

Finding Work in the Netherlands as a Non-EU National after Graduation

Since December 2007, foreign students (non-EU*) who have completed an HBO/WO (higher education/university) degree programme can file an application with the Dutch immigration agency, **IND**, to remain in the Netherlands for ONE year to look for a job. This is known as a *zoekjaar* ('search year', or search period). **Romanian and Bulgarian nationals are not permitted to work without restrictions yet, and are entitled to the search year as well.*

After applying for a change in the purpose of stay endorsed on your residence permit, the purpose of the residence permit is changed to "verblijf gedurende zoekjaar afgestudeerde" ('seeking work after graduation'). You can look for a job as a so-called "highly-skilled migrant", but you are also allowed to look for a job as a regular "labour migrant".

During the one year search period, you are *not* eligible for social benefits and you must support yourself financially. In order to pay your own way while searching for a job that allows you to stay in the Netherlands, you may work freely after obtaining the change in residence permit to reflect the search year 'verblijf gedurende zoekjaar afgestudeerde'. No additional work permit is required.

After the one year search period, you must have found a job as a highly-skilled migrant or labour migrant. Otherwise you will have to leave the country. Once you have found such a job, you again will need to apply for a change in the purpose of your stay.

If you find an appropriate job (with a minimum salary of EUR 26.931 for new graduates), you and your employer can apply for an adjustment to your residence permit for the 'kennismigrant' or '**highly-skilled migrant**' scheme.

Please note that other rules apply if you are 30 years and older. For more information, visit <http://english.ind.nl>

Highly-skilled migrant procedure

The Dutch government introduced the highly-skilled migrant programme, a work authorisation programme for highly-skilled foreign workers (who are not citizens of Switzerland or the European Economic Area) in October 2004. The programme seeks to attract young, highly-skilled professionals to the Netherlands by setting forth relatively simple requirements and allowing for expedited processing of residence permit applications.

The advantage of the highly-skilled migrant status, compared to the labour migrant status (i.e. employer/employee not meeting the requirements for highly-skilled migrant), is that a separate work permit is not needed, so you can start working faster. For a labour migrant, both a residence permit and work permit are required. Here, we will only look at the highly-skilled migrant procedure, since many DSF non-EU graduates may qualify as a highly-skilled migrant after graduating from DSF.

In many cases, the employer offering the position will facilitate the adjustment in the individual's residence permit and pay for the fees associated with it, but this should be agreed upon between the employee and employer.

In general, there are 3 requirements that must be met to become a 'highly-skilled migrant':

1. The employer must have signed a declaration for the admission of highly-skilled migrants with the Dutch immigration agency, the IND. This is a non-recurring declaration, which will apply to all applications you make in the future in the context of the highly-skilled migrant procedure. At the present moment, approximately 6.600 enterprises have a contract with the IND.

2. For new graduates, the employer must offer at least the minimum gross salary of EUR 26.605. For those who are not new graduates, the minimum salary amount is higher and is not addressed here.
3. Also, an MVV entry visa is required.

Nationals from these countries are exempt from the MVV entry visa requirement:

Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Korea, Israel, Suriname, Japan, Switzerland, Monaco, USA, and all EEA/EU Countries

Nationals not exempt from MVV

Nationals who are NOT from the above-mentioned countries are not exempt and must obtain an MVV entry visa prior to arriving in the Netherlands, whether the intention is for study or for work.

Once you have the MVV entry visa, you can start work immediately upon registration with the IND, because your eligibility for a residence permit was determined during the MVV process prior to arriving in the Netherlands.

Nationals exempt from MVV

For nationals of countries who ARE from the above listed countries are exempt from the MVV entry visa requirement, so you do not need an MVV entry visa prior to coming to the Netherlands.

However, without the MVV visa, you *may not* immediately start work as a highly-skilled knowledge migrant until the application for a residence permit as a highly-skilled migrant is approved.

Thus, for nationals of countries exempt from the MVV requirement, you can **voluntarily apply** for an MVV entry visa in your native country prior to coming to the Netherlands, so that you can start working immediately upon submitting the application to change the 'reason for your stay' of your residence permit.

In any case, for both categories, after finishing your study, you must change 'your reason for stay' for the search year and again if and once you secure a job. Employers can assist with the latter adjustment to highly-skilled migrant.

The residence permit of a highly-skilled knowledge migrant is granted for the length of the employment contract, **up to a maximum of five years**, assuming the migrant's passport is valid for the duration. Renewal is possible.