

# The Netherlands introduction

Developing a culture of learning in Dutch society and promoting lifelong learning are on the agendas of state and non-governmental institutions in the Netherlands. The current decentralised system of education in the country works in support of strengthening local actors and engaging more individuals in learning, however, the government and society in general keeps working to develop the field of non-formal adult education.

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## Recent developments in the Netherlands

Even though the Netherlands has one of the highest percentages of adults involved in learning, increasing the participation of adults in education remains on the national and regional agenda. In 2019, the Dutch cabinet, in cooperation with social partners, sectoral training and development funds, educational institutions including VET schools, and other stakeholders passed a new policy programme that aims to strengthen lifelong learning in the country. The main objectives of the new initiative are:

1. to familiarise society with training and learning opportunities that are available, so that individuals become more independent in their educational choices,
2. encourage citizens to engage in learning, promoting an individualised approach and subsidies for everyone,
3. ensure adults participation in education by providing support structures and flexible

provision in education.

The government does this by encouraging good support, strengthening the learning culture in small businesses and promoting a flexible educational offer.

In 2018 the departments of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), and Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) collaboratively launched the programme *Tel mee met Taal* (Count along with Language), which has been extended for the year of 2019. The focus of the programme is literacy education for low-educated adults. The programme aims at strengthening cooperation between partners on local and regional levels in order to outreach a bigger public and engage both youth and adults in improving their language, maths and digital skills.

As a follow up, a new strategy for 2020-2024 was presented in the beginning of 2019.

The objectives of the new strategy are:

- to reach more people through a tailor-made approach
- knowing what works: more insight into quality and effectiveness
- strengthening collaboration on municipal level

In the following years, the programme will put a stronger emphasis on digital inclusion and digital skills, in addition to language skills.

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## Links to the EU and international policy in the

# Netherlands

The implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative in the Netherlands is happening via the further development of vocational training sector. At the same time civil society organisations such as libraries, welfare organisations, and voluntary organisations play an increasingly important role, especially with the financial support from the Erasmus+ programme. Collaborations are being set up and universities and colleges are also working to help adults with a lower level of education to survive, and thrive, in society.

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## Challenges and recommendations in the Netherlands

There are several changes to the non-formal adult education sector in the Netherlands. However, improving the adult education provision and the image of lifelong learning by offering an individualised approach remains a focus. At the same time, it appears challenging to tailor financial solutions to adult learners by adjusting educational loans, tax schemes, as well as encouraging lifelong learning in smaller and medium-sized enterprises. Decentralisation and autonomy of local municipalities also need to be further addressed and supported.

EAEAs members in the country recommend the development and implementation of structural solutions to the system that would allow a stronger presence of learners voice in the decision-making process. Our members are going to continue working on the

implementation of UNESCO Learning cities, support the regionalisation of Adult Learners Festival, as well as express their recommendations on public learning accounts.

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