



Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–17

NETHERLANDS



Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies

**Developments in vocational education and training
policy in 2015-17**

THE NETHERLANDS

Cedefop (2018). *Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015-17: the Netherlands*. Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/vet-policy-developments-the-netherlands-2017>

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This report was produced by Cedefop and reflects contributions from Cedefop's VET policy and systems team, and Cedefop experts working on common European tools and principles for education and training, and statistics. It is based on detailed information on VET policy implementation submitted by Cedefop's European network of expertise on VET (ReferNet) and other sources.

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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 VET and the needs of regional labour markets (European Commission, 2015, p. 8). Employers had been offered incentives to provide more and better-quality internships. Revision of the qualification structure in upper secondary 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, p. 7). From 2013 to 2015, the proportion of secondary-level students participating in VET had increased from 67.1% to 69% ⁽¹⁾, while the EU average had been moving from 48.9% to 47%. However, the share of upper secondary VET learners on 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 upper secondary graduates was well above the EU average: 83.4% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015, p. 8) and 85.8% in 2015 (European Commission, 2015, p. 7), 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, p. 8) 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, p. 7) and actions have also been initiated on the lifelong learning side.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat, data for 2015.

Table 1. Framework data: score on VET indicators in the Netherlands and in the EU: 2010, last available year and recent trend

Indicator label	2010		Last available year		Recent trend (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 ^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	39.2 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			'15	6.4 ^b 5.3 ^b	'14-'15	▪ -5.3	▪ -1.0

Indicator label	2010		Last available year			Recent trend (per year)		
	NL ^f	EU ^f	Yr	NL ^f	EU ^f	Range	NL	EU
(over general stream)								
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	11.0 ^c	'13-'15	↘ -0.5	↘ -0.5
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)		33.8	'15	46.3 ^b	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	76.9 ^c	'13-'15	↗ 1.1	↗ 0.7
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)		27.3	'15	23.6 ^b	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	52.6 ^c	'13-'15	↘ -0.3	↗ 0.6
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	80.0 ^d	82.8 ^d			

^(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: 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

In the Netherlands, school-based and work-based (apprenticeships) VET programmes have existed since the 19th century. The work-based learning requirements in upper secondary VET are regulated by law ⁽²⁾. Pre-vocational programmes (VMBO) for learners aged 13 to 16 are available in lower secondary. Upper secondary VET programmes (MBO) are offered in either school-based (BOL, *beroepsopleidende leerweg*) or dual (BBL, *beroepsbegeleidende leerweg*) 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 occupies a significant part covering 20 to 59% of the school-based track and at least 60% in dual VET. 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 wage.

Upper secondary initial vocational education and training (IVET) programmes can 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 ⁽³⁾. In the Netherlands, the distinction between IVET and CVET is not so straightforward. All IVET courses may be followed by adults, 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 free to choose from what's offered by training companies. In some sectors, CVET is regulated by

⁽²⁾ The adult and vocational education Act, 1996 and the VET and education Law, 2006.

⁽³⁾ Cedefop, 2016a, Section 2.3.2.1.

social partners through the provision of facilities for on-the job training and sector-based training funds.

Post-secondary VET specialisation programmes (EQF 4) usually include an internship. The number of students enrolled in dual VET is decreasing steadily. The Ministry has asked the social and economic council to advise how to stop this decline. Measures on how to attract more students are still under debate.

To make higher education future-proof and improve quality, 2013 legislation (quality through diversity act) called on higher professional education institutions to adjust their training offer to the type ⁽⁴⁾ and orientation ⁽⁵⁾ of the programme concerned and support good quality guidance services for students ⁽⁶⁾.

1.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

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).

1.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

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

Due to the decreasing number of students in the dual (BBL) VET programmes ⁽⁷⁾, worries for 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

⁽⁴⁾ Bachelor, associate degree or dual paths.

⁽⁵⁾ Research institutions, upper secondary VET or focus on applied research.

⁽⁶⁾

https://www.eerstekamer.nl/behandeling/20130118/memorie_van_toelichting_2/document3/f=/vj6ifr0xnkyo.pdf

⁽⁷⁾ From 170 000 in 2009/10 to less than 100 000 in 2015/16.

labour market changes and developments (including potential impact on recent education choices of students) and to reflect how to improve workplace learning (to be) offered in both VET pathways (school and apprenticeship). Preliminary advice published in October 2016 presents possible explanations for the declining number of dual VET students, such as the economic crisis, increased participation in general education, 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 new cascade funding scheme ⁽⁸⁾ that might have caused uncertainty among employers. Actions are proposed to tackle the issue (better information, search for hybrid forms of vocational education and more cooperation between schools in the same region).

1.2.2. 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 ⁽⁹⁾ to integrate the school-based (BOL) and dual/apprenticeship track (BBL) of Dutch VET have been planned to take place between May 2015 and July 2021 in upper secondary VET schools (MBO levels 2 to 4). Students will 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. In 2017, in response to the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands' advice on futureproof VET, the government is planning ⁽¹⁰⁾ to introduce an alternative option to both upper secondary VET pathways to help MBO schools design tailor-made programmes. Experiments in schools are being tested, while the ministry promotes further research for hybrid forms of VET. A portal ⁽¹¹⁾ has been developed by the Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (*Stichting Beroepsonderwijs en Bedrijfsleven*, SBB) and is fully

⁽⁸⁾ Cedefop, 2016a, Section 2.2.4.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://www.overheid.nl/english>

⁽¹⁰⁾ Minister letter to the parliament, February 2017:
<https://www.ser.nl/nl/publicaties/adviezen/2010-2019/2016/toekomstbestendig-beroepsonderwijs.aspx>

⁽¹¹⁾ <http://www.beropeninbeeld.nl/>
<https://www.s-bb.nl/onderwijs/studie-cijfers>

operational. It offers comprehensive and updated information on VET programmes and learning pathways, VET qualifications and labour market perspectives, to help learners make informed career choices ⁽¹²⁾. The government has called on all VET actors to collaborate in offering more dual training places, especially in sectors where dual VET is less common or has no historical roots.

1.2.3. Assisting the search for internships

Following the technology pact (*Nationaal Techniekpact 2013*), a technology education portal has been created to enable young people to find an internship or work/study place ⁽¹³⁾. In the framework of this pact, 120 companies are participating in a funding scheme (key sector grants), resulting in enrolment of 500 students in VET programmes with a total investment of EUR 2.2 million.

1.2.4. 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 ⁽¹⁴⁾ 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.

1.2.5. 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 ⁽¹⁵⁾. Also, 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, operational since August 2015. SBB works at sectoral, regional and

⁽¹²⁾ For more information:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xzs5C36wjlU&feature=youtu.be>;
Cedefop, 2016b.

⁽¹³⁾ <https://www.topsectorbeurzen.nl/home>

⁽¹⁴⁾ Applicable to VMBO, MBO and higher professional education (HBO) VET programmes.

⁽¹⁵⁾ See <https://www.s-bb.nl/bpvprotocol>, *Reglement erkenning leerbedrijven SBB*.

national levels. Via its eight sector chambers, it acts as intermediary between training institutions and companies to guarantee ⁽¹⁶⁾ appropriate work placements in both (BOL and BBL) VET tracks. It is responsible for maintaining the qualification framework for secondary vocational education; accrediting and coaching work placement companies ⁽¹⁷⁾; and monitoring and informing on labour market developments ⁽¹⁸⁾. VET and social partners are equally represented in sector chamber discussions; on developments on the labour market and their translation into new courses; the efficiency of the range of courses; and prospects on the job market ⁽¹⁹⁾. The new regulation 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. The final results of the action will be available online.

1.2.6. Improving apprenticeship and internship quality

Quality agreements centre on a performance-based funding scheme introduced in 2015. They are concluded between public upper secondary VET schools and the Ministry of Education, and are monitored by account managers, ministry officials. The aim is to support rapid implementation of measures and 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 will be 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;

⁽¹⁶⁾ *Stage-en-leerbanenoffensief*.

⁽¹⁷⁾ www.stagemarkt.nl provides an overview of all accredited companies.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Information is available via www.kansopwerk.nl

⁽¹⁹⁾ For a comprehensive list, see www.s-bb.nl/samenwerking

(c) participation in a peer reviewing exercise.

Based on their performance, schools will receive extra funding. The total amount allocated is EUR 58 million ⁽²⁰⁾.

⁽²⁰⁾ Regulation of 19.7.2016: www.officielebekendmakingen.nl

CHAPTER 2.

MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET ⁽²¹⁾

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 ⁽²²⁾. 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 formed a network for collaboration on quality assurance. They have developed together an audit system on top of the quality assurance 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 2.1, 3.2.4.1 and 4.2.1.3). The agenda includes the validation of exams by an external

⁽²¹⁾ Sources:

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop):

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

ReferNet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>

Priorities reported by Directors General for vocational training for the 2016-20 period;

EQAVET (2016 Secretariat survey, website, newsletters): <http://www.eqavet.eu>

2016 compendium of EQAVET NRP *Erasmus+* funding;

Council recommendations on the 2016 national reform programmes:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/2016/#>

Education and training monitor 2016 country reports:

⁽²²⁾ <http://www.cinop.nl/cinop-en.html>

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 are participate.

Extra funding (partly performance-based) will be provided in the coming years to raise VET quality. Based on agreements with the Ministry of Education, public and private VET providers have set goals and made plans to improve quality for the period from 2015 until 2018. *MBO in bedrijf* (VET in business) is an organisation operating at national 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 (MOE). 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.

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. It includes eight sectoral chambers responsible for developing and maintaining the qualifications for a particular sector. Sectoral chambers also supervise whether there are enough companies to provide internships according to quality standards; they have to deliver information on labour market developments in the sector on a regular basis.

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 partnership should focus on closer collaboration between VET schools and industries at a regional level.

2.1. Quality assurance in line with EQAVET

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are that:

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

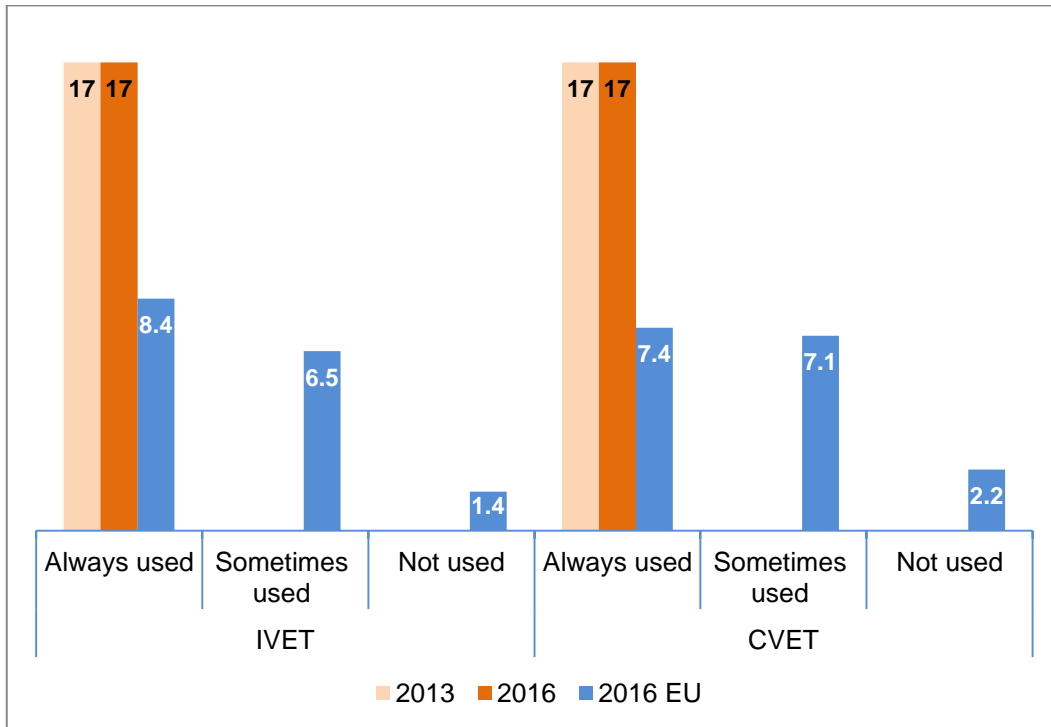
These priorities will remain a focal point for the inspectorate of education, as has been the case since 2012. The Ministry of Education will support a quality network in VET and provide hands-on support to schools through the QANRP.

Improving the quality assurance approach is an 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 was planned to be in place in 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 (Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs, WEB)* will come into force by September 2017 (Sections 3.2.4.1 and 4.2.1.3). 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 are 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.

The systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor the VET system ('always used' item in Figure 1) has remained unchanged compared to 2013. In 2016, the Netherlands was above the EU average in IVET and CVET. All indicators suggested in the EQAVET recommendation are systematically used.

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 2016 in the Netherlands, compared to 8.4 in the EU on average in 2016.

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 2016 data.

2.2. Continuous information and feedback loops in IVET and CVET

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, are:

- (a) 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;
- (b) that all (recognised) VET-institutions have a system to assess the quality of their education.

Between 2014 and 2016, 63 public-private partnerships have been established using the Regional Investment Fund. The fund has strengthened cooperation between education and labour market stakeholders. 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 the people in employment.

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 the SBB.

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

A range of developments in easing access to VET and transition within the education and training system had taken place before 2015. 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 4.2.1.2). 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 ⁽²³⁾. 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 2015, the Ministry of Education enabled earlier registration to MBO to stimulate young people in seeking career advice at an earlier stage.

3.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

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;

⁽²³⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2016/12/01/rapport-experimenten-vakmanschap-en-technologieroute>

- (ii) establishing the distinction between diplomas entitling students to pursue a higher educational degree and diplomas valid only for the labour market. The second point is currently (June 2017) on hold;
- (b) for adults:
 - (i) ensuring the right to enrolment in VET for all (through the Law on right of enrolment in VET for all);
 - (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.

3.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

3.2.1. Promoting equal opportunity

3.2.1.1. 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 MOE submitted to the parliament in October 2016 an action plan for equal opportunities in education ⁽²⁴⁾. The plan foresees measures to combat inequality with available additional funding from 2017 onwards. In first place, it will be sought to smooth transition within education and training. This includes the creation of in-between years (*schakelklassen*) to support smoother transitions from VMBO to MBO, or to upper secondary general education programmes (HAVO) ⁽²⁵⁾, and smoother transition from MBO to higher professional education (HBO). Additional budget (EUR 4 million) has been made available to students in MBO to finance complementary VET studies at a higher level. 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 can apply for this grant in August to September 2017. Their proposals must be based on plans developed by students, so so-called student labs are organised in which students will design approaches for successful transition. The plans ⁽²⁶⁾ will be published in a brochure.

⁽²⁴⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/10/31/kamerbrief-over-actieplan-gelijke-kansen-in-het-onderwijs>

⁽²⁵⁾ <https://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/sectoroverstijgend/nederlands-onderwijsstelsel/stromen-in-het-nederlandse-onderwijs>

⁽²⁶⁾ <https://goo.gl/AvSRwh>

The action plan also aims to develop networks for experience sharing. To that end, the Ministry of Education 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 ⁽²⁷⁾ will enable sharing experiences and learning from other initiatives. Complementary approaches are foreseen:

- (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 socio-economic background, are not familiar with higher education.

The alliance is expected to be operational by August 2017.

3.2.1.2. *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 went 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 more time to react if students would not register in MBO, thus giving schools a chance to reduce the risk of early school leaving. The 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.

3.2.2. **Guidance**

In a letter on career orientation and guidance sent to parliament in November 2015, the Ministry of Education 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 educational sectors (general

⁽²⁷⁾ www.gelijke-kansen.nl

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 ⁽²⁸⁾ in general and vocational education. Actions envisaged include:

- (a) in collaboration with stakeholders (sector councils, teacher associations, educational 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 will be designed. At the same time, it will be explored whether specific courses or training modules are needed on this subject;
- (b) as of August 2017, career orientation and guidance will be included in the template which the inspectorate of education will use to assess the quality of education/education programmes in primary, secondary general education and upper secondary VET;
- (c) research and 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. It is based at the Netherlands association of VET colleges (*MBO Raad*) 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;
- (d) company visits are an important part of programmes to allow pupils to explore the world of work. These visits are important for all pupils, but even more for pupils with a migrant background and for vulnerable young people in larger cities. Therefore, exploratory visits are planned within the framework of the *City deal* approach;

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

- (e) the Ministry of Education will ask education institutions, students, industry, and the inspectorate of education to meet annually to discuss the improvements on career orientation and guidance in education.

3.2.3. Permeability and flexibility

3.2.3.1. Amendments to secondary education Act

Amendments to the secondary education Act (*Wet op het Voortgezet Onderwijs, WVO*) entered into force in August 2016. The amendments are the result of an intensive VMBO renewal debate with teachers, school leaders, administrators, and businesses, started in 2010. New programmes have been introduced, renovating 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.

3.2.3.2. Voucher experiments and partial diploma/qualifications for adults

In letters 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 more flexible and tailor-made. This will be done through voucher experiments in higher education and introducing certificates (parts of a full diploma/qualification) in upper secondary not-publicly financed VET, measures 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 identified optional subjects (*keuzedelen*) that can be awarded in this way and a first set of 38 of these optional subjects was selected (including entrepreneurship and leadership). Certification ⁽²⁹⁾ of these 38 subjects is possible since autumn 2016 and for not-publicly funded VET institutes only.

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://goo.gl/MXSnyb>

In September 2016, a commission ⁽³⁰⁾ (*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 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 ⁽³¹⁾:

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

3.2.4. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.2.4.1. Reform of examination boards in upper secondary VET

An amendment to the adult education and vocational education Act *Tightening requirements examination boards in upper secondary VET (Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs, WEB)* accepted in February 2017 and into force as of September 2017 aims at improving the quality of examination boards in upper secondary VET (Sections 2.1 and 4.2.1.3). These consist of 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 successfully 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

⁽³⁰⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2016/09/08/sap-leidt-adviescommissie-vraagfinanciering>; <http://www.magazine-on-the-spot.nl/doorlerenwerkt/>

⁽³¹⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2017/04/04/doorleren-werkt.-samen-investeren-in-nieuwe-zekerheid>

diploma is able to show to an employer what parts of a course have been successfully completed.

3.2.4.2. *ECVET* ⁽³²⁾

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 have started in 2016-17 and aim at the recognition of certification units in the Dutch healthcare and welfare sector.

3.2.4.3. *Validation of non-formal and informal learning* ⁽³³⁾

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) ⁽³⁴⁾ 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 are intake-assessment, e-portfolio, competence tests, ECVET-methods, etc. If a formal VPL procedure is followed, the result can also be an *ervaringscertificaat* (experience certificate). Since January 2016, *Servicepunt*

⁽³²⁾ Source: the ECVET users' group members.

⁽³³⁾ Cedefop, 2017b; Cedefop et al., 2017.

⁽³⁴⁾ In Dutch: *Erkenning van Verworven Competenties (EVC)*.

Examinering (examination support body) supports VET schools in validating competences.

3.2.4.4. *Learning outcomes approach*

The Netherlands has a long tradition in learning-outcomes-based education; there is no discussion on whether to have a learning-outcomes-based education system. The discussion in 2017 concentrates on implementation: how to formulate and implement learning outcomes, improve mobility, and develop valid assessment methods.

3.2.5. **Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups**

3.2.5.1. *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, action continuing) between employer organisations, trade unions, large employers, and the Ministry of Education 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 also invited to open up jobs to school leavers or young people (18 to 27 years old); to prepare youngsters for the labour market by supporting their career and educational 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.

3.2.5.2. *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 ⁽³⁵⁾ (including their municipalities, schools, the employee insurance agency (UWV), employers, 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 ⁽³⁶⁾ with methods to tackle the problem was prepared. Support to newcomers from older VET students was called for; the most successful approaches will be generalised to more schools, institutions and municipalities/cities.

⁽³⁵⁾ Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven, Leeuwarden, Zaanstad.

⁽³⁶⁾ <http://www.discriminatie.nl/onderwijs>

3.2.6. Increasing the attractiveness of VET

3.2.6.1. *Raising the profile of associate degrees*

Action consisted in 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 needs of businesses. 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 will a stand-alone position. In February 2017, the higher education and scientific research Act (*Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, WHW*) was amended. The legislative changes aim to give AD programmes this independent profile and position.

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

In February 2017, the Ministry of Education sent a letter to parliament on the subject of strong VET (*Sterk beroepsonderwijs*)⁽³⁷⁾. 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), possibilities to redesign and reposition pre-vocational education are being explored. All stakeholders will be consulted on how to strengthen the position of pre-vocational education and upper secondary VET in the education system. Several measures are announced in this letter in regard to:

- (a) the transition to and accessibility of VET;
- (b) knowledge and image of VET;
- (c) organisation of VET considering the decreasing enrolment figures.

Measures announced are:

- (a) introduction of consecutive learning routes encompassing pre-vocational education and upper secondary VET;
- (b) introduction of an additional preparatory year between pre-vocational education and upper secondary VET;
- (c) providing primary school teachers with information on VET;

⁽³⁷⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2017/02/20/kamerbrief-over-versterken-vmbo>

- (d) combining the two general tracks (the theoretical and mixed pathway) in pre-vocational education;
- (e) sharing expertise and facilities of other schools in the region.

The measures are to be detailed in 2018.

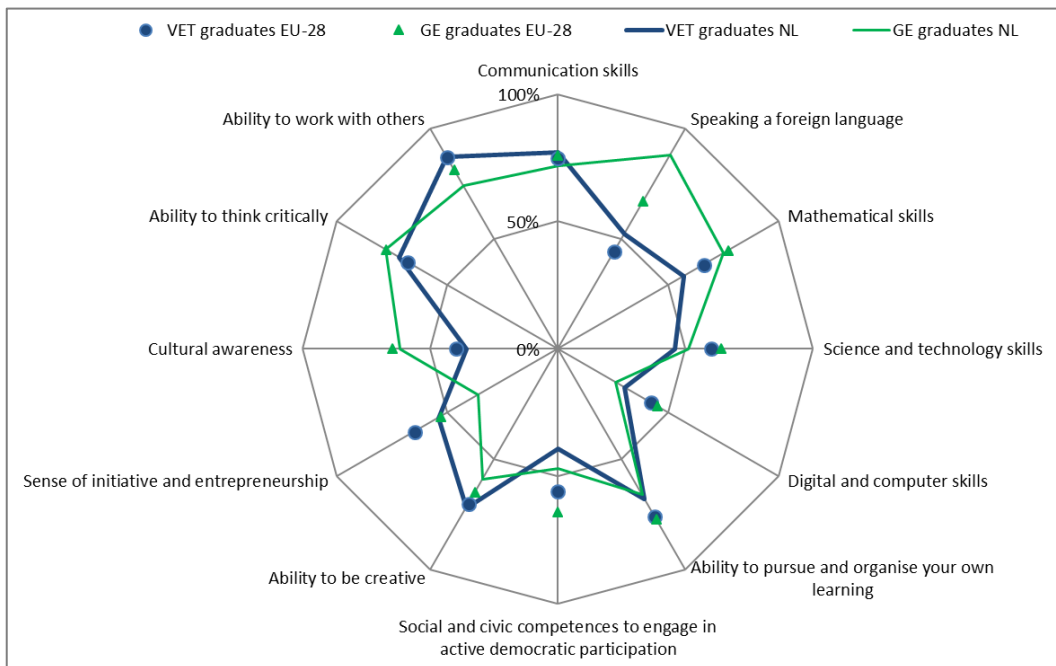
CHAPTER 4.

MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

Compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes feel they have:

- (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



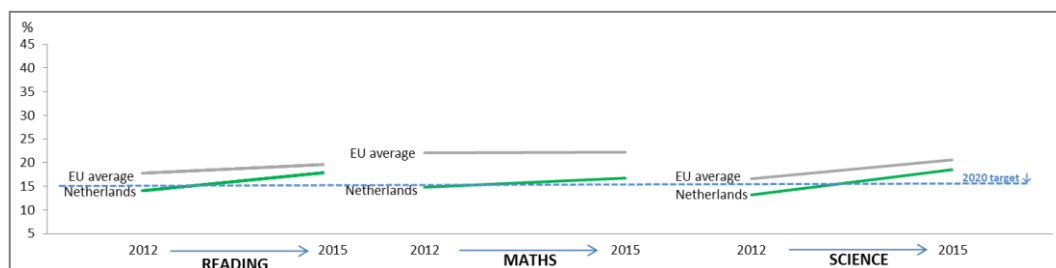
NB: GE stands for general education.

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 with 2012 (Figure 3). Despite this trend, the share of low achievers in the Netherlands is 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 ⁽³⁸⁾, this trend is likely to be reflected in the key competences trained for in VET programmes ⁽³⁹⁾. VET is not limited to occupational (technical-instrumental) skills. Key competences are embedded in curricula and some, such as English and maths at upper VET levels, are introduced as compulsory subjects ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

4.1. Policy priorities for 2016-20

The country's priority in this area for 2016-20, as set by the Director General for vocational education and training, consists in 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 ⁽⁴¹⁾). Both the basic and specific part will include key competences. Social partners will be involved.

⁽³⁸⁾ Calculated from Eurostat, data for 2015.

⁽³⁹⁾ For more information see Westerhuis, 2016.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ For more information see Westerhuis, 2016.

⁽⁴¹⁾ According to Act on renewal of the qualifications structure (2016).

4.2. Main actions taken in 2015-17

4.2.1. Key competences in initial VET

4.2.1.1. VET and 21st century skills

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

4.2.1.2. 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; they are relevant for several qualifications simultaneously. Companies and education institutions jointly develop them to respond quickly to innovations or emerging needs within their region.

4.2.1.3. Reform of examinations

Amendments (December 2016) of the adult education and VET Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs, WEB*) aimed at improving the quality of examination (boards) in upper secondary VET (Sections 2.1 and 3.2.4.1). 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 ⁽⁴²⁾ to keep them motivated and positively challenged by

⁽⁴²⁾ Learners in secondary pre-VET, pre-university programmes; in upper-secondary VET, who plan to enrol in teacher training; with entry-level VET qualifications.

offering feasible examination requirements. After public consultation completed in September 2016, the law is expected to come into force in 2018-19.

4.2.1.4. *Maths agenda*

The maths agenda (2016), 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.

4.2.1.5. *Civic competence agenda*

In 2017, the Education Ministry and the association of VET colleges (*MBO Raad*) representing all VET schools, launched an agenda to strengthen civic competences of VET learners by updating VET curricula.

4.2.1.6. *Key competences in continuing VET*

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 3.2.3.2).

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 (*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 supports parents in providing better educational guidance for their children, including VET learners. It will offer language training to around 10 000 parents with low literacy levels, with support and coaching to help them with the educational support of their children.

CHAPTER 5.

MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors

5.1. Initial training for teaching/training staff in VET schools

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;
- (b) improve the pedagogical and didactical skills of teachers coming 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) will offer programmes dedicated to VET.

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 intended to become effective as of 2017. Formal requirements were divided into three categories:

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

The 2015 teacher register Law, that made registration of teachers mandatory from 2017 onwards, was amended in 2017. This measure will come into effect in August 2018, as more preparatory time is needed. By being registered, teachers will demonstrate that they have the right qualifications, keep their knowledge and skills up to date and keep abreast of the latest

developments in their field. The register is an initiative of the national teacher body ⁽⁴³⁾.

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 ⁽⁴⁴⁾. The plan proposes to stimulate circular careers and hybrid teaching to tackle shortages of (technical) teachers.

The Ministry of Education 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 are encouraged at national level within the policy measure *Reinforcement of collaboration between initial teacher training institutes and schools 2013-16*. The partnerships are 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.

Funded quality agreements were introduced in 2015, concluded between individual public upper secondary VET schools and the Ministry of Education. An aim of the agreements is to provide new teachers with coaching. Schools decide by themselves how to organise this support. In 2017 and 2018, the schools are being assessed based on achievements.

In September 2016, teacher training colleges started offering a specialisation track for vocational education in teaching qualification at bachelor level. The aim of this specialisation is to prepare teachers adequately for upper secondary vocational education and pre-vocational education.

⁽⁴³⁾ <http://registerleraar.onderwijscooperatie.nl/nieuws/wetsvoorstel-aangenomen-eerste-kamer/>
<https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/dossier/34458/kst-34458-G?resultIndex=6&sorttype=1&sortorder=4>

⁽⁴⁴⁾ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/11/29/kamerbrief-derde-voortgangsrapportage-lerarenagenda-samen-werken-aan-een-doorlopende-leerlijn-voor-leraren>

5.2. Continuing professional development for teaching/training staff in VET schools

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.

The 2015 teacher register Law (Section 5.1) stipulates that teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) is mandatory for re-registration in the teachers' register from 1 August 2019 onwards. The Law also regulates teachers' professional development training rights. 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 5.1) also apply to continuous professional development.

5.3. Continuing professional development for trainers and mentors in enterprises

The 2017 Amendment of the teacher register Law (Section 5.1) also affects the CPD of in-company trainers.

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.

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions and the country's policy priorities for the 2016-20 period are being addressed, though information available to Cedefop at the time suggests issues which could benefit from further consideration: supporting entrepreneurship education and the initial training of in-company trainers and mentors, which seem to have been somewhat overlooked over the past three years. Setting out policy priorities on initial and continuing training of in-company trainers and mentors for the remaining period until 2020 could also be considered.

List of abbreviations

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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