

# Working in the Netherlands as an Occupational Therapist

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## Introduction

On behalf of the Dutch Association of Occupational Therapists, Ergotherapie Nederland (EN), we would like to thank you for your interest in working in The Netherlands.

Occupational Therapy is an ever growing profession within the Dutch healthcare system. Occupational therapists work within a wide range of settings including hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, primary care and institutions for psychiatry and private practices. In the Netherlands there are three specialization profiles for Occupational Therapy: Pediatrics, Hand therapy and Elderly.

Individuals in the possession of a foreign qualification who wish to work in the Dutch health sector are expected to meet the requirements set by the Dutch government. Only a declaration of professional competence issued by the Dutch Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport gives the right to use the title of Ergotherapeut (occupational therapist). Without this recognition you are not permitted to work as an occupational therapist (Ergotherapeut) in the Netherlands. If you do so, the government can fine you.

More information you can find at:

<https://www.bigregister.nl/over-het-big-register/nieuwsbrieven/juli-2016/erkenning-buitenlandse-diplomas>

Please be aware of the fact that occupational therapy is an article 34 profession. You don't need to register for BIG legislation, but for a declaration of professional competence.

It can take several months to complete the application process, so it is important that you start this procedure on time.

## Applying to work in the Netherlands – Legal requirements

Occupational Therapists in the possession of a diploma obtained outside the Netherlands, wishing to work in the Dutch health sector, are expected to meet the requirements set by the Dutch government and others.

The Wet op de Beroepen in de Individuele Gezondheidszorg (Individual Health Care Professional Act) generally known by its Dutch acronym, 'BIG', is of prime importance to you. The BIG act sets requirements on the quality of professional practice to protect clients and clarifies the conditions under which a person has the right to use a recognized registered, or training, title. Use of the title Ergotherapeut (Occupational Therapist) is a legally protected training title in the Netherlands under the BIG Act.

The BIG register is administered by the Ministry of Health and Sport on behalf of the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport. The BIG Act provides two Articles in law for occupational therapists as professionals.

The BIG is responsible for recognizing a diploma awarded outside the Netherlands for both Article 3 and Article 34 professions. Without recognizing it is not allowed to use the title occupational therapist (ergotherapeut).

If you fulfill all the criteria, the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport can issue a Declaration of Professional Competence to practice in the Netherlands.

BIG-information service: 0900 – 89 98 225 (€ 0,10 per minute)

International: 00 31 70 340 66 00

Office hours: 08.30 to 17.00hrs

E-mail: [info@bigregister.nl](mailto:info@bigregister.nl)

Twitter: Ask your question via [@BIGregister](https://twitter.com/BIGregister) on Twitter.

## **Step 1: Application for Declaration of Professional Competence**

Application for Recognition of your professional qualifications on the website

<https://english.bigregister.nl/foreign-diploma/procedures/recognition-professional-qualifications>

Details on completion and where to return the form are shown in the introduction page. It is important to know that pages 9 and 10 are about necessary documents to provide. Within EER and Switzerland are different requirements compared to countries outside EER and Switzerland.

This form requires you to provide specific information relating to your training, experience and competencies as an Occupational therapist. Section 7 (Vereiste documenten) includes a list of documents you must provide as evidence of your competencies.

If the language of the documents is other than Dutch, English, German or French, these must be translated and certified by a sworn translator. Photocopies must, likewise, be translated. If you are unable to submit all of the documents, you must provide a written explanation of your reasons. If you fail to comply with the requirements in this document, there is 6 weeks' time to complete files. Otherwise your application will be rejected.

There is no fee for the above declaration.

## **Step 2: Acknowledgement of Application**

When the application is approved the Nuffic will be involved for recognizing the value of the diploma. The CBGV will use this information as background. The process takes 3 weeks to complete.

## **Step 3: Kennis en Vaardighedentoetsen (Knowledge and Expertise tests)**

It may be necessary for applicants with diplomas obtained outside the EER and Switzerland to proof your language proficiency, at least B2 level. For those persons outside Europe the 'Algemene kennis en vaardighedentoets' (AKV) is obliged. Cito provides a test, cost € 225 for first attend. The test contains 3 parts; Dutch, English and expressions in care.

<https://english.bigregister.nl/foreign-diploma/procedures/proof-language-proficiency>

## **Step 4: Assessment of Application by CBGV**

The application for the Declaration of Professional Competence, *will additionally* be assessed (at the request of the BIG) by a third party comprising Occupational Therapy experts in the Netherlands (Commissie Buitenslands Gediplomeerden Volksgezondheid (CBGV) Foreign Health Care Qualifications Commission. The Commission makes assessments on an intermittent basis depending on the number of applications received.

The CBGV will assess your professional competence on the basis of the tests, portfolio and submitted documents. Competency must be equivalent to that of a Dutch practitioner in Occupational Therapy. Be aware that Occupational Therapists in the Netherlands have the ability to work without a medical referral, via direct access. The CBGV recommends suitability of Professional Competency to the minister. You may receive advice on the level needed to attain the appropriate standard if you're level is not considered appropriate.

Based on the minimum standards of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, shortened as WFOT, at least 1000 hours of practical training is recommended. <http://www.wfot.org/>

### **Step 5: Processing time**

In practice it can take up to 12 months or more to complete the process. For those outside Europe the process takes more time due to learning language and AKV test. Therefore it might be to consider to start to learn Dutch before application. The process for those within EER and Switzerland takes maximum 4 months.

### **Step 6: Recognition of Professional Competence**

If, following the assessments you meet all the required professional requirements the BIG, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, will grant recognition of Diploma and you may legally use the recognized training title of Ergotherapeut (Occupational Therapist) in the Netherlands.

## **Additional information**

### **Kwaliteitsregister - Occupational Therapists**

Central registration is voluntary in the Netherlands for Occupational Therapists, but in practice many employers will ask for confirmation of registration in the Kwaliteitsregister which ensures practitioners meet the standards of the BIG legislation (Beroepen in de individuele Gezondheidszorg). This registration is renewable every 5 years provided you meet the ongoing training and quality requirements.

<https://www.kwaliteitsregisterparamedici.nl/beroepen/beroep.aspx?onderwerp=ergotherapeut>

### **Professional Association - Ergotherapie Nederland (EN)**

The professional body representing Occupational Therapists in the Netherlands is Ergotherapie Nederland (EN). Membership is voluntary, but strongly encouraged. EN is not involved in the process of recognition of a foreign diploma.

EN is a great way to establish and build a network with professionals in the field. It provides information regarding the professional Standards of Occupational Therapists in the Netherlands. Additionally, it lists lots of information e.g.: congresses, courses, developments in the Dutch Healthcare system etc. etc. <https://ergotherapie.nl/>

### **Employment Basics**

If you do not hold the nationality of one of the European Union member states, you will require a Residency Permit ('Verblijfsvergunning'). An employer will ask for a BSN number (Burger Service Nummer), a central tax number. This is obtained by contacting one of the many tax offices.

Many employers will now ask for a Certificate of good conduct. You will need to show that you have no criminal convictions or behavior that would present a risk to your work as an occupational therapist. You will need to apply to the relevant authority in the country in which you are resident. If you are already resident in the Netherlands, and have been for some time, you can apply to the local gemeente (council). The certificate is issued by the Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie. [www.ind.nl/en](http://www.ind.nl/en)

### **Looking for a job**

Most of the time, job seeking in the Netherlands will start online. There are a couple of websites which can provide you in Occupational Therapists vacancies. Some examples are [www.indeed.nl](http://www.indeed.nl), [www.monsterboard.nl](http://www.monsterboard.nl) or our own website [www.ergotherapie.nl](http://www.ergotherapie.nl). Be aware, most of the vacancies are written in Dutch.

Good luck with your application and welcome in the Netherlands!