



M O B I L I T Y G U I D E

NETHERLANDS





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Part I: General country information

Official name:	Kingdom of Netherlands (Koninkrijk der Nederlanden)
Capital:	Amsterdam, seat of government: Den Haag
Flag:	
Languages:	Dutch (official language), Frisian (spoken by approx. 350.000 persons)
Government:	Head of State is Queen Beatrix, Princess of Oranje-Nassau. She assumed office in 1980. Together with the Council of Ministers she forms the Dutch government. The president of the council of ministers is by constitution Dutch minister president.
Inhabitants:	16.336.000 (2006), around 1,5 million live in the greater Amsterdam region
Unemployment quota:	3,5 % (February 2007)
National holiday:	30th April. Formerly queens day („Koninginnendag“).
Currency:	Euro
Time:	MEZ
Prefix:	+ +31
Internet:	.nl

Part II: General information to prepare for mobility

In preparation for a working stay in the Netherlands it is important to look into the country, its people and its customs. This will help you – especially in the beginning of your stay – to find your way in your new living and working environment.

Labour market information

Jobwise the Netherlands are an interesting place to go. As the unemployment quota is low, certain professions lack qualified jobseekers from the Netherlands. As a result there is a growing interest of Dutch employers for recruitment of groups of workers from other countries. For 2006, for instance, the Job Vacancy Survey of the Centre for Work and

Income (CWI) shows that almost 27 % of vacancies were regarded by employers as hard to fill.

Furthermore, figures show that in 2007, nationwide, the construction and manufacturing industries have a higher than average number of hard-to-fill vacancies. This also applies to vacancies for technical and construction personnel, nursing and paramedical personnel and for personnel for job vacancies at certain educational levels, notably higher vocational education. As labour market needs change within time, it is sensible to have a look at the actual labour market situation. EURES, the European Job Mobility Portal, provides a short overview (<http://ec.europa.eu/eures>).



However, rather than relying on abstract labour market information, you might find it interesting to take a look at the EURES-jobsearch. The jobs advertised on the EURES Portal come from EURES members and partners, in particular the European Public Employment Services. They use EURES to advertise jobs for which employers are particularly interested in recruiting workers from other European countries. In 2007, the top 10 categories of vacancies include amongst other things 'technical and commercial sales representatives', 'welders and flame cutters' as well as 'plumbers and pipe fitters'.

Money earning and living costs

In general the level of income matches the European average. The Netherlands is not a cheap country to live in. People tend to spend a very substantial part of their income on fixed living expenses.

- ▶ Cigarettes: 4,11 €/20 cigarettes
- ▶ Loaf of bread: 1,69 €/800 grams
- ▶ Sandwich: 2,95 € (tomatoes, cheese, bacon, salad)
- ▶ Cup of coffee: 1,70 €
- ▶ Pint of beer in a pub: 1,92 € /0,2 litres
- ▶ Chocolate bar: 0,79 €/200 grams when bought at a discounter
- ▶ Cinema ticket: 7,00 €
- ▶ Short bus journey: 1,60 €

Looking for a job: where to start?

There are many search options for finding work in the Netherlands. Two things you should bear in mind, however, are:

- ▶ You are expected to learn Dutch, particularly if you intend to work at a small firm.
- ▶ More than 60 % of all vacancies are filled informally. As a consequence, if you have personal contacts in the Netherlands that improves your chance of finding a job in the Netherlands notably.

Here some examples of resources you could check when looking for a job:

Personal advice

The Dutch labour administration consists of a network of more than 200 employment centers. Regions have local employment centers (Arbeidsbureau).

CWI: The Centre for Work and Income (Centrum voor Werk en Inkomen (CWI)) supports and assists job-seekers in their search for work. Registration with the CWI is not compulsory. Consult <http://www.werk.nl>.

EURES advisers: EURES advisers are trained specialists who provide the three basic EURES services of information, guidance and placement, to both jobseekers and employers interested in the European job market. They have developed specialised expertise in the practical, legal and administrative matters relating to mobility at national and cross-border levels. They work within the Public Employment Service of each member country, or within other partner organisations in the EURES network. You find contact details on the EURES website (<http://ec.europa.eu/eures> in the category „EURES“)

Privat placement offices:

Apart from the state-run labour market services, there are a number of private placement offices. The so called „Uitzendbureaus“ hire employees and „rent“ them to other firms, while so called „Bemiddelingbureaus“ act as agents between the jobseeker and an employer.

Advertisements:

Newspapers: You are advised to consult the Dutch newspapers for vacancies. The Saturday editions of national newspapers contain the most vacancies.



- ▶ NRC Handelsblad (<http://www.nrc.nl/>): managerial positions.
- ▶ De Volkskrant (<http://www.volkskrant.nl/>): public sector, academia/medical profession.
- ▶ De Telegraaf (<http://www.telegraaf.nl/>) and the Algemeen Dagblad (www.ad.nl): commercial vacancies.
- ▶ Regional papers.

Internet: Online applications on companies' websites and the use of CV databases are the norm. Employers use CV databases to recruit candidates. If you can understand Dutch you can use the website of the CWI: www.werk.nl. Further online job databases are set out in the category „links“.

Attention: The Netherlands has its own rules concerning job applications. Do make yourself familiar with those mostly unwritten rules. You may find it useful to consult some of the links set out at the end of this brochure.

Working Conditions

A number of factors are important in working life, i.e. „hard facts“ such as working time, remuneration, annual leave and the personal atmosphere at the workplace.

Remuneration

It is normal in the Netherlands for a gross wage to be agreed. Your net pay is (almost) always transferred to your bank or giro account. This usually happens once a month, every four weeks or every week.

Working time

By law you may not work for more than nine hours a day and 45 hours a week. The average working week is between 36

and 40 hours. The Netherlands has a five-day working week, although four-day working weeks are sometimes found.

Vacation

All employees in the Netherlands are entitled to paid holiday. The statutory minimum applies in all cases. The statutory amount of holiday each year is at least four times the number of working hours each week. Most Collective Agreements provide for an amount of holiday that differs from the statutory minimum. The number generally varies from 20 to 30 days for full-time employees. Regardless of the amount of your wage, you can claim a minimum holiday allowance of 8%; this is known as holiday pay.

Social security system

The Dutch social security system is one of the most comprehensive in the EU. As soon as you start work in the Netherlands, you will automatically begin making payments into the Dutch social security system. Most social security contributions are deducted automatically from your salary. In the case of so-called employee insurance, both you and your employer pay contributions. If you are legally resident in the Netherlands but lack the means to support yourself owing to: long-term disability or unemployment. You can claim benefit from the Dutch state (Ministry of Social Affairs).

Your possible entitlement to benefit as a result of involuntary unemployment is intended as a temporary bridging measure. It is up to you to make every effort to find another job as quickly as possible. In this connection, any job is considered suitable.

The Employee Insurance Agency (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen – UWV) provides advice over the phone to jobseekers residing in the Netherlands and can be reached on the following number: 0031 113750350.



Recognition of qualifications

In some countries access to certain jobs is restricted, meaning that you need to prove a certain qualification to be able to practice the profession. Find below contact details of two institutions you can turn to in case of doubt:

Academic qualifications:

NARIC – National Academic Recognition Information Centre

NUFFIC, Postbus 29777

NL-2502 LT Den Haag

Phone: 0031 70 426 02 60

Vocational qualifications:

Centraal Organ van de Landelijke

Opleidingsorganen (COLO)

Promenade 329

NL – 2701 Zoetermeer

To be checked before leaving or after arriving

Before moving to your new country of residence make sure you have:

- ▶ (Temporary) accommodation.
- ▶ Sufficient financial resources for the first month.
- ▶ The right documents:
 - A valid EU passport/ID card;
 - A European Health Insurance Card;
 - An E301 or 303 form.
- ▶ General knowledge of your new country of residence.

As soon as you arrive in the Netherlands:

- ▶ Register with the municipality in which you will be living.
- ▶ Apply to the tax authorities for a social security (SOFI) number.
- ▶ Register with the IND.
- ▶ Open a bank account.

Part III: Golden rules for intercultural understanding

A society's hidden rules form the basis for smooth everyday interaction – at home as well as abroad.

Any host will certainly be lenient towards a guest who – despite good manners – behaves differently from a fellow countryman. For instance, think of a guest smoking at table, something quite natural in that person's home country, but unthinkable in others, and this not only for legal reasons. Or think of the visitor from Paris, who barely knowing you, gives you a kiss on the cheek.

There is no written law on how to behave correctly in another country, and even within a country, rules will vary from one region to another. Any foreign visitor may therefore unconsciously drop a clanger.

Only living in a country for some time, being attentive and interested, will help you to learn the unwritten rules and see the clangers. However, if you as a guest stick to some basic rules, your stay will run smoothly.

- ▶ Don't be afraid of the unknown. Remember that in your home country you also meet strangers and usually you manage the situation without problems.
- ▶ Let situations sink in. Note the common ground as well as differences, and try to not immediately assess everything in terms of good and bad, better and worse. Things are just different!
- ▶ Confronted with new situations: wait and observe. You may be surrounded by cooperative people, however, be



aware that they might never have thought about why things are done this or that way.

- ▶ **Get into contact!** Nobody expects you to be perfect in the foreign language. So make an effort. Even a few words can open doors.

- ▶ For conversation at your workplace, reflect on your job, your future plans and train the relevant vocabulary before you leave. Also: Read about your home as well as about your target country and region. A country guide of your home region in the hosts' language might make a nice present.

Part IV: Everyday-life

Getting into contact

Dutch people use a handshake to say hello or goodbye. Friends kiss each other on the cheeks. A common form of greeting is „Hoe gaat het?“ (How are you).

In former times naming somebody by his or her christian name was a priviledge of close friends & relatives. Meanwhile, it has become common among young people. However, to be sure better wait until your interlocutor uses christian names first. It will probably not take long. Colleagues address each other informally.

In writing use your initials and the family name. Don't use titles. This is against Dutch preference for modesty.

Some vocabulary to start with

Hello ▶ Goede dag

God evening ▶ Goede avend

Good night ▶ Welt e rusten

Hello/Bye ▶ Hoe gaat het?

Good bye ▶ Tot ziens

My name is ... ▶ Ik Heet ...

Thank you ▶ Dank u wel / bedankt

Please ▶ Abstublieft

Sorry ▶ Excuses / sorry

Yes ▶ Ja

No ▶ Nee

Dutch people are known for language competencies. Therefore, for instance Germans tend to think that all Dutch people speak their language. This is not quite true. English, French and German are taught and are usually understood.

However, every word in Dutch will enhance every day cooperation. And it is more polite to ask one's interlocutor if it is possible to speak English or any other foreign language.

Working environment

Dutch tend to perceive hierarchy in enterprises as a necessary evil. The boss is commonly seen as "one of us", or perhaps as the most important employee.

Equality and openness are characteristic for the Dutch society in general. This is also true for work place atmosphere. In general, Dutch people are fact-oriented and rather direct.

In discussions everybody is called to give their opinions. Independently of status or hierarchy or status all search for the best possible solution and success is merit of the team. Putting oneself first is perceived as impolite. Hectic and lack of patience are perceived.

Germans for instance are perceived as achievement-oriented and hasty. This isn't per se negative. However, remember that other countries count with other paces of work and timing. To assess the „time“ in a foreign enterprise, just go



along and adapt yourself to the rhythm of your foreign colleagues. Feel the difference. After all, you want to get to know another mode of work and not do everything as at home.

HINT: Working and private life are usually kept strictly separated. After work people go home, eat with their families and then maybe they will meet with colleagues.

Manners/Etiquette

The Netherlands have a strong Calvinistic tradition. Still today, modesty, austerity, openness and reliability are highly esteemed virtues.

Dutch people tend to give their opinion frankly – only when it comes to making a decision public one might hear no more than vague pronouncements.

Invitations

Private sphere is an important good. Only rarely you will be invited home and spontaneous visits may be unwelcome. Punctuality is a must. Should you not have given any indication as to the time of the invitation, you may recur to the following rule of thumb:

- ▶ Arrival not before 8:30 p.m., parting before midnight.
- ▶ Afternoon invitations usually finish at 6 p.m. Only rarely they are extended to the evening.
- ▶ As to snacks: wait until you are offered some and take only once. Restraint is important.

It is common to bring a present for the host. It should not be exaggerated. A bucket of flowers may be a good idea. Please note: Flowers are handed over enrolled in paper.

If you are invited to a birthday party, be aware that not only the person whose birthday is being celebrated receives congratulations, but also the relatives.

Koffie

If you like drinking coffee (Koffie) you will feel at ease in the Netherlands – it is offered at all times of the day. Tee will be served upon request.

In a casual atmosphere the host will say „Eet smakelijk“ which indicates that you can start eating.

Smokers are a minority in the Netherlands, so rather ask if smoking is permitted.

Topics for conversation

Topics for conversation: house or soccer. Be aware that Dutch people tend to feel close to the royal family. Negative pronouncements don't go down well. No mention should be made of the 2nd world war, the actual salary or domestic political problems. Ironical or sarcastic remarks may be misunderstood.

Holland or Netherlands?

Holland and the Netherlands are two different things. Technically, Holland is a Dutch province or better two: North and South Holland. Holland as a name for the whole country is folksy, but it is not correct. To be sure, use „Netherlands“ until you see which word your host uses.

Spare time

Flowers decorate apartments, restaurants and work places. Soccer and biking are the most popular sports. Nearly every Dutch rides a bike, bike clubs can be found all over the country, bike paths „Fietspaden“ are everywhere.

Public holidays

Difference in habits in European countries often exist where you wouldn't expect them. The way people celebrate hol-



Example: Christmas in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, „sinterklaas“ is an important holiday. The last weekend in November each year he comes from Spain by boat. He is also the patron saint of sailors. He travels on a white horse accompanied by two persons, the „zwarte piten“. They ride over the roofs on Dec. 5 and throw their gifts through the chimneys. To allow the horse to rest and have a meal, children put carrots, a bucket of water and a bit of hay in front of the door. In the evening of Dec. 5 families celebrate. Gifts are accompanied by a poem that makes fun of the receiving persons' mannerisms. The atmosphere is usually joyful.

idays tells a lot about the countries' culture. Therefore, to inform yourself about holiday traditions is a good way to get to know more about the country.

The official holidays in the Netherlands are as follows:

- ▶ New Years Day 1 January
- ▶ Good Friday
- ▶ Easter Monday
- ▶ Queen's Day 30 April
- ▶ Liberation Day 5 May (celebrated once every five years)
- ▶ Ascension
- ▶ Pentecost
- ▶ Christmas 25 and 26 December
- ▶ The feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated on 5 December.

On this day, some companies and organisations close one hour earlier.

Eating & drinking

Eating is not a central part of social life. Eating habits reflect the moderate lifestyle. Meals are usually down-to-earth and receive no particular celebration.

Breakfast

Cereals, bread, cheese, cold meat, juice, coffee or tea. Whole wheat breads are popular and „Krentenbroodjes“ (bread rolls with raisins). Kids especially like sweet „toppings“ for their bread – particularly chocolate granules

Main meal

At midday many Dutch people eat sandwiches or „Kroket“. The main meal is usually served at night. Typical dishes include herring, smoked eel, pea soup and „Hutspot“ (mashed potatoes with carrots and onion). Cakes are a particular speciality in the Netherlands. Popular snacks are fried potatoes, „Stoopwafels“ syrup waffles and „Poffertjes“.



Part V: Vocational education & training

People working abroad obviously speak often about their profession and everyday working life in their home country. It is therefore important to realise that school, vocational education and ways to learn a trade vary distinctively between States.

Find below a short overview of the Dutch vocational education system:

The Dutch State supervises education, but it doesn't hold an „education monopoly“ There are no public schools nor public institutions designating teachers. The decentralised education system follows the rule of „freedom of tuition“. Every religious or other community has the right to run schools and every citizen has the right to choose a school. Therefore many training institutions exist (approx. 6000).

First level of education

- ▶ Compulsory education from 5 to 16 years.
- ▶ Elementary school and special courses until 11th and 12th year of age.

Continuing education

After compulsory education there are various possibilities to continue training:

- ▶ **Vorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (VWO):**
 - Comparable to high-school, A-levels, Matura, Bac. Or Abitur
 - Duration: 6 years
 - Certificate: Higher education entrance qualification
- ▶ **Hooger Algemeen Vormend Onderwijs (HAVO):**
 - Comparable to high school
 - Duration: 5 years
 - Certificate: Advanced technical college entrance qualification

- ▶ **Vorbereidend Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (VMBO):**
 - Comparable to junior high school / secondary school
 - General and specialised courses targeted at vocational preparation
 - Duration: 2–4 years
- ▶ **Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs (MBO):**
 - vocational education

Vocational education is possible in areas such as services, health care, tourism, catering trade, technical trades and agriculture.

Basics

Apprentices can either choose company-based or school-based education. For the company training, the apprentice concludes a contract with the enterprise. The salary is fixed by law. Depending on the apprentices' age and the scope (complexity) of the course, apprentices have to pay fees. School-based training includes internships.

Company training (BBL) is accompanied by a theoretical part of 1 day in vocational school and is similar to the German dual vocational education. School-based education (BOL) includes “internments”. The theory / practice relation is 70:30 %.

The Dutch system is flexible, mixed-forms are possible, decisive qualifications at the end of one level. Training institutions are big ROC's – which sometimes have up to 20.000 pupils and 1.000 teachers – and where trades can be learnt.

Upon successful passing the examination of one level, it is possible to access the next higher level. Those who pass vocational school successfully, can reach until the advanced technical college entrance qualification (HBO-level). Dropouts receive a certificate showing their partial qualifications.



The levels

MBO level-1: Assistant level
Duration: 0,5 – 1 year
Level of qualification: Carry out simple tasks

MBO level-2: Basic vocational education
Duration: 2–3 years
Level of qualification: Working under instruction

MBO level 3: vocational (technical) training
Duration: 2–4 years
Level of qualification: Independent working, supervision of employees levelled 1–2.

MBO level 4: Experts/Executive staff
Duration: 4 years
Level of qualification: Task in specialist areas, teaching

Part VI: Selected trades

Every one of the professions mentioned below can be learnt on various 4 levels as explained above. Find below some examples:

Bakery and Confectioner trade

Name: Brood- en banketbakker

Level: MBO level 2

Feature: As bread- and confectioner you make bread, wafers and pastry from all kinds of raw materials. According to the recipes, you mix, knead and weigh the ingredients. Pastry or bread is then put into the furnace. Pastry making is finished by garnishing, glazing or filling. Bread making requires knowledge of specific processes and dealing with high-quality technical equipment; confectioning particularly claims dexterity (with techniques) and creativity.

Bakery and confectioner trade

Name: Allround brood- en banketbakker

Level: MBO level 3;

Feature: This training can follow you after training bread – and confectioner (level 2). Allround bread – and confectioner prepare among other things unfilled and filled bread types. They also prepare several products from the confec-

tioner sector such as several types of butter paste and crust paste. Fantasy and creativity play an important role in this profession.

Bicycle technician trade

Name: Fietstechnicus

Level: MBO level 2

Feature: Bicycle technicians maintain and repair all kinds of bicycles, such as racebikes, ATBs and mountainbikes. Given that new bicycles and techniques appear regularly, it is important that bicycal technicians maintain their knowledge on level. Learning the bicycle technician trade includes advising customers, repairing techniques, making damage reports, as well as managing stock.

Roofer trade

Name: Installatiemonteur dakbedekkingen

Level: MBO level 3

Feature: Installation fitters specialised in roofing learn to lay and maintain evacuation installations, central heating installations and roofings. Work includes gas installations, tap water installations, warm tap water installations, sanitary



installations. Usually „installatiemonteur dakbedekkingen“ specialise in introducing zinc, plastic and bitumen.

Optician trade

Name: Opticien

Level: MBO level 3

Feature: Opticians learn to advise customers concerning the choice of spectacle-frames and glasses. They know how to measure an optical device, including eye-measuring, and perform repairings to optical devices (glasses). They learn to give technical information and make recommendations concerning the model, the colour etc. Moreover they learn how to sharpen optical device-spectacle glasses and how to produce adjust spectacle-frames. They need to know how to sell optical devices, sunglasses, magnifying glasses, reading glasses and alike products. Opticians need technical knowledge, skills and product knowledge.

Optician manager

Name: Opticien manager

Level: MBO level 4

Feature: Optician manager to advise customers concerning the choice of spectacle-frames and glasses. They know how to measure an optical device, including eye-measuring, and

perform repairings to optical devices (glasses). They learn to give technical information and make recommendations concerning the model, the colour etc. Moreover they learn how to sharpen optical device-spectacle glasses and how to produce adjust spectacle-frames. They need to know how to sell optical devices, sunglasses, magnifying glasses, reading glasses and alike products. Opticians need technical knowledge, skills and product knowledge.

Apart from that, they have to manage the optician company, human resources, do the purchase, monitor the stock, do administrative work etc.

Motorcycle technician

Name: Bromfietstechnicus

Level: MBO level 2

Feature: Motor-cycle technicians and maintain and repair motorcycles and scooters. As there are always several models scooters, it is important to always be informed of new developments. Motorcycle technicians learn everything concerning the functioning of motorcycles and scooters, such as acceleration, light, links, start mechanism and brakes. They also learn to advise customers, draw up damage reports, make repairing budgets and manage the stock.

Part VII: Links

EURES

- ▶ European Job Mobility Portal (EURES): <http://europa.eu.int/eures/home.jsp?lang=en>

National employment agencies

- ▶ National Employment Service: Centrum voor Werk en Inkomen (CWI): <http://www.werk.nl>
- ▶ Information in German on <http://www.europa-mobil.de/eu-arbeitssuche-arbeitsaufnahme/Europa-Arbeitssuche/beratung-jobsuche/Europaservice/>



Representations of small and medium-sized enterprises

- ▶ MKB Nederland. <http://www.mkb.nl/>
- ▶ Landes-Gewerbeförderungsstelle des nordrhein-westfälischen Handwerks – Handwerk international: Information in German on formal requirements for working in the Netherlands, tax and social laws, public procurement etc.: Brochure „Arbeiten in den Niederlanden“, 2007, 10 Euros; <http://www.handwerk-international.net> -> Publikationen -> Publikationsliste

Online job databases

- ▶ www.askjim.nl
- ▶ www.limburgvac.nl
- ▶ www.internetvac.nl
- ▶ www.jobstoday.nl
- ▶ www.pagepersonnel.nl
- ▶ www.brabantvac.nl
- ▶ www.jobbingmall.nl
- ▶ <http://vacaturekrant.nl>
- ▶ www.parool.nl
- ▶ www.learn4good.com
- ▶ www.backinjob.nl
- ▶ www.acro-monde.com
- ▶ www.jobtrack.nl

Recruitment agencies for non Dutch speakers

- ▶ <http://www.undutchables.nl>
- ▶ <http://www.career-abroad.com>
- ▶ <http://www.kellyservices.com>
- ▶ <http://www.dutchisnotrequired.nl>
- ▶ <http://www.manpower.com>
- ▶ <http://www.elanit.nl>
- ▶ <http://www.sykes.com>
- ▶ <http://www.uniquemls.com>
- ▶ <http://www.bluelynx.nl>
- ▶ <http://www.iws.nl>

Guides on applying for jobs in the Netherlands:

- ▶ “Looking for work in the Netherlands” ISBN 90-5896-0145, available to order from www.labourmobility.com
- ▶ “125 tips om je beter te presenteren tijdens sollicitatiegesprekken” (“125 tips to improve your presentation at job interviews”), ISBN 90-71844-811
- ▶ “100 succesvolle sollicitatiebrieven” (100 successful application letters”), ISBN 90-74900-07-0
- ▶ “Ik ben de beste; de 10 geheimen van succesvol solliciteren” (“I’m the best; the 10 secrets of successful applications”)

Free online translation:

- ▶ <http://babel.altavista.com/tr>



Imprint

Publisher: Westdeutscher Handwerkskammertag, Sternwartstraße 27–29, D-40223 Düsseldorf, Phone: ++49 (0) 211) 30 07-700, Fax: ++49 (0) 211) 30 07-900, E-Mail: whkt@handwerk-nrw.de

Text: Stefanie Schönraht, europa concept | Layout: Peter Luttko

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union as part of the project „Skilled Mobile European“.
The contents of this document can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.