



Statistics VET mobility

October 2017

Highlights

- Between 2013 and 2015, the estimated share of VET graduates who had spent more than two weeks abroad for study exchange or a work placement increased from 5.7% to 7.0%. This means that outward VET mobility in the Netherlands is already one percentage point above the 6% outward mobility benchmark set as an aim for all EU Member States for 2020.
- In 2015-2016, female students accounted for 62.8% of all VET students who went abroad, but only for 48% of all VET students. The overrepresentation of women in VET mobility is increasing.
- 82.2% of VET students go to a destination within the European Economic Area (EEA). Moreover, the popularity of EEA countries compared to non-EEA countries is increasing.
- Most outbound mobility occurs within level 4 VET qualifications. In percentage terms however, this overrepresentation is more modest. In 2015-2016, 2.6% of all students enrolled in a level 4 qualification went abroad. In comparison, 1% of all students enrolled in a level 3 qualification went abroad.
- Students in the sectoral committee Food, Green and Hospitality are the most likely to go abroad. In 2015-2016, 5.8% of the total of 71,131 students in this sectoral committee (i.e., students in the first to last years of their VET career) did a work placement outside the Netherlands.
- With 1,035 international work placements in 2015-2016, Hospitality Manager/ Entrepreneur is the qualification that saw the greatest mobility.
- Most mobile VET students (52.6%) did an international work placement for a period of three to six months. Only 38.7% did an international work placement for a period shorter than three months.
- Students in agricultural education centres (AOCs) were the most likely to do an international work placement. In 2015-2016, 5.4% of the total of 25,212 students who were enrolled in an AOC did an international work placement.
- Almost all internationally mobile students followed the school-based pathway. In 2015-2016 there were only 115 internationally mobile students taking the work-based pathway.

Background and context

VET mobility should be understood within a context of globalisation and internationalisation of education systems and labour markets. When entering the labour market, students are likely to start working in an international environment where intercultural communication and understanding are required. Moreover, at the national level well-trained VET students are important for the competitive position of the Netherlands as a knowledge economy¹. Vocational jobs increasingly require communication and technical skills, and a part of the students will be trained for jobs that do not exist yet².

This means that, during their education, students should be prepared for this intercultural and flexible world of work. In its report entitled 'Internationalisation with ambition' (Internationaliseren met ambitie), published in 2016, the Dutch Education Board (Onderwijsraad) recommended that all students should be internationally competent by the end of their education³. In a similar vein, the EU has also recognised this necessity and developed a strategy to cope with these global changes. According to the Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (2010), VET providers should implement an international dimension to learning, improve cross-border cooperation in VET, and increase international mobility⁴. By the year 2020, 6% of all 18 to 34-year-olds with initial vocational education and training qualifications should have had a VET-related study or training period abroad, lasting a minimum of two weeks⁵.

This research report provides a detailed overview of the current status of outbound VET mobility in the Netherlands. For analysis the report draws on three different data sources: the ROA graduate surveys, the SBB and DUO study placements registration, and the records of the ErasErasmus+ programme. Together these three types of data afford insight into the international mobility of VET students in the Netherlands and reveal some of the recent trends. For a more detailed discussion on the methodology used and the differences between the various data sources, see Annex 1.

¹ Tran & Dempsey (2017) 'Internationalization in VET: An overview'. *Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Issues, Concerns and Prospects* 25

² Shaw, A.J., Shaw, K.J., & Blake, S. (2016). Examining barriers to internationalisation created by diverse systems and structures in vocational education and training. *International journal for research in vocational education and training*, 3(2), 88-105.

³ See: Onderwijsraad (2016) <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/publicaties/2016/internationaliseren-met-ambitie/item7413>

⁴ See 'The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020'

⁵ Council of the European Union. (2011). Council conclusions on a benchmark for learning mobility. Retrieved from http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/126380.pdf

It is important to bear in mind that international mobility is just one possible way to gain international experience. Besides going abroad, there are a range of other activities which can improve students' international skills and outlook. For instance, VET students can do an internship at an international company located in the Netherlands or collaborate in online projects with students from European partner institutions (e.g. eTwinning)⁶. These are just two examples of activities that can facilitate 'internationalisation at home'. Although the number of VET students who actually go abroad during their studies is increasing, most VET students remain in the Netherlands. In line with the advice by the Dutch Education Board (2016) it is important to ensure that this group too can gain an international experience during their education.

Total international mobility in VET

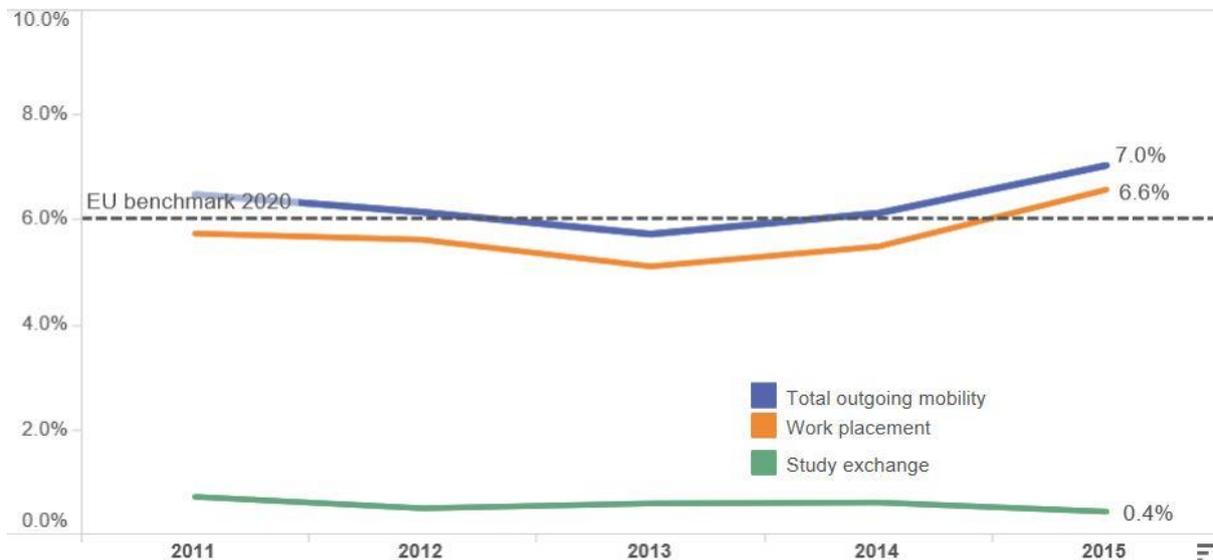
Figure 1 shows that, since the 2013 graduate year, an increasing number of Dutch VET graduates have gone abroad as part of their education. In 2013 an estimated 9,200 graduates, which was about 5.7% of all registered VET graduates in the Netherlands, were internationally mobile, compared with an estimated 10,000 graduates who had been abroad as part of their formal education in 2015. This equates to 7.0% of the total number of VET graduates⁷. Due to this substantial increase over the past two years, outbound VET mobility in the Netherlands is already one percentage point above the EU's 6% benchmark that was set for 2020.

Furthermore, the growing share of internationally mobile students is the result of an increase in the number of work placements rather than study placements (e.g. exchanges, excursions). Both in relative and absolute terms, the total number of students who go abroad for a study exchange decreased between 2014 and 2015. Hence, the importance of work placements relative to study placements is growing.

⁶ For more information on eTwinning see: <https://www.nuffic.nl/middelbaar-beroepsonderwijs/internationale-ervaring/etwinning>

⁷ Source: Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) graduate surveys see: <http://roa.sbe.maastrichtuniversity.nl/>

Figure 1: Percentage of Dutch VET students who spent at least two weeks abroad as part of their studies



Source: ROA

Moreover, register data on work placements with SBB confirms that the share of mobile VET students is increasing. Between 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, the number of registered work placements increased by approximately 16%, from 6,966 to 8,124 students. Furthermore, in 2015-2016 there were 6,174 VET students who received Erasmus+ funding for an educational activity abroad.

The difference of about 2,000 students between registered work placements and financed work placement under Erasmus+ can be explained in part by the European scope of the Erasmus+ programme. VET students who go to a destination outside the European Economic Area (EEA)⁸ do not qualify for Erasmus+ funding. Another reason is that some students go abroad without applying for an Erasmus+ scholarship. Finally, whereas SBB register data only comprises work placements, mobility with Erasmus+ can also be in the form of a study exchange.

Furthermore, percentages of mobile students - based on the number of yearly international work placements and Erasmus+ mobility - cannot be compared directly with the percentage of graduates from a single cohort with foreign experience (Figure 1). We would have to multiply the yearly percentage of international work placements with the average nominal programme duration (roughly three years) to arrive at an estimation of the percentage in the resulting graduation cohort that would have been abroad in a registered international work placement. Due to the variety in duration of education programmes, this estimation would be highly unreliable.

⁸ The European Economic Area includes all EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

In addition, not all outgoing mobility is accredited via an international work placement agreement. The final category of outbound mobility is either accredited via regular courses in the programme curriculum – and, as such, not in need of registration – or consists of ‘free movers’ whose time abroad has no linkage with the formal curriculum whatsoever.

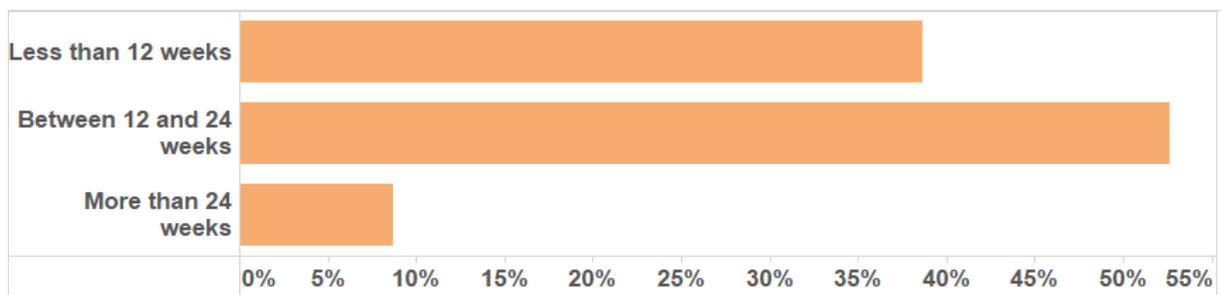
Length of stay

The majority of the students who went abroad did an international work placement of three to six months. The duration of roughly one third of the international work placements is less than three months. In 2015-2016, there were 707 students who went abroad for a period of six months or more. This is approximately 8.7% of all the students who went on an international work placement in 2015-2016.

The European Commission aims to increase the number of VET students who participate in longer-term international mobility, based on the assumption that the longer the period of mobility, the greater its impact on students' personal development. The proposed

Pro programme, which targets students who want to spend more than three months abroad, may well result in a further increase in the number of students who participate in long-term mobility. Yet, as shown in Figure 2, most internationally mobile Dutch VET students already spent more than three months abroad.

Figure 2: Duration of work placements in 2015



Source: DUO and SBB

Destination countries

Figure 3 visualises the locations of all international work placements in 2015-2016. Most internationally mobile VET students who did an international work placement went to a country within the European Economic Area (EEA). In 2015-2016, only 17.8% of registered international work placements took place outside the EEA. Curaçao, Surinam and the United States were the most popular non-European destination countries.

Figure 3: Destination of International work placements of VET students in 2015-2016

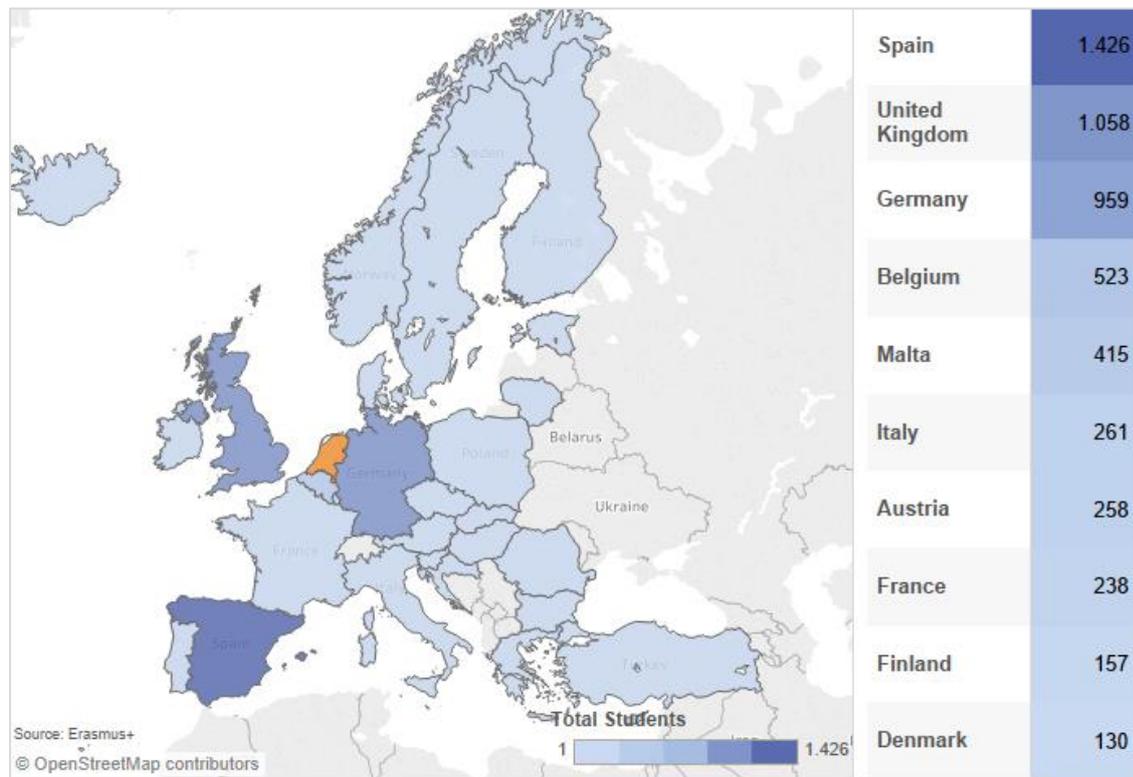


Source: DUO and SBB

Zooming in on Europe (Figure 4), closer examination of the data from the Erasmus+ programme reveals that Spain, Germany and the United Kingdom are the most popular destination countries. Of all the 6,174 VET students who went abroad with a Erasmus+ scholarship, 55.7% went to one of these three countries.

There is a discrepancy between Figures 3 and 4 as regards the relative importance of Belgium as destination country. There were 1,157 registered work placements in Belgium in 2015, but only 523 students who went to Belgium with Erasmus+ funding. This means that a relatively large percentage of the students who go to Belgium do so without Erasmus+ funding.

Figure 4: Destination countries for VET students with Erasmus+ funding in 2015



Source: Erasmus+

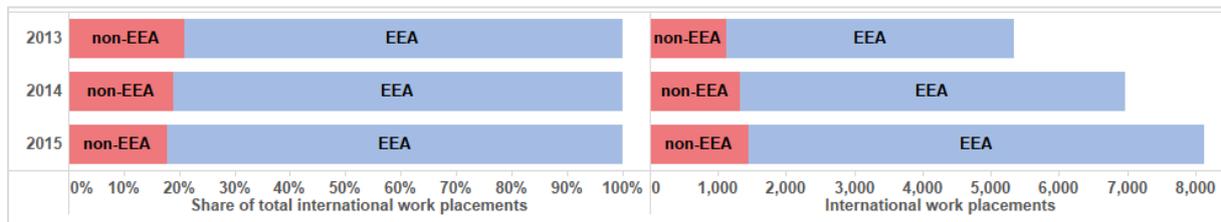
Dutch VET students who spend time abroad mainly go to countries within the EEA. This can be explained by the visa-free movement of persons within the EU and the excellent opportunities that the Erasmus+ programme offers within Europe. As a result, students encounter fewer economic and political barriers if they decide to stay within Europe as compared to many non-European areas. The relative duration of an international work placement also plays a role here. Whereas in 2015 14.1% of the 1,962 work placements with a duration of less than three months were in a non-EEA country, 21.8% of the 707 work placements of more than six months was located in a non-EEA country.

Moreover, as shown in Figure 5 the focus on EEA countries is intensifying. Although the absolute number of VET students who go to non-EEA countries is also increasing, in relative terms these countries are becoming less popular. Whereas in 2013 approximately 79% of all international registered work placements were in EEA countries, in 2015 this figure rose to 82.2%. This means that an increasing number of VET students decide to go to EEA countries rather than non-EEA countries.

The appeal of EEA countries among VET students is in sharp contrast with the trend in higher education where, since 2013, students have shown an increasing preference for countries outside the European Union⁹.

⁹ See: <http://www.studentenmonitor.nl/tabellen/index.html>

Figure 5: Relative and absolute numbers of internationally mobile VET students who go to destinations within the EEA, from 2013 to 2015



Source: DUO and SBB

Within Europe, the appeal of Germany, Spain and Austria is further increasing. For example, between 2014 and 2015 the number of VET students who went to Germany rose from 761 to 1,006. As a result, the relative importance of Germany – expressed in the percentage of all internationally mobile students who go to Germany – increased from approximately 10.9% to 12.4%. In other words, the most popular countries are becoming even more popular.

One exception is Belgium. Although the absolute number of VET students who go to Belgium has increased, in relative terms this country is becoming less popular as a destination. Whereas in 2012 approximately 18.6% of all international work placements were in Belgium, in 2015 this share fell to 14.2%.

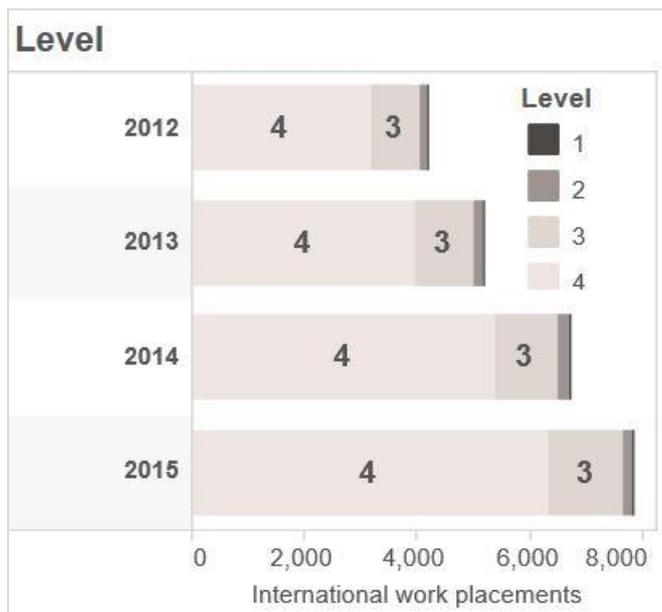
Level 4: the most internationally mobile group

Most of the registered international work placements were VET students enrolled in a level 4 programme. Students in levels 1 and 2 rarely go abroad for a registered work placement. Compared with the total number of students in each level, level 4 students remain the most internationally mobile group. In 2015-2016, 2.6% of all the 246,580 students enrolled in a level 4 programme did a registered work placement abroad. Almost all of them followed the school-based pathway. In 2015 there were only 115 internationally mobile students taking the work-based pathway¹⁰.

The 2013-2015 period saw a year-on-year increase in the percentage of the total number of students enrolled in a level 3 or 4 programme who did a work placement abroad. Among level 2 students, the share of those who did an international registered work placement remained stable at around 0.2%.

¹⁰ Students who choose the work-based pathway (BBL) spend at least 60% of their time as apprentices working for an employer. Those who choose the school-based pathway (BOL) spend a greater proportion of their time in the classroom.

Figure 6: Number of internationally mobile VET students by level between 2013 and 2015

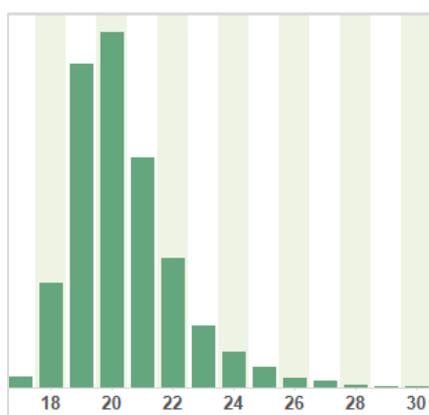


Source: DUO and SBB

Age

Figure 7 shows that the majority of mobile VET students are between 19 and 22 years old. Twenty is the most common age for internationally mobile VET students. This means there are very few underage students who participate in an international work placement. One reason for this is that many institutions and companies abroad only accept international students who are at least 18 years old.

Figure 7: Age distribution of internationally mobile VET students in 2015-2016



Source: DUO and SBB

Female students are more likely to go abroad

Of all the registered VET students who did a work placement abroad in 2015, approximately 63% were female. For comparison, only 48% of all the VET students in 2015 were female. This means that female VET students are almost twice as internationally mobile as their male counterparts. The overrepresentation of women in mobility is a well-known phenomenon within higher education, where more than 60% of participants are female¹¹. In fact, the overrepresentation of women in international mobility seems to be an increasing trend. In 2012, 38.3% of international VET students were male, but in 2015 this share declined to 37.2%.

Figure 8: Gender ratio of internationally mobile VET students from 2013 to 2015



Source: DUO and SBB

Sectoral committees

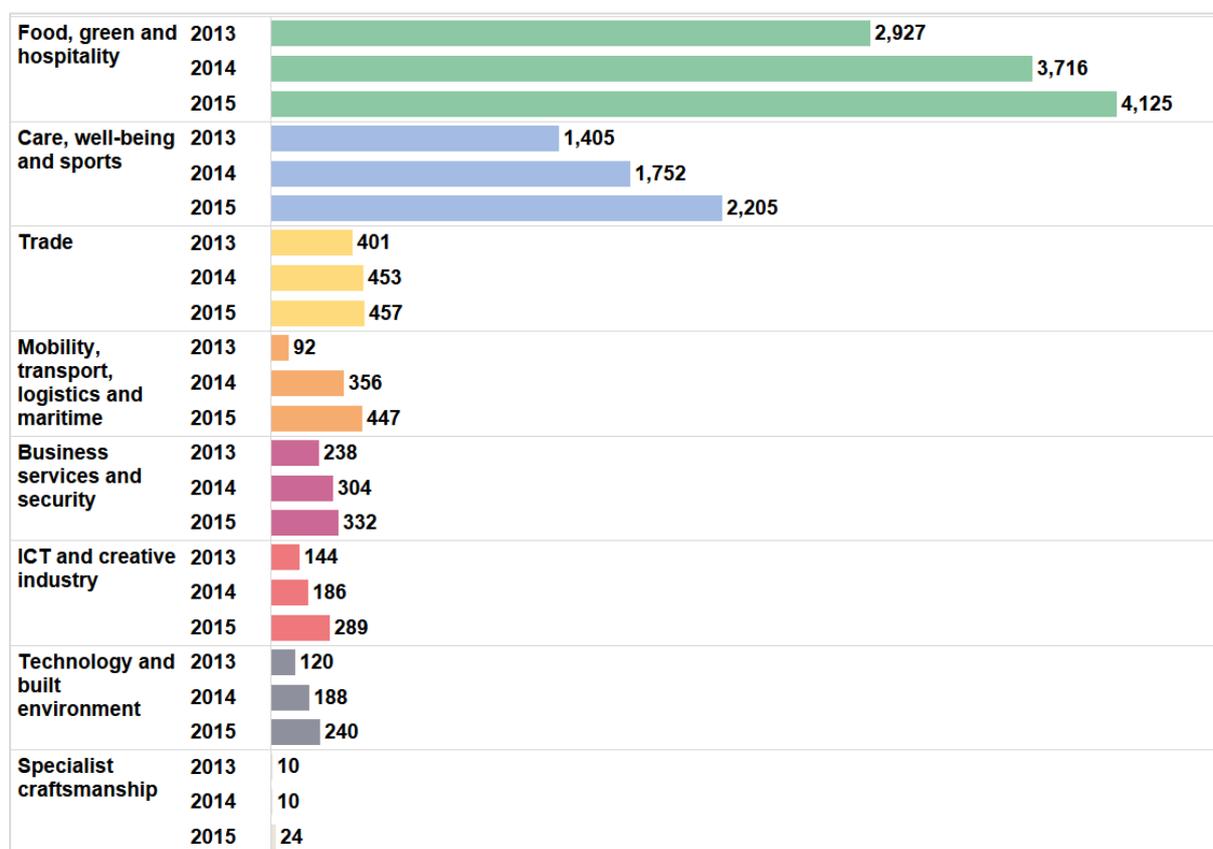
Students in the sectoral committee Food, Green and Hospitality are the most likely to do an international work placement. Half of all registered work placements (more than 4,000) involved students from this sectoral committee. Even when adjusted for the relatively large size of this sectoral committee, they are still the group that is the most internationally mobile. In 2015-2016, 5.8% of all 71,171 students enrolled in Food, Green and Hospitality went abroad.

The sectoral committee Care, Well-being and Sports comes in second place. In 2015, more than 2,000 students in this group did a registered work placement abroad, which is approximately 1.5% of the total of 143,597 students enrolled in 2015. This percentage is comparable to that for the sectoral committee for Trade, where 1% of the 43,837 enrolled students went abroad, and for Mobility, Transport, Logistics and Maritime, where 1.4% of the 32,657 enrolled students did a work placement abroad.

The relative popularity of destination countries also slightly differs between sectoral committees. For example, students in Care, Well-being and Sports favour Austria as a destination country – especially those students who do qualifications relating to (winter)sports and exercise. Among students doing a qualification in ICT, the United Kingdom is the most popular destination country.

¹¹ Erasmus Statistics validated by the European Commission's DG EAC.

Figure 9: Total number of students per sectoral committee between 2013-2015



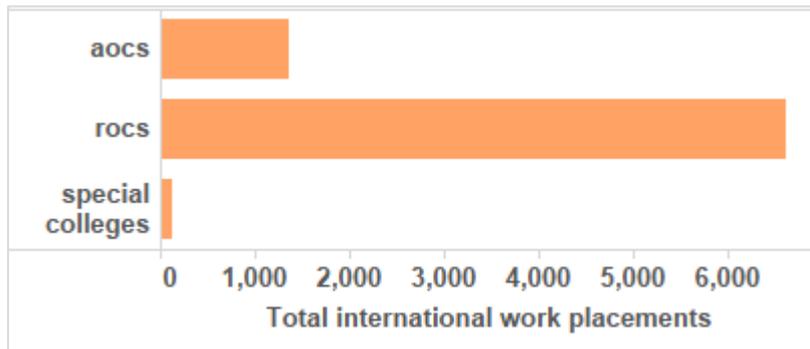
Source: DUO and SBB

Type of schools

Figure 10 reveals that most of the students who do an international work placement are enrolled in a regional education centre (ROC). In 2015, 6,631 ROC students did an international work placement. With 1,035 international work placements in 2015, Hospitality Manager/Entrepreneur was the most mobile qualification.

Although the total number of AOC (agricultural education centre) students is much smaller, in percentage terms they are more likely to go abroad than ROC students. In 2015, there were 1,372 AOC students, approximately 5.4% of the total (25,212), who did an international work placement. This share is much higher than in the ROC segment, where only 1.6% of the total of 422,406 enrolled students were internationally mobile in 2015. At AOCs the qualifications with the most internationally mobile students are Supervisor Green Open Spaces, Manager Animal Care and Livestock farm expert.

Figure 10: Total number of international work placements by type of institution in 2015



Source: DUO and SBB

Conclusions and recommendations

An increasing share of Dutch VET students participate in international activities during their education. With 7.0% of all 2015 graduates spending time abroad, the Netherlands is already above the EU 2020 benchmark of 6%. This suggests that the previous efforts of VET schools and the various stakeholders to promote international activities are paying off. To make sure that the number of students who go abroad continues to increase, current financial and promotional activities should be continued.

However, there is also room for improvement. Not all VET students participate in international mobility to the same extent. Especially male students and students in level 1 and 2 qualifications are underrepresented in international work placements. In addition, there are substantial differences among sectoral committees, types of institutions and qualifications. Another matter for concern is the underrepresentation of students in the work-based pathway (BBL). Although some of these differences were to be expected and can be attributed to variations between education programmes and qualifications, we should strive for inclusive internationalisation.

Although the Netherlands has exceeded the EU's 6% benchmark and increasing numbers of VET students opt for an international work placement, the fact remains that the majority of students do not go abroad. It is important that these 'non-mobile' students, too, are prepared to work in a highly international labour market and gain international experience as part of their education. Besides encouraging more students to go abroad, therefore, we should facilitate options for students to experience internationalisation at home. For this to work it is essential, for instance, to recognise the role of teachers in promoting their students' international competence.

Institutions and qualifications should integrate suitable aspects of internationalisation in their programmes. Internationalisation of education should be viewed not as a single uniform strategy, but rather as a broad palette of options that institutions can choose from. For some qualifications increasing the number of international work placements would be desirable, but for others instruments such as online collaboration with partner institutions or bilingual VET programmes are for example more suitable.

Annex 1: Data and methods

The conclusions of the report are based on the analysis of three different data sources: registered international work placements (DUO and SBB), students going abroad on an Erasmus+ scholarship, and the annual graduate survey conducted by ROA. Together, these three sources give a good overview of the current status of outbound VET mobility from the Netherlands. However, as result of differences between the sources in terms of scope and measurement, the figures cannot be compared directly. In addition, each data source has its own specific limitations. The structure of the data and some of these limitations are briefly described below.

The graduate survey conducted by ROA provides the best estimate of the share of VET graduates who have spent time abroad during their education. In the survey, students were asked whether they had been abroad during their education, how long they had been abroad, and in what type of mobility they participated. The responses allow us to calculate the percentage of respondents who went abroad during their education. Given the random sampling method used, this sample can be considered representative for the entire population of graduated VET students in the Netherlands in a particular graduation year. A weight factor was used to adjust for overrepresentation of particular subgroups in the sample¹².

The number of registered international work placements was derived from the DUO register, which contains all work placements officially registered with SBB. In contrast with the information from the ROA graduate survey, these figures represent actual students rather than estimates based on a sample. Furthermore, the DUO register provides information on the total number of Dutch VET students who did an international work placement in a particular school year (e.g. 2014-2015). Because the nominal time students take to complete their VET programme roughly varies between two and four years, this number is unsuitable to calculate the percentage of students who go abroad during their education. Percentages given thus refer to all the students in the first to last years of their education rather than to a specific graduate cohort.

Data on financed VET mobility was drawn from the register of the Dutch National Agency Erasmus+. Similar to DUO and SBB data, this data represents actual (rather than estimated) VET mobility for a particular year. Because the Erasmus+ programme started halfway through 2014 and projects in that year were still financed under the preceding programme (Leonardo Da Vinci), only the data from 2015-2016 is deemed reliable. Although most of the financed VET mobility will also be registered with SBB, there are some differences. As previously mentioned, this discrepancy derives from the European scope of the Erasmus+ programme, Erasmus students who go abroad without a work place agreement and students who go without Erasmus+ funding.

¹² For more information on design of the survey and sampling method see: <http://roa.sbe.maastrichtuniversity.nl/?portfolio=school-leaver-surveys>

Appendix 2: Definitions used

- Registered work placements abroad:
An international work placement accredited and registered by SBB and DUO
- Financed VET mobility with Erasmus+:
A period spent abroad with a duration of more than two weeks, subsidised with Erasmus+ funding
- VET:
Vocational education and training
- Outbound:
Student moving from the Netherlands to other countries.
- Graduate year :
Students who graduate between 01-09-2014 and 01-09-2015 fall in the 2015 graduate cohort
- School year :
Work placements that start between 01-08-2014 and 01-08-2015 fall in the 2014-2015 school year.