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IMMIGRATION CONSULTANT

NETHERLANDS WORK PERMIT

The Complete Master Guide to Every Work Permit Pathway

MVV & Entry Visas • TWV & GVVA • Highly Skilled Migrant Routes • Family and Student Routes • Special
or Protection Provisions

Prepared by VisaHelperz Immigration Consultant

Immigration rules change frequently. This guide is an educational roadmap — always confirm current eligibility with the Visa Helperz Team before applying.

THE BIG PICTURE

Five Categories Cover Every Route In

Dutch immigration law runs on 21+ pathways across employment, research, entrepreneurship, family and protection provisions — and nearly all of them fall under five umbrellas.

1. Highly Skilled & Employer Routes

Highly Skilled Migrant, EU Blue Card and Intra-Corporate Transfer — an IND-recognised sponsor or qualifying employer sponsors you, with no labour-market test.

2. Ordinary Employment (GVVA / TWV)

The combined residence-and-work permit for regular jobs, or a standalone short-term work permit — both usually require a labour-market test.

3. Graduate & Researcher Routes

Orientation Year and Researcher categories — broad work rights for a year while you search, or a permit tied to qualifying scientific research.

4. Business & Self-Employment

Start-Up Permit and Self-Employed Person — routes for entrepreneurs building a business rather than working for an employer.

5. Family, Student & Status Routes

Family-based residence, student work rights, asylum/refugee status and Ukraine temporary protection — work rights that flow from your existing residence status.

HOW IT WORKS

The Work Permit Application, Step by Step

Whichever pathway you use, the actual process almost always follows this order:

1. Determine your pathway

Start with "which Dutch immigration category do I qualify for," not "how do I get a work permit."

2. Check the employer

For Highly Skilled Migrant, confirm the employer holds IND-recognised-sponsor status — this changes everything about the process.

3. Check the job

Occupation, contract, salary, duration, employer, work location and qualifications all affect which route fits.

4. Select the immigration route

Usually one of: HSM, EU Blue Card, ICT, GVVA, TWV, Orientation Year, or a specialist category.

5. Employer or applicant applies

Depending on the route, the employer applies, employer and employee apply jointly, or the applicant applies alone.

6. IND / UWV assessment

Different routes involve different combinations of the IND, UWV, and sometimes RVO.

7. MVV, if required

If your nationality needs a long-stay entry visa, it's completed as part of the same process.

8. Travel to the Netherlands

Enter once the necessary authorisation has been granted.

9. Collect your residence card

This establishes your right to reside — and, depending on the route, to work.

10. Start work

Only once you hold the appropriate authorisation and meet the exact conditions printed on your permit.

PATHWAY 1

Employer-Sponsored & Highly-Skilled Pathways

These five routes cover the vast majority of non-EU/EEA/Swiss applicants coming to the Netherlands for work — from the fastest, most practical option to the hardest, most heavily tested one.

Requirement	Highly Skilled Migrant	Ordinary GVVA
Employer status	Must be IND-recognised sponsor	Any registered Dutch employer
Labour-market test	Not required	Employer generally must show no suitable EU/EEA candidate was available
Typical speed	Often weeks	Slower — recruitment evidence required

Highly Skilled Migrant **MOST PRACTICAL**

For a qualifying job with an IND-recognised sponsor meeting the applicable income criterion.

Find recognised-sponsor employer → salary meets IND threshold → sponsor applies → residence card

- No labour-market test — the employer never has to prove a Dutch/EU candidate wasn't available
- Salary must meet the annually-reviewed IND income criterion and market rate
- Best suited to IT, engineering, finance, science and consulting professionals

EU Blue Card **EU-WIDE**

For higher-education graduates with a qualifying employment contract and salary.

Qualifying degree → qualifying contract → salary threshold → IND assessment → Blue Card

- An EU-level residence framework rather than a purely Dutch one
- Attractive for candidates planning further mobility within the EU
- Don't assume it's automatically easier — for many, HSM is still the more straightforward option

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PATHWAY 1 (CONTINUED)

Intra-Company, Ordinary & Short-Term Routes

Intra-Corporate Transfer (ICT) **MULTINATIONALS**

For managers, specialists or trainees already employed abroad and transferred to a Dutch entity of the same corporate group.

Employed abroad → qualifying corporate relationship → Dutch entity initiates → ICT residence permit

- The transfer relationship and category (manager, specialist, trainee) both have to be demonstrated
- Employment history, qualifications and assignment documentation are all reviewed

Ordinary Employment — GVVA **HARDEST ROUTE**

The combined residence and work permit most people mean by "Netherlands work permit."

Dutch job offer → labour-market test → IND + UWV review → combined permit

- The employer generally must show the vacancy couldn't appropriately be filled locally
- Recruitment efforts and compliance with labour-market rules are assessed
- A willing Dutch employer alone is not enough to guarantee approval

Short-Term Work Permit — TWV **UNDER 3 MONTHS**

A standalone employment permit for shorter engagements, assessed by UWV.

Employer identifies short-term role → applies to UWV → TWV granted → work within its conditions

- A TWV authorises the work itself — it is not a residence permit
- Entry and residence requirements are assessed as a separate matter

OY — Orientation Year (Zoekjaar)

A one-year residence permit with broad work rights for recent graduates of qualifying Dutch or foreign institutions, PhD graduates and researchers — no separate employer sponsorship needed while you search. Typically progresses to HSM, GVVA or Self-Employed status.

RES — Researcher

For qualifying scientific research hosted by a university, research institute or other recognised organisation. The exact route depends on the research, host organisation and funding arrangement; some researchers can also qualify under HSM or the EU Blue Card.

PATHWAY 2

Every Other Pathway, At a Glance

Category	Who it's for
SEA — Seasonal Work	Mainly agricultural and horticultural seasonal jobs, strictly time-limited
PW — Posted Worker	Employees of an EU/EEA/Swiss company temporarily assigned to the Netherlands
SBA — Short-Term Business	Negotiations, installing employer-supplied equipment, conferences and similar limited activities
ART — Artists & Performers	Musicians, performers and other cultural workers under a dedicated category
REL — Religious Workers	Ministers, spiritual counsellors, monks, nuns and missionaries
NPO — Non-Profit Staff	Employees of certain qualifying international non-profit organisations
TRD — Trade Schemes	Niche UWV schemes for specialist knowledge and international trade activity
STU — Student Work Rights	Limited work rights for holders of a study residence permit

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PATHWAY 3

Business Routes & Long-Term Progression

You don't need a Dutch employer to build a future here — and years of legal work and residence can themselves unlock broader labour-market access.

Start-Up Permit

For an innovative business concept developed with a registered facilitator and a structured development plan — different from simply registering a company.

Self-Employed Person

A completely separate pathway assessed against Dutch economic and immigration criteria, with a business plan and supporting evidence. Start-Up holders often transition here once established.

Orientation Year → Highly Skilled Migrant

Graduates can work unrestricted during their orientation year, then switch to HSM once they land a qualifying job — sometimes at a reduced salary criterion for the transition.

5-Year Unrestricted Labour-Market Access

After enough consecutive years of legal work and residence in the Netherlands, some applicants reach a status where the ordinary TWV requirement no longer applies — the exact result depends on residence history and permit type.

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PATHWAY 4

Family & Existing-Residence Pathways

If you already hold Dutch residence rights, the wording on your card — not a separate work permit — usually determines whether you can work.

Family-Based Residence

Certain family-based residence permits carry unrestricted work rights. Look for the wording “arbeid is vrij toegestaan” (work freely permitted) on the residence document — this is why some people work in the Netherlands without a separate employer-sponsored permit.

Always Check the Card, Not the Category

The residence-permit category name alone doesn't tell the whole story. Two people on similar-sounding permits can have different work rights — confirm the exact wording before assuming you can (or can't) work.

Student Work Rights

Holders of a study residence permit can work under limited conditions. Permitted hours and employer-authorisation requirements still apply — this is not an unrestricted work permit.

Progression Is the Norm, Not the Exception

Think of Dutch immigration as a progression of statuses rather than one permanent “work visa.” Orientation Year, Start-Up, and several years of continuous legal work can each open the door to a broader, more permanent labour market status over time.

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PATHWAY 5

Special & Protection Routes

Distinct from economic immigration — based on protection needs or a special, sometimes time-limited, protection regime rather than employment.

Asylum & Refugee Status Holders

Certain asylum and refugee residence statuses carry work rights that differ from the ordinary foreign-worker rules — the wording on the residence document is what establishes the right to work.

Ukraine Temporary Protection

Special rules for Ukrainians covered by the Netherlands' temporary-protection framework — a distinct, time-limited protection regime, not a general route available to everyone.

5-Year Progression

Legal work and residence over enough consecutive years can itself unlock broader access — covered in detail in the Business & Progression section (Pathway 3).

Rules Above the 21 Pathways Still Apply

Beyond the pathways in this guide, Dutch immigration law contains numerous nationality-, residence-status-, occupation-, treaty- and temporary-protection-specific exceptions. This guide covers the major work-authorisation pathways and principal special categories — eligibility within each can contain further sub-routes and exceptions.

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QUICK REFERENCE

Which Pathway Is Best For You?

A fast starting point — your ideal pathway always depends on your full profile.

Your situation	Usually strongest option
Software engineer or IT professional with a Dutch job offer	Highly Skilled Migrant
Strong degree, internationally mobile	EU Blue Card
Already employed by a multinational with a Dutch office	Intra-Corporate Transfer
Dutch or qualifying foreign university graduate	Orientation Year → HSM
Ordinary hospitality or retail role	GVVA / TWV, but difficult
Agricultural seasonal worker	Seasonal Work route
Researcher	Researcher / HSM / Blue Card, depending on circumstances
Entrepreneur with an innovative concept	Start-Up Permit
Employee of an EU company sent to NL temporarily	Posted Worker
Already hold Dutch family residence	Check the "arbeid vrij toegestaan" wording on your card

A job offer is not employment authorisation. Do not travel on a tourist visa or visa-free short stay intending to work. A signed contract, salary slip or verbal agreement does not authorise employment — only your residence status, TWV, GVVA, or a qualifying residence card does that.

Immigration programs and eligibility rules change frequently, and 2026 brings several scheduled updates. Always verify current requirements on the IND's official site (ind.nl) or with the VisaHelperz Team before applying.