

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



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COUNTRY SHEET ON YOUTH POLICY IN THE NETHERLANDS



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1. Context and principles of national youth policy

1.1 Context of national youth policy

Several factors have been important for the development of youth policy in the Netherlands.

Decentralization

Since the late eighties, a growing number of responsibilities is being decentralized and transferred from the national level to the provincial and the local administrative level. This decentralization intends to facilitate local and provincial authorities to find solutions to local issues, needs and demands.

General Youth Policy and Youth Care

Another important factor is the historical distinction between:

- General youth policy, including non-formal education, general youth services, recreational services and facilities and preventive health care. It also includes access to family support and care coordination (with special focus on parenting support). These services are offered by Youth and Family centres, for which the local authorities are responsible.
- The youth care system which covers all forms of care provided to an indicated group of children and adolescents with serious development problems and parents with specific parenting problems, for which the responsibility lies with the provincial authorities. This youth care system focuses on children and young people up to the age of 18 (in some cases this can be extended up to 23 years). There is close cooperation with the schools and local child care services, although they are not formally part of the Dutch youth policy field.

Major changes in responsibilities

Responsibilities and implementation of youth care will transfer from the provincial authorities to the local authorities. This transition process should be finalized by 2016. These responsibilities include provisions for youth mental health care, youth care, youth probation and youth protection services, aftercare services and services for young people with minor mental disabilities. In 2016 municipalities will be responsible for preventive, voluntary and compulsory care services. The Youth and Family Centres will act as front offices for these youth care services.

The decentralization process will include a single funding system for these forms of youth care. The Youth Care Act will be replaced by a new Youth Act to provide one legal framework for all child and youth related services. Two main policies are intended to improve the quality of youth services:

1. Increasing the quality of the living environment for children

This policy focuses on all children and young people. Strengthening the talents of children, informal learning, involvement of the civil pedagogic society and enhancing the participation of youth are important themes.

2. Building a more coherent youth care system.

This policy focuses on empowering young people, parents and their network instead of taking over their problems. It stresses the need for parental education and early support.

1.2. Principles of national youth policy

In the Netherlands, the term youth is applied to children and young people from 0 up to the age of 25. Approximately 30% of the Dutch population falls into this category, and one in five young people has an ethnic background. As in most other industrialized countries, the proportion of youth in the total population is decreasing. According to the Health Behaviour School Children (HBSC)¹ study among children aged 11-16 the average Dutch child is happy, satisfied about his or her life, gets along well with his parents, does reasonably well at school, has an active social life and is satisfied about his or her relationships.

Despite this, around a third of Dutch parents worry about the upbringing and development of their children. Furthermore, approximately 10% of the Dutch adolescents can experience problems and may need some additional support. A further 5% of Dutch youth is considered structurally at risk in their development and is in need of some form of youth care.

¹ The Health Behaviour School Children study is a international study focused on the health and well-being of children in Europe and Northern America. Following this study Dutch school aged children are the happiest in the world, which can be read in the following brochure: http://www.nji.nl/publicaties/Being_young_in_the_Netherlands_2012.pdf. [More information on HBSC can be found at: http://www.hbsc.org/](http://www.hbsc.org/)

2. Statistics on young people

The total Dutch population numbers 16.738.836 people (May 2012). The following charts show the number of young people following the Youth monitor between 0 – 25 years old in 2010 and 2011 divided into gender (table 1) and age groups (figure 1).

Gender	2010	2011
Total aged 0-25	4.941.244	4.948.548
Boys	2.521.546	2.524.661
Girls	2.419.698	2.423.887

Table 1 Children and young people divided into gender Youth in the Netherlands

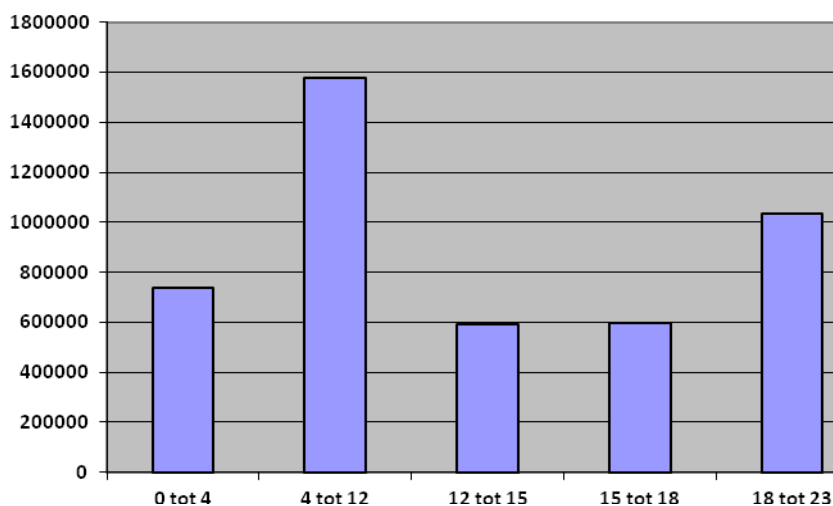


Figure 1: Children and young people divided into age group

The National Youth Monitor

The statistics on youth in the Netherlands are collected in the National Youth Monitor.

The monitor is compiled on the basis of several data resources and is divided into five domains:

1. Young people and families
2. Health and welfare
3. Education
4. Labour
5. Safety and justice

Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) is responsible for the National Youth Monitor and runs the website and database which is also available in English:

<http://jeugdmonitor.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/home/default.htm>

3. Actors and Structures

3.1 Public authorities

3.1.1 National public authorities:

At the time of writing this country file, a new government has just been installed (04.11.2012) from a coalition between the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD – Liberal party) and the Party for Labour (PvdA – Social Democrats). Elections took place the 12th of September 2012. This is the first time to have a two-party government in the Netherlands. The responsibility for youth policy is part of the ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Child care, mostly provided by (semi-) commercial providers, is the responsibility of the ministry for Social Affairs and Employment. Formal education, is the responsibility of the ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences.

Further information is provided on the website of the Dutch government <http://www.government.nl/>

3.1.2 Regional public authorities with competencies in the youth field

The Netherlands is a decentralized unitary state. This means that decentralized authorities at provincial and municipal level assume tasks and responsibilities with a certain degree of autonomy, including general and preventive youth policy and specialized child and youth care.

Currently, the twelve provinces and the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague are responsible for ambulant youth care, open and youth care, foster care and emergency care, but this will change with the earlier described transition of responsibilities to the local level. Access to youth welfare services is ensured by Youth Care Agencies (Bureaus Jeugdzorg) in every province. The Interprovincial Conference (Interprovinciaal Overleg) is the coordinating body for the provincial authorities. Information about this can be found at the Dutch website: <http://www.ipo.nl/>. After the transition of youth care to the municipal level, all responsibilities of the provincial authorities in youth policy will be transferred to the municipalities.

3.1.3 Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field

Currently, local authorities (415 municipalities) provide services and facilities for education and health care as well as being responsible for ensuring a safe and secure environment for youth and families. Local authorities implement and fund children and young peoples' (welfare and well-being) policy. The coordinating body of the municipalities in the organization and structuring of all local responsibilities is the Netherlands' Association of Dutch Municipalities (Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten/VNG- <http://www.vnginternational.nl/home.html?L=0>)

An important recent development is formed by the establishment of Youth and Family Centres (Centra voor Jeugd en Gezin) in every Dutch municipality. These centres aim to be low threshold services at local level where parents and professionals can turn to with questions related to parenting and the development of their children and where children and young people can ask for information and advice. The centres should connect, upgrade and strengthen already existing support structures for families, children and young people.

More information about these Youth and Family Centres can be found at <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Family-and-parenting-support/Youth-and-family-centres-Youth-and-Family-Centres>

3.2 Youth welfare services (comprising public and/or non public actors)

Youth welfare services at municipal level are mainly provided by private organizations that are funded by public authorities. These organizations are based on yearly programmes and set targets. Local authorities provide certain youth welfare services, such as services for the prevention of juvenile delinquency, services for children and young people from ethnic minorities or for runaway children.

3.3 Non-public actors/structures & youth services with competencies in the youth field

Due to the structure of services and responsibilities most organizations work at a local level. At the national level the Coalition of Children's Rights (Kinderrechtencollectief) focuses on the implementation of children's rights in the Netherlands and is responsible for providing the NGO-report to the CRC Committee in Geneva. The coalition's secretariat is run by Defence for Children/Netherlands, more information can be found at the Dutch website: <http://www.kinderrechten.nl/>

3.3.1 Youth Councils

The Dutch National Youth Council (Nationale Jeugdraad -NJR) is an independent umbrella organization of national youth organizations in the Netherlands. It started its work in 2001 with the financial support of the ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Currently, it also receives project grants from other departments and local governments and organizations. The National Youth Council represents more than 25 national youth organizations including political youth organizations, student organizations and social organizations and is member of the European Youth Forum. The National Youth Council is responsible for:

- improving youth participation at national and local level;
- advocating the best interests of young people and youth organizations.

The National Youth Council is the leading partner in the Dutch national working group for the Structured Dialogue, an initiative to increase the participation of youth in European and national policy within the renewed Framework of the European Youth Strategy. In this group, it closely collaborates with the ministry for Health, Welfare and Sport, the Netherlands' Association for Dutch Municipalities and the Netherlands Youth Institute. More information can be found at the website of the National Youth Council <http://www.njr.nl/NJR/Engels.html>

3.3.2 Youth NGOs

A number of youth NGO's, both political and non-political, are active at the national level. Most of these organizations are member of the National Youth Council but, due to the decentralized nature of youth work, most groups and organizations are mainly active at local level.

3.4 National network(s) for knowledge on youth linking all actors in the field (policy makers, researchers, young people and their organisations, NGOs)?

Netherlands Youth Institute

The Netherlands Youth Institute (Nederlands Jeugdinstituut) is the national institute in the Netherlands for compiling, verifying and disseminating knowledge on children and youth services, such as youth care, parenting support and child education. The Netherlands Youth Institute's main aim is to improve the physical, cognitive, mental and social development of children and young people by improving the quality and effectiveness of the services rendered to them and to their parents or carers.

As an expert centre, the Netherlands Youth Institute connects scientific research to the practitioners' need for knowledge. One of its' key issues is promoting evidence based interventions through 'translating' scientific results into practical advice and support. The Netherlands Youth Institute covers areas such as child and youth welfare, (residential) youth care, health, justice and children's development and well-being. It is the national specialist on parenting support, community schools, child abuse and early child education. It supports the youth sector by advising on policy, programmes and implementation and by training professionals in evidence based methods. In this role, the Netherlands Youth Institute works closely together with other Dutch governmental and non-governmental organizations in the youth field .The Netherlands Youth Institute is also an international knowledge broker on issues related to children and youth policy. It seeks to exchange scientific developments and good practices with professionals, knowledge centres and research institutions in other countries, thereby improving the children's services and policies at home while at the same time contributing to developments in the youth field abroad.

4. Legislation

There is no general law that covers all aspects of children's and young people's lives in the Netherlands. Different aspects related to children and families (education, juvenile justice, working conditions for young people) are covered by the following different laws.

The first one is the Youth Care Act (Wet op Jeugdzorg) that became effective in January 2005. The residential and non residential care is laid down in this act.

It has two aims: 1) to ensure that better care is made available to young people and their parents (the clients of the youth care services) and 2) to strengthen their position. The act aims to put the client at the centre of a more transparent, simpler system for youth care. This principle is reflected in five policy objectives. These are:

1. Priority to client's requirements
2. A legal right to youth care
3. A single, recognizable access point for youth care (youth care agency) in each province
4. Integration of other services, such as child protection services and juvenile justice
5. Introduction of family coaching

With an evaluation of the Youth Care Act in 2009, researchers concluded that the act did not result in the full integration of services, that the access points did not function optimally and that the legal right to youth care may not be maintainable. These findings, together with the earlier described transition plans, are reasons to revise the current Youth Care Act. The revision of the Act will focus on the responsibility of local authorities to provide a Youth and Family centre, to organize co-operation between stakeholders and inspectorates, to decrease the administrative burden and to increase flexibility. The text for a proposal for new legislation is at this moment in public consultation.

The second one is the Social Support act (Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning) which became effective in January 2007. This act also incorporates other legislations and provisions. The main aim of the Social Support Act is the participation of all citizens (including children and young people) in society and to create a coherent supply of social support services at the local level. The act will create access to social support at local level for citizens. Municipalities have to develop a plan for these services every four years. One of the nine targets of the Act is directly aimed at support for young people with difficulties growing up and parents with parenting problems. Local municipalities have obligations to inform, advice and support their citizens on health issues, parenting support and to help them to fully participate in local society. There are some specific measures to create opportunities for all citizens (including young people) to work as a volunteer. With the introduction of the Social Support Act, youth policy has become a statutory competence of the local authorities.

5. National Policy Programmes on youth

Youth and Family Centres

The policy programme around Youth and Family Centres has a national framework but is locally designed. The national framework describes the services that should be provided through the centre in order to be allowed to use the title and logo of a Youth and Family Centre:

- Child and youth health care, baby well clinics and municipal health services
- Five functions that have been stipulated in the Social Support Act: information and advice; minor pedagogical support; identification of problems; guidance to help; coordination of care, including social work, family coaching, and parenting support
- Link to the provincial Youth Care Agency
- Link to the School Care and Advice Teams

The Youth and Family Centres also have to provide a website where parents and professionals can get up-to-date information.

ZonMW Programme

The Research and Development Programme 'Working Effectively in the Youth Field' of ZonMW (national institute that stimulates health research and care innovation) is agreed upon in April 2012 for seven years (2013-2019) with a total budget of € 21 million. This includes the funding of a section on tackling child abuse 'Support and Evaluation of a Multidisciplinary Approach in Child abuse'. This section started in the second quarter of 2012.

The programme contains four themes

1. Child and family
2. Professionals
3. Tools (interventions and signaling, screening and diagnostic instruments)
4. Organizations

The mission of this programme is to enlarge, combine and disseminate knowledge about promoting the psychosocial development of children and youth. Knowledge gained through this programme support the quality of youth care.

Youth participation

The former Dutch ministry for Youth and Families stated that youngsters aged 13 – 25 years should be able to participate in local civil society and have a say in local policy issues that concern them. How and to what extent this participation is designed is determined by the municipalities and preferably in collaboration with

the youngsters themselves. A national binding framework for these youth policy plans does not exist. However, a variety of local initiatives is supported by local municipalities, ranging from local youth councils to young ambassadors, youth mayors and other youth participation projects. Because of the Social Support Act the participation of young people at a local level is still in progress and on the local political agenda. Also the transition of the specialized and targeted youth care services to the municipal level creates the incentive for municipalities to strengthen the participation of young people at a local level. Current trend in local youth policies is to work from a more positive approach with and for children and young people rather than a risk oriented approach in youth policies. See also <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/News/Archive/News-2012x/New-brochure-about-positive-youth-policy>

Child protection and Advice and Reporting Centres on Child Abuse (AMK's)

In June 2009 the former ministry of Youth and Families, the ministry of Justice and the ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport together announced the law 'Reporting code domestic violence and child abuse'. In the Netherlands, professionals did not have legal reporting duty in cases of (suspicion of) child abuse, but since 2012 organizations that work with children have a legal duty to work with a protocol on how to act in cases of (suspicion of) child abuse. The reporting code is a set of rules of conduct and instructions for citizens and professionals when they suspect or identify a case of child abuse. Besides professionals, everyone can contact the central agency to request advice about or report on child abuse and neglect: the Dutch Advice and Reporting Centres on Child Abuse (Advies- en Meldpunten Kindermishandeling - AMK). Each province (12) and major urban region (4) has its own AMK, which is part of the Youth Care Agency. In case of notification, the interest of the children comes first before the privacy of the family. In serious cases a formal report of suspicion of child abuse is made. From that moment, the AMK holds the responsibility for investigating the circumstances and determining whether there is indeed a case of child abuse. If this proves to be the case, the centre will attempt to ensure that appropriate action is taken. Where those involved are willing to accept help on a voluntary basis, the centre can refer a case to a social worker from the Youth Care Agency. In cases where children stay at risk or parents do not want to cooperate, youth protection measures such as (temporary) restraining to enter the house and criminal law punishments, are possible.

Reference Index for youth at risk

The Act on the Reference Index arranges that every municipality in the Netherlands works with a so called Reference Index for youth at risk (Verwijsindex Risicjongeren - VIR). The VIR is a national electronic observing system that brings together risk signals of youth (up to 23 years), as reported by social workers, health care professionals, teachers and police. The VIR has four missions, namely:

1. to prevent problems from escalating;
2. to improve the exchange of information between the different professional systems;
3. to facilitate an efficient collaboration between professionals as well as coordinated assistance;
4. to improve the assistance for children at risk.

School Care and Advice teams

School Care and Advice Teams (Zorg en Adviesteams - ZAT) improve the support given to students with psychosocial problems, encourage a balanced development and prevent early school drop-out. The aim is that the ZAT and the Youth and Family Centres reinforce each other in the care for the child and its family. The Netherlands Youth Institute stimulates the structural cooperation between school, youth care, social work, police, and compulsory education. The institute also initiates and supports the quality improvement of the ZAT and the link with the Youth and Family Centres.

More information about the different programmes can be found at <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/>

6. Budget / Public expenditure allocated to youth

National level

At a national level the following ministries are involved in youth policy: the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Security and Justice. Because four ministries are responsible together for all youth related policies, the public expenditure allocated to youth is hard to define.

Local level

Municipalities have the freedom to choose how they are going to spend their funding on youth. Therefore, the expenditure differs between municipalities.

7. European Dimension of youth policy

The ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, is the ministry to contact for international relations and organizations. Under the authority of the ministry the Netherlands Youth Institute carries out several international activities, such as being a mandated body in the EU Twinning programmes and act as the Dutch correspondent for the EKCYP, the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policies of the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

7.1 Council of Europe.

The Youth Directorate of the ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport disseminates the information on the youth programmes of the Council of Europe to all relevant Dutch organizations in the field of youth.

7.2 European Union.

7.2.1 Implementation of the Youth in Action programme

The Youth in Action Programme is a grant programme for international projects and activities with and for young people. It runs until the end of 2013. It is an important tool to expand the structural dialogue in the Netherlands. The Youth in Action programme funds projects of Dutch organizations and youth groups that focus on giving young people the opportunity to have their voices heard by policy makers.

The National Agency for the EU Youth in Action Programme, including Eurodesk, has been designated to the Netherlands Youth Institute. The Programme has been running in the Netherlands since its introduction in the nineties. Approximately 400 projects a year are granted, involving over 4000 young people. The information on the programme reaches more than 2000 organizations, mainly at the local level. More information can be found at www.youthinaction.nl. Information on European youth activities and funding can be found at www.go-europe.nl

Life Long Learning programme

The Life Long Learning programme is a grant programme that supports education and training in Europe. This programme is implemented in the Netherlands and is currently still running until the end of 2013. Its focus is on exchange, collaboration and mobility between educational systems in the European community. It covers several funding strands such as Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig.

More information on Life Long Learning can be found at the Dutch site: <http://www.na-lll.nl/>

7.2.2 Follow up of the EU Youth Strategy (2010 – 2018) on the national level

A challenge for the Netherlands is to involve the municipalities (local governments) and their young people in the European Youth Strategy. Currently a pilot project started with five local municipalities, its civil servants, youth workers and young people to develop a method of structured dialogue at local level. The aim is to generate input towards the European Structured Dialogue in a more consistent and targeted approach being of direct interest and involvement of local partnerships.

In the Netherlands the Dutch Youth Council (NJR) is the leading party in the structured dialogue as mentioned earlier. The NJR is supported by the ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), Directorate General Youth Policy, the Netherlands Youth Institute (NJI) and the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG). Every six months, these parties organize a consultation on major issues in the structured dialogue.

8. Further sources of information on youth policy in the Netherlands

Websites

- Information on Dutch youth policy: www.youthpolicy.nl
- Statistics Netherlands: <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/home/default.htm?Languageswitch=on>
- Statistics on youth in the Netherlands: <http://jeugdmonitor.cbs.nl/en-GB/>
- Youth in Action Programme <http://www.youthinaction.nl/>
- Eurodesk information on mobility, funding and EU youth policies: <http://www.go-europe.nl/>
- National Youth Council: <http://www.njr.nl/NJR/Engels.html>
- Dutch government: <http://www.government.nl/>
- Association of Dutch Municipalities (Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten/VNG): <http://www.vng-international.nl/home.html?L=0>
- Youth and Family centres: <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Family-and-parenting-support/Youth-and-family-centres-Youth-and-Family-Centres>
- Life Long Learning: <http://www.na-III.nl/>
- Health Behaviour Study Children: <http://www.hbsc.org/>

Publications

- Including children and young people:
moving towards a positive approach in youth policy in the Netherlands
- <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/News/Archive/News-2012x/New-brochure-about-positive-youth-policy>
- Being young in the Netherlands
http://www.nji.nl/publicaties/Being_young_in_the_Netherlands_2012.pdf
- Trending towards a positive approach: repositioning or shifting paradigms (2011)
(<http://www.nji.nl/eCache/DEF/1/30/816.html>)
- Combating child abuse and neglect in The Netherlands (2012)
(<http://www.nji.nl/eCache/DEF/1/35/631.html>)
- Fighting child abuse (2011) (<http://www.nji.nl/eCache/DEF/1/29/812.html>)