

Speech and language therapy/orthophony in the Netherlands

Overall description/legal basis

Currently, about 5000 speech and language therapists (logopedists) are practicing in the Netherlands. Speech and language therapy is considered a paramedical profession in healthcare and in education. The speech and language therapist is both a speech and language specialist. A speech and language therapist's occupation is the development, improvement and recovery of four vital aspects of human communication: speech, the human voice, language and hearing, including the primary functions at the basis of these aspects, i.e. swallowing.

The majority of speech and language therapists in the Netherlands is female and works part time. Speech and language therapists work with a broad range of different target groups. The profession is governed by the Dutch Law on Individual Healthcare Professions - 'Wet Beroepen Individuele Gezondheidszorg', Article 34. This means that the title is legally protected. In this article, professional competence and educational requirements for the profession are described. Other paramedical professional groups are listed in Article 34 as well.

Organisation of Speech and Language Therapy in the Netherlands

Speech and language therapists in the Netherlands are active in a diverse range of professional areas, such as general education, hospitals, nursing homes for the elderly, rehabilitation centres, institutional care for the mentally handicapped, private practices, and in higher music and drama education.

Education/training

Speech and language therapy professional education forms an integral part of the higher health education system in the Netherlands. The study duration is 4 years, for which regularly 240 EC (European Credits) are awarded. Currently, seven Dutch institutes for higher education are offering professional speech and language therapy education at Bachelor level, which attracts 500-600 students annually.

Prerequisites for access to the studies are the completion of a voice- and speech test with satisfactory results and a minimum education at Higher General Secondary Education - 'HAVO' - level or equivalent. Upon successful completion of the course, a Bachelor of Health diploma will be awarded. Education is regulated by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science - 'Ministerie van OCW'. Upon successful completion of the BA course, it is possible to enrol in a Master's programme in Logopaedic Science, Speech and Language Pathology, Neurolinguistics or Linguistics at several Dutch universities.

Authorisation/licence/recognition of diploma

Dutch speech and language therapists are eligible to practice upon reception of their Bachelor diploma, which is recognised by the Dutch government. Speech and language therapists may voluntarily register with the Quality Register for Paramedics - 'Kwaliteitsregister Paramedici'. The mission of the Quality Register for Paramedics is to increase the visibility of speech and language therapists, to stimulate professional quality and to make specific competence and expertise more visible to the general public, health insurers and employers.

Initial registration is followed by an optional periodical re-registration every five years. Criteria for re-registration are formulated relating to the extent of professionalism, vocational training, intervision, supervision of practical training and scientific research.

Recognition of professional qualifications obtained abroad

The Dutch Law on Individual Healthcare Professions - 'Wet Beroepen Individuele Gezondheidszorg', Article 34, does not provide in a legal obligation for professional registration of speech and language therapists. Whoever practices as a speech and language therapist in the Netherlands in the possession of an officially acknowledged diploma, may use the formal title.

In accordance with the regulations for professions which are monitored on the basis of Article 34 of the Individual Health Care Professions Act (BIG Act), individuals in the possession of a foreign qualification who wish to practice as a speech and language therapist in the Netherlands may apply for a declaration of professional competence.

A request for such a declaration of professional competence may be addressed to, and will be assessed by, the Bureau of Foreign Degree Holders at the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. When your professional competence is favourably assessed, the Minister will issue a declaration of professional competence that enables you to use the protected title.

For more detailed information on working in the Netherlands, please refer to the Dutch Information and Referral Desk, which helps people with foreign care qualifications who wish to practice their profession in the Netherlands by directing them to the right institutions: www.verwijspunt.nl.

Status of the profession and the professional income/scale

Salary depends on the field in which the speech and language therapist is practicing. If the speech and language therapist works in a practice under private management, then she will be reimbursed on a declaration basis by the health insurer. A speech and language therapist who is working in private practice receives a fee based on centrally established tariffs. The average income for such a practice is € 4750 (before expenses and taxes) per month. Speech and language therapists who work in institutional healthcare receive a salary based on collective labour agreements - 'CAO'. Salary ranges from a minimum of € 1550 per month to € 3100 (before taxes) per month.

Professional association(s)

Speech and language therapists in the Netherlands are organised in the professional body of speech and language therapists Nederlandse Vereniging van Logopedie en Foniatrie (NVLF), which was founded in 1927. The NVLF is acknowledged by the Dutch government and by the Dutch health insurers. Its mission is to advocate the individual and collective interests of its members in the broadest sense of the word. The NVLF is engaged at a professional as well as at social-economic and societal level. It is continuously striving to improve the quality of speech and language therapy in The Netherlands, resulting in a broad range of activities and working groups around issues such as professional specialisation, speech and language therapy and the elderly, and early diagnosis. Quality circles exist throughout the country in which speech and language therapists are working together to further improve the level of professional care in the Netherlands.

Further information/useful links

- www.kwaliteitsregisterparamedici.nl
- www.verwijspunt.nl
- www.minvws.nl
- www.minocw.nl