

COUNTRY POLICY REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Netherlands



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Section 1: Country priorities for education

The text below presents the main country priorities in the field of education, with special attention to the development of inclusive education.

Country priorities

One of the key features of the Dutch education system is the freedom of education. It is safeguarded by Article 23 of the Constitution. It covers the freedom to set up schools, organise teaching systems at schools and determine the founding principles. Any citizen has the right to set up a school and provide education based on religious, ideological or educational beliefs. Under the Constitution, private and public schools are guaranteed equal public funding.

‘Freedom to organise teaching systems’ means that both public and private schools are free to determine what is taught at schools and how this is taught, within legal boundaries. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, however, sets the quality standards to which both public and government-funded private schools must adhere. This system allows also for free school choice by parents and learners. Primary and secondary education are free of costs for parents.

Since the introduction of the first Compulsory Education Act (1901 – learners aged 6–12 should attend school), how to educate learners with mental and physical disabilities has been considered. Specialised education has been developed since then. In 1927, schools for special education were regulated by law, first only in primary education and later in secondary education as well. Since the 1980s, there has been debate about specialised schools versus supporting learners with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools.

When a new law for primary (mainstream) education was introduced (1985), an ‘interim law’ for primary and secondary special education (1985–1998) was formulated to redesign the special education system. This eventually led to a new system and law, the Expertise Centres Law, in 1998. In this law, schools for primary and secondary special education became expertise or resource centres, while schools providing mild support, mainly for learners with small learning impairments, became part of the mainstream system (‘mainstream-plus’ schools; ‘Together to School Again’ policy). Mainstream schools were supported by support teachers from the resource centres.

In 2003, the introduction of a pupil-bound budget (‘back-pack’ financing) gave an extra incentive for more inclusive education. With this personal budget, learners with SEN could also attend mainstream schools. However, in the following years, even more learners with SEN attended special schools instead of mainstream schools which led the government to change the system again. The result was the Act on Suitable Education (2014) – the ‘Education that Fits’ policy. In this system, the criteria for admittance to special schools are set by regional school alliances, together with a fixed budget based on the total number of learners within a region. The fixed budget stimulates regions to support learners with SEN more often in mainstream schools, while it is also possible to create more tailor-made support, in mainstream or in special education.



Country priorities

There has been an on-going debate for decades now about how to stimulate more inclusive education. At the same time, much effort has been made to improve the quality of special schools (Act on Quality of (Secondary) Special Education, 2012–2013). Many parents and teachers are in favour of special schools. Due to separate laws and systems, it is difficult to integrate special and mainstream education. With the recent ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the evaluation of the Education that Fits policy in 2020, the subject is again on the political and social agenda.

In the upcoming evaluation year (2020), priorities have been set by the Ministry of Education. First of all, the new system will be evaluated as a whole. A scientific research programme was set up from the beginning of the policy until the end of 2019. The Dutch Education Council will also advise on the system for learners with special educational needs and will evaluate whether the Education that Fits policy has contributed to it.

Secondly, regardless of the evaluation outcomes, effort will be made to stimulate mainstream and special schools to collaborate and integrate even more, and to experiment outside the law. This might also eventually lead to integrating the different laws.

Thirdly, politicians and society in general are asking for a strategy on inclusive education and on the future of special education. This Country Policy Review and Analysis (CPRA) project, alongside various inter-ministerial collaborations on the UNCRPD, will provide the building blocks.

Fourthly, despite the autonomous education system, the different education and health sector laws sometimes prevent tailor-made support. The Ministries of Health and Education, together with representatives of school boards and youth health (care) organisations, have founded a joint policy programme called 'Coalition Education, Care and Youth'. They work on a better connection between the three domains, with the aim of better aligning care and education with the individual needs of children.



Section 2: Analysis grid

Measure 1: To improve inclusive education and to ensure that good quality education is accessible for all

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.1 There is a clearly stated policy for the promotion of quality in inclusive education.</p> <p><i>(Policy aims to widen access to education and to promote full participation and opportunities for all learners vulnerable to exclusion to realise their potential. Policy outlines how education policy-makers need to take responsibility for all learners.)</i></p>	<p>1.1.1 Education is seen as a very important tool to combat poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation. Education is open to all pupils, emphasises equality and provides each pupil with equal opportunities for development and participation in society, and to foster social inclusion and cohesion. Equality and equity are important characteristics of the Dutch education system. Policy aims at striving for the inclusion of all pupils. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision)</p> <p>1.1.2 To foster social inclusion and participation of pupils in society, the Primary Education Act and Secondary Education Act were amended with an additional specification. It obliges schools to offer education that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assumes that pupils grow up in a multiform society;• stimulates active citizenship and social integration;• aims to ensure that pupils have knowledge of and become acquainted with different backgrounds and cultures of peers (WPO, art. 8 lid 3 / WVO, art. 17). <p>Since 1998, the Netherlands has worked to include more pupils in mainstream education, starting with the ‘Together to School Again’ act. With this act, secondary special education for pupils with minor learning and behaviour problems was transformed in mainstream schools for practical training learning support in pre-vocational education. Mainstream primary and secondary schools received a budget to support pupils with, for example, dyslexia, ADHD and PDD.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>In 2003, the pupil bound budget was introduced. The idea was that parents could choose between mainstream and special education for their children, and the money would follow the children. In 2014, the 'Education that Fits' act was introduced. It aims to lay more responsibility for including pupils in mainstream schools on the regions by introducing regional school alliances between mainstream and special schools. The alliances receive fixed budgets that can be used in either mainstream or special schools.</p> <p>In 2007, the Equal Treatment by Virtue of Disability and Chronic Illness Act was changed/adapted. Before then the Act only applied to employment, living and vocational education. Since 2009 the Act has also applied to primary and secondary education.</p> <p>1.1.3 Suitable education (Amending Act, 2014) aims to provide all learners with the best fitting educational context. During the compulsory education period, this might be mainstream or special education. It means that pupils with special educational needs can be placed in mainstream schools, following the mainstream programme and receiving the specific support they need. In this way education becomes more customised. Therefore, it is necessary that mainstream schools co-operate in an intensive way with schools for special education, among others. For this purpose, regional school alliances were formed. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>1.1.4 Learners with minor learning disabilities can (temporarily) attend 'mainstream-plus' schools in primary education. These schools have smaller classes, so that learners receive more guidance. Learners complete the mainstream curriculum and take the compulsory test when they are in the highest class. After completion, most learners transfer to mainstream secondary education, with a minority transferring to special secondary education.</p> <p>In secondary education, two types of mainstream schools offer extra support. Regional school alliances receive extra funding for learners with minor learning disadvantages. They can allocate this to pre-vocational secondary education schools; four years (VMBO) level, in order to provide smaller classes and/or extra assistance in class. Practical training schools specialise in learners with learning and intellectual disabilities. Learners earn a certificate afterwards and can transfer to upper-secondary vocational education</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>level 1 (assistant worker). Upper-secondary vocational education and higher (vocational) education consists only of mainstream schools and colleges. They provide the support needed in an individual way. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision).</p> <p>Although inclusive education in mainstream schools is promoted and stimulated, special schools are sometimes in a better position to offer the best support. Parents’ preference for special schools has to be respected. The Netherlands have the following system of special education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government-funded special education in special schools for primary, secondary or primary and secondary education.• Special classes within mainstream primary or secondary schools. Accurate numbers are not available.• Institutions where pupils are offered short-term education and healthcare services, for example time-out, rebound or reintegration for early school leavers. These are orthopedagogic-didactic centres (OPDCs). Learners receive education here and work on behavioural improvement, so that return to a mainstream school becomes possible again.• Health and care organisations for learners with very severe impairments and very low cognitive capacity. These day care facilities have teams of experts, for example psychologists, remedial educationalists, physical therapists and speech therapists, who treat learners. The facility works together with the parents and gives them guidance as well. <p>Over 15% of children in the Netherlands are at risk of developing language disadvantage. To help them, municipal authorities, playgroups and schools organise special programmes (measure 5). Secondary schools can obtain funding for language training or language coaches for pupils whose language skills lag behind.</p> <p>The national government has a specific policy for reducing early school leaving. The goal is to offer young people a better perspective on a career. One of the measures is that a qualification obligation applies to pupils between the ages of 16 and 18. They must continue to receive education if they do not have achieved a diploma at International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 3 (general upper-secondary</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>education – HAVO), pre-university education – VWO) or upper-secondary vocational education – MBO, level 2).</p> <p>1.1.5 One of the key features of the Dutch education system, guaranteed under Article 23 of the Constitution, is freedom of education. This refers to the freedom to found schools (freedom of establishment), to organise the teaching in schools (freedom of organisation of teaching) and to determine the principals on which they are based (freedom of conviction). People have the right to found schools and to provide teaching based on religious, ideological or educational beliefs. As a result, there are both publicly-run and privately-run schools in the Netherlands. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>1.1.6 Publicly-run schools are state funded and open to all children regardless of religion or outlook. They provide education on behalf of the state. They are governed by the municipal council, but mostly by a public legal entity or foundation set up by the council. Some publicly-run schools base their teaching on specific educational ideas, such as the Montessori, Jenaplan or Dalton methods. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>1.1.7 Privately-run schools are also state-funded although not set up by the state. These schools are governed by the board of the association or foundation that set them up. These so-called denominational schools base their teachings on religious or ideological beliefs. They include Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and anthroposophic schools. Some private schools base their teaching on a specific educational idea, such as the Montessori, Jenaplan or Dalton-method. The denominational schools can refuse to admit pupils whose parents do not subscribe the belief or ideology on which the education the school offers is based. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>1.1.8 The freedom of education is, however, limited by the qualitative standards set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in educational legislation. These qualitative standards – core objectives – refer to <i>what</i> needs to be taught and studied in both public and private primary, secondary and special education: a global method of educational programming. Freedom of education gives schools the right the</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>decide <i>how to</i> translate global frameworks into specific education. In addition, the number of instructional hours is prescribed at a national level. Schools are free to decide where they want to set quantitative accents in their educational programming, however. This means that schools can decide how to allocate the hours of attendance in different subjects; for example, learners can attend more hours of maths and fewer hours of arts, or vice versa. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p>
<p>1.2 Legislation and policy are consistent with the principles of the UNCRC and the UNCRPD.</p> <p><i>(Legislation and policy and upholds the right of all learners to full participation in school with their own local peer group.)</i></p>	<p>1.2.1 The Netherlands has agreed on several international agreements regarding inclusive education. These include the Council Resolution concerning integration of children and young people with disabilities into mainstream systems of education (1990), the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the UNCRPD (2016). With the ratification of the UNCRPD, several laws were adjusted: the Law on Equal Treatment based on disability and chronic illness, the Electoral Law, the Social Development Law, the Participation Law and the Youth Law (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy; <i>Tweede Kamer, Vergaderjaar 2013–2014, 33990, no. 3</i>; <i>Tweede Kamer, Vergaderjaar 2013–2014, 33992 (R2034), no. 3</i>). The Ministry of Education participates with other ministries in an intensive programme called ‘<i>onbeperkt meedoen</i>’ to implement the UNCRPD in society and education.</p>
<p>1.3 The concept of inclusion is clarified in education policy as an agenda that increases quality and equity for all learners.</p> <p><i>(Policy aims to address underachievement of all vulnerable groups including children with disabilities.)</i></p>	<p>1.3.1 Accessibility and quality are important characteristics of the Dutch education system. There are, however, some threats (such as segregation, overburdened schools). Measures are now being taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy on support for disadvantaged pupils (learners at risk due to lower socio-economic status/migration background) requires municipalities to draw up a local educational agenda together with school boards and childcare providers. In the local agenda, school boards, local municipalities and childcare providers discuss how best to combat educational disadvantages and how to avoid segregation in education.



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools with many disadvantaged pupils (learners at risk because of lower socio-economic status/migration background) receive a subsidy to help teachers to deal with differences in the class and provide extra supervision for the pupils.• Primary and secondary education are free of charge in the Netherlands. However, schools may request a voluntary contribution from parents. Codes of conduct state that schools must explicitly inform parents that this contribution is voluntary and not mandatory.• The Inspectorate is currently developing a new model to assess the educational outcomes of schools. This takes more account of the learner population of the school and the opportunities that schools want to offer learners. <p>1.3.2 In 2014, the ‘Education that Fits’ policy was launched. An important aim is to improve education for every pupil with SEN within the education system. The policy arose from the need and desire to improve care for learners with special needs, to streamline the provisions for special needs education that each had their own funding and procedures, and to prevent learners getting lost between systems. Under this policy, every school board has the responsibility to provide adequate education to every pupil that enrolls, regardless of their specific educational needs and the kind of support that they need. By co-operating with other school boards at a regional level within regional school alliances, schools must arrange educational provisions to enable every learner to be educated taking into account their special educational needs. Schools are free to decide on how arrangements are offered. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.4 Legislation and policy for inclusive education is cross-sectoral.</p> <p><i>(Policy outlines procedures to ensure the efficient co-ordination of services, as well as clearly defining roles and <u>responsibilities</u>.)</i></p>	<p>1.4.1 Primary and secondary schools may experiment with the joint provision of education for pupils aged 10 to 14.</p> <p>1.4.2 Since 2017, the Ministry has made almost EUR 5 million in subsidies available each year for transfer programmes for VMBO–MBO and VMBO–HAVO. Pupils receive extra support and their parents are more involved. To improve the transfer from MBO to HBO, more than 70 MBO institutions and colleges of higher education have received subsidies to test innovative new methods. A bill is being prepared that regulates a transfer right for the transfer from VMBO–GL or TL–HAVO and for the transfer from HAVO to VWO.</p> <p>1.4.3 Investigations are currently underway to discover whether it helps if disadvantaged learners (learners at risk because of lower socio-economic status/migration background or learning disabilities) are allowed to take HAVO for longer. Schools set up an extended substructure for pupils who demonstrably have the capacities and motivation to obtain a HAVO diploma, but who in practice often return to pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) or are left behind due to circumstances, including a less stimulating home environment and language deficiencies.</p>
<p>1.5 There is a long-term multi-level policy framework for implementing quality inclusive education at national, regional and / or organisational levels.</p>	<p>1.5.1 See 1.3.2</p> <p>1.5.2 The Act Quality of (Secondary) Special Education was submitted (2012/2013) due to an increasing number of pupils after the implementation of the Expertise Centres Act (1998) and due to a lack of visible output in terms of qualification primary and secondary special education. The main objectives of this Act were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to raise the achievements in (secondary) special education; • to augment educational quality in special education;



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to ensure that special schools draw up a developmental perspective plan for all learners. The plan must, among other things, forecast a long-term outcome destination and note the learner’s specific needs and support. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)
1.6 Policy outlines how education policy-makers need to take responsibility for all learners.	–
1.7 Policy has the goal of supporting all teachers to have positive attitudes towards all learners.	–
1.8 Policy requires learning material to be accessible.	1.8.1 Learners can apply for devices for disabilities or assistive technologies, such as sign language interpreters or adjusted furniture. These devices or services are funded by the Ministry on application (input funding). (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Financing of inclusive education systems)
1.9 Policy describes an effective framework of support for schools to implement inclusive education. <i>(Support structures focus on different forms of educational resource centres that are locally organised to offer support to individual or clusters of schools.)</i>	<p>1.9.1 Regional school alliances must prepare a regional support plan every four years. In it they must describe how they develop a comprehensive offer to support all pupils in the region. This plan also states the minimum support schools must be able to offer pupils. (WPO art. 18a, lid 6-8; WVO art. 17a, lid 6-8)</p> <p>1.9.2 Schools establish the support they can offer in a so-called school support profile. School development and teacher training in special educational needs are based on this profile. In this profile schools describe the support they can offer pupils with special educational needs, and the regular support they offer for pupils with dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD and gifted pupils. The document contents future aims, the profile the school would like to grow into and what is necessary to achieve this.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	1.9.3. Schools also have a duty of care. Individual schools must provide pupils who require extra support with the most appropriate schooling. If a school cannot offer the necessary support, the school must find a school that can offer the support needed. In order to fulfil this obligation, school authorities must offer tailor-made educational solutions in the framework of the school alliances. These solutions can be offered in mainstream or (secondary) special education.
1.10 Policies outline a continuum of support for children and young people in schools, to meet the full diversity of learners' needs.	1.10.1 Other ways to support learners with SEN are to adapt teaching, for example by adapting the instruction in mainstream classes, by remedial teaching or classroom assistance. (Country Information for the Netherlands, European Agency, 2019) 1.10.2 See 1.9.3
1.11 Policy outlines strategies for awareness-raising with all stakeholders in inclusive education.	–



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>1.12 Policy outlines the development of the role of special schools as a resource to increase the capability of mainstream schools and improve support for all learners.</p> <p><i>(The specialist knowledge and skills of special school / resource centre are maintained and further developed so as to enhance support for learners, such as those with low-incidence disabilities.)</i></p>	<p>1.12.1 In the regional school alliances, mainstream and special schools co-operate.</p> <p>1.12.2 There are more opportunities for intensive forms of co-operation between special and mainstream education, including the combination and integration of facilities and hybrid forms of education (see also 6.5.3).</p> <p>1.12.3 Traditionally, the Netherlands have several schools which are attached to pedagogical institutions. These so-called PI schools are part of the regional school alliances in their region. They also work together in a national network to exchange and disseminate knowledge and experiences in supporting learners with behavioural disorders (see also 4.3.2)</p> <p>1.12.4 In 2014, the schools for cluster 1 and cluster 2 worked together in national resource centres. From there, they supported learners in special schools, or outpatient counsellors supported learners in mainstream schools.</p> <p>1.12.5 In 2018, legislation was introduced to stimulate fusions of special and mainstream schools. For a period of four years, special and mainstream schools can integrate their school organisation and classes, and grow to one school organisation. During the experimental period, both schools continue to receive funds. After four years, they have to decide upon an organisational fusion and new funding, based upon one school organisation.</p> <p>1.12.6 Due to the fact that schools want to work together more intensively, the legislation will be prolonged and broadened to enable more mainstream and special education schools to work together in integrated centres.</p>



Measure 1 evaluative comments

Although compulsory education starts at the age of five, most children start school at the age of four. The general enrolment rate in the Netherlands for mainstream education is about 97%, while enrolment in special education is about 3%. In 2018, 0.17% of learners could not attend school due to a lack of required support from school and/or youth care. More often, these are the learners with complex difficulties who need more than average support. (European Agency, [Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision](#))

In the Netherlands, the right of learners to go to school and receive education is defined by an obligation to go to school. Parents must abide by the law and are therefore responsible for registering their child at a school. Parents can, however, ask for an exemption from compulsory education, for example for children who are unable to receive education due to mental or physical disorders, or children who attend a school abroad.

Specification of school types:

- Cluster 1: special schools for pupils with visual impairments or multiple disabilities including visual impairment
- Cluster 2: schools for learners with hearing impairments or communication disorders (due to hearing, language or speech difficulties or autism) or for children with multiple disabilities including hearing, language or speech impairment
- Cluster 3: schools for children with physical impairments or chronic physical illnesses
- Cluster 4: schools for children with mental or behavioural disorders.

Since 2003, the Dutch education system has removed the criterion of minimum IQ for children. Therefore, children with very severe impairments and very low cognitive capacity can also attend schools and are provided for with specific education goals. Because of their severe impairments, some of these children go to health and care organisations. The Ministries of Education and Health are jointly investigating possibilities to extend the opportunities for these children.



Measure 2: To support improved co-operation, including greater involvement of parents and local community

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>2.1 The full involvement of families in all educational processes is outlined in legislation and policy.</p>	<p>2.1.1 To ensure the full involvement of families in all educational processes, the Participation in Education Act (2006) states that all schools should have a participation council (WMS, art. 3 lid 1). School staff, parents and learners (only in secondary education) participate the participation council (WMS, art. 3, lid 3).</p> <p>The participation council is authorised to discuss, take position or make proposals on all school matters (WMS, art. 6, lid 1). This includes budget and financial, organisational and educational policy, annual reports, complaints. (WMS, art. 8)</p> <p>The participation council can give advice in advance on any decision to be taken by the school authority with regard to the adoption or modification of the school support profile (see 3.3.2). (WMS, art. 11)</p> <p>2.1.2 On the level of the regional school alliance, a participation council is formed to give advice on the regional support plan (WMO, art. 11a). Parents (and learners) participate in this council.</p> <p>2.1.3 On an individual level, many schools involve pupils in the process to formulate an individual development plan for learners who need extra support. Law states they must involve the parents, who have to agree with the individual development plan (WPO art. 40; WVO art. 26).</p>
<p>2.2 Policy for inclusive education places learners and their families at the centre of all actions.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Strengthening the position of parents, both at individual and collective level, is one of the aims of the Act on Suitable Education (2014).</p> <p>The duty of care for schools forms an important basis for strengthening the position of parents. Schools are obliged to provide pupils who require extra support with the most appropriate schooling. If a school cannot offer the necessary support, the school (and not the parents) is obliged to find a school that can offer the support needed.</p> <p>The school has to draw up an individual development plan for pupils with special needs in either mainstream or special education. Part of the plan is the support the school is going to offer. Parents (and pupils if possible) are involved in drawing up the plan and they have to agree with it.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
2.3 Sharing information among professionals and families is a policy priority.	2.3.1 When registering at a school, parents conform themselves to the provisions as included in the WPO, WVO and WEC about the exchange of information by schools with others about their child. The school informs the parents when necessary. This professional information exchange is a condition for the proper functioning of the internal and external care and support structure and for the continuity of (educational) support. Parents' consent is recorded in writing if necessary.
2.4 Policy has the goal of supporting parental interaction and communication with professionals.	2.4.1 The Dutch Coalition Agreement 2017–2020 encourages the goal of supporting parental interaction and communication with professionals. Accordingly, the coalition agreement stands for schools, children and young people flourishing in parental involvement.
2.5 Schools are expected and supported to involve a wider range of partners and foster formal and informal networks that support their practice.	2.5.1 On the involvement of a wider range of partners by schools, the law states that the support plan will not be established until consultations have been held with the mayor and councillors of the concerning relevant municipalities (WPO, art. 18a, lid 9; WVO, art. 17a, lid 9).

Measure 2 evaluative comments

It is currently being investigated how far the (right of) hearing of pupils in appropriate education can also be legally established.



Measure 3: To develop monitoring strategies, establishing a comprehensive accountability and evaluation framework for inclusive education

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>3.1 Policy describes clear mechanisms to evaluate effectiveness and quality in inclusive education.</p>	<p>3.1.1 The Inspectorate of Education assesses the quality of education of the individual educational institutes (schools) and the education system as a whole in the Netherlands and its developments. It also stimulates schools and educational institutions to maintain and improve the quality of education they offer.</p> <p>3.1.2 The Government Accounts Act states that ministers are responsible for periodically examining the effectiveness and effectiveness of policy. An evaluation programme has been set up for the implementation of the Act on Suitable Education / Education that Fits policy.</p>
<p>3.2 Monitoring procedures ensure that inequalities in access to educational resources at regional or organisational levels are addressed.</p>	<p>3.2.1 The Inspectorate checks whether regional school alliances carry out the tasks assigned to them. They also have a coherent set of support facilities within and between schools, so that all pupils who require extra support are given the most suitable place in education. (Inspectorate of Education Research Frameworks (2017): <i>Onderzoekskader 2017 voor het toezicht op de voorschoolse educatie en het primair onderwijs; Onderzoekskader 2017 voor het toezicht op het voortgezet onderwijs; Onderzoekskader 2017 voor het toezicht op (voortgezet) speciaal onderwijs</i>)</p> <p>The Inspectorate also checks whether the regional school alliance does everything possible to organise suitable support facilities for learners who need extra support. If extra support has been requested, the regional school alliance will process this application within the legally prescribed period. The regional school alliance promotes that all school-age learners who need extra support are enrolled in a school and actually attend education. Where necessary, it involves chain partners.</p> <p>Finally, the Inspectorate checks whether the regional school alliance achieves the results as described in the support plan. The regional school alliance has involved the regional context in defining its goals. The regional school alliance ensures network consultations with the municipalities and educational institutions in the region, and has agreements that lead to appropriate educational (youth care) arrangements.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>3.2.2 At the school level, the Inspectorate checks whether learners receive extra education, support and guidance as needed. For pupils who need structural educational support at a different level to their age group, the school must offer suitable education support and/or guidance, based on the capabilities of the pupils concerned. The education, support and/or guidance must be aimed at the continuous development of the learner. The school must periodically evaluate whether the support has the desired effect and adjusts the interventions if necessary.</p> <p>The school must have laid down in the school support profile what it means by extra support and what facilities the school can offer in addition to the level of basic support defined by the regional school alliance. For learners who need this extra support, the school must record in the development perspective how education is tailored to the needs of the learner.</p> <p>The school must also co-operate with pre-school facilities and previous schools by exchanging information about pupils in disadvantaged situations and ensuring education is an on-going learning process. At the end of the school period and when learners leave before the end of the school period, the school informs the parents and the secondary school about the learners' development.</p> <p>For pupils with an additional need for support, the school co-operates with the regional school alliance and, if necessary, with care partners. The school implements agreements from the Local Educational Agenda (municipalities) and with regard to early childhood education.</p>
<p>3.3 Accountability measures that impact upon educational professionals' work reflect the importance of wider learner achievements.</p>	<p>3.3.1 The Inspectorate checks the quality assurance within the regional school alliances. The regional school alliance must have formulated goals based on its social mission and improve the performance of its duties based on regular and systematic evaluation of the achievement of those goals.</p> <p>3.3.2 There is also quality assurance on the school board and school level, which the Inspectorate evaluates. The board provides a system of quality assurance at the schools. This system is detailed in the school's plan. From this system, the board monitors and promotes the quality of the learning process and the learning outcomes.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>The board and the schools have insight into the quality of education. Testable goals have been formulated and there is a regular evaluation of whether these goals are being achieved. The causes of any inadequate quality of education are analysed and, where necessary, improvements are targeted. The division of responsibilities between administration and schools makes a functioning system of quality assurance possible.</p>
<p>3.4 Policy outlines common standards for service and provision evaluation for use across health, education and social services.</p>	<p>3.4.1 The support plan of the regional school alliance will not be established until consultations have been held with the relevant municipality or municipalities on a draft of the plan and consultations have been held within the regional school alliance. Consultation with the municipality takes place in accordance with a procedure established by the regional school alliance and mayor and aldermen of that municipality or municipalities. The procedure contains a provision for settling disputes. (WVO, art. 18a, lid 9; WVO, art. 17a, lid 9)</p> <p>3.4.2 The Inspectorate checks whether the regional school alliance achieves the results as described in the support plan. The regional school alliance has involved the regional context in defining its goals. The regional school alliance ensures network consultations with the municipalities and educational institutions in the region within it, and thus has agreements that lead to appropriate educational (youth care) arrangements.</p> <p>3.4.3 At the school level, the Inspectorate checks whether the school co-operates with the regional school alliance and, if necessary, with care partners. The school implements agreements from the Local Educational Agenda (municipalities) and with regard to early childhood education.</p>
<p>3.5 Policy outlines how to involve families in the process of evaluating quality of services.</p>	<p>3.5.1 The board of the regional school alliance is accountable to the internal supervisor, the government and the stakeholders in accordance with the legal regulations and agreed guidelines. The board has organised counterparts, informs its environment and, among other things, accounts for the results in an annual report that is accessible to all involved. The board consults periodically with the support plan council (including parent representatives) and, if applicable, the staff section of the participation council. It submits decisions in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. (Inspectorate of Education Research Frameworks (2017): <i>Onderzoekskader 2017 voor het toezicht op de voorschoolse educatie en het primair onderwijs</i>;</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p><i>Onderzoekskader 2017 voor het toezicht op het voortgezet onderwijs; Onderzoekskader 2017 voor het toezicht op (voortgezet) speciaal onderwijs)</i></p> <p>3.5.2 School boards and schools also have organised counterparts by involving parents and staff in policy and decision-making. The board and the schools report at least annually on their goals and the results they achieve. They do this in an accessible manner. The board reports to the internal supervisor. The board and schools are accountable to the government and stakeholders.</p> <p>3.5.3 On an individual level, parents are involved with their children’s development at school. For every learner that receives extra support, schools are obliged to provide an individual development plan. This describes the expected outflow and educational objectives for that pupil. It indicates the level the pupil can achieve and the support that they will need to achieve it. The parents have to agree with the development plan (WPO, art. 40a, lid 5)</p>
<p>3.6 Policy describes mechanisms to evaluate demand for services.</p>	<p>3.6.1 Regional school alliances must prepare a regional support plan every four years. In it, they describe how they develop a comprehensive offer to support all pupils in the region.</p> <p>3.6.2 Schools are obliged to describe the support they offer pupils with special needs in a ‘school support profile’ (<i>schoolondersteuningsprofiel</i>) every four years. School development and teacher training in special educational needs are based on this profile. In this profile schools not only describe what support they can offer pupils with special educational needs, but also the regular support they offer for pupils with dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD and gifted pupils. The document contents future aims as well: the profile the school would like to grow into and what is necessary to achieve this. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>3.7 Policy supports opportunities for school teams to evaluate their practice through involvement in research and development activities.</p>	<p>3.7.1 The Ministry funds a practice oriented research and development programme, 'Behaviour and Education that Fits'. Consortia of scientists and schools can call for a grant to conduct a 2–3 year research programme. It must provide concrete and useful products with which schools can renew and improve their practice.</p> <p>3.7.2 The Ministry also funds a support organisation, which helps regional school alliances, school boards and schools with the implementation of the Education that Fits policy. This organisation offers, for example, a scan to assist schools in evaluating the progress of Education that Fits. For school boards, a self-evaluation tool and a peer-learning visitation programme have been developed.</p> <p>3.7.3 Within a wider context, the Ministry funds the Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO). The NRO contributes to innovation and improvements in education by co-ordinating and funding educational research and facilitating the connections between educational practice and research.</p> <p>The focus is on education research: whether that examines the class (processes and learning outcomes), school (organisation and effectiveness) or the whole of the Netherlands (education and society). The NRO encourages and facilitates the dissemination of all knowledge emerging from research into educational practice.</p>

Measure 3 evaluative comments

The Evaluation programme is a long term research programme, which started in 2015 and continues until 2020. Seven research institutes/universities are involved. The focus of the research is on the impact of the 'Education that Fits' policy programme on educational practice. It involves primary and secondary education, special education and upper-secondary vocational education. Several quantitative and qualitative methods are combined: monitors, case studies, thematic studies and longitudinal case studies and surveys.

The active agreement of parents with the individual development plan was not regulated at first. Later it was recorded by law at the request of parliament.



Measure 4: To improve the cost-effectiveness of the education system, combining efficiency, effectiveness, equity and inclusion

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>4.1 National level inclusive education strategies are linked to long-term financial support.</p>	<p>4.1.1 Education, including special needs education, is financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Local authorities contribute to educational facilities such as school housing. The Ministry of Health contributes to health and welfare costs in education (through the learners rather than through the schools) (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Financing of inclusive education systems).</p> <p>4.1.2 With the introduction of the Appropriate Education Act (Education that Fits) in 2014, regional school alliances were formed by school boards in primary and secondary education. From that moment on, regional school alliances were provided with funding for special needs education (both learners and schools) by the Ministry. Part of this funding is allocated directly to school boards, which in turn allocate the resources to special schools. This can be considered as more general funding for special schools, comparable to the general resources allocated to mainstream schools (FPIES).</p> <p>4.1.3 Regional school alliances are funded based on the total number of learners registered at the schools within the alliance. The funding has a personnel and a material component (buildings, learner materials). The funding based on learners in special education is allocated directly to special schools. The remaining budget is for SEN support in mainstream education, or other facilities or professionals. To ensure that admittance to special education is not the easiest route, there is a maximum percentage learners in special schools for which regional school alliances are funded. If they want to place more learners in special education, however, the school boards must pay for those learners themselves.</p>
<p>4.2 Funding policies and structures provide flexible resourcing systems that promote inclusion.</p>	<p>4.2.1 The Constitution places public and private schools on an equal footing. It means that public and private education are equally funded. Primary and secondary education are free, and parents do not have to pay a tuition fee. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>4.2.2 Although most private schools are funded by the government, a small number of schools are privately funded. The number of learners in private, non-government-funded primary education (ISCED 1) is marginal (0.3%). In general secondary education (ISCED 2/3), a small number of learners are enrolled in</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>non-government-funded private education (3.4%). (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>4.2.3 Since August 2006, a weighting system to fund schools with learners with (potential) educational disadvantages has taken effect for primary education. In 2019, the weighting system was updated and is now based on five criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the educational level of both parents;• the mother’s country of origin;• the duration of the mother’s stay in the Netherlands;• the average educational level of all the mothers in the school;• whether parents are participating in a debt restructuring programme (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy) <p>4.2.4 The other part of funding provided to the regional school alliances by the Ministry of Education contains the former individual budgets for pupils with an official decision of SEN (‘backpack financing’). Regional school alliances must decide how to divide the remaining part of the budget, for example between special schools, mainstream schools, individual or group-based arrangements, special facilities, teacher support, etc. Every four years, the regional school alliances write a Regional Support Plan, in which they introduce their (financial) policy to support the learners with special educational needs within the region.</p> <p>4.2.5 There are various ways for regional school alliances to allocate their budgets, but roughly three models can be differentiated: the school model, the expertise model and the learner model.</p> <p>In the first model, regional school alliances allocate the resources for inclusive education directly to school boards (which allocate them to schools), based on the learner ratio per school or school board. In the second model, the resources are allocated to a network of services, and often special educational needs specialists are employed by the regional school alliance. In the third model the regional school alliance</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>maintains the individual budgets. Schools, both mainstream and special, can apply for individual arrangements. Research shows that regional school alliances mostly use a combination of these models.</p> <p>4.2.6 Children of newcomers to the Netherlands, such as asylum seekers, often have language difficulties at school. They need effective coaching, for instance through specially designed programmes. Schools with at least four registered pupils in this category can apply for extra funding. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Financing of inclusive education systems)</p> <p>4.2.7 Secondary schools can obtain extra (throughput) funding if they have a relatively high proportion (between 30% and 65%) of pupils from deprived neighbourhoods. This funding enables schools to tackle educational disadvantage and prevent school drop-out. Schools can receive extra funding to ensure that recently-arrived immigrant pupils learn Dutch quickly. The size of the grant depends on how long the pupils have already been living in the Netherlands. The school chooses how to spend the extra funding and selects the most suitable type of education for the new pupil. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Financing of inclusive education systems)</p> <p>4.2.8 For immigrant pupils who have been in the Netherlands for less than a year, schools can apply for extra (throughput) funding. The money provides extra language training for a full school year. In order to engage extra staff and set up special teaching programmes, schools can obtain a one-off grant of EUR 16,000. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Financing of inclusive education systems)</p> <p>4.2.9 For learners who are in pre-vocational education and are lagging behind with language and/or arithmetic (identified by a test) additional budgets are available. Since 2016 the regional school have alliances distributed these budgets based on the number of pupils who are lagging behind. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Financing of inclusive education systems)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>4.3 There are long-term funding commitments to support collaborative initiatives between various school-based, resource centre and research teams.</p>	<p>4.3.1 With the introduction of the Appropriate Education Act in 2014, regional school alliances were formed by school boards in primary and secondary education. Schools for mainstream and special education (clusters 3 and 4) participate in the regional school alliances together (WPO, art. 18a, lid 2; WVO, art. 17a, lid 2). Co-operation is therefore stimulated. The Ministry provides regional school alliances with the funding for special needs education. Part of this funding is allocated directly to school boards, which in turn allocate the resources to special schools.</p> <p>The other part of the funding that the Ministry of Education provides to the regional school alliances contains the former individual budgets for pupils with an official decision of SEN ('backpack financing'). The school alliances decide whether to maintain the individual budgets or provide the budget to mainstream or special schools, or to other services (throughput funding), or both. (Financing Policies for Inclusive Education Systems (FPIES) – Netherlands country report)</p> <p>4.3.2 Traditionally, the Netherlands have several schools which are attached to pedagogical institutions (expertise centres/schools specialised in supporting learners with behavioural disorders). These PI schools are part of the regional school alliances in their region. They also work together in a national network to exchange and disseminate knowledge and experiences of supporting learners with behavioural disorders.</p> <p>4.3.3 In 2014, the schools for clusters 1 and 2 worked together in national resource centres. From there, they supported learners in special schools, or outpatient counsellors supported learners in mainstream schools. Cluster 1 and cluster 2 centres are funded directly by the Ministry of Education and allocate the funding to the special schools themselves or via learner arrangements to the mainstream schools.</p> <p>4.3.4 In 2018, legislation was introduced to stimulate fusions of special and mainstream schools. Over a period of four years, special and mainstream schools can integrate their school organisation and classes, and become one school organisation. During the experimental period, the schools continue to receive funds for both schools. After four years, they must decide on an organisational fusion and new funding, based on a single school organisation.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
4.4 Policy outlines mechanisms for systematic data collection on expenditure and implementation that informs cost-effectiveness issues.	4.4.1 The law states that regional school alliances have to adopt an annual report, including financial statements (WPO, art. 171) and send this to the Inspectorate. Regional school alliances have to provide information on their core activities and the main parts of their policy.

Measure 4 evaluative comments

Due to regional educational assessment procedures (instead of a nationwide procedure) and autonomy on budget for the regional school alliances, a distinction between pupils with and without special educational needs in mainstream education can no longer be made. Important data for evaluating the effectiveness of the system at a national level is thus missing.

In theory, the annual report should have all the information needed to know how schools, school boards and regional school alliances are spending their budget, whether it is cost-effective and if the budget is adequate. However, this is not the case. Many regional school alliances transfer the majority, or a large share, of their budget directly to the school boards. The school boards should either indicate to the school alliances how they have spent that budget, or indicate it in their own annual report, but only few do so.

In order to stimulate more open and transparent processes of accountability within regional school alliances, the Ministry subsidises the development of an 'accountability dashboard'. Regional school alliances can benchmark their own results on input, throughput and output indicators with other alliances. ([FPIES – Netherlands country report](#))



Measure 5: To increase participation in good quality inclusive early childhood education and care and enrolment rates in pre-school education

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>5.1 Policy clearly respects the rights and the needs of children and their families.</p>	<p>5.1.1 Day care facilities must have a parent committee. Parent committees maintain and improve the quality of day care in collaboration with the day care facility. The parent committee therefore maintains contact with the parents, the organisation and the Municipal Health Service.</p>
<p>5.2 Support is available for families to recognise and understand the needs of their child.</p> <p><i>(Support focuses upon what is in the child's best interests.)</i></p>	<p>5.2.1 When a new-born child is registered in a municipality, the consultation centre contacts the parents. The Municipal Health Service doctor and district nurse monitor the child's growth and development. They examine height, weight, eyes and ears; provide information about health, care and parenting; give vaccinations against childhood diseases; refer the child to a doctor, specialist or youth care if necessary.</p>
<p>5.3 Policy outlines how ECI services should be provided for children and families as early as possible and as quickly as possible, following identification of need.</p>	<p>5.3.1 There is no formal educational provision for children under the age of four, but various childcare facilities are available outside the education system. There is no legal curriculum for children aged 0–4. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy). The Compulsory Education Act states that children aged 5–16 are obliged to attend school on a regular basis. However, most children attend school (kindergarten in primary schools) from the age of 4.</p> <p>5.3.2 The following organised facilities are available for 0–4-year-olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-schools: an increasing number of former playgroups (now day nurseries, see 5.5.1) offer development stimulation programmes and have a more educational focus. These so-called 'pre-schools' are particularly intended for children (2.5–3 years old) from disadvantaged backgrounds (children from parents with low levels of education and a risk of language disadvantages). The central aim is to prevent and mitigate educational deficiencies, particularly in the domain of language development. The Dutch Government recently (2017) decided to invest



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>EUR 170 million per year extra into early childhood education. (Eurydice – Key Data on Early Childhood and Care in Europe (2019), p. 185)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day nurseries: day nurseries cater for children aged from six weeks to four years. Their main function is to care for children to allow parents to work. They provide daily care for children and opportunities to meet and play with other children. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy) <p>5.3.3 For younger children (aged 4–6), there are guidelines which include goals to be achieved by the end of kindergarten. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>5.3.4 Young children aged 0–7 with severe development impairments, due to mental, physical or social problems, can attend a medical day care facility. Parents are eligible for reimbursement for this facility. The medical support team composes an individual development plan for the child and also supports the parents. The larger academic hospitals also provide an education facility. In smaller hospitals or at home, children are supported by ambulatory teachers or the school counselling service. From the age of 7, children with severe impairments can attend a special school. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision)</p>
5.4 Policy states that in risk situations, the child’s rights should come first.	–
5.5 Policy measures and guidelines clearly define quality standards for early childhood services and provision.	<p>5.5.1 Recently, new legislation has entered into force which includes rules about the quality of both day nurseries and (former) playgroups. The child-staff ratio for baby care has been lowered to one carer per three children. There is also a greater focus on child development. All children are assigned a mentor. All day nursery and playgroup staff must be fluent in Dutch and meet minimum language proficiency standards. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>5.6 Early childhood guidance is developed jointly by departments of health, education and social services.</p>	<p>5.6.1 Childcare facilities as a policy area fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy). The Ministry of Education provides funding for municipalities to maintain pre-school education.</p> <p>5.6.2 The Ministry of Education also provides funding for a regional support programme for all municipalities, in order to maintain and raise the quality of pre-school facilities.</p>
<p>5.7 Policy for early childhood services supports cross sectoral, multi-disciplinary working at regional and local levels.</p>	<p>5.7.1 The policy on support for disadvantaged pupils (<i>Kansen gelijkheidsbeleid</i>) requires municipalities to draw up a local educational agenda together with school boards and childcare providers. In the local agenda, school boards, local municipalities and childcare providers discuss and decide how to combat educational disadvantages and avoid segregation in education. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision)</p>
<p>5.8 Policy ensures there are pre-school places offered to children coming from ECI services/provision.</p>	<p>5.8.1 An increasing number of playgroups offer development stimulation programmes and have a more educational focus. These so-called ‘pre-schools’ (VVE) are particularly intended for children (2.5–3 years old) from disadvantaged backgrounds (children from parents with low levels of education and a risk of language disadvantages). Their central aim is to prevent and mitigate educational deficiencies, particularly in the domain of language development.</p> <p>5.8.2 Municipalities determine which children are eligible for VVE. This is usually done through the consultation office. They then give a child a ‘VVE indication’. Municipalities are also responsible for good locations for pre-school education.</p> <p>5.8.3 The Ministry of Education provides funding for municipalities to maintain pre-school education. From 2020, every municipality with one child in the target group receives sufficient resources to offer a group of eight children pre-school education for 16 hours per week.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
5.9 Policy outlines how cost-free services/provision are made available for families.	5.9.1 When there is a VVE indication by the consultation office, the municipality generally pays a (large) part of the costs for pre-school education. In most situations parents pay a small parental contribution. For parents who are not entitled to childcare allowance, this parental contribution is often calculated on the basis of income. The level of the parental contribution varies per municipality; there are no national guidelines for this.
5.10 Policy ensures the same quality of service irrespective of differences in geographical location. <i>(Such as isolated or rural areas).</i>	5.10.1 Facilities for early childhood and care are available in all parts of the Netherlands, irrespective of the geographical location.

Measure 5 evaluative comments

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Measure 6: To improve student-focused measures such as mentoring, personalised learning approaches and improved guidance

Agency recommendation	Findings
6.1 High expectations for all learners' achievements underpin policy for inclusive education.	6.1.1 Primary and lower-secondary education have core objectives for all learners, including those in special education. In upper-secondary education (general and pre-vocational), learners take central exams and school-based exams.



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>6.1.2 This is also the case in secondary special education for pupils who are on the ‘further education’ track. Pupils in the other two tracks in upper-secondary (labour market and day care) have core objectives based on the core objectives for mainstream education. There are more transcending core objectives aimed at preparation for labour market or daily activities.</p> <p>6.1.3 For every learner that receives extra support, schools are obliged to provide an individual development plan, which describes the expected outflow and educational objectives for that pupil. It indicates the level the pupil can achieve and the support that they will need to achieve it. The parents have to agree with the development plan.</p>
<p>6.2 Policy outlines that learners’ voices should be listened to in decision-making that affects them.</p>	<p>6.2.1 According to the law, pupils must be represented in the participation council of a secondary (special) school, alongside parents (WMS, art. 3, lid 3b). Schools are not obliged to install a (exclusive) student council.</p> <p>6.2.2 In the support plan council of the regional school alliance, half of the seats are reserved for parents and/or learners (WMS, art. 4a, lid 2).</p> <p>6.2.3 On a personal level, many schools involve pupils in the process of formulating an individual development plan. The law states that parents must agree with the individual development plan (WPO, art. 40; WVO, art. 26). It is currently being investigated how the (right of) hearing of pupils in appropriate education can also be legally established.</p>
<p>6.3 Teaching, support and guidance has the goal of empowering all learners.</p>	<p>6.3.1 The content of the curriculum must be adjusted to different learning needs of pupils and must be evenly and coherently distributed over the school years (WPO, art. 8, lid 1). This also means that structural and recognisable attention must be paid to combating disadvantages in all areas of education, including arithmetic and in particular the Dutch language (WPO, art. 8, lid 11). The school prepares the pupils for the start of further education (WPO, art. 2). It follows from the requirement for continuous progress in the development of pupils that the school must logically phase or build up, ascending levels in a manner that is appropriate to the age of the learner.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>6.4 Appropriate educational support is available as necessary and is fit for purpose in meeting personal learning needs.</p>	<p>6.4.1 When a pupil needs extra educational support, the school is obliged to investigate the needs of the pupil and construct a suitable education programme. This might lead to an assessment procedure for admittance to special education. In both mainstream and special education, schools have to provide an individual development plan, which describes the expected outflow and educational objectives for that pupil. It indicates the level the pupil can achieve and the support that they will need to achieve it.</p> <p>6.4.2 The school is expected to offer a certain number of hours of education that every learner can use. However, this does not mean that all of these hours must be followed by every learner. Tailor-made teaching time is possible for individual learners and can be arranged at school level. Approval of the inspection is only required with regard to a specific group of learners who are temporarily or partially unable to attend school for physical or psychological reasons.</p> <p>6.4.3 The law makes it possible for pupils in mainstream education to follow part of the education at a school for special education. The time during which the pupil receives this education counts as teaching time. It is also possible for pupils in special education to attend mainstream education for a certain amount of time.</p>
<p>6.5 The learning process is based on flexible curricula based on learner centred approaches and the development and implementation of individual learning plans as necessary.</p>	<p>6.5.1 The curriculum in the Netherlands is for all learners, including those in special education. It consists of four things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core objectives indicate what subjects should be taught for the eight years of primary education and two to three years of lower-secondary education (pre-vocational and general). • Reference levels indicate what level children should achieve at the end of primary school and the end of each school type in secondary education. These levels apply to language and arithmetic.



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="712 311 2056 459">• A compulsory test for all children in the highest grade of primary education: this is not an exam that has to be passed, but rather a measure of language and arithmetic levels. It also provides the school and child with advice for the type of secondary education in the upcoming school year. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)<li data-bbox="712 483 2056 555">• At the end of upper-secondary school (pre-vocational and general), learners take central exams and school-based exams. <p data-bbox="663 579 2056 890">6.5.2 The freedom of education is, however, limited by the qualitative standards set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in educational legislation. These qualitative standards – core objectives – refer to <i>what</i> needs to be taught and studied in both public and private primary, secondary and special education: a global method of educational programming. Freedom of education gives schools the right to decide <i>how to</i> translate global frameworks into specific education. On a national level the number of instructional hours is prescribed, although schools are free to decide where they want to set quantitative accents in their educational programming. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p data-bbox="663 914 2056 1066">6.5.3 Schools are obliged to provide an individual development plan, which describes the expected outflow and educational objectives for that pupil. It indicates the level the pupil can achieve and the support that they will need to achieve it. The parents have to agree with the development plan. The plan must be evaluated and if necessary adjusted at least once a year.</p>

Measure 6 evaluative comments

An upcoming [curriculum reform](#) in the Netherlands focuses on integrating subjects into core domains and a better transfer from primary to lower-secondary education.



The quality of special needs education, both in mainstream and special schools, is an important policy ambition. Pupils with special needs should have equal chances for further education or a position in society and/or the labour market as their peers without special needs. In 2012, the Act on Quality (Secondary) Special Education took effect.

Like mainstream schools, schools for (secondary) special education have core objectives/attainment targets. These objectives are developed for all the specific groups within (secondary) special education. They give a global curricular description of the education programme for each profile. Schools are responsible for making these global curricular descriptions concrete in school and further in the classrooms.

In secondary special schools, pupils can take the same examinations as in mainstream secondary education. More than 95% of the pupils that take examinations pass; that percentage is higher than the average in mainstream education. Pupils with special needs in both mainstream and special education have higher marks than their peers in mainstream education. (European Agency, [Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision](#))

Measure 7: To improve the school ethos (such as the creation of supportive learning environments, adapting learning environments to specific learning needs)

Agency recommendation	Findings
7.1 Policy supports school leaders to value diversity among staff as well as learners, encourage collegiality and support innovation.	–
7.2 Policy outlines the responsibility of school leaders to effectively communicate their vision for inclusive education to the school teaching team and wider school community.	–



Agency recommendation	Findings
7.3 Policy aims to ensure the recruitment of teaching staff from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities.	–
7.4 Policy supports schools to ensure teaching staff are able to meet diverse learning needs. <i>(Teaching staff have competence and expertise to develop individual plans, implement learner-centred approaches and support learners in personalised learning.)</i>	7.4.1 Teacher professionalisation at the national level is supported by a programme called Teachers' Agenda 2013–2020 (<i>De Lerarenagenda 2013 – 2020</i>). One of the targets is for all teachers to have skills and competence to adapt their lessons to their learner's different needs by 2020. To reach that target, teachers can apply for a scholarship (<i>de Lerarenbeurs</i>) which many applicants use to obtain a Master's in Special Educational Needs.
7.5 The school ethos and culture is guided by school strategic plans that have high expectations for the academic and social achievements of all learners.	7.5.1 The core objectives (see also 6.5) provide a description of pupils' qualities in terms of knowledge, insight and skills with regard to the educational activities. The description of the educational policy of the school shows whether the educational programme is in accordance with the requirements of the core objectives.
7.6 School strategic plans describe how universal design for learning approaches are used to provide individualised learning tools and opportunities.	–



Agency recommendation	Findings
7.7 School strategic plans stipulate that all learners are entitled to be active participants in the life of the school and community.	–
7.8 School strategic plans have clear statements on the value of diversity.	–
7.9 School strategic plans describe mechanisms for shared leadership, teamwork and collaborative problem solving.	–

Measure 7 evaluative comments

At a national level, the Ministry of Education supports the important role of the school leader by:

- making funds available for professionalisation in sector agreements in primary, secondary and vocational education and in the lump sum;
- conducting research;
- supporting the school leader registers in primary and secondary education;
- making funds available for the school leaders' academy in secondary education;
- supporting the school leaders 'tops' in primary and secondary education. ([School Inspectorate](#))



Measure 8: To reduce the negative effects of early tracking (the early streaming of pupils by ability into different types of provision or schools) and to reduce the extensive use of grade retention¹

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>8.1 Legislation across relevant public sectors has the goal of ensuring educational services enhance developments and processes working towards equity in inclusive education.</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>8.2 Policy outlines how support structures that impact upon inclusive education are diverse and easily available.</p> <p><i>(Support structures prevent early tracking and streaming of pupils at an early age).</i></p>	<p>8.2.1 In 2014, the Education that Fits policy was launched. An important aim is to improve the realisation of education for every pupil with SEN within the education system. The policy arose from the need and desire to improve care for learners with special needs, to streamline the provisions for special needs education that each had their own funding and procedures, and to prevent learners getting lost between systems. Under this policy, every school board is responsible for providing adequate education for every pupil that enrolls, regardless of their specific educational needs and the kind of support that they need. By co-operating with other school boards at a regional level, within regional school alliances, schools are required to arrange educational provisions in such a way that every learner can be educated taking into account their special educational needs. Schools are free to decide on how arrangements are offered.</p> <p>Some important features of the Education that Fits policy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no learner left behind: school boards are responsible for providing an adequate place in the education system for every learner;

¹ Early tracking means the early streaming of pupils by abilities into different types of provision or school; this includes placing children into separate schools.

The extensive use of grade retention means holding students back to repeat school years, instead of providing flexible individual support.



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-operation between boards of different school types, including primary education, secondary education, vocational education and special education; • co-operation between schools and other organisations and institutions responsible for the care and well-being of children (health organisations, youth care, etc.); • participation of all stakeholders (school board, management, teachers and parents). (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision)
<p>8.3 Assessment mechanisms are in place to identify the support needs of learners at an early stage.</p>	<p>8.3.1 Since the introduction of the Education that Fits policy in 2014, the regional school alliances have their own educational assessment procedures (instead of a nationwide procedure). The outcome of the assessment procedure can lead to a declaration of admission in a special school. The declaration of admission is valid for at least a year. The regional school alliance sets the criteria for duration and review of the declaration. The decision about the declaration is made by a multidisciplinary team. The law requires two experts to be involved in the assessment procedure. One of the experts has to be a special education generalist or a psychologist, the other expert is chosen by the school or the regional school alliance. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Assessment within inclusive education systems)</p> <p>8.3.2 The big difference in how pupils are assessed now compared to pre-2014 is that previously assessment mainly described the impairment of pupils and, as a result, their incapacities. The current situation provides a description that shows the pupil’s capabilities and the support they need in order to be successful. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Assessment within inclusive education systems)</p> <p>8.3.3 Schools can detect delays in the development of learners from early on, for example with tests, observations by teachers and learner monitoring systems. If it appears that the learner has a learning problem the school can, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • align the curriculum with the learning problem;



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help the learner to organise their agenda; • guide the learner with their homework; • offer books and tests in extra-large letters; • let the learner work in a small group with learners of the same level. <p>The school can also offer remedial teaching for dyslexia, dyscalculia or behavioural problems.</p> <p>8.3.4 When mainstream schools cannot offer the support that is needed for the learner (with or without the help of professionals from the regional school alliance), the learner may apply for a position in a special education setting (see also 8.3.1)</p>
<p>8.4 Data is available relating to learners' rights to age appropriate education.</p>	<p>8.4.1 The Executive Agency for Education monitors learner 'flows' throughout their educational careers. This data indicates the types of education learners attend at what age level and at what age level they transfer to another school type. In special education, learners are allowed to stay a little bit longer in school before transferring to the next level of education or labour market or day time activities than in mainstream education.</p>

Measure 8 evaluative comments

In Volume II of the PISA 2015 result, the OECD wrote about the extensive early tracking system in the Netherlands (box II.5.2). It concluded that the education system for early tracking is well-structured and well-resourced. It includes various opportunities on learners' paths through education to correct some obvious socio economic imbalances, starting from early childhood all the way up to tertiary education.

In the transfer from primary to secondary education, equity is stimulated by an objective final test that learners take at the end of grade 6. From the 2019–2020 school year on, this test is also mandatory for learners in 'mainstream plus' and special schools. The final test shows which type of secondary education suits the learner and is an addition to the school advice that a learner receives. If the test recommendation is higher than the school recommendation, the primary school always reconsiders the school recommendation. In consultation with the learner and their parents, the school can then adjust the advice upwards, but that is not mandatory.



Secondary schools, on the other hand, cannot take additional tests to determine the level of the learners. The admission school may not rely on other tests that learners take at primary school (for example tests of the pupil tracking system or an IQ test). The primary school does, however, take this data into account when making school recommendations for secondary education.

Measure 9: To support improvement in schools with lower educational outcomes

Agency recommendation	Findings
9.1 Clear mechanisms exist to identify schools with lower educational outcomes. ²	<p>9.1.1 In 2017, the Inspectorate renewed the supervision of schools. In short, the new supervision means that the Inspectorate no longer only visits all schools, but begins its supervision with school boards, every four years. The board must show how it has arranged quality assurance for its schools. The school plan forms the starting point. The Inspectorate then checks at a number of schools whether the findings of the board match their findings.</p> <p>The Inspectorate assesses general educational and financial quality standards ('soundness requirements') regulated at the level of the law. These include educational process, school climate, school results/educational outcomes, quality assurance and financial management. The Inspectorate also assesses quality standards that are set by the schools and boards themselves, in order to stimulate a more ambitious learning culture within schools.</p> <p>If the board does not have quality assurance in order or, for example, a school runs the risk of becoming 'insufficient' or 'very weak', the Inspectorate will visit the relevant school(s) more extensively (see 9.2). The standard for basic quality is that a board and its schools meet the soundness requirements with regard to the quality of education (including educational outcomes), quality assurance and financial management. The inspectorate can conclude that a school is of basic quality, 'insufficient' or 'very weak'.</p>

² This recommendation does not directly come from the Agency work covered in the CPRA activities. A number of project recommendations have implicitly, but not explicitly referred to this issue. However, the piloting work and detailed discussions with PG countries showed it is necessary to have this explicit recommendation linked to this measure.



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>9.2 Policy outlines how methods of assessment, inspections and other accountability measures contribute to school improvement processes.</p> <p><i>(Accountability measures support inclusive practice and inform further improvement of provision for all learners.)</i></p>	<p>9.2.1 The outcome of the four-yearly survey of the Inspectorate (see 9.1) determines what the follow-up supervision of the board and schools looks like. Follow-up supervision occurs when the education Inspectorate determines that something needs to be repaired or improved. If everything is in order they will, in principle, visit the board again after four years.</p> <p>When determining follow-up supervision, the Inspectorate looks at the specific situation at the board or school (e.g. the number of schools under management, the size of the schools, the development of quality and quality assurance, the seriousness of any shortcomings and risks, and the monitoring history). In other words, the follow-up supervision is tailor-made.</p> <p>9.2.2 If the Inspectorate finds shortcomings at a board or a school, they can take measures (apply interventions) to have the shortcoming repaired. These measures vary from giving a warning or repair order to withholding part of the funding in the most extreme cases. Shortcomings are always about non-compliance with laws and regulations.</p>
<p>9.3 Policy aims to increase the capacity of all schools to meet a greater diversity of needs and support learners within their local communities.</p> <p><i>(Schools are supported to use innovative teaching methods, practical learning approaches and individual plans, focusing on learners' capabilities.)</i></p>	<p>–</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>9.4 Policy outlines clear incentives for schools to take all learners from their local community.</p>	<p>9.4.1 Since 2014, every school board has been responsible for providing adequate education for every pupil that enrolls, regardless of their specific educational needs and the kind of support that they need. This is called a ‘duty of care’.</p> <p>The school investigates whether it can offer the right support within the school. If not, or if not without (financial) help, the school has to find another school that can. This can be a mainstream or special school. In the case of a special school, the local school must request a declaration of admittance to special education from the regional school alliance.</p> <p>9.4.2 Also since 2014, all regions in the Netherlands receive an equal amount of funding, relative to the number of pupils attending school. More than EUR 100 million is redistributed during a five-year period. This also means that a part of the regional school alliances is stimulated to reallocate the budget from special settings to mainstream settings and that more learners with special educational needs will attend mainstream or ‘mainstream plus’ schools in those regions. (FPIES – Netherlands country report)</p>
<p>9.5 Policy requires school strategic plans to outline preventive educational action against dropouts.</p> <p><i>(Including necessary measures so that learners who become disengaged find new educational alternatives.)</i></p>	<p>9.5.1 Combating early school leaving is a central policy priority. So is early detection of potential disadvantages among young children and increasing enrolment of children from underprivileged backgrounds, who are at risk of educational or language disadvantage, in pre-primary schools. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Systems of support and specialist provision)</p>

Measure 9 evaluative comments

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Measure 10: To improve the quality of school staff, focusing on the quality of teachers, quality in continuing professional development, developing teacher competences and reinforcing school leadership

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>10.1 Policy outlines how all school staff develops the skills to meet the diverse needs of all learners.</p> <p><i>(Appropriate training and professional development is provided to all school staff including teachers, support and administrative staff, counsellors, etc.).</i></p>	<p>10.1.1 The Dutch government has the constitutional duty to provide high-quality education to everybody. The Professions in Education Act (2004) states that educational staff – teachers, assisting staff members, school managers – must not only be qualified, but also competent. For this reason, sets of competences and requirements have been developed for teachers, and are being developed for assisting staff members and (primary) school managers. School boards are obliged to employ competent staff and subsequently enable them to keep their competences at a high level and further improve them. Teacher training colleges use these competences as a guideline for their educational programmes.</p> <p>10.1.2 There are three versions of competence requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• for teachers in primary education;• for teachers in secondary and vocational education;• for teachers in the last two classes of general upper-secondary education (HAVO) and the last three classes of pre-university education (VWO). <p>10.1.3 The differences between the three versions are only marginal. In fact, all Dutch teachers are required to have the same basic competences. The framework of competence requirements specifies four professional roles that teachers have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpersonal role• Pedagogical role• Organisational role• The role of an expert in subject matter and teaching methods.



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>10.1.4 The teacher fulfils these professional roles in four different situations, which are characteristic of a teacher's profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with learners; • working with colleagues; • working within the school environment; • working with themselves. <p>The latter refers to their own personal development. The framework specifies competence requirements for each role and in each situation. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Teacher education for inclusive education)</p>
<p>10.2 Policy supports the development of high quality and appropriately trained teacher educators.</p> <p><i>(With improvements in recruitment, induction and continuing professional development.)</i></p>	<p>10.2.1 Primary and secondary schools receive additional resources for the professionalisation and support of education staff, as part of an agreement between the Minister of Education, employers' and employees' associations. The agreement mainly aims to expand the possibilities for further development for teachers and other education staff within the school. The agreement contains arrangements about maintaining competency requirements and about training and professionalisation in relation to the Education Professions Act and the competency dossier. These arrangements have been further developed in the decentralised collective labour agreements.</p> <p>10.2.2 The Ministry stimulates teachers to obtain a (professional) master's degree, for example a Master's in SEN, by providing scholarships. With this scholarship, teachers can study for two days a week when (funding for) replacement is arranged. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Teacher education for inclusive education)</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>10.3 Policy supports flexible training opportunities in initial and continuing professional development, for all teachers.</p> <p><i>(Schools and teacher education institutions will work together to ensure good models in practice schools and appropriate placements for teaching practice.)</i></p>	<p>10.3.1 With the introduction of the Education that Fits policy, most teacher training colleges adapted their curricula on different subjects (educational science/pedagogy, didactics, subject matter and internships). Initial teacher education often includes an introduction to educating pupils with special needs. Some teacher training colleges also offer an optional course and/or minor in SEN. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Teacher education for inclusive education)</p> <p>10.3.2 Teacher professionalisation is an on-going process. It is supported by a national programme called Teachers’ Agenda 2013–2020. (<i>De Lerarenagenda 2013 – 2020</i>). One of the targets is for all teachers to have skills and competence to adapt their lessons to their learner’s different needs by 2020. To reach that target, teachers can apply for a scholarship (<i>de Lerarenbeurs</i>) which many applicants use to obtain a Master’s in Special Educational Needs. School leaders and teachers report that this master’s degree enables teachers to better analyse learners’ different needs and adapt their teaching to those needs (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Teacher education for inclusive education).</p>
<p>10.4 All teaching staff are supported and develop a clear understanding of effective learning strategies.</p> <p><i>(Such as learning to learn and active learning approaches.)</i></p>	<p>10.4.1 Another target of the Teachers’ Agenda 2013–2020 is that all teachers master the general didactic and differentiation skills. Several national programmes support the development of teachers’ skills. Many organisations in the education field are working together to ensure the programmes are a success.</p>
<p>10.5 Policy supports schools to develop strategic plans of staff training in inclusive education.</p>	<p>–</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
10.6 Policy outlines the specialised training pathways for specialists who support school communities to implement inclusive education.	10.6.1 Although supplementary training for teachers in special education is optional, most teachers in special education undertake two-year, part-time training. The course assumes the students are already working in education and focuses on both theory and practice. There are several specialist fields including visual impairments, behavioural problems, intellectual disability, remedial teaching and peripatetic teaching. Although not obligatory, a growing number of mainstream teachers have a Master’s certificate in Special Educational Needs. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Teacher education for inclusive education).
10.7 Policy supports research into the effectiveness of different routes into teaching. <i>(Including course organisation, content and pedagogy to best develop the competence of teachers to meet the diverse needs of all learners.)</i>	10.7.1 The Teachers’ Agenda 2013–2020 is accompanied by a research programme. The aim is to generate insights on how teachers can be supported best. The research programme contains seven themes: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Quality of prospective teacher training students2. Quality teacher training courses3. The routes to the teaching profession4. The starting teacher5. The school as a learning organisation6. Skilled and competent teachers7. A strong profession.



Measure 10 evaluative comments

At the moment, the Netherlands have a teacher shortage, which complicates the professional development of teachers. A special policy programme now aims to:

- increase the intake in teacher training;
- increase the inflow from other professions;
- keep teachers in education;
- ask people with a teacher qualification to transfer back to education;
- improve salary and career perspectives in education;
- organise schools and classes differently.

Measure 11: To improve transition from education to work by increasing the coherence between employment incentives, education and VET; improving the quality and accessibility of apprenticeships; promoting cross-sector co-operation; simplifying the systems of qualifications

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>11.1 Policy ensures that VET programmes should address labour market skill requirements.</p>	<p>The Dutch VET system is closely linked to the labour market.</p> <p>11.1.1 The Dutch VET system is competence based. For each course the targeted learning outcomes (competences) are stated in a qualification file. Each file consists of three types of subjects: basic, generic subjects; profession specific subjects; and subjects of choice (to further specialise or broaden a learner’s knowledge). It is mandatory to complete at least the basic and professional specific parts in order to obtain a diploma. Learners must also take subjects of choice, but they are not counted for graduation.</p> <p>11.1.2 The contents of the qualification file and the competences a learner needs to acquire are designed in close association with employers. Employers from the main labour market sectors, trade unions and VET schools are organised in sectoral boards, run by the Foundation for Co-operation on Vocational Education, Training and Labour Market (SBB). Together the sectors’ representatives discuss which future skills and</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>competences are needed and how they should be incorporated into the VET curriculum. They make up a proposal for the Minister of Education, who then decides whether or not to adjust the contents and requirements of the qualification files. The final step is implementation of the adjusted requirements into the daily education programmes of the VET institutions.</p> <p>11.1.3 The Dutch VET system is very practice-oriented. There are two learning pathways: the school-based pathway and the apprenticeship pathway. In both tracks learners spend a significant amount of time on work-based learning.</p> <p>In the school-based track, learners spend at least 20% of their study in practice (mainly through internships). They often go to school four days a week and take an internship at an employer for one day a week. In the apprenticeship track, it is the other way round: learners actually work as an employee for four days a week and go to school for one day a week.</p> <p>Because of these strong links to regional and local employers, learners learn both contemporary and future skills and competences that are needed by employers directly from practice.</p>
11.2 Policy aims at matching labour market skill requirements and learners' skills, wishes and expectations.	<p>11.2.1 Of all Dutch education branches, the upper-secondary vocational education (MBO) division is closest to the labour market. VET institutions (colleges) closely collaborate with local and regional employers. VET institutions often take part in regional economic boards. These boards discuss the contemporary and future regional economical and labour market needs. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>11.2.2 VET institutions are obliged (<i>Regeling Studie Bijsluiter MBO</i>) to make information available to learners for every vocational training track, with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• opportunities for work;• labour market position of graduates expressed as a percentage of employed people;• opportunities for internship or apprenticeship;



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starting salaries. <p>11.2.3 If finding a suitable practical training place for the VET institution is an obstacle, the institution or the learner can refer to the SBB's 'Workplace Shortage Reporting Point' for support from one of its advisers in practical training in the relevant institution or region.</p> <p>11.2.4 The Dutch universities of applied science (HBO/ISCED 6) are also relatively practice-oriented (an internship is mandatory for students), but they are less close to the labour market than the VET institutions.</p>
<p>11.3 Policy outlines the development of partnerships and networking structures.</p> <p><i>(Partnerships with a pool of local employes to ensure close co-operation with regard to learners' supervised practical training and finding employment after graduation.)</i></p>	<p>–</p>
<p>11.4 Policy outlines how transition from education to employment is supported by adequate provision.</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>11.5 Policy supports the availability of meaningful VET options for learners to choose from.</p>	<p>11.5.1 On average, learners are 12 years of age when they enter secondary education. In the 2018/2019 school year, there were 638 secondary schools that catered for 974,911 pupils. Secondary education encompasses schools providing pre-university education (VWO), general secondary education (HAVO), pre-vocational education (VMBO) and practical training (pro).</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<p>VMBO comprises four learning pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic pre-vocational programme (BL)• Middle management pre-vocational programme (KL)• Combined theoretical and pre-vocational programme (GL)• Theoretical programme (TL). (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy) <p>11.5.2 VMBO learners can receive additional support through learning support (lwoo). After VMBO, at an average age of 16, learners may transfer to upper-secondary vocational education (MBO). Those who have completed the theoretical programme can also choose to transfer to HAVO, which is intended as a preparation for higher professional education (hbo). VWO is intended to prepare learners for research-oriented education (university). In practice, however, VWO graduates also transfer to hbo. The school types differ in terms of duration of their programmes: VMBO takes four years, HAVO five years and VWO six years. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>11.5.3 After VMBO and HAVO, learners may transfer to upper-secondary vocational education (MBO). MBO comprises school-bound vocational training (BOL) or block or apprenticeship programmes with work components (BBL).</p> <p>VET courses are offered in four major sectors (economics, technology, agriculture and personal and social care/health care; which are in turn specialised into many fields) and the courses can be taken at four different qualification levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• assistant worker (entrance level/level 1)• basic vocational training (level 2)• professional training (level 3)



Agency recommendation	Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • middle management or specialist training (level 4). (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy) <p>11.5.4 Due to an increasing number of pupils in the period since the Expertise Centres Act was implemented and due to a lack of visible output in terms of qualification, primary and secondary special education were submitted to the Quality of (Secondary) Special Education Act. The main objectives of this Act were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to raise the achievements in (secondary) special education; • to augment educational quality in special education; • to ensure special schools draw up a developmental perspective plan for all pupils. In it, amongst other descriptions, a long term outflow destination is forecast and the specific needs and support are noted. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy) <p>11.5.5 Secondary special education is built up in three profiles connected to the outflow of the learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous education • Labour market • Daytime activities. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)
<p>11.6 Policy supports the availability of supervised practical training.</p>	<p>11.6.1 The central government encourages employers to offer practical apprenticeships and makes a financial contribution available for this through the Practical Learning subsidy regulation. This regulation runs through to 2023. Employers can receive compensation if they offer a place to learners (secondary education, secondary special education, practical training, MBO students following an apprenticeship programme with work components, or higher vocational education students) and for PhD students. The vast majority of the budget for the subsidy regulation goes to companies that offer MBO students a work placement.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
11.7 Policy outlines how sustainable employment opportunities are supported through the availability of appropriate, on-going support.	–
11.8 Policy outlines how VET programmes are reviewed periodically. <i>(Both internally and/or externally in order to adapt to current and future skill needs.)</i>	11.8.1 The adjustment of the qualification files is a recurring process. 11.8.2 The Efficiency in VET Act (2015) obliges VET institutions to keep their portfolio relevant to the regional labour market. That means that they are not allowed to offer courses with which graduates are not able to find relevant a relevant job in the region. They should also limit the number of students with specific qualifications, depending on the labour market perspective of those graduates. The Inspectorate for Education supervises compliance with this law. 11.8.3 The Inspectorate also visits the VET institutions every four years, or more often when necessary. In the judgements, efficiency, job chances and satisfaction of students and employers are considered.

Measure 11 evaluative comments

Via the system described in 11.1.2, the Dutch system attempts to ensure that the contents of VET courses are up-to-date to the needs and future challenges of the labour market. However, critics say that it still takes too much time to get the new content implemented in the actual educational programmes of the VET school and that the life cycle should be shortened.



Measure 12: To improve educational and career guidance across all phases of inclusive education

Agency recommendation	Findings
<p>12.1 Policy outlines the mechanisms for ensuring effective transition across educational sectors and phases.</p> <p><i>(There are well-organised transition processes among services to ensure continuity in the support required when learners move from one form of provision to another.)</i></p>	<p>12.1.1 Children must attend school full time for 12 full school years (from the age of five) and, in any event, until the end of the school year in which they turn sixteen. Since August 2007, the obligation to continue education to obtain a basic qualification has applied to young people under the age of 18 who have finished compulsory education but have not yet obtained a basic qualification certificate. They must achieve at least a diploma at general secondary (HAVO), pre-university (VWO) or vocational (MBO-2) level. (European Agency, Country information for the Netherlands – Legislation and Policy)</p> <p>To ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary education, learners have to take a final test at the end of grade 6. This final test shows which type of secondary education suits the learner. The final test is not an exam, learners cannot pass or fail the test. The test is an addition to the school recommendation about the type of secondary education. For example if the advice from the primary school is HAVO, but the learner wants to go to VWO (one level higher), the secondary school will place the learner in a HAVO or HAVO/VWO class, as the primary school suggested. If during the year the learner can go to the VWO level, the secondary school can advise the learner to do VWO level the next year.</p> <p>12.1.2 In order to create a smooth transition from pre-vocational education (VMBO) to upper-secondary vocational education (MBO) and to remove barriers, schools can offer one continuous VMBO-MBO learning route from 2020 onwards. In the case of a continuous learning route, schools offer a joint educational programme from upper-secondary vocational education up to and including vocational education diploma. Education can be deepened, enriched or accelerated during this route. The learning route can be provided at a VMBO and/or MBO school.</p> <p>12.1.3 From the 2019–2020 school year on, legislation was introduced to stimulate schools to experiment with mixed classes for practical training and pre-vocational education.</p>



Agency recommendation	Findings
	12.1.4 In secondary education, there are no legal rules that state how long a learner can take pre-vocational (VMBO), general upper-secondary (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO). Without delay the VMBO lasts four years, HAVO five years and VWO six years. As a rule, a learner cannot stay in the same class for more than one year. The school regulations of most schools state that learners may stay once in the same class; may fail an exam once, or may sit twice in different classes.
12.2 Policy outlines how career counsellors/officers support learners and employers regarding employment possibilities. <i>(Support is provided with job applications, inform and support employers and facilitate contact between both parties.)</i>	12.2.1 The Participation Act (2015) states that people with a disability can apply for a ‘job appointment indication’. People with a job appointment indication are registered in a national database. When employers hire someone from the database, they get financial benefits, while people ‘with a distance to the labour market’ can get a job. Learners in special secondary education, practical training or assistant worker training can apply for an indication during their study, in order to facilitate a smooth transition from education to job.

Measure 12 evaluative comments

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Annex

The Dutch education system is governed by different acts. Each type of education has its own legislation:

- Primary education: Primary Education Act (WPO, 1985)
- (Secondary) special education: Expertise Centres Act (WEC, 1998)
- Secondary education: Secondary Education Act (WVO, 1998)
- Adult and vocational education: Adult and vocational Education Act (WEB)
- Higher education: Higher Education and Research Act (WHO)
- The Act on Quality of (Secondary) Special Education (2012/2013)
- The Act on Suitable Education (2014) / 'Education that Fits' Policy (Amending Act for WPO, WVO and WEC).

Besides the laws mentioned above, other laws constitute the education system in the Netherlands:

- Compulsory Education Act (1969)
- Childcare Act (2005)
- Participation in Education Act (WMO).



Glossary

OPDC: Orthopedagogic-didactic centre

VMBO: pre-vocational secondary education; four years (ISCED 2)

HAVO: general upper-secondary education; five years (ISCED 3)

VWO: pre-university education; six years (ISCED 3)

MBO/VET: upper-secondary vocational education, level 2 (ISCED 3)