stimulating adult learning is something of the **long haul**. Continuous commitment is essential.

## Challenges

- Addressing the impact of the **COVID-19 pandemic**.
- Ensuring continuous **political commitment**.
- Ensuring a **strong regional infrastructure** where supply meets demand.
- Ensuring solid and accessible **guidance** for all adults.
- Realising a **flexible learning offer** for adults in a system that has traditionally been designed for young students.
- **Outreach** to, and **mobilisation** of specific target groups, especially low-skilled and low-educated adults.
- Ensuring solid **monitoring and evaluation**.



# Questions?

