EUROPE · NETHERLANDS · NON-EEA PHARMACY DEGREE ROUTE

NL How to register as a pharmacist in Netherlands

To work as a pharmacist you must be registered in the BIG-register. With a degree from outside the EEA you first need a verklaring van vakbekwaamheid (certificate of professional competence), issued after an assessment by the CBGV expert commission. Licence or registration: **BIG registration as apotheker (pharmacist)**. Regulator: **BIG-register, run by CIBG for the Ministry of Health (VWS)**. Every fact was checked against official sources on **20 November 2026**.

ROUTE CHANGED IN 2024 The AKV test was removed on 1 January 2024. You now send Dutch (B2+) and English reading (B2) certificates with your application. The BI-toets applies only to doctors, dentists and nurses, not pharmacists. The application is free now, but costs €102.86 from 1 January 2027.

Who decides what	
CIBG / BIG-register	Runs the procedure for the Minister of Health, issues the certificate of professional competence and registers you as apotheker.
CBGV	Independent expert commission that assesses your education and experience, may interview you and advises on the decision.
Nuffic	May evaluate your diploma when CIBG asks. You do not arrange this yourself.
IND and Dutch embassy	The IND decides residence permits. The embassy in Islamabad issues the MVV entry visa sticker. Separate from registration.
Employer	Decides hiring and, as recognised sponsor, applies for a work-based permit. A certificate is not a job offer.

Who can apply

- A completed pharmacy qualification from outside the EEA, plus a document showing you are authorised to practise in the country that issued it.
- Dutch at B2+ and English reading at B2 before you apply. CIBG advises waiting until both certificates are ready.
- Work experience is not a fixed requirement, but the CBGV weighs it with extra training when comparing your degree with Dutch training.
- Two applicants with the same diploma can receive different advice, because each file is assessed individually.
- You can apply from abroad using a BIG login if you have no Dutch citizen service number (BSN) for DigiD.

The steps, with approximate time and cost

1. **Reach Dutch at level B2+**
   Pharmacy is an academic profession, so you need B2+ in reading, writing, speaking and listening from a BIG-listed provider, or CNaVT abroad. Certificate under 2 years old.
   Time: 12–24 months (est.) · Cost: set by provider

2. **Prove English reading at B2**
   IELTS 5.5–6.0, TOEFL 72–94, Cambridge 160–179 or British Council EnglishScore, with a reading part. Certificate under 2 years old.
   Time: 1–3 months (est.) · Cost: set by test body

3. **Apply for the verklaring van vakbekwaamheid**
   Apply online with a BIG login or DigiD. Send diploma, course overview, syllabus, proof you may practise, language certificates and translations.
   Time: next step in 4 weeks · Cost: free until 31.12.26

4. **Assessment by the CBGV**
   Nuffic may evaluate your diploma. The commission reviews your education and experience, may interview you, then advises. There is no BI-toets for pharmacists.
   Time: 6–18 months overall

5. **Complete any training the CBGV sets**
   If there are gaps, the decision can require extra training, an adaptation internship or a practical skills test. Courses last 3 months to 2 years.
   Time: 3 months–2 years · Cost: set by provider

6. **Register as apotheker**
   With a positive certificate, register in the BIG-register before you start work. Fee €85.00, rising to €124.46 on 1 January 2027.
   Time: 1–2 months (est.) · Cost: €85.00

Typical total: About 2–4 years (est.)

Language requirements

- Dutch: level B2+ for academic professions such as pharmacist, covering reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Accepted Dutch proof: a B2+ certificate from an institution on the BIG-register list, the CNaVT exam abroad, or proof that you were educated in Dutch.
- English reading at B2: IELTS 5.5–6.0, TOEFL 72–94, Cambridge 160–179 or EnglishScore. Pharmacists are not named in this table, so confirm with CIBG.
- All certificates must be passed and no older than 2 years.

Read this before you plan

- Certificate ≠ registration ≠ visa ≠ job. The verklaring is not a licence: you must still register in the BIG-register, and neither gives a right to live or work.
- Pharmacists may not work as a pharmacist before BIG registration. Residence is decided by the IND, and hiring by the employer.
- Highly skilled migrant permits need an employer who is an IND recognised sponsor and a salary at the yearly threshold. Nothing in this process is guaranteed.

Exams, costs and documents

Checked 20 November 2026

Exam pattern and mode: online, test centre or onsite

Dutch language certificate (B2+)

TEST CENTRE

- Reading, writing, speaking and listening
- Level B2+ for academic professions
- Only BIG-listed B2+ providers or CNaVT
- Pass grade needed; under 2 years old
- Attendance certificates not accepted

At BIG-listed B2+ providers in the Netherlands. From abroad only CNaVT is accepted, held once a year in May. No Pakistan venue confirmed.

English reading certificate (B2)

TEST CENTRE

- Must include a reading component
- IELTS 5.5–6.0 or TOEFL 72–94
- Cambridge 160–179 or EnglishScore
- Certificate under 2 years old
- Course attendance alone not accepted

IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge or British Council EnglishScore, sat with the test provider. CIBG does not list venues; check the provider for Pakistan.

Official fees	Amount
Certificate of competence application Application and CBGV assessment are free in 2026	**€102.86 from 2027**
BIG registration One-off registration fee after a positive certificate; €124.46 from 1 January 2027	**€85.00 (2026)**
Language certificates Dutch B2+ and English reading B2, paid to the exam provider; not set by CIBG	**set by provider**
IND highly skilled migrant permit First application, usually filed by the employer as recognised sponsor	**€423.00**
IND orientation year permit Only for eligible graduates, see the visa section	**€254.00**

IND fees change every 1 January. Translations, certified copies, Dutch courses, extra training and living costs are extra.

Documents usually required

- Profession-specific appendix, if one exists for pharmacists
- Pharmacy diploma, original or certified copy
- Course overview of your degree (transcript)
- Syllabus showing your name, study years and course content
- Certified copy of your passport
- Proof you are authorised to practise in the country of training
- Dutch B2+ and English B2 reading certificates
- CV and signed employer statements of experience (desired)
- Translations of documents not in Dutch or English

Expected time

- After you submit, CIBG tells you the next step within 4 weeks. The full certificate procedure takes 6 months to 1.5 years on average.
- Without a BI-toets, the commission decides within 6 weeks of receiving your file for advice. You then have 2 weeks to respond to the intended decision.
- Extra training, if required, lasts 3 months to 2 years. Language study before applying usually takes longest.

Typical total: About 2–4 years (est.)

If the CBGV finds gaps

- The CBGV can advise extra training, an adaptation internship or a practical skills test before a positive certificate.
- CIBG states that additional courses can last between 3 months and 2 years.
- Utrecht University states that holders of a non-EEA pharmacy degree must first complete the Dutch master Farmacie to register. Ask CIBG what applies to you.
- Entry to a Dutch master needs a Nuffic evaluation and, at Utrecht, Dutch at B2+/C1. University fees are separate.

Visas, pay and next steps

Checked 20 November 2026

Immigration route (separate from registration)	What official sources say	Status
Highly skilled migrant (kennismigrant)	Needs a job with an IND recognised sponsor. 2026 gross monthly salary: €5,942.00 at 30 or older, €4,357.00 under 30. You must also hold BIG registration to work as a pharmacist. IND fee €423.00.	Changes yearly
EU Blue Card	Needs a job offer at a salary of €5,942.00 gross per month in 2026 (reduced criterion €4,754.00). Registration is still required to practise. IND fee €423.00.	Changes yearly
Orientation year (zoekjaar)	One year to look for work, with free access to the labour market. Only for recent graduates of Dutch programmes or of designated top-200 foreign universities, with a Nuffic evaluation. Fee €254.00.	Open
MVV entry visa	After the IND approves a permit, its letter says where to collect the MVV sticker. You then have 3 months to apply at the embassy.	Open

If you are applying from Pakistan

- You can collect an MVV at the Dutch embassy in Islamabad only if your IND approval letter says so, within 3 months of that letter.
- Book by email to isl-ca@minbuza.nl, subject 'Mvv appointment request', with your V number, name, contact details and the IND letter.
- Issuing the MVV sticker can take up to 10 working days. Passports can be collected at the embassy or a Gerry's collection centre.
- Pakistani documents are legalised by Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Islamabad or camp offices in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar or Quetta.
- Legalisation does not prove a document is genuine. The IND or other Dutch bodies may verify it themselves.

Pay and funding

- Employed pharmacists fall under the collective agreement Cao Apothekers in Dienstverband, 1 March 2025 to 31 March 2027, with rises of 4.25% on 1 April 2026 and 1% on 1 September 2026.
- The salary tables are published by KNMP as PDF annexes. We did not verify the exact euro amounts, so no figure is printed here.
- It is a minimum agreement: actual pay depends on employer, role and region.

Avoid these common mistakes

- Following old guides that mention the AKV test. It was replaced by language certificates on 1 January 2024.
- Preparing for a BI-toets. It applies to doctors, dentists and nurses, not pharmacists.
- Applying before both language certificates are ready, or using a certificate older than 2 years.
- Treating the certificate of competence as permission to work. BIG registration comes first.
- Assuming a certificate or registration brings a visa or a job. The IND and employers decide those.

How ASGHCA supports you

- International Career Mapping: consult, assess, roadmap, prepare
- Documentation and registration guidance
- English test preparation: IELTS, PTE and OET
- 1-on-1 mentorship, CV and interview support
- Webinars, CPD sessions and a lifetime community

ASGHCA offers education and guidance. Regulated immigration advice is referred to authorised professionals.

Official sources, all checked 20 November 2026: english.bigregister.nl: certificate of competence procedure, tests, Dutch language proficiency, English reading skills, supporting documents, processing time and costs, CBGV, AKV news (18 Jul 2023) · knmp.nl: recognition of foreign diplomas, Cao Apothekers in Dienstverband · uu.nl: master Farmacie, non-Dutch diploma · ind.nl: required amounts 2026, orientation year, fees · netherlandsworldwide.nl: MVV apply Pakistan, legalisation of Pakistani documents.

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