

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning
Background report for the Netherlands
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Introduction

Commissioned by the Project Directorate Learning and Working of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, Rijnland Advies has written this country background report. This report is part of a research by OECD, into policy options for non-formal and informal learning.

The information necessary for this report was gathered in the period September 2006 – January 2007. The research was carried out by desk study and interviews with key experts on recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Netherlands. The country background report has been set up according to the format developed by OECD (“New OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning – Guidelines for country participation”, 2006).

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Component 1. Contextual factors

Component 1.1. Demographic change

1.1.a) How have the profiles (age, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic backgrounds) of learners changed/diversified for overall post-secondary education institutions (higher education, further education and vocational education and training, professional training, etc.)? Is there any evidence of admission and graduation rates?

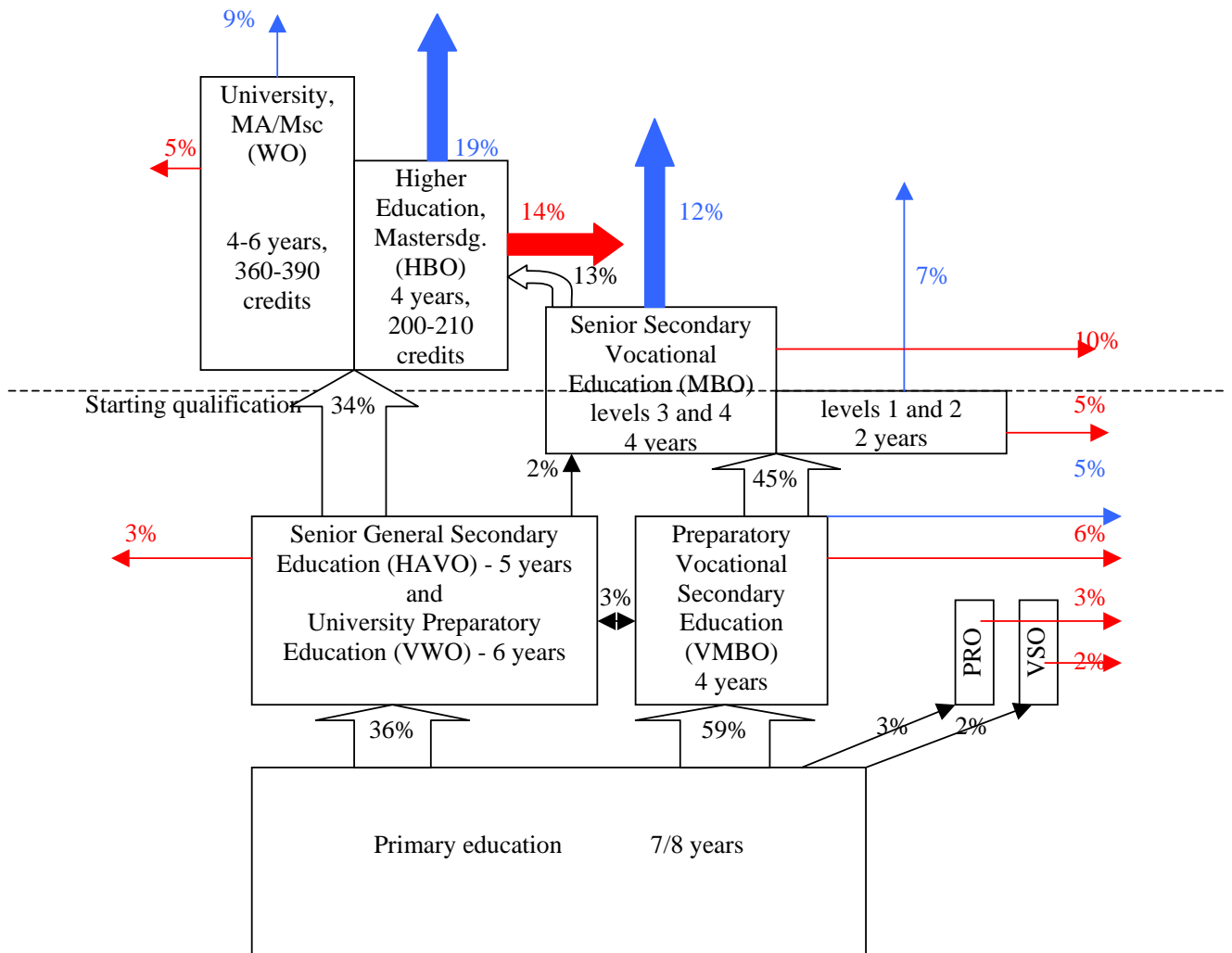
The educational system in general

Dutch youngsters start going to school at the age of 4. The vast majority attends primary education for 8 years. A small number (5%) of the pupils who are leaving the primary education system at the age of 12 years, is going to practical schools (PRO) or the advanced special schools (VSO). About 59% continues its educational career in the regular secondary educational institutions (vocational education (VMBO). 36% goes to pre-higher education schools (HAVO and VWO).

Almost all graduates of regular secondary institutions stream - directly or indirectly - to post-secondary education institutions: senior secondary vocational education (MBO), higher vocational education (HBO) and universities (WO). A part of the youngsters (19%) will get a bachelor's degree in a period of 4 years; at the universities it is possible to get this bachelor's degree in 3 years time and thereafter a master's degree in a period of 2 years. About 9% of all youngsters pass a master's exam.

Participation, admission and graduation rates

The scheme on the next page shows the complex system of streams of participants between the different educational sectors and layers. Three possibilities are discerned: streams between the various educational levels, graduation and number of students leaving the educational system without a diploma. The figures are percentages of a cohort of graduates of primary education.



legend

- stream between parts of the educational system
- leaving the educational system with diploma's/certificates/degrees
- leaving the educational system without diploma's/certificates/degrees

“Streams in the Dutch education system”.

In percentages of one cohort of children leaving primary education.

Source: Analysis of Rijnland Advies on information of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, Kerncijfers 2001 – 2005 and Nuffic, The education system in the Netherlands.

Table 1 shows the exact numbers of participants on all levels of the Dutch educational system in the last 5 years. The numbers of participants have increased for all levels of education. Participation in primary and secondary education institutions increased relatively only a little, because of demographic developments in the Netherlands. The number of participants in senior secondary vocational education (MBO) shows a mild growth, exclusively in the sector of full time education, because the number of participants in the part time sector is decreasing. Especially the growth of the number of students in higher vocational institutions in the last 5 years is remarkable (11%), thanks to the full time courses of these schools. The number of university students has also increased in the last 5 years, after a small decrease in mid-nineties. This decrease was due to changes in the intake procedure as well as the average duration of studies of the university students in that period.

Table 1. Numbers of participants of the educational system in the Netherlands (x 1.000)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total	3.504,7	3.538,2	3.578,1	3.609,7	3.642,2
Total primary education	1.652,3	1.654,1	1.654,3	1.656,2	1.657,8
Total secondary education	904,3	913,6	925,5	934,9	939,8
Total secondary vocational education	455,5	469,5	475,7	473,9	485,2
Total higher vocational education	320,7	322,2	334,4	346,1	355,6
Total universities	171,9	178,8	188,1	198,6	203,7

Source: Ministry of education, culture and science, Kerncijfers 2001 – 2005.

The participation rate of 17 tot 22 year olds in part time and full time education has increased considerably over the last 15 years, from 55,2% in 1990 to 68,3% in 2005.

Table 2. Participation rate of 17-22 year old persons in part time and full time education (%)

	1990	1995	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005
Full time	44,7	51,7	52,7	52,8	54,9	57,6	59,7
Part time	10,5	10,3	10,4	10,9	10,4	9,2	8,6

Source: Ministry of education, culture and science, Kerncijfers 2001 2005.

The profiles of the students in overall post-secondary education institutions

Age

Although there are no recent precise figures, the impression is that there are no spectacular changes in the average ages of participants in overall post-secondary institutions. One can see a decrease of the average ages of the students of HBO- and university institutions on a longer term in the last 25 years. In senior secondary vocational education there are two learning routes: a (full time and a part time) route (BOL) in which the students most of the time are learning in a school-environment, and a (full time and a part time) route (BBL) in which the participants (in the full time variant) work and learn for 4 days a week in enterprises, and go to school 1 day a week. The average age of the students in the full time variant of BOL and BBL was 18 in 2004 and in the part time variant of BOL 33 years; in the part time variant of BBL: 27 years.

Ethnicity

The number of first year students of allochtone origin in higher education institutions (HBO and universities) in relation to the total number of new students has stayed on the same level in the last 5 years (about 14%). Students of Surinam, Moroccan, Turkish and Antillean origin form a minority compared to the group of "other origin"; in the HBO-sector their share is 35% and in the university sector 15%.

In the third year of secondary education (the year in which almost all participants have made a definitive choice), the participants of non-western origin more often than participants of Dutch origin, choose education in the vocational variant of the system in the secondary vocational educational system. Also, they more often participate in lower level courses. In the secondary vocational sector, the allochtone participants are in the majority and their share will increase in the next years, especially in the big cities. A big problem seems to be that quite a lot of them will leave the schools without sufficient qualifications.

There are no figures concerning the ethnicity in the non-governmental sector of training.

Sex

The number of female students is steadily growing in the institutions of post-secondary education, although not in all fields of study. In technical education, female students are a minority. In 2004, female students constituted 47% of the pupils in secondary vocational education institutions.

1.1.b) What are the effects of demographic changes (ageing population and migration) on participation in different sectors of education and training?

Recently the main demographic changes in the Netherlands are:

- A reduction of the growth of the population. Since 1900 there never has been such a low growth in the population as in 2005.
- The number of emigrants is recently growing. In 2005 more than 120.000 Dutch citizens left their country; in 2004 this number was on the level of about 110.000. Quite a part of them moved to Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom and the Antilles. The age of emigrants to neighbour countries is relatively high.
- The number of immigrants is stabilising at the level of about 90.000 to 100.000 people a year. The number of immigrants from Morocco and Turkey has decreased in the last years. The number of Polish immigrants increased in the last year from 2.000 to 7.000. Their number is smaller than the number of repatriating Dutchmen.
- Since 2004 there are more emigrants than immigrants.

- In 2005 188.000 children were born; 6.000 less than in 2004. The decrease of the number of births started in 2000. In the coming years, this decrease can be expected to continue, as a consequence of the decreasing number of young females in the Dutch population. In the immigrant families, the number of births is higher than in autochtone families.
- The death rate has been lower in the last 2 years.
- Thanks to particular measures of the government, more employees are working for a longer period. Less people are using the pre-retirement facilities than in the last years.

Overall, these important recent demographic changes in the Netherlands strengthen the already existing tendencies in the ageing and diversification of the Dutch population. These tendencies have the following effects on the participation in different sectors of education and training:

- the number of learners of the primary and secondary schools is stabilising and will probably decrease in the coming years;
- the diversification of learners in the primary and secondary schools will further increase. If this development continues, a growing number of schools in the big cities in the Netherlands will turn out to be coloured;
- the number of students of post-secondary education can be expected to rise further in the first coming years;
- the diversification of learners of the vocational education system will also further increase;
- it can be expected, that the number of dropouts (in 2002: 15%; in 2006: 16%.) will further increase in the coming years, unless the government will take special measures.

1.1.c) Is there any evidence of national policy on migration (e.g. the low-skilled or high skilled) with respect to demographic change?

Recently the government has stressed the importance of the immigration of high skilled people because of the role they can play in the knowledge society the Netherlands in the near future. However, demographic change is not the main driving force behind national policy on migration. Matters of social inequalities and integration are the most important drivers of Dutch national migration policies. The most important issues regarding migration policy are discussed below.

In the eighties

In the eighties, a discussion starts on integration policies. If immigrants and their families wish to stay in the country, they will have to find a place in Dutch society. Education in their own language is discarded. Preserving the own culture is accepted. The backward position of immigrants is evident (unemployment, a low education level, more use of social security and a higher crime rate). National policy focuses on making up for the arrears.

The nineties up until the present

The discussion hardens

In the nineties, the atmosphere of national discussion on migration hardens. Respected politicians on the right put the allochtone issue on the political agenda. Publicists are writing about the “multicultural drama”. The discussion becomes more intense and opinions of politicians are more outspoken. Immigration is more and more restricted. Participation and the individuals own responsibilities for integrating and participating in society become basic principles in policy making.

Law

European law becomes a basic influence. EU citizens are free to settle in other member states. Since the entry of East European countries into the EU, an influx of particularly Polish workers is visible in

the Netherlands. Most of these immigrants are not permanent settlers, they are in the country for temporary work. However, more and more Polish workers choose to settle permanently (about 7.000 people a year). The influx of Poles has met with some resistance. Polish workers would work for wages under the market price, and hence expel Dutch workers from the labour market. Also the crime rate would be relatively high, in this group.

The Dutch law on labour of foreign workers (Wet Arbeid Vreemdelingen) states, that citizens from the European economic space (EU member states and Norway, Iceland en Liechtenstein) are free to work in the Netherlands, with exceptions for citizens of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary, The Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. People from these countries need to apply for a working permit at the Centre for Work and Income (CWI). In 2006 it was determined, that starting December 17th 2006, people from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia will be given a working permit, if housing of these workers is taken care of and their wages are as high as the wages of Dutch workers. This rule only applies tot workers in construction, transport, banks, insurance and 12 other sectors. With this regulation, the obligation for employers to first look for workers in the Netherlands or other pre 2004 EU member states (the “arbeidsmarkttoets”), has ended.

The opening up of sectors, is generally seen as e prelude to free transfer of labourers with the new EU countries. Earlier this year, the government already opened up 23 sectors for workers from new EU-countries.

Family reunification

Family reunification has been a major issue in immigration policies. 75% of non-western allochtones chooses a partner in the country of origin. In the 21st century, about 10.000 people a year come to the Netherlands for family reunification. Immigrants for family reunification make up 45% of all immigrants. In 1993 stricter rules were applied for immigrants in the context of family reunification for non-EU citizens. Family starters have to have stayed in the Netherlands legally for at least three years. In November 2004, further alterations were made. Minimum age for family reunification was set at 21, for both partners. The family starters had to earn an income of at least 120% of legal minimum wage. The desired partner must successfully complete a naturalization exam in his/her county of origin. The immigrants must pay for this exam. Citizens of EU member states do not need to take this exam.

Asylum seekers

In the nineties, Dutch government wanted to make the Netherlands as unattractive as possible for asylum seekers. Reception centres were sparsely equipped. Access to welfare was dismissed, an asylum seeker received an allowance of €15 a week. In 1994 facilities were expanded with application centres (AC), where a quick selection was executed, to separate solid applications from the unfounded ones. Persons with applications that were clearly unfounded, were sent back right away. Because less and less people are eligible for a permanent residence permit, more people have to be deported. Since 2003, deportation centres have been set up. This restrictive policy seems to have effects. In 1994 52.580 refugees came to the Netherlands. In 2004 the number has decreased to 9.780. Still, al lot of peoples' applications are rejected, and these persons are sent to deportation centres, and are sent out of the country. Deportation often fails, and a lot of rejected refugees disappear into illegality. The Dutch state does not offer these illegal refugees any facilities, which leads many of them to an existence on the street. In some towns, local government creates facilities for these people. This has lead to a discussion on the (in)humanity of the policies for refugees/asylum seekers.

Highly educated workers

On February 23rd 2007, the Socio-economic Counsel (SER, made up of the labour unions and the employers organisations) advised the new Cabinet, to make admission to the Dutch labour market easier for highly educated foreigners. This could take place through a score-system, in which persons are given points for education, income, working experience, age, language and experience in the Netherlands. This should help the Netherlands compete in the international “battle for brains”. Highly educated talent is scarce, and for this group of immigrants, Dutch migration policies should be changed from “no, unless..” to “yes, if...” policies.

1.1.d) Describe any change of higher education institutional admission policies starting to practise recognition of non-formal and informal learning due to demographic change?

For a long time already, it has been possible for the institutions of higher education to recognise non-formal and informal learning in the admission of first year students. Under the so called Colloquium Doctum policies, Universities can admit students who do not meet the formal requirements. Partly, this is done by taking admission-exams. This policy has not been changed because of demographic reasons.

In general, it can be said that the Netherlands are scoring high as far as participation in life long learning is concerned. In 2000 this participation has been 15,5% of the adult workers (25-95 years old). The European average in that year was 8,5% and the European target is 12,5% in 2010. The Dutch government is aiming at 20% in 2010.

At the moment, 74% of the adult workers of 25 to 65 years old has an adequate labour market qualification. The government is of the opinion that this percentage should be improved in the perspective of a future knowledge based society. In 2010 at least 80% of the workers of 25 to 65 should have attained a so called “starting qualification”.

Also the number of people of the age of 22 years with a degree of higher vocational education should increase from 73% in 2000 to 85% in 2010, according to the government.

In the near future, the Netherlands will be faced with a shortage of highly skilled people, especially in the fields of science and technology. Compared to the other EU-countries, the number of graduates in science and technology is low: 5.8 graduates and PhD students in science and technology per 1000 inhabitants between 20 and 29 years. In 2010 this number should be raised to 6,7 graduates per 1000 inhabitants.

The importance of the concept of life long learning is recognised at all levels. It can be considered a matter of high priority in the Netherlands, that as many people as possible should participate in the life long learning activities. According to the government, one of the obstacles for this policy is, that in many ways the conceptual jump from formal to non-formal and informal learning routes (with the recognition of earlier acquired competencies) has not been made. This is leading to a lack of coherence between the world of learning and the world of work. An integration of the two worlds can be attained by stimulating work-based learning (or dual programmes) in HBO's as well as universities (particularly on the master and doctoral level). EVC (recognition of acquired competencies) is increasingly used as an important instrument to facilitate those development towards life long learning. (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Issues in HE policy, 2005).

Recently, a stimulus regulation has been created to stimulate the use of EVC in higher education. In component 2.1.c this regulation will be discussed in detail.

Component 1.2. Internationalisation

1.2.a) Describe any national policy or current practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration strategies of migrant population (highly skilled, low skilled and refugees)?

Many refugees and immigrants have had problems to get work in the Netherlands on the level they are trained for. During their escape, many refugees could not take with them proof of their education and training and experience. Other immigrants have diplomas which are not easily comparable to the diploma's of Dutch educational institutions. In order to improve the fast and good integration of immigrants in the Netherlands, the Dutch government has stressed the importance of getting information of their competencies as soon as possible.

An investigation carried out in 2004 led to the conclusion, that a portfolio method should be used, which means a portfolio instrument and a training programme. The instrument and the training programme are developed in co-operation with a number of institutions, active in the field of the integration of refugees and are tested in practice. This method can also be used in the cases of other immigrants.

After making an inventory of the wishes of the different institutions, agreement was reached on the development of a portfolio-format, which matches these wishes. In the portfolio the candidates give extensive information on their personal data, educational and training programmes they have taken, paid and unpaid working experience in other countries and in the Netherlands, knowledge of languages and computer experience. Also information is asked on personal skills and qualities as well as activities carried out in the family or with friends or as a hobby. Part of the portfolio route is the formulation of a personal development plan (in Dutch POP), part of which is a plan of action to get prepared for work. On the basis of a POP, organisations will be able to offer support geared to the personal plan of the participant.

The first results of this project are promising. In more sectors the portfolio is seen as a valuable and practical instrument for organisations as well as for immigrants. The immigrants are getting a better view on their competencies and quite a number of them started a training programme, based on the portfolio route, which matched better with their experiences and level of education. A reasonable competency in Dutch or English is a necessary condition for starting the POP-training.

In the testing-period of this program, the portfolio method was primarily directed to the high skilled refugees. The method is now also used for low-skilled refugees. The method proves to be valuable for anyone who has a certain distance to the labour market. It improves the understanding of the possibilities and impossibilities of the people concerned and contributes to a better self-image and, in connection with that, also to motivation to social activity.

1.2.b) Describe any national policies or higher education institutional approaches, that are currently being taken to promote comparability/compatibility, visibility and portability of learning outcomes through non-formal and informal learning to promote cross-border mobility?

The activities of universities and HBO-institutions in the field of international recognition and certification are co-ordinated by Nuffic, the Netherlands organisation for international co-operation in higher education, in The Hague, especially by its Centre for International Recognition and Certification (CIRC). CIRC is one of the world's leading centres with expertise on credential

evaluation and serves as the Dutch National Equivalence Centre (ENIC-NARIC). When students want to study in the Netherlands, Nuffic can make a diploma evaluation. And in case someone wants to work in the Netherlands, Nuffic can give him or her information about procedures and laws concerning the recognition of one's qualifications or diploma's.

Because highly skilled migrants have a lot more competencies than is revealed by a credential evaluation (for example, through on-the-job-training), CIRC has developed a method to identify the prior learning of individuals. The Centre for International Identification of Competences (CIIC) was launched in mid 2005. At this centre, highly skilled migrants can develop a digital portfolio, that they can fill in under supervision, to give more insight in their prior learning in order to improve their employability. This portfolio method has been developed in close consultation with bodies that need to make assessments or give recognition (universities, HBO institutions, ministries, et cetera). The portfolio method allows highly skilled migrants to demonstrate their prior learning or skills, but also provides the information required by assessing and recognising bodies. The second aspect is, of course, crucial to the success of the portfolio method, because assessing and recognising bodies will be the ones to decide whether the descriptions and the evidence in the portfolio will count towards Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).

In the period July 2005 until December 2007, Nuffic participates in an ESF-EQUAL project proposed by the central administration of the centre for Work and Income (CWI) in the Netherlands. The project (entitled PLAR Empowerment Centre: anchoring and implementation) involves 18 organisations working towards the broader implementation of PLAR methods, which have previously been developed for specific target groups, including highly skilled migrants.

Component 1.3. New ICT

1.3.a) Provide any evidence of modularisation of learning and the new recording system opened up by new information and communication technologies be fully used to promote credit transfer?

Since the nineties, the policy of the ministry of Education, Science and Culture in the Netherlands is aimed at strengthening the development and implementation of new information and communication technologies in the Dutch educational institutions. In the framework of this policy, the ministry – in co-operation with the educational organisations - has created two independent foundations in 2001: the foundation Knowledge network (Kennisnet) and the foundation ICT at school. Both foundations are financially supported by the ministry. The main objective of both foundations is to contribute to better informing teachers and school managers about ICT in the school and to support schools in the development of new relevant contents. In this context, the importance of life long learning has been stressed, not only in the formal period of education but also thereafter. In this way, ICT is strongly connected with innovation of teaching and training and also with teaching and testing, independent of place and time of performance. The foundations will ask attention for the development of instruments supporting the learning process of students and the recording of results (portfolio, dossiers of testing results as well as administrative systems).

The national testing organisation CITO also has a long experience using ICT in the testing procedures. In recent years, CITO has developed expertise in the field of E-learning and E-testing and can offer tools for the development of e-learning and e-testing. Employees in companies can be tested by means of Internet or the Intranet of the companies. These practises can contribute to the promotion of credit transfer. More than 10 years ago, CITO established its own Expertise Centre for electronic testing,

with the purpose to inform the educational field on new possibilities of testing with the aid of the computer. The electronic testing projects undertaken by the Centre have focused on:

- the development of new testing programmes for many different target groups and levels of education;
- the construction of computer based tests and item-banks;
- the support of entire testing procedures: development, storage, administration and distribution of tests;
- the production of student reports to be used in credit transfer.

1.3.b) Provide a list of new qualifications that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies. Provide evidence, if any, that the certificates by the major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications.

1. Management assistant ICT	2. Information analyst	3. Network architect
4. ICT-manager	5. Data architect	6. Network engineer
7. ICT-employer	8. System analyst	9. System programmer
10. Network manager	11. System designer	12. Internet infrastructure specialist
13. Employer monitoring and security	14. Software architect	15. Change manager
16. (technical) application developer and	17. Application designer	18. Implementation adviser
19. Private digital investigator	20. Functional designer	21. Tester
22. Employer information services	23. Technical designer	24. Data manager
25. Chief information officer	26. Embedded software engineer	27. Server manager
28. Information manager	29. Programmer	30. Storage manager
31. IT-adviser	32. Data warehouse developer	33. Operator
34. Adviser information supply systems	35. Web designer	36. Web master
37. Business Systems Analyst	38. E-business adviser	39. Staff member help desk
40. Information Architect	41. Knowledge engineer	42. Resource manager
43. Security officer	44. Architect technical infrastructure	45. Account manager

There is no formal evidence that certificates by major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications. But these certificates are always incorporated in the CV's of candidates for vacancies. So it is clear that these certificates are important in the case of change of work in the Netherlands, especially when it concerns candidates that have had their educational training a long time ago.

1.3.c) Describe current national policies or practices of e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes or 'learning assets'? What has been achieved and what have been challenges?

See above under 1.3.a

Component 1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/mismatch

1.4.a) Describe any legal framework, policy, programmes, research that address the issue of recognition of skills, experience and knowledge within the framework of human capital with respect to the economic developments or labour force issues. Are there any specific policies at the regional level such as 'Regional Development' and 'Learning Regions'?

Policies on recognition of formal and informal learning, relating to economic developments of labour market issues, are mainly focussed at the regional level.

A shared Project Directorate for Learning and working was set up by the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science (OC&W) and Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), to make a shared effort to stimulate and support Lifelong Learning. Also the Ministries of Agriculture (LNV), Economic Affairs (EZ) and Immigrant matters and Integration (V&I) are involved.

Lifelong learning is considered an important condition for keeping people employable on the labour market. The goal of the Project Directorate is to stimulate and support employers, workers, citizens, the entrepreneurial world, education, centres for work and income, municipalities and other parties *at the regional level*, to make Lifelong Learning possible.

Stimulating dual learning and recognition of skills are important elements of the policies and regulations carried out by the Project directorate. In 2.1.a and 2.1.b, the policies and regulations concerned will be dealt with in detail.

1.4.b) Describe overall skills mismatch/shortage situation in your country. Do you have any economic policies that address the issue of skills shortage or skills mismatch? In what sectors/industries has the issue been most conspicuous?

General perspectives

In the coming years, the labour market will show a recovery. From 2006, it is expected that employment will grow significantly and unemployment will decrease. In 2007, the number of persons with jobs is expected to grow by 1.75% (CPB nieuwsbrief, December 2006).

According to ROA (De arbeidsmarkt naar opleiding en beroep tot 2010 - November 2005), not only the high skilled graduates, but also the low skilled graduates will profit. None the less, growth of employment will be higher for workers with higher education, because the sectors and professions where they work will grow faster and because upgrading of qualification-demands will continue.

Unemployment for people with only secondary education will be structurally higher, than for people with higher education. Also, unemployment for low-skilled persons shows a stronger reaction to economic development. During the economic boom in the late nineties, unemployment among low educated persons decreased, and their backward position compared to workers with higher levels of education was partly made up for. After the economic recession in 2002, unemployment among low skilled workers rapidly increased again. In 2006, unemployment among people with only primary education was 12.2% and unemployment among persons with only secondary education was 7.4%. The total unemployment rate was 5.5%.

In the ROA-report it is expected, that the upgrading of the qualification demands in professions will decrease in the coming 5 years. This so called “upgrading rate” is not constant every year and depends on technological and organisational developments.

However, the labour market chances of workers will depend more on their profession than on their level of education. Generally, the technical educational programmes offer better perspectives on the labour market than the agricultural, economic and ICT fields of study. The students in the care and education sectors will probably be better off than the students in the social-cultural and welfare sectors.

Employment in the agricultural sector and in a number of industrial sectors will structurally decrease, in connection with the so called “service character” of the Dutch labour market. Particularly in the sectors of construction and real estate, as well as metal and electrical engineering, the growing economy will have a positive influence upon the development of employment.

Bottlenecks in the supply of workers are not to be expected in the informatics professions, in the social-cultural professions and the care and service oriented professions. The biggest problems in the personnel supply are to be expected in the technical and industrial professions, the pedagogical professions and the security oriented professions. In these sectors, great differences can appear between the various levels of profession. There will probably be no difficulties in the personnel supply as far as teachers in primary education are concerned, but that will not be the case in some teacher professions in secondary and vocational education.

It seems, that the educational demands in the pedagogical sector and in the security sector are so specific, that it will be rather difficult to hire people with another background. This means, that the substitution possibilities will be rather small. In the technical and industrial sectors, this will play a minor role, but here the sensitivity to economic changes will be great. This means, that the bottlenecks will be more serious, in case the economic recovery will be greater than now is foreseen. In the medical and paramedical professions, it is expected that the shortages generally will diminish compared to the last years. This applies especially to the lower and intermediate levels. The reason for this appears to be the low replacement demand. The expected shortages of physicians and apothecaries will be continued on a high level. Also in these fields the substitution possibilities will be low.

Government policies

In the case of a mismatch/shortage situation, the government tries to stimulate the interest of young people in the relevant educational and training programmes, by subsidies and by giving information about the good labour market opportunities. At the same time, programmes are set up for in-service training by government agencies and the employer’s organisations.

Local government (the municipalities) wants unemployed persons who receive social benefits to be self supporting as soon as possible. Reintegration policies are meant to help people to find jobs. All

unemployed persons who can not find work, are offered guidance within 12 months, to enlarge their chance of finding work. Elements of such guidance can be:

- profession choice tests;
- vocational training;
- language courses;
- training programmes for finding jobs and applying for jobs;
- job mediation.

These guidance programmes are often tailor made, and adjusted to the specific needs of the individual. Job oriented training can be part of such individual routes. These training programmes are (partly) paid for by the municipalities and are often carried out by regional educational institutions or private agencies.

In the late nineties, the Ministry of Social affairs and Employment has established an independent special agency to improve the links between supply and demand on the labour market, the Centre for Work and Income (in Dutch: CWI). Employers should go first of all to this CWI for personnel mediation and information concerning the labour market. Unemployed people will find information regarding job-vacancies and public assistance. CWI brings employers and unemployed together and offers the unemployed means to find work, for instance the possibility to follow training programmes for finding jobs and applying for jobs. CWI cooperates with other agencies and the municipalities.

Biannually a number of ministries order the Research Centre for Education and Labour market (ROA) of the University of Maastricht to carry out an investigation to the trends and developments in the Dutch labour market for a period of 5 years. Recently the Centre has presented the report on the actual and expected situation of professions and education and training programmes in the period 2005 - 2010.

An important target group of these prognoses are of course the young people who have to make a decision about their educational career. The prognosis results enable them to base these decisions on the labour market perspectives of different fields of study on the longer term. But the report is especially directed to the development of a policy on labour supply of different groups of policy makers in the ministry of education, science and culture as well as the ministry of social affairs. These prognoses can particularly play an important role in the policy making on training and other educational facilities. Finally, these prognoses can support labour market policies in the broad sense, for example target groups policies, policies aimed at the enlargement of participation in the labour market and policies for the lower income classes.

Regional development programmes have a long tradition in the Netherlands. Dutch government has recently stressed, that it is important to use the opportunities in the regions, rather than eliminating the arrears. In 2006, the Ministry of economic affairs introduced the action programme “Pieken in de delta”. Programmes for 6 regions have been developed in order to eliminate the bottlenecks, which prevent the further economic growth in these regions. Funds are made available for the financing of regional economic projects. For example bottlenecks in the infrastructure and for promoting innovation in the industries.

1.4.c) Provide any evidence of increasing or decreasing economic and social disparities in your country (e.g. poverty rate such as gini-co-efficiency) among certain groups (low skilled, immigrants, youth, older workers, etc.). Provide also, if any, relevant documents addressing policy issues (economic, social, labour market, etc.) that account for such trends.

A 2005 report of CBS and SCP (Social Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands) has concluded, that the number of households with a low income (based on the public assistance allowance level for a single person in 1979), has increased in 2003 after a period of many years of decrease. In 2002 poverty in the Netherlands had reached its lowest point. In that year only 8,8% of all households had a low income. The share of low income families has risen to 9,8% in 2003 (642.000 households). Of this number, more than one third lived under the low-income border for more than 4 years. It seems, that the share of low income families has further increased in 2004 and 2005. It is expected, based on forecasted spending development, that this share will decrease in 2006, to the level of 2003. This does not apply for all groups. In the group of single public assistance allowance receivers, the number of people with a low income will increase with 3% in comparison to 2003. The number of single people of 65-years and older with a low income will decrease by 3%. The relative size of low incomes under workers (with or without children) and married or partnered people of 65 years and older, will probably stay at the same level in the period 2003-2006.

In this respect, the risk groups as far as poverty is concerned are: one parent families, households with a public assistance allowance and non-western allochtone families. In the category of working people, the independents show a relatively high percentage of low incomes. The development of the share of non-western allochtone people is not favourable. The position of older people has been improved. The income-position of non-western immigrants is clearly worse than the position of autochthones. The situation is the most unfavourable for Moroccans; in 2003 almost one third of the households had a low income; the Turkish (29%), Antillean (28%) and Surinam (23%) families were doing a little better. The so called new groups of immigrants live generally in a worse income situation; more than half of the Somali, Afghan and Iraqi households had a low income. This applies also to one third of the Iran and Chinese households. Poverty of non-western households is increasing since 2002.

CBS has shown in 2005, that second generation allochtones (born in the Netherlands) do not show any difference in wages compared with autochtone people; only the first as well as the second generation of Moroccan workers are staying under the wage level of autochtone workers.

Another conclusion of CBS in 2005 was, that labour migrants generally start from a rather favourable situation, while the asylum immigrants on the contrary start with a very low income. Immigrants prove to be able to decrease the difference after a while.

In 2002, CBS has investigated the data concerning the earned income of workers in relation to their profession and educational level. CBS has reached the conclusion, that the wages rise with the level of the profession and of educational training. Men are receiving better wages than women. This difference increases with age and with the level of profession and of education. In the period 1997-2002, the employees with the highest education have improved their relative situation.

Further information can be found in:

- De armoedemonitor van CBS en CSP van 2005;
- Sociaal-economische trends, driemaandelijkse rapporten van CBS;
- Loonstructuuronderzoek CBS, 2002.

1.4.d) Provide data, if any, which points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solve the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage and, therefore, a way to drive economic development.

From the beginning, the aims of EVC-policies in the Netherlands are that, in the so-called knowledge based economy, it is up to everyone to acquire new knowledge and skills efficiently and quickly. Learning, i.e. the acquisition of knowledge and expertise, will need to be made more flexible in terms

of form and content. This means, that in addition to regular education, other learning environments will also need to play a role: instruction for the working population, on the job and independent learning. In doing so, EVC provides not only an added incentive for continuous learning, but also “for improving the match between education and the labour market, since it will now centre not only on supply but also demand. The skills acquired, can after all lead directly to receiving certificates and exemptions from diploma requirements. They can also be part of personnel policy and provide insight into individual employability.” (EVC-report ‘The Glass is half full’, Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2001, p. 10).

Based on the recommendations in the report “The Glass is half full”, a plan of action has been established in order to improve the conditions for implementing EVC. Attention is given to the development of rules and regulations and of standards more than to facilitating of already started autonomous market processes in which EVC is used in a flexible way.

In 2006 the Minister of Education, Culture and Science gave interim regulations for project subventions in organisational costs, for developing the demand of employees, employers or unemployed for EVC-routes on the level of secondary vocational education. The subvention can also be applied by HBO-institutions for the adaptation of the EVC programmes they offer. The total amount of money involved is €6.800.000,-. A project can not get more than €150.000,- for a minimum of 200 EVC routes and €750,- per EVC route with a maximum of €750.000,- for 1.000 EVC routes.

1.4.e) Provide data, if any, if there has been any study that points to a certain group that would benefit most from the recognition system for their skills (e.g. retirees, older workers, women, immigrants (highly- skilled or low-skilled), part-time workers, unemployed youth, etc.)?

In its 4th Annual Report (2004), titled ‘The broad perspective of EVC’ the Dutch Knowledge Centre EVC describes the introduction of EVC for the many volunteers active in the field of care, sport, the schools, the churches, politics et cetera. In other articles, it has been investigated whether EVC can contribute to the promotion of integration in society of people with specific functional problems. In a third article attention is given to the ways in which EVC can be of use in the reintegration branche.

Finally, in the same report, Jan van Zijl, chairman of the council for Work and Income (RWI), stresses the use of EVC as a solution for the problems on the labour market experienced by target groups such as the unemployed, non graduated dropouts, employees threatened by unemployment and starters in the labour market. In his article Van Zijl indicates, that EVC can be an effective labour market instrument in many branches.

1.4.f) Provide data, if any, that discuss some issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economies.

The Central Agency of Scouting Gelderland (a province in the eastern part of the Netherlands) has started a project to support volunteers. A lot of volunteer organisations, like Scouting, would like to get more volunteers and to keep them in their organisations. EVC is used for two positive effects:

- the recognition of the competencies volunteers get in the Scouting clubs to give these competencies social value;
- the realisation of traineeships for students of different fields of vocational education.

The competency profiles concerned are:

- competency profile of group supporter;
- competency profile of group leader;
- competency profile of team leader.

Other issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economics have not been found.

1.4.g) Please provide a list of occupations to which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be counted as a part of entrance (e.g. teachers, engineers, journalists, etc.). Of the list, which occupations are regulated professions, i.e. that require a certain qualification (certificates, licences, etc.)?

EVC projects have been or are carried out in a number of sectors.

- advisory services
- general services
- construction industries
- retail commerce
- facility services
- national health services
- wholesale trade
- hotel and catering industry
- agriculture
- public services
- educational institutions
- personal services
- installation and electronics
- transport

In all of these sectors projects have been started or are at the moment under consideration, but these projects are or will be carried out in co-operation with particular enterprises “in the field” and not with branche related organisations. The projects do not seem to concern activities related to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning activities to be counted as a part of direct entrance. However, for these sectors EVC can be counted as part of entrance, in the sense, that it can be part of entrance-procedure into formal vocational training of these sectors.

Component 1.5. Social developments

1.5.a) What are the newly evolved ‘skills and competencies’ to live in the knowledge economy, which have been identified to date? Make a list of such skills and competencies.

The importance of flexibility, adaptability and mobility in the global economy and the information society is a leading theme in current discourse on education and training. Adults of the 21st century are expected to fulfil many different roles throughout life, act in different contexts, and meet multiple challenges.

Defining the competencies needed to meet these expectations is at the heart of the international, interdisciplinary, and policy-oriented research program DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations) of OECD. Three categories of key competencies (interacting in socially heterogeneous groups, acting autonomously and using tools interactively) grounded in a holistic model of competence, constitute a core element of DeSeCo’s

conceptual frame of reference. In this context it seems to be sufficient to refer to this DeSeCo program.

1.5.b) Provide evidence, if any, that recognition of this type of learning has led to the uptake of further learning or progression in profession?

In the Netherlands, EVC is regarded an important tool in the HRM policies of industrial and service organisations and in the development of the individual employees. Evidence of this fact may be, that at the end of 2006, the Knowledge Centre EVC will conclude agreements with the overall branch organisations in order to guarantee the quality of the EVC routes in their member companies. The branche organisations are prepared to take this step, because they recognise, that EVC will lead to the uptake of further learning or progression in profession.

At the start of quite a number of the EVC projects in the individual companies, it is stated that these projects will be a stimulus for the employees in their careers in (and perhaps outside) the companies. In its report "What can be the profits of EVC" (Utrecht, 2002), the Knowledge Centre for EVC in the Netherlands stresses the importance of EVC for further development of employees. That goal is attained in quite a number of EVC projects. Generally, the competencies acknowledged and recognised with EVC, are attained in the work shop. For that it is not surprising, that the work shop is central in further development of which EVC can be step. According to the report, EVC has the potential to stimulate further learning.

In general, the report concluded, that the most important yield of EVC is its contribution to the further development of people. EVC is not a goal in itself (however important certification may be), but a tool to support organisations and individuals in the direction of the long term goal: continuous development.

1.5.c) Provide evidence, if any, of recognition of this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship?

In the just mentioned report on the profits of EVC (see 1.5.b and 1.6.b), attention is given also to the social yields, which surpass the importance of the own experience and that of the organisation. EVC experts in the army stated, that EVC can help to bridge the gap between military life and civil society. They regard it their duty to support young men and women, who often start their military career with modest qualifications, to learn new competencies and qualifications in order to strengthen their start in society after finishing their period in the army.

In quite a number of EVC programmes, the subject of Social Cultural Qualifications (MCK's) has a special place. A positive outcome of the investigation of the EVC practice in the Netherlands is, that the value of a test on 'citizenship' (social competencies) is not in discussion. In its reflection on the case studies it has investigated, the commission of the report on the yields of EVC recommended, that the subject of MCK's should get its own place in the qualification structure, instead of being integrated in the existing subject qualifications, without clear relations to the subjects (page 64). Social-cultural development and citizenship of employees will get more importance, if there will be a direct relation to the functioning of the citizen as an employee, in other words: if MCK's are connected with social functioning within the work organisation.

The report concludes (page 57), that EVC leads to confidence and enthusiasm of participants and makes a direct contribution to motivate people to further development and to a positive change of

culture. Because of that, EVC is a valuable contributor to change processes. One can say that in this way EVC contributes also to improved citizenship.

Component 1.6. Others

1.6.a) Provide other contextual factors or trends that you think are influential – directly or non-directly – that drive changes of institutional and technical arrangements and stakeholder behaviour concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning which have not been addressed in Component 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.

As other contextual factors of importance for the development of EVC in the Netherlands it is good to point at :

- the diminution of contribution (afdrachtvermindering) for employers when a employee follows an EVC traineeship;
- the possibility for employees to deduct the income taxes with the costs of EVC traineeships;
- the declarations of intent in 37 regions and sectors in the Netherlands to start 24.917 dual routes (learning and working routes) for adult employees en unemployed people and 19.870 EVC routes;
- the development of 20 regional Desks for Learning and Working as part of a better EVC infrastructure, in order to provide a better dissemination of information on EVC and other learning-working policies.

Recently (September 2006), the government has sent a letter to Dutch Parliament, entitled “Learning, that works! On to a better co-operation between education, employers and government”. The Netherlands want to be a competitive knowledge economy, which demands higher skilled employees. So we have to continue the investments in good education and professional skills. Because of that, the Minister of education, culture and science and the State secretary of social affairs and employment have launched new plans to strengthen the relations between education and the labour market.

They proposed amongst others: further strengthening the existing regional co-operation and infrastructure for the world of learning and the world of working, in accordance with the policy of the project organisation Learning and Working of both ministries. Co-operating organisations which are setting up EVC and other learning-working routes, will be financially supported by the two ministries. Besides a fund of €229,5 million in 2007 and 2008 will be available, for (amongst others) the development of new EVC-routes and traineeships for teachers of MBO-schools.

1.6.b) Provide historical backgrounds concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning in your country.

The beginning

During the early 1990s, the Dutch government felt, that regular education should be made more accessible for adults. This led to the establishment of the Commission on the ‘Recognition of Informally Acquired Skills’. The Commission published its report ‘Recognising informal Skills’ in March 1994. This marked the launch of EVC (the recognition of informally acquired skills), and emphasised the need to increase the accessibility to education which is traditionally based on formal qualifications or the reward of certificates.

The Cabinet responded positively to the report. It stated, that EVC could make a useful contribution to the functioning of the labour and training markets, especially for individuals. The implementation of

the scheme had to tie in with existing structures and the stakeholders had to pay the costs of implementation. The government agreed to provide a set of instruments to assist EVC, including funding of development.

EVC got a new impetus of the first liberal-socialist government, that stated in its national action programme of 1998, among other things: “More should be done to ensure that the workplace is used as a centre of learning. The experience gained should be made visible as informally acquired skills and qualifications. The cabinet wants to assist, by setting up a system in which informally acquired knowledge and experiences, that is, knowledge and experience gained outside the formal education system, can be tested and recognised.”

Plan of action

Based on the recommendations in the report “The Glass is half full”, a plan of action has been established, in order to improve the conditions for implementing EVC. Attention is given to the development of rules and regulations and of standards, more than to facilitating of already started autonomous market processes in which EVC is used in a flexible way.

The Knowledge Centre EVC

In 2001 the Knowledge Centre EVC was established by a number of ministries and other organisations, involved in stimulating the use of EVC procedures in the Netherlands. The Centre collects information concerning EVC, distributes the information (by publications, website, articles, conferences, information on good practices, et cetera) and stimulates actors to set up their own EVC programmes. In recent years, the Centre has gathered a lot of expertise and a broad network.

Government regulations, subventions

In 2005, the State secretary of Social Affairs and Employment announced, that subventions could be given to communities as a contribution in the costs of support to and the participation in learning and working routes.

Furthermore, the Project directorate for Learning and working was established, which implements a regulatory framework for stimulating dual learning and EVC (see also component 2.1).

Activities in sectors

It should be stressed, that the Netherlands have a long tradition of training and developing employees. Not only in the working place, organised by the employers, but also with a strong support of the trade unions. In quite some industrial branches, trade unions and the organisations of employers have bundled their efforts in stimulating the industrial training programmes. Together, they started the so called Education and Development Funds (O&O fondsen), which possessed a total budget of €600 mln for several purposes in 1999 (J.M. Waterreus, O&O fondsen op herhaling. Stand van zaken scholingsfondsen 2002, Max Goote Kenniscentrum voor Beroepsonderwijs en Volwasseneneducatie, Amsterdam, 2002). According to the Max Goote institute, a part of this sum can be related to EVC activities (see Table W1). Recently, the Knowledge Centre EVC has estimated, that not more than 5% of these O&O budget can be attributed to real EVC purposes. It seems to be reasonable to state that in 2007 this sum will grow up to an amount of €700.000,-. Because the budgets of the O&O funds are equally provided for by the two partners, the EVC part of the O&O budgets (€35.000.000,-) has been split in 2 equal shares in table W1.

The Max Goote institute has remarked that these O&O education and training facilities are just a small part of the industrial training activities in the Netherlands. In 1999 these activities have been estimated by CBS to cost €3 mld, twice as high as in 1993. In 2007 this amount will be higher, but a reasonable estimate is not available. In 2004, 331.000 employees have participated in these programmes (CBS

Statline). However, it cannot be expected that these training programmes are contributing also at least 5% to EVC purposes. Because of the great uncertainties, these activities are not taken into account in the tables in the Annex of this report.

The effects become visible

The report “The Glass is half full” (2001), mentioned in section 1.4 , has stressed the importance of EVC for the Dutch labour market and economy, especially in the context of the developments that are connected with life long learning. In the report there are 13 recommendations for a good development of EVC in the Netherlands. Seven of these recommendations concern the system and 6 concern the procedure. One of the system dimensions refers to the usefulness and the gains of EVC: the effects of EVC should be made measurable, such as the growth of the number of diploma’s, certificates etc. based on EVC. Other results of EVC could lie in diminishing the number of drop-outs in the educational system, a higher number of people successful in the labour market and greater flexibility of employees.

In a recent report “What can be the profits of EVC” (Utrecht, 2002), the Knowledge Centre EVC – based on a number of case studies - has concluded, that with EVC a profit of 50% or more of the demanded subject qualifications will be possible, above all in the cases of employees who have already been active in the a labour organisation for some time. But also in the beginning of a career, EVC can result in tens of percents of exemptions and subject qualifications.

In the report, indications are given also of results of EVC in the following areas:

- material investments (shortening of education time);
- recognition of the work place as a learning environment;
- socio-psychological results;
- follow up profits;
- HRM and employability;
- social profits.

All people involved in the case studies underlying the report, have a positive judgement on EVC, or in any case support the desirability to value the competencies acquired by experience on the job in order to set up a route for further development. In practice, they would like to develop an application of EVC which fits their situation. The result will be, that the variety of EVC practices will grow in the Netherlands.

Component 2. Description of institutional arrangements

Component 2.1. Political and legal framework

2.1.a) Describe, if any, clear political will or statements and policy responses in your country on lifelong learning which are explicitly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

In 2000, the Council of Ministers of the European Union had its regular semi-annual meeting in Lisbon. They decided, that in 2010 Europe should become the most competitive economy in the world, by strengthening its knowledge based economy and by improving employment in the various countries. These decisions are called the Lisbon-objectives. In the framework of these aims, the European leaders agreed, that education and training should be strongly supported.

As a consequence of these Lisbon-objectives, the Dutch government proposed to bring the participation of (professional) population to education and training on a higher level. In the Plan of Action "A life long learning" (2004), the Ministers concerned, amongst others the Ministers of Education, of Social Affairs and of Economic Affairs, have announced the measures to be taken in order to attain these objectives. According to the Ministers, all available competencies should be deployed in the knowledge society the Netherlands would like to become, especially by using certification of competencies acquired by independent (non-regular) learning routes (erkenning van verworven competenties, EVC). The Ministers stressed the importance of EVC, not only for the personal development of the individuals but also the labour market.

Aims of their Programme are:

- it is important that Dutch citizens learn as long as they live, in order to participate in the knowledge economy and the knowledge society;
- Dutch citizens should pursue not only a professional career but also a learning career; both careers will continuously alternate with each other and strengthen each other.

The Ministers agreed that there should be 3 lines of programming.

1. Learning and working routes (dual routes), in order to promote that young people and adults combine their work or their seeking for work with learning activities and training, which lead to a (professional) qualification on the labour market.
2. Learning and working desks in order to provide employees and seekers of employment with easy access to career advice, training facilities and recognition of acquired competencies. Instruments for this line of programming are: regional desks and an on-line market place for interactive information concerning training and learning programmes.
3. Levelling the thresholds as well as stimulation and innovation by 3 projects:
 - an investigation into the accessibility and availability of financial instruments for life long learning procedures;
 - tracing and improving innovative best practices, already effective in practice;
 - introduction of an "associate degree" in the higher vocational system, by experiments with a two year education programme in the bachelor's phase.

In the Plan of Action of 2004, the Ministers concerned formulated the following concrete targets in this perspective:

- the number of EVC procedures to be carried out should increase from 20.000 in 2006 to at least 50.000 in 2010 for adults;
- 50 % of the EVC procedures should result in a legally acknowledged degree or a certificate which is recognised by the sector concerned.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Ministers have established an interdepartmental Project Directorate, existing of representatives of all Ministries concerned. The following targets are to be attained before October 1st 2007:

- 20.000 consumers of existing and new EVC-programmes;
- 15.000 new learning and working routes (dual routes);
- 20 regional learning and working desks (in 2005: 4 regional desks should have started with subventions on a pilot base) .

In the above mentioned recent letter (component 1.6.a) "Learning, that works!" (September 2006), the Ministers of Education, Culture and Science and of Social Affairs stated, that these objectives of 2004 should be extended with:

- at least 20.000 extra learning and working routes for adult people without starter's qualifications;

- at least 10.000 EVC routes for adult people;
- EVC courses in secondary vocational education institutions (MBO-schools) should be further developed. It is estimated that EVC procedures should be developed for at least 4.200 training programmes (about half of the actual number of training programmes) in order to get the EVC supply of MBO in perfect order. An amount of €21 mlj. will be provided for this objective.

These new objectives should be attained by strengthening the already existing regional co-operation of secondary vocational schools, employers and municipalities. For this co-operation, an amount of €10 million has been made available.

2.1.b) Do you have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning? Please state – yes, under development/discussion, or no. For those who answered ‘No’, describe possible reasons for the inexistence as well as possible future prospects. For those who answered ‘yes’ or ‘under development/discussion’, please answer to the following questions.

Yes.

2.1.c) Describe the aim(s) and principles stated in the framework?

There is no special law on recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The State Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment and of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science have enacted two formal Temporary Regulations concerning this subject to stimulate learning and working routes.

1. The Temporary Regulation Learning and working

The Temporary Regulation Learning and working of the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment has been published in the official State Journal of 16 December 2005. The Temporary Regulation will provide an important stimulus to realise the above mentioned targets of the Interdepartmental Working Group (Component 2.1.a), as far as the MBO-education sector is concerned. A system of subventions has been announced in order to promote regional co-operation, especially as a contribution to the organisational costs. The parties concerned (municipalities, secondary vocational schools and regional employer’s organisations), should sign a declaration of intent of co-operation and submit a plan of activities in order to be considered for a subvention. The amount of money available for these co-operation activities will be €5.7 million.

2. Regulation to stimulate the EVC activities in the HBO sector

Also the recent Regulation of the Minister of Education (July 5th 2006) to stimulate the EVC activities in the HBO sector (higher education) is a temporary one. The Minister will provide subsidies for organisational costs to improve and adapt the supply of EVC learning and working routes. It is the intention of the Minister that the HBO institutions should use the possibilities to differentiate their educational programmes in order to make it easier for people with a non-traditional background to take HBO courses. The Ministers hope, that in this way the competencies of more (potential) professionals can be developed. The subventions will only be procured for EVC routes of at least 200 participating employees and people seeking employment. The subvention applicant should make visible how these routes will be promoted towards employers, employees and people seeking employment. Up until now, 7.995 EVC routes in the higher education sector have been supported by this regulation.

3. Tax deduction

Starting January 1st 2007, there will be a possibility of tax deduction for the costs of employers and employees for EVC procedures. The employers will receive a compensation for the costs of the EVC

procedures of their employees. The employees can get a deduction of income tax for the EVC costs they spend.

2.1.d) Describe the historical background that this issue has been taken up. What are the most important drivers of legislation? If there has been already reform of the legislation, describe the change and the pressure which made the change.

Historical background

At the start of the nineties, it was a general policy, that the institutions of regular education should open their doors to adults. The reason for this was that, in modern society, people should possess more knowledge. Employers will demand more of their employees.

In 1993, the Government established an advisory committee “Recognising Acquired Qualifications” The committee put forward recommendations concerning improving accessibility of educational institutions, by formal qualifying and certifying, which were seen as a useful contribution to the labour and learning markets of individuals. The Government made quite some money available, to make a start with EVC procedures, but did not provoke real innovations, as far as policy making in this field is concerned. In practice, a number of pilot projects in the areas of construction and health care have been developed.

For the recommendations and follow up of the report “The glass is half full”: see Component 1.6.b.

For the establishment and instruction of the Knowledge Centre EVC in 2001: see Component 1.4.d.

For the 2004 Plan of Action “A long life learning”: see Component 2.1.a.

For the establishment and instruction of the Project Directorate Learning and Working in 2005: see Component 2.1.a.

The 2004 Plan of Action “A life long learning” has been changed into a Plan of Approach “Strengthening Learning and Working”: see Component 2.1.a.

In 2005 the State Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment has enacted a formal Temporary Regulation on Stimulating learning and working routes, see Component 2.1.c.

In 2006 the Minister of Education, Culture and Science has enacted the Temporary Regulation on Stimulating EVC in HBO institutions, see Component 2.1.c.

Driving forces

The most important driving forces of above mentioned legislation have been:

- The Minister for Education, Culture and Science, the State Secretary of Social Affairs and the Minister of Economic Affairs as well as their departments;
- employer’s organisations, confronted with the problems of a shortage of qualified personnel;
- representatives of trade unions, interested in the possibilities of improving the chances of employees on the labour market, especially their mobility;
- a number of secondary vocational schools and HBO-institutions, because of the possibility to enlarge the number of participants and to contribute to a real need felt in practice;
- Centres of expertise on Vocational Education, training and the labour market (Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs en Bedrijfsleven, KBB’s).

2.1.e) What areas of competencies do governments have or intend to have? Are there any specific areas that are/ to be regulated by law or by social partners for professional recognition?

Senior secondary vocational education

The Law on Adult Education and Vocational Education (WEB, 1996) contains not only legal regulations on regular vocational education, but also regulations on (adult) education. (Adult) education is directed towards the promotion of personal development with respect to the social functioning of adults, by the development of their knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes connected with their demands, possibilities and experiences as well as the social needs. It is stated in the law, that the admission requirements of adult education are connected with the admission requirements of regular vocational education, if possible. The following training programmes are considered to belong to (adult) education:

- training programmes secondary general adult education directed to awarding diploma's;
- training programmes directed to broad social functioning;
- training programmes Dutch as a second language;
- other training programmes directed to social independence.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science, in co-operation with his colleague of Agriculture, has special competencies in the field of vocational education and adult education, not only where financing of the MBO schools is concerned, but also in guaranteeing the quality of vocational and adult education in the Netherlands. In consideration of the last mentioned competence, the Minister is charged with the responsibility:

- to maintain the national Inspectorate on Education;
- to take care of the so-called national Qualification structure for vocational and adult education;
- to set the standards for the examinations and to appoint the national Quality centre for Examinations Vocational Education (in Dutch: Kwaliteitscentrum Examinering Beroepsonderwijs, KCE).

Annually the Minister formulates the content of the Qualification structure, in which for every field of vocational education is described:

- the goals of the educational programme;
- the various subject qualifications of these goals;
- the subject qualifications that are obligatory for awarding a diploma of a vocational programme;
- the study load;
- the learning routes.

These elements of the Qualification structure are drawn by the Ministers upon the recommendation of the KBB's in the respective fields of vocational education.

The standards of the examinations for vocational education and adult education concern:

- the content and the level of the examinations in relation to the goals of the educational programmes;
- the procedures with regard to the examinations and the conditions of the examinations.

Higher education

Based on the Law on Higher Education and scientific research (WHW, Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek, 1992), institutions for higher education can have their educational programmes registered in the central register for training in higher education (CROHO). Registration is compulsory for government financing, for determining the right of students to government allowances (studiefinanciering) and for government permission to provide degrees. In short,

educational programmes and institutions registered in CROHO are recognised by the Minister of Education. The Minister has appointed the organisation NVAO for accrediting institutions (assessing the quality of the training programmes), reviewing new training programmes and advising the Minister about prolongation of master programmes at universities.

Within higher education, three kinds of institutions can be discerned.

1. Financed institutions

These institutions are financed by the ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences (OC&W) and the ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food quality (LNV). They charge their students a lecture fee, which has been determined by the Minister of education. There are 64 of these institutions (Schools for higher education, universities and the Open University). Their students can automatically apply for a government allowance (studiefinanciering), and need to meet the demands in the admission policies set by the government.

2. Designated institutions

These institutions are not financed by the government. Their training programmes are registered in CROHO. They are free to determine their lecture fees, charged to the students. Also, within certain boundaries, they can determine their own admission policies. Their students can apply for a government allowance (studiefinanciering). The law on higher education only partly applies to these institutions. There are 60 of these schools for higher education and 8 universities.

3. Private institutions

The law on higher education (WHW) does not apply to these institutions. Examples are foreign universities and business schools.

Starting in 2007, a two year experiment will be carried out, in which institutions previously not financed by the government, will be allowed to give courses financed by the government (the so called "open system").

Stimulating co-operation

The Dutch Government has acted as a stimulator of co-operation between municipalities, employer's organisations, trade unions, schools and institutions of higher education, by providing for subventions for the organisational costs as well as by starting new regional information desks and demanding declarations of intention to co-operate in the cases of supplying subventions.

Establishing the Knowledge Centre EVC

At the same time, the Dutch Government has made it possible that a Knowledge Centre in the field of EVC has been established, in order to investigate the possibilities to improve EVC and to support the development and implementation of new EVC programmes as well as the accessibility of the existing programmes and to develop a quality model.

Eliminating financial barriers

The Dutch Government has eliminated financial barriers for the participation in EVC programmes.

Monitoring EVC activities

The Dutch Government itself does not interfere in the process of monitoring of the EVC activities. The monitoring will be provided by the Inspectorate for Education, an independent agency of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

Requirements for foreign students

In case of formal recognition of special professions, for instance in the medical and care sphere and educational professions, the Government has enacted and will enact special requirements for students who have studied at foreign institutions or who have special experience that qualifies them for the specific jobs.

2.1.f) Describe, if any, operational systems to put the legal framework into practice. Who set up the system(s)?

Four (groups of) organizations are relevant.

A. The Project Directorate Learning and Working

The Project Directorate Learning and Working has been established by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The Project Directorate has been described in 2.1.a, the regulations it carries out have been described in 2.1.c. Extra attention to the Project Directorate will be paid in 2.2.d.

B. The Knowledge Centre EVC

The Knowledge Centre EVC is working on the instructions of the Project Directorate Learning and Working. Its main objective is: development, implementation and accessibility of EVC instruments and guaranteeing the quality of EVC procedures. This objective will be reached by three groups of activities.

1. Sharing knowledge and expertise, for instance by facilitating EVC platforms: meetings in which expertise is shared, in which there is place for deepening and attunement and the participants act as promoters of diffusion of EVC experiences. There are different platforms:

- platform for the vocational education sector;
- platform for the Expertise Centres;
- platform for the HBO sector;
- platform for the regions (to be formalised).

2. Implementation of a quality code

3. Innovation of knowledge and expertise

The Knowledge Centre EVC has the following target groups: organisations for economic sectors, trade unions, advisory offices, companies, MBO schools (ROC's), HBO institutions, Centre for Work and Income and public authorities. The activities of the Knowledge Centre EVC are mainly directed towards working citizens (paid and unpaid).

C. The Empowerment Centre EVC

The Empowerment Centre EVC directs its attention towards unemployed citizens. This Foundation aims at full use of EVC, to individualize labour market integration, Life long learning and participation in society of unemployed and vulnerable groups on the labour market.

Nationally and internationally, the Empowerment Centre develops EVC-instruments for persons with are at a relatively great distance to the labour market, like drop-outs, new comers and restarters. An EVC procedure can support these individuals in getting a clear picture of their qualities and possibilities. Each individual him/herself should be given the opportunity to discover what they want (more) and how to reach that under one's own steam.

D. Other organisations

Also the independent agency SenterNovem plays a role, because it has been charged with the allocation of the subventions according to the 2 Temporary Regulations described in Component 2.1.b. This Agency, established by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, is responsible for a broad area of services, mainly in the field of technological innovation, sustainability of the industrial enterprises and international co-operation.

Of course other organisations to be mentioned in this respect, are the Centre for Work and Income (mentioned in component 1.4.b.), the regional information desks as well as the schools and institutions of higher education and the sector organisations for development and training of employees working in the sector (O&O fondsen).

These sector organisations have been established by the employer's organisations and the trade unions in the sector; their funds are provided for in the negotiations of collective labour agreements as a part of the salaries and the employer's contribution. These funds stimulate innovation on the labour market, employment and training policy and promote various kinds of retraining and in-service training projects. Some funds are not only interested in profession-oriented professional knowledge of the employees, but also in their general development. In their policies the funds can have different priorities. These priorities, dependent on the demand or the problems of the employers and the employees, can be: the optimisation of the availability of the employees, the improvement of the inflow of new employees, the revaluation of the image of the sector, the validation of the competencies of the employees.

2.1.g) Provide information of how they work or how they have not worked.

Most organisations mentioned, have only been in the business of EVC for a short time. Not many formal evaluations have taken place.

However, it is clear that the Project Directorate has been successful in bringing together the expertise of the two most important Ministries involved, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Social Affairs. The two Temporary Regulations mentioned before (Component 2.1.a) can be seen as proof of this statement.

Ordered by the Ministries concerned, an evaluation has been made of the starting years of the Knowledge Centre. This evaluation took place in 2004. In its report, also based on the experiences and opinions of a number of people "in the field", the evaluation commission concluded that the Knowledge Centre has been successful in:

- creating a powerful basis and network;
- making itself useful source of information;
- being a source of inspiration and promotor of the concept of EVC;
- acting as a provider of best practices;
- developing itself as a authority in the field of EVC experts with a good reputation;
- having an independent position towards the other parties in EVC.

According to the evaluation commission, the Knowledge Centre should pay more attention to being successful in:

- getting in touch with a number of economic sectors as well as the HBO institutions. The Centre should have more attention for the so called "white spots". The Centre should work in a more systematic way;
- realising that the investigations carried out appeared to have a limited use for the overall EVC consumer;

- accentuating the necessity of ‘tailored made solutions’, connected with the stage of development of EVC in a sector of industry;
- making the EVC ‘play ground’ more clearly structured and more efficient.

Based on the recommendations of the evaluation commission, the Knowledge Centre has adapted its policy in the last years.

2.1.h) Describe outreach activities or awareness-raising activities of the framework or the operational systems. How are the objectives of outreach/awareness-raising activities articulated? Which audience(s) do the activities mainly target?

By the Knowledge Centre EVC

These activities are one of the most important tasks of the Knowledge Centre for EVC; to share knowledge is its first assignment. This is carried out by:

- the publication of the bi-monthly EVC Magazine;
- a number of reports and scientific publications of staff members and other scientists;
- annually awarding of the EVC prizes since 2002. In 2006 two prizes are awarded: the EVC Encouragement Prize and the EVC Sustainability Prize;
- organising knowledge round tables upon the basis of special themes;
- it's Web site.

These outreach activities of the Knowledge Centre have as an audience the experts in the regional information centres, the staff members of KBB-Centres, schools and institutions of higher education, Ministries, the employer's organisations, trade unions, the O&O funds, Centre for Work and Income, municipalities, universities etc.

By the Project Directorate Learning and Working

The Project Directorate Learning and Working has started a public relations campaign (“Development works”) in order to provide the public in the regions with information on the development and the possibilities of EVC in accordance with its needs, formulated in the declarations of intent necessary for the drawing of EVC subventions. The campaign is also directed to the support of regional partners to start a PR campaign concerning their activities in the regions and in the sectors concerned. In the campaign use can be made of posters, flyers, advertisements, movies, best practices, banners and the website of the Project Directorate. The website contains links to the websites of the Knowledge centre EVC, the Taskforce Youth unemployment and the website “Opleiding en beroep” (training and profession). The website “Opleiding en beroep” offers information not only about EVC, but about all services people can use, for life long learning. This website is visited by 2.000 persons a day.

O&O Funds

Finally, the O&O funds have an important task in promoting EVC. Information on EVC activities and possibilities is circulated on web sites, flyers, posters, and by happenings for employers and employees in the sector for which the O&O fund is active.

Component 2.2. Governance and the role of government

2.2.a) List all actors in governance and create a matrix of who (e.g. government, quasi-government, assessment centres, public educational institutions, private for-profit education providers, professional bodies, etc.) does what (provides academic/ professional recognition, overseas assessment, etc.) for non-formal and informal learning. If there are more than one body who are responsible for an action (e.g. recognition), list all actors involved and describe how is the coordination managed? If there are more than one ministry of a government are involved, specify which ministries have competencies for what. How clear are the different roles by different actors communicated among themselves as well as to users?

List of ‘who does what’ for non-formal and informal learning and recognition of such learning

Who?	What?
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law on Vocational Education and Adult education - Temporary Regulation on Stimulating EVC in HBO institutions - Subventions to HBO institutions - Information concerning EVC - Development of new EVC activities - Formal recognition of EVC routes in the case of teacher’s education - Supporting the Knowledge Centre EVC
Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Temporary Regulation on Stimulating EVC in MBO institutions - Subventions to MBO institutions - Information concerning EVC - Development of new EVC activities - Labour market research on new EVC opportunities - Supporting the Knowledge Centre EVC
Project Directorate Working and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation and Execution of the formal Regulations - Information on EVC activities - Preparing the budget decisions for new EVC activities
Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information concerning EVC in agriculture - Subventing EVC activities in agricultural schools
Ministry of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information concerning EVC procedures in health - Recognising competencies for health and care professions

Who?	What?
Ministry of Finance	- Tax rules in order to stimulate the participation of EVC by enterprises and individual employees
Knowledge Centre for EVC	- To gather knowledge on the use of EVC - To develop knowledge on the use of EVC - To disseminate the knowledge on the use of EVC
Centres of expertise on Vocational education, training and labour market (KBB Centres united in Colo)	- Development of EVC procedures - Execution of EVC procedures - Information concerning EVC activities - Development and maintenance of EVC qualification structure
Colo (the united KBB's)	- Equivalency of diploma's ¹
MBO- institutions (Regional Education Centres, united in MBO-Council)	- Development of EVC procedures - Execution of EVC procedures - Information concerning EVC activities - Taking part in the Learning and Working Desks
Nuffic (Netherlands organisation for international co-operation in higher education)	- Equivalency of diploma's ¹
Private training centres (united in PAEPON)	- Development of EVC procedures - Execution of EVC procedures - Information concerning EVC activities
Quality Centre Examination (Kwaliteits Centrum voor Examinering, KCE)	- Recognising the suppliers of EVC
HBO institutions	- Development of EVC procedures - Execution of EVC procedures - Information concerning EVC activities - Taking part in the Learning and Working Desks
Other suppliers of EVC (such as agencies for training, coaching and labour market-integration)	- Development of EVC procedures - Execution of EVC procedures - Information concerning EVC activities

¹ In the Netherlands, two centres of expertise work together on evaluating foreign diplomas (IDW): Nuffic (for higher education) and Colo (for senior secondary education). They set up an Information Centre for Credential Evaluation (IcDW).

Who?	What?
SenterNovem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of the subvention requests - Allocation of the subventions
NVAO (Netherlands Flemish Accreditation Organisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designating VBI's for reviewing the quality of EVC activities of institutions for higher education
VBI's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for reviewing the EVC activities of institutions for higher education by the standards of the Quality Code
O&O funds (development and training funds for economic sectors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financing of the development of EVC procedures - Financing of the execution of EVC procedures - Information concerning EVC
Individual enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financing of the development of EVC procedures - Financing of the execution of EVC procedures - Information concerning EVC
Employer's organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in the boards of KBB Centres - Participation in the boards of O&O funds - Participation Advisory council KCE - Information concerning EVC - Participation in regional information desks
Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in the boards of KBB Centres - Participation in the boards of O&O funds - Information concerning EVC - Participation in regional information desks
UWV (Executive institute of employees' assurances (Uitvoeringsorgaan werknemersverzekeringen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and stimulation of participation of EVC procedures
Centre for Work and Income (CWI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and stimulation of participation of EVC procedures
Regional and local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Co-) financing of EVC procedures - Participation in regional information desks working and learning
Associations of local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in regional information desks working and learning

2.2.b) Create the above same matrix for recognition of formal learning for comparative purposes.

List of 'who does what' for formal learning and recognition of such learning

Who?	What?
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation on education - Financing - Information - Quality assurance
Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation - Financing - Information
Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation - Financing - Information - Quality assurance
Ministry of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation - Financing - Information - Quality assurance
Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation - Financing
Centres of expertise on Vocational education, training and labour market (KBB's, united in Colo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and maintenance of qualification structure - Defining the terms for examination - Recognising enterprises for practical training
MBO- institutions (Regional Education Centres, united in MBO-Council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of teaching programmes - Teaching - Development of examinations - Execution of examinations - Awarding diploma's and certifications
Private training centres (united in PAEPON)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of teaching programmes - Teaching - Development of examinations - Execution of examinations - Awarding diploma's and certifications

Who?	What?
Quality Centre Examination (KCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determination of the standards of examinations - Control of the quality of examinations (content and procedures) - Monitoring the results of the MBO schools
Nuffic (Netherlands organisation for international co-operation in higher education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International recognition and certification of foreign diploma's
HBO institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of teaching programmes - Teaching - Development and execution of examinations - Awarding diploma's and certifications
NVAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registering training programs/courses of institutes for higher education - Accrediting courses of institutes for higher education (by assessing the quality of the courses) - Establishing international contacts and coherency
O&O Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Co)financing of training programmes for employees - Stimulating the supply of training programmes for employees - Stimulating the number of participants in MBO and HBO institutions - to stimulate the quality of vocational education - recognising training programmes for employees
Individual enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financing the training programmes of their employees
Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in the boards of KBB Centres - Participation in the boards of O&O funds - Participation Advisory council KCE - Information concerning training programmes and facilities
Employer's organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in the boards of KBB Centres - Participation in the boards of O&O funds - Participation Advisory council KCE - Providing professional competency profiles to the KBB's - Informing enterprises on training and regulations

2.2.c) Describe the competencies (direct and indirect role) of government in the practice? Which of the following three models would your country be classified with respect to governance: 1) a 'predominance-of-industry' model; 2) a 'predominance-of-public authorities' model'; and 3) a 'shared responsibility' model . Explain why that model fits into your country context. If there is a trend to shift to another model, describe driving forces for such change. Describe the details. If none of which is suitable to your country, describe your own country model.

The Dutch Government is responsible for:

- legislation on education, including EVC;
- facilitation of the partners concerned, including financial stimuli;
- monitoring the quality of the programmes and examinations;
- stimulating the co-operation of partners concerned;
- information on EVC in the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, the Government has chosen for the third model of 'shared responsibility', in the sense that the partners in the economic sectors (employer's organisations and trade unions as well as the O&O funds) are responsible for the development of programmes, the participation of employees in training programmes, information on programmes and the financing of the courses.

It is up to the MBO schools, HBO institutions and other (private) suppliers of educational courses, to develop the courses and to execute them, as well as to take care of the examinations. The quality of the examinations is inspected by the Quality Centre for Examinations (KCE) for the MBO schools (senior secondary level). NVAO assesses the quality of the training programmes carried out by the HBO institutions (higher education). Both KCE and NVAO are independent agencies, established and financed by of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The third model of 'shared responsibility' fits extremely well into the Dutch context, because in most fields of policy, one can find a subtle equilibrium of responsibilities by taking care of the expertises to be found at the different levels concerned. It is a generally accepted philosophy in the Netherlands, that the responsibilities should be placed on the lowest possible level, as near as possible to the target groups to be served. In the field of labour market policy, the Dutch Government has claimed the role of facilitator and stimulator and has entrusted as much as possible the responsibility to the social partners: employer's organisations and trade unions, even the necessity to finance the EVC programmes.

In the context of this third model it is understandable, that a quality system for EVC will not be imposed by the Government, but is the result of serious discussion of the parties concerned and will be laid down in an agreement signed by these parties.

2.2.d) Describe, if any, inter-Ministerial approaches to the issue? Describe also the policy objectives behind such approaches as well as positive results and challenges to date.

The Project Learning and Working

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the State Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment, in accordance with their colleagues of the Agriculture, Economic Affairs, Health and Finance, decided in March 2005, to start the Project Learning and Working and have formed a separate Project Directorate, that reports to the two members of Government.

The Project has been given the objective to stimulate and to support all parties concerned, especially trade unions, employer's organisations, individual citizens, private enterprises, institutions of education, the Centre for Work and Income, municipalities and O&O funds, to make possible an broad network of life long learning programmes. EVC activities can be considered to be part of these programmes.

The Project Directorate co-ordinates all activities of the 2 Ministries concerned in the field of life long learning. It would like to broaden and support the existing initiatives; it will support the infrastructure necessary for the execution of a Life long learning policy in the country. The Project Directorate considers regional co-operation to be a starting point for its policy. It would like to use existing initiatives and networks as much as possible. In case the execution of concrete programmes seems to be hindered by departmental regulations, the Directorate will seek solutions as soon as and as concrete as possible.

By January 2007, the activities of the Project Directorate have resulted in:

- declarations of intent of different parties in more than 37 regions and sectors leading to:
 - o 19.870 EVC routes;
 - o agreements for the establishment of 20 learning and working desks;
 - o 24.917 extra dual routes;
- a Public Relations campaign;
- the Temporary Stimulus Regulation for HBO institutions (with subventions);
- the Temporary Stimulus Regulation for MBO schools (with subventions);
- 37 regional or sectoral programmes of learning and working;
- the signing of the quality covenant (EVC code) on November 14th 2006 (see Component 2.3.d.).

“Vocational education in business”

Also in the broader programme “Vocational education in business” (“Beroepsonderwijs in bedrijf”) the Ministries of Education, of Social Affairs and Employment and of Economic Affairs have described their intention to strengthen their investments in the infrastructure for learning and working by an amount of €229,5 million in 2007 and 2008. These investments are to be financed from the so called FES means, which will become available in 2007 and 2008 in the FES fund (a fund for improving the economic structure). For 2008, an amount of €115 million has been reserved.

Part of this broader programme is the establishment of a fund of €65 million to endorse the co-operation of vocational education and trade and industry. The programme calls on strengthening the infrastructure for learning and working through regional co-operation and developing the prior conditions for training programmes.

An amount of €10 million for stimulating the regional consortia is a part of this fund. The three Ministries will elaborate these intentions in the near future. The rest of the means of the fund will be used for innovation projects to improve the availability and quality of traineeships and learning and working routes by a better match between demand and supply and tailor made solutions.

Component 2.3. Resources

2.3.a) Who is/are the financing body(ies) for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What is the policy thinking behind such financing? What is the annual budget 2004/2005? (Please convert to Euro.) Provide data, if possible, on the breakdown of how the budget has been spent.

The financing bodies in the Netherlands for EVC are:

- the employers;
- the employees;
- the regional and local authorities, especially the municipalities;
- the O&O funds.

All these bodies can make use of:

- the subventions of the Government (the recent Temporary Stimulus Regulations for MBO and HBO institutions);
- the tax deduction of the Ministry of Finance for employers (see Component 2.1.c);
- the stimuli of the Project Directorate Learning and Working;
- subventions of the European Social Fund;
- the income tax deduction of the Ministry of Finance for employees (see Component 2.1.c).

As mentioned before, the policy philosophy is: the Government is facilitating and stimulating; the social parties in the field and the schools carry out, each party in accordance with its expertise.

The annual budget for EVC programmes is to be divided by:

- A. a budget directly used for the development and implementation of EVC programmes
- B. a part of the budget to facilitate and to create favourable conditions for all kinds of training facilities for employees (of which EVC is a part).

Ad A. The budget directly used for the development and implementation of EVC programmes

A.1. Government

- subventions to HBO institutions (the Temporary Stimulus Regulation), 2006	€ 6.800.000,-
- subventions to MBO schools (the Temporary Stimulus Regulation), 2006	€ 5.700.000,-
- extra financing for development of 4200 routes by MBO schools (FES), 2006	€ 21.000.000,-
- Knowledge Centre EVC (2006)	€ 1.500.000,-
TOTAL	€ 35.000.000,-

A.2. O&O funds

- about 5% of their total expenditures to be used for EVC programmes	€17.500.000,-
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Ad B. A part of the budget to facilitate and to create favourable conditions for all kinds of training facilities for employees (of which EVC is only a part).

B.1. Government

- Extra-deduction of taxes for training activities of enterprises (2006)	€ 40.000.000,-
- Tax deduction for employers (WVA), 2006	€ 229.000.000,-
- European Social Fund (ESF) (2000-2006) training for employees and training and labour market integration for unemployed	€ 40.000.000,-

- Project Directorate Learning and Working (2005)	€ 10.800.000,-
- Temporal stimulus Regulation learning and working routes (Min. Social Aff)	€ 33.000.000,-
- ESF Equal start subvention (project non-traditional enrolment groups Empowerment Centre)	€ 5.000.000,-
<i>TOTAL</i>	€ 357.800.000,-

The extra deduction of taxes for training activities of employers is part of an agreement of the government with the employers, that €40 million will be made available for fiscal measures, in order to stimulate traineeships and training programmes of employees (of which EVC can be a part). It concerns the further deduction of the amount of money to be paid for educational activities (“verhoging van de afdrachtvermindering onderwijs”) and the introduction of a new possibility for deduction of the amount of money to be paid for educational activities, namely the traineeships of the MBO level 1 and 2 in the school oriented route (BOL).

For 2007, the government has indicated in the state budget, that the following amounts of money should be available for the programme “Vocational education in business”: €115 mlj (€82.250.000,- in the budget of the Ministry of Education and €32.500.000,- in the budget of the Ministry of Economic Affairs). These resources will be dedicated to:

- 7.000 tailor made learning and working routes for youngsters and 20.000 for adults;
- funding;
- 4.200 EVC procedures;
- 5.400 traineeships for teachers;
- development of learning and examination material.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to break down the mentioned amounts of money, to how the budgets have been spent.

For 2008, another €115 million has been budgeted, these funds will be released after a positive evaluation of the funds reserved for 2007.

2.3.b) If the system has existed for some years, please provide the budget data since it existed. Has there been any increase/decrease of budget for recognition of non-formal and informal learning since a framework/system has been taken up? If so, describe any elements that have driven such change.

There has been an increase of budget for EVC activities in the last years, especially thanks to the budgets made available by the already mentioned Temporary Stimulus Regulations for MBO and HBO institutions. Experts do say, that also the O&O funds have increased their EVC programmes in the last years, but these funds do not have information on the precise amount of money spent on EVC. Probably, the main cause for the increase of budgets for EVC programs, is the awareness, that EVC can effectively contribute to the improvement of the competencies of employees, and that these competencies are necessary in an effort to strengthen the knowledge economy and society.

2.3.c) Who pays for the assessment and recognition processes? If an individual is to pay, how much does it cost to him/her? Break down the costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed, if relevant. Are there any cost-sharing arrangements between educational institutions and employers, between education institutions and government, etc.? Describe the costs arrangements.

As has been stated before, most of the costs of EVC programmes are provided for by the employer concerned, an O&O fund or by local authorities. Only in very few cases the employee him/herself

contributes to these costs. The costs of EVC programmes are not only related to the training activities, but usually comprise also the assessment or recognition processes.

The prices of EVC programmes vary from zero up to more than a few thousand Euro. Sometimes EVC providers do not charge a consumer of the programmes when he/she – beforehand or after finishing the EVC program - give notice of his/her willingness to enrol in a regular course of the same institute. The most expensive EVC procedures are the procedures in which an EVC organisation uses a lot of time and expertise in organising visits at the workshop, practical tests or career advising. In fixing a price of a EVC procedure it is also important to take into account the number of hours it costs an employee to participate, generally between 8 and 20 hours, as well as the time needed by his/her manager and/or portfolio drafter.

According to the Knowledge Centre EVC, EVC procedures carried out by institutions for higher education and by the KBB's, averagely cost an amount of €1.000,- up to €1.250,- per participant, including the costs of assessment and recognition of the results. EVC procedures carried out by MBO-institutions (senior secondary education) averagely are cheaper. This is possible because part of the costs are compensated for by the enrolment of the participant in regular training programs.

2.3.d) How many assessment centres and/or assessors exist to date, if any? Where are such assessment centres located? Please specify the areas/regions with characteristics of such areas/regions (e.g. the average income, the income disparity, etc.) How was the decision made where to locate such centres? How much does it cost to maintain such centres and/or assessors? How many training programmes exist: specify how many in a given year, if there are significant increases per year? How much does it cost to train such assessors? Break down by levels assessed, if relevant.

How many

Assessment centres can be found in the institutions of regular education:

- MBO schools (42 are acting as assessment centres according to the information of the Website of the Knowledge Centre EVC);
- Agricultural vocational centres (secondary schools for agriculture) (12 according to the website of KC EVC);
- 13 HBO institutions.

But also in:

- 8 special vocational schools (sport, transport, technical installations);
- 10 Knowledge centres;
- 4 private training centres;
- 9 other institutions as the Open University, the Foundation Training and Employment (Stichting Scholing en werkgelegenheid).

The most important centres can be found in 23 MBO-schools. In the HBO institutions EVC has only been started and is still in the first phases of development.

At this moment, the Knowledge Centre EVC is investigating the number of Assessment centres. This research will probably point out, that there are many more providers of assessment, than the list mentioned above.

Where

MBO schools and HBO institutions are spread over the country. Of course the MBO schools and HBO institutions offer a regular pattern; in fixing their location, the boards of the schools have taken into

account the number of MBO students to be expected and the supply of MBO education in the neighbourhood.

Assessors

The legal framework for MBO schools and HBO institutions does not give direct starting points for the quality demands to be formulated by the suppliers. In the Law on Vocational Education and Adult Education and the Law on Higher Education and Universities, one can find the requirements for the organisation and execution of the assessment and examination, but EVC has not been mentioned in these laws. Because EVC leads to acquiring of diploma's and certificates, assessment in EVC should be considered a form of examination. The requirements for EVC assessment should be equal to the requirements for the MBO examinations. This seems to be also the philosophy of KCE which is now responsible for guaranteeing the quality system of MBO schools. In the publication "The glass is half full", a system of quality guaranteeing has been called a pre requisite of a successful use of EVC.

Most of the MBO institutions have a manual for the examination procedures, in which all kinds of problems are regulated, such as:

- education and examination rules
- the examination committee
- the appointment of examiners
- commission of appeal.

The examination system in vocational education and adult education in the Netherlands is a copy of the examination system of the UK where a national qualification structure has been established more than 10 years ago; the national vocational qualifications (NVQ's). The assessment takes place on the basis of portfolio development and evidence of (subject)qualifications, performance criteria, assessment criteria and range statements. Besides this procedure for qualification, an elaborate system has been developed for qualification of assessors, in- and external verification. The Netherlands have also a system of external qualification in the form of KCE. Accreditation of examiners has not yet been formalised in our country.

Regional spreading of assessment centres is also advocated by the employer's organisations which sometimes demand assessment in different regions as a prerequisite of the enrolment of their employees in EVC procedures.

Costs of training assessors

At the moment, there is no clear answer on the question of the costs for the maintenance and upkeep of assessment centres and the training of assessors in the Netherlands. Up until now, there are no formal training programmes nor competency standards for assessors. Most suppliers of EVC train their own EVC assessors or offer an external training route, consisting most of the time of a 1.5 – 2.5 days training course, which in practice appears to be not enough. That is the reason why the Knowledge Centre EVC has developed a competency profile for assessors in EVC procedures and is working at the development of a system for accrediting EVC assessors (ISO orientated). The Knowledge Centre EVC is of the opinion, that every EVC assessor should possess an EVC certificate for the competencies of assessor.

Initiated by a number of educational and examination institutes, a start has been made to set up a system of certification of assessors, test constructors and quality managers. It is the intention that this system will get an official ISO certificate.

Component 2.4. Others

2.4.a) Provide any other institutional arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

The Quality code

In order to streamline the qualification procedures the Knowledge Centre for EVC has developed a *Quality code (EVC code)*, which appeared to get quite some support of all parties concerned and the professionals in the field of EVC. Upon the basis of the experiences with the EVC code, the different parties have discussed the possibility of developing a Covenant regarding the voluntary use of a Quality code for EVC.

The signing of the Covenant has taken place on November 14th 2006. The Covenant, signed by quite a number of organisations such as the State Secretary of Education, Colo (Union of Centres of expertise on vocational education, training and labour market), CWI, the HBO council, the MBO council and the AOC council, is based on the following considerations.

- A. The use of EVC is steadily growing as well as the diversity of EVC procedures. It is important for everyone participating in EVC procedures to know beforehand the quality of the procedure. Parties involved in this Covenant would like to make arrangements on the quality of the EVC procedures.
- B. Parties do wish to establish a Quality code for EVC procedures and to use it on a voluntary basis.
- C. The Quality Code developed by the Knowledge Centre EVC together with a number of other organisations has sufficiently been accepted by the professionals who have worked with the Code.

Based on these considerations the parties involved have agreed;

1. That in an EVC procedure, the extent to which an individual possesses particular competencies should be described. These competencies can be related to a function, vocation or profession oriented standard. An EVC procedure results in a EVC report, in which the competencies will be described. This report is the result of a route, has an independent value for the participant and can lead to:
 - improvement or retention of the labour market position;
 - exemptions from parts of a training or vocational programme of educational institutions, as well as of training programmes of the economic sectors;
 - obtaining a diploma or (subject)certificate recognised by the economic sector (without the need of a continuous education);
 - obtaining a diploma or (subject)certificate recognised by the Minister of education or the Minister of Agriculture (also without the need for a continuous education).
2. That EVC can be the start of a tailor made training route to a diploma or certificate. It diminishes the costs for the employee and stimulates the (potential) employee to start a learning route (again). EVC should not obligatorily be connected with a training programme and has a value in itself for the individual.

3. That parties underline the following principles of EVC, which are described in the EVC Code:
 - the purpose of EVC is to make clear the competencies individuals have, to value these competencies and to recognise them;
 - EVC answers the needs of the individual. Individual rights and agreements with the suppliers of EVC should be clearly formulated and guaranteed;
 - Procedures and instruments should be reliable and based on good standards;
 - Assessors should be competent, impartial and independent. Their impartiality can be improved by training and by participating in learning networks;
 - The quality of EVC procedures should be guaranteed and continuously improved, for instance by regular evaluations.

4. The EVC Quality Code should contribute to the three objects connected with the introduction of EVC:
 - Make EVC accessible for more participants. To make clear what EVC is and how EVC should be supplied.
 - To stimulate the transparency by making it more easy to compare the EVC procedures.
 - Comparability and the guarantee of the professional qualification (in Dutch: civiel effect)

5. The EVC Code will be elaborated in a set of standards and norms. On January 1st 2007 this set is be agreed upon by the parties concerned.

6. All organisations which will supply EVC and use the EVC Code, will be recognised suppliers. The recognition as EVC supplier will take place upon the basis of a report of a reviewing organisation. A “recognised supplier of EVC” will be registered in the “Register of recognised EVC suppliers”.

Component 3. Description of technical arrangements

Component 3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework

3.1.a) What term does your country use for ‘Recognition of non-formal and informal learning’? Please provide the original term in your own language as well as the literally translated term in English. Please describe if the term has certain connotations, implications, specific associations, etc.

In the Netherlands the term “Erkennen van verworven competenties” (EVC) is used, literally translated in English: “Recognising acquired competencies”.

“Erkennen” means: to award a professional qualification (civil effect) to competencies on the basis of an independent judgement.

“Verworven” means: all competencies an individual has acquired, not taking into account the form and the place of learning.

“Competenties” means: the capacities of people to be developed in order to act in occurring situations in an adequate, effective, motivated, process oriented and result oriented way.

EVC is aimed at the recognising, validating and further developing all an individual has learned in all kinds of learning environments: in formal places like school, but also in non-formal or informal

settings like the workplace or at home. EVC wants to build on the competencies a person has already acquired.

EVC is to be considered at the same time a concept and an instrument. This means that, in the strict (or summative) sense of the term “EVC”, EVC is concentrated on the recognition and validation of all a candidate has learned. When this validation is taking place on the basis of a recognised standard, such as the MBO qualification standard, this will provide the candidate with certificates or a diploma.

In a broader (or formative) sense of the term “EVC”, EVC comprises also the stimulation of the real learning or knowledge development. The broader approach is directed to the development of the individual participant. In practice, this development proves to be of great value to organisations. EVC in this sense can be seen as an important instrument of career development.

The EVC procedure can be divided into a number of steps.

Step 1. Informing the candidate;

Step 2. Individual agreements: making a development-plan;

Step 3. Finding and inventorying competencies;

Step 4. Recognising and judging competencies;

Step 5. Describing the results of the procedure in an EVC-report;

Step 6. Proceeding with the elaboration of a personal development plan.

Looking at the way EVC is carried out in an wide variety of projects, we conclude, that several names are used for EVC-procedures and also the elements of the procedures used are diverse.

3.1.b) Describe if recognising of non-formal and informal learning is linked to qualifications, qualification systems, or qualifications framework in your country. Provide data, if any, on the impact of such linkages.

EVC as an alternative route to diploma's (the summative approach)

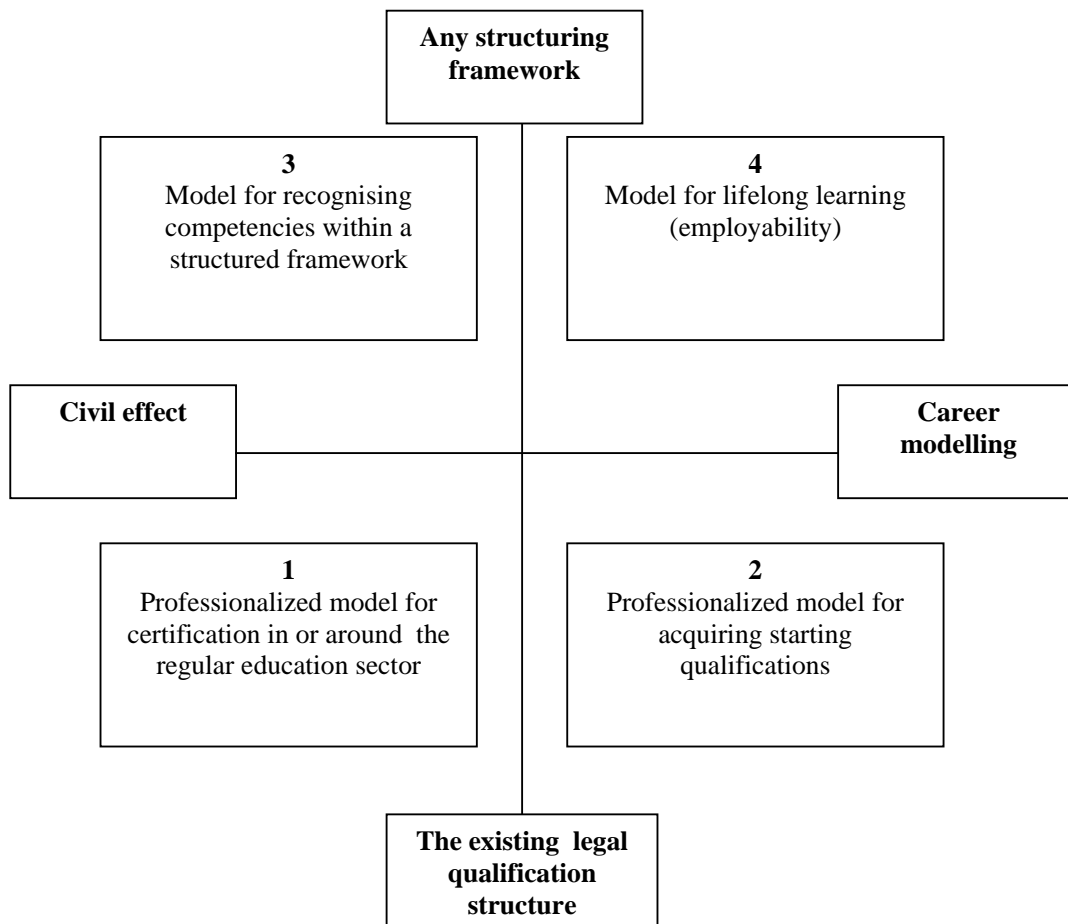
The summative approach focuses on recognising competencies within existing qualification- or certification structures. As an alternative route to diploma's, EVC procedures have to concur with the goals of the formal (legal) qualification structure (educational programming of MBO schools, the KCE standard or the accreditation framework of HBO institutions (NVAO) or standards developed by economic sector organisations or branche union, like quality standards like ISO-norms).

EVC as a system for career development (the formative approach)

EVC as a system for career development does not always necessarily lead to formally recognised certificates. EVC in the formative approach focuses on career modelling, connected to any form of participation in society, paid or unpaid. Important to mention in this context is, that enterprises are stimulated to make a kind of portfolio or report in the personnel dossiers, in which the actual competencies of the individual employee are described, as well as his/her personal development plan (POP) and the perspectives he/she appears to have on the labour market. The quality of this kind of portfolio or report depends on the quality of the manager or personnel assessor.

EVC is important because of its diversity, not only in supply, but also on the demand side. However, it is still possible to structure the broad area of EVC services in spite of the big diversities.

The structuring of EVC in the Netherlands is based upon two main lines; the objective and the context. In a matrix these lines form the four working spheres of EVC. This is graphically depicted in the scheme on the next page.



The four “working spheres” of EVC (Source: Knowledge Centre EVC 2003)

3.1.c) What kinds of qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, etc.) are more linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What are the difficulties or obstacles in linking recognition of non-formal and informal learning to qualification framework?

Qualifications

An EVC procedure can have as a result:

- Exemptions from the need to participate in subjects of a training programme. This will happen in educational institutions, as well as in training programmes recognised by the economic sector;
- (Subject)certificates or diploma’s recognised by the economic sector;
- A (subject)certificate or diploma in accordance with the regulations of the Minister of Education;
- Recently also: an EVC report, in which a survey will be given of all competencies of the individual. This document has value in itself, it is considered “proof of experience” (as it is called in Belgium). Or, as the Knowledge Centre EVC puts it: “EVC now has it’s own thing”.

With above mentioned results, an individual can choose an appropriate route to follow.

Difficulties

Difficulties and obstacles in linking EVC procedures to the qualification framework in the Netherlands are described below.

- The quality of the processes is not everywhere on the same level.
- The quality of the assessors is not well defined, although a profile has already been drafted.
- Educational institutions do not always accept the results of an individual acquired in another institution (insufficient exchangeability of certificates and other results).
- Participants are only enrolled in EVC procedures, if they also apply for the training programmes of that institute. Participants do not have an independent choice of the (kind of) EVC institute they want to use.
- In some cases, EVC procedures are used as admission requirements for a standard short training and not for a tailored training programme (inflexibility of the institutions).
- Private EVC institutions can offer a training programme on “white spots”, but appear to be too expensive (especially in the care sector).
- EVC procedures and career advice should be connected in a more clear way to each other;
- Senior secondary vocational education is making a switch to competence oriented educational programs and standards. It is yet unclear what consequences this switch will have for the possibilities to recognise participants for parts/fractions of qualifications.
- Accreditation of suppliers and/or assessors is not formally regulated (although the signing of the Quality Code EVC is expected provide sufficient quality assurances).
- Under the Quality Code, accreditation of suppliers and/or assessors will mainly be carried out by independent organisations (KCE and VBI’s). However, the methods for accreditation have yet to be developed.
- Financing: EVC is mainly connected with regular educational institutions (paid by the Government). In that situation, an EVC route will be a part of the regular teaching programmes. An individual has to choose first of all an educational institution and has to enrol at that institution. Then he or she will be allowed to participate in the formal programme. It has been argued, that a better form would be, that de participant himself would get a subvention in order to be free to shop everywhere he likes for a training programme, completely attuned to his demands.

3.1.d) Describe if there are differences in such linkages depending on whether the qualifications are professional or academic recognition? Can the link to the qualification systems legitimacy of such recognition be a means for establishing ‘legitimacy’ both in working life and in the educational system.

Academic recognition

The linkage of EVC to different kinds of qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, etc.) has been different in the case of academic or professional recognition. EVC procedures linked to academic performances are also linked to MBO or HBO qualification structures. It is generally accepted that these structures are very well connected with the demands of trade and industry. So the EVC qualifications based on training programmes of MBO schools or HBO institutions, can be considered to be in agreement with the demands of trade and industry. The qualification codes of MBO schools and HBO institutions are attuned to the demands of KCE and NVAO, the quality institutions for (the examinations) of the MBO and the HBO sectors.

In the case EVC procedures are a part of the examination of MBO schools or HBO institutions, KCE or VBI’s, designated by NVAO, evaluate also these procedures.

Professional recognition

Economic sector organisations choose their own quality assurance organisation, to check whether EVC procedures in their sector are in accordance with the standards of training programmes recognised by the economic sector. In the situation that also these EVC procedures will be integrated in the agreements of the above mentioned Covenant, it may appear that the legitimacy of these procedures will be on the same level as the legitimacy of the procedures of EVC acknowledged institutions.

3.1.e) If your country has a national qualification framework or in the process of establishing one, has the development towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning been one of the drivers for your country to establish one? Is the development of the qualification framework and its implementation in practice with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in parallel?

As a matter of fact, the development towards EVC has not been one of the driving forces to establish a national qualification framework. The development of such a framework has already started more than fifteen years ago, and the development of EVC (in a more structural way) is something of the last five years.

As has been mentioned before (Component 2.1.b) the Law on (Adult) Education and Vocational Education (1997) has introduced a Qualification Structure for secondary vocational education (BVE) in the Netherlands. Due from 1st august 1997, all BVE schools had to set up the educational programmes in agreement with the goals (eindtermen) formulated in the official Qualification Structure. The development of the Qualification framework for senior secondary vocational education and its implementation in practice, have preceded the start of EVC.

At this moment, senior secondary vocational education in the Netherlands is making a switch to competence oriented educational programs and standards. This development started in the mid-nineties, and is going to be completed in 2008. Obviously, many similarities between EVC and the regular educational system could materialize, in the way competences are tested and examined.

It is fair to say, that some experiences in the development of EVC activities do indeed have an impact on the further development of the qualification structure. For instance, the development of portfolio's and qualification dossiers in the EVC sector, is recently also adopted in the regular educational sector. In this context, it should be mentioned that good experiences in EVC procedures with competency driven training programmes, have led the MBO schools and the HBO institutions to introduce that kind of training concept. This development in MBO schools and HBO institutions has assumed such enormous proportions that the Knowledge Centre EVC has started a project to follow a number of people in the regular educational system in the switch to competency driven vocational education, in order to see whether this switch can contribute to new developments in EVC. In this way, one can notice a situation of reciprocal influences between the regular educational system and the EVC system.

3.1.f) What are some potential threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals? How can resistance from the higher education sector be overcome to embed the recognition of non-formal and informal learning into the qualification framework?

Institutes of higher education

EVC is considered to have the following potential threats/hindrances to HBO institutions:

- For higher education there is no lawful structure of qualifications, like there is for courses in senior secondary education (MBO). HBO institutions form their own training programmes. When these programmes are positively assessed by NVAO, such a course is recognised by the ministry of education, and certain rights come into action, under the law on higher education and scientific research (WHW) (see also 2.1.e). It is rather difficult in this situation, to get agreements on the competencies to be attained, and to develop independent and interchangeable EVC-procedures and EVC-reports.
- The HBO institutions do have limited contacts with trade and industry. For developing EVC procedures these contacts should be more intensified.
- EVC advises are not valued and accepted by the HBO institutions in the same way.
- Teachers in HBO institutions are afraid that in the EVC procedures the exemptions are given too easily.

Measures to be taken in order to diminish these threats and hindrances in HBO institutions:

- Stimuli to HBO institutions to get more experience in EVC procedures in practice;
- Adaptation of the law on higher and university education in order to enlarge the possibilities of EVC in HBO institutions (or even to accept EVC as a regular task of the HBO institutions);
- Exchange of experiences in HBO institutions (good practices);
- To improve the standardisation of EVC procedures in the HBO system;
- Focussing on the individual and his/her possibilities;
- Better information about the objectives, the developments and execution of EVC procedures.

Employers

EVC is considered to have the following potential threats/hindrances to employers:

- the fear that a well trained employee will move to another employer (paradox);
- the fear for extra costs for the training;
- the organisation of the workshop as a training facility demands quite a lot of the managers;
- the fear that the knowledge component will not be sufficiently tested; ('if an employee is able to carry out specific tasks, it is not clear that he possesses sufficient knowledge');
- education institutes are not able to provide employers with the EVC-procedures and the training programmes that will prove necessary, once the "EVC-train" is set in action.

Measures to be taken in order to diminish these threats and hindrances with the employers:

- to conduct a better HRM policy in order to improve the attractiveness of the enterprise;
- more subventions by O&O funds and employer's organisations;
- tax facilities for the employers (as from January 1st 2007 the employers can deduct their contribution for education (afdrachtvermindering onderwijs) with an amount of €300, - for every employee participating in an EVC procedure);
- to inform the employers in a systematic way about the profits they have in EVC procedures (a win-win-situation);
- cooperation between employers and educational institutions, to clarify the needs of employers, so that apt training and EVC procedures can be developed;
- better information concerning objectives, developments and execution of EVC procedures.

Employees

EVC is considered to have the following potential threats/hindrances to employees:

- The fear for a lot of time, effort and money to be spent;
- EVC is often associated with the earlier experience of learning ("it is a long time ago that I have been in a learning situation");

- The fear of not meeting the standards that other people (for instance the employer) expect them to attain by the EVC procedure;
- The idea “I am doing this work already for a long time and I do not need to do something else”

Measures to be taken in order to diminish these threats and hindrances with the employees:

- better information about objectives, developments and execution of EVC procedures;
- tailored made training programmes, directly connected with the demands and specific problems in the working place;
- organising the training programmes in such a way that these can be taken in the shortest possible time;
- develop didactic procedures that are practical, directly applicable in the work shop and related to the working experiences: learning and working on the spot;
- start as soon as possible with the programmes in order to keep the initial enthusiasm alive;
- tax facilities for the employee; from January 1st 2007, employees who pay themselves for EVC procedures, can get an income tax reduction, for all costs passing the threshold of €500,-. Employees will also acquire the possibility to use the saved wages (spaarloon) for expenses on EVC.

Component 3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer

3.2.a) Describe any formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning, if they exist. What are general policies, objectives, and legislative, regulatory or sectoral agreement frameworks for such credit arrangements? How are the arrangements used - at similar levels, between different levels, or between different sectors. Provide data, if any, of actual users (number of users, at what level, which sector, transition path, etc.).

The signing of the Quality Code EVC (mentioned in component 2.4.a) is an important step towards a formal credit arrangement for non-formal and informal learning. In this covenant, the principles for the quality of EVC-procedures are defined. From the moment the Covenant will be in force, one can say that the most important parties in the field of EVC suppliers do have an agreement, in the framework of which it is possible to come to terms with each other as far as the acceptance of credits is concerned.

The main elements of the Quality Code are printed in component 3.4.a.

3.2.b) Who is/are responsible for credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning? Is it different from the arrangements for formal learning?

Formal learning

The credit arrangements for formal learning are described in the different laws on education.

Non-formal and informal learning

Formal credit arrangements for EVC are the responsibility of all parties concerned: employer's organisations, trade unions, EVC suppliers and the Ministries involved in this field. These parties have signed the covenant “Quality code EVC”. As a consequence of this covenant, the outcomes of EVC-procedures (reports) will be standardized, and the suppliers and assessors will be accredited, in accordance with the rules mentioned in the Quality code EVC.

The Quality code EVC is detailed in a set of criteria. At January 1st 2007, these criteria were agreed upon by the parties who signed the Covenant. This set of criteria will be used by the organisations

responsible for judging and monitoring the quality of EVC-procedures. Judging and monitoring the quality of EVC procedures will presumably be carried out by KCE (Knowledge Centre for Examination), for senior secondary vocational training and by the VBI's (organisations appointed by NVAO), for higher education. For EVC in sectors or EVC in the field of labour market (re-) integration, governing bodies will be allowed to choose the organisation which will carry out the quality monitoring from a list of organisations that has been drawn up by the partners who signed the Quality code.

3.2.c) How is a credit counted? Number of hours of a course? Please specify how credits are counted on what base in your country.

As explained in component 3.1.b, EVC carried out from the summative perspective, generally leads to diploma's or certificates within the formal education system (recognised by the Ministry of Education) or to certificates recognised by sectors.

Generally, these credits are counted on different bases:

- the hours of a course or experience in the workshop,
- the level of the course or experience;
- the subject;
- the results.

Outcomes of EVC carried out in the context of re-integrating persons into society, in some cases are linked to the same credit system, and in other cases do not link to any formal credit system.

In the long run, the Quality code EVC will result in all EVC-routes to be carried out by organisations that work according to the principles of the EVC code, and are registered as such in a registry of accredited suppliers of EVC. Until December 31st 2007, this registry will be controlled by the Knowledge Centre EVC, and published at www.kenniscentrumevc.nl.

3.2.d) What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?

Incentives for participants to gain credit can be:

- the perspective of a higher salary;
- the perspective of more interesting work;
- the perspective of a better career within or outside the same organisation.

Disincentives for participants to gain credit can be:

- an EVC procedure can demand a considerable amount of time and energy, depending on the methods used;
- fear of not gaining credit. An EVC procedure does not necessarily result in gaining credit. The EVC-procedure makes the competencies of the participant visible. The participant may turn out not meet the standards which others (for instance the employer) expect him to meet.

Incentives for providers to give credit can be:

- providers of EVC are in many cases educational institutions. Participants in EVC may subsequently enrol in courses in the same educational institution;
- connecting better to (wishes of) enterprises in the same region;
- EVC offers educational institutions a clearer view at the competencies of the participants;
- less drop-outs;

- a better position on the educational market (offering a more complete array of services)

Disincentives for providers to give credit can be:

- a change of culture within educational organisations is necessary to adjust the educational system and offer flexible training routes;
- the costs of EVC are high;
- having to meet quality standards for EVC;
- in particular small institutions may not have the human resources for developing and realizing EVC;
- participants may start “shopping” for courses after completing an EVC procedure, and enrol in other schools.

3.2.e) Describe, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your VET system through credit system: e.g. the dual system to integrate experiential learning.

At this point in time, the extent to which working experience of candidates is recognised *within* the VET system (MBO), still varies between qualifications. The outcomes of EVC procedures, as put down in EVC reports, are not yet universally recognized within the VET system. In the future, under the influence of the Quality code EVC, the outcomes of EVC reports are supposed to be universally recognized within the VET system. This process will supposedly take some years.

3.2.f) Provide data, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your HE system through credit system: e.g. research on the growing number of take-up of internships, etc.

In higher education (HBO), institutions are beginning to gather experience with EVC-routes. As described in 1.1.d, institutions for higher education have a long experience with assessing qualifications of applicants, by admission exams (the Colloquium Doctum policies). Until now, EVC in higher education is mainly focussed on getting exemptions from participating in parts of a training programme. By the Temporary Stimulus Regulation for HBO institutions, 7.995 EVC routes will be carried out (subvention was awarded in November 2006).

At present, every institution in higher education is allowed to develop it's own curricula and to make a credit system for these curricula (see also 2.1.e). Partners in higher education have the intention to recognise each others EVC reports and to make credits interchangeable between institutions based on an EVC report. As EVC in higher education is only starting to be developed, realising this intention will supposedly take quite some time.

Component 3.3. Assessment methods and procedures

3.3.a) Describe the assessment arrangements. Who carries out assessments, and with what type of approaches? Who validates the results of the assessments? How long will the assessment procedures take? If methods or procedures vary depending on sectors, list the name of the sectors and the methods used for the recognition for the sector. What assessment procedures do participants go through to get their non-formal and informal learning recognised? Describe different stages.

The assessment arrangements in the Netherlands show a great diversity, as the EVC procedures vary greatly. These arrangements are developed bottom-up, according to the needs of the people in the field.

EVC procedures and, as a consequence, the assessment arrangements are in different phases of development. Some enterprises are in the phase of starting with EVC procedures and assessment arrangements (just beginning with some pilot projects). Other enterprises are building a more general system for all their employees. Some other enterprises already have a consolidated system, in which EVC can be regarded as an instrument of the HRM policy.

Thanks to the efforts of the Knowledge Centre EVC, one can say that in a number of for EVC important organisations, the assessment will be arranged. These organisations with the label of “recognised EVC supplier” will have:

- goals of assessment;
- a framework and instruments to assess;
- qualified assessors.

The instruments to be used by these “recognised suppliers” will vary from interviews to portfolio’s. Each supplier will choose the instrument(s) that is tailor made for the specific situation and the specific EVC consumer.

The assessment instruments used by other (non-acknowledged) suppliers, will be as diversified as the instruments used by the acknowledged suppliers. The instruments are different per sector and even within a sector or a company. The choice of the instrument to be used, is connected with the kind of personnel problem involved. Examples of the problems employers in different sectors are faced with and of the choice of the assessment instruments are given in the scheme on the next page.

Examples of the problems employers are faced with and the choice of the assessment instruments

Sector	Problems to be solved	Assessment instruments
Health care and social work	- To enlarge influx of qualified workers	- Portfolio - Selected training routes
Construction	- To prevent ageing of the workers-population - To keep sufficiently qualified personnel	- Portfolio - Interview - Selected short training routes
Wood and furniture industries	- To guarantee the professional quality of employees - To improve the existing EVC procedures	- Assessment - Directed training routes
Metallurgical industries	- To answer the demand for (higher qualified) personnel	- Assessment in the work shop
Food industries	- Change of vocational production to industrial production - To change the functional demands of personnel	- Intake assessment with subject qualifications (chocolate industries: subject qualifications: hygiene) - Portfolio
Defense organisation	- Validation of experience people acquired in the defence organisation	- Portfolio

Hotel and catering industry	- To flow the existing personnel in order to satisfy the growing demand	- e-EVC (ICT supported EVC procedure) amongst others: career advise and assessment
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3.3.b) Describe different types of assessment methods and procedures. Provide data on advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment (e.g. competence-based assessment, summative assessment, portfolio assessment, etc.) What are the principle drivers of costs of different types of assessments to different actors? Provide evidence, if any, of certain types of assessment may become beneficial or a barrier to participants (e.g. psychological, financial, etc.).

Methods used

The assessment methods and procedures which are in use in the Netherlands, are the following:

- portfolio assessment: to determine the value of pieces of evidence of competency;
- criterium directed interviews: to judge the planning and methodical skills;
- observation in an authentic or simulated situation: to judge the action skills (professional, social, organisational, application of knowledge);
- validation of results: to judge the products turned out and the effects realised;
- 360 degrees feedback: by asking colleagues and external individuals to give an assessment of the demanded competencies of a person from their perspectives;
- reflection interview: to judge reflecting and transfer skills;
- diploma comparison.

The advantages and challenges of the different types of assessment are mentioned in this scheme.

Advantages and disadvantages of the different types of assessment:

Assessment	Advantage	Disadvantage
Portfolio judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participant can work on it independently - it is the responsibility of the participant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - much time and effort required - own responsibility is great - papers of evidence are not always clear - judgement is mainly directed upon convincing the assessors
Criterion directed interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - papers of evidence are rather clear thanks to the possibility of asking specific questions - competencies are visible in connection with each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not transparent - it is easy to make mistakes - the context can influence the behaviour - judgement is rather labour intensive
Assessment	Advantage	Disadvantage
Observation in staged professional practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - influence on testing condition is large - it is dominantly practical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relatively expensive because the situation should be organised in accordance with reality

360 degrees feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more reliable than judgement by one person - it is most reliable because it concerns description of behaviour - it is easy to develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - several people are vulnerable - more people are involved - it is mainly to stimulate the employee
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Cost drivers

The principle drivers of the costs of different types of assessment are:

- level and experience of the individual to be assessed;
- amount of time necessary for assessment as far as assessor as well as the individual is concerned;
- quality of the assessment procedure;
- number of elements of the assessment procedure;
- the choice of the assessment instrument (the 360 procedure is much more expensive than the interview instruments);
- assessment by group or by individual;
- price per hour of the assessor (a assessor on contract base is more expensive than a teacher of an MBO school);
- charging of overhead costs by supplier;
- outsourcing of services.

3.3.c) Describe the current relationship between academic standards, professional standards, and occupational standards in your country. Who owns and controls such standards?

The procedures for academic standards, professional standards and occupational standards of regular educational institutes are described in the laws on education. In the Netherlands, it is generally accepted, that the standards used by senior secondary vocational education (MBO) and higher education (HBO) are relatively well tuned to the demands of the sectors. A system was designed to ensure this.

Senior secondary vocational education

The standards to be used in vocational education come into force in the following way. The employers organisations of the economic sectors propose the professional competency profiles (in Dutch: Beroeps Competentie Profielen BCP's) in their sector. Based on these proposals, the Centre of expertise on vocational education, training and labour market (KBB) for the economic sector in question, develops the goals (end terms) of the relevant educational programmes and the qualifications concerned. These qualifications are incorporated by the Minister of Education in the formal Qualification structure for the MBO school system. These standards are points of departure:

- for the Inspectorate of Education in reviewing the MBO school and the individual schools or institutions;
- for the KCE in reviewing the suppliers of education and training activities that are financed by the Government;
- for KBB for setting the examination standards;
- for MBO schools to make the examinations (schools often hire specialised test institutions to make the exams);
- for MBO schools to develop and carry out the teaching programmes and to draft the evaluation procedures.

Higher education

In 1997, the institutes for higher education agreed to set national standards for each educational programme, and to let these standards be validated by the relevant sectors. At present, standards

(educational qualifications) have been set for most programmes and these standards have formally been accepted by the council for higher education (HBO Raad). The educational qualifications will, in time, be replaced by “domain competencies”. Monitoring of the quality of educational programmes is carried out by VBI’s, which are appointed by NVAO.

The standards to be used in EVC procedures are generally the same as the standards used in the regular educational system, especially when the EVC programmes are carried out by the MBO schools or the HBO institutions. The standards used in the cases where the EVC procedure is not taking place in an MBO school or HBO institution, will generally reflect the formal standards in the organisations for regular education and training, in any case when EVC procedures will be delivered by an officially “recognised EVC supplier”, according to the Covenant of November 2006.

Sectors

Besides or on top of the MBO and standards, sectors can define their own standards. This happens for instance, when employees have to be trained in competencies which are not integrated in the MBO- or HBO qualification structures. In such cases Employers organisations, Trade Unions and O&O Funds sometimes define their own standards for those particular qualifications.

Others

In other cases the supplier can set their own standards (of course in agreement with the consumer or the organisation that pays for the procedure) but it is to be expected that the consumers would like to be trained and assessed in accordance with standards generally recognised, not only by the official authorities but also by the sector organisations.

3.3.d) Has the issue been raised in your country of how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes be retained? Describe the debate to date, if any.

It appears that there is no such discussion in the Netherlands. One of the basic principles of the new Covenant Quality Code for EVC is that EVC should answer the “need of the individual. Individual rights and arrangements with EVC suppliers should be clearly formulated and guaranteed.” The Quality code determines that “in principle participation to EVC procedures takes place voluntarily.” In case individuals would like to use their right to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes, they are free to do so. Assessment and recognition processes are only used, when the EVC consumers are convinced they themselves will profit of these procedures. In a situation where an individual would like to partake in a EVC procedure, without any assessment, but the employer, who will pay for it demands the assessment and recognition processes, it is necessary that they reach agreement.

Fortunately, it appears that people are more and more aware, that assessment is a modern and indispensable testing and learning instrument, to be used at the start of a new educational process in which not only (factual) knowledge is important to learn, but also skills and competencies should be acquired.

3.3.e) How is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning quality-assured in your country? Who is responsible for the quality assurance process? How is the issue of quality assurance treated in the internationalisation context?

Quality assurance

The Covenant Quality Code for EVC (Component 3.2.a and 3.4.a), based upon proposals of the Knowledge Centre EVC and signed by the State Secretary of Education and educational organisations on November 14th 2006, is a milestone in the development of guaranteeing the quality of EVC in the Netherlands.

As has been said, recognition of “recognised EVC supplier” will be possible on the basis of an independent reviewing organisation that will put forward a report. The results of the reviews should lead to actions to improve the situation. The Knowledge Centre EVC expects that the KCE will be charged with the task to review the EVC suppliers and to control the quality of the assessors, for EVC that takes place at the MBO-level (senior secondary vocational education). The VBI’s will do the same for EVC at the HBO-level (higher education). For EVC taking place under the supervision of sectoral actors (the O&O Funds, governed by employers organisations and trade unions), the sector may appoint an organisation for reviewing and monitoring the quality of the assessors.

After signing the covenant, the participating institutions have to develop their own quality processes to be reviewed on a regular basis by the independent organisation. Until January 2007, 60 organisations have applied to be accredited as a “recognised EVC supplier”. The Knowledge centre EVC expects that 100 to 150 organisations will be accredited as “recognised EVC supplier” in 2007.

There is no general rule or agreement to guarantee the quality of EVC procedures by suppliers that are not participating in the Covenant Quality Code and do not belong to the category of “recognised EVC supplier”. If they think it is important, consumers should make ad hoc agreements with the EVC supplier about the quality of the procedure.

Internationalisation

The Quality Code EVC is in accordance with the Common European Principles (council of the European Union, May 2004). Also the Project directorate Learning and Working aims to comply with the Common European Principles. This is a European guideline for validating formal, informal and non-formal competencies. This guideline stipulates, that validation processes should provide individuals with an understanding of their competencies, so that they can effectively realise lifelong learning.

The goal of the Common European Principles is to realize a coherent and comparable system for validation in Europe. They do not describe specific methods or institutional solutions. The principles do stipulate a number of basic requirements that have to be met, if trust, credibility and impartiality are to be upheld.

International equivalency of diploma’s can be observed as one of the forms of EVC and can be made part of the arrangements which are determined in the EVC Quality Code. The Department for International Identification of Competencies (CIRC) of Nuffic (mentioned in component 1.2.b as the Netherlands Organisation for international co-operation of institutions of higher education) validates diploma’s of people who have quite a lot of experience in the countries where they have lived before. Since 2001 the identification of competencies is one of the key tasks of CIRC as well as the equivalency of foreign diploma’s. In this way CIRC concurs with the national and international developments in the framework of a life long learning and contributes to the employability of foreign people.

Up until now, Nuffic does not possess a good method to value the work experience and other training experiences in their advise on the competency level of individuals. These individuals do feel this as an injustice: Experience of years is not taken into consideration for their career in the Netherlands. Nuffic

is now developing a method, that will show the competencies of highly educated foreigners. Not only the individual but also the Dutch economy will benefit of this development.

Some pilot projects have taken place, to review the existing procedures of comparison of foreign diploma's. So Nuffic and the University of Utrecht have investigated how prior acquired competencies of foreign graduates can be evaluated. The two organisations have agreed, that diploma comparison is not always sufficient, because there are many different foreign educational procedures that are very difficult to evaluate as far as level and content are concerned in the context of the Dutch practice. Nuffic and the University of Utrecht have advised a supplementary EVC procedure after the validation of foreign diploma's, in order to show that the candidate possesses the required competencies. On the basis of such an assessment, it is possible to offer an tailor made training route necessary to get the necessary documents to start an appropriate career in the Netherlands.

For the period July 2005 up to December 2007, the central Organisation Work and Income (CWI) has started a programme "Empowerment Centre EVC: anchoring and implementation", subsidised by the European Social Fund (ESF). In this programme 18 organisations, including Nuffic, are working together to implement the EVC techniques for non-traditional target groups. It is in the framework of this programme that Nuffic develops its new portfolio services.

The foundation University Asylum Fund (UAF), a central organisation for the reception of asylum students in the Dutch universities and HBO institutions, has applied the use of a digital portfolio of CIRC in the period of March up to June 2006 for 3 of her client groups, in total 30 participants:

- highly educated refugees looking for a part time study;
- 2 groups of highly educated women who would like to work again after a rather long time of not participation in the labour process for some reasons.

The participants have used the digital portfolio under supervision of UAF, in combination with meetings in order to get a better understanding of their own competencies en what they have learned elsewhere (recognition phase). It is not clear, whether the portfolio will be acknowledged. UAF will develop the instrument further with the objective of a compound CV.

Since December 1st 2005, the Ministry of Health applies a new admission procedure for medical doctors with a foreign diploma who would like to carry out their profession in the Netherlands. The Unit Declarations of Professional Skills (Vakbekwaamheidsverklaringen) of the Ministry of Health is responsible for the procedure, which has the form of an 'assessment' and contains not only knowledge and skills tests but also a portfolio. Nuffic (CIRC) will take care of the construction of the online portfolio's as soon as there will be an agreement with the Ministry on the format to be used.

Component 3.4. Others

- 3.4.a) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

The main elements of the Quality code EVC, mentioned in components 2.4.a and 3.2.a , is printed below. The Quality Code is an important step towards a formal credit arrangement for non-formal and informal learning. In this covenant, the principles for the quality of EVC-procedures are defined. From the moment the Covenant will be in force, one can say that the most important parties in the field of EVC suppliers do have an agreement, in the framework of which it is possible to come to terms with each other as far as the acceptance of credits is concerned.

The Code reads as follows.

*EVC Quality Code
Code Details of implementation*

- 1. The goal of EVC is to define, evaluate and accredit individual competencies. The accreditation of prior learning has a value in and of itself and contributes to employability. In many cases, EVC can be a benefit to further career-related personal development.*
 - 1.1 A goal is explicitly linked to the EVC procedure.*
 - 1.2 The EVC-supplying organization and each individual reach consensus on the use of the results of EVC.*
- 2. Individual entitlements: the EVC process answers to the need of the individual. Entitlements and arrangements with the EVC-offering organizations are clearly defined.*
 - 2.1 The accessibility of the EVC procedure for participants is documented.*
 - 2.2 Participation in the EVC procedure is generally on a voluntary basis.*
 - 2.3 The EVC-offering organization and the participants make arrangements on the optimal course of the EVC procedure.*
 - 2.4 The participant decides whether he/she will participate in the EVC procedure and will receive all relevant information needed to do so.*
 - 2.5 Time frame for the entire procedure is realistic, feasible and known in advance.*
 - 2.7 The privacy of the participant is guaranteed and the results of the EVC procedure are the property of the participant unless agreed otherwise in advance.*
 - 2.7 The participant is entitled to appeal, and there is a system in place for this option.*
- 3. Procedure and instruments are reliable and based on solid standards Trust is the key issue. Trust has to do with civil effect, properly defined standards, and clear information on the way in which assessments are conducted and the arguments on the basis of which conclusions are drawn.*
 - 3.1 Tasks and capacities of all parties involved in all phases of the procedure are known and are functioning.*
 - 3.2 A standard coordinated to the relevant working area and which leads to the civil effect is used.*
 - 3.3 The equivalence of the EVC procedure with an initial vocational training programme must be demonstrated.*
 - 3.4 The reliability and validity of the assessment instruments and procedures used is guaranteed, even if procured externally.*
 - 3.5 The assessment instruments make use of any available evidence, no matter what the source.*
 - 3.6 The participant is entitled to a concluding meeting to be informed of the result. This result, including the civil value of the result, is set out in an EVC report.*
- 4. Assessors and supervisors are competent, independent and impartial. Independence and impartiality are crucial factors in the evaluation and are rooted in the roles and responsibilities of the assessors involved in the process. It is of major importance to avoid unnecessary confusion of roles. Impartiality can be reinforced by training and the use of networks.*
 - 4.1 The independence of the assessors is guaranteed.*
 - 4.2 The roles of supervisors and assessors are separate.*

- 4.3 *The supervisors have a proven track record of competence. They are able to present procedures and to interview, coach and give feedback to individuals; they are professionals in the fields in which their coaching specializes.*
- 4.4 *The assessors have a proven track record of competence. They are able to interview, give feedback to individuals and evaluate competencies; they are able to communicate assessment results; they are professionals in the fields in which they conduct assessments.*
- 4.5 *Supervisors and assessors keep their professional skills up.*
5. *The quality of EVC procedures is guaranteed and is being improved on an ongoing basis. The quality of the EVC procedure and the set of instruments used is guaranteed.*
- 5.1 *The EVC procedure is open. Evaluations are conducted regularly. The results are incorporated into improvement actions.*
- 5.2 *Targets, procedure, assessment framework, assessment instruments, quality of assessors and supervisors, and EVC administration are all evaluated regularly.*
- 5.3 *Evaluation of the participants is a standing component of quality control.*
- 5.4 *The organization lives up to the quality standard of EVC.*
- 5.5 *The evaluation and the EVC procedure improvement policy that follows from the evaluation is embedded into the organization's existing quality control system.*

The parties agree as follows:

1. *The parties endorse the principles and premises concerning the quality of EVC as set out in the EVC code*
2. *This EVC code is further developed into a review framework. On 1 January 2007, this framework will be adopted by the parties. The evaluating organisations can use this review framework to produce an assessment of the quality of the EVC procedures.*
3. *This EVC code is a contributing factor to three objectives linked to the introduction of EVC:*
 - *Increasing the accessibility of EVC. Clarifying what EVC is and how EVC must be offered.*
 - *Providing transparency. Allowing better comparison of different EVC procedures.*
 - *Guaranteeing civil effect.*
4. *All organizations that offer EVC and opt to profile themselves with the EVC code must be accredited providers. An organization is accredited as an EVC provider by means of a report by an evaluating organization. An "accredited EVC provider" is entered in the directory of the accredited EVC providers.*
5. *The accreditation of EVC providers:*
 - *Organizations offering programmes and/or examinations for MBO (senior secondary vocational education) and which are licensed by the Minister of Education, Culture & Science/Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality for those programmes can have themselves provisionally registered as accredited EVC providers without first being evaluated by an evaluating organization.*
 - *Organizations offering programmes and examinations for the HBO (higher professional education) and which hold an NVAO declaration attesting to the accreditation of those programmes, can have themselves provisionally registered as accredited EVC providers without first being evaluated by an evaluating organization. Any organization wishing to become provisionally accredited must submit a signed statement to the EVC Knowledge Centre declaring that it meets the requirements for an accredited EVC provider. Evaluation of these provisional accredited EVC providers will be conducted retroactively, but at the latest by 1 January 2008, by the evaluating organization.*

- *Other EVC providers can also have themselves registered as "accredited EVC providers." To do this, they must submit the evaluation report of the evaluating organization to the EVC Knowledge Centre. On the basis of the report, the organization can be entered into the directory of accredited EVC providers.*
6. *An EVC procedure is a method of identifying the extent to which a person possesses certain competencies. These competencies may be rated in relation to a job standard, educational standard or professional standard. An EVC procedure results in an EVC report, which gives an overall comparison of the individual's competencies against the standard levels of those competencies. This EVC report has an independent value to the individual, and can result in:

 - a. *improvement or retention of the labour market position.*
 - b. *exemption from the requirement to follow elements of a training programme accredited by the sector, industry, SUWI chain partner or professional group.*
 - c. *obtaining a diploma, certification or partial certification accredited by the sector, industry, SUWI chain partner or professional group. In this case, a follow-up programme is not required.*
 - d. *exemption from the requirement to follow elements of a training programme accredited by the Minister of Education, Culture & Science/Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality.*
 - e. *obtaining a diploma, certification or partial certification accredited by the Minister of Education, Culture & Science/Agriculture, Nature & Food Quality. In this case, a follow-up programme is not required.**
 7. *EVC can be the start of an individualized educational programme in pursuit of a diploma or certification. It cuts the programme fees borne by the employer and is a source of motivation to the employee or potential employee. EVC may not be made a mandatory part of an educational programme, and it has an independent value to the individual.*
 8. *The parties wish to promote the use of EVC and the EVC quality code amongst their members.*
 9. *Until the end of 2007, the EVC Knowledge Centre will coordinate the implementation of the quality code. The EVC Knowledge Centre will perform, minimally, the following tasks in this implementation:

 - a. *Set up, publish and administer the directory of accredited providers.*
 - b. *Publish the texts of the EVC code and administer the corresponding standards.*
 - c. *Develop sample EVC reports, portfolios and supporting tools. Investigate whether this will require making arrangements linked to the EVC code.*
 - d. *Produce a model methodology to evaluate the quality of supervisors and assessors. Investigate whether this will require making arrangements linked to the EVC code.*
 - e. *Investigate the effects and the impact of the EVC code measured against the objectives linked to the introduction of EVC (accessibility, transparency and civil effect).*
 - f. *Investigate whether the designation of evaluating organizations and the corresponding accreditation of EVC providers under the responsibility of social partners in industries or sectors, or of the SUWI partners in the SUWI chain or in professional organizations, is actually happening. Investigate how the evaluating organizations proposed by the social partners are applying the EVC code and the standards. Have an initial impartial and independent evaluation performed of the quality model and the use of the EVC code.*
 - g. *Before July 1st 2007, the Knowledge Centre EVC will write a letter with recommendations to the parties based on the above mentioned subjects. The**

discussion of this evaluation by the parties will include the determination of who will take on those tasks of the EVC Knowledge Centre relating to the EVC code in 2008 and thereafter.

Component 4. Stakeholder behaviour

Component 4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders

4.1.a) Identify all possible stakeholders involved (with specific characteristics) and complete a list below concerning non-formal learning and informal learning in your country to complement the list for Component 2.2. The 2.2 list is to map out governance and the role of government while this list aims to map out the relationships between providers of non-formal learning or types of informal learning, recognisers of such learning, recognition to be received, regulatory of such recognition, and main users of such recognition.

There are quite some local differences in non-formal and informal learning. Still it is necessary that research should be done into informal learning, how people are acquiring learning experiences in a incidental or casual way in daily life, for example in the family, the circles of friends, in volunteering activities or in leisure time. It is clear that this type of learning takes an gradually more important place in the learning career and gets more attention. In 2007 an investigation will take place to the state of the art and the results of non-formal learning in the Netherlands. The main subject of the investigation will be: what is the meaning of non-formal learning for the development of life long learning in the Netherlands. The investigation will be financed by the above mentioned Project Directorate Learning and Working.

On the following pages, the stakeholders grids for non-formal and informal learning are depicted.

**Non-formal learning (learning through a programme without certification)
Characteristics of stakeholders grid**

Provider of non-formal learning (e.g. universities, for-profit private companies, company's in-house training, government, NGOs, etc.)	Recogniser of such non-formal learning (e.g. government, quasi-government, universities, companies, professional bodies, trade unions, etc.)	Types of recognition received (e.g. academic qualifications – degrees, diplomas, credits, awards, certificates, professional qualifications, etc.)	Regulator (e.g. quality assurance agency, professional body, government, etc.)	Main users (specify)
MBO schools (Regional Educational Centres, ROC's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examination board of the MBO schools - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subject qualifications conform the regular qualification structure of MBO schools - (Subject) certificates recognised by the economic sector or by the government in the framework of security, hygiene etc. - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Centre for examinations (KCE) for testing the quality and organisation of the examinations of the MBO schools - Examination Committees from the economic sector, monitoring the educational goals of the programmes for guaranteeing the certificates - Independent reviewers designated by sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - People after army service - Low skilled immigrants - Unemployed NEET age between 18 – 30 - Re-enterers on the labour market
Private suppliers of EVC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent Reviewing organisation according to the Covenant - Entrance committees of MBO schools or HBO institutions - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subject qualifications conform the regular qualification structure of MBO schools - (subject) certificates recognised by the economic sector or by the government in the framework of security, hygiene etc. - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Centre for examinations (KCE) for testing the quality and organisation of the examinations of the MBO schools - Examination Committees from the economic sector, monitoring the educational goals of the programmes for guaranteeing the certificates - Independent reviewers designated by sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - People after army service - High skilled immigrants - Low skilled immigrants - Unemployed over 30 years old - NEET age between 18 – 30 - Re-enterers on the labour market

Provider	Recogniser	Types of recognition received	Regulator	Main users
Higher Vocational Education institutions (HBO institutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examination Board of the HBO institution - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subject qualifications conform the regular qualification structure of HBO institutions - (Subject) certificates recognised by the economic sector or by the government in the framework of security, hygiene, education etc. - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Netherlands Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO) for testing the quality and organisation of the examinations of the HBO institutions. - VBI's independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for reviewing the EVC activities by the standards of the Quality Code. - Examination Committees from the economic sector, monitoring the educational goals of the programmes for guaranteeing the certificates - Independent reviewers designated by sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - High skilled immigrants - Unemployed over 27 years old - NEET age between 18 – 30 - Retired people - Private persons following a private goal - Re-enterers on the labour market
Adult education institutions (People's universities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrance committees of MBO schools, of HBO institutions - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subject qualifications conform the regular qualification structure of HBO institutions - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Centre for examinations (KCE) for testing the quality and organisation of the examinations of the MBO schools - Examination Committees from the economic sector, monitoring the educational goals of the programmes for guaranteeing the certificates - Independent reviewers designated by sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - High skilled immigrants - Low skilled immigrants - Retired people Private persons following education for private goals - Re-enterers on the labour market
Social activating programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrance committees of MBO schools - Social organisations - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exemptions from examinations - (subject)qualification - Portfolio's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Centre for examinations (KCE) for testing the quality and organisation of the examinations of the MBO schools - Examination Committees from the economic sector, monitoring the educational goals of the programmes for guaranteeing the certificates - Independent reviewers designated by sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professional - Volunteers - NEET 18 – 30 years - Re-enterers on the labour market

Provider	Recogniser	Types of recognition received	Regulator	Main users
Community centre and club activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrance committees of MBO schools - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exemptions from examinations or certification - Portfolio's - (subject)qualification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality Centre for examinations (KCE) for testing the quality and organisation of the examinations of the MBO schools - Examination Committees from the economic sector, monitoring the educational goals of the programmes for guaranteeing the certificates - Independent reviewers designated by sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - Volunteers - Re-enterers on the labour market
Educational broadcasting companies	as above	as above	as above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - Volunteers - Re-enterers on the labour market
Libraries	as above	as above	as above	as above
Companies	as above	as above	as above	as above
Voluntary recreational clubs	as above	as above	as above	as above
Private individuals	as above	as above	as above	as above

Informal learning (learning resulting from daily work-related, family and leisure activities)
Characteristics of stakeholders grid

Types of skills gained by informal learning	Recogniser of informal learning	Types of Recognition received	Regulatory body	Main users (specify)
ICT/computer skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies - Professional bodies - Defence organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject qualifications - subject certificates - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KCE for the senior secondary level. - VBI's (independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for the higher education level) - Independent reviewers designated by sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People after army service - High skilled immigrants - Low skilled immigrants - Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.) - Unemployed (over 30 years old) - NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30 - Re-enterers on the labour market
Social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject qualifications - subject certificates - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KCE for the senior secondary level. - VBI's (independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for the higher education level) - Independent reviewers designated by sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - People after army service - Low skilled immigrants - Unemployed under and over 30 years old - NEET age between 28-30 - Re-enters on the labour market
Management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject qualifications - subject certificates - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KCE for the senior secondary level. - VBI's (independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for the higher education level) - Independent reviewers designated by sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - People after army service - Low skilled immigrants - Unemployed under and over 30 years old - NEET age between 28-30 - Re-enters on the labour market

Types of skills gained by informal learning	Recogniser of informal learning	Types of Recognition received	Regulatory body	Main users (specify)
Administration skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject qualifications - subject certificates - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KCE for the senior secondary level. - VBI's (independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for the higher education level) - Independent reviewers designated by sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - People after army service - Low skilled immigrants - Unemployed under and over 30 years old - NEET age between 28-30 - Re-enters on the labour market
Organisational skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject qualifications - subject certificates - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KCE for the senior secondary level. - VBI's (independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for the higher education level) - Independent reviewers designated by sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - People after army service - Low skilled immigrants - Unemployed under and over 30 years old - NEET age between 28-30 - Re-enters on the labour market
Language skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies - Professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject qualifications - subject certificates - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KCE for the senior secondary level. - VBI's (independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for the higher education level) - Independent reviewers designated by sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - People after army service - Low skilled immigrants - Unemployed under and over 30 years old - NEET age between 28-30 - Re-enters on the labour market
Assistance in kitchen and housekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hotel and catering - social care institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - subject qualifications - subject certificates - Portfolio's - Exemptions from examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KCE for the senior secondary level. - VBI's (independent organisations, designated by NVAO, for the higher education level) - Independent reviewers designated by sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working professionals - People after army service - Low skilled immigrants - Unemployed under and over 30 years old - NEET age between 28-30 - Re-enters on the labour market

Component 4.2. Access

4.2.a) What are the eligibilities to go through the recognition process? If it differs in different sectors/levels (e.g. HEd, VET, upper secondary, basic education, professional, etc.), describe different eligibilities for different levels/sectors.

In general, there are no eligibilities for individuals interested in partaking in the recognition process. However, the suppliers of EVC procedures generally want to have an indication of the level of knowledge and experience of the candidates. When the EVC route includes elements of regular education, the MBO school, the school of professional education or the HBO institution concerned will value that level on the basis of the standards used in the regular educational system.

Sometimes EVC is used in order to determine whether candidates for programmes in MBO schools do meet the formal entrance requirements of the schools.

To apply for EVC at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (Higher Education), candidates need two to three years of workingexperience in a relevant professional field.

4.2.b) How many educational institutions (in comparison with the total number of educational institutions) at different levels practise the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an admission policy?

EVC is not structurally a part of admission policies of educational institutions.

Senior secondary vocational education (MBO)

The MBO schools are formally recognised as official suppliers of training and education by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. These institutions can provide recognised qualifications or diploma's and most of these institutions receive financial support from the Government. Each of these MBO schools has an admission procedure of it's own, in which questions are put forward concerning the acquired diploma's, certificates and acquired competencies. The appraisal of the educational level and the awarding of exemptions are different in each admission procedure.

70 schools or training centres are united in the MBO Council. Quite a number of units within schools offer EVC procedures. However, it differs between schools and within the schools. It appears, that most of the MBO-schools do practice EVC as part of the admission procedure, but certainly not for all training programmes.

Higher education (HBO)

Forty five institutions for higher education are united in the HBO council. Most of the HBO institutions have established a policy of exemptions in their admission of students who do not meet the legal admission requirements. EVC seems to be very useful in determining the eligibility of future students on the basis of other requirements than the formal education and training programme in the secondary phase.

A special situation applies for the foreign university and HBO students; as has been explained in the first chapter (Components 1.1.d. and 1.2.b). Nuffic has started an investigation to develop new EVC procedures for the admission of these students at Dutch universities and HBO institutions.

About one third of these institutions practise EVC as part of the admission procedure. 13 HBO institutions have applied for contributions of the Temporary Regulation on Stimulating EVC in HBO institutions. In total they will offer EVC routes for about 8.000 people.

The Hogeschool van Amsterdam offers EVC, not only as part of admission procedures, but also as a way to obtain exemptions from parts of the study program.

Universities

There are 14 universities in the Netherlands. One of these, (the Open University) uses EVC as an instrument for admission.

4.2.c) Describe the situation of access to information and communication. Is there a one-stop information service centre or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system? What medium has been used (leaflet, CD-ROM, website, etc)? If there is a website, please provide the figure of 'click ratio (how many clicks per month – please provide all the records available since the launch of the website.)'. Attach an example. What media channels have been used to publicise the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.

At this point in time, there is no one-stop information service desk or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system. But efforts are made to improve the availability of information, as will be explained below.

Access to information

There is still a lot to be done in the field of spreading information about EVC. The Knowledge Centre EVC has conducted a research in the hindrances for access to EVC. Three hindrances have been found.

- EVC is relatively unknown. The existence of EVC is unknown to many individuals and organizations in the Netherlands.
- Individuals and organisations that want to use EVC have a lot of difficulties finding their way to suitable suppliers of EVC. Forms of cooperation between suppliers hardly exist, which makes a transparent chain of EVC services, and a well coordinated supply of EVC impossible.
- The supply of EVC is relatively small and not available for many people, such as unemployed and people doing volunteer work. Possibilities for people to find forms of EVC and additional training that match their own wishes and situation, are small. Realising tailor made EVC routes is a problem.

Communication efforts

Regional Learning and Working Desks

As has been explained in earlier chapters (Component 1.2), the Government has made it possible to start with the establishment of regional learning working desks where (interactive) information is made available about EVC procedures in (V)MBO schools and about the recognition system. Media to be used by these desks will be: flyers, brochures, websites, personal instruction, network meetings, direct e-mail, internet, broadcasting and sector bulletins.

Only a few desks just started, so it is not possible to give relevant quantitative data concerning the number of people who have used the desks in one way or another.

Websites

All kinds of information for employers and employees concerning vocational and professional career, practical work, courses, training programmes and financial benefits are to be found at one website: www.opleidingenberoep.nl. The surplus value of this portal is, that people interested in this information can find all information collected and are not obliged to get it by difficult Google procedures. This website is hit 2.000 times a day. The development of the portal is part of the PR campaign "Developing works" of the Project Directorate Learning and Working. The campaign would

like to make employers, employees and unemployed aware that the combination of working and learning will have profits.

Sector funds (O&O Funds)

O&O funds are also giving all kinds of information about the recognition system of vocational and professional training programmes. Within quite a number of economic sectors the employer's organisation, the trade unions or other organisations are trying as much as possible to collect and make information or databases available, for example about best practices.

Nuffic

Nuffic communicates the above mentioned information on EVC in universities and HBO institutions to foreign students.

HBO institutions and universities

The universities and the HBO institutions provide applicants for their institutions with all kinds of information concerning the admission procedures. This is done by information desks, websites and brochures. Also these institutions advertise in newspapers. Some newspapers (for instance De Volkskrant and NRC Handelsblad) once a year publicise special sections on higher education institutions in which also their admission policies are explained.

Knowledge Centre EVC

Finally, the Knowledge Centre EVC (see component 2.1.h) is supplying quite some information about EVC in general and of course also about recognition systems. In the period September 2005 – August 2006, its website (www.kenniscentrumevc.nl) was visited 2.935.197 times. The peak period for visits was January 2006.

Component 4.3. Participation

4.3.a) How many people have actually taken up the process at different educational levels? Provide any evidence on the patterns of participants (gender, age, socio-economic groups, ethnicity, employment status, marital status, educational levels and their family educational levels)?

Total number

According to the Knowledge Centre EVC, the number of people actually taking up the processes can be estimated at 20.000 to 30.000 a year, mainly on the MBO-school level. More exact numbers of EVC participants are not available.

A break down of the available numbers can not be provided, also because of:

- the inappropriate nomenclature used for a number of activities that some organisations mark as EVC procedures and others do not;
- lack of administration, as has been shown in an investigation in the sector of welfare work (youth assistance, children's homes, institutions of welfare work). It turned out, that many institutions do not keep a proper administration of the number of EVC procedures in their organisation.

In January 2007, the Project Directorate Learning and Working has registered declarations of intent, for EVC routes to be carried out for 19.870 persons, in 2006 and later years. The Project Directorate mainly aims at people with low levels of education (people without a starting qualification, this means below senior secondary education, level 2). They form almost a quarter of the population (22%).

Backgrounds of participants

The participants in EVC procedures are coming from different organisations and from different functions (especially on MBO level). Because of that, the backgrounds of the participants are also rather diverse. Some people have had a training more than ten years ago; some participants have recently been at school. Part of the EVC population has another mother tongue. However, it is clear, that most participants in EVC procedures are either

- workers (employed persons), using EVC as an instrument to get their competencies measured, followed by additional training, to eventually get a better position at work or at the labour market;
- other persons who want to get into senior secondary vocational education. These individuals can be drop-outs, unemployed people et cetera. Their level of education is low, many of them do not have a starting qualification (senior secondary education, level 2).

Information on participation, effects and quality are barely available. An important source of information will be the “Monitor Postinitieel” of the Max Goote Knowledge Centre. The results of this research will be published early in 2007. This research will also contain information on EVC. Based on the report, a seminar will be organized on the consequences of the results for policymaking.

- 4.3.b) Provide details of any survey – national household survey, user survey, etc. – that explains any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.

Exact details are not available, so it is impossible to give information about the linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process, other than the characteristics mentioned in 4.3.a. However, there are plans to gain more insight in this matter, at the Knowledge Centre EVC and the Max Goote Knowledge Centre.

- 4.3.c) Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning worked as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the ‘learning leads to learning’ and ‘training leads to training’ track? Who constitutes the ‘disadvantaged group’ in your country?

In the National Action Programme A life long learning (1998), it is indicated that the Government should be explicitly careful for groups of employees who for one reason or another do not have sufficient attention and possibilities for learning. These groups are for example: elder employees, employees without a starting qualification and flex workers. Especially for these categories of employees, the government stimulates the use of EVC procedures.

It is generally accepted, that besides the groups just mentioned, the government holds the view that EVC can be seen as a new possible pathway for the following disadvantaged groups in the Netherlands:

- youths who are at risk to end up in a socially backward position;
- allochtone women;
- re-enterers in the economic system;
- refugees/immigrants without (recognised) previous education or a very minimum of education;
- (ex)detainees;
- elder people.

EVC procedures should give members of these groups the opportunity to get a starting qualification, because the regular educational pathways seem not to be a proper instrument of learning.

Especially the re-enterers and the refugees/newcomers have often had their educational training too long ago. Drop-outs do not often possess the required starter's qualifications and have a shortage of working experience. EVC can be helpful in order to improve the understanding in the motivation people have or in the possibilities to become active or in the desired training programme.

According to the Empowerment centre EVC, the EVC procedures for backward groups begin to get results, especially in qualitative sense. Specific data are not available. There are many initiatives on project basis, but also structural changes have been made, in order to get individuals with educational arrears on the right learning track. Examples are the projects of Nuffic (see 3.3.e), the use of portfolio by COA (centres of reception of refugees), the methods of CWI (Centre of work and income) and the use of EVC instruments in re-integration routes.

A disadvantage of the Dutch system is that the way of financing, is rather determinant for the procedure to be supplied or to be followed by different target groups.

Component 4.4. Incentives and disincentives

4.4.a) Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning works as a transitional or multi-directional pathway in your country (e.g. a way to further studies, shorten study period, find a job, change a job, get a better salary, etc.). If it functions as a way to find a job from the unemployment status, is there any evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transition.

Research carried out by CINOP, published under the title "Financing of EVC, Figures for the BVE sector from 2002", shows that EVC has the following results.

On a macro level:

- less educational efforts and more certificates and diploma's;
- less drop outs and greater motivation;
- more educational consumers of an older age (life long learning);
- better exchange between labour market and the educational system by recognising the competencies of workers.

For individuals:

- recognition improves self esteem and self-confidence of the participants;
- recognition promotes the appraisal of colleagues, managers and family and friends;
- shortening of the educational period leads to savings in learning and teaching costs.

For companies:

- EVC can contribute to diminishing the partition between older and young employees;
- EVC can promote the development of new personnel instruments in HRD and the use of talents. EVC fits very well with initiatives like 'Investors in people', life long learning, quality management etc.;
- less loss of working time and costs for training and qualification;
- EVC can contribute to improve the policy of labour mediation and placement of target groups;
- recognition is also important in economic sectors which need an influx of workers into the higher qualified levels (education, care, technology).

For the suppliers of EVC:

- EVC can lead to higher numbers of students and degrees, which can contribute to higher subventions of the government to schools;
- more output financing of schools and institutions because, of a lower number of drop outs and shorter study period for the students;
- more motivation in the case of tailor made training programmes taking into account the starting position of the student and his/her competencies;
- EVC can stimulate the institutions of regular education to think of ways to reach other target groups like employees.

There is no detailed evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transitional pathway in our country. However, it is generally accepted that people with a longer unemployment record have a worse position on the labour market.

4.4.b) Provide evidence, if any, of detailed case studies where the actual length of studies was shortened by the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. number of such cases, the maximum and minimum reduced length and, thus, the costs of the study, the most practised subject areas, etc.)

The Yearbook 2004 of the Knowledge Centre EVC provides several cases.

Heineken Breweries

A participant (a packing technologist and manager of 14 people) received his HBO degree technology in a period of 1 year, and finished his post graduate course Maintenance management. Without EVC, he would have needed at least 1 year but perhaps 2 years more for the 2 studies. After finishing these studies, he started a pilot study for dual routes in metallurgical electronics of the HBO institution of Utrecht.

Post offices BV

A few years ago, this organisation became aware, that a number of its employees possessed quite some of the MBO competencies, thanks to their experience within the organisation and to the internal training programmes. In co-operation with an MBO school in Dordrecht, a pilot EVC-project has been started for 24 people. The project started with the determination of their subject qualifications on the basis of a portfolio and a number of tests in writing. These tests were not satisfactory, so the next project has started with a information evening, after which the participants themselves have to draft their portfolio. The portfolios will be evaluated by the teachers of the MBO school. The teachers can give some clues to improve the portfolio's and finally award the exemptions from the tests. It appeared that the participants are getting for almost 75 % of the subject qualifications an exemption. After that it is only a minor effort to get the final degree.

BSN Glasspack

In 2003 a number of 119 candidates of BSN Glasspack have applied for the EVC procedures. Of the applicants 30% has dropped out after a quick-scan. All those who have been successful in passing the complete route, have realised a shortening of their study period of 80% resulting in a degree up to level 3 of the MBO system.

Mondriaan College

This MBO school in Rotterdam has EVC procedures for Social Pedagogical Work (SPW) levels 3 and 4. On the basis of EVC procedures, a candidate will be admitted to a shortened vocation accompanied route (BBL route) of a year. The programme is clearly defined but individual candidates can get a number of exemptions of examinations and tests. The aim of the EVC procedure is to determine

whether a candidate has sufficient knowledge and experience to follow with success the shortened BBL route. Only students who answer the following demands will be admitted:

- Older than 21 years;
- A fixed job or traineeship for at least 20 hours a week;
- Intelligence level of pre-secondary vocational education-c;
- Related previous education;
- Presented by the employer.

The EVC procedure usually takes half a year. The training supervisor has an information meeting with the candidates. After that, the candidates make the portfolio, supported by their employer and the training supervisor. The portfolio is reviewed by a team of four teachers. After the test, a personal training plan is made.

4.4.c) Provide data, if any, of the returns of investments for different stakeholders. Any evidence of better private returns of investment (e.g. earnings) afterwards? Any evidence of fiscal returns? Any evidence of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship as social outcome of learning?

Below, some examples of returns on investment are given, for various stakeholder groups. Other information about results and return on investment are described in 4.4.a and in component 5.

For employers

- The organisation of the metallurgical sector: revaluation of the company by recognition of (work) experience in diploma's and certificates.
- The construction sector: less costs for schooling.
- The Care sector (OVDB): more influx of qualified personnel.

For employees

- Corus Metallurgy: employees are receiving a functional salary when they have received the degree belonging to it. The degree has been awarded after an EVC procedure.
- Innovam mobility branche (cars, trucks, motorcycles): the awarding of a diploma motor technician without further training but on the basis of work experience.
- Metalelectro: greater involvement of employees in the company.

UWV/CWI (implementation organisation assurances employees / Centre of work and income)

- Shortening the training routes of people who get an unemployment allowance leads to less costs of the re-integration programme.
- Metalelectro sector: EVC reduces the number of people flowing into occupational disability insurance (social returns).

Education

- HBO institution Arnhem – Nijmegen: EVC enlarges and broadens the inflow of students.
- ROC Oss (an MBO school): thanks to EVC, the educational system is more attuned to the motivation of participants, which prevents dropping out.

Government

- Project Directorate Learning and Working: more people are learning (again).
- Local government: there are now more adults with a professional qualification.

4.4.d) Provide data, if any, of practices of fiscal incentives for employers (e.g. tax incentives).

The government has announced that there will be fiscal facility for all participants of EVC per 1 January 1st 2007: they will be allowed to deduct the costs of a EVC procedure of their income to be taxed. In order to be considered for this regulation the participant should be able to show an invoice of a recognised EVC supplier.

4.4.e) Has the government made an explicit statement about promoting equity and social cohesion by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? If so, what kinds of schemes exist?

By supporting the use of EVC for the integration procedures of immigrants, the Government has shown that EVC is an important instrument in the promotion of equity and social cohesion, by using recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In this respect, also the information in component 1.5.c is relevant.

4.4.f) Describe a situation in your country if stigmatisation exists for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as opposed to the formal recognition) in the academic world and/or in the labour market? If yes, have there been any attempts to change such effects and to increase up-take of such recognition? What strategies have been tested so far?

It still appears that the academic world generally is primarily concerned with the content of the subject-matters of teaching. This concern can be characterised by knowledge transfer and testing and collides with the competency oriented approach. Especially in university education, there is the fear for loss of quality and loss of prestige. As a result of this feeling, a discussion is going on about the question whether it is possible to get academic competencies outside the universities. Fortunately, even in the traditional university institutions, there are developments in the direction of a broader use of EVC, for instance in the procedures for recognising the competencies of foreign students and in the admission of people with special experiences leading to exemptions from tests.

In trade and industry, EVC carries the stigma of being too expensive, although there are many possibilities to reduce the costs of the employer (for instance the subventions of the O&O funds and tax deduction). A second stigma is that some employers refuse to make investments in EVC procedures, because they are afraid that their well trained employee will get a job in a competing organisation; in implementing a good HRM policy the employers will contribute to the stay of their well trained employees in their original environments.

As far as attempts to change are concerned, these are described in component 2.b

4.4.g) Describe any incentives or levers that promoted public-private partnership in the recognition practices in the labour market? What schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements?

For these purposes, the tax deductions for employers and employees, and the Temporary Regulations for MBO and HBO are available. These regulations are described in component 2.1.c.

Component 4.5. Others

4.5.a) Provide any arrangements of collective bargaining that exists in your country. If there are accomplishments gained by collective bargaining for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, please provide details (driving forces, technical arrangements, beneficiaries, etc.)

At this moment, arrangements concerning EVC have been made in 10 collective labour agreements (CAO's). The collective labour agreements of the following economic branches contain concrete arrangements concerning the use of EVC.

Construction sector

- An EVC project is agreed upon to stimulate 250 employees from the construction sector to get a recognised diploma. These employees should possess relevant working experience, which will lead, by EVC procedures, to a number of (partial) exemptions of examination subjects. For this project parties concerned have made available an amount of €816.805,- from the O&O fund of the sector.
- Starting July 1st 2006, the construction worker is entitled to an EVC route aiming at professional certification, with financing from the schooling fund up to a maximum of 10 days.
- The subsector 'finishing': the costs of EVC procedures (training costs, travel costs, lay-off costs and bonuses) are financed out of a budget of €86.000,-.

Housepainters, window glass setters

- Employees of at least 25 years old, who have worked in the sector for at least 5 years, have the right to have their acquired competencies recognised, to follow training programmes leading to an official degree.
- In the CAO it has been agreed (paragraph 4) that employees who are qualified for EVC, will receive the training needed for an official degree.

Children's reception centres

Up until December 15th 2006, the children's guides could apply for EVC procedures to get their experiences recognised, in the form of official subject certificates or even diploma's. The employers will take care of the costs of these procedures.

Retail

The department store Bijenkorf B.V. has started a pilot project MBO-sales of 1 year. Sales employees can get a certificate recognised by the government. The progress of the pilot will be subject of discussion periodically with the trade unions. After evaluation of the pilot, social partners will decide whether the project will be made available for all employees of Bijenkorf B.V.

Hotel and catering services

In the annual evaluation discussion of the employer or the manager with the individual employee in which the functioning of the employee is subject of discussion, the two parties together have to make agreements on the personal development of the employee. Upon the request of the employer or the employee, it is possible to make further arrangements concerning the training, the recognition of acquired competencies or the gathering of advice for further training, and the leave necessary for that. Periodically, both parties will discuss the progress of the agreed arrangements and will adjust the arrangements if needed.

Industry

Metallurgical electronics

Art. 2 of the CAO contains the arrangement, that annually employers and trade unions will determine the maximum number of EVC procedures to be financed. The employer can receive a gross amount of €750,- per employee for his/her costs for an EVC procedure, of course under certain administrative conditions further elaborated in the CAO.

Philips

In connection with the Employment Plan agreed upon in the context of the CAO, the company will carry out the project "Certification of craftsmanship" which will give the opportunity to employees to get job experience and to participate in training facilities and to get certifications.

Personal services

Hairdressers: In the annexes to the CAO, mention is made of the foreign diploma's, recognised by the CAO parties as equivalent to the Dutch diploma's. Also a procedure of recognising other foreign diploma's has been described in the annexes.

Hospitals

Parties have acknowledged the importance of the Recognition of acquired competencies. It is agreed that employees learn in practice besides training and education oriented to awarding of diploma's. Because of the uncertainties of procedures and the EVC instruments, the CAO parties have developed a brochure "To recognise experience with EVC". The brochure has been published and distributed in 2006. The employer's organisation together with the trade unions will organise a work conference for personnel managers, care managers and training experts, with the aim to inform them about the opportunities, best practices and existing uncertainties and to eliminate the barriers.

- 4.5.b) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

No other technical arrangements exist in the Netherlands.

Component 5. Case studies on benefits and barriers

Component 5.1. Economic benefits

- 5.1.a) Shortening the formal education process and thus reducing direct costs of learning and opportunity costs for individuals.

Career development in the construction sector

The goal of the project was to stimulate and facilitate career development and professional training, to eventually push back the influx of persons in social benefits for workers unfit to work (WAO). 700 construction workers were involved in this project.

The project started in 2004. Regional desks were created, where workers received career guidance by professional career advisors.

The EVC procedure consisted of:

- intake;

- assessment;
- making a personal development plan;
- carrying out training;
- evaluation, guidance and job-mediation.

This project has shown, that inter sectoral mobility can contribute a lot to sectoral career policies. Important success factors are close cooperation between sectoral organisations and the notion that the best alternative career opportunities for some people lie outside their present working environment or sector.

Care institution Opella

Opella is a foundation for housing, care and well-being in a central region of the Netherlands (Wageningen/Ede, Gelderland). The foundation is concerned with all people who have disabilities; these are in many cases elderly people. Opella has 1.300 employees and can call upon 800 volunteers.

The aim of a pilot project EVC procedures: To shorten the 3 years training programme for student nurses to 8 months up until 18 months, with the possibility to get a degree; they even will be better qualified than in the former training, because in the new construction, they get extra subject qualifications from other training programmes (Well being).

The EVC procedure consists of:

- intake and assessment to determine whether the candidate has the capacity to finish the training;
- portfolio;
- portfolio assessment.

The competencies of the candidates are assessed according to the official standards of the Law on Vocational Education and Adult Education (MBO-level 3). In principle, the training is composed in agreement with the approach of competency directed vocational education. Point of departure is not the qualification structure (subject qualifications and goals of an educational programme) but the OVDB (KBB, Centre of expertise of vocational education, training and labour market for care well being and sport) competency profile of the vocation supervised learning route (BBL). Only, the examination or reviewing takes place according to the qualification structure. The teachers are making the translation from the competency profiles and the qualification structure.

The EVC procedures are free for employees who next will follow a training programme of the MBO school (Regional Educational Centre, ROC). The others will receive an invoice of the school for the EVC procedure. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has decreed that the fee for the route should be €462,- a year. For books etc. another amount of €200,- up to €500,- will be necessary, dependent of the length of the programme. A third category of costs for the participant consists of the extra activities to be carried out as far as necessary: a more extensive intake procedure, extra skills training, extra supervision from the school etc. (€295,- to at most €950,-). Generally, the employer will reimburse these costs completely or partly.

The pilot project has been completely financed by Opella in the supposition, that the investments will be paid back by the shortening and the quality of the training programme. At the same time, Opella tries to get a part of these investments back by selling the concept and the developed instruments to other institutions.

Hogeschool van Amsterdam

The Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA) offers EVC at the level of higher education. Candidates with two to three years of working experience in all relevant profession can apply for an EVC procedure.

The procedure consists of:

- an introductory interview, to clarify the expectations of the candidate and the demands made by the EVC-supplier;
- portfolio assessment;
- an assessment interview;
- a report of the results.

If the exam committee of the HvA agrees with the results, a candidate receives access to the courses in question and can obtain exemptions from parts of the program.

Foundation Children's Reception Centre Bussum Naarden Muiden Muiderberg

Aim of the EVC programme is: to diminish the scarcity on the labour market; through EVC procedures employees are admitted to a shortened BBL training route of 1,5 years while the official route demands a study period of 3 years. The programme has been started in 2000 and will comprise 17 managers-in-training (MBO level 3) in 4 years (2000 to 2006).

The method used:

- recruiting of managers-in-training by advertisements and open applications;
- introductory interview to get an impression of the motivation of the candidate to do an EVC procedure;
- portfolio assessment;
- a report of the MBO school, that indicates which parts of the training programme should be taken into account.

The EVC procedure and the contracted training route are to be financed by the employer on the basis of a written study agreement, signed by both parties before the training programme will start.

Frico Cheese Company

In 2000, a calculation of an accountants office has shown, that the EVC procedure of this company is much less expensive than the formal training of employees. The EVC procedure appeared to demand quite some time investment by the company itself, but the certificates awarded to the employees have been received in half of the time needed to follow a regular educational programme.

- 5.1.b) Increasing the visibility of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and thus enhancing potential benefits for future economic gains.

Successfully finished EVC procedures can enhance the selfconfidence of volunteers. EVC procedures appear to be important for young volunteers and people with a weak position on the labour market. Experiences in volunteers' activities can be used in other situations on the labour market. Scouting Gelderland is a forerunner in the volunteers' sector as far as EVC procedures are concerned.

Scouting Gelderland

A number of volunteers' organisations are looking for ways to get more volunteers and especially to keep them in the organisation. Scouting Gelderland thinks EVC procedures are a solution that will have 2 positive effects. Firstly, the recognition of competencies volunteers acquire in this kind of organisations; these competencies will also get more social recognition. Secondly, the realisation of fully accepted trainee positions for students in social and sport educational programmes. The aim of the EVC procedure is: to give volunteers' activities more social value. In practice, it means that the scouting volunteers can use the information on the competencies they have learned and developed in

their scouting period, in application forms or in career interviews or in the requests for study points or examination exemptions. Thanks to the project, they now know exactly what kind of competencies they possess. Nowadays, scouting seems to be a good workshop for trainees for MBO schools.

The project was started in 2003, by developing an EVC kit for 200 local scouting groups in the province of Gelderland. The organisations involved are, besides Scouting Gelderland, MBO schools (ROC's) and the National Institute for Test Development (Cito) in Arnhem. The EVC procedure is as follows:

- A description of the work in 3 competency profiles which concur with the national qualification structure of MBO schools, especially the BOL-educational route Social Cultural Work, level 4 (management level)
- The development of instruments with a Scouting content. The competency game is an example: this game replaces the checklist often used in intakes for EVC procedures and is apart of the EVC kit 'Scout it out!'. It contains further material for a competency training, a manual for the composition of a portfolio, flyers for recruiting new trainees and list of words to translate typical scouting words to the outside world.

5.1.c) Improving the allocation of human capital within organisations by matching the appropriate demands and supplies of skills and competencies.

Sensire De Drie Beken

Sensire is an institution for care, housing and well-being in the province of Gelderland. With 8.000 employees, they offer various services to elderly people. Employees (nurses and tenders) have to learn to work on MBO school level 2 and to get a diploma on that level. They will become more effective in the sense, that they can handle more complex problems, without use of specialised colleagues. This improves the quality of the service.

The aim of the EVC procedures is: to make the exiting Home Care employees more effective. The project has been started in 2006 and will comprise 20 employees. It will be carried out by the ROC Graafschapcollege.

Used method:

- information meetings with the employees;
- portfolio;
- subject qualifications and further training.

Tapestry industry

The professional developments in this sector of industry will be translated to education, by co-operation with the educational institutions. Sector co-operation is getting a new impulse with the development of an innovative, competency oriented training programme for the tapestry industry. Aim of the EVC procedure since 2001 is: to improve and broaden the employability of the employees in the tapestry industry in a structural way.

The number of participants: up until 2004: 20; in 2004: 20; in 2005: 30 and in 2006: 20 employees who have been working for some time in the tapestry industry. The EVC procedure has been started by the sector organisation and is carried out by a working group of that organisation as well by a MBO institute: ROC Oost-Nederland and Kjenning Ondernemend Leren (Kjenning entrepreneurial learning).

The methods used are:

- the development of the sector oriented function competency profiles (what should be expected of an employee in the future?);
- the determination of the needed practical and theoretical knowledge (what should an employee learn in order to be able to carry that out?);
- the assessment of the actual level of the employee (portfolio);
- the reviewing by an examination committee (certification/exemptions or training route).

5.1.d) Reducing skills shortages or skills mismatch by allowing more mobility within the labour market (occupational mobility).

Metallurgy, training-on-the-job of engineers

In the future, there will be a larger demand for higher skilled personnel, because the activities in the metallurgical sector will change. In order to keep the employees inside the sector, it is important that better use is made of existing talents and that the experienced employees working in the sector should get better career prospects.

The aim of the EVC project in the sector is: further training of employees in the metallurgical sector on HBO-level.

The project has been started in 2001 as a pilot project. It will comprise 45 participants working in the mechanical engineering and technological business administration on HBO level, without a HBO institution diploma.

The project is carried out by the employer's organisation for metallurgy and 3 HBO institutions (Amsterdam, Eindhoven and Enschede). The competency standards used are the competency profiles of the HBO functions mechanical engineering and technological business administration.

The methods used are:

- pre phase: information, interviews with the candidates, scan of the working places of the candidates, to see whether the context of their jobs is sufficient for personal development plans;
- intake: assessment by an external office (IQ test), personality test, motivation test, development test and a portfolio;
- study route: on the job by action learning assignments, results/proofs of the assignments to be gathered in the portfolio, tests in the case the results of the assignments are sufficient;
- diploma or further schooling.

Financing: all costs will be paid by the employer. The costs for recognising, evaluate and acknowledge the competencies are about €2050,-; the costs for the training phase: €5.500,- a year. The O&O fund for metallurgy contributes an amount of €2300,- a year 'with a maximum of 2 years; the real costs for the employers are between €1150,- and €2050,- a year.

5.1.e) Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by the active use of the potential labour population (older workers, women, immigrants, unemployed youth, etc.).

FLEXIS initiative in the province of Zeeland

In order to reduce the shortage of personnel in the care sector, the Education and Development funds (O&O fonds) of the sector have started the FLEXIS initiative in 1999. This was done in the expectation, that new groups of people can be attracted to the sector by offering training.

The aim of FLEXIS (which stands for: Flexible Learning routes resulting in extra input of personnel) is: to realise that (allochtone) unemployed people and personnel working in the sector will get a diploma on MBO level 3 and a job, by an EVC procedure and by a tailor made learning and working route that is connected with it.

In the period 1999-2001, 2 MBO schools in the province of Zeeland have developed an EVC instrumentation and tailor made routes. At the end of 2003 there have been 63 participants; in 2005 there were 68.

In the meantime, a structural supply of tailor made learning and working routes can be done. Also new learning routes on MBO-level 2 (assistants) and MBO-level 4 (nurse) can be offered.

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- intake interview;
- portfolio; knowledge test and (as far as unemployed are concerned) a 3 weeks traineeship;
- subject qualifications;
- individual learning routes.

5.1.f) Ensuring the labour force to support economic growth by improving productivity of the current labour force.

Baker Wiltink

The bakery sector has been developed from craftsmanship to a more industrial sector with an important role for ICT. The former bakers in the factory nowadays are operators in the process industry. Industrial production processes and distribution demand competencies that are not provided for by the educational programmes and diploma's of ten years ago.

The family company Baker Wiltink (140 employees) is continuously looking for methods to improve the quality and efficiency of the activities in the company. It is one of the food industrial enterprises, that have introduced EVC procedures in a structural way in its HRM policy, in order to improve the productivity and the self confidence of its labour force. It has contributed to better financial results, because of the improvement of the productivity. The illness-rate has decreased, the motivation of the labour force has increased and the wish to learn is also greater.

The aim of the EVC project started in 2001 is: certification at least on MBO level 1 of employees with sufficient experience but without a diploma, the improvement of the use of the employees and a stimulus to be further trained. More than 100 employees have successfully passed the EVC procedure: 70 on the MBO level 1 and 30 first on the level 1 and later on the level 2. Baker Wiltink is co-operating with a MBO school and a consultancy firm.

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- Information and PR;
- Portfolio (personal inventory) and questionnaire;
- Assessment;
- Internal training and certification.

Component 5.2. Educational benefits

5.2.a) Reshaping the established concept of education from 'terminal education' to 'lifelong learning'.

Senior secondary vocational education (MBO)

At the moment there are various reforms in the educational system in this direction. Mention should be made of the introduction of competency oriented education in the MBO school system: the learning process is taking place more and more in the workshop and the ROC's (MBO schools) are co-operating with trade and industry in a closer way. The individuals are getting more and more grip on their own learning process and the learning system should support their learning process or career. Educational institutes supply more tailor made training programmes after the assessment (by EVC procedures) of what an individual has learned.

Detailed case studies that prove that EVC has contributed to the reshaping of the established concept of education from 'terminal learning' to 'life long learning', are not available. But it is obvious that the regular educational institutions are more open to recognising informally and non formally obtained qualifications and to life long learning concepts.

Higher education (HBO)

EVC Centre of the Hogeschool Amsterdam (HBO institution Amsterdam)

Use of already acquired competencies leads to more motivated students and to lasting development of tailor made training programmes. Form and content of the educational system are better tuned to the life long learning group, which is or will be fit for a competency development on HBO level.

The aim of the EVC project: development and execution of EVC within the Hogeschool van Amsterdam, by carrying out co-operation projects and by dissemination of knowledge about EVC through training programmes, workshops, presentations and publications. These co-operation projects focussed on the development of EVC, are taking place with the educational institutes of the Hogeschool and trade and industry. The EVC procedures are meant for people with at least some years of working experience, who have grown to MBO plus or HBO level but not possess the diploma that is connected with that level. The EVC procedure is carried out by two assessors, one coming from the training programme itself and the other working in the profession.

The EVC procedure consists of:

- Filling out a form;
- EVC starting interview on mutual expectations;
- Development of a portfolio;
- Assessment of the portfolio;
- Personal learning route.

The participants can start the EVC procedure at any time. On average, the procedure takes one to two months. The duration depends on the time needed to develop a portfolio.

Interestingly, this HBO-institution was the first to appoint a lector for EVC.

5.2.b) Providing flexible personalised learning pathways.

Koning Willem I College, together with the House of the Future organisation (Huis van de Toekomst) in Bois-le-Duc (province of Noord Brabant), has started a training programme for middle level executives in Construction and Infrastructure.

The aim of the EVC procedure is: to contribute to a better equilibrium of the labour structure in the participating companies and to provide for well trained employees who satisfy the modern demands of the employer and the labour market. At the moment 12 employees of Brabant Water and Heymans infrastructure are involved, who would like to be awarded a MBO level 4 diploma.

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- EVK/EVC route, in which the experiences and knowledge are assessed;
- An individual training route, the duration of which depends on the examination exemptions.

ROC Westerschelde (MBO school) (see also Component 5.1.e)

The aim is: to supply individual, flexible learning routes by tailor made learning routes in the care sector.

The flexibility of the programme is guaranteed by the rule that every first week of the month a participant can start a tailor made route. He/she follows indeed a real individual procedure and does not have to comply with a group. In most cases, after getting his/her diploma the participant has taken up a regular job in the care centre in which he/she has passed the practical part of the training.

5.2.c) Raising educational attainments levels by increasing the completion rates of secondary education qualifications.

There is no evidence, that EVC has raised the educational attainments levels by increasing the completion rates of secondary education qualifications. This is because there no complete EVC procedures exist in regular vocational education in the Netherlands. This has to do with the fact, that accelerated inflow of students from preliminary schools (VMBO) to secondary of higher vocational schools is still not possible in our country. Parts of EVC procedures are tentatively used in this system. The Platform VMBO is stimulating the use of good supervising and reviewing interviews to determine how the experiences of students can be used.

Research of Hennie Jacobs (Foundation Platform VMBO) shows, that 67 % of the interrogated VMBO-pupils expect that they can get exemptions for the experiences obtained in the VMBO schools and elsewhere. However, these exemptions are being applied only for 15% of the MBO-students.

VMBO-schools appear to be rather careful with exemptions; for instance, in the case of the educational programme Commerce and Sales, the pupils are allowed to show their skills in handling a cash-desk thanks to their weekend job in a supermarket.

Although it is impossible that VMBO pupils are admitted in an earlier stage in MBO schools because of elsewhere acquired experiences, there are some pilot projects with the aim to bring VMBO and MBO together, for instance in the Scholingsboulevard, in Enschede. Here VMBO and MBO are under the same roof. The pupils do profit of the possibility of uninterrupted learning routes from class VMBO 3 top MBO level 2 (BOL). The result will be amongst others: premature drop out will be diminished and the percentage of the number of pupils getting the starter's qualification (MBO level 2) for the labour market, will increase.

Hooghuis Lyceum Oss (a community college for all kinds of professional and general education)

Participants of the VMBO department Care and Well being work at big integration assignments, for which they carry a great responsibility. Result is that the participants are proud of themselves and of the school. The department hopes, that it will be possible in the future to use the experiences of participants obtained in volunteers activities or in sports clubs of sport in the educational concept.

Aim of the EVC procedure: to implement a new educational concept in order to address the growing problems of motivation and order in VMBO schools.

Since the start in 2002, 100 pupils have taken up assignments which are carried out in co-operation with the institutions of care and well being in the town of Oss.

The EVC procedure consists of:

- description of 5 competencies;
- by implementing the assignments (for example, organising a Santa Claus festival for children or helping elderly people to go out shopping on the market), the pupils improve their knowledge, attitudes and skills; they are responsible for the success of the assignment;
- reflection interviews.

Other developments in secondary education as far as EVC is concerned:

- Pupils can get a qualification on VMBO level-1, of which EVC is a part, for example: Assistant Green (gardens and parks);
- Flexible examinations. Pupils of pre-university schools (VWO) can pass the examination in foreign languages in the 5th school year (a year before the final year);
- Flexible examinations in VMBO. At the moment, two ROC's (MBO schools) investigate for which MBO-programmes VMBO-pupils (the future participants of the ROC) can be prepared in their VMBO time in order to make the transfer to the MBO programme easier, through a system of exemptions. By flexible examination the pupil can get during his/her VMBO school period exemptions.

5.2.d) Increasing the tertiary participation rates of non-traditional learners.

In a recent report 'EVC at the gateways of HBO institutions' (ITS Nijmegen, 2000) that gives a number of advices for implementation of EVC in HBO institutions and universities, it is mentioned that EVC will make higher education more attractive to new target groups. HBO institutions which are familiar with EVC confirm, that EVC can be useful to make HBO institutions more attractive and to improve the accessibility of Higher Education. By giving exemptions, the creation of better inflow possibilities and the supply of shorter and tailor made learning routes, the number of students with special backgrounds (other previous education, working experience) in Higher Education could rise. Several EVC experiments in some HBO institutions are described below.

Fontys

In 2005, Fontys HBO institutions started the Experiment Flexible Admission Fontys. The aim of the EVC procedure is: to admit youngsters in the age of 16 to 21 years who do not answer the legally demanded requirements but dispose of a level that is at least equal to that of the legally demanded previous education.

In 2005, 102 candidates were admitted to the admission test. 66 candidates passed the admission assessment, 48 of these candidates obtained the admission to the educational programmes.

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- self assessment;
- tests of proficiency in order to prove the potential capacities, motivation and acquired competencies;
- assessment interview;
- personal development plan.

Matrix Practical training programmes

Matrix offers tailor made practical training programmes focussed on professional craftsmanship and workmanship. It takes mainly care of practical training programmes for people seeking employment in the sectors of services and technology. EVC has been integrated in the programmes, in order to shorten the learning routes and to help people to find a job faster. Each month, about 50 people participate in a training programme. There are programmes of a month and programmes up to a year. In co-operation with the Albeda College in Rotterdam, vocational qualifying training programmes are supplied. It leads to an extra inflow of pupils into MBO schools.

The aim is: practical training programmes for unemployed individuals (re-integration training) to help people to find a job. These people are all registered at CWI (Centre for Work and Income) and are 25 to 40 years old. They can start the training programmes any time, they can choose the tempo they like and which fits their capabilities. About 70% of the participants are getting a job after finishing the programmes of Matrix.

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- intake, of which EVC is a part: the general and professional competencies of the participant are interviewed and partly tested by language, study skills and arithmetic tests and personal characteristics are investigated;
- determination of the route of learning;
- practical training by tailor made working and learning routes;
- traineeship;
- application training;
- assistance to labour.

5.2.e) Improving the teacher work force through more flexible entrance to teaching occupation.

Institute of Teacher and School

The Institute of Teacher and School (ILS) is a joint institute of the Tertiary High School Arnhem/Nijmegen and the Radboud University Nijmegen. The ILS offers teachers training programmes, full time and part time, also for people working in other economic sectors. The government will stimulate the flow of students to the teachers training programmes and has provided for extra scholarships. The ILS is continuously active to develop new, more flexible part time alternatives, for example learning routes for people working in other economic sectors (in Dutch: zij-instromers). The result is: more students and better motivated students.

The aim of the EVC procedure is: to offer bachelors of HBO institutions and universities a practice oriented educational programme of a year, in order to award them the teachers qualification (second degree) and to teach them how to transfer their knowledge at schools of second education, vocational education and adult education.

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- intake;
- writing a personal development plan;
- orientation on the schools in various sectors and traineeships;
- a route of intervision and reflection.

Component 5.3. Social benefits

5.3.a) Building social institutions to arrange smoother transition from education to work and from work back to education; increasing socio-cultural equity and social cohesion by providing pathways for formally excluded disadvantaged groups to be included.

A project to let people with mental limitations learn

Mentally limited youngsters generally are not stimulated to learn further after finishing their school time and entering the social workshop or day residence. It is an exception when a learning route is offered.

Aim of the project: The project “Life long learning” enables youths with a mental limitation after their school time, to develop and to (re)discover their own powers and responsibilities and to participate in society and the labour market, for example by getting a new position in the social labour relief work or in a assistant function in a simple, regular job.

The project is carried out in co-operation by care institutions and educational institutes (MBO schools) in the regions Friesland, East-Gelderland and Rijnmond. It is the intention, that the participants reach to the maximum of their abilities, by getting (another) job in a relief organisation or a supporting function in a simple regular job. The project is supposed to have stimulated a swing of mentality of assistants, educational institutions, the participants themselves and their parents/counselors. It has been started in 2002 and has finished in 2004. It has had 117 participants (the target was 75).

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- inflow procedure: personal interview with 1 supervisor to get a clear picture of the training aims;
- the offer of individual learning modules, resulting in 13 subject certificates on E1 and E2 levels.

The project has shown small-scale, practical successes and has resulted in a new training programme Assistant Green (gardens and parks) at the Agricultural College Friesland. Ultimately, this kind of activity is economic when you are making the people concerned more independent.

The methodology used has been recorded on DVD. A prospectus has been written for policy makers. It appears, that there are hindrances for the further development of this kind of activity for mentally limited people:

- the regulations of the government;
- people are not flexible;
- the resistance of the school institutions.

5.3.b) Leading to better societal values (e.g. promotion of democracy, intercultural understanding, better health, lower criminal rates, etc).

In the Netherlands, we do not find EVC projects aimed at better societal values. EVC is applied for different target groups, with different goals, enabling persons to take substantial steps in their lives. Nevertheless, EVC can lead to better health (because of more pleasurable work), more integration of autochtone and allochtone workers (like in the example of Corus, described below), or less criminality (when ex-prisoners get more opportunities in society).

The examples described in this component can be seen in this light.

Metallurgical industry Corus IJmuiden: more integration

15% of the 10.500 employees of Corus is low skilled. This group does not possess the recognised educational programmes on MBO level 2 and is working mainly in the raw materials department in which the ore and coal are processed.

The aim of the EVC procedure is: For the category of low skilled employees Corus has set up a training course Practical Craftsmanship, in order to train the employees up to the MBO school levels MBO 1 and 2, by which they can be deployed in other activities as well. The course is attuned to the target group and to the demands in the practical situation. In the programmes there is almost no place for theoretical elements; participants learn by doing; they are supervised intensively. Besides there is a basic training programme. Another goal was to improve integration between allochtone and autochtone workers.

The basic training programme has been followed by about 180 employees and about 130 employees have participated in the training course Practical Craftsmanship and attained the diploma. This course is still available and will be enlarged in the near future.

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- a one day assessment;
- a basic training programme to learn how to learn, if necessary extra subjects on primary school level (Calculation or Dutch language);
- training course Practical Craftsmanship.

The EVC procedure of Corus is a good example, because low skilled people with bad experiences and resistances to learning activities are motivated to come into action and participate in this kind of activities. Participants who have successfully passed the MBO 1 or 2 level examinations, are able and sometimes also motivated to take up further education. They have become more emancipated and will have more understanding of their activities. Thanks to the project, there is also a promotion of integration of autochtone and allochtone employees.

Heinz: an open working relationship between workers and managers

Heinz is a food industry enterprise and has intentions to enlarge the possibility of employees to be active in at least 3 functions and to have an open working relationship with their managers. The internal training programmes apply to these intentions. Heinz is trying to get national recognition for these internal training programmes.

The aim of the EVC procedure is to be a useful instrument to prove the quality of its internal function oriented training programmes and to stimulate employees to talk about their work and to address their managers as far as their responsibilities are concerned. This aim has led to the conclusion that also the managers should be trained as internal assessors, in order to enable them to review their employees and their work. EVC just gave the managers and the employees a structural framework for their training policy.

In 2005 Heinz has started a pilot project for operators in the department Food services in Elst.

The EVC procedure was as follows:

- portfolio;
- quick scan;
- criterium oriented interview;
- 3 tests in the work shop;
- 1 assignment.

It appeared, that the internal training programmes of Heinz concur with legal qualifications in sector food technology of the MBO schools. In the pilot project 28 employees have been assessed: 3 for courses on MBO school level 1, 11 on MBO school level 2 and 14 for a short sequel course. 80- 85 % of the employees admitted to the programme have got a certification in one go. The average time for the employees needed for the programme was 34 hours; the average time for a manager: 60 hours. The programme manager has needed 250 hours.

5.3.c) Enhancing flexibility to allow more mobility within the education and training sector (e.g. between VET and HE and from FE to HE, etc).

According to Riet Driessen, project leader EVC and Assessment of ROC Eindhoven and chairperson of the EVC platform for Vocational Education, there are contacts between MBO schools and HBO institutions in many places in the Netherlands, to get an agreement on the terminology to be used concerning EVC and the content of EVC procedures. In the future, the flow of students from MBO to HBO will be simpler thanks to EVC procedures, but that does not mean that schools will be more equipped to supply tailor made solutions. However, in general, one cannot say that there are results to be reported on the level of the executives, with the exception of some pilots.

Christian High School Windesheim; Training programme Design and Engineering

The regional metallurgical industries have promoted the inflow of employees with working experience and a MBO-degree in a related HBO education programme. The Department Design and Engineering of Windesheim has developed EVC for mechanical engineering, electrotechnology, industrial product design and industrial business administration, for people already working in another economic sector.

Aim of the project: to recognise the employee's competencies acquired in his educational past, in his labour and other situations and to give the participants a tailor made study advise after finishing the EVC procedure.

The project has started in 2004; there have been 17 participants, 6 of them have been admitted to Windesheim and another number of these participants has started complementary educational activities upon the basis of the results of the EVC procedure.

The EVC procedure consists of:

- information meeting;
- portfolio document;
- assessment interview with the 2 assessors: criterium oriented interview and capabilities and motivation tests;
- personal development plan.

5.3.d) Building a stepping stone for prisoners to be re-integrated into a society.

Real times, real life, a game

The game enables unemployed people to develop new perspectives in their lives. They learn to understand the wider context in which they live, to handle changes and to learn themselves and their competencies. This will improve their self confidence to build up their own career. The game was developed by the Canadian National Life Work Centre. In the Netherlands, the APS National Centre for School Improvement (Algemeen Pedagogisch Studiecentrum), was involved in implementing the game.

Albeda College Rotterdam, Training without thresholds for ex- prisoners

Prisoners and ex-prisoners often have a great distance to the labour market. In order to reduce the distance and the recidivism, the Albeda College (an MBO school) is offering practical oriented qualified training programmes, since 2002. The programmes can start in the penitentiary institution and can be continued in the school in Rotterdam. EVC can be a part of the training route. Research has shown that recidivism of participants of this programme is only 20% (national average: 40%). The programme has resulted in 1.200 certificates and diploma's (up to September 2005).

The aim of the programme: to promote an inflow without thresholds to secondary education for (ex)prisoners and of people with a task penalty in the region of Rijnmond. Another goal is to award them a (subject)qualification and to improve their personal chances on the labour market. The objective is that the participants within the period of 1 year will get a paid job in combination with a training programme.

The number of participants in the pilot project phase has been 900 (ex)prisoners and people with a task penalty.

Component 5.4. Personal benefits

5.4.a) Empowering individuals to have more control over where and when they learn.

Volunteers' Central Council Utrecht and Re-integration organisation Centrum BOA

The aim: to supply a traineeship in volunteers' work to 70 non- or low skilled women, mostly of allochtonic origin, who have not had a paid job for a long time. Working in a volunteers' job (care, kindergarten, administration, hotel and catering environment) the women discover their abilities and what kind of job they are interested in. Women discovered that the experiences they have obtained somewhere else (in their home country or in housekeeping) can be used and defined. The work of the women has been evaluated by EVC procedures (at least 6 competencies out of 17 competencies). The evaluation resulted in a certificate.

5.4.b) Developing the aspirations of those who have 'dropped out' to resume learning and to complete a qualification.

The organisation for addiction care North-Netherlands

This organisation offers information, assistance and prevention to addicted people. A part of the personnel of the centre is formed by experts, who have themselves experienced the treatment. Former addicts are trained in a tailored made programme for the job of counsellor. Sometimes the training programmes can be shortened because of the working experience the former clients have obtained. The organisation stimulates their (formerly addicted) employees to develop further and to get degrees, even if that means that they will get a job in other organisations.

The aim of the EVC programme 'From Dependence to Independence' is: to create (trainee) jobs for previously addicted people who have lived at least 1 year independent of addiction care.

The EVC procedure is as follows:

- to evaluate the working experience of previously addicted people by inserting assessment modules or portfolio;
- assessment;
- training route.

5.4.c) Reducing the stigma of qualifications associated with non-formal and informal learning.

Foundation Tele Assistance Limburg; project 'Recognising the volunteers' work'

The foundation offers people help, anonymously, 7 days a week and 24 hours a day, by clarifying their problems, in structuring of their thoughts or in making choices. Its clients can be referred to other professional institutions more fit to handle the problems. A great number of volunteers is working for the foundation. Professional employees take care of the training and supervising of these volunteers.

Since 2001 the foundation tries to get an official recognition of the basic training programme and the monthly expert training of the volunteers. The project has been closed in 2006; it is now a structural part of the supervising and evaluation procedures of the volunteers organisation. In total 9 volunteers have built up a portfolio and 4 of them have started a training programme.

The aim of the EVC route, carried out by the ROC Leeuwenborg is: to get more knowledge of what volunteers learn in the organisation and to define the value of it.

The EVC procedure is:

- to compose a portfolio;
- testing portfolio by the ROC Leeuwenberg leading to (subject)certificates.

Component 5.5. Others

5.5.a) Describe any cases where you identify other benefits or barriers to such benefits.
EVC procedures can be supportive in the case of outplacement.

The cases described below, show that EVC can be of assistance in outplacement activities.

EVC pilot in KPN Telecom (department of Entercom and others)

The trade unions have indicated during the negotiations concerning the Mobility agreement, that EVC should be taken into account as an instrument to help to help employees to get diploma's or (professional) certificates in a relatively short period of time. By showing the often hidden competencies of employees and by formally recognising these competencies by an EVC procedure, the multifunctionality of the employees will be improved and accelerated.

The aim of the pilot project for 25 employees is: active support of employees who (have to) leave the company in seeking a new job (as a part of the social plan accompanying the reorganisation proposals).

In total 14 employees have participated in ROC Midden Nederland and 11 employees in Kenteq, the knowledge centre for professional technical training.

Two of the 14 ROC trainees have shown that they possess 75 % of the required knowledge and experience to get a MBO diploma; they have got the full MBO diploma after half a year. Seven other ROC-participants have received the MBO diploma after 1 year. All 11 Kenteq participants have shown sufficient knowledge and experience to get the full professional diploma. So far, the participants have not found new jobs, but they are positive about the pilot project and their opportunities on the labour market.

Givaudan, flavour industries for food (Barneveld, province of Gelderland)

In 2004 the management has decided to concentrate all activities in Switzerland and Germany. About 130 employees would lose their jobs, mainly in production and stores working on MBO school level.

They do not have function related diplomas, but they do have a lot of experience, also thanks to internal training programmes. The management wanted to support these employees who have to leave the company in finding new jobs. In agreement with the trade unions, the social plan contained a number of measures like training and outplacement procedures. Givaudan has also offered the possibility to participate in EVC procedures, together with a MBO school (Groenhorst College). 55 of the production employees have decided to participate in the EVC procedure; they all have received a diploma or subject qualification.

The total investments are: €53.000,- and at least 700 hours in 6 months.

Component 6. Conclusion

6.a) Which national goals, if any, in your country, is ‘recognition of non-formal and informal learning’ most closely associated with? Are these goals associated with lifelong learning agenda or something else? If something else, specify.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is most closely associated with two groups of goals.

1. Economic development

In the knowledge based economy, citizens need to acquire new knowledge and skills efficiently and quickly. Learning, i.e. the acquisition of knowledge and expertise, will need to be made more flexible in terms of form and content. This means, that in addition to regular education, other learning environments will also need to play a role: instruction of workers, training on the job and independent learning.

EVC provides not only an added incentive for continuous learning, but also “for improving the match between education and the labour market, since it will now centre not only on supply but also demand. The skills acquired, can after all lead directly to awarding certificates and to exemptions from diploma requirements. They can also form part of personnel policy and provide insight into individual employability.” (EVC-report ‘The Glass is half full’, Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2001, p. 10).

In short, EVC is an important instrument for national goals like:

- lifelong learning;
- internationalisation;
- coping in the knowledge based economy;
- stimulating innovation;
- fighting mismatch on the labour market.

2. Fighting social problems (integration of target groups)

As has been explained in component 1, recognition of non-formal and informal learning is an instrument used for solving inequalities in society. EVC can be a starting point for the integration of marginalized persons. The instrument clarifies the competencies of individuals without formal diploma's. This is not only done for labour market purposes, but also to provide confidence and perspectives for people without formal qualifications. Thus, the EVC report can be a goal in itself and a starting point for the integration of individuals into society. Target groups of such policies are the unemployed, new comers, migrants, drop outs, people without a starting qualification, (ex-)prisoners et cetera.

In the Netherlands, EVC is not explicitly associated with the internationally discussed "civil society" objective.

6.b) What strategies (short-term, mid-term and long-term) are needed to operationalize the 'recognition of all types of learning outcomes – including formal, non-formal and informal learning' in your country? What are the most challenging tasks for policy-makers in the due course?

Short-term

- For the short-term actions are in order, to facilitate implementation of EVC and to make EVC accessible for organisations and individuals. The temporary regulations for MBO- and HBO institutions and the tax-regulations (all discussed in component 2.1.c) have been installed for this purpose.
- Communicating the content and effects of EVC on a larger scale is necessary as well. EVC and possibilities for financing recognition activities, are still relatively unknown.

Mid-term

Quality and content

We think that the following measures would be useful.

- The Quality Code (November 2006) sets an important framework for ensuring the quality of EVC procedures. In the meantime, progress has been made. At January 26th 2007 60 suppliers have applied to be accredited by the Knowledge Centre EVC as a supplier of EVC that meets the criteria of the Quality Code. The Knowledge Centre EVC expects that in 2007, 100 to 150 suppliers will be accredited. Implementation of the Quality Code should be a priority for all stakeholders involved.
- Now that the Quality Code is actively being used, white spots and bugs are surfacing. Debugging and filling in the white spots will have to receive attention.
- One of the elements of the Quality Code stresses the importance of using standards which are coordinated to the relevant working area, which leads to a civil effect. With respect to this element of the Code, we think two challenges must be addressed.
 - o Central development
Central development of EVC procedures and EVC reports and offering these instruments for use in regional activities. So far, EVC is being developed bottom up, within regions or (sub)sectors. Results (the EVC report) are in most cases linked to the formal qualification structure or to sectoral standards. Every supplier of EVC is free to develop his own procedure. On one hand this approach ensures important commitment from stakeholders in the regional or (sub)sectoral context. A disadvantage of the bottom up approach is a technical one. EVC reports can, in most cases, only be used for further training in the educational institutions who developed the procedure and the report.

One way to improve the situation, might be to let procedures and reports be developed centrally, for instance by the KBB's (Centres of expertise on vocational education, training and labour market). This way, quality, independence and interchangeability of EVC procedures and reports would be improved. Also development costs would be reduced.

This does not mean, that all initiative and action must be taken away from the regional level. On the contrary, regional commitment and initiative are crucial. But use of centrally available expertise in the field of technical development of EVC-procedures and EVC-reports should be stimulated, within projects at the regional level.

- Attainable standards sub-MBO level?
Attention should be paid to the way in which EVC carried out in the context of (re-) integrating vulnerable groups into society, is linked to the formal qualification structure. The competency-level of many of the participants in this kind of EVC is not high enough to attain a starting qualification (MBO level 2). For participants in EVC, this means, that an EVC report will state, that they reach up to a certain percentage of the level required.

Experiences with these target groups should be used to answer the question, "Is it useful for the participants, to define qualification standards below the MBO-1 or MBO-2 level?". For labour market integration purposes, the answer is "No". But for purposes of personal development of marginalized persons, it might be relevant to examine this matter. For these groups, an EVC report truly can be a goal in itself. A first recognition of the fact, that a person has certain skills, upon which further development can be built. The availability of relevant standards, that lie within the reach of lowskilled persons, might prove to be helpful in this context.

Facilities

Furthermore, measures could be taken to further facilitate development, implementation and participation in EVC. In its report "Talent ontwikkelen, talent benutten", the Council for Work and Income (RWI) proposes a number of policies. The proposals mainly focus on facilitating measures.

- Strengthening relations between education and business. Education and training should be more focussed on career development and changing jobs, instead of keeping jobs.
- Development of "second career policies". Everyone should get the chance, a least once during their career, to use an EVC route. This gives workers information on their acquired competencies. Also it can be used to open up more career opportunities, inside or outside the sectors in which they work.
- Fiscal facilities.
- Un-used rights to schooling for employees could be used to give these persons an EVC-route.
- Periods of inactivity should be used better. EVC-routes and additional training could be offered to individuals who have been unemployed for more than a year. This would require an effort of MBO-schools, HBO-institutions, universities and organisations for employee insurances and labour market integration, like UWV and CWI.

Integrating sectoral and regional policies

Expertise on training and matching people to places for learning and working, is concentrated in branche related organizations, such as employers organizations, the KBB's (the Centres of expertise on vocational education, training and labour market), sector schooling funds (O&O fondsen) and training organizations in sectors. In many sectors, these organizations have adopted EVC as a useful tool in the labour market policies of the sectors.

Labour market (re-)integration of unemployed people takes place at the regional level, by the municipalities, in cooperation with regionally oriented organisations, such as the CWI (an organization that offers a platform for enterprises to publicize their job-vacancies and for unemployed people to find these job-vacancies).

In our opinion, these two working fields are not sufficiently connected. The expertise and knowledge that is available in the realm of sector related organizations should be better used in regional labour market policies and projects. An important challenge is to integrate regional and sectoral policymaking for labour market and training, in a way that meets the needs and possibilities of the enterprises and offers comprehensive solutions to the target groups of individuals on the regional labour market.

A solution might be, to enhance the level of regional policymaking, so that regional staff-capacities will be large enough to enable effective cooperation with the sectoral networks.

Long-term

In the long-term, institutional arrangements could be adjusted, to create better conditions for life long learning.

- Separate training- and educational arrangements exist, for different target groups, such as pupils in secondary and senior secondary education, students in higher education, working people, unemployed, newcomers and people living on welfare. These arrangements should be better harmonized, and made more transparent. So that more flexible learning pathways for participants will be possible.
- Financial arrangements for participants, the education sector and enterprises should be better tuned as well, for instance by:
 - o more possibilities for tax-deduction of cost of training for employees;
 - o more possibilities could be created for the unemployed, to enable individuals, to participate in education and training, while keeping welfare of other financial allowances;
 - o developing a “social loaning system” for people older than 30;
 - o making regulations that put demand and supply of education/training in an equal position. For instance by creating individual financial accounts for people, which can be used to create individual tailor made learning paths.

6.c) Address important policy issues for your country which have not been addressed in any of the previous Components.

All important policy issues have been addressed in previous components.

6.d) Please describe how much the ‘Lifelong Learning for All’ strategies are implemented at post-compulsory education level in your country?

National strategies for lifelong learning

In a recent report ‘Course vocational education and adult education’ (Koers BVE, Den Haag , 2004) the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Maria J.A. van der Hoeven, has indicated, that it is important that “educational institutions will meet the demand for well educated people. That companies will get the candidates they need. That participants will develop their talents, choose the proper learning career and get a starter’s qualification. That civilians will learn a life long.” One of the six most important objectives of ‘Course BVE’ (p. 20) is: “a lifelong learning”. Earning and working are no longer successive phases of life but alternate processes. Up until now, the accent is on learning before working. This will stay the basis to acquire the needed knowledge and skills, but vocational education will also adapt to the need of learning during the career: a lifelong learning. The knowledge

economy demands of people the willingness to learn continuously. In the report it is said that for this purpose the following is necessary:

- more innovation and output by co-operation between educational institutions and their surroundings;
- more attention to a variety of learning careers;
- attractive educational programs, closer related to the labour market;
- the institutions should be broadly accessible.

This policy line is also discussed in component 1.4.a.

Implementation in the education sector

It will take some time before all the steps mentioned above will be taken in all regions and all schools. It is obvious, that in recent years important progress has been made in the direction of the four steps, as has been shown by the different case studies in the previous components of this report. It appears that especially the co-operation of MBO schools and trade and industry in their own geographic regions has improved substantially in the last years. In the slipstream of this development MBO schools are aware of the necessity to relate their educational programs closer to the labour market.

As a consequence of the strategies developed in the report 'Course BVE', the Minister has sent a letter on the 'Main lines of lifelong learning' to Parliament and has established a Platform for Life long learning. Also, at the end of 2006, a self-learning competence is supposed to be inserted in the formal "qualification structure"; as a matter of fact, this is still in the process of execution.

It appears, that the Dutch HBO institutions and universities are not adapting in a very systematic way to the need of lifelong learning, except for the recognition of diplomas of foreign students and the training of teachers. As has been shown by a few case studies in the previous components, some steps forward were made. Besides, the HBO institutions and universities are seeking more co-operation with trade and industry in their neighbourhood, as well as on the national level. There is also more attention to a variety of learning careers and the admission processes of these institutions are broadened. An exception should be made for the Open University in the province of Limburg, which has also systematically focused on the development of attractive educational programs, closer related to the labour market and on innovation of the educational and pedagogical processes. Its programs are open to more participants than those of the other universities.

Implementation in enterprises

It is clear, that the lifelong learning concept has taken a rather firm root in the companies and in the so called O&O funds, funds for training and development of the employees in the branches (established by the trade unions and the economic sector organisations of employers). But also in quite a number of the companies, a more explicit policy in this respect is still needed. The Ministry of Economic Affairs is promoting the further implementation of the lifelong learning strategies in the companies, also in the context of its innovation objectives.

6.e) Please list some 'factors' which you think as unforeseeable and yet necessary conditions to realise the 'Open Learning Society' scenario, which gives value to formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The most important conditions for creating an Open Learning Society are:

- a transparent qualifications structure;
- regulation of quality control, not only for education, but also for EVC. Quality control for EVC could be regulated by agreements of "high trust", between suppliers and (organised) users, such as sector organizations and organizations in the field of labour market (re-)

integration. These “high trust” agreements could be supported by national law, but this is not imperative;

- a transparently structured education sector, that allows a flexible flow of participants from one layer or sector to another;
- universal, transparent and interchangeable EVC procedures and EVC reports;
- close relations between educational institutions and their surroundings (enterprises, government institutions, institutions in the field of (re)integration of unemployed into the labour market);
- creating possibilities for developing and executing individual tailor made learning paths;
- facilities for financing flexible tailor made individual learning routes, such as an individual learning account;
- clear communication to Dutch citizens about the technical and financial arrangements for education and EVC.

Annex I

Table W1 – Total expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning by source of funds– Year 2006		
Source of funds	Expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning	% of GDP
Public	€ 35.000.000	
Trade Unions	€ 8.750.000	
Private (other than individual) (employers)	€ 8.750.000	
Individuals themselves		
Total	€ 52.500.000	0,0104%

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs/Ministry of Education, Knowledge Centre EVC, CPB

Table W2 – Total public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning – Year 2006		
Expenditure	% of all public expenditure	% of GDP
€ 35.000.000	0,0175%	0,0069%

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs/Ministry of Education, CPB

Table W3 – Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a percentage of total public educational expenditure – Year 2007		
Level of public expenditure on education	Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning (%)	Public expenditure on all other educational activities (%)
€ 29.913.120.000	0,1170%*	99,8830%*

Source: State budget 2007

*Estimate

Table W6 – Total expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a percentage of total educational expenditure (whether public or not) – Year 2007		
Expenditure on education	Expenditure on recognition (%)	Expenditure on all other educational activities (%)
€ 30.263.120.000*	0,1735%*	99,8265%*

Source: State budget 2007, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, CPB

*Estimate

3.3. Characteristics of participants in the recognition process of non formal and informal learning

Year	Frequency of individuals outside the initial education and training formal system	Frequency of individuals between 16 and 64 years of age	Frequency of individuals below 16	Frequency of individuals above 64	Total population	Frequency of individual employed	Frequency of individual unemployed	Frequency of individuals out of labour force
2005	12.663.326	10.943.000	3.008.574	2.353.952	16.305.526	6.918.000	483.000	8.904.526

Source: CBS statline

Table W13 – Distribution of participants in the recognition process by age – Year 2006

A breakdown of participants in the recognition process by age is not yet possible. Estimates are, that in 2006 roughly 20.000 participants were involved in EVC. A vast majority of them (roughly 19.000) were in the age group 16 - 64. A small part (1.000 maximum) may have been younger than 16. The number of participants older than 64 was probably zero.

Place of Birth	Frequency of participants	Frequency in the group (16-64 outside ET)	Frequency in the group (16-64)	Frequency in the group (0-100)
National	19.000	?	?	?
Foreigner	1.000	?	?	?
Total	20.000	?	?	?

Source: Rijnland Advies. Note: these figures are (very) rough estimates.

3.6. Recognition providers

Most providers of recognition are either educational institutions for senior secondary education, institutions for higher education or Centres of expertise on Vocational Education, training and the labour market (Kenniscentra Beroepsonderwijs en Bedrijfsleven, KBB's). A minority of recognition providers are private organizations. Exact figures are not available.

3.7. Educational institutions

Most educational institutions which provide EVC are in the size group "1.000 to 5.000 students".

2008 Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission

Contribution of the Netherlands

April 2007; amended version September 2007

Chapter 1: presentation of the national strategy for lifelong learning

1.1 Current state of play:

1.1.1 Was a lifelong learning strategy established in your country by the end of 2006, and if not what is the timetable for its establishment?

The Netherlands' strategy for lifelong learning is not described in a one volume document. However, The Netherlands carry out a conscious policy for lifelong learning for the whole educational system aiming at a maximum participation in all educational sectors. The policy aims at coherence and continuity and the maximum participation of all potential participants up till the highest possible level. The priorities of the current government are on pre- and early school education as a basis for further education, pushing back early school leaving in secondary education, increasing the quality and availability of teachers, introduction of a duty to qualify for all secondary vocational education, making higher education more attractive by introducing for instance associate degrees and extending possibilities for mobility) (see 1.3). At the same time policy is aimed at establishing a logical coherence between all successive educational sectors and at taking away barriers between sectors by introducing continuous pathways from pre- and early education up till higher education. The government submits its lifelong learning policy periodically in contiguous, future oriented plans for each individual sector (Koers PO, Koers VO, Koers BVE, HOOP). Next to formal education opportunities for formalisation of individual persons' competences acquired in a non-educational environment are being developed (Erkenning van elders verworven competenties, EVC)

This lifelong learning strategy has been laid down in a number of interrelated policy documents. The most important of these are:

- *Koers PO* for primary education (<http://www.minocw.nl/documenten/brief2k-2004-doc-28790a.pdf>)
- *Koers VO* for secondary education (in English: http://www.minocw.nl/documenten/koersvo-doc-koersvo_agenda2010_en.pdf)
- *Koers BVE* for secondary vocational education (<http://www.minocw.nl/documenten/koersbve-doc-2004-koersbve.pdf>)
- *HOOP (2004)* for higher education (<http://www.minocw.nl/documenten/brief2k-2004-doc-3283a.pdf>)
(NB. These 4 basic Sector Strategy documents are revised every 4 years and thus are current till 2008)
- *Aanval op de uitval*, policy for combatting early school leaving (http://www.voortijdigschoolverlaten.nl/docs/OCW_AanvalopUitval_fldr2.pdf)
- *Leerkracht, teacher policy* (http://www.minocw.nl/documenten/rapport_leerkracht_2.pdf)
(NB. in September a specially government installed commission will issue its advice on teacher policy)²
- *Leren en Werken Versterken* (Reinforcing learning and working 2005-2007 (http://www.leren-werken.nl/front/docs/leren_en_werken_pva.pdf, also available in English)

² The recommendation was issued on 12 September 2007; <http://www.minocw.nl/actueel/nieuws/35420/Advies-Commissie-Leraren.html>)

- *Toezicht in vertrouwen, policy on governance*
(<http://www.minocw.nl/documenten/Toezichtinvertrouwen.pdf>)
- The main points of the current government's policy for education (quality of education, teachers and early school leaving plus other spearheads for 2007-2011) can be found on <http://www.minocw.nl/hoofdpuntenbeleid/730/Over-hoofdpunten-beleid-OCW.html>
- The general basic principles for the current government can be found on <http://www.samenwerkenaannederland.nl/uploads/ik/cl/ikclUls8PZnZB7wvBquAIQ/Beleidsprogramma.pdf>

Next to the revision of the Sector Strategy Documents every 4 years, a clear and coherent presentation of the current overall strategy is given every year in the Policy Agenda which is published together with the Budget every 3rd Tuesday in September.

1.1.2 *Plans for future adjustment, completion or modification of the strategy*

At this time there are no plans for adjusting, completing or modifying the strategy (cf. 1.1.1). Policy is aimed at keeping the strategy up-to-date with social and economical developments. A crucial point for constant attention is pre- and early school education. Next to this is the extension of the qualification duty to the age of 23. In secondary vocational education developments are in an advanced stage to introduce competence-based qualifications.

1.1.3 *Any obstacles encountered in the establishment of your strategy*

Not applicable (cf. 1.1.1).

1.2. *Comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance:*

1.2.1 *Which systems and levels of education and training are covered?*

The strategy includes all sectors of education, from pre- and early education up till higher education. Non-formal education is stimulated by the possibilities to validate competences acquired in non-formal and informal education.

1.2.2 *The challenges addressed by the strategy, including improving the efficiency and equity of education and training systems, and how these have been identified (evidence base).*

The challenges in the strategy are:

- assuring the good quality of education;
- guaranteeing the accessibility of education;
- the pursuit of excellence at all levels and the development of talent;
- allowing schools and institutions the room to develop the individual qualities of pupils and students.

The challenges were inventoried on the basis of other qualitative and quantitative analyses and interviews with stakeholders.

1.2.3 The priorities for action and policy development within the strategy, in light of these challenges.

The following priorities for action are included in the strategy:

- the availability of sufficient, properly qualified teachers;
- reducing the number of early school leavers by 50%;
- continuous learning lines from preschool through to higher education and research;
- preschool and early childhood education;
- developing and implementing an accessible educational infrastructure for lifelong learning.

1.3. Main policy measures:

1.3.1 The main policy measures in the strategy and how these fit together, including

1.3.2 Outline the measures designed to address progress towards the EU benchmarks, including any national targets in these areas

1.3.3 Allocation of resources to main policy measures, including any national targets for more / more efficient use of funds and the use of EU funds to support lifelong learning (e.g. Structural Funds, European Investment Bank)

1.3.4 Measures to change attitudes to learning

1.3.5 Strengthening evidence-based policy making, using a culture of evaluation, leading to innovation in education and training

1.3.6 Measures to target the needs of disadvantaged people (e.g. immigrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled)

- Strategy applies to both formal and non-formal education (see 1.2)
- Coherence is guaranteed by the introduction of contiguous learning lines and the tuning of all sectoral plans involved
- Flexibility is included:
 - in secondary education: learning support which enables pupils to receive extra (temporarily) help
 - in secondary vocational education: choice for full time education of block or day release
 - higher education: introduction of associate degree, world wide portability of grants
- implementation and dissemination is ensured by statutory regulations and by deliberation with the stakeholders involved (associations for the individual sectors)
- The Netherlands has agreed to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

- Possibilities are introduced to formalize non-formal competences acquired in non-educational situations (see 2.2)
- Guidance: Regional joint ventures are encouraged between the education world, local authorities and Centres for Work and Income, in order to realise combinations of learning and working (work-based learning routes), the Recognition of Acquired Competencies (RAC) and so-called learning-working desks (see 2.3).
- Mobility in higher education is increased by the introduction of world wide portability of grants; next to this there is the introduction of a new grants programme (Huygens Scholarship Programme) This national programme aims to offer internationally competitive scholarships to attract, retain and send out the top talent that is needed to develop the Dutch knowledge society. The HSP will be open at the bachelor's and master's level to all incoming students from all countries (see 2.4).
- For the EU benchmarks the Netherlands have set national targets (see below and footnote 2)
- Learning partnerships with stakeholders (policy-makers at national, regional and local levels, social partners, learners and representatives of civil society) are developed for adults (see 3.1.7).
- Pre- and early school education has major attention in present lifelong learning policy (see. 3.2.1)
- Measures are taken and integrated to improve equity in a variety of fields (see 3.1.3)
- With a view to strengthening the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation, the Dutch government has implemented a number of measures (see 3.3.1)
- There is policy aimed at the position of teachers and teacher education. Primary and secondary schools receive additional resources for the professionalisation and support of education staff. The agreement is mainly aimed at expanding the possibilities for further development for teachers and other education staff within the school. Performance agreements have been adopted between the Ministry of OCW and the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO-raad) and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) to improve the quality of teacher training; this particularly applies to the maths and language skills of students at teacher-training colleges for primary education (PABO) and to the quality assurance of in-school training.

More specifically the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry of OCW) has taken the following measures (among others) to make progress, including in the area of the EU benchmarks:

- Availability of properly qualified teachers:
 - The Ministry of OCW has made performance agreements with the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO-raad) and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) to improve the quality of teacher training; this particularly applies to the maths and language skills of students at teacher-training

colleges for primary education (PABO) and to the quality assurance of in-school training.

- Proper harmonisation of the supply and demand of teachers, particularly at the regional level.
- Tackling early school leaving in general, reducing the number of early school leavers by 50% and ensuring that at least 85% of young people obtain basic qualifications³. Early school leaving (i.e. leaving school without obtaining a basic qualification, in other words education to at least level 2 of senior secondary vocational education [MBO]) is a serious weakness in the performance of the Dutch education system. The percentage of early school leavers aged 18 to 24 as compared to the total number of young people in this age group dropped from 15.5% in 2000 to 12.9% in 2006. Through the measures below, the government is striving to reduce this percentage from 12.9% to 8% in 2010:
 - further development of preschool and early childhood education (cf. 3.2.1);
 - proper registration, a sound truancy policy and enforcement of compulsory school attendance to prevent unnoticed absences;
 - a customised approach by schools, special needs institutions, the Centre for Work and Income (CWI), social services, judicial authorities and employers to assist unemployed early school leavers in finding work or returning to school. In 2006, the Ministry of OCW concluded agreements with 14 regions aimed at reducing the number of early school leavers by 10% in the 2006/2007 school year.
 - the introduction with effect from 1 Augustus 2007 of the so-called “qualification obligation” for all students aged up to the age of 18 (cf. 3.4.6).
 - extending guidance counselling for special needs students in secondary vocational education.
- Simplifying transfers between primary, secondary and secondary vocational education (the so-called continual learning pathways).
- Reducing the number of rules passed down by the Ministry of OCW (governance plan, cf. 3.1.1).
- Preventing and reducing learning disadvantages through the further development of pre-school and early childhood education (cf. 3.2.1).
- Further development of post-initial training, cf. 2.2 and 2.3

The Netherlands sets great store by a policy based on facts and evaluation. Evidence-based policy is the objective. To strengthen the scientific basis, the Ministry of OCW has set up a “knowledge chamber” in which the Minister discusses the priority issues in educational policy with representatives of the world of educational research and stakeholders. The Ministry is formulating themes at the strategic level for which there is a need for knowledge, subsequently, the knowledge institutions indicate whether they can meet the demand. Based

³ Next to these targets, the other national targets on EU benchmarks are: maintaining the reading skills at current level (9% of 15-year-olds to have scant reading skills), increasing the number of graduates in maths, science and technology by 15% in 2010 and increasing the participation rate in lifelong learning to at least 20% in 2010. Furthermore, an additional national target is set aiming at 80% of the labourforce (25-65 years of age) to have a basic professional qualification in 2010 (2006: 77.3%).

on their own expertise, they can also indicate any themes missing from the Ministry's agendas and point out where scientific substantiation is (partially) lacking in policy documents. The Netherlands has taken the initiative at the European level of investigating whether it is possible to act together with other countries in this context.

1.4. Development, implementation and dissemination of the strategy:

1.4.1 *Coordination and consultation mechanisms involving all relevant stakeholders.*

The Ministry's lifelong learning policy is always drawn up based on talks with and visits to stakeholders on an ad-hoc basis. This is a system that the Ministry of OCW has had in place for years regarding the determination of sector policy strategies that are set down for every education sector once every four years. Last time (2004), the Sector Documents were drafted after the Minister personally made a nation-wide consultation tour, speaking with as many stakeholders involved as possible (also parents and even young children). The Ministry also consults closely with all stakeholders concerned when determining these strategies, using among others a forum on the internet.

1.4.2 *Implementation arrangements, including publicity and dissemination.*

As a rule, the Ministry disseminates policy strategies widely.

Chapter 2: Implementation of transversal policy objectives

2.1 *The establishment of national qualification systems and frameworks (in line with the European Qualifications Framework), and the elimination of obstacles between levels and systems.*

The Netherlands has agreed to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). A steering group representing various departments of the Ministry of OCW has already been established for the national implementation of the EQF. The education sector is involved in an international pilot aimed at testing the functioning of the EQF.

2.2 *Identification and validation on non-formal and informal learning. The development and introduction of the Recognition of Acquired Competencies [RAC, in Dutch abbreviated to EVC] is in the hands of the education sector. Since 2001, the Knowledge Centre for Accreditation of Prior Learning in the Netherlands [Kenniscentrum EVC] has been supporting education providers and employers in the development of RAC. Introduction on a large-scale is not yet a reality. A quality code set down in an agreement between the Ministry of OCW and the sector is intended to identify and validate the assurance of the quality of the recognition process for non-formal and informal learning.*

The quality code defines what is generally accepted as RAC, whereby a qualification obtained through a RAC pathway has the same value across the Netherlands. Since 1 January 2007, the quality code has included the possibility of fiscal RAC arrangements for employers and employees. In addition, the RAC assessors will compile a list of RAC providers and their competencies.

2.3 *Widely accessible lifelong guidance policies and systems.*

The Interdepartmental Project Unit for Learning & Working, an interdepartmental joint venture (established in March 2005) between the Ministry of OCW and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, is charged with advancing lifelong learning. The aim is to encourage regional joint ventures between the education world, local authorities and Centres for Work and Income, in order to realise combinations of learning and working (work-based learning routes), the Recognition of Acquired Competencies (RAC) and so-called learning-working desks. The subsidy arrangements of the project group are aimed at increasing the number of RAC pathways and at more effective efforts for optimising the connection between learning and working. The application of RAC procedures takes place both within and outside the secondary vocational education and higher professional education sectors, e.g. in a number of sector-specific collective labour agreements. The project group has already been able to make agreements for setting up 20 regional learning-working desks and over 24,000 work-based learning routes and 20,000 RAC pathways for employers and job seekers. A learning-working desk is a facility in a region which everyone is entitled to approach for independent information and advice regarding RAC, training and choice of career or occupation.

In addition to the learning-working desks, an internet portal was introduced in 2006 that provides information about study programmes, occupations, courses on offer, work placements/ learning-working placements and job vacancies in the Netherlands, aimed at a wide audience of every age group, and at the least suitable for people with no basic qualifications. The project group's national campaigns focus the attention of employers, employees and job seekers on learning and working.

2.4 *Measures to reinforce transnational mobility in all sectors, including through the removal of administrative and legal obstacles, the implementation of Europass, or by the provision of financial or other support.*

The aim of the *BAND* (Bilaterale Austausch Niederlande Deutschland) programme is to structurally strengthen cooperation between the Netherlands and Germany through (subsidising) bilateral exchange projects in education.

Since 2005, students have been able to compile a personal portfolio using Europass documents. The implementation of Europass is in the hands of a consortium of eight parties led by the Dutch Information Management Group (IB-groep).

From September 2007, students desiring to follow a study abroad – in full or in part – will not only be entitled to take their student grant with them to European countries, but also to all countries outside Europe. In this way, students have maximum freedom to choose a programme that best suits their needs and wishes.

In recent years, the Ministry of OCW has implemented a number of measures aimed at strengthening transnational mobility in higher education. Student grants can now be transported worldwide. The Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) and higher education institutions have drawn up a code of conduct for international students. Furthermore, there is regular interdepartmental consultation on student migration. In 2005 the Europass was implemented.

With effect from 2006, the Ministry of OCW introduced a new programme: the Huygens Scholarship Programme (HSP). This national programme aims to offer internationally competitive scholarships to attract, retain and send out the top talent that is needed to develop the Dutch knowledge society. The HSP will be open at the bachelor's and master's level to all incoming students from all countries. The Netherlands is cooperating with current EU candidate Member States in the area of education and research. To further encourage this, PhD candidates from these countries will also be eligible for the HSP. The HSP grants are equally distributed between higher professional education and academic university education. A portion of the budget – about 20% – is designated for talented Dutch students who desire to follow a course of study abroad. In this regard, the Ministry of OCW has a subsidy arrangement with the students and not with the institutions. One of the starting points of the HSP is the reduction of the current administrative burden compared to that of existing scholarship programmes.

As of 1 January 2009, institutions will have access to Knowledge Scholarships [Kennisbeurzen] for internationalisation.

Chapter 3: Implementation of policy objectives in schools, higher education, vocational education and training and adult education

3.1 Elements that must be reported at all levels (schools, higher education, vocational education and training and adult education)

3.1.1 Governance and leadership of education and training institutions (e.g. organisational and administrative reforms, autonomy and accountability measures, public/private initiatives).

Increasing the autonomy of schools and institutions

The objective for all education sectors is to increase autonomy and to deregulate by reducing the administrative burden through the removal of unnecessary obstacles, lack of clarity and complex legislation, by abolishing furnishing and equipment stipulations, strengthening the position of teachers and, where possible, that of pupils and students, and allowing room for institutions' own educational initiatives within the framework of clear administrative relationships.

- This governance policy has already been significantly developed in secondary education and secondary vocational education.
- In secondary education, lump sum funding has now also been introduced for practical education whereby the administrative burden has been reduced for the entire secondary education sector. Other initiatives aimed at reducing the administrative burden in the secondary education sector are:
 - o setting down a limited number of dates on which the government confronts the education sector with legislation and regulations;
 - o an integrated annual document focusing on accountability and reduction of the burden of questionnaires from the Education Inspectorate;
 - o in addition, in recent years the Ministry of OCW has been working on regulations for the secondary education sector aimed at reducing the administrative burden and achieving deregulation:

- for instance, the introduction of learning-plus schemes for poverty problem accumulation areas instead of the ethnic minorities arrangements;
 - the introduction of the education number, enabling institutions to report more efficiently on the study progress of their pupils;
 - the simplification of planning regulations whereby various procedures for receiving permission for the expansion of buildings will be abolished;
 - the government will decentralise the setting of fringe benefits in the secondary education sector with effect from July 2007.
- In the primary education sector too, significant measures have been taken in the domain of reducing the administrative burden:
- o lump sum funding was introduced with effect from 1 August 2006 resulting in the abolishing of countless administrative procedures in respect of government financing. Schools no longer need to make declarations and the lump sum removes the barriers between budgets and other expenditure restrictions. There is a single budget for school boards and in this way complete freedom from financial policy has been achieved for the primary education sector;
 - o the setting of fringe benefits for the primary education sector was also decentralised as of 1 August 2006 and this has created more room for customised working at the institution level. The decentralisation of the terms and conditions of employment in the primary school sector is expected to take place as of 1 January 2009.

Accountability

Bearing responsibility goes hand in hand with being held accountable. Greater individual responsibility for school boards therefore should go together with assuring proper accountability for the way in which this responsibility is borne by schools. Good governance involves both the relationship between the government and the institutions and governance within the institutions themselves. In other words, the internal relationship between checks & balances.

In the higher education sector, the Minister of Education is responsible for the performance of the higher education system but is not responsible for the administration and management of the individual institutions. Therefore, the Minister must have proper, reliable information available on the performances and that means that the government is tightening up the ways in which institutions are held accountable. In this approach, the institutions themselves are responsible for good governance – including the internal monitoring of the institution – and they will have to be increasingly accountable to their social environment (horizontal accountability).

Currently, the secondary education sector is experimenting with various instruments in respect of horizontal accountability.

Vertical supervision by the government remains, but the Education Inspectorate will be using this instrument proportionately and selectively, according to the degree to which the institutions have organised their internal supervision, whereby smoothly running programmes or institutions are less often and/or less comprehensively inspected or reviewed. "Allowing room" therefore means that the accountability

and supervisory burden for the institution concerned can be reduced and that sound annual reporting will be sufficient for the state.

The role and task of the government

As the government steps back, it must in its turn ensure that it does not fence in the room and freedom created with replacement rules as this would negate the intended effect of deregulation. To minimise this risk, the primary and secondary education sectors are developing an internal bureaucracy monitor. This monitor is an instrument that offers schools the room to work on reducing their red tape. Schools and their organisations are developing this instrument themselves. In this context, work is currently being done in the secondary education sector on developing a “code of good governance” that is expected to be finalised in the autumn of 2007.

Within the framework of deregulation, in cooperation with other ministries, the Ministry of OCW is developing alternatives to legislation and regulations whereby the government will only use legislation and regulations as the final tool for achieving policy objectives.

In coming years, these governance principles will be anchored in legislation.

To this end, in the near future a bill on good governance for the primary education and secondary education sectors will be submitted to the Lower House.

3.1.2 *Stimulating private investment from enterprises, households and individuals.*

Given that education must be accessible for everyone, the government pays the bulk of the costs. The rest is paid by pupils, participants and students or their parents. Their financial contribution consists of two items: school costs or study costs and school, course or tuition fees. School costs are the costs connected to the school and teaching, such as expenditure on books, travel expenses and the voluntary parents’ contribution.

The government has no policy aimed at stimulating private investment in primary and secondary education.

School fees have been abolished with effect from the commencement of the 2005/2006 school year. Thus, there are no statutory costs for pupils in primary and secondary education. This also applies to pupils in special primary and secondary special education and to sixteen and seventeen-year-olds in vocational training courses (BOL) within secondary vocational education. In October 2006, the Dutch Lower House adopted a motion on providing school textbooks free of charge in the secondary education sector. The Minister of OCW has indicated that this motion will be implemented. The main reason for supplying free school textbooks is to lower school costs for parents. The intention is that secondary schools will purchase and pay for the textbooks.

Statutory regulations apply to sponsoring in the primary and secondary education sectors. In addition to these statutory regulations, the government has concluded the *Convenant Sponsoring* [Sponsoring Agreement] with stakeholders in the education sector. The *Convenant Sponsoring* does not contain statutory regulations but rather sets out collective agreements between the partners about how the education sector and the stakeholders should deal with sponsoring in primary and secondary education.

In order to bring young people in secondary vocational education into more contact with entrepreneurship during their study, in November 2005 the *Leren ondernemen* [Learning Entrepreneurship] partnership was launched with the aim of actively disseminating and expanding good practices. The government establishes structural regional and sectoral joint

ventures to stimulate combined learning and working routes and to create preconditions to facilitate work-based learning routes.

In higher education, students have to pay tuition fees. There are statutory regulations on tuition fees and students pay these fees to the education institution (academic university or university of professional education) once they have been admitted into a full-time programme. Tuition fees are compensated by a supplementary grant. Students who do not receive a supplementary grant may take out a loan.

Students who have reached the age of 30 have to pay tuition fees set by the institution itself. These tuition fees also apply to foreign students who are not nationals of EU/EER Member States or who are not entitled to receive student grants and to students who are enrolled in work-based learning routes or part-time programmes.

Within the framework of the Educational Experiments Act, for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years, the Ministry of OCW has granted five institutions the authority to charge higher tuition fees for particular programmes. To be granted this leeway, the programmes in question must have added social value. In other words, these programmes must offer students something extra compared to standard programmes and thereby distinguish themselves in terms of quality.

3.1.3 *Widening access, and improving equity of participation, treatment and outcomes, especially for disadvantaged learners (e.g. migrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled).*

In the Netherlands, the parallel existence of different structures for pupils with special needs has led to a lack of clarity concerning the responsibilities within the primary and secondary education sectors. As a result, many (too many) pupils fall through the cracks. The introduction of a duty of care / obligation to deliver results in fit for purpose education could offer a solution. Based on the obligation to deliver results, school boards would be given the responsibility of offering a fit for purpose educational programme for each enrolled pupil. This could be at the school itself, or, if the school cannot offer such a programme, at another school (in the neighbourhood). The intention is to couple the obligation to provide results to significant deregulation, among other things, by simplifying the special needs assessment procedure and the requirements set down for cooperation.

In the Netherlands, some pupils enter primary education with educational disadvantages. The policy on eliminating educational disadvantages focuses on the early identification and combating of disadvantages in the primary education sector. Therefore, for children between the ages of 2.5 and 6, the government is strengthening the position of early childhood education. Bridging classes are also in place offering intensive language teaching to children with a significant Dutch language disadvantage. The intention is that in 2009, 36,000 pupils will have participated in bridging classes. Moreover, in the coming school years, pilots in the area of language policy will offer schools additional possibilities to improve the language disadvantages of their pupils.

In accordance with the weighting system, children whose parents have a low educational level will receive a higher weighting than children whose parents have a higher educational background. Primary schools will receive additional funding for these children.

Secondary schools that have to deal with an accumulation of problems (a plurality of problems expressed in an increased risk of truancy, delays in the school career, early school leaving, criminality and/or youth care problems) will receive additional funds within the framework of the learning plus schemes for secondary education. The objective is to contribute to the reduction of early school leaving, to maximise school performances and to be able to deliver more tailored work. To determine which schools are experiencing such an accumulation of problems, the starting point is the "accumulation area" indicator of Statistics Netherlands and the Social and Cultural Planning Office. Whenever 30% of the pupils (both ethnic minority and native Dutch pupils) originate from such an area, the school will receive additional funding for a two-year period.

The government encourages the establishment of community schools by providing information on the internet, offering practical manuals and having research conducted. A community school is a structural cooperation between various institutions surrounding the children. It is a joint venture between a primary or secondary school and, for example, a child care centre, play school, or cultural or sports institution, but also with youth care or special needs institutions. Which partners will cooperate in community schools is decided at the local level, whereby tailored provisions are made that expand the development opportunities of the children concerned. The estimation is that there are currently 750 community schools in the Dutch primary education sector and just under 400 in the secondary education sector.

In recent years, the Ministry of OCW has supported projects aimed at opening dialogue about and tolerance of homosexuality. For instance, there are regular regional meetings organised at which key figures in education are brought together to establish the network necessary to keep this item on the agenda. An example of such projects is *De Vrolijke Schooldag* [The Gay School Day] project that encourages schools to set down the state of affairs at their school regarding diversity policy, and to think about follow-up measures to improve this policy.

A structural facility, the website www.gayandschool.nl, was commissioned by the Ministry and is implemented under the auspices of the Centre for School and Safety. The website and its helpdesk provide schools with information, and on request, with advice on this subject.

Regarding higher education, the results of a study carried out in 2005 show that there has been a slight improvement for the disabled in comparison with 2001 in the degree of hindrance encountered in following a course of study in this sector. On the other hand, the results also show that solutions for certain obstacles were lacking in many larger institutions in 2005. In light of the nature and scope of the problem, in 2005 the government decided to make additional resources available to higher education institutions up until 2009 to enable them to take the measures needed, to conduct research into the outcomes and success of these measures, to maintain qualitative support to institutions and students by an Expertise Centre and to carry out a communication campaign to make problems and existing solutions better known and to advance understanding.

A target in the higher education sector is to improve both the intake and yield of ethnic minority students up to the level of native Dutch students. To this end, the government has set aside additional funds and has concluded performance agreements with 21 higher

education institutions. Furthermore, there are a number of other projects aimed at offering ethnic-minority students equal opportunities in higher education, such as the ECHO Award for successful ethnic-minority students and the UAF to allow refugee students to study.

3.1.4 Measures to address gender aspects in education and training.

The Ministry of OCW, the programmes and the projects are all devoting attention to gender equality in education and training with the emphasis on a greater intake of girls and women into the exact sciences and technology disciplines and a better transfer of women to higher positions in education management. Other aspects of gender equality such as unseen distinctions made according to gender in interactions in the classroom and advancing the participation of men and boys in care and teacher training programmes are receiving less attention. Recent research argues for this.

Among other things, the programme for the broadening of science and technology in primary education (VTB) devotes attention to target groups that are under-represented in science and technology occupations. VTB includes emancipation and gender issues in its knowledge and information provision to schools. The objective of this is to encourage awareness of the possible differences in the actions of teachers and pupils in lessons in which technology plays a significant role.

In recent years, the Secondary Education Council has received a subsidy to implement a programme to ensure more women move up to management positions. This resulted in the *Convenant professionalisering en begeleiding van onderwijspersoneel* [Agreement on the professionalisation and support of education staff] for the primary and secondary education sectors. This agreement sets down a number of agreements between the Minister and employers' and employees' associations about the professionalisation and support of staff in the education sector. This agreement was signed in the summer of 2006.

Few specific measures have yet been taken in the secondary vocational sector (MBO) regarding the advancement of gender equality. In the Glazen Muur [Glass Walls] project attention is paid to the transfer of girls from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to MBO courses with a male image (like technology).

In terms of the total quantitative participation in higher education, gender inequality disappeared many years ago. However, there is a constant imbalance in the distribution of participation in individual sectors and disciplines. An expertise centre that provides advice and support with regard to removing gender inequality at the institution and higher levels – in particular in the exact sciences and technological disciplines in higher education – continues to provide support. Since 2005, resources provided by the European Social Fund made it possible to finance a project intended to promote the choice of exact sciences and technology at the decision moments in the educational and working careers of girls. This is done by utilising realistic information, additional guidance counselling, contact with role models and by informing, counselling and advising education institutions, lecturers and employers.

The participation of women in higher positions in knowledge institutions is increasing but is not yet sufficient. It is worth noting that the results of the policy implemented will only be reflected in the statistics in several years time. The proportion of women in scientific positions

has slowly but surely increased since 1990. A rising trend can be seen of women winning through to the positions of university lecturer, senior university lecturer and professor. Women make up 40% of successful PhD candidates. One of the main barriers in transferring lies between the position of university lecturer and that of senior university lecturer. There is little growth in the numbers of lecturers and the appointment of senior lecturers to professorial chairs leads to a low number of female senior lecturers. At the European level, the Netherlands still rates poorly regarding the appointment of female professors. The 2006 Female Professors Monitor that was published in October shows that although the percentage of female professors increased last year from 9.3% to 9.9% (in 2000 it was only 5%), compared to the rest of Europe this percentage is still low.

3.1.5 *The use of learning outcome based approaches for the definition and design of education and training objectives, standards and curricula, and their relevance to the needs of society and the economy.*

In 2004, together with schools and education specialists, the Ministry of OCW set 58 new attainment targets for primary education (cf. 3.2.2). The attainment targets for special education will be set in the coming school year. The (possible) introduction of learning standards for primary education will be covered in the wider discussion about the accountability of schools for learning outcomes. Attainment targets and learning standards contribute to the quality of education and to a guaranteed minimum level by the end of primary school (year 8; 11-12 year-olds).

In secondary vocational education, learning-working pathways lead to a qualification in secondary vocational or higher professional education or to a certificate recognised by the trade or sector concerned. Recognised qualifications or certificates contribute to the mobility of workers on the labour market by providing demonstrable proof of competencies. The quality code introduced for the recognition of acquired competencies (RAC) on 14 November 2005, provides for the assurance of the quality of the RAC procedure and this increases trust in the instrument.

In higher education, the institutions are responsible for their own programme objectives, programme standards and curricula. They are also responsible for coordinating these elements with the relevant stakeholders.

3.1.6 *Quality assurance systems*

School boards in the primary and secondary education sectors are themselves responsible for the quality of the education provided. Schools must meet a number of quality requirements (certified teachers, offer courses in accordance with attainment targets, set working methods down in a school plan, set down accountability in a school guide). In the primary education sector, cohort studies track the development of groups of pupils and periodic measurements set the levels for the different subjects.

Primary and secondary schools are accountable to the government for the quality of their education through the Education Inspectorate. The Inspectorate reports on this in a school report that it publishes on the internet and processes in aggregated form in the annual Education Report. The government itself also conducts studies into the quality of education.

The revision in 2006 of the assessment standards developed in 2002 by the Kwaliteitscentrum Examinering [Quality Assurance Centre for Examinations] allows

these standards to be used within competence-oriented, key-task focused professional practice education.

Over the past two years, higher education institutions and the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) have worked hard on the further introduction of the accreditation system. By 2010, all existing programmes must be accredited. Interim evaluation shows that the accreditation system, with a few critical comments, is functioning as expected. The Ministry of OCW together with NVAO, institutions and other stakeholders (students, employers) is searching for a new, simpler and less burdensome model of accreditation that must be operational by 2010. In 2007, an international NVAO evaluation will take place within the framework of the ENQA. The standards and guidelines set down by the education Ministers in Bergen (2005) will form the guideline.

3.1.7 *Developing learning partnerships with stakeholders (policy-makers at national, regional and local levels, social partners, learners and representatives of civil society).*

The Interdepartmental Project Unit for Learning & Working is a joint venture between various ministries that in one way or another are involved in adult education (cf. 2.3). This cooperation ensures coordinated action in the area of lifelong learning.

The task of the Interdepartmental Project Unit for Learning & Working is to establish regional and sectoral joint ventures aimed at advancing combinations of learning and working. The joint ventures mainly consist of representatives from municipalities, provinces, social partners, education institutions, Centres for Work and Income (job creation) and companies.

3.2.1 *Increasing investment in and strengthening pre-primary school education,*

Pre-school and early childhood education (in Dutch abbreviated to VVE) involves children under the compulsory school age and can if necessary continue through the initial compulsory schooling years. The children participate in educational programmes that stimulate their development and combat and prevent educational disadvantages. This increases the chances of these children to have a proper school career and later a good social career.

- Play schools and on occasion child day care centres offer the pre-school component of the VVE programme. In the pre-primary school period, 46% of the target group children are reached.
- Primary schools offer the early childhood education component of the VVE programme. In the early primary period, 69% of the target group children are reached. The municipalities are responsible for the early primary school period. Using the resources made available by the municipalities and school boards, municipalities and schools are expected to reach 70% of the target group children by 2010. For the 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years, the government has provided municipalities with an additional budget, the use of which should enable 70 % of the target group to be reached in the course of 2009.

3.2.2 *Modernising school curricula and assessment arrangements (inter alia to address learning outcomes and the attainment of key competences).*

In 2004, together with schools and education specialists, the Ministry of OCW set 58 new attainment targets for the primary education sector – both mainstream and special education – that went into effect in the 2005-2006 school year. As of August 2006, nursery classes have been working with these targets and in August 2009 they will be applied across the entire primary education sector.

For each learning domain, the Ministry identified the objectives that are essential for the development of pupils of primary school age. In addition, it was determined which objectives promote a smooth link with secondary education. For Dutch language and arithmetic/maths the attainment targets are more precisely described than for the so-called factual and expressive subjects for which more room is allowed for the school itself to determine content. In respect of the former attainment targets from 1998, the number of attainment targets per learning area has been reduced.

Learning lines and interim targets have been developed for schools that would like support in translating the attainment targets into daily education practice. A learning line indicates for a particular learning area how children of a particular starting level can arrive at the attainment target. The interim targets are important moments in the learning line. The use of learning lines and interim targets improves teachers' possibilities for tracking the development of their pupils. Moreover, it provides them with a guideline for achieving the attainment targets.

Since 1 August 2006, 58 broad attainment targets have been in force in the secondary education sector. These attainment targets set down the aspects to which schools should devote attention in the first two learning years. Schools should elaborate the attainment targets in their education programme for the different groups of pupils at different levels. The schools determine themselves the structure of the lower school programme: in the form of subjects, cross-curricular learning areas, projects or otherwise.

For pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), the modernisation of the curricula has been fleshed out through the broadening of the attainment targets. The Secondary Education Act (WVO) only contains an amended curriculum for the VMBO learning-working pathways (a pedagogic-didactic concept within the basic vocational programme). These pupils follow an almost completely occupation-oriented programme.

To strengthen the continuous learning pathway from VMBO to MBO, projects have been launched with the aim of better harmonising the VMBO and MBO curricula and thus arrive at a single, integrated learning pathway.

Over the past two years, exhaustive discussion has taken place about a new set-up for the second stage of pre-university education (VWO) and senior general secondary education (HAVO): the subject clusters. New subject clusters will go into effect as of 1 August 2007. The structure of the subject clusters has been amended so that there is no longer significant fragmentation of subjects at the expense of depth. The exam programmes of the individual subjects have also been modified to create the possibility of more depth and to achieve a better balance between knowledge and skills.

3.2.3 *Addressing the specific learning / training needs of teachers (including pre-primary school) to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society.*

On 30 June 2006, the Minister of OCW concluded the *Convenant professionalisering en begeleiding van onderwijspersoneel in het primair en voortgezet onderwijs* [Agreement on the professionalisation and support of staff in primary and secondary education] with education sector employers' and employees' associations. As a result of this agreement, as

of 1 August 2006, primary and secondary schools receive additional resources for the professionalisation and support of education staff. The agreement is mainly aimed at expanding 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 elaborated in the decentralised collective labour agreements.

3.2.4 *Measures to reduce early school leaving, to increase rates of completion of upper secondary education, to reduce the proportion of low-achieving 15 year olds in literacy, and to increase the take-up of mathematics, science and technology subjects (EU benchmarks).*

Every year, data from the Labour Force Survey (EEB) is used to monitor the proportion of young people aged 18-24 without basic qualifications who have not participated in either regular education or in courses or other short programmes during the previous 4 weeks.

From 2000 to 2006, the total number of 18-24 year-olds without basic qualifications and not attending school fell. This drop is not sufficient to achieve the Lisbon objectives by 2010 (halving the number of early school leavers in the 18-24 years age group compared to 2000). These figures clearly show that together, schools, employers, support facilities and other parties involved still have to make a significant effort. The municipalities will play an important, coordinating role in this respect.

As part of the working agenda of the *Aanval op de uitval* project [Combating School Failure, 2006], agreements were concluded in 2006 with the 14 municipalities with the highest dropout rates. In 2007, this should lead to a reduction of 10% in new and existing early school leavers. The Dutch Lower House agreed to the introduction of the qualification obligation, which, if approved by the Upper House, can go into effect in the 2007-2008 school year. The qualification obligation requires all young people up to the age of 18 who have not obtained basic qualifications while of compulsory school age, to follow a complete education programme until they obtain a basic qualification (cf. 3.4.6). Other examples of implemented measures are the strengthening of pre-school and early childhood education, the expansion of guidance counselling for pupils with special needs in secondary vocational education and the acquisition of additional internship places.

In 2004, in order to increase the number of higher educated persons in the exact sciences and technology sectors (by 15% by 2010), the Ministers of Education and Economic Affairs drew up a Delta Plan for Science and Technology that the Lower House accepted and that has been implemented since that time. The Platform Bèta Techniek [Science and Technology Platform] plays a central role in this programme that initiates actions at school and institutions throughout the entire education sector, from primary education through to higher education, with the aim of increasing the appeal of choosing science and technology disciplines. This programme will run up to and including 2010 (cf. 3.3.4).

The programme for the extension of science and technology in primary education (VTB) forms the basis for the action plan. In 2008, 2500 primary schools will have started to introduce and expand science and technology lessons. VTB schools will receive a financial incentive for a period of three years. With this financial contribution and support from the local Regional Support Centre, schools will organise and integrate science and technology into their programmes, organisation and education policy. There are currently over 1330 VTB schools. From September 2007, there will be room for a further 600 new VTB schools.

3.3.1 Measures to reinforce the knowledge triangle between education, research and innovation.

With a view to strengthening the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation, the Dutch government has recently implemented the following measures:

- The *RAAK* scheme [Regional Attention and Action for Knowledge Circulation] aims to reinforce the knowledge bridge function between universities of professional education on the one hand and the business community and society on the other. The scheme provides funding to set up cooperation projects between universities of professional education and small and medium-sized businesses and social sectors. The scheme has been so successful that demand has outstripped supply.
- The *Subsidieregeling Innovatievouchers* [Innovation Vouchers Subsidy Scheme] was launched in 2006 with the aim of bringing small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs into contact with knowledge institutions and using existing knowledge to improve their products, production processes or services. Companies can be granted subsidies to have the knowledge institutions carry out short-term studies. Here too, demand has outstripped supply.
- In 2005, the NWO first implemented the Casimir Programme. The focus of the programme is to have science and technology researchers from public knowledge institutions work temporarily for companies and vice versa.
- In November 2005, the Learning Entrepreneurship Partnership was launched; the aim of this partnership is to encourage entrepreneurial skills and an enterprising attitude in education.
- Moreover, in 2007 a number of Centres for Entrepreneurship were established at universities of professional education or academic universities. From 2007, funding is structurally available for university lecturers and knowledge networks.
- On the initiative of the innovation platform, funds for *Smart Mix* have been available since 2006. This programme encourages cooperation between businesses, social institutions and knowledge institutions.

3.3.2 Any participation targets and measures to achieve them?

The Dutch government aims to have more of its population highly educated to advance a successful, internationally competitive knowledge society. In 2020, 50% of the professional population aged 25 to 44 will have a higher education. According to the statistics, in 2004 higher education graduates accounted for almost 36% of the Dutch professional population in the 25-44 age bracket.

The Netherlands has almost achieved the target of 50% participation in higher education: the expectation is that 50% of the population born in 1988 will have entered higher education. The participation level of the group aged up to 23 years is currently 44%.

The transfer from secondary vocational education and secondary education is running smoothly. The transfer rate is now relatively high (secondary to higher education about 87%, secondary vocational to higher professional education about 50%, 34% of which transfer directly and the rest with a delay of one or more years). The number of persons who have at least completed upper secondary education (HAVO, VWO and MBO level 2 or higher) is continuing to increase (from 58% in 1996 to 65% in 2004). There is, however, a great deal of social concern about the quality of education at all levels and about the quality of the intake

into higher education. In the coming years, the government will therefore make additional investments in the quality of the education provided.

A comparison with OECD figures for the age groups of 25-34 and 35-44 shows that the percentage of higher education graduates places the Netherlands in the middle bracket in the international context.

3.3.3 Measures to increase excellence

An increasing amount of attention is being given to children with special gifts (highly intelligent, artistically gifted, talented in sport and talented in entrepreneurship). The policy for highly intelligent children focuses on good cooperation between the National Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) for primary education and the Protestant Educational Advisory Centre (CPS) for secondary education. Work is being done to establish a nationwide network of so-called talent profile schools. The network of *LOOT* schools (*LOOT*: National Consultation Board for Top-Class Sports and Education) that focuses on pupils who are gifted in sports, will be expanded. Schools can also submit an application for development as a cultural profile school. These schools focus on the cultural education of gifted pupils.

The development of programmes that challenge ambitious and exceptionally gifted students is receiving additional financial stimulation in the *Ruim baan voor talent* [Room for Talent] programme. Within that context, in 2005 experiments were launched with programmes that – contrary to the law – selected students and/or increased tuition fees. The aim is to learn whether selection and/or differentiation in tuition fees are good instruments to raise the quality of programmes. The experiments will end in 2007, whereupon the government will decide whether or not to legalise the possibilities of student selection and tuition fees differentiation. In 2006, also in the *Room for Talent* programme, financial support was given to the development of programmes that specifically *do not* select students and/or differentiate tuition fees, the so-called honours programmes.

3.3.4 Measures to increase the number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology (EU benchmark).

The 2003 National Science and Technology Action Plan, aimed at arriving at more higher education graduates in the fields of science and technology, encompasses an approach that focused on the whole chain from primary school through to the labour market with the objective of achieving 15% more graduates in higher science and technology disciplines by 2010 compared to 2000 (cf. 3.1.4). The interim target is to achieve a 15% higher intake into these programmes in 2007 compared to 2000. To this end, in 2004, an implementation organisation was set up, the *Platform Bèta Techniek* [Science and Technology Platform]. Currently, hundreds of companies and sectors, 1300 primary schools (in the future increasing to 2500), 250 HAVO/VWO schools in the secondary education sector, 50 VMBO schools (which will grow to 100-150), an increasing number of Regional Training Centres (ROCs) – currently 12 and in the future some 25 – and all academic universities and universities of professional education are working with the science and technology approach. The initial results have been predominantly positive: the participating schools, knowledge institutions and companies are enthusiastic. Experts believe that 85% of primary schools and the large majority of secondary schools are on the way to achieving the desired final outcomes. For the higher education sector this applies to 8 of the 11 participating academic universities and to 10 of the 18 participating universities of professional education. The intake results in higher science and technology education are:

- in 2006, the interim target for academic universities of a 15% increase in intake compared to 2000 was more than met with a growth of 21.7%. The output target was also achieved: +29.5%.
- The universities of professional education (HBO) performed less well: the intake in 2006 fell by 7.5% and the output by 1.2% compared to 2000.
- In the higher education sector as a whole, in 2006 the intake rose by 1.6% and the output by 7.1% compared to 2000. The expectation is that in higher professional education too the targets will be met, but later than had been planned.

3.4.1 *Measures to improve the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training and of adult education.*

A trial was started in 2004 involving competency-oriented professional programmes based on competency-oriented qualifications profiles. The development of a new qualifications framework and the new programmes and exams based on this framework, ensure a better link with the labour market and the needs of society. In the 2005-2006 school year, some 10% of the total number of pupils in secondary vocational education entered an experimental programme.

3.4.2 *Measures to reinforce the link between VET and labour market needs including early identification of skills needs, improving the relevance of curricula and qualifications.*

The 2005 innovation scheme adds substance to the goal of contributing to the innovation of vocational education within the context of strengthening the relationship between education and the business community. The aim is to strengthen the learning careers of the participants through projects implemented at the regional/sectoral level in joint ventures involving schools/institutions of vocational education, companies and possibly other organisations. In 2006, a total of 23 projects were funded on the basis of the *Subsidieregeling innovatiearrangement 2005* [2005 Innovation Subsidy Scheme]. To solve the internship placements problem in secondary vocational education, over 20,000 additional internship and simulation places have been realised for participants who are difficult to place. These participants receive intensive guidance counselling.

3.4.3 *Opening up pathways to further and higher education.*

A number of measures have been implemented to enhance the link between VMBO and secondary vocational education. For instance, in 2006 a project was launched in which young people who had not yet enrolled in a secondary vocational education programme were counselled over the summer months to enable them to make a choice from the courses offered by the Regional Training Centres. Furthermore, projects were started aimed at improving the conditions needed for the smooth transfer of education and special needs data. The *Intensiveringsprogramma Kwaliteit Zorgadviesteams* [Intensification Programme for the Quality of Special Needs Advisory Teams] devotes express attention to the transfer of special needs data at the transfer moments in the learning career of pupils.

The harmonisation of the training programmes and study counselling of the secondary vocational education and higher professional education sectors will improve the transfer of students from secondary vocational to higher professional education. This would offer MBO

graduates who transfer to related HBO programmes the possibility of shortened learning paths. The Regional Training Centres and universities of professional education can themselves make agreements in this respect.

3.4.4 *Addressing the specific learning / training needs of vocational and adult teachers and trainers to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society*

The further strengthening of an integrated staff policy was mentioned in the previous report. The introduction and development of a competency-oriented qualifications framework for the secondary vocational education sector sets different requirements for the organisation of learning processes and consequently requires different competencies from teachers. The further strengthening of an integrated staff policy at institutions is aimed at developing the competencies of the school staff and maintaining the competencies of teaching staff. There have been no changes to this item since the previous report.

3.4.5 *Measures which reinforce social partner involvement in training, in particular sectoral approaches to skills and qualifications.*

The approach of the Netherlands is demand oriented: the wishes and needs of employers are the starting point. A training institution or a company advisor determines the training needs of the company and the individual staff members in consultation with the employer. A RAC procedure measures the previously acquired competencies and determines what additional training is needed to obtain the desired qualification. The training institution is expected to deliver tailored work. This is not yet always achieved but the institutions are working hard to improve their methods so that the needs of the (regional) business community can actually be met.

3.4.6 *Enhancing access and opportunities for learning among the disadvantaged, and alternative pathways, including for early school leavers.*

One of the measures to further reduce the number of early school leavers is the qualification obligation. The Lower House has adopted the legislative proposal for the introduction of this measure. To find a suitable position on the labour market, young people need to have at least a basic qualification: a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 diploma. Additional measures are aimed at participants at MBO levels 1 and 2. For instance, in 2004/2005, programmes to qualify for work were introduced that have a broad orientation on the labour market. These programmes are largely aimed at young people who do not know what they want to do and have dropped out of school early, with the intention of guiding them back to the education system. The internship scheme *Stagebox* also has the aim of providing suitable internship places for participants at MBO levels 1 and 2 and to supply them with additional guidance counselling during their internships.

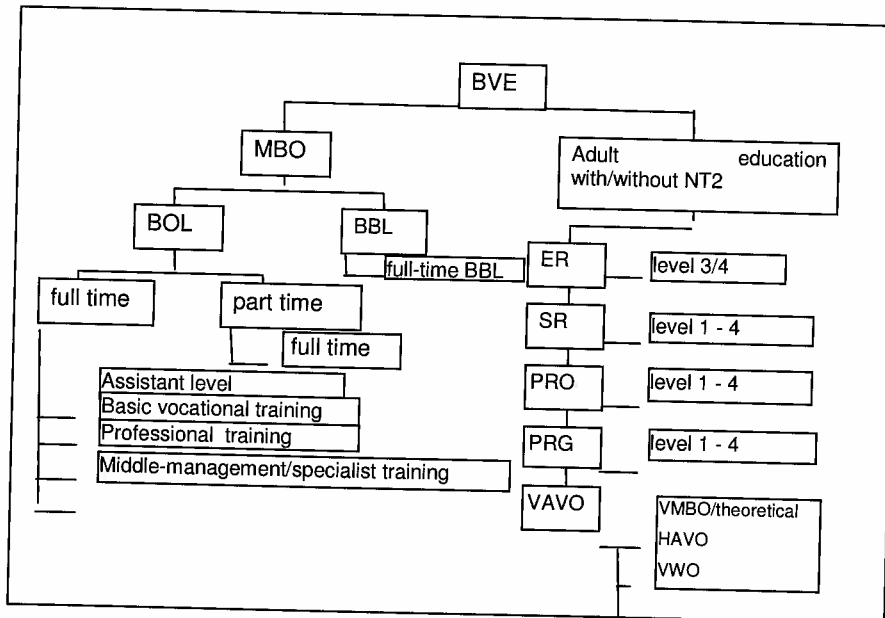
3.4.7 *Measures to increase the rate of adult participation in lifelong learning, and to reinforce key competences among adult learners and older people whether employed or not (EU benchmark).*

The approach of the Interdepartmental Project Unit for Learning & Working (cf. 2.3) is intended to encourage learning among the less-educated whereby the emphasis lies on the small and medium-sized business sector. Fiscal measures aimed at obtaining basic qualifications and RAC support this activity. Training from secondary level to a higher level is also a priority. Employers are eligible for compensation for the related school costs. Furthermore, in 2006 a two-year short programme was launched in the higher education sector: the so-called Associate Degree. The expectation is that this programme will appeal to employed people with a secondary school education who would like to reach a higher education level but find a four-year programme too long.

7. Adult and vocational education

Vocational education is provided at secondary schools (pre-vocational secondary education, VMBO), institutions for secondary vocational education (MBO) and institutions for higher professional education (HBO) (see § 7.2). This chapter discusses vocational education as set out in the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), which covers secondary vocational education (MBO) and adult education, but not higher professional education (HBO) or pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO)

Figure 7.1 The structure of adult and vocational education (BVE)



- BOL: vocational training pathway
 BBL: block or day release pathway
 ER: educational self-reliance
 SR: social self-reliance
 PRO: professional self-reliance, unqualified
 PRG: professional self-reliance level 1

Secondary vocational education

Secondary vocational education (MBO) provides both theoretical instruction and practical training in preparation for the practice of a wide range of occupations for which a vocational qualification is necessary or useful. Its main target group is young people from the age of 16. There are three sectors: business, engineering and technology, and personal and social services and health care. Secondary vocational education (MBO) is provided at four qualification levels (see § 7.10.1):

- level 1: training to assistant level;
- level 2: basic vocational training;
- level 3: professional training;
- level 4: middle-management training and specialist training.

Every level has requirements which are defined in terms of exit qualifications (see § 7.14.1).

For each course there are in principle two learning pathways:

- vocational training (BOL) where practical training takes up between 20% and 60% of the course;
- block or day release (BBL) where practical training takes up more than 60% of the course (formerly the apprenticeship system).

Adult education

Adult education is geared to furthering the personal development of adults and their participation in society. The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) identifies four types of courses (see § 7.10.2):

- adult general secondary education (VAVO), leading to a pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO theoretical programme), senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) certificate (levels 4, 5 and 6) or part of one;
- courses providing a broad basic education (BMF);
- courses in Dutch as a second language (NT2);
- courses aimed at fostering self-reliance (SR).

7.1. Historical overview

Many of the forms of adult education that exist today originated in the nineteenth century, often thanks to private benefactors setting up educational and training facilities for adults. The Society for the Promotion of the General Good was set up in 1784 with the aim of educating the working classes and turning them into virtuous citizens. From 1850, many initiatives were launched to set up forms of adult education, most of them inspired by the Toynbee lectures and debates in Britain, when professors talked about developments in their fields.

The first adult education institute ('volksuniversiteit') was set up in Amsterdam in 1913. It provided education without the pressure of examinations, with instruction based on scientific objectivity, and was accessible to people from all walks of life. The government did not become involved in adult education – in the sense of statutory provision – until the twentieth century.

As a result of the trend towards the democratisation of education in the 1970s, a form of adult education was introduced that aimed to give people of 18 and over a second chance to obtain a school-leaving certificate. Since only examination subjects were taught, adults could obtain a MAVO certificate within three years or they could study for separate subject certificates. This form of adult education was particularly popular among women with children, since classes were taught at times that were particularly suited to them.

New adult education policy plans launched in the 1980s ultimately led to the Adult Education Framework Act of 1991, which was incorporated into the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) in 1996.

Vocational education, too, was for many years reliant on private initiative. The Occupational Education Act, the first piece of legislation governing vocational education, was not introduced until 1919, in response to the growth in the number of vocational schools.

On 1 January 1996 the Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) entered into force, bringing greater unity to the existing provision of adult and secondary vocational education. Prior to that, the Dutch system had consisted of apprenticeship training and vocational education. Apprenticeship training prepared students for a wide range of trades and occupations and combined school with 'learning on the job'. Senior secondary vocational education began in the 1950s with senior technical schools (MTS). Other subject areas were soon added, such as business and commerce (MEAO), agriculture (MAO) and personal and social services and health care (MDGO).

7.2. Ongoing debates and policy trends

Student-specific funding in secondary vocational education

Personal budgets (LGF) were introduced into adult and vocational education in order to safeguard educational continuity for individual learners registered as having a disability or chronic illness. This extra, student-specific funding makes it possible to provide appropriate facilities and peripatetic assistance. The government extended the LGF scheme to include secondary vocational education through interim grant legislation introduced on 1 January 2006. The aim is to incorporate LGF into the Adult and Vocational Education Act, and for the required amendment to enter into force on 1 August 2008.

Competence-based qualifications

There are too many different types of qualification in the Netherlands. They do not adequately reflect the skills actually required in the workplace and are also over-detailed. As a result, vocational education and training often lags behind new developments in occupational practice. The government is therefore introducing a new, competence-based qualification structure, which describes:

- core tasks and working processes that are relevant to, and characteristic of, the occupation or trade;
- the competences needed to carry out these processes successfully;
- the underpinning subject knowledge and skills;
- performance indicators which demonstrate that competences have successfully been acquired.

The new system will incorporate a standardised list of 25 competences that denote active behaviour such as working with other people, giving presentations and applying expertise. The content descriptors are clear and unambiguous, making it much easier to compare occupations, qualifications and training courses and to exploit matches more effectively.

The new qualifications are currently being developed by the centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market (see § 7.15.1). Once they have satisfied the quality criteria set by the Minister of Education, they will be given official approval. The qualification structure consists of all the qualifications that lead to a certificate or diploma. The aim of the new system is to prepare secondary vocational education learners for occupational practice, provide them with a springboard to further education and involve them in society as a whole.

Educational institutions are also developing new training courses and designing new types of examination to match the new qualifications (which describe the basic knowledge and skills needed to obtain the certificate in question). Each educational institution makes its own decision on the mode of teaching and learning and the examination set-up. For instance, it may opt for a more practical approach to teaching or increase the focus on independent learning.

The new system will be introduced in phases. Initially, each institution operates at its own speed and is free to choose which and how many new-style courses are to be offered, and the degree of variety and innovation in the mode of delivery. Once the planned legislation (still being drafted) has entered into force, institutions will only be allowed to offer new-style courses leading to new-style, competence-based qualifications. The Steering Committee for Competence-based Vocational Education, which was appointed by the Minister and represents all the partners involved, is managing the reform process. Institutions will receive appropriate support in implementing the new system.

Regional network

'Steering a course for BVE' describes government policy on the adult and vocational education sector for the coming years and the most significant innovation in government-education relations within the sector: a shift in focus to regional networks. The various parties – educational institutions, the business community, the municipalities and the centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market (see § 7.15.1) – work together on a regional basis. Issues related to labour market policy, social policy and policy on training can thus be addressed both effectively and holistically.

Lifelong learning

The notion of lifelong learning – that people continue to learn throughout their careers – is in line with the Lisbon goal that by 2010, 20% of the population aged 25-64 will be participating in education and training. The aim is for people to develop their learning capacity and to respond flexibly to changes within society and the world of work. On 1 March 2005, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment jointly launched the Learning and Working Project, which is due to run until 31 December 2007. Employers, employees, the general public, the business community, educational institutions, Centres for Work and Income (CWI), the Employee Insurance Schemes Implementing Body (UWV), reintegration agencies, municipal authorities and other parties involved at regional level are actively encouraged to promote lifelong learning. The government creates the enabling conditions but ultimately, the responsibility for achieving the goals lies with the various partners involved in the learning and working process. The government is offering tax incentives to make lifelong learning more attractive (see § 7.3) and has made grants available to set up dual courses, enable prior learning assessment and recognition (EVC) and create training and employment helpdesks.

Dual courses

Dual courses give employees, jobseekers or benefit recipients the chance to work while undergoing training. In 2007, arrangements were made for the creation of extra dual courses. Learning targets are adapted to the requirements of the participants and the labour market. Most of the learning is done 'on the job'. Employees who have completed a dual course may be eligible for promotion within their

company, or be better equipped for their current work. For jobseekers or benefit recipients, the main aim is to obtain a basic qualification (a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 certificate) or a job. To this end, educational institutions such as ROCs and institutions for higher professional education work closely together with employers.

Prior learning assessment and recognition (EVC)

The Learning and Working Project team funds and steers the Knowledge Centre for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. People starting jobs or training courses already have certain competences that they have acquired elsewhere. The centre officially recognises working experience as previously acquired competence. Its aim is to match school curricula more effectively to the world of work and to assess its clients' requirements for on-the-job training. Regional consortia involving training institutes, CWIs and the business community are to create an extra 20,000 EVC schemes in 2007.

Training and employment helpdesks

The CWIs are working with the providers of courses at regional level to set up training and employment helpdesks to provide the general public, jobseekers, employees and employers with information about EVC, training, dual courses, careers and funding. People who do not have the competences required for their occupation or field of work can receive supplementary training and thus acquire the full or partial qualification they need. The helpdesks actively promote participation of employers, employees, benefit agencies, jobseekers and other members of the public. They function as front offices for educational institutions (MBO, HBO and universities), both government-funded and non-government-funded, bringing together supply and demand. The social partners (ROCs, local authorities and the business community) are expected to fund the training and employment helpdesks independently as from 1 January 2008.

European Social Fund (ESF) grants

ESF grants will mainly be available between 2007 and 2013 for people who are disadvantaged on the labour market, such as the elderly, women returners, immigrants and the partially incapacitated. Businesses and government bodies can also use them to enable their employees to undergo training so that they can adapt to changes on the labour market. After being debated by Parliament, the programme will be submitted to Brussels for official approval. The 31 largest municipalities can apply direct to the ESF for grants between 2007 and 2013.

Tackling dropout

The following measures are designed to reduce the school dropout rate to half its 2002 level:

- Provide more support advisory teams (ZATs) for pupils with multiple behavioural problems and/or special needs in secondary vocational education (MBO). This entails close cooperation between the ROCs, the municipal health services, the social services, school attendance authorities, youth care services and the police. Less than two-thirds of all ROCs currently have a special needs team. It is hoped that in the future, each ROC will have one or several of its own.
- Improve provision for levels 1 to 2 in secondary vocational education so that special needs pupils can get the same intensive counselling and advice as is currently provided in pre-vocational secondary education. This will enable VMBO pupils to transfer successfully to secondary vocational education and get a basic qualification (HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2). To this end, the budget for secondary vocational education has been increased.
- Work placements and employment simulation: an extra 20,000 opportunities will be created for young people who are otherwise difficult to place. During the placement, the ROCs and centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market (KBBs) will provide intensive coaching for these students and their employers. The measures should result in a better qualitative match between the supply of and demand for placements on the labour market.
- Raise the school-leaving age to 18. From 1 August 2007, all young people will be required to continue learning until they have obtained a basic qualification. This measure will replace compulsory part-time education.
- Introduce compulsory follow-up for all pupils (including those with special needs) transferring from VMBO to secondary vocational education (MBO). The government is currently considering whether it would be feasible or desirable to make schools responsible for supervising their pupils until they are officially enrolled at another educational institution.

Registration and coordination at regional level

Young people who drop out of school are channelled back into education or work-study placements by the municipalities which act as regional registration and coordination centres for school drop-out. The

municipalities network with youth care services, educational institutions and Centres for Work and Income in order to create the appropriate conditions for early school leavers to return to school and/or work. The aim is to ensure they acquire at least a basic qualification (a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 certificate). Steps are being taken to make it easier for young people to enrol mid-course. Plans are also being developed for a compulsory work-and-study requirement for young people aged between 18 and 23 who have no basic qualifications, and compulsory registration and supervision of early school leavers.

Transfer and mobility within the vocational education sector

There is a shortage of skilled people at the intermediate and higher levels on the Dutch labour market, so the Ministry of Education is working with the vocational education sector to facilitate the transition from one level of vocational education to another (see § 5.5). Secondary vocational education must supply enough young people with level 3 and 4 qualifications to meet demand in the lower and middle ranges of the knowledge economy. It is vital for students to be able to move on without difficulty from pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) to secondary vocational education (MBO) to higher professional education (HBO). Under the new arrangements, more students will be able to obtain the right qualifications and be equipped for the job market sooner than in the past. Most students who complete VMBO go on to MBO, and the link between the two has been strengthened by the introduction of the four 'learning pathways' within vocational education (see § 5.11.1). Extra support will be provided for pupils transferring from VMBO to MBO. Plans are also under way to develop the concept of 'learning careers', enabling young people to exploit all the opportunities that are open to them across a wide range of learning environments, and to remove the barriers between the different levels of vocational education. The government will remove statutory obstacles to make this possible while institutions themselves will be expected to work together at regional level.

Civic integration training

Until December 2006 recent immigrants to the Netherlands were required under the Civic Integration (Newcomers) Act (WIN) to attend a civic integration course. These courses were aimed at improving immigrants' self-reliance and enabling them to go on to further training or find work. As of 1 January 2007 the Civic Integration (Newcomers) Act was superseded by the Civic Integration Act (WI), which incorporates substantial changes to civic integration policy, which is now no longer part of adult and vocational education. All immigrants to the Netherlands are now required to undergo civic integration training, regardless of whether they are recent or long-term residents. The new course covers knowledge of Dutch society and competence in Dutch as a second language (NT2). Both parts of the course lead to an examination. Candidates must pass both parts in order to fulfil the legal requirement for civic integration.

The municipalities are responsible for enforcing the Civic Integration Act, which is based on the principle that individual immigrants take the initiative (and bear the costs). The new Act also abolishes the status of the regional training centres (ROCs) as sole providers of civic integration training. With the market opened up, municipalities are now free to buy in courses from whoever they want.

Personal identification number

A unique personal identification number (PGN; sometimes referred to as the education number) is assigned by the Information Management Group (IBG) to all pupils receiving government-funded education who are too young to have a tax and social insurance (SoFi) number. For older pupils, their PGN is the same as their SoFi number. Schools pass on the PGN, together with certain other data on pupils, to the IBG. They register this data, which is used to determine schools' funding and for policy development and supervision purposes, the latter by the Education Inspectorate. The data kept by the IBG is increasingly used for purposes such as monitoring pupils' school careers, school attendance and early leaving. Schools are funded on the basis of these numbers, which are linked to a pupil's weighting (see § 4.2 and § 4.8). PGNs have been introduced in secondary, vocational and adult education, and are being introduced in primary education.

7.3. Specific legislative framework

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB), which entered into force on 1 January 1996, brings together the various forms of adult and vocational education in a single statutory framework. The WEB Implementation Decree regulates the funding of vocational education and the centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market, and central government grants to adult education

institutions (see § 7.15.1). The Manpower Services Act provides a statutory framework for training measures for the unemployed.

7.3.1. Adult and Vocational Education Act

The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) entered into force on 1 January 1996. The Act was introduced in stages between 1 January 1996 and 1 January 2000 beginning with the introduction of the qualification structure for vocational education in 1997. The last group of regional training centres (ROCs) opened their doors in 1998 (see § 7.5). Finally, on 1 January 2000, the new funding system was introduced. Under this system, institutions are funded partly on the basis of student numbers by course and learning pathway, and partly on the basis of numbers gaining qualifications. National qualification structures are central to the Adult and Vocational Education Act (see § 7.2).

7.3.2. Education Participation Act

Under the Education Participation Act 1992 (WMO), every institution for adult and vocational education is legally required to set up a participation council (MR) (see also § 2.7.1), 50% of whose members are staff and 50% are students attending courses at the institution. Members of the competent authority of the institution may not sit on the participation council. By exercising the right of approval and the right to be consulted, the participation council can influence the way the school is organised, how teaching is organised, the proportions of the budget spent on staffing and staff and labour market policy, and the maintenance and upkeep of the school's premises. Under the terms of the Act, the competent authority of the school cannot take any important decisions without the agreement or advice of the participation council.

7.3.3. Training measures

When there is a downturn in the economy, employees without a basic qualification who were previously unemployed are often the first to lose their jobs. In order to ensure that this group of individuals have a better chance of staying in work, it is essential that they have the opportunity, while working or before starting a job, to obtain a basic qualification (a HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2 certificate). The following instruments are deployed for this purpose:

- reductions in tax and social insurance contributions to offset the wage costs of trainees on work-study placements (see § 7.15.1);
- grants from the European Social Fund (ESF) (see § 7.2): businesses and government bodies can use these grants to train employees so that they are equipped for changing conditions on the labour market;
- employers are also eligible for a reduction in their tax and social insurance contributions to offset the extra costs of training and supervising employees who subsequently obtain a basic qualification and who either had to abandon a training scheme in order to accept their current job or did not have a basic qualification when they started work and were not already receiving training.

7.4. General objectives

Social trends and the need for lifelong learning have made adult and vocational education crucially important for individuals, the labour market and society as a whole (see § 7.2). As well as a socioeconomic function (matching supply to demand, greater employability), the Act therefore also has a sociocultural function (promoting integration and greater participation of disadvantaged groups).

7.4.1. Secondary vocational education

The aim of secondary vocational education, as defined in the Adult and Vocational Education Act, is to provide both theoretical instruction and practical training in preparation for the practice of a wide range of occupations for which a vocational qualification is necessary or useful. It also furthers the general education and personal development of students and helps them to play an active part in society.

7.4.2. Adult education

Adult education is geared to furthering the personal development of adults and their participation in society (self-reliance). Knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes are developed in relation to the needs, opportunities and life experience of adults. Adult education can prepare individuals for vocational training and boost their personal and social roles.

7.5. Types of institution

Institutions are required to provide made-to-measure training for jobseekers, people in regular employment and young people with no work experience. The Adult and Vocational Education Act (WEB) gives institutions the opportunity to devise special learning pathways for educationally disadvantaged students.

Regional training centres (ROCs) offer a complete range of adult and vocational education courses, both full-time and part-time. This combined approach serves to strengthen the institutional and curricular cohesion between vocational education and adult education. Since the introduction of the WEB in 1996, municipalities have been responsible for planning and funding adult education. The Adult and Vocational Education Council is the umbrella organisation representing the sector.

In 2005, the sector consisted of 42 ROCs (excluding those in the agricultural sector). From 1 January 1998, institutions which were not part of an ROC ceased to be eligible for government funding with the exception of 13 specialist colleges providing training for a specific branch of industry. Two other institutions have been granted exemption on religious grounds and two are attached to institutes for the deaf.

Agricultural courses are now provided at agricultural training centres (AOCs). Vocational education courses in the agriculture and natural environment sector are the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Adult education

Municipalities are responsible for providing courses that meet the demand for adult education. The target group includes illiterate adults, immigrants and elderly people and also specific groups such as young mothers or the long-term unemployed. The municipalities buy in courses from the ROCs, including literacy courses, and report to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on their education policy. Since the introduction of the Adult and Vocational Education Act, adult education courses have been provided by the regional training centres (ROCs). Adult Vocational Training Centres, Centres for Vocational Orientation and Training and Women's Training Centres, which provide training under the Manpower Services Act, have the option of either becoming part of an ROC or working closely with them as independent institutions.

The ROCs accommodate 95 adult education institutes ('volksuniversiteiten'), which operate in more than 250 municipalities and provide courses for some 165,000 people every year. Adult education institutes offer a wide range of courses on a variety of subjects, the most popular being foreign languages, history, art and culture, and arts and crafts. The institutes' other tasks are:

- to encourage study and discussion of philosophical and social issues;
- to organise lectures, discussions, exhibitions and so on;
- to develop educational programmes for special groups, such as volunteers in the care sector, ethnic minority mothers, the elderly and people with minor learning disabilities.

Within the context of lifelong education, the various non-formal types of adult education are significant. The sector includes:

- nature and environmental education (e.g. NIVON);
- private education (distance learning, language schools);
- educational broadcasting;
- libraries;
- adult education institutes ('volksuniversiteiten');
- arts education for adults;