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Employment in the Netherlands

A short orientation for foreign employers

Dutch employment law is largely mandatory: it protects the employee, and most of it cannot be contracted away. Collective labour agreements add a further layer of binding rules, and in many sectors they apply whether or not the employer is a member of the negotiating association. The main points an employer should be aware of are set out below.

What the law requires of an employer

- Every employee is entitled to at least the statutory minimum wage, which is a gross hourly amount set by law and indexed twice a year. Holiday allowance is payable on top of it.
- Working and rest times are regulated. A full working week is normally between 36 and 40 hours, depending on the sector.
- Employees accrue statutory paid holiday of four times the agreed weekly working hours.
- Fixed-term contracts can be renewed only within limits, both in number and in total duration. Once those limits are exceeded, the contract becomes one for an indefinite period by operation of law. The chain also continues across successive employers, so time worked through an agency before being taken on directly counts towards it.
- Employees are entitled to leave around childbirth, adoption and the care of relatives. Part of that leave is paid by the employer and part through the benefits agency UWV. A dismissal ban applies during pregnancy and maternity leave.
- Where an employee falls ill, the employer must continue to pay wages for up to two years, and both parties have re-integration obligations. A dismissal ban applies during that period, and insufficient re-integration effort can extend the obligation to pay.
- The employer is responsible for safe and healthy working conditions. This includes a written risk inventory and evaluation, a contract with a certified occupational health service, and an appointed prevention officer.
- From a certain size a works council is mandatory; below that threshold a lighter form of employee representation may be required.
- Participation in an industry-wide pension fund is compulsory in a number of sectors. The obligation follows from the activities the company actually carries out, and it applies to foreign employers with staff in the Netherlands as well.
- Dismissal is subject to a closed system of grounds and a prescribed route, through UWV or through the court, and in principle carries a statutory transition payment.
- Employers above a certain size must have an internal whistleblower reporting procedure, and the processing of employee and applicant data is restricted.
- Employees recruited from abroad may qualify for the expat scheme, under which part of the salary can be paid free of tax for a limited number of years. Nationals from outside the EU, the EEA and Switzerland need a residence and work permit.

This overview is deliberately brief. If you would like to know how these rules work out for your own organisation, please contact us.

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Key figures as at 11 September 2026

Only the figures that change from year to year are listed here; they are reviewed each February. The durations and thresholds mentioned on the previous page follow from the law and do not change annually.

Subject	Figure	Applies to
Statutory minimum wage, 21 and over	€ 14.99 gross per hour	from 1 July 2026
Statutory minimum wage, 21 and over	€ 14.71 gross per hour	1 Jan – 30 June 2026
Maximum daily wage capping sick pay	€ 309.91	from 1 July 2026
Maximum statutory transition payment	€ 102,000 gross	2026

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