

## New Initial Judicial Programme in The Netherlands

# A summary of the preliminary phase

The preliminary phase - which covers the first three months of the new Initial Judicial Programme - is an innovative component that covers multiple fields of law. Following these three months, trainee judges will have become acquainted with the full breadth of the judge's profession and the judicial system, they will know exactly which skills and competencies they still need to develop, and - within the context of a work team - will have established a basis with other trainee judges to share knowledge and intervision throughout their later careers. Trainees will then also have mapped out their own route towards becoming a judge in a thorough Personal Learning Plan (PLP).

### What do trainee judges do during the preliminary phase?

During the preliminary phase, trainee judges will spend roughly half of their time in the workplace at their own courts. They do this within the field of law in which they will also spend the first period of the main phase of the programme (the work-training environment). They will spend the other half of their time 'off the job' with other trainee judges from their jurisdiction (work team) and on individual training programmes and courses. The preliminary phase also includes a joint Induction Week and a brief Public Prosecution Service internship.

Within their own courts, trainee judges will write real draft judgements, under the guidance and supervision of their practical trainers. They will also jointly prepare court sessions. The complexity of the cases is selected to suit the level of experience and legal knowledge that each trainee judge can contribute. No further legal subject matter will be taught as part of the course until the main phase. However, in the preliminary phase trainee judges will analyse where they particularly need to acquire additional knowledge in each field of law. At this stage they are still free from productivity pressure, so they can look into which options they could choose to resolve disputes, learn about the decision-making process in chambers and how to reach judgements.

Under the guidance of SSR's core trainer, they will spend a lot of time in the preliminary phase thinking about judges' traditional and magisterial competencies. Trainee judges will learn about *judge craft*, both on their own and together with other trainee judges in their work team. They will also learn about the importance of reflection and intervision for judges to form proper judgements. The emphasis here is not on concealing knowledge and skills gaps, but on identifying them. This specifically involves looking at multiple fields of law simultaneously. In a stimulating working environment, trainee judges will work on their own learning plans and answer the question: 'is being a judge really the right thing for me?'.

### What is the preliminary phase for?

An introductory period when trainee judges can learn about what it takes to become a judge will give them a clearer view of the road ahead. This enables trainee judges to direct their own programme and tailor the teaching on offer to suit the knowledge and experience they already have. An intensive introduction to the judicial system enables trainee judges to decide at a relatively early stage whether becoming a judge really is what they want to do. The degree of responsibility they must take for their own programme reflects the position that they will assume later as judges. How the programme reflects the profession, and

how the programme is tailored to the knowledge students already have, are seen by educational experts as critical factors to successful education.

The preliminary phase is also an opportunity to lay the groundwork for a learning and working culture which emphasises working together, open communication and intervision. This makes the new programme better suited to training future judges who can respond to the demands of a changing society. The preliminary phase is an example of the culture shift that is a key aspect of the new programme and that will in turn take the judicial system as a whole in a new direction.

### Structure of the preliminary phase

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13
Induction Week	Learning environment (SSR)						Public Prosecution Service internship	Learning environment (SSR)					
	Work-training environment (court)							Work-training environment (court)					