

## VNFIL COUNTRY FICHE: NETHERLANDS



## General description of the system

National terminology: “EVC – *Erkenning van Verworven Competenties*”

VNFIL is an instrument that validates learning outcomes against national standards. VNFIL is introduced in the Netherlands based on the analysis that almost 20% of the working population had no formal qualification related to the job, almost 15% of them had no so called ‘start qualification’ (EQF/NQF level 2), which is regarded as the lowest qualification one should have in order to be able to get a job).

Based on these figures VNFIL provision in the Netherlands is developed as an open system that is accessible for anyone who wants his or her learning qualified. Any formal and non-formal standard can be used, as long as the VNFIL provider is qualified to do so. VNFIL providers can be educational institutes, but also private providers who operate independent from the public educational institutes.

Dutch Government funded the Dutch Knowledge Centre on VNFIL from the year 2000 until 2015. During these years a comprehensive system for VNFIL provision was set up, with a quality Assurance system for a 150 providers. Currently (2016) there are still 70 providers active in the market that provides VNFIL according to the Dutch Quality code for VNFIL.

Two distinct validation paths exist:

1. Ervaringscertificaat (EVC)

Validation is offered against national standards in formal (VET provision and universities of applied science) and nonformal (standards defined by social partners and/or sector). These kind of VNFIL procedures lead to an ‘Ervaringscertificaat’ (Certificate of Experience) comparing the competences of the candidate with a (non)formal standard (diploma or certificate).

2. Ervaringsprofiel (EVP)

Next to validation of learning also ‘recognition of learning’ is offered. In these kinds of VNFIL procedures the use of national standards is not necessary (they can be used, but any other standard can also be used). Focus is not on formal validation, but on self-recognition of competences. Recognition of learning leads to an ‘Ervaringsprofiel’ (experience profile). This profile describes all competences of candidates that are relevant for career and/or personal development. For EVP are no national standards agreed.

## Process and vocabulary

Identification:

The system is mostly demand based, where the initiative is usually on potential beneficiaries (individual or institutions). Identification leads to the choice of a validation paths (EVC or EVP) and standard (can be tailored for the need of an organization in case of EVP, social and labour market recognition is the key element). *“Intake of the individual and making individual arrangements linked to the individual’s defined career goals. The candidate decides on the choice of qualification and whether to start the EVC procedure or not...”* (Duvecot et al., 2014)

Documentation:

Preparation of the portfolio with the support of a trained coach. The client creates a portfolio of proofs for every learning outcome.

Assessment:

Assessment is usually held directly at companies. Assessment leads to the development of a report that contains descriptions of the learning outcomes that match the specific certification. This report also contains advice on further

professional development of the candidate in regards to his/her career goals.

#### Certification:

The certification or exemption is given by the awarding body (school, university...). The awarding body can decide whether it will accept the certificate or not, based on the quality of the information it contains.

### Usage of VNFIL

#### Target groups:

In the Netherlands are no specific target groups defined. Research shows that people use VNFIL for career development, meeting qualification standards or finding new jobs. VNFIL is a private provision mostly paid by employers and/or employers' organisations. There is no public funding available for VNFIL. Result of this is that the classical target groups one finds in other European countries (members of disadvantaged groups) are hardly represented in the Dutch VNFIL figures.

In the years 2011-2014 the National Knowledge Centre researched the market for VNFIL and found out that candidates motivation for VNFIL is:

Aim of VNFIL	Percentage
Career development	55%
Meeting the qualification standards of the job	43%
Outplacement / finding new jobs	31%
Validation of learning of unemployed	17%
Partial qualification for exemptions in education	15%
Other reasons	16%

There is no public funding for VNFIL, per candidate a procedure costs at least 700 Euro's. In most cases employers and/or employers' organisations pay for these procedures. A fiscal bonus is applicable to compensate for the higher cost.

#### Outcomes of VNFIL:

VNFIL is offered against standards for VET (EQF/NQF levels 1 -4/5, with standards for Universities of Applied Science (EQF / NQF level 5/6 and with sector specific non formal standards (estimated EQF/NQF levels 1-4).

#### Total of VNFIL procedures in NL

year	total	VET (1 – 4/5)	Universities (5/6)	Sector
2011	17.700	57%	11%	22%
2012	14.654	27%	6%	67%
2013	30.514	17%	3%	80%
2014 (expected)	16.801	-	-	-

Top 4 of used standards in VNFIL (2012 & 2013):

	VET (1 – 4/5), n=31	Universities (5/6) n=7	Sector n=14
1	Healthcare and welfare (34%)	Social sciences (16%)	Forklift & reach truck (35%)
2	Chemical & Manufacturing Industry (27%)	Economy / management (14%)	Disability care (29%)
3	Transport, shipping & logistics (23%)	Health care (14%)	Youth care (21%)
4	Finances, accounting and administrative (16%)	Education (8%)	Retail (21%)

## Quality assurance

The VNFIL system in Netherlands is currently undergoing a change: Providers can get awarded as ‘certified VNFIL provider’ by the ministry of Education (until 2017) after review by an awarding body, based on the Dutch Quality code on VNFIL. Providers have to pay the awarding body for their work. Until 2015 the ministry of Education funded a national knowledge centre VNFIL. Starting 2016 this role is a private role, funded by the VNFIL providers.

Since 2015 a new policy divides VNFIL in two different environments: in the labour market and/or in an educational route. Higher Education Institutes can experiment with VNFIL in pilot projects, where the quality is assured by the Education Inspectorate and the NVAO (accrediting authority). The ministry of Education retreats its directing role on the quality assurance on VNFIL, focusing on the introduction of partial qualifications into VET, in order to make the system more flexible and accessible to adults.

The Dutch VNFIL council wherein the social partners and the ministries of Education, Social Affairs en Economic Affairs) are represented takes responsibility for sustainable provision of VNFIL in the labour market route. On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016 a new covenant will regulate this labour market route. This covenant will among other things provide in an agreement on quality assurance and a private knowledge centre on VNFIL. For the time being the qualifications framework is the continuation of the existing framework with the current Dutch quality code and awarding bodies.

The Dutch quality code contains the following criteria (sub criteria and indicators are not included in this fiche):

1. *The goal of VNFIL is to define, evaluate and accredit individual competencies.*
2. *Individual entitlements: the VNFIL process answers to the need of the individual. Entitlements and arrangements with the VNFIL-offering organizations are clearly defined.*
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.*
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.*
5. *The quality of VNFIL procedures is guaranteed and is being improved on an on going basis*

**Role of Peer-review:** Current development in Netherlands (focus of the government on the VNFIL in the educational sector) means that Peer Review can prove its value in the further development of VNFIL. With Peer Review private providers establish a high quality framework for evaluation and further development of their VNFIL provision. In Peer Review relevant public education providers are able to evaluate all aspects of their VNFIL provision.

## Status of implementation of the CEDEFOP guidelines on VNFIL (2015)

### 1. Availability of information, guidance and counselling:

The VNFIL system is driven at least partially by market forces. The competition for potential clients drives information campaigns and assures the information. Local governments integrate VNFIL to labour market integration programmes.

### 2. Stakeholders coordination:

The VNFIL system is open and based on mutual trust of stakeholders: government defines the national strategy, local governments through employment services assure the availability of VNFIL to disadvantaged groups, educational institutions share the VNFIL provision with private companies. Employers are often involved in financing VNFIL to particular groups of employees. Stakeholders are coordinated through VNFIL council and providers are united in the Dutch Association of VNFIL providers. The bottom-up approach is very strong for the steering of the system.

### 3. Links to national qualification framework

The Dutch Qualification Framework (NLQF) provides transparency between qualification in the educational and labour market route. With NLQF the relation between labour market qualifications and formal qualifications becomes transparent. NLQF is related to the European Qualifications Frameworks (EQF) and VNFIL provides a possibility to progress between different levels of NQF. The ECVET system is being implemented in VET in order to modularize VET and make it more accessible for adult learners through the usage of VNFIL.

### 4. Standards and learning outcomes

The outcome of the VNFIL process (the certificate of experience) is based on the learning outcomes of recognized occupational standards. However, it is not automatically accepted by the training institutions – they keep their prerogative in awarding a formal qualification or granting an exemption. Custom occupational standards can be elaborated for specific use cases (recognition of non-formal and informal learning of an individual, without certification - EVP).

### 5. Quality assurance

Quality assurance system is undergoing a transformation, with some risks of being fractured between labour market-path and educational path. However, the national quality code is a very good basis for the development of new QA mechanisms based either on certification of providers, or more soft approaches (e.g. peer-review).

### 6. Professional competences of practitioners:

The competition between providers and the system based on trust, rather than formalistic approaches, gives rise to very professional practices, particularly in the documentation of learning outcomes. All the processes are assured by professionals, however, there seems to be no central coordination for the development of practice in the whole system (this issue is particularly important with the dissolution of the central coordinating body).