The 2035 openings are mostly replacement

Of all Dutch job openings to 2035, the European forecast puts 68% down to replacement, not growth. And 72% require high qualifications.

Summary

The European outlook for the Dutch labour market to 2035 confirms what the replacement figures already showed, and extends it a decade. Of all expected job openings between 2022 and 2035, 68% stem from replacing departing workers; among technicians and associate professionals it is 91%. Professionals account for 44% of all openings and 72% of openings require high qualifications, some 12 points above the EU average. The Dutch labour force aged 55 and over grows 16% to 2035, against just under 10% in the EU.

Projections to 2035 are not measurements, but they force an answer to a question quarterly figures dodge: where will next decade's work come from? For the Netherlands, the European centre for vocational training has done that sum. This paper reads the Dutch 2025 edition.

Openings come from departure, not growth

The core of the forecast: Dutch employment grows slightly to 2035, somewhat slower even than the EU average. Job openings therefore barely come from new jobs.

68% of Dutch job openings to 2035 stem from replacement demand

Share of replacement in all expected job openings 2022 to 2035. Cedefop, Netherlands: 2025 skills forecast, retrieved 1 September 2026.

Of all expected openings between 2022 and 2035, 68% is replacement demand: people retiring or leaving their occupation who must be replaced. Among technicians and associate professionals that share is 91%: there, recruitment in the coming decade is almost entirely a replacement task.

The demography behind it is sharper than the EU average. The Dutch labour force aged 55 and over grows by 16% between 2020 and 2035, against just under 10% in the EU. The greying of the workplace here is not a receding wave but one still swelling.

Where the openings fall

The forecast also distributes the openings across occupations and sectors:

- Professionals account for 44% of all job openings, by far the largest block.
- Even shrinking or stable occupation groups keep producing openings: clerical work and elementary occupations together still count for 16% of openings, almost entirely from replacement.
- By sector, business and other services grow fastest, around 1% a year, followed by construction at 0.7%. Health, at 16% of employment, grows around 1% a year on the ageing population. Retail, also 16% of employment, shrinks.

The qualification bar rises

Of Dutch job openings to 2035, 72% require high qualifications, about 12 points above the EU average. The forecast expects supply to grow along: the highly qualified share of the labour force rises from 42% to 55% by 2035, the medium-qualified share falls from 40% to 36% and the low-qualified share nearly halves, from

18% to 9%.

That shifts the scarcity but does not resolve it. If 72% of demand is highly qualified and 55% of supply, the tension stays at the top, exactly where today's shortage lists already sit.

What a forecast is not

- These are model outcomes under assumptions about growth, demography and policy, not measurements. The figures deserve the word expected at every repetition.
- The Dutch edition is the 2025 forecast; the centre published a new round in 2026 with a deepened replacement analysis. Both point the same way; the decimals not necessarily.
- The forecast speaks of qualification levels, not fields. That 72% must be highly qualified does not yet say in what.
- Where this European forecast and the Dutch ROA projection differ, both belong on the page. This paper leans on the European one; the Dutch counterpart sits in the earlier replacement demand paper.

What this means

- **The quotable number.** 68% of Dutch job openings to 2035 is replacement, and among technicians 91%. Growth is the exception, departure is the rule.
- **Recruitment turns structural, not cyclical.** Demand that comes from departure does not move with the economy. Waiting for calmer times does not help a replacement market.
- **The top stays the squeeze.** 72% of openings require high qualifications. Competition for the highly educated is not a phase but the playing field of the coming decade.
- **Shrinking occupations keep recruiting too.** Clerical and elementary work together still deliver 16% of openings. A shrinking occupation group is not an empty vacancy market.

Method and sources

All figures come from the country report Netherlands: 2025 skills forecast by Cedefop, the European centre for vocational training, and its accompanying forecasting tool, retrieved on 1 September 2026. The publication is under Cedefop's copyright and is summarised and rewritten here, not reproduced.

The forecast is a macroeconomic model projection per country, sector, occupation group and qualification level, with 2022 as the base year for the openings calculation and a horizon of 2035. Job openings are the sum of expansion demand and replacement demand. The shares in this paper, 68%, 91%, 44% and 72%, are the published forecast outcomes for the Netherlands and carry the uncertainty of any projection; they are phrased as expectations throughout. A new forecasting round appeared in 2026 with a dedicated replacement analysis; it is named here but not blended in, so that every figure comes from one edition.

Europe, Forecasts, All markets

Sources

- Cedefop, Netherlands: 2025 skills forecast
- Cedefop, Skills forecast