

Postdoctoral Careers in Europe: Netherlands





Introduction

Whether you are in the final stages of your doctorate or have just finished, you will probably be planning your next career move. One of the questions you will be asking yourself is whether to stay in your native country or embark on an academic career abroad. If you decide on the latter, Europe will almost certainly be on your shortlist of possible destinations. This eBook is for postdocs interested in starting or continuing their academic career in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands prides itself on its research-driven ‘knowledge economy.’ A well-structured and distinguished higher education system and an unparalleled commitment to internationalisation makes the country a fantastic place for postdocs to start their academic career.

In this eBook, you will find out about the different higher education systems, and gain valuable insights into funding options, career advancement, the job market in each country and practical ways to get a foot in the door.

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Research and Funding

A forward-thinking culture, innovation and international partnerships characterise the Netherlands' diverse research activities. The principal research council, the [Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research \(NWO\)](#) - an independent body part funded by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science – receives around €400 million each year, and allocates grants and subsidies to scientists from around the world. The NWO also manages eight prominent [research institutes](#), and funds around 5,800 research projects annually.

There are generous grants on offer for early career researchers through programmes such as [RUBICON](#), which allow foreign nationals to spend a year at a top research institution, and the [Vidi grant](#) for postdoctoral researchers. Dutch companies and the government are the most important financial backers of research, with the private sector making up 60% of all research activities. The country is home to knowledge-intensive businesses and worldwide market leaders such as Shell, Philips and Unilever, which provide their own funding programmes to attract talented international postdocs.

Career Progression

The majority of PhD students are employed by a university, and all academic staff are government employees or civil servants. An academic career usually starts with a postdoc research post of around two years before moving on to the position of Lecturer, similar to a tenure-tracked post in the States. During this phase, you would be expected to hone your teaching and research skills before moving up the ranks to Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor and, finally, Professor. The ability to move up the academic ranks and fixed pay scales depends on your publications record and ability to win major grants. Every faculty member must also achieve a basic teaching qualification, called a [BKO \(Basiskwalificatie onderwijs\)](#), in order to progress in the system.

The Higher Education System

Higher education is divided into two categories: research-oriented degrees offered by [14 research universities \(universiteiten, WO\)](#), and 'higher professional' degrees offered by [41 universities of applied sciences \(hogescholen, HBO\)](#). The highest ranking institutions are the University of Amsterdam and Delft University of Technology. Universities and colleges offer a two-tier Undergraduate-Masters degree system, with undergraduate degrees taking three to four years to complete, and Masters up to two years. There are currently 1,500 degree programmes taught exclusively in English, and the primary research language is also English.

Funding is allocated via state contributions, external public and private grants, and tuition fees. EU students pay around €1,950 per year and non EU students around €6,000 and €15,000 per year, depending on the course. Most PhDs are fully funded in the Netherlands and are predominantly paid research positions, with doctoral candidates treated as university employees.



Salaries

All universities have identical union contracts and fixed pay scales, with little room for negotiation. Despite this somewhat inflexible approach to salaries, highly skilled non-Dutch nationals can be eligible for certain tax advantages, such as the [30% Ruling](#). Universities are also bound to supply all workers with a new bicycle every three years to help with transport costs.

Average academic salaries in Netherlands (gross monthly salary):

- Postdoc researcher/research assistant: €1,800 to €2,220
- Docent (Lecturer): €2270 to €5,670
- Docent II (Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor): €4240 to €6840
- Professor: €4,820 to €8,260

The cost of living in the Netherlands has risen in recent years, however, the country offers exceptionally good public services and affordable, quality healthcare.

To find out more about living and working in the Netherlands, visit our country profile [here](#).

The Job Market

The academic and research job market is very open to hiring international scholars and researchers. This is further strengthened by the use of English as the principal research language (a knowledge of some Dutch is useful, however, to help make social links). Dutch academics work in a highly structured and well-funded environment, and the country invests heavily in attracting international talent to encourage diversity in research.

In recent years, the job market has become more competitive, resulting in more fixed term and temporary posts, particularly at postdoctoral and docent levels. Most opportunities exist in STEM subjects, and both public and privately funded science and technology research programmes recruit heavily from overseas. Other prominent research areas in the Netherlands include social sciences, physical and life science, and humanities. A series of funding opportunities and fellowships are available through the [Innovational Research Incentives Scheme](#) and RUBICON programmes.



Job Application Process

The job application process requires sending a resume or CV, separate publication list, cover letter and letter of reference from a colleague or supervisor. The Dutch favour modest and sober language, so it's advisable to keep your CV/resume and cover letter factual and to the point, with achievements backed up by evidence. If your application is successful, you will be invited to an interview, which can involve giving a presentation, speaking with faculty members and teaching a sample class. The Dutch preference for consensus in recruiting panels means interviews often take several hours. You can search for academic jobs at www.jobs.ac.uk.

Application Tips: The Dutch like hard facts, and your publications and any major funding you have won in the past will help you to stand out. Mentioning money during an interview can be considered rude; pay is usually discussed after a job offer has been made.



Work Permit

EU/EEA and Swiss nationals are free to work in the Netherlands without an employment permit. Those from outside the EU must apply for a combined residence and employment permit, called a GVA, if they intend to work in the country for longer than three months. Highly educated non-EU workers who contribute to the Dutch 'knowledge-based' economy may not have to apply for a GVA if they have an employment contract. For more information, consult the Netherlands government website [here](#).

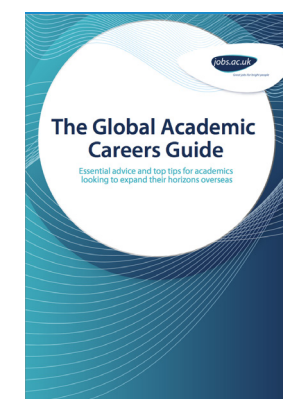
About this ebook

'Postdoctoral Careers in the Netherlands' has been compiled by jobs.ac.uk as part of the 'Postdoctoral Careers in Europe' series, helping you take your first step into the European academic world.

Europe is one of the most popular destinations for freshly-minted doctorates. Ancient and prestigious universities, excellent funding opportunities and diverse research networks attract thousands of international students, postdocs and academics to Europe each year. Add to this the prevalent use of English as a working language and a commitment to international cooperation in research which is unparalleled worldwide, Europe has much to offer aspiring academics.

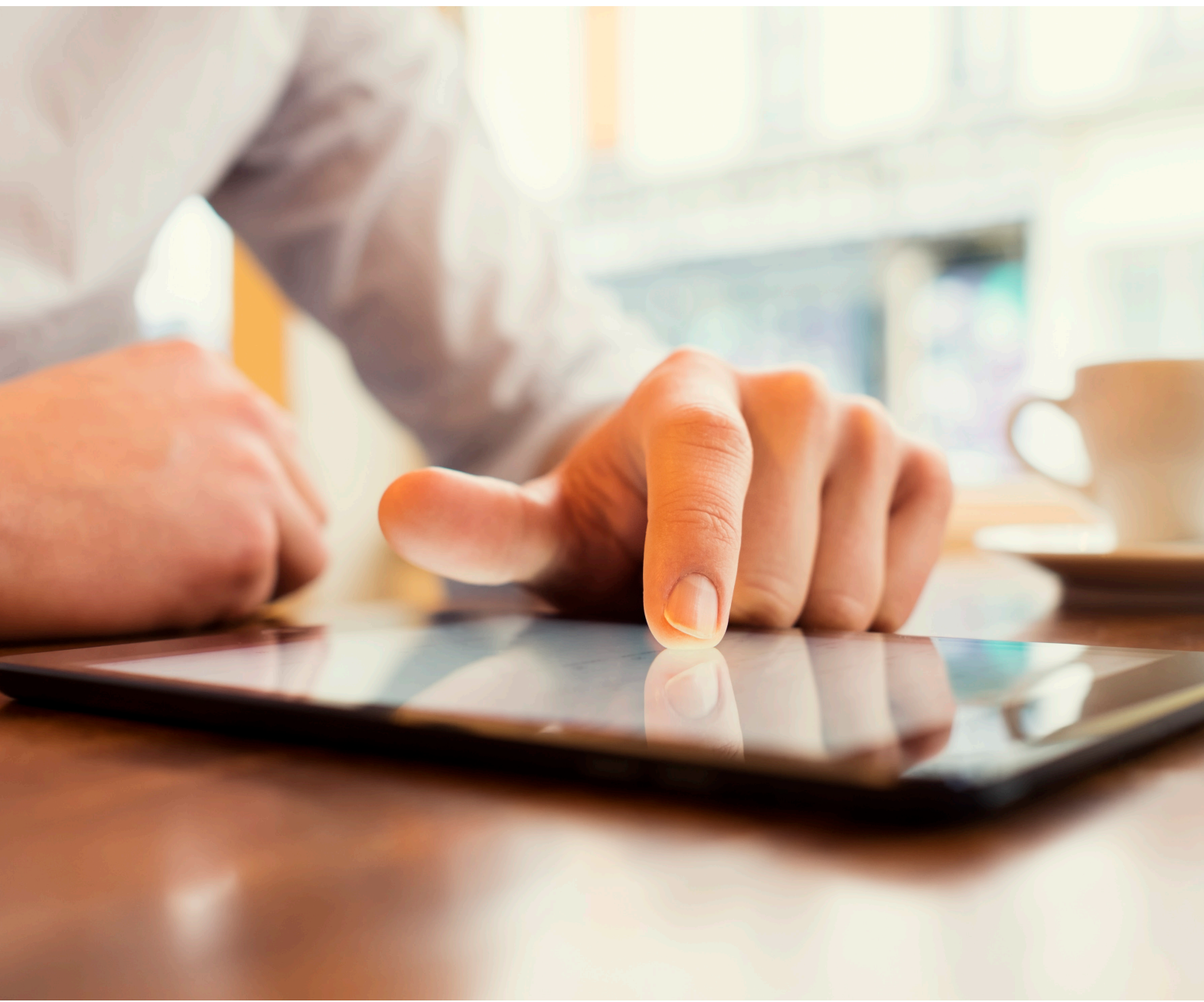
Combined, the European Union member states invest almost €300 billion in research and development each year. There is a strong tradition of cross-border collaboration, providing a unique research perspective, as well as offering ample opportunities to work with colleagues across the continent. Whether you choose a job in a European university, research institute or company, you will experience fantastic research facilities, generous funding and progressive working conditions.

Recommended reading:



The Global Academic Careers Guide

Essential advice and top tips for academics looking to expand their horizons overseas. This ebook will tell you more about the scale of the new global market, help you consider the pros and cons of seeking employment outside your nation of origin, and give you important information that will improve your success rate if you do decide to give working abroad a try.



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