

# ACCESS

## Guide

# Working in the Netherlands

**Zeestraat 100 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**  
**2518 AD The Hague**  
**Tel: 0900 2 ACCESS**  
**(0900 2 222377)**  
**10:00–16:00, Monday–Friday**  
**[helpdesk@access-nl.org](mailto:helpdesk@access-nl.org)**  
**[www.access-nl.org](http://www.access-nl.org)**

## Contents

<b>DUTCH EMPLOYMENT LAW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Work permit.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Contracts.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Dismissal .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Collective labour agreements (CAO) .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Leave and special leave .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Diploma evaluation.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>HOW TO FIND A JOB.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>CV, COVER LETTER AND INTERVIEW .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Your CV.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Your Cover Letter.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>How to prepare for an interview .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CAREER AND JOB HUNTING SUPPORT .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>DUTCH BUSINESS CULTURE .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>USEFUL REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>22</b>

Author : Genoveva Geppaart

Last update by : Genoveva Geppaart, September 2010

### Dutch employment law

If you have not moved to the Netherlands with an expatriate employment contract governed by your home country laws, Dutch employment law will become important to you. This chapter gives an overview of the most important rules. Please note that this text is meant to inform you, but in case of doubt the official (Dutch) text of the law is always definitive.

### Work permit

Most people taking up employment in the Netherlands must obtain a work permit before they may start. There are exceptions, including those working for International Organisations such as the International Court and the European Space Agency where the organisation will take care of all necessary paperwork, and citizens of European Union nations (except Bulgaria and Romania). Highly skilled migrants may also be exempt. A work permit can be obtained by your employer from the UWV *Werkbedrijf* (*Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemers Verzekeringen*), which is the office for reintegration, unemployment benefits etc. (formerly the Centre of Work and Income) [www.werk.nl](http://www.werk.nl) (in Dutch and English).

The Foreign Nationals Employment Act (*Wet Arbeid Vreemdelingen* or WAV) requires employers to first recruit in the Netherlands and other Western European countries. This is intended to protect the Dutch and Western European labour markets. The work permit system allows the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment to regulate the intake of labour in the Netherlands. The work permit application procedure requires the employer in most cases to show that no qualified Dutch or EU nationals are available to fill the vacancy, after advertising for at least five weeks prior to filing the application. Applicants for work permits must be between the ages of 18-45.

The maximum length of a work permit is three years. People who have had work permits for three consecutive years, and who have not moved their residence outside the Netherlands since then, become exempt from the work permit requirement. Their residence permits can be endorsed with a note stating "Employment freely permitted" and "No work permit required". If the residence permit is not approved (for example, the IND discovers that the applicant has a criminal record), then the work permit is automatically withdrawn when the residence permit is denied. If you are allowed to work in the Netherlands, then your spouse/partner is usually allowed to work as well.

# Working in the Netherlands

---

## Contracts

Your legal rights and obligations differ depending on the type of employment contract you have, so you need to consider your most suitable option. To help you make this decision, the basic principles of the different contractual options are explained below.

There are three common labour contractual options. These are:

- Temporary labour contract
- Permanent labour contract
- Contract with an employment agency

Any contract should include:

- Name and address of employer and employee and where you will be working
- Job title and job description
- Start/end dates. Contracts can be of fixed length (will include start and end dates), or indeterminate length (contract end with notice)
- Trial period (if any). If the contract is for less than two years, the trial period is generally one month (unless agreed otherwise with the CAO, but the maximum is two months)
- Number of hours of work
- Salary and other expenses
- Notice for termination for both you and your employer

### **Temporary labour contract**

A temporary contract has a start date and an end date. The contract will end on the agreed date without a dismissal procedure. We strongly advise you to make sure that you get a contract in writing, although a verbal agreement is also valid in the Netherlands. The employer is obliged to inform you in writing of the main issues covered in the contract within one month after the start of the contract. Within legal limits, both employers and employees are free to decide what will be covered by the contract.

### ***Trial period***

A trial period is a common part of a (temporary) contract with the employer. The trial period applies for both parties and must be agreed in writing. If the duration of the temporary contract is less than two years, the maximum trial period is one month. Exceptions can only be made when a Collective Labour Agreement (CAO) applies. The legal maximum trial period is two months, with no possibility of extension. You can be dismissed during your trial period. Your employer need not give a reason.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

### ***Term of notice***

A temporary labour contract will end automatically and legally on the date agreed. This means that there is no dismissal procedure involved. The situation changes if either parties (or one of them) want to end the contract before the agreed date. In this case, the option for termination of the contract before the final date must be part of the contract. If the employer wants to end the contract before the date agreed, he needs to follow a legal dismissal procedure. You should contact the UWV *Werkbedrijf* for further information.

### ***Repeated contracts with the same employer***

#### **Permanent labour contract**

The most important difference between a temporary and a permanent labour contract is that a permanent labour contract has no end date. This means there is no indication of any intention to limit the duration of the contract, such as 'for the duration of the project'. Hence, and unlike temporary labour contracts, there is no mention of an end date of the contract in a permanent contract. Also the 'term of notice' will be different for a permanent contract, since your legal position is different. The differences for terminating a permanent labour contract are explained below:

- A permanent labour contract can be ended by one of the parties. The legal terms of notice need to be respected
- The rules are different for employers and employees. The employee has the legal right to end the contract without a procedure but he must respect the legal and agreed period, which is usually a minimum of one month's notice
- The employer needs to apply for a dismissal permit. The term of notice depends on the duration of the contract on the day the employer applies for the dismissal permit. We advise you to contact the UWV *Werkbedrijf* for more information if you are confronted with this situation
- Both employer and employee have the right to go to court and ask to end the permanent labour contract

#### **Contract with an employment agency**

The contract with an employment agency (*uitzendbureau*) differs fundamentally from a contract with an employer described above. The employment agency is your legal employer while you work in a company that hires you from the employment agency. In particular, your protection against dismissal during a certain temporary period is not regulated. On the other hand, both you and the company you are working for can terminate your employment at any given time during the agreed employment period.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

Employment agencies have their own Collective Labour Agreement. There is an "Allocation of Workers by Intermediaries Act" (*Wet Arbeidsbemiddeling en Allocatie door Intermediairs*) that regulates issues related to employment agencies, for example:

- Employment agency employers are prohibited from charging temporary workers money (or any other consideration) for being given temporary work.
- Employment agencies must inform temporary workers in writing about the working conditions at the place of work in advance.

### Dismissal

As stated above, a temporary contract ends on an agreed date or during a trial period.

In both cases there is no dismissal procedure.

An employer must have good reasons to dismiss you when you have a permanent contract. You can be dismissed:

- For (business) economic reasons, for example, when a reorganisation takes place or a company closes down or relocates. This could include part of the company's activities being closed down
- If you do not perform well or are no longer suitable for the job. However, you cannot be dismissed if this is the result of illness. Note: your employer must have repeatedly pointed out that you are not performing or have performed insufficiently, preferably in an appraisal or performance interview. You must be given time to improve your performance
- If there is a conflict with your employer and the relation between you and your employer is beyond repair
- If you have serious conscientious objections to your duties and your employer is not able to offer you a different job or suitable work
- If you are long-term occupationally disabled
- For improper conduct, for example if you forge certificates, threaten colleagues, endanger yourself or others or if you do not observe the duty of confidentiality
- If you steal, refuse work without good reason or come to work drunk
- If you and your employer mutually agree to the dismissal

There are a number of restrictions for dismissal. You cannot be dismissed on the grounds of your gender or when you are pregnant.

Your employer can only dismiss you:

- When he has a dismissal permit from the UWV *Werkbedrijf*

## Working in the Netherlands

---

- If he goes to court to dissolve your employment contract
- In case of summary termination
- During your trial period, or
- With your consent

In case of summary termination the employment contract ends with immediate effect. Your employer does not need permission from the UWV *Werkbedrijf*. Your employer can only dismiss you with immediate effect if he has good reason, for example if you steal, commit fraud, refuse work without good reason or come to work drunk. He must immediately tell you why you have been dismissed.

If you have been dismissed, your employer must observe a period of notice, so you should be told in advance that you will be dismissed. The period of notice is often mentioned in your contract or CAO. If not, the following periods of notice should be observed:

- If you were working with the employer less than 5 years: 1 month
- If you were working with the employer between 5 and 10 years: 2 months
- If you were working with the employer between 10 and 15 years: 3 months
- If you were working with the employer 15 years or more: 4 months

You can also agree with your employer that you will stop work immediately. You must both consent to this. If you resign, you must observe a period of notice of one month. Your employment contract may state otherwise, provided it is in writing.

### Collective labour agreements (CAO)

Most companies and organisations participate in a collective labour agreement (CAO). This is a written agreement between one or more employers and one or more trades union about the labour conditions for all employees, such as wages, payment of extra work, working hours, probation period, pension, education and childcare.

The agreements in a CAO are often better than those prescribed in law, but they may never contradict the law.

If there is no CAO, you have to make an individual agreement with your employer about the labour conditions, preferably in writing. The legal rules are the basis for this agreement.

# Working in the Netherlands

---

## Leave and special leave

Employees in the Netherlands are not only entitled to fully paid leave days, but also to several kinds of special leave such as:

- Adoption leave (*adoptieverlof*)
- Emergency leave (*calamiteitenverlof*)
- Short-term compassionate leave (*kortdurend zorgverlof*)
- Long-term compassionate leave (*langdurig zorgverlof*)
- Parental leave (*ouderschapsverlof*)
- Paternity leave (*vaderschapsverlof*)
- Pregnancy and maternity leave (*zwangerschapsverlof*)

The sections below describe the legal regulations. A CAO may well have better regulations. More detailed information about holidays and special leave is available on the website of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment,

[http://english.szw.nl/index.cfm?menu\\_item\\_id=14640&rubriek\\_id=391971&rubriek\\_item=392437&hoofdmenu\\_item\\_id=14632](http://english.szw.nl/index.cfm?menu_item_id=14640&rubriek_id=391971&rubriek_item=392437&hoofdmenu_item_id=14632)

## Leave

Every employee in the Netherlands is entitled to leave with full pay. The right to leave days is built up during the course of a year. The minimum number of leave days to which you are entitled after one year is four times the agreed number of days you work each week (usually  $4 \times 5 = 20$  days). If you have not yet been employed for one year by an employer, your holiday will be calculated proportionately.

You will receive full pay during your leave. In addition, you are entitled to a minimum leave allowance. The leave allowance is payable by your employer and is paid at least once a year (usually in May). Your employer must specify the amount of your leave allowance on payment. The leave allowance amounts to 8% of your income in money (basic wage, bonuses and allowances).

The CAO might include other agreements about the number of leave days, the payment and the amount of the leave allowance.

The Netherlands has one national holiday:

- 30 April: Queen's Birthday

## Working in the Netherlands

---

In addition, there are a number of generally observed public holidays:

- New Year's Day: 1 January
- Easter Monday
- Ascension Day
- Whit Monday
- Christmas Day and Boxing Day

Whether you are free from work on these days depends on the agreements made between employers and employees in the CAO or those in your employment contract.

Leave entitlements can be saved for up to five years. This offers employees more scope to save up a portion of their leave days for longer periods of paid leave in order to - for example - carry out caring activities or attend a course.

### **Adoption leave (*adoptieverlof*)**

You are entitled to adoption leave when you adopt a child. Both parents can take adoption leave. When you adopt more than one child at the same time, you can only take adoption leave once. When you foster children you can also take adoption leave.

You may take adoption leave between two weeks before and sixteen weeks after the adoption. The maximum amount of leave is four weeks, in which you will receive an allowance that matches your salary, up to a maximum amount.

### **Emergency leave (*calamiteitenverlof*)**

Emergency leave is leave you can take when you suddenly and unexpectedly need to take time off, for example when the water mains in your house burst or your child becomes ill. The period should be reasonable, so the length depends on why it is needed. In some cases a few hours will be enough, in other cases you might need a few days. During the emergency leave your employer will continue to pay your salary.

### **Short-term compassionate leave (*kortdurend zorgverlof*)**

You are entitled to short-term compassionate leave if you have to look after a parent, a sick child who lives at home or your partner, but only if you are the only person who is

## Working in the Netherlands

---

able to provide the care at that time. Unlike your partner and child, it is not necessary for your parent or parents to be registered at your address. You are also entitled to short-term compassionate leave to look after your foster child, if he or she is ill, providing he or she lives with you and a foster care contract has been signed.

Every twelve months you are entitled to no more than twice the number of hours you work in one week. For example, if you work 36 hours a week, you can take up to 72 hours short-term compassionate leave every twelve months. During any short-term compassionate leave that you take you will continue to receive at least seventy per cent of your salary from your employer.

### **Long-term compassionate leave (*langdurig zorgverlof*)**

You are entitled to long-term compassionate leave when you are employed and you are caring for your partner, child or parent who has a life-threatening illness. Life-threatening means that the life of the person concerned is, in the short term, at serious risk. Every year you are entitled to long-term compassionate leave for a period of up to twelve weeks, during which you are allowed to reduce the number of hours you work to not less than half of normal. You will not receive wages for the number of hours that you are taking for long-term compassionate leave.

### **Parental leave (*ouderschapsverlof*)**

You are entitled to parental leave when you have been working for the same employer for at least one year and are caring for a child that is younger than eight. Both parents are entitled to parental leave. If you have more children, you may take parental leave for each child separately. You are also entitled to parental leave for your adopted children, foster children or stepchildren, provided the child is living with you. You are entitled to parental leave up to 26 times your weekly working hours. The normal arrangement is that for six months you work half of your normal hours. For example, if you work 32 hours per week, then for six months you will work 16 hours per week together with taking 16 hours parental leave per week. Parental leave is unpaid.

### **Paternity leave (*kraamverlof*)**

After your partner has given birth you are entitled to two days of paternity leave. Paternity leave is paid.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

### **Pregnancy and maternity leave (*zwangerschaps en bevallingsverlof*)**

Pregnant employees are entitled to pregnancy and maternity leave, for at least sixteen weeks. Babies are seldom born on the date they are due. The period of leave depends on the due date and on the date the baby is actually born. You can take pregnancy leave from six weeks before the date the baby is due. The pregnancy leave should start no later than four weeks before the baby is due. After giving birth you are *always* entitled to at least ten weeks of maternity leave, even if the baby is born later than it was due. A few examples:

- You stopped work six weeks before the baby was due. The baby is born one week early. You will then have five weeks of pregnancy leave and eleven weeks of maternity leave, totalling sixteen weeks of leave
- You stopped work six weeks before the baby was due. The baby is born two weeks after it was due. You are then entitled to eight weeks of leave before giving birth and ten weeks thereafter, totalling eighteen weeks of leave
- You stopped work four weeks before the baby was due. The baby is born two weeks after it was due. You are then entitled to six weeks of leave before giving birth and twelve weeks thereafter, totalling eighteen weeks of leave

During your leave you will receive an allowance which matches your salary up to a maximum amount.

### **Diploma evaluation**

If you gained your diploma in another country and you want to work or continue your studies in the Netherlands, you need to know what a particular certificate is worth in terms of the Dutch system. In the Netherlands, two centres of expertise work together on evaluating foreign diplomas (IDW): Nuffic and Colo. They have set up an Information Centre for Credential Evaluation (IcDW), [www.idw.nl](http://www.idw.nl).

There are three possible situations:

- You have a foreign diploma and you want to study in the Netherlands
- You have a foreign diploma and you want to work in the Netherlands
- You have a foreign diploma and you are interested in what it is worth in the Netherlands. You do not know yet if you want to work or study in the Netherlands.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

### **You have a foreign diploma and you want to study in the Netherlands**

You should first contact the institute where you plan to study. They will arrange for your diploma to be evaluated. Ask the institute if there are any costs related to the evaluation. If diplomas are evaluated at the request of one of the regularly subsidised educational institutions, there is normally no charge. However, if the request comes from a private organisation or individual, a fee is charged.

### **You have a foreign diploma and you want to work in the Netherlands**

If you are **unemployed** and are looking for a job in the Netherlands, you should go to the UWV *Werkbedrijf* (previously Centre for Work and Income), [www.werk.nl](http://www.werk.nl). The UWV *Werkbedrijf* will request a diploma evaluation on your behalf and tell you which documents you need to supply. They will pay the fees for the evaluation.

If you have a **job in a non-regulated profession** and are looking for another, you can apply to the IcDW for a diploma evaluation ([www.idw.nl](http://www.idw.nl)). You will have to pay the evaluation fee yourself.

If you wish to practise in a **regulated profession** in the Netherlands, you will have to get in touch with the official body that grants admission to the profession in question. You can contact the Dutch National Contact Point ([iras@nuffic.nl](mailto:iras@nuffic.nl)) to enquire whether your profession is regulated in the Netherlands and, if so, which organisation you need to contact.

You can also visit [www.professionalrecognition.nl](http://www.professionalrecognition.nl) if you need more information about practising a regulated profession in the Netherlands. You have to pay any fees relating to the evaluation.

### **You have a foreign diploma and you are interested in its value in the Netherlands. You do not know yet if you want to work or study in the Netherlands**

You can request a diploma evaluation from UWV *Werkbedrijf* [www.werk.nl](http://www.werk.nl). If your diploma is evaluated through UWV *Werkbedrijf*, there is no charge.

# Working in the Netherlands

---

## How to find a job

Here are several ways to find a job in the Netherlands:

- Via the internet
- Via job agencies that are specialised in jobs for non-Dutch speakers
- Via an open application
- Via networking

### Internet

In the Netherlands most companies and organisations include their vacancies on the internet. You can look at the websites of the companies and organisations where you would like to work and see if they have any vacancies. Job agencies for non-Dutch speakers also use their website to publish vacancies.

Newspapers have their own websites, where you can browse the advertised jobs at your convenience.

There are also websites that collect vacancies in one or more branches. Applications should be submitted directly to the employer. Examples of this kind of websites are [www.englishlanguagejobs.com](http://www.englishlanguagejobs.com) and [www.searchhiddenjobs.com](http://www.searchhiddenjobs.com).

If working from home is an option for you, have a look at [www.odesk.com](http://www.odesk.com).

### Job agencies for non-Dutch speakers

Job agencies are a good way of finding work, as a lot of companies use them to filter potential candidates. They act as the middle man between the employer and the candidates. A good agency will build up strong connections with companies and be their first point of call when the company has a new vacancy. The agency would search their database for any candidates and also advertise on their website, to reach a wider audience and increase their chances of securing the vacancy for their client and therefore earning themselves commission.

You can either forward your CV to the job agency or apply for one of the vacancies. Both can be done via their website. If your CV matches the criteria, the job agency will contact you to make an appointment, where they will register you and have a chat about the job and what you are looking for. It is a good way for the consultant to put a face to a name, as they receive lots of job applications a day.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

You will need to check the website frequently for any new job vacancies and apply for them.

Some job agencies for non-Dutch speakers are:

- **Adams Multilingual Recruitment Agency, [www.adamsrecruitment.nl](http://www.adamsrecruitment.nl)**

Offices located in Amsterdam and Rotterdam

Multilingual

- **Kelly Services, [www.kellyservices.com](http://www.kellyservices.com)**

Offices throughout the Netherlands

Administration, agricultural, consulting, customer services, education, engineering, financial, healthcare, human resources, IT, legal, logistics, marketing, media, sales, science, hospitality

- **Octagon, [www.octagon.nl](http://www.octagon.nl)**

Based in The Hague

ICT, finance, energy trading, sales, marketing, secretarial, administration, human resources

- **Together abroad, [www.togetherabroad.nl](http://www.togetherabroad.nl)**

Based in The Hague

Multilingual

Administration, secretarial, ICT, sales, marketing, finance, engineering, human resources, customer services, commercial, tourism, banking, legal, communications, economics, public relations and translations

- **Undutchables, [www.undutchables.nl](http://www.undutchables.nl)**

Offices throughout the Netherlands

Multilingual

Administration, secretarial, IT, customer services, commercial, financial, logistics, managerial

## Working in the Netherlands

---

- **Unique Multilingual Services, [www.unique.nl](http://www.unique.nl)**

Offices throughout the Netherlands

Multilingual

Administration, customer services, financial, human resources, IT, logistics, marketing, sales, secretarial

### **Finding a job by open application**

As most of the jobs will be “hidden” - i.e. the job is not advertised externally- it is worthwhile to apply directly to the companies that you would like to work for.

Be direct with what position you are looking for, so that they know where in the company you would like to be placed. Explain why you would like to work for the company, so they know that you have researched them and that you are not churning out your applications to every company.

### **Networking to find a job**

In the Netherlands, establishing a network of contacts is invaluable. You can register with the professional body in the sector that you work for. There are also a lot of expat organisations that you can join, such as:

- Connecting Women, [www.connectingwomen.nl](http://www.connectingwomen.nl)
- Women’s Business Initiative, [www.womensbusinessinitiative.net](http://www.womensbusinessinitiative.net)
- European Professional Women’s Network, [www.europeanpwn.net](http://www.europeanpwn.net)
- The Network Club, [www.thenetworkclub.com](http://www.thenetworkclub.com)
- LinkedIn, [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com), is a networking tool on the internet that is often used in the Netherlands. You can make your professional profile, get in touch with (former) colleagues and business partners and build a professional network.

## CV, cover letter and interview

### **Your CV**

It is important that your CV (resumé) is clear, comprehensive and written on two pages, as it will give a valuable first impression of you, your skills and experience that you have

## Working in the Netherlands

---

on offer. Often the companies will be inundated with CVs and speed read or scan through the CVs, so make sure your CV markets you in the best possible light.

### **Your CV should always include:**

*Personal details* – include your name, address and phone numbers and an email address. If your name does not obviously show if you are male or female, please make this clear. Details of your nationality and date of birth would be appreciated but are not obligatory.

*Work experience* – list your work experience using short, straightforward sentences, preferably in bullet points. You can list your work experience in chronological order, most recent first. Make sure you give the name of your employer, job title, and your tasks and responsibilities. Part-time work experience should also be included.

As well as describing the job, point out any additional qualifications gained.

*Education* – Briefly list the details of your qualifications. Highest level of attainment should be listed first. Include type of degree, name of University, location and (anticipated) date of graduation. List other degrees, on-going professional education/training courses and study abroad.

*Skills* – include specific skills such as IT skills and languages. Make sure you include your current level of spoken/written fluency as well.

*References* – it is customary, although not obligatory, to provide names and contact details of two referees. Graduates and those with limited work experience can list college lecturers, teachers or managers during work experience. Be sure to contact your referees in advance, so they will be prepared.

*Hobbies* – it can provide your employer with a more complete picture of your personal qualities.

Two-page CVs are acceptable if the information on both pages details your skills and

## Working in the Netherlands

---

experience. A good CV highlights these skills and accomplishments, while excluding irrelevant information and experiences.

Most employers will expect to find the information listed under clear headings highlighted in bold or capitals, such as **WORK EXPERIENCE** or **EDUCATION**. Put dates on the left-hand side and indent to make it easy for consultants and employers to find their way through your job history. CVs should follow a logical, easy-to-read set-up and be free from any spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors.

If you have any gaps in your employment, explain the gap, such as maternity leave, travelling, studying.

References and copies of certificates need not be attached. These are only required at a later stage.

### Your Cover Letter

The purpose of a cover letter is to market yourself to the company. Present your personal information to show that your skills could prove useful to their organisation.

Application letters should be typed, preferably a one page letter: A4 format. The style is short, direct and professional. Commonly a letter begins with your reason for applying. The middle part explains why you are the right candidate for the job and what attracts you in the company. In ending the letter, it is common to say that you would like to be invited for an interview.

### How to prepare for an interview

Here are some useful tips for preparing for an interview. Some might be obvious; some might be different from the way you would prepare yourself in your own country.

- Know the exact name, place and time of the interview, interviewer's full name and correct pronunciation and his/her title
- Research the company, products/services, growth and potential growth in the future
- Refresh your memory on the facts and figures of your present employer and former employers
- Prepare the questions you will ask during the interview; the interview is about input and feedback from both you and the interviewer
- Arrive on time - this is very important in the Netherlands.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

In the job interview, the emphasis is on your motivation. Questions will be asked such as why you chose that particular company, name your skills and strengths, but also some of your less strong points and skills you do not possess. Give examples that demonstrate your skills and strengths. You will usually be interviewed by one or two people. Applicants often have to attend two or perhaps three interviews. At the end of the interview in the Netherlands it is common to ask some questions yourself.

On [www.jobera.com/job-interviews/job-interview-questions/job-interview-questions.htm](http://www.jobera.com/job-interviews/job-interview-questions/job-interview-questions.htm) you can find a list of questions that are often asked during a job interview.

During the interview:

### Do

- Dress formally in business wear - although the Dutch tend to dress informally, an applicant should always be formally dressed
- Be aware of your body language
- Make eye contact when talking to the interviewer

### Don't

- Do not answer with a simple yes or no but also do not over-answer questions
- Do not make negative remarks about your present or former employers
- Do not inquire about salary or other remuneration during your first interview unless they mention it first
- Do not be offended when asked about your private life (employers search for long-term commitment)

## Career and job hunting support

If you are who are active looking for a job, thinking about the next step in your career, want to go back to work or want to do something different you may want support.

There are several professionals and companies offering career counselling or coaching for job hunting for expats. Some of them are:

**Dorota Klop-Sowinska**, [www.dosocoaching.com](http://www.dosocoaching.com)

She offers career coaching to:

## Working in the Netherlands

---

- Professionals who want to get more out of their career
- Women returning back to work after maternity leave
- International graduates who are not sure which direction to

### **Teresa Moynihan, [www.moynihan-hr-consulting.com](http://www.moynihan-hr-consulting.com)**

She offers job hunting support workshops and individual consultations. Career counselling is available to:

- Professionals who are in a job but you want to do something different
- Those returning to work after a career break Those who just graduated and would really like some guidance to help decide their future career
- Professionals due to be made redundant and not sure what to do next

### **Caroline van den Bogaard, [www.cctransitions.com](http://www.cctransitions.com)**

She offers personal career coaching and career workshops for international professionals/expatriate partners who:

- Have recently arrived in the Netherlands and are looking for a job
- Are working in a Dutch environment and would like to improve their performance or cultural understanding
- Would like to reflect on their career and/or a potential career switch
- Need support to create a portable career (for accompanying partners)

### **Joanna Trawinska, [www.dreamjobdiva.com](http://www.dreamjobdiva.com)**

She offers job hunting workshops to those who are active looking for a job as well as individual coaching. There is also a free, monthly support group “Connect with your dream job” for women looking for a job.

## Dutch business culture

The Netherlands has a formal business culture in which honesty, efficiency, productivity and courtesy are highly valued. Expatriates from some cultures may find the Dutch business person direct, blunt and without the same respectful manners they have been used to. Most decisions and agreements are made in open meetings rather than behind closed doors. Enticements and other forms of minor corruption are at a low level compared with other parts of the world. Contacts and networks are important and you should try to arrange introductions through a third party.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

Appointments should be made well in advance. Normal business hours are 09:00 to 17:00, Mondays to Fridays, although many workers start and finish earlier. Always turn up on time, as punctuality is expected. Meetings with several attendees generally start on time without waiting for the (embarrassing) arrival of any latecomer. Although Dutch is the official language in most offices, most business people speak English fluently.

Conducting business affairs over lunch is unusual in the Netherlands - lunch is usually a quick snack, where most office workers bring sandwiches from home.

Normal business attire varies considerably between industries. Unless you are aware that informal dress is the norm in your business area, wear a conservative suit for interviews and meetings. Don't be put off by even senior Dutch members of staff wearing a jacket, an open-necked shirt and a pair of jeans - male or female.

People should be addressed by their personal or professional titles with family names, unless you are invited to use first names. Academic titles are not normally used in speech. Business cards are exchanged on meeting, and should include details of higher educational qualifications, which are valued in the Netherlands.

Everybody in the team, except "the leader", has seemingly similar status and to pretend to be somebody special will result in problems with other members of the team. When success is achieved, it is important that the success is attributed to the team rather than assumed by any of the individuals within the team.

Team structures tend to be flat, without much hierarchy despite different levels of pay and responsibility.

It is important to be seen by others in the team as professional and diligent - and an important element of this is to be thought of as someone who will honour commitments of whatever nature or size.

Respect is gained through speaking one's mind and being direct, thus avoiding wasting time. Little respect is given to those who appear devious or underhand in what they are saying. This directness of approach can sometimes be misconstrued as aggression or even rudeness - but it is a tool for enabling the meeting to efficiently reach an agreed solution.

Paradoxically, due to the consensual nature of decision making in the Netherlands it can be sometimes difficult to get a straight 'yes' or 'no'. This seeming unwillingness is more a sign of no decision having been yet reached than any subtle politicking.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

The manager in the Netherlands will rarely take an authoritarian approach to the team, preferring to be seen as the colleague who has most influence rather than as the ultimate arbiter on all decisions. This does not mean that the boss is powerless. It is more that the influence and control are subtler than in some other countries. It may even appear to those from more hierarchical cultures that the boss is shown very little respect.

Communication is expected to be open and transparent. Any unwillingness to share with colleagues could be seen as devious and underhand - charges to be avoided at all cost in the Netherlands. A boss expects input from all team members and must show equal respect for all ideas.

Expatriates can often find meetings in the Netherlands somewhat frustrating and certainly lengthy. Meetings in the Netherlands are forums for debating issues in a full and frank manner where everybody is expected to contribute and everybody expects to be listened to. The purpose of the meeting is to move towards a commonly agreed approach, which can then be implemented. However, reaching this common viewpoint can be a time-consuming business, needing a great deal of The Dutch can have some antipathy towards those that they feel arrive at the meeting having lobbied prior to the meeting in order to reach a group position to expound in the meeting. This pre-meeting lobbying, endemic in many cultures, can be seen as devious and underhand and lead to accusations of 'hidden agendas' and inflexibility.

Despite the often free-wheeling nature of discussions in Dutch meetings, protocols are often observed with agendas generally distributed and respected and each person waiting for their turn to speak rather than interrupting whoever has the floor.

It is important to appear unpretentious. Whatever you are, do not think of yourself as something special. Therefore self-promotion of the type that might be found in the USA is seen as being distasteful and will probably be thought of as arrogant. Remember that many Dutch workers have travelled extensively in their business and private lives and are reasonably familiar with many different cultures – although they might prefer their own. The Dutch take formal education and training seriously.

There is a relatively strong separation made between work and private life. Colleagues tend not to socialise very much immediately after work, and most do not invite business guests into their family life. You are unlikely to be invited to dinner by a Dutch business person, either at their home or at a restaurant. If you invite them to dinner in a restaurant, that is taken as a sign that you are going to pay the whole bill unless you explicitly make a cost-sharing arrangement beforehand. Not many Dutch workers are willing to remain at work after the normal end of the working day.

## Working in the Netherlands

---

Dutch office workers tend to drink a lot of strong coffee during the day. Be on your guard if you are adversely affected by caffeine. Tea or water is normally available as an alternative but not alcohol.

### Useful references

- UWV *Werkbedrijf*, [www.werk.nl](http://www.werk.nl)
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, [http://english.szw.nl/index.cfm?menu\\_item\\_id=14640&rubriek\\_id=391971&rubriek\\_item=392437&hoofdmenu\\_item\\_id=14632](http://english.szw.nl/index.cfm?menu_item_id=14640&rubriek_id=391971&rubriek_item=392437&hoofdmenu_item_id=14632)
- International Diploma Evaluation, [www.idw.nl](http://www.idw.nl)
- Professional recognition, [www.professionalrecognition.nl](http://www.professionalrecognition.nl)

### Websites with vacancies

- [www.englishlanguagejobs.com](http://www.englishlanguagejobs.com)
- [www.searchhiddenjobs.com](http://www.searchhiddenjobs.com)

### Job agencies for non-Dutch speakers

- [www.adamsrecruitment.nl](http://www.adamsrecruitment.nl)
- [www.bluelynx.nl](http://www.bluelynx.nl)
- [www.content.nl](http://www.content.nl)
- [www.kellyservices.com](http://www.kellyservices.com)
- [www.octagon.nl](http://www.octagon.nl)
- [www.undutchables.nl](http://www.undutchables.nl)
- [www.unique.nl](http://www.unique.nl)

# Working in the Netherlands

---

## Job interview tips

- [www.jobera.com/job-interviews/job-interview-questions/job-interview-questions.htm](http://www.jobera.com/job-interviews/job-interview-questions/job-interview-questions.htm)

## Networking

- [www.connectingwomen.nl](http://www.connectingwomen.nl)
- [www.europeanpwn.net](http://www.europeanpwn.net)
- [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)
- [www.thenetworkclub.com](http://www.thenetworkclub.com)
- [www.womensbusinessinitiative.net](http://www.womensbusinessinitiative.net)

# Working in the Netherlands

---

ACCESS guides available for downloading, free of charge, from the ACCESS website:

- Banking
- Childcare and playgroups
- Food from home
- Having a baby in the Netherlands
- Health care
- Housing and accommodation
- Inheritance and wills
- International primary and secondary education
- Learning the Dutch language
- Marriage , registered partnership, cohabitation and ending a relationship
- Obtaining a driving license in the Netherlands
- Post Office
- Public Transport
- Social Security
- Starting your own business
- Studying in the Netherlands
- Telephone, internet and television
- What to do when leaving the Netherlands
- Working in the Netherlands

© COPYRIGHT ACCESS Sept 2010

#### Disclaimer

This ACCESS guide is intended to provide comprehensive and general information.

ACCESS did everything possible to ensure correct and up-to-date information. ACCESS cannot accept responsibility for any information that may have changed. If you need more information about this subject, please contact the organisations listed or look at the websites mentioned.