

# Advancing Bioeconomy Skills Development in The Netherlands

## Policy Brief | The Netherlands CoP

This policy brief outlines the key outcomes and recommendations from the The Netherlands CoP's Regional Policy Workshop, held under the BioGov.net project, focusing on identifying deficiencies within governance and feedback mechanisms in bioeconomy skills development.

## Introduction

This policy brief outlines the key takeaways and recommendations from the **The Netherlands CoP's Policy Workshop**, held as part of the **BioGov.net** project. **Eighth one-on-one**, organised by **MNEXT** and **BTG**, were held from May to June 2024, involving members of the CoP. These interviews aimed to address gaps in current governance systems in the Netherlands and improve feedback loops for **better strategy design in bioeconomy skills development** at multiple levels.

More specifically, discussions focused on guidelines and advice for policy and governance interventions to effectively set up training programs, as well as the concrete steps needed to achieve these interventions. The insights gathered from these discussions provide valuable perspectives on **enhancing the effectiveness of educational initiatives** in this field. The interviewees included two education providers, two industry networks/clusters, and four policymakers.

## Main takeaways

### Policy

#### 01.

**The following policy-relevant issues were noted in the interviews:**

- **Cooperation in the triple helix** is seen as essential by all partners, with general consensus on how to ensure success.
- **Local governments** (municipalities, municipal cooperations, provincial governments, etc.) often take the initiative for new cooperations.

#### 02.

**Key Factors for Successful Educational Cooperations:**

- **A trailblazer or project manager** to streamline communication and facilitate collaboration (mentioned 3x).
- **Intrinsically motivated individuals** who actively drive the initiative forward (mentioned 3x).
- **Financial support to fund activities** or hire a project manager (mentioned 3x).
- **Formalisation of cooperation** at an appropriate stage (mentioned 2x).

#### 03.

**Additional Policy-Relevant Issues:**

- **Recognising and celebrating successes** helps strengthen cooperation, attract new partners, and increase buy-in (mentioned 2x).
- **Operating outside traditional structures** is a common trait among many successful initiatives (mentioned 1x).
- **The role of chance** - the same approach may succeed or fail depending on the municipality, often referred to as postal code luck (mentioned 1x).
- **Having an independent organisation in the lead** fosters trust and facilitates smoother cooperation, as different stakeholders have distinct agendas (mentioned 1x).
- **Balancing long-term goals with short-term actions** engages a diverse range of stakeholders and enhances collaboration (mentioned 1x).

#### 04.

**Challenges in Cooperation:**

- **Competing interests among partners** can hinder collaboration. Companies may view each other as competitors in the job market and product market, while educational institutions may also exclude potential partners. One example cited was two large educational institutions actively keeping others out of their cooperation.
- **Diverging perspectives between companies and educational institutions** can create barriers. While some educational institutions see themselves as “bringers of knowledge,” companies may perceive them as “consumers of knowledge.” Additionally, businesses often lack a clear understanding of how the educational process functions.
- **Poorly defined target groups** can reduce the effectiveness of educational initiatives. Many projects fail to clearly identify their target audience, making engagement challenging—especially when trying to reach young people.

### Education

#### 01.

**Certification in Education**

**Expanding certification options:** There is a growing demand for shorter educational tracks and micro-credentials, which certify the completion of short courses or even single modules.

**Lack of certification for alternative learning models:** There is currently no formal certification system for alternative learning models such as **on-the-job training** and **open-source education**, where students learn independently under a coach rather than a traditional teacher. This lack of certification poses a challenge, particularly in emerging fields where knowledge has not yet been formalized into curricula.

**Reducing the divide between formal and commercial education:** There should be less distinction between traditional and commercially driven educational programs to enhance flexibility and accessibility.

**Challenges with traditional education structures:** The rigid frameworks of formal education may not be well-suited for certain innovative learning approaches.

#### 02.

**Monitoring of Educational Initiatives**

**Importance of monitoring:** Three out of eight respondents emphasised that monitoring is crucial to legitimising educational interventions. It ensures transparency in resource allocation, aids in the dissemination of results, and helps maintain company engagement.

**Different approaches to monitoring:** Include specialised dashboards for long-term tracking of multiple educational projects, simple evaluations after each event using “tops” and “tips” feedback to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and baseline (“zero-point”) measurements to assess impact over time.

## Lessons Learned

- **Effectiveness of One-on-One Interviews:** One-on-one interviews with stakeholders in bioeconomy education provided high-quality feedback due to their direct experience with cooperation in the field, while also encouraging broader participation by requiring less time commitment than a workshop.
- **Alignment with BioGov.net Partner Experiences:** The challenges and solutions discussed closely align with the experiences of BioGov.net partners (MNEXT and BTG), with most insights reinforcing existing observations and highlighting their relevance.

- **Consensus Among Respondents:** Despite being interviewed independently, respondents demonstrated broad agreement on key issues. A few specific concerns were raised by only a small number of participants, but these still provided valuable perspectives.
- **Suitability of the Semi-Structured Interview Format:** This approach enabled wide-ranging input while also offering insight into the relative importance of different challenges and barriers.

For more detailed information, visit [The Netherlands regions page](#) and [Biogov.net](#) website.

### Consortium

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