

NETHERLANDS

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The Educational Training and Software Market

In the 1990s, government cutbacks caused the Dutch educational system to take a technological backseat to its European counterparts. Today, government support for the integration of technology and education is a high priority. This shift has spurred demand for educational training and software in the Netherlands and created opportunities for Canadian suppliers.

Market Overview

To improve the quality of education, the Dutch government implemented "Investing in Progress", an action plan to integrate information and communication technology (ICT) into education. The objectives of the plan include the creation of a national educational network — *KennisNet*, teacher training, and the development of educational software for the national curriculum. The plan, funded to 2010, will eventually result in a ratio of

one computer to every 10 school-children; the ratio in teacher training establishments will be one computer to every three students; and ICT will become a standard part of the primary school arithmetic and language teaching curriculums.

The plan also calls for the decentralization of the central government's power, which will allow schools to decide on investments in hardware, training and software. In 1999, the government began to grant structural compensation on a per student or participant basis in schools for information technology (IT) training. The funds are to be used at the institution's discretion for IT-related training and equipment. Funding also includes \$12 million per year to be allocated for the development of IT learnware.

Market Access

Few Canadian educational software developers have penetrated the Dutch market. However, an upcoming bilateral agreement between Industry Canada and the Netherlands Ministry of Education includes an educational software exchange project that will create opportunities for Canadian suppliers of innovative learnware. Paving the way to this market is a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Canada and the Netherlands in the Fall of 2001.

Opportunities

Opportunities exist for Canadian content and software developers to partner with Dutch companies on government-funded initiatives. Dutch students generally have an excellent command of English and French by the age of 18. As a result, Canadian software producers may sell their products to schools and students without major adaptations.

At the primary level, a shortage of suitable educational software has created demand for programs that promote basic learning. Elementary schools prefer software packages closely related to the curriculum. The educational software currently available to elementary schools is used for mathematics, language and geography. Schools prefer to buy new software for these subjects, while the upper grades are more interested in software developed for English, history and science.

At the secondary level, schools prefer software closely related to the curriculum and the textbooks used. Most teachers look for software that

supports all aspects of the teaching and learning process.

See Potential?

To learn more about this market, please read *The Educational Training and Software Market in the Netherlands*, prepared by the Market Research Centre of the Trade Commissioner Service. This report and hundreds of others are available on-line at
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