



spotlight on VET

THE NETHERLANDS

VET in the Netherlands

Learners leaving primary education at age 12 go on to various schools in the secondary education category. From the third year at lower secondary level (14 year-olds) onwards, about a quarter of students follow programmes that can be characterised as pre-vocational (part of preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO)).

For learners not capable of entering pre-vocational education, separate labour-oriented practical training is offered (praktijkonderwijs).

There are two types of programmes at upper secondary level that provide general education: upper secondary general education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO).

Upper secondary vocational education (MBO) is also available. Three structural elements determine this type of education: differentiation according to level, programme orientation and learning pathway:

- level: upper secondary vocational education has four levels corresponding to EQF levels 1 to 4. At which level students start depends on what prior education they have and the diploma obtained. There are no minimum admission requirements for levels 1 and 2 in this type of education; however, this will change in the near future. From summer 2014 onwards, only the level 1 programmes will be without a threshold. It is possible to move (upwards) within upper secondary vocational education and the highest level 4 (EQF 4) gives access to associate degree or bachelor programmes in higher professional education (HBO) offered by universities of applied sciences;
- programme: vocational training programmes are offered in four sectors; green/agriculture, technology, economics and care and welfare. There are a total of 237 dossiers that describe interrelated qualifications; there are 612 different diplomas;
- learning pathway: upper secondary vocational education has a school-based pathway (BOL) and a dual pathway (BBL). In the school-based pathway, students spend at least 20% of their time on work placement. In the dual pathway,

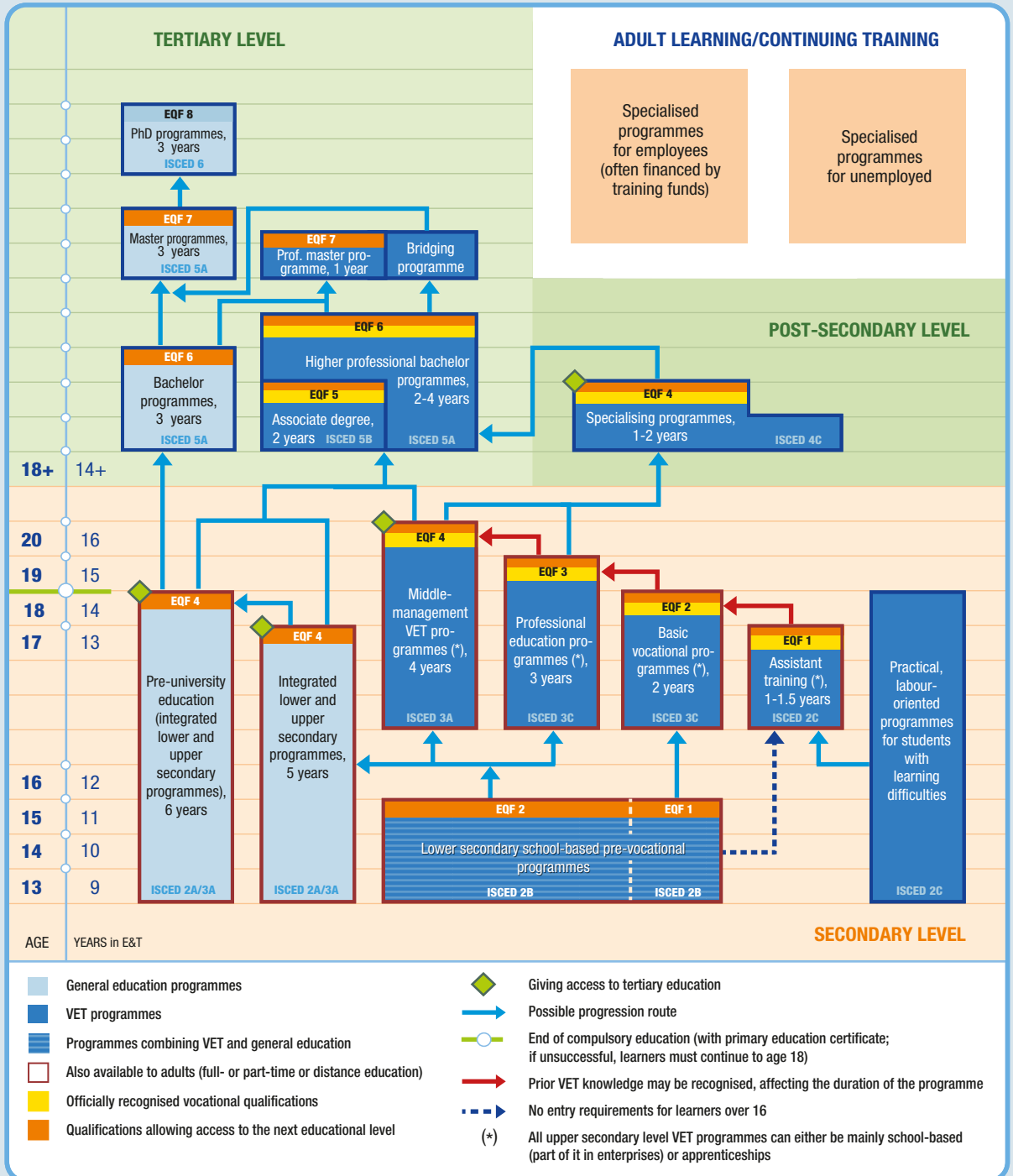
students have jobs that they combine with a course of study (apprenticeship); this often involves four days' work a week and one day at school.

Higher professional education (HBO) is open to students with upper secondary general education diplomas. Transferring to this type of higher education is also possible with a diploma at level 4 of upper secondary vocational education: 50% of students with a qualification at MBO-4 level enter the job market while the other half go on to higher professional education. The majority of these students pursue a four-year professional bachelor degree programme. Moreover, in recent years two-year associate degree programmes have been developed (short-cycle higher education) and students with a bachelor degree can transfer to a professional master degree programme, albeit still to a limited extent.

There is no institutional framework for continuing vocational education and training (CVET). Provision is market-driven with many suppliers. Social partners can stimulate CVET with help from their branch-specific training and development funds. Publicly-financed part-time/dual initial VET can also function as CVET for adults.

In upper secondary vocational education the national qualification structure defines qualifications' desired outcome. Social partners and education, represented in sectoral institutions, have the legal task to develop and maintain these qualifications. Once determined by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science/Economic Affairs, schools develop – in cooperation with training firms – curricula based on the qualification profiles.

VET in the Dutch education and training system



NB: ISCED 1997 was used on the chart. Conversion to ISCED 2011 is ongoing.
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Netherlands.

Distinctive features of VET

Compared to other countries, upper secondary VET in the Netherlands has the following special characteristics:

- vocational education and training (VET) is the joint responsibility of government, social partners and educational institutions. The business community plays a relevant part in developing qualifications and providing apprenticeships;
- publicly-funded providers of VET programmes are multisectoral, large regional institutions (averaging 12 000 students at each regional training centre (ROC) and several specialist schools, including agricultural training centres). ROCs provide vocational education for young people and adults (IVET), in addition to general adult education; they are active on the continuing VET market with privately-funded programmes. Government-regulated IVET programmes are also provided by privately-funded institutions. The heterogeneous and multifunctional nature of upper secondary VET is unique compared to other countries;
- the two learning pathways in upper secondary VET lead to the same diplomas. They operate like a system of communicating vessels so that the learning pathways' volume of intake can move with the economic trend: increase of students in the school-based pathway during a period of economic recession and decrease in the dual pathway; and the opposite during a period of boom;
- educational institutions are given a high degree of freedom to design vocational education as they see fit. The VET law provides a broad framework only outlining some key elements at system level; institutions receive a lump sum for their tasks.

Challenges

Three, to some extent conflicting, principles are crucial for the VET system: accessibility, quality and efficiency. Striking a good balance so that each principle is applied optimally is a constant challenge.

In practical terms, this means, first, that Dutch upper secondary VET works towards developing talents of its highly heterogeneous student population – from students who transfer to higher education right down to students for whom obtaining a minimal basic qualification is too difficult. VET has to be accessible and attainable for all target groups.

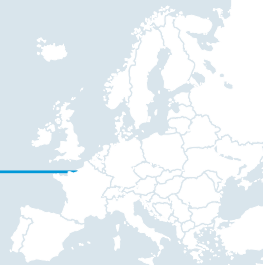
At the same time, the challenge is to raise quality and effectiveness of upper secondary VET. Key aspects of this objective are: further reduction in numbers of early school-leavers and more students attaining their diplomas at various vocational education levels. Recently, basic skills requirements (language, elementary mathematics) were tightened to improve quality; central testing of these basic skills is currently being implemented in various forms of education, including upper secondary vocational education. The challenge – related to VET programmes' design – is to find a good balance between generic key skills with a high transfer value and specific knowledge and skills from different vocations.

A third challenge lies in increasing efficiency of upper secondary vocational education, where the following developments play a role: moving towards an all-embracing system of qualifications for secondary vocations and corresponding training courses; reducing numbers of qualifications while ensuring they are widely on offer throughout the Netherlands; and decreasing duration of training, in particular longer courses in upper secondary VET.

While emphasis in the first decade of this century was on guaranteeing accessibility of the VET system, principles of efficiency and quality have, for the past four years, been receiving more attention.



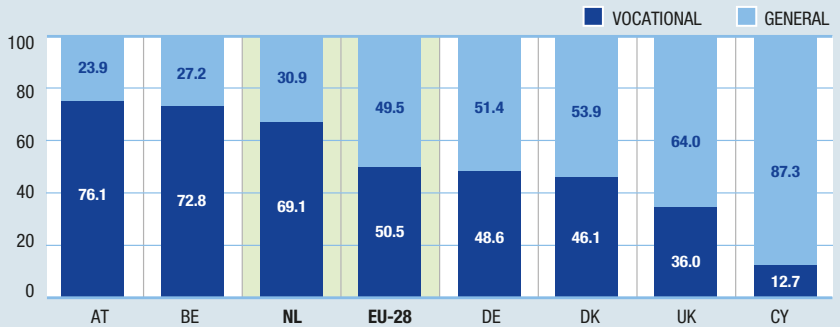
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Education and training in figures

Learners in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational and general programmes

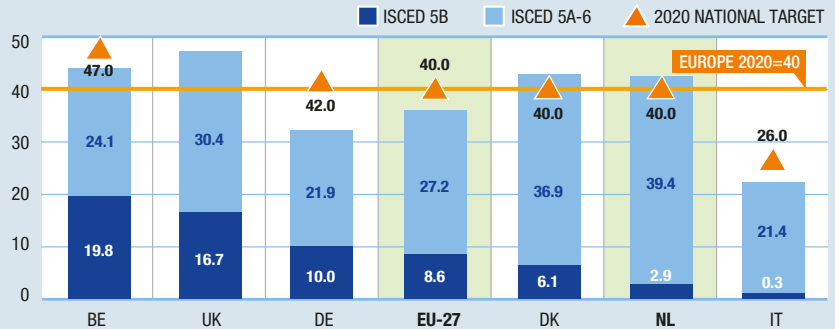
% of all students in upper secondary education, 2011



Source: Eurostat, UOE data collection on education systems, date of extraction 28.6.2013.

Tertiary education by type

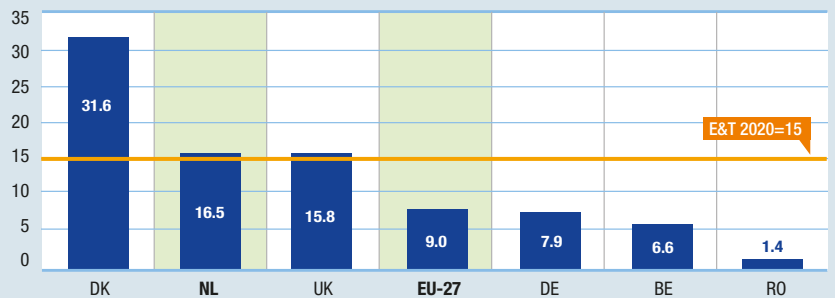
% of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary education by type, 2012



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 8.7.2013.

Lifelong learning

% of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey, 2012

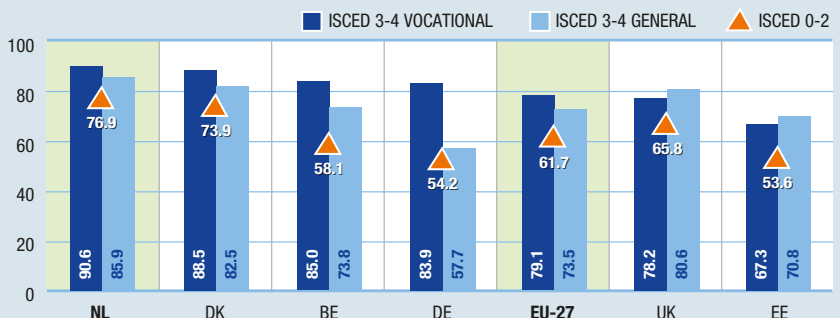


NB: Data for NL are provisional.

Source: Eurostat, labour force survey, date of extraction 3.7.2013.

Employment rates by highest level of educational attainment

20-34 year-olds no longer in education by highest level of educational attainment, 2009



Source: Cedefop calculations based on Eurostat, 2009 ad hoc module of the EU labour force survey, date of extraction 19.9.2012.



Further information

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www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ez	Ministry of Economic Affairs
www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/szw	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
www.onderwijsraad.nl	Education Council
www.cbs.nl	Statistics Netherlands
www.statline.cbs.nl	Statistical information
www.s-bb.nl	Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market
www.mboraad.nl	Netherlands Association of VET Colleges
www.vereniginghogescholen.nl	Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences
www.ecbo.nl	Centre for Expertise in Vocational Education and Training
www.refernet.nl	ReferNet Netherlands



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