The Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market (ROA) is a research institute of Maastricht University School of Business and Economics. Through its research, the institute aims to improve the understanding of the relationship between education and the labour market. More specifically, ROA studies the effects of knowledge and skills acquired in education and other learning situations in three areas, namely the interaction between labour demand and supply, occupational careers, and performance within organisations. With these studies ROA aims to contribute to both academic discussions and the public debate on education and labour market issues.

This leaflet describes ROA’s research activities, which are divided into four programmes: Education and Occupational Career, Training and Employment, Dynamics of the Labour Market and Human Capital in the Region.

Education and occupational career
The focus of this programme is twofold. It studies the development of competences during education and the transition from school to work, as well as the subsequent occupational careers. Within this framework, a large-scale survey among school-leavers and graduates who entered the labour market is carried out annually. These surveys cover the entire spectrum of education and are considered the most influential data source on school-to-work transitions in the Netherlands. The data obtained are used by Ministries and other relevant organisations (such as the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences and the Association of Universities in the Netherlands). The data also play an important role in the quality assurance and accreditation of individual educational institutes.

Besides the main focus on transition research, this ROA programme also takes a wider life-course perspective. It analyses educational careers, competence development in education and its relation with programme characteristics as well as long term outcomes of education on occupational careers, and their effects on other domains of the life-course.

Training and employment
The relationship between developments in the labour market on the one hand, and the acquisition of qualifications and skill obsolescence in workers, job-seekers and non-participants on the other, is the research focus of the Training and Employment programme. This development of human resources is analysed from the perspective of both employees and employers. From the employees’ point of view, the relationships between human capital development and wages, job satisfaction and mobility are studied. From the employers’ perspective, productivity, returns to training investments and the substitutability of educational groups are analysed. Also the Human Resource practices that organisations use to improve the productivity of their workforce are considered in the research. Specific areas of interest include industry studies, apprenticeships, job–worker mismatches, technology and training, training and retirement, informal learning, skill obsolescence, employability, labour market segmentation and Human Resource Management. Research has been conducted in several economic sectors, such as the metal and electronics industries, pharmacies, call centres and the public sector.

Dynamics of the Labour Market
ROA’s third research programme focuses on the way the labour market functions by distinguishing between labour demand and supply, and more in particular by analysing the effects of education and training on labour market outcomes. With respect to labour demand we study the allocation of skills in the labour market, skill biased technological and organisational change, and related changes in the distribution of productivities and wages of individuals. The research on labour supply analyses the impact of employment perspectives on individual behaviour, such as educational and occupational choice, labour force participation (discouraged worker effect), occupational mobility, retirement of older workers, and international mobility of graduates and workers. An effort is made to increase the transparency of the labour market for individuals, employers, employment agencies and policy makers, by providing information on current and future developments in the labour market. This information is often arranged according to education and occupation. In this context, the effects of changes in behaviour and policies are also analysed.

Human capital in the region
Human capital investments made at the regional level are important to match labour supply and demand, and to increase labour participation and productivities of the work force. Due to demographic transitions, particularly in the form of population ageing, the decreasing number of young people may fall short to replace the number of older workers who retire. The problems faced differ by level of education. Higher educated workers are important for a regional labour market as drivers of economic growth. Their high geographic mobility creates opportunities as well as threats for shrinking regions. Workers with low and intermediate education levels are often largely dependent on their own region, which makes them vulnerable for shifts in the structure of employment. Young people should earn vocational qualifications that correspond with the regional labour demand, so that a minimum of human capital is wasted.

Research questions concern the optimal guidance and development of the available human capital in the region, differentiated by education, sex, age and origin, for the jobs that are made available as a result of the demographic transition. Employers, schools, local governments and private and public employment services should cooperate at the regional level to improve the transition between the labour market and the education system in the region. Good schools and teachers are required to educate young people and optimally prepare them for the needs on the labour market.

Fundamental research
ROA’s research is part of the research programme of the Graduate School GSBE of Maastricht University’s School of Business and Economics (SBE). On the basis of their scientific publications, several ROA staff members have been appointed as GSBE fellows.

Fundamental research projects are set up by ROA, often in the form of PhD and postdoc studies, supporting the subsidised and contract research carried out within the four research programmes. For most PhD studies, funding is obtained from GSBE and NWO. PhDs also benefit from ROA’s Research Fellows. The latter also contribute to the ROA Research Memorandum Series and our weekly research seminars.