



Press release

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More people unemployed in December

- More people entered the labour market in the past three months
- Youth unemployment virtually stable
- Number of unemployment benefits up by 16 thousand in December
- More benefit recipients among over-55s relative to one year ago, fewer young benefit claimants

According to figures released by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) today, the number of unemployed people rose by 12 thousand to 642 thousand. Unemployment started to climb again in December after having been stable in the preceding three months. In the period May-August, unemployment had fallen noticeably. In December, 8.1 percent in the labour force were unemployed. Youth unemployment remained stable. Unemployment among over-45 appears to be a long-term problem.

According to figures released by the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), the number of people claiming unemployment benefits increased by 16 thousand in December 2014 to 441 thousand. The number of benefits was marginally higher at the end of 2014 than at the end of 2013.

More people active on the labour market

After adjustment for seasonal variation, unemployment in the Netherlands was 642 thousand in December, 26 thousand fewer than at the beginning of the year. In the first months of 2014, unemployment rose rapidly, but fell substantially in the period May-August. In autumn, the labour supply increased: more people not included in the labour force entered the job market. Part of them did not immediately find work. Due to the growing supply of labour, unemployment stabilised at 8.0 percent of the labour force during four months. In December, unemployment rose slightly again to 8.1 percent. The labour supply remained unchanged in December, but the employed labour force declined. As a result, unemployment increased.

Youth unemployment stable

Youth unemployment remained virtually stable in December, just as in the preceding months. People aged 25 and older entirely accounted for the growth of unemployment in December. Earlier this year, unemployment decreased among 25 to 45-year-olds. Unemployment among over-45s has been stable for a long time. For over-45s, unemployment often is a long-term problem. In the third quarter, 45 percent of all unemployed people had been in this situation for at least twelve months, versus six in ten people older than 45.

Unemployment benefits in construction sector compared to one year ago

The number of unemployment benefits rose by 0.7 percent to 441 thousand compared to December last year. The number of unemployment benefits granted to women increased compared to one year previously, the number of unemployment benefits granted to men declined. With 14.5 percent, the most substantial increase was recorded among over-55s. The number of unemployment benefits granted to young people under the age of 25 fell by 15.4 percent. The decline in the construction sector was 15.5 percent relative to December 2013. The number of unemployment benefits granted in the sectors public administration, health care/welfare/culture and transport/storage grew relatively fast compared to one year previously.

Compared to November, the number of unemployment benefits rose by 3.7 percent in December 2014. The corresponding figure for December 2013 is 4.5 percent.

291 thousand benefits ended because people found work

In 2014, the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV) paid 605 thousand new unemployment benefits, a marginal decrease relative to in 2013. Last year, 602 thousand benefits were ended, 16.7 percent more than in 2013. The number of benefits ended because people found work grew by 18.9 percent to 291 thousand relative to 2013.

Unemployment relatively low in the Netherlands

According to the definition used by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Dutch unemployment was 6.7 percent of the labour force in December, versus 6.5 percent in November. In an international perspective, unemployment is thus relatively low in the Netherlands. In the eurozone, unemployment was 11.5 percent in November, versus 10.0 percent in the European Union as a whole. With approximately 5 percent, Austria and Germany boasted the lowest unemployment rates.

The main difference between the national and the international definition of the labour force is the number of weekly working hours. The international definition, which complies with the ILO guidelines, comprises everyone who works or wants to work, including students working for only a few hours a week. It has a threshold of one hour: everyone who works or wants to work for at least one hour a week is by definition included of the labour force. According to the Dutch national definition, the labour force includes people who work for a significant number of hours a week. The national threshold is thus set at twelve hours a week.

From 2015, Statistics Netherlands will base its main unemployment indicator on the ILO definition.