



How does **secondary education work in the Netherlands?**

Children from Ukraine are entitled to education in the Netherlands. All children must attend school until the end of the school year in which they turn 16. Children aged 16 and 17 must also attend school if they have not yet obtained a basic qualification. You can register your child at one or more nearby schools. The municipality where you are living or a local school can help you with this.



What kind of secondary schools are there in the Netherlands?

Nearly all secondary schools in the Netherlands are public-funded. Some of these schools provide teaching based on religious or ideological beliefs, or on an educational concept. There are also schools that offer bilingual education. There are also different types of secondary education: pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-university education (VWO). Many schools offer more than one type of education. So, for example, your child may be able to follow VMBO or HAVO at the same Catholic school, or VWO at a non-denominational school. There are also schools for special secondary education.

Is secondary education in the Netherlands and Ukraine organised differently?

The Ukrainian school system is different from the Dutch system.

Class (Ukraine)	Age (years)	Level (Ukraine)	Class and level in the Netherlands
	4-5		1 primary education
	5-6		2 primary education
1	6-7	beginners education	3 primary education
2	7-8	beginners education	4 primary education
3	8-9	beginners education	5 primary education
4	9-10	beginners education	6 primary education
5	10-11	middle education	7 primary education
6	11-12	middle education	8 primary education
7	12-13	middle education	1 secondary education
8	13-14	middle education	2 secondary education
9	14-15	middle education	3 secondary education
10	15-16	upper secondary or vocational education	4 secondary education
11	16-17	upper secondary or vocational education	5 secondary education
	17-18		6 secondary education

> [Structure of education systems in the Netherlands and Ukraine](#)

Which schools can I register my child with?

You can place your child on the waiting list at one or more nearby schools. If you register your child with more than one school, you should say which school is your first choice.

There are also international bridging classes for Ukrainian children aged 12 to 18. These classes help children deal with trauma and help them learn Dutch. You can find an overview of bridging classes in the [LOWAN school database](#).

What are international bridging classes?

For children whose command of Dutch is not yet good enough, there are schools with facilities for newcomers. In secondary education these facilities are often referred to as international bridging classes. In international bridging classes the main focus is on learning Dutch. Children usually transfer to the regular Dutch education system after 1 or 2 years.

International bridging classes offer 3 learning pathways. Over a pupil's first few months an assessment is made of their interests and abilities. Then the teachers, parents/guardians and the pupil decide which pathway is most suitable. The chosen pathway determines which type of Dutch secondary education the pupil will transfer to after the bridging class.

More information is available on the [LOWAN website](#).

Is education compulsory for Ukrainian children?

The rules for children and teenagers from Ukraine are the same as for other children and teenagers in the Netherlands. All children must attend school until the end of the school year in which they turn 16. School is also compulsory for children aged 16 or 17 if they have not yet obtained a basic qualification.

A basic qualification is a senior general secondary education (HAVO) certificate, a pre-university education (VWO) certificate or a secondary vocational education (MBO) certificate at level 2 or higher. Go to <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/education-systems/ukraine/level-of-diplomas> for more information about how Ukrainian and Dutch qualifications compare.

Not all Ukrainian secondary education certificates count as a basic qualification. If there is any doubt, or if proof of attainment is required, a secondary education certificate or other credentials obtained in Ukraine can be evaluated by [Nuffic](#) or [the Foundation for Cooperation on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market](#).

How do I register my child with a school?

Children must always be registered with a school in writing. Schools in some municipalities have a central registration system. Ask the school or the municipality about the procedure.

The school decides whether to admit a child. Some schools have a selection procedure, which might involve drawing lots. Because your child is new to the Netherlands, a school may wish to test their knowledge and skills to determine their current level. If there are doubts about the most suitable level for your child, they will be admitted to the higher level. Schools with an international bridging class admit all pupils as long as a place is available. A school must respond to your request for admission within 6 weeks.

What does secondary school cost?

Public-funded secondary schools do not charge school fees, but they may ask parents for a voluntary contribution towards the cost of activities. The school will provide most of the school books your child needs.

You will have to buy some materials yourself, such as dictionaries, a calculator and a gym kit.



What are the different types of secondary education?

There are three types of secondary education in the Netherlands.

1 Vmbo (Pre-vocational secondary education)

VMBO lasts 4 years. It has 4 streams which cater to different ability levels and vary in the degree of practical and theoretical learning. After completing VMBO, pupils go to secondary vocational education (MBO) or to year 4 of HAVO.

2 Havo (Senior general secondary education)

HAVO lasts 5 years and prepares students for higher professional education (HBO). After completing HAVO, pupils can also go on to year 5 of VWO. For the last 2 years of HAVO, pupils choose 1 of 4 subject combinations: science and technology; science and health; economics and society; culture and society.

3 Vwo (Pre-university education)

VWO lasts 6 years and prepares pupils for university. But they can also go to HBO or an MBO school. For the last 3 years of VWO, pupils choose 1 of 4 subject combinations: science and technology; science and health; economics and society; culture and society.

What is special secondary education (VSO)?

If your child has special needs, for instance because they have a medical condition or disability, they can usually still attend a regular school. Most regular schools can offer the necessary support. If a child needs specialist support that a regular school cannot provide, the child can go to a school for special secondary education (VSO). To be admitted to a VSO school your child must have a statement of needs. Tell the school if your child has any special needs when you register them. The school must help you find an appropriate place for your child.

More information (in Dutch) is available at <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/passend-onderwijs/speciaal-onderwijs>.



Can my child attend school in Ukraine via remote learning?

In some circumstances the Dutch education system allows children to attend school in Ukraine via remote learning.

If you have questions about this, contact the head of the child's school in the Netherlands.



Who should I contact if I have specific questions about a school?

You can contact the school or look on its website. You can visit this [website](#) for more information on the Dutch educational system.