Holocaust Education in the Netherlands

1. What official directives from government ministries and/or local authorities regarding the teaching of the Holocaust exist in your country? Please attach these directives to your answer.

The Dutch educational system does not rely on a fixed curricular for the subjects that are taught. The Ministry of Education had defined the main objectives (kerndoelen) that schools must achieve.

For primary schools the objectives were stated in 2002. What students should know and be able to do by the end of the primary schools was divided into ‘domains’. From these domains the following parts are relevant to lessons about the Holocaust.

Domain historical awareness - objectives are amongst others that:
- Pupils can consult historical sources. These sources are:
  - Stories of people that have lived through the events;
  - Remnants from their own environment such as photo’s, family trees, historical maps;
  - Texts and illustrations, youth literature, audiovisuals;
  - Students understand that historical sources can be contradictory and that each source tells its own history that is bound by time, space and point of view.

Domain historical events, developments and people – objectives are amongst others that:
- Pupils know in general about the following important contemporary and historical events, developments and people in history:
  - The crisis years in the Netherlands and the Second World War
  - Post-war society in the Netherlands and the development of the welfare state.
  - Contemporary European and world wide relations, amongst which the development of multicultural societies after 1945, the European Union and changes in Eastern Europe.

At this moment the new objectives for secondary schools for the coming years are being finalized. These objectives are broadly defined. The two objectives that relate to the history of the Second World War are as follows:

Kerndoel 37, Learning area - People and Society:
Students learn about ten historical periods so as to be able to place events, developments and people in their times and must learn to connect the events and developments in the 20th Century (also the World Wars and the Holocaust) and modern day developments.

Kerndoel 47, Learning area - People and Society
Students learn to understand modern day tensions, conflicts and wars in context and learn how these influence individuals and societies (national, European and international) and to see the meaning of international co-operation.

2. If the Holocaust is not a mandatory subject, what percentage of schools chooses to teach about the Holocaust?

There is no research that can substantiate the percentage of schools that choose to teach about the Holocaust but it can be safely said that the vast majority (surely > 90 %) of the schools will teach about the Holocaust in one way or another.

In primary school education the history books devote just a few paragraphs to the Holocaust within the frame of the Second World War and/or the Occupation of the Netherlands. Several institutions (NGO’s) provide additional teaching materials that are often used. The National Comité for the 4th and 5th May provides schools with a booklet for pupils (age 10/11) on the meaning of war and freedom in the lives of children, that
is ordered (free of charge) by most schools. The booklet introduces children to the traditions and rituals connected to the commemoration of the Second World War. Two thirds of the primary schools order the Anne Frank Journal that is reissued each year and aims at students age 11/12. The story of Anne Frank is placed in the wider history of the Holocaust. Often the journal is accompanied by a film (or an additional book) that teachers use as additional teaching material on the Holocaust. Many primary schools will take their pupils to a historical site linked to the Holocaust or invite an eyewitness to speak about the Holocaust or about the occupation and resistance. The National Support Point for Guest Speakers provides professional backing for eyewitnesses that speak about their personal experiences at schools. This Support Point (based in Westerbork) not only brings schools and speakers together but also offers training opportunities for guest speakers. Some of the historical sites and museums (i.e. The Hollandse Schouwburg, Westerbork, Vught, the Resistance Museums) are published educational materials that are used in schools, mainly, but not only to prepare a visit to a site. Most of these institutions also have websites providing educational materials.

In secondary schools most the text books devote attention to the Holocaust (see 12.), with the exception of some of the books for the lowest level of learning that do not all deal with the Second World War. In addition to the lessons in which textbooks are used many teachers will show documentaries and films, invite guest speakers or visit a historical site. Quite a number of primary and secondary schools (about 1000) have adopted a monument dedicated to the Second World War. In many schools in the weeks prior to the National commemoration special attention is given to the relationship between the school and the monument.

3. How is the Holocaust defined?
The most accepted definition of the Holocaust refers to the persecution, deportation and mass murder of the Jews of Europe by the Nazi’s. Some teachers and teaching materials will define the Holocaust as referring to all the victims of Nazi racist ideology, that is including the Roma and Sinti victims. On occasion the Holocaust is used to describe also the persecution and/or murder of other victims of the Nazi’: homosexuals, the victims of the so-called ‘Euthanasia program’ and Jehovah Witnesses.

4. Is the Holocaust taught as a subject in its own right, or as part of a broader topic? Explain the reasoning behind this decision.
The Holocaust is generally taught within the history lessons dealing with the Second World War. At the primary school level the lessons pay some attention to the rise to power of the Nazi’s in Germany, but mostly focus on the occupation of the Netherlands from 1940-1945. In secondary school the Holocaust is either placed within the context of the history of the Third Reich and the Nazi racist ideology or it is place within the context of the history of Occupation that focuses on the Dutch example of how the Jews were registered, isolated, deported and murdered and on the Dutch collaboration, resistance or accommodation to the Nazi-regime. Along side the teaching in history classes the Holocaust is also sometimes a subject in Religious Studies (Levensbeschouwing) classes, in Citizenship classes (maatschappijleer) and in an implicit way in Dutch literature, as so much of the post World War Two literature deals with the war and the occupation of the Netherlands. At primary and secondary school level the Holocaust will also sometimes be introduced in a project or series of lessons dealing with prejudice, discrimination, (anti) racism, and the importance of tolerance, acceptance of pluralistic societies etc. In these projects learning from the past, with the Holocaust as an example of what racisme can lead to, is more central that learning about the past.

5. At what age(s) do young people learn about the Holocaust in schools? Do students encounter the Holocaust in schools more than once? Please give details.
   - In general all students at primary school level in one of the two final years: in class 7 (10/11 years) or class 8 (11/12 years).
   - In general all students at secondary school level in the 2nd form (13/14 years) for students in vocational training schools (VMBO - basisvorming). However some of the history text books used do not deal with the period of the Second World War.
- In general all students at secondary school level in the 3rd form (14/15 years) for students preparing for higher education at college or university (Havo and VWO – basisvorming)
- Students (Havo and VWO) that elect history for their final exams (20% of the 40% that follow this higher level of secondary school education). [cijfers navragen bij VGN/OC&W]

6. **How many hours are allocated to teaching and learning about the Holocaust in schools?**

At primary school level this will depend entirely on the teacher and on whether project lessons are devoted to the Second World War and/or the Holocaust. Some teachers will just spend four weeks of history lessons on WWII (max. of four hours, of which maybe one on the Holocaust) but most will spend more time on this period. Some schools will spend a good part of a whole school day during several weeks working on projects related to the history and the commemoration of the war, including the Holocaust.

At the secondary level schools will spend 6 to 20 history lessons on the period 1933 – 1945. The time devoted to this period will depend partly on the level of the students, partly on the text book that is used and will be determined by choices made by the teacher. Some schools will work on a cross curricular project connected to WWII – this is however the exception. Many of the students at vocational training schools will not have any lessons on the Second World War and the Holocaust.

There is no extensive research to substantiate these rough indications. However a recent report that included interviews of just ten history teachers supports the general outline given above and that corresponds with the overall idea that those working in the field have.

7. **In what areas of study (history, literature, sociology, and theology) is the Holocaust taught? In each case, briefly outline the rationale for teaching the Holocaust in this particular subject area.**

**History**
The Holocaust is taught within the framework of 20th century history, dealing with totalitarian regimes in general. More specifically it is taught within the history of the Third Reich and the racist ideology of the Nazis and it is taught within the history of the Occupation of the Netherlands.

**Literature**
Dutch post World War Two literature is permeated by the years of occupation and the mass murder of the Dutch Jews. Each and every major novelist has written at least one, but often more, novels that centre on themes such as collaboration and resistance to Nazi occupation; to the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands; betrayal and/or help to those that the persecuted etc. Several successful novels have been made into movies. Although there are no Dutch text books for pupils dealing only with these themes, some teachers will spend time discussing how different authors present this period in history.

**Religious Studies (Levensbeschouwelijke vakken)**
Some schools will go into the history of the Holocaust when they are studying the history of Judaism. In all the text books on religious education there is a chapter on Judaism and Jewish history. Most of these text books devote a few paragraphs on the history of antisemitism and the Holocaust. Many teachers will spend more time on this, by showing films and discussing the Holocaust with their classes.

8. **a) What historical, pedagogical and didactic training is provided to teachers of the Holocaust at either the university level or the professional development level in your country?**

Within universities and teaching training colleges students are free to choose from many courses and can in that way put together their own program within the limits set by a particular bachelors or masters degree.

Courses on the history of the Holocaust have been given at the history faculties at different universities for several decades, but until recently there was not a specialized institute offering courses each year and at different levels.

The prime task of the newly established Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies (CHGS - 2003) are academic research and academic teaching. In its first year (September 2003-September 2004) of its existence the CHGS taught 150 students at the BA-level at the University of Amsterdam and taught 6 students at the MA-level.
Teachers training institutes across the country offer courses on the history of the Holocaust and WWII (focusing on the history, or more specifically on the pedagogy of teaching about this period) at irregular intervals but most students will not follow such a course. The Ministry for Health, Welfare and Sports is currently engaged in negotiations with the institutions that are involved in the professional development of teachers in order to secure that Holocaust education becomes a part of the curriculum.

8 b) How many teacher-training sessions are held each year, and how many teachers are involved?

There is no regular in-service training. Partly this can be explained by the limited time allotted to teachers to follow in-service training. History teachers will mostly follow courses given in connection with the subjects set for the national history exam, which changes every two years. (i.e. 2003/2004: Industrial Revolution in Lancaster, the war in Vietnam)

Most teacher-training dealing with WOII and the Holocaust is linked to the publication of new teaching materials and organized by the publishing NGO. The Association of Dutch History Teachers and the publishers of history text books organize yearly conferences at which most years, a workshop on teaching about the Holocaust or WWII will be on offer. These workshops are given by educators working at historical sites or teachers that have a specific expertise in this field.

In the autumn of 2005 the CHGS and the Anne Frank House will jointly organize four one-day seminars for teachers at four historical sites/museums in the different regions of the Netherlands.

c) What funding is available for training in the teaching of the Holocaust in your country?

Most projects concerning the Holocaust are funded by The Ministry for Health, Welfare and Sports/Department for EOH or by private foundations. The available funding is limited to some tens of thousands of Euros per calendar year.

9. Has your country instituted a national Holocaust Memorial Day? If so, in which ways is this day marked and commemorated? What difficulties have you encountered in establishing this day of remembrance in the national consciousness?

There is no national Holocaust Memorial Day in the Netherlands as such. The commemoration of the Holocaust is tied into the national remembrance of all the Dutch victims of the war. The Netherlands has it’s own way of commemorating the Second World War and celebrating the country’s liberation from five years of occupation. Unlike most countries the Netherlands sets aside two days to mark these events – the 4th and 5th of May. The first is a day of solemn commemoration; the second a day of public rejoicing with the young at the centre of attention. After a day of looking back to the past, the focus is then on the future.

On May 4 1946 the end of the war in the previous year was commemorated across the country. In 1954 this date was officially established. At eight o’clock in the evening people all over the country gather at war memorials in their own communities and at the stork of eight a two-minute silence is observed. A national ceremony is held in Amsterdam with a memorial service held in the Nieuwe Kerk in Dam Square. The ceremony is attended by the Queen, members of parliament and people from more than 100 organisations representing the different groups in society who were affected by the war. After the two-minute silences wreaths are laid at the foot of the national monument in Dam Square. This national and many of the local events are broadcast live on television and radio.

The close of Remembrance Day signals the start of Liberation Day, commemorating Germany’s capitulation on 5 May 1945. War veterans gather in Wageningen, where the historic documents were signed. 5 May is a national holiday. The only other national holiday in the Netherlands is the queen’s official birthday, celebrated on 30 April.

Special Liberation Day events are organised all over the country. Two highlights of the day are the official launch of the celebrations – held in a different province each year – and the open-air concert to mark their conclusion. Traditionally held on the Amstel river in Amsterdam and broadcast live on television, the concert is attended by the queen and members of the government.

Many local authorities organise special events for their own communities and thirteen liberation festivals are held in each province of the country. These liberation festivals feature both Dutch and international artists and are especially popular with the young. Liberation Day events centre on a different theme each
year. Civil rights was an important theme in the early 1990’s. In recent years emphasis was placed on the concept of freedom, that cannot be taken for granted.

In 1986 the Dutch government established the National 4 and 5 May Committee, in which four government ministeries are represented. The committee is responsible for organising Remembrance Day and Liberation Day.

15 August is also an important commemorative date. This is the date on which Japan capitulated and the Dutch East Indies (now the Republic of Indonesia) returned to Dutch sovereignty. The civilian and military victims of the war against Japan and the Japanese occupation are honored on this date at the national monument in the Hague.

As the Netherlands was liberated at different times - the southern provinces were liberated in the autumn of 1944 - different parts of the country also celebrate their own liberation, alongside the national days of remembrance and liberation.

The victims of the Holocaust are commemorated at the Auschwitz commemoration held each year on the Sunday nearest to the 27th of February. The ceremony held at the Auschwitz monument in Amsterdam is organised by the Dutch Auschwitz Committee and attended by the Mayor of Amsterdam and government representatives. The commemoration on Yom Ha Shoah is held in the Hollandse Schouwburg, the site where the Jews of Amsterdam were held before they were sent to the transit camp in Westerbork.

Other important commemorations that are given national news coverage each year are February 25th (commemoration of the February Strike in 1941, the protest against the persecution of the Dutch Jews), November 9 (Kristallnacht commemoration at the Monument to the Jewish Resistance in Amsterdam), ceremonies in the former concentration camps in Westerbork and Vught. In 2005 the names of all the victims of the Holocaust were read in the days and nights prior to the Auschwitz Commemoration on January 27. The reading started in Amsterdam at the Hollandse Schouwburg (where Jews were concentrated before deportation to Westerbork) and then continued in Westerbork.

10. Has your country established a national Holocaust memorial and/or museum? What numbers of students visit this memorial/museum each year?

There is no Holocaust museum in the Netherlands but several sites and museums that are devoted to the commemoration and education of the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands and/or other aspects of the Occupation.

In 1947 three former concentration camps in the Netherlands, Westerbork, Vught and Amersfoort were designated to be national monuments. Now each of these sites has an exhibition and educational facilities. There are three ‘Resistance museums’ that focus on different aspects of the history of occupation, the War Museum, on a former battle ground and a museum dedicated to all aspects of the war in the former Dutch East Indies (Indisch Huis).

Hollandse Schouwburg (part of the Jewish Historical Museum)
Anne Frank House
Indisch Huis
Resistance Museum, Amsterdam
Resistance Museum, Leeuwaarden
Resistance Museum, Gouda
War Museum Overloon
Groesbeek
Fort ‘t Bilt

11. Please estimate the percentage of students in your country who visit authentic sites, and list three primary sources of funding available in your country for visits to authentic sites.

Mostly sites that are visited are within the country and schools will fund the costs for the visit (travel costs, program costs and in some cases entrance fees for the museum) from their own budget. However there are also local councils and private foundations that will cover (some of) the costs. In some cases the local
Orange vereniging’ or the local ‘4 & 5 May committee’ (committees that organise the commemoration and/or the celebration of the Queens birthday) will (help) finance the costs.

The Foundation for the February Strike (referring to the strike against anti-Jewish measures in 1941) finances the travel costs for schools to several of the authentic sites and museum in the Netherlands (upto …? Schools use this possibility per year).

A small amount of schools visit concentration camps in Germany or Poland. These visitis are sometimes organized by the organisations set up by former concentration camp prisoners. For example the Ravensbrück Committee has taken schools groups to Ravensbrück for the last seven years. Such projects are financed by different foundations and by local and national government support. This is also the case for the individual schools that organize a visit to a former concentration camp.

12. What are the three major textbooks used in teaching the Holocaust in your country? How many pages do your school textbooks allocate to the Holocaust, and on which aspects do they focus?

There are four textbooks used in history teaching that together serve the vast majority of the schools: Sprekend Verleden (Living history), Memo, Sporen (Tracks) and Sfinx.

Sprekend Verleden dedicates 21 pages to the ‘World Wars in the 20th century’. This part is divided into four chapters: The First World War, The causes of the Second World War, Comparing WWI and WWII and the Netherlands under German Occupation. The period of occupation is divided in four phases, with each phase leading to worse relations between the Nazi’s and the Dutch population. In the second phase the systematic registration and isolation of Jews took place (anti-Jewish decrees), leading to the concentration of Jews in the transit concentration camps of Westerbork and Vught. In the third phase the deportation of the Jews took place.

Memo dedicates 20 pages to the chapter ‘The Second World War’. This chapter is divided into the following parts:

- Humiliation and Crisis;
- Hitler’s Rise to Power;
- War breaks out;
- Europa at war;
- The Persecution of the Jews;
- File: Germany – the Netherlands
- Choice: The Bomb
- Box: Two Resistance Fighters

The paragraphs that deal with the persecution of the Jews explain how starting in the 1930’s Jews were persecuted ever more brutally in the Third Reich and in the occupied countries, leading to the ‘industrial destruction’ in Auschwitz.

Sfinx dedicates 20 pages to the chapter ‘The Second World War that is divided in the following parts:

- Introduction;
- The way to War
- German Successes
- The Netherlands Occupied
- A Difficult Liberation
- How the Jews were persecuted
- Hitler, Monster or Human?
- The War in the Pacific
- War Art
- Fascism through the centuries.

Sporen dedicates 43 pages to the chapter Dictatorship and Democracy in Germany that is subdivided into the following themes:

- Democracy and dictatorship
- Economic crisis
- Unavoidable War
The texts books either choose to look at the Holocaust within the context of the history of the Third Reich, or they focus on the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands within the context of the history of the occupation.

13. **What strategies of differentiation are typically used to make the study of the Holocaust accessible to students of different ages and with different learning needs?**

Age appropriate:

One way in which teaching materials are adapted to the students’ age and in this way aim to be age appropriate, is by telling the personal stories of people that have the students own age.

Starting in 1990 several projects have focused on using the stories of eye-witnesses (on video), taking people that had the age of children now during the war years. For example the project ‘Child at War’ collected seven video portraits with accompanying teaching materials using the personal stories of people aged 10 – 14. This teaching material was aimed at 10-14 year olds.

The project ‘Eyewitness’ contained the personal stories of seven people that had been 14 – 18 years old during WWII and was focused on that age group.

Different learning needs

The vast majority of additional learning materials concerning WWII and the Holocaust are developed for students following the highest level of education. In recent years more materials have been developed for the lower level of learning skills. One example is the comic book ‘De Ontdekking’ (2004) that covers the main themes of the history of occupation through the lives of one Dutch family and their friends. The comic book goes hand in hand with lessons based on historical photos that many of the drawings in the comic were taken from.

In 2004 and 2005 several institutions have produced exhibitions, books and CD-roms that focus on the history of the Moroccan participation in the Allied forces. Some teachers feel that it is difficult to engage second generation immigrant students in the history of the Holocaust as it is not ‘their history’. These materials have been developed to make the history of WWII and the Holocaust a ‘shared’ history, that is relevant to all students.

The website [www.spion.nl](http://www.spion.nl) contains an overview of all the additional teaching materials available in the Netherlands. It is possible to select the materials per theme and the class level the materials have been made for.

In recent years many Dutch internet sites provide information on the Holocaust for students. Many institutions (authentic sites & museums) will give background information that can be used for projects. The National Comité for the 4th and 5th May for example has an often visited site in Dutch and English ([www.tellingsilence.nl](http://www.tellingsilence.nl)) that contains thirty-eight portraits of people explaining what the commemoration or the Second World War means to them.

14. **How far and in what ways is your country's own national history integrated into the teaching of the Holocaust?**

The history of the Occupation is central to the teaching of the Holocaust in the Netherlands. In school text books two approaches can be found. Either the Holocaust is integrated in the chapters about Nazi Germany and the racist state, of it is integrated in the chapter on the history of occupation of the Netherlands and the deportation and mass murder of the Jews from the Netherlands. To a certain extent this focus on what happened in the Netherlands is limiting. For example the NGO’s that make additional teaching materials and the school text books rarely discuss the history of the ghettos in Eastern Europe or the Einsatz groups. The focus is very much on Western Europe and specifically the national context. Few teachers take a wider approach to discuss the Holocaust in a European context.
15. What are the three major obstacles to teaching and learning about the Holocaust in your country?

Please also provide a supplementary overview of no more than two pages summarising the state of Holocaust education in your country, to give context to your answers to the above questions. You may wish to include: what progress has been made in recent years; what impact (if any) membership of the ITF has had on your country; and how existing obstacles to improving Holocaust education may be overcome in the future.