CEDEFOP OPINION SURVEY
ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

NETHERLANDS

THEMATIC PERSPECTIVES
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ReferNet is a network of institutions across Europe representing the 28 Member States, plus Iceland and Norway. The network provides Cedefop with information and analysis on national vocational education and training (VET). ReferNet also disseminates information on European VET and Cedefop’s work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway.

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Introduction

Why research into Europe’s public’s opinion on VET?

Vocational education and training (VET) (1) provides access to the labour market, helps to combat unemployment and labour market integration; in particular for people at the periphery of society. In short, VET gives access to work and society. This is the key message of the European Commission’s New skills agenda for Europe). The basic assumption to this agenda is that Europe needs VET-systems that are able to respond to changes in professional practice on a very short notice. European VET should be flexible in order to match education and labour market needs.

In many Member States, participation in secondary VET is lagging behind participation in secondary general education. In those countries vocational education has the reputation of a ‘second choice’. Differences in the perception of VET can be explained by differences in the knowledge about VET. It is therefore important that EU citizens appreciate the value of this type of secondary education for valid reasons. Public awareness of VET’s importance for developing competences for getting a job and VET’s contribution to social inclusion are crucial if VET is to obtain the reputation of an attractive educational option. We know little about the public image of VET. What do European citizens know about VET? How is it assessed and for what reasons? The European Commission Eurobarometer, published in 2012 (2) gives an idea, but cannot compare the opinion on VET to the public’s opinion of general education, as it did not contrast the perceptions of VET to the public’s views on general education. Therefore, the barometer provides only limited insight into specific factors contributing to VET’s attractiveness. For this reason Cedefop launched an opinion survey covering all 28 Member States on the public’s experiences with and perceptions of VET (3).

(1) Please see Annex 1 for the definition of VET used in this opinion survey
This article focuses on the image of upper secondary vocational education (in short: VET) in the Netherlands. This image will be compared to VET’s overall image at EU-level. On some key-topics the public image of VET in the Netherlands will be compared to VETs image in other Member States.

The most striking conclusion from this survey is that in the Netherlands VET enjoys much public awareness. Nevertheless, it has a poor image. Among all 28 EU countries, it comes second last in terms of attractiveness.
CHAPTER 1.
Awareness and knowledge

What do Dutch people know about their VET system? Do they know what it is? Are pupils informed about VET when they have to make a decision about their educational career at secondary level? And to what effect? Did the information on VET have any influence on the choice they made? These questions are answered in this section.

Figure 1 shows that many Dutch people know about VET. As many as 89% of the Dutch know what it is. Together with Latvia (LV) the Netherlands (NL) share a second place. Only in Lithuania (LT), Finland (FI) and Sweden (SE) VET is more widely known. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom (UK) and Italy (IT), for example, no more than 51% know about the existence of VET.
Are Dutch people well informed about VET when choosing between alternative school types at upper secondary level? This is the case for about two-thirds (63%) of the Dutch. In other countries, the VET-option is more often discussed; in Slovakia (SK) for instance. The Netherlands scores slightly above the EU average of 57% (Figure 2).
Figure 2. Did you get information on VET when deciding about your education career at upper secondary level, by country

If information about VET has been provided, it does not automatically mean that young people will act on this information. Is there a relationship between being informed on VET and participation in VET? Figure 3 tells us that this is not the case for the Netherlands. Even though 63% received information about VET, no more than around 35% made a choice in its favour. In other countries, where also between 60 and 70% of the young people have been informed on VET, participation is much higher; in Poland (PL), Austria (AT) and Bulgaria (BG) for example.
The reasons Dutch give up for their choice to enrol in VET are dominantly content-based. Compared to the whole of the EU, finding jobs is not the decisive argument. More dominant is one’s interest in the subjects in VET curricula and one’s performance in those subjects. These are also arguments put forward by those who went to general education at upper secondary level. And additionally the argument that upper secondary general education gives access to higher education.
How many respondents have been advised not to go to VET at upper secondary level? Not less than 91% of the Dutch, the largest share of the EU, did not get this advice. For Denmark (DK), more or less the same applies. Elsewhere it's different. Relatively often, in Eastern European countries, but also in Italy, many young people were advised against VET (Figure 4).

The explanation for the Dutch case is most likely that there is not much consulting space when a choice has to be made. After graduating from prevocational education - at lower secondary level, VET is the only option, as out of four, three prevocational education track graduates only are allowed to enrol in VET programs (4). On the other hand, after entering general education at lower secondary level, there is no reason to consider the VET option as these two general education school types cover both the lower and the upper secondary education levels.

(4) See Annex 2 for a short description of the education system of the Netherlands.
CHAPTER 2.
Attractiveness and access

What is the image of VET in the Netherlands? Does the general public know about the importance of VET for the Dutch economy? On what topics VET’s image differs from that of general education? What aspects of vocational education the public opinion assesses as positive or negative? This section will tell us.

2.1. The public image of VET in the Netherlands

The question whether VET image is positive or negative is positively answered by relatively few Dutch respondents (53%); for 41%, VET’s image is negative; well below the EU average of 68%. Only in France (FR) and Hungary (HU) VET has a negative image in the eyes of more residents, as can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5. The image of VET; positive or negative? by country

Q15: Would you say that these days vocational education at upper secondary education for those aged 16-18 has a positive or negative image in (COUNTRY)? (%)

Base: All respondents (n= 35 645).
Source: Cedefop VET opinion survey.
2.2. Comparing VET’s image with that of general education

No more than 52% believe general education has a more positive image, compared to 65% for the whole of the EU. While slightly half of the Dutch think that general education has a more positive image than VET, two thirds of the EU have taken this view.

In the end however, upper secondary general education wins. When explicitly asked to compare the images of both education, 68% vote in favour of upper secondary general education.

Why this distinct negative image of VET in the Netherlands? The answer cannot be found in this survey. It is not because Dutch respondents believe that in particular low graded students are directed to VET, since the share, holding this opinion is almost equivalent to the EU average (75%). Nor the idea that it’s easier to get a VET diploma, compared to upper secondary general education diploma’s; only 45% of the Dutch think so, while the EU average is significantly higher (63%).

2.3. The importance of vocational education and for whom

A large majority of the EU citizens (86%) believe that VET transfers skills needed by employers. They are less convinced of VET’s contribution to find a job quickly (67%), a job that is well paid (61%) or attractive (60%). On these topics, the opinions differ considerably between countries. For example, 74% (above EU average) of the Dutch respondents believe a VET qualification helps to find a job quickly, but only 35% think that a VET qualification gives access to attractive positions (Figure 6).
Figure 6. **Prepares VET for attractive jobs? by country**

Based on the percentage of the respondents who have given positive answers to the questions about VET's image and relevance for the labour market, the researchers constructed an 'attractiveness indicator'. Figure 7 tells us that the Netherlands ends in the second last position, just before France; a big difference with countries like Malta (MT), Germany (DE) and Austria (AT).
2.4. **Should the government invest in VET?**

Should the government prioritise investments in VET or in general education? The dominant opinion is that VET deserves priority. While 49% of EU citizens prioritise investments in VET, only 28% give priority to investments in general education. The remaining respondents (23%) don’t know or believe that neither form of secondary education deserves priority. Compared to the EU average, a greater majority of the Dutch prefer investments in VET (58%) over general education (26%). Dutch people hold more pronounced opinions as well; where 23% of the EU citizens do not have any preferences, this is the case for no more of 16% of the Dutch.

2.5. **Transitioning between types of education (VET and general)**

Is it possible to switch from VET to general education at upper secondary level? Many Dutch people (63%) believe the transition to be difficult, significantly above the EU average (41%; Figure 8). Interestingly, there are striking differences between EU countries on this subject. Poland (PL) and Ireland (IE) belong to the
countries where a small number believes this transition is difficult (28 and 31% respectively) and 79% of the Belgian respondents.

Figure 8. Difficult to switch from VET to general education? by country

Do VET-diplomas provide access to higher education? On this topic, Dutch respondents are slightly more pessimistic compared to the whole of the EU. Here, 49% think this is possible, compared to 54% of all EU residents. In Poland, as many as 75% believe VET gives access to further education, while in Belgium only 26% hold this opinion (figure not included). It is hard to believe that similarities in the answers to both topics (‘Is it possible to switch from VET to general education?’; ‘does a VET diploma gives access to higher education?’) are coincidental. Either the explanation lies in differences in admission conditions or in the level of knowledge about the finer details of national education systems.
Does VET prepare students to work and study abroad? Figure 9 shows that 67% of the respondents having completed vocational education hold this opinion. Those who did not visit VET make another estimate. No spectacular differences, but it is clear that those with no experience in VET have a lower esteem of the value of VET for gaining experiences abroad. It is important to note that one cannot equate opinions to facts and responses might be based on a limited knowledge of a subject.
CHAPTER 3.
Experiences and satisfaction

This paragraph deals with respondents’ experiences in upper secondary education and whether experiences differ between those who visited secondary education in a vocational or in a general form. First of all, we will look at the variety in learning places. Secondly, aspects of education the respondents are satisfied with. And finally, we will assess whether a number of 21th century skills are well or less well developed in both forms of secondary education.

Mode of delivery: school versus the workplace

It is not surprising that the vast majority of EU respondents (89%) was educated in a classroom in general education. That is not the case for those who visited VET at upper secondary level. Not half of these respondents (43%) enrolled in school based VET. Almost all others (55%) were trained partially or completely in the workplace.

Satisfaction with upper secondary education: vocational and general

Does it make any difference whether one’s upper secondary education has been of a vocational or a general nature in terms of the development of general skills, and of work-related skills, the quality of teaching, and the equipment that was available? The survey data learn that in general (EU level) VET participants are more satisfied with all aspects, compared to the General Education participants. Perhaps surprisingly, most VET participants are most satisfied with the development of their general skills (90% at EU level, 86% of the Dutch respondents). In general, General Education participants are (somewhat) less satisfied with these aspects of their education. This is most true for the development of their general skills (62% at EU level, 40% of the Dutch respondents).

Between the EU-countries the researchers found, among those who enrolled in VET, a gradual decline in the level of satisfaction with their education. However, the margins are small (96-80%). It is different for those who have followed general education, with the Netherlands as an outsider. On average in
the EU is 62% satisfied, but no more than 40% of the Dutch are satisfied with the extent to which these skills have been addressed in upper secondary general education. More countries score relatively low as well, for instance Lithuania (LT) and Finland (FI). Romania (RO), Portugal (PT) and Croatia (HR) are, on the other hand, top scorers, implying general education curricula might overlap VET curricula to a greater or smaller extend (Figure 10).
Figure 10. Satisfaction with work-related skills developed in VET and general education, by country

Q13T.2: How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the education you received at upper secondary education? The work-related skills you developed (% — total 'satisfied')

Base: Respondents who went to upper secondary education (n= 24 146).
Source: Cedefop VET opinion survey.
Satisfaction with skills development in upper secondary education

Respondents were invited to comment whether they developed 12 so-called 21st century skills when they were at upper secondary education (VET and general education):

(a) communication skills,
(b) speaking a foreign language,
(c) mathematical skills,
(d) science and technology skills,
(e) digital and computer skills,
(f) the ability to pursue and organise your own learning,
(g) social and civic competences to engage in active democratic participation,
(h) the ability to be creative,
(i) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship,
(j) cultural awareness,
(k) ability to think critically,
(l) ability to work with others.

For many skills, it does not seem to matter what type of education was followed. Either way, respondents from both types of education give the same answer in terms of levels of mastering. This is the case for communication skills, the ability to pursue and organise your own learning, the ability to be creative and digital and computer skills.

The biggest differences can be found in cultural awareness, the ability to think critically, speaking a foreign language and mathematical skills. Of these (4) skills, significantly more (> 10 percentage points) of the respondents with a background in general education confirm that they have developed these skills in upper secondary education, compared to VET-respondents. In one skill VET graduates are ahead to a similar extent: in entrepreneurship.

In the Netherlands, the responses do not differ greatly from the general EU-picture. The only striking difference is that Dutch respondents with a background in VET as well as in general education score below the EU average on the ability to pursue and organise your own learning. Few Dutch people are satisfied with degree to which they have been able to develop this ability in secondary (general or vocational) education.
CHAPTER 4.
Outcomes and effectiveness

What are the benefits of VET for its participants and society in general? In this paragraph we look into the public opinion on VETs contribution to combat unemployment, finding a job and pursuing an attractive career in education and in work. Do opinions differ between those who went to VET and those who have enrolled in general education?

Does vocational education help to combat unemployment?

On this topic the opinions are divided. In the EU, 80% believe that VET contributes to combat unemployment. A high percentage, but that does not mean that the percentage is as high in all Member States. In the Netherlands, 86% think this is the case. Even higher scores are found in Scandinavian countries; in Sweden (96%), Finland (94%) and Denmark (93%); the lowest in Greece (66%), France (69%) and Slovenia (70%). Maybe, the figures reflect the impact of unemployment in society rather than the level of faith citizens have in VET’s ability to solve this problem.

How do respondents explain difficulties they might have had in finding a job (after completing their highest level of education)? Figure 11 shows that relatively few Dutch respondents met with problems finding work; it had no effect whether their secondary education was of a vocational or general nature. This is no surprise; almost all Dutch pupils in upper secondary general education continue their career in higher education, at an associate, bachelor or master level. Almost all pupils enter the labour market sooner (VET) or later, after completion a kind of professional training.
For Figure 12, representing the length of time before finding a job – VET and general education graduates – the researchers have chosen to construct tables using different scales. At first sight, a choice for VET seems the best in terms of the time it took to find the first long-time job; the bars in the left table are longer. But while the responses of this group are shown in a scale that goes up to 50%, the scale of those who completed general secondary education ends at 40%. In short, in the Dutch context differences in job-finding between both groups of graduates are not that big.

Compared to the EU though, it turns out that Dutch school leavers spent less effort to find a job. Here too, interviewees were invited to inform the researchers about their experiences after the completion of their education career. Those who have gone to general education at secondary level will for the most part have entered the labour market with a bachelor or master degree and not with a diploma at upper secondary general education level.
Did young people proceed in education after upper secondary education? VET students in particular? For the majority of the EU respondents with a background in VET the answer is negative. In total, no more than 39% of all VET-respondents have continued the study, or are currently attending (Figure 13).
For the Netherlands the figures are more favourable. Here, as many as 60% of all VET-students took a follow-up course and 87% of those having followed a general education program at secondary level (not included as a figure).
CHAPTER 5.
Main conclusions and recommendations for further research

The purpose of this opinion survey was to gain insight into the images EU citizens have of VET at upper secondary level. In the preceding paragraphs we examined VET’s image for the Netherlands on four topics; where it differs from the average EU image and with which countries differences – in positive and negative terms – are extreme:
(a) awareness and knowledge,
(b) attractiveness and access,
(c) experience and satisfaction,
(d) outcomes and effectiveness.

In this section we provide an interpretation of the results for the Netherlands. The second theme in which we look at is the hooks and eyes of international comparisons.

How to interpret differences in the images of VET between EU countries? Can one assume that, if in a country many people do not know about VET, VET is ‘underrated’ and information campaigns are the way to change its image? There might be a solid reason for this unfamiliarity. Maybe because of its low quality or its low rating as an entrance ticket to the labour market.

5.1. Awareness and knowledge

The vast majority (89%) of respondents in the Netherlands know what VET is. However, relatively few (63%) people have been informed about VET at the time of taking the decision of orientation of education. This can be explained from the way the Dutch education system is constructed. After primary education, at the age of 12, young children enter lower secondary education. Only one school type, prevocational education, has a ‘lower secondary’ status. After prevocational education almost all learners continue their educational career in VET, acting as upper secondary education for them. For those who go to general instead of prevocational education, lower secondary lower and upper secondary education are integrated in one school type; they stay in secondary education until they graduate. The most obvious choice is to continue in higher education; VET is hardly ever never an option, only if they fail in lower or upper secondary general
education. The performance-based selection process at lower secondary level explains why so very few have not been advised not to go to VET. The space for deciding is very limited at that stage. Hence, advices pro or contra VET will have little impact.

The information about VET in the Netherlands seems non-committal, as ultimately, it inspires only a relatively limited number of young people to participate. In other countries information and participation seems to be more linked. But because we do not know what this information exactly contains, there is little to be deduced. Is VET presented as an alternative to general education, or are young people already pre-sorted for VET? In which case the information might only relate to the options from which a choice must be made.

5.2. Attractiveness and access

VET’s image is not particularly good in the Netherlands. For 41% of the people VET has a negative image; well above the EU average of 23%. When asked whether general education has a better image than VET, more than two-thirds of the respondents award general education with a better image. All in all, VET has a poor image in the Netherlands; at the 'attractiveness indicator', constructed for this opinion survey, it ends in the last place; a surprising outcome, as Dutch VET is counted as one of the best systems in the world by international organizations such as the OECD and Cedefop (5).

Responses to the opinion survey questionnaire give little clues to explain this low image. Many Dutch people think that low-qualified students are directed to VET. And also relatively many Dutch people judge the switch from VET to general education to be difficult. However, compared with other countries and the EU average, these views are not exceptional.

A maybe more accurate interpretation of the outcomes is that many Dutch people cherish a benevolent opinion of VET. VET is relevant and important to those who depend on it for a job and an income, but preferably not to themselves. The knowledge that VET offers excellent labour market opportunities, compared to general education, is no reason for a high rating;


nobody expects general education to offer excellent job opportunities. General education is preferred for another reason; its qualifications provide access to higher education, and higher education offers much better job and career opportunities – and more job security, compared to VET.

5.3. Experience and satisfaction

Dutch people discern a wide gap between VET and general education curricula. This conclusion can we draw from the exceptionally large difference in the extent to which labour market skills are felt to be developed in VET, compared to general education. While a great share of VET participants and graduates respond positively, only a small share of those with a general education background agree they have developed labour market skills.

Concerning the development of ‘new’ 21-century skills, the type of education (general or vocational) is of little influence in the Netherlands. Differences of any significance are clearly linked to differences in subjects taught in general and vocational education. See for instance the higher share of respondents confirming they developed cultural skills and foreign language skills in general education and the higher share of respondents confirming they developed entrepreneurial skills in VET. Therefore, it is remarkable that in the Netherlands fewer respondents with a background in vocational education and as well as fewer respondents with a background in general education claim they have been able to develop the skills necessary to pursue and organise your own learning.

5.4. Outcomes and effectiveness

What are, compared to general education, VET’s specific benefits? For one’s career, the education type is of little influence. Those who have completed their secondary education in a general or vocationally-oriented variant are, for the most part, satisfied with their careers.

There is a difference in the pursuit of educational careers. The option of further learning is made significantly more frequent by those with a background in general education. Again, this is not surprising in the Dutch context, for as a rule, graduates from upper secondary general education continue their study at tertiary level.

The most striking conclusion from this opinion survey is that in the Netherlands VET is widely known, but has nevertheless, a rather poor image. A
striking difference with the reputation Dutch VET enjoys abroad, in particular in European institutional circles.

An explanation, not yet confirmed by research findings though, is that Dutch VET is a system in its own with courses at no less than four levels. Annex 1 gives the definition of VET used in this opinion survey, but in Dutch VET there is a world of difference between level 1 courses (which are actually beyond the definition) and courses at level 4, giving access to higher (professional) education. We cannot exclude the idea that VET suffers from its complex nature. Dutch VET can be associated with groups on the verge of society, and also with high quality expert and specialist courses. Quite possible that where European institutional circles praise Dutch VET for its inclusive nature, many Dutch students and their parents prefer a more exclusive school type. This topic needs further research.

5.5. Recommendations for further study

A major problem in research into public opinions on VET is that its position differs so very much between countries. Not only the status of VET differs between countries, but also its position in a national education system. In the Netherlands for example, it is obvious that young people, after having finished prevocational education will continue their educational career in secondary VET, and not in upper secondary general education. This is not the case in Flanders where young people can choose between two forms of VET: technical secondary education and the lower-rated variant called professional secondary education. Another difference between countries is whether VET is predominantly regulated by the Government, by the social partners or in a form of tripartite cooperation (as in the Netherlands); also in terms of whether it is predominantly organised in schools, in the workplace or about as much in both places. And finally, it may be the case that VET policies are regulated in the region or by companies.

For this reason, it is difficult to compare the positions and perceptions of VET between EU-countries. For, as the position differs, EU residents coming from different countries might have different perceptions of VET as well; either based on factual differences or unfounded opinions. In addition, differences might as well indicate the levels of knowledge about national VET systems as inform us about its national position and performance. And so the methodological question has to be raised whether country differences in the image of VET are based on factual (in legal, governance, stakeholders and positional terms) differences or on differences in knowledge the general public has of VET. Take for example question Q19.2 (‘VET provides opportunities to work and study abroad’). The
explanation that a greater majority of the respondents with a background in VET agree with this statement can be that this group refers to own experiences and respondents with a background in general education do not. Who is to tell? The survey invited respondents to express their opinion, but can we be sure that opinions reflect the actual course of action?

Is it possible to compare opinions when respondents might refer to different types of education and we cannot rule out the fact that some have little knowledge about VET?

Again, the survey invites respondents to express their opinion, but we cannot be sure that the answers represent the facts. We cannot rule out the possibility that people with a negative image of VET are better of less well informed.

It is advisable to take into account these and maybe more positional differences in subsequent editions of this opinion survey; for instance by introducing typologies to cluster the variety in relations between VET and education systems in general (6) and to control for the level of knowledge of the respondents by checking for the degree of familiarity with VET.

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Annexes

A short description of the education system of the Netherlands

Study results and advice from school determine the type of secondary education that learners follow after leaving primary education at age 12. In the third year of secondary education, 53% of students follow lower secondary pre-vocational programmes (VMBO). Half of VMBO students are in vocationally oriented programmes; the rest follow general programmes offered by VMBO schools. VMBO is the main route to upper secondary vocational education and training (VET).

Apart from lower secondary pre-VET programmes, there are also general programmes that prepare students for higher education: integrated lower and upper secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). Some 45% of students in the third year of secondary education take part in one of these programmes. Labour-oriented practical training (*praktijkonderwijs*) is available for learners not capable of entering pre-vocational education.

Upper secondary VET

Learners aged 16 or above can enter upper secondary VET (MBO). Three structural elements determine provision of MBO programmes, with differentiation according to:

(a) **level**: upper secondary vocational education has four levels leading to EQF levels 1 to 4. Student admission to a level depends on prior education and the diploma obtained. Admission to level 1 programmes is limited to learners without a prior qualification at lower secondary level. It is possible to progress within upper secondary VET and the highest level (leading to EQF 4) gives access to higher VET programmes offered by universities of applied sciences;

(b) **area of study**: upper secondary VET programmes are available in four areas (‘sectors’): green/agriculture, technology, economics and care/welfare;

(c) **learning pathway**: upper secondary VET has a school-based pathway (BOL) and a dual pathway (BBL). In the school-based pathway, work placements in companies make up at least 20% of study time. In the dual pathway
(apprenticeship), students combine jobs with school-based instruction; this often involves learning at work four days a week and one day at school.

In upper secondary VET, the desired outcomes of qualifications are defined in the national qualification system. Occupational standards cover one qualification profile or several interrelated ones. Social partners and education institutions represented in sectoral committees have legal responsibility to develop and maintain these standards. Once approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (the Ministry of Economic Affairs for agricultural programmes), schools – in cooperation with enterprises providing work-based learning – develop curricula based on the qualification profiles.
Tertiary VET

Higher professional education (tertiary level VET, HBO) is open to students with upper secondary general education diplomas and graduates of level 4 upper secondary VET programmes. Around 50% of such VET graduates enter the job market; the rest continue to higher professional education. Most pursue a four-year professional bachelor degree programme which, on completion, can give access to a professional master degree programme, an option not yet extensively used.

Also, two-year associate degree programmes (short-cycle higher education) open to MBO level 4 graduates and leading to EQF 5 have recently been developed.

Continuing VET

There is no institutional framework for continuing vocational education and training (CVET). Provision is market-driven with many suppliers. Dual VET (the BBL pathway) can also function as CVET for adults. Social partners stimulate CVET through sectoral training and development funds. In 2014, there were about 125 such funds. Most approach and finance training from an employability perspective. They help employees progress in their careers, sometimes even in other sectors, offer special arrangements for older workers, and support the development of effective human resource management policies at sector level. Most funds also support projects that help young people find employment or take initiatives to sustain or expand apprenticeship

Distinctive features of VET in the Netherlands

The heterogeneous and multifunctional nature of upper secondary VET in the Netherlands is unique. Key distinctive features are:

(a) most publicly funded VET is provided by large multi-sectoral regional training centres (ROCs) with an average student population of 12,000. Sector-specific schools and agricultural training centres also provide VET programmes. ROCs provide VET for young people and adults (IVET) and general education for adults. They are also active on the continuing VET market, with privately funded programmes. Government-regulated IVET programmes are also offered by private providers;

(b) school-based and dual pathways in upper secondary VET lead to the same diplomas. Participation in each corresponds to the economic cycle stages: in
periods of economic boom, the number of students in the dual pathway increases, while it decreases in the school-based pathway; the opposite happens during an economic recession;

(c) education institutions have a relatively high degree of freedom to shape VET provision. The VET law only provides a broad framework outlining key elements at system level; institutions receive a lump sum for their tasks;

(d) the Netherlands promotes a culture of evidence-informed VET policy and practice and encourages innovation. Recent initiatives include providing VET schools regularly with up-to-date regional labour market information and early school leaving data, and implementing plan-do-check-act mechanisms as a basis for organisation and programme development. School-based ‘innovation labs’ use action-based research methodologies to encourage innovation in programmes and teaching methods. To encourage knowledge sharing, VET teachers have opportunities to present their research projects and findings to a wide VET audience, for instance during teacher days

Source:
