

Late-career mobility in the Netherlands: the impact of institutions and policies

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NEDERLANDSTALIGE SAMENVATTING

De tewerkstellingspatronen van de Nederlandse oudere werknemers vertonen twee belangrijke karakteristieken. Aan de ene kant, in tegenstelling tot België, is de activiteitsgraad van oudere werknemers (55-64 jaar) sterk toegenomen tijdens het laatste decennium. Aan de andere kant lijkt de mobiliteit van die werknemers op het eerste gezicht niet significant hoger dan in België. Met andere woorden, mobiliteit en een hogere activiteitsgraad lijken niet verbonden met elkaar.

De twee karakteristieken zijn sterk ingebed in het Nederlandse mobiliteitsregime, dat op zijn beurt gekenmerkt wordt door:

- een gemiddeld niveau van ontslagbescherming, waarbij de verplichting bestaat om bij collectief ontslag sociale plannen te onderhandelen die de transitie van de ontslagen werknemers naar een andere job faciliteren;
- een beroepssysteem waarbij een duidelijk onderscheid wordt gemaakt tussen het verplicht onderwijs, waarvoor de staat verantwoordelijk is, en de beroepsopleiding van volwassenen, die essentieel als een gedeelde taak van werkgevers en werknemers wordt gezien;
- een op activering gericht arbeidsmarktbeleid, waar de privé-sector een belangrijke rol speelt als dienstverlener en waar werkgevers als mede verantwoordelijk worden geacht bij de ongeschiktheid van hun werknemers;
- een pensioenstelsel waar vervroegde uittreding wordt ontmoedigd en pensioenrechten transfereerbaar zijn doorheen verschillende functies.

De rode draad doorheen het mobiliteitsregime is de centrale rol van de sociale partners: in de Nederlandse beleidsvisie worden werknemers en werkgevers gezien als de verantwoordelijken voor de mobiliteit en activiteit van oudere werknemers, zij het door middel van sociale plannen (cf. gedwongen mobiliteit), de versterking van competenties, de responsabilisering bij ongeschiktheid en werkloosheid en de regulering van pensioenen in collectieve arbeidsovereenkomsten (CAO's). Daarbij nemen de sociale partners hun verantwoordelijkheid op vooral op CAO-niveau, zij het op sector- of bedrijfsniveau.

In het kader van het Nederlandse mobiliteitsregime moet de evolutie in de activiteitsgraad van oudere werknemers op de eerste plaats toegeschreven worden aan ingrijpende maatregelen met betrekking tot de afschaffing van vervroegde uittre-

ding en de verhoging van de pensioenleeftijd. Er zijn desalniettemin een aantal initiatieven die, zonder zulke grootschalige effecten te vertonen, inspiratie kunnen bieden voor het Vlaamse beleid:

1. Zowel op vlak van mobiliteitsbeleid (zonder onderscheid naar leeftijd) als tewerkstelling van oudere werknemers hebben er in Nederland intensieve reflectieprocessen plaatsgevonden op vlak van beleid. Die denkprocessen worden vaak in gang gezet door beleidsadviezen van onafhankelijke commissies (de Taskforce Ouderen en Arbeid, de Commissie Bakker) of organen (de Sociaal-Economische Raad). Die reflectieprocessen steunen op uitvoerig onderzoek (mobiliteit wordt vaak onderzocht) en gaan uit van een holistisch beeld van het beleid, waar de verschillende aspecten van werk en hun onderlinge relaties aan bod komen. Het concept 'duurzame inzetbaarheid', dat recent wordt toegepast in het Nederlandse beleidsdiscours, biedt een interessante kapstok voor die aspecten, vermits het mobiliteit, scholing en gezondheid omvat. Bovendien worden de verantwoordelijkheden van respectievelijk de sociale partners en de overheid expliciet geschetst bij elk proces.
2. Om 'harde' beleidsmaatregelen zoals de afschaffing van vervroegd pensioen te vervolledigen, worden er zachte maatregelen ingesteld, zoals de Regiegroep 'GrijsWerk', die als hoofdtaak het initiëren van een culturele verandering had. Daarnaast heeft het 'Vitaliteitssparen'-initiatief het fiscaal aanmoedigen van loopbaaninvesteringen en het faciliteren van transitie. Deze maatregel kadert bovendien in de trend naar individualisering van budgetten (i.e. 'loopbaanrugzakjes').
3. Om gedwongen mobiliteit te faciliteren heeft de overheid een netwerk van lokale mobiliteitscentra opgericht. Ze zijn ingebed in bestaande diensten (i.e. arbeidsbemiddeling), maar tegelijkertijd bekleden ze een preventieve rol bij gedwongen mobiliteit die verder gaat dan die diensten. Ze hebben als voornaamste rol het adviseren van werkgevers.
4. Op sectorniveau zijn de sociale partners actief bij het zoeken van manieren om langere loopbanen te stimuleren bij zware beroepen. Een eerste *best practice* in verband daarmee is het Tweede Loopbaanbeleid bij de brandweer, vastgelegd in een CAO. De loopbaanduur in een zware functie wordt beperkt tot twintig jaar, waarna werkgever en werknemer gezamenlijk verantwoordelijk zijn voor een transitie naar een tweede loopbaan. Daartoe worden er instrumenten zoals persoonlijke ontwikkelingsplannen, opleiding en erkenning van verworven competenties vanaf de aanwerving ingezet.
5. Ook op sectorniveau heeft het *Loopbaanproject bouw* plaatsgevonden. Daar worden transitie vergemakkelijkt van werknemers die ofwel een carrièrewending ambiëren (ambitie), ofwel in de arbeidsongeschiktheid dreigen te belanden (preventie). Het project wordt gekenmerkt door een intensieve trajectbegeleiding waarbij aandacht besteed wordt aan zowel loopbaangerelateerde aspecten zoals competenties, maar ook aan persoonlijke ontwikkeling en medische aspecten.

6. Op kleinere schaal worden er evenwel initiatieven ondernomen door de sociale partners, zoals kennisdeling tussen KMO's, adviesverlening met betrekking to loopbaanbewust personeelsbeleid, of samenwerking binnen bedrijfsterreinen om arbeidsoverschotten aan arbeidstekorten te koppelen.

Uit de Nederlandse case zijn er talrijke lessen te trekken met uitzicht op de Vlaamse context:

1. er is nood aan een diepgaande reflectie omtrent het concept 'mobiliteit' binnen de Vlaamse context. Daaraan moet een explicitering van de verwachtingen en verantwoordelijkheden van de sociale partners gekoppeld worden;
2. er is nood aan beleidsruimte om 'grijze zones' met betrekking tot de verantwoordelijkheid van de overheid en de sociale partners aan te pakken (zoals bij gedwongen mobiliteit);
3. zachte maatregelen zouden voorafgegaan worden door harde maatregelen om werkelijke gedragsverandering te produceren;
4. nieuwe beleidsmaatregelen zouden stapsgewijs geïntroduceerd moeten worden, door bij voorbeeld pilootprojecten die intensief opgevolgd en geëvalueerd worden;
5. er is een sterke nood aan coördinatie doorheen verschillende beleidsdomeinen, zowel op nationaal als sectorvlak;
6. er zijn andere manieren om met collectief ontslag om te gaan dan brugpensioen;
7. intersectorale mobiliteit kan onmogelijk vanzelf ontstaan. Er is met andere woorden nood aan een regisseur om die mobiliteit vanuit een hoger niveau te stimuleren. De sociale partners of de overheid op gewestniveau kan die rol opnemen;
8. er is nood aan een overkoepelende, duidelijke visie van mobiliteit die gedeeld wordt door de overheid en de sociale partners. Die visie kan als leidraad fungeren bij het ontwerpen van concrete beleidsmaatregelen;
9. mobiliteitsbeleid moet geïnformeerd zijn door wetenschappelijk onderbouwde kennis om specifieke doelstellingen op bijvoorbeeld sectorvlak te kunnen identificeren;
10. nieuwe beleidsmaatregelen worden best ingebed in bestaande structuren;
11. een sterk netwerk van privé-dienstverleners kan de allocatie van arbeid faciliteren bij gedwongen mobiliteit.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Even though the mobility of older workers in the Netherlands is not considerably higher than in Belgium, the Dutch case is worth looking at due to the fact that the government and the social partners have succeeded, in a relative short period, to increase the degree of activity of older workers (55-64 year) from 38.2% in 2000 to 55.1% in 2009 (European Commission, DG Employment Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2010). Hence, the Netherlands stands out as one of the countries to have experienced the sharpest rise in the proportion of active older workers (55-64 year) during the last decade.

Table 1.1 Basic indicators

		Netherlands	Belgium
Population over 65	% of working population	24.1	28.8
Public pension spending	% of GDP	4.7	8.9
Persons 55-64 in employment	% of population in age group (2010)	54.1	37.3
Participation in training of workers aged 55-64	% of the age group	8.5	13.6
Average exit age from the labour force		63.2	61.6
Average job tenure of workers aged 55-64	Years	21.0	24.2

Source: European Commission, DG Employment Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2010; OECD, 2011, 2012; 'OECD Statistics', n.d.

Although the sharp rise in older workers' degree of activity is, in the first place, the product of 'grand' fiscal and regulatory measures aimed at eliminating the incentives for early retirement and encouraging working longer, it is highly relevant to look at the broader policy landscape due to two reasons. First, the initial attention to the participation of older workers has given place to an emphasis on the allocation of those workers and opened thus a space for mobility as a policy priority. In other words, once participation has been achieved, attention is being focused on the features that participation should have. Second, the Dutch formal

institutional system shares several features with the Belgian and Flemish systems. In other words, the 'infrastructure' on which mobility policies are built (i.e. sector-level bodies and arrangements) is close to the Belgian one. This can provide us with valuable policy lessons.

The discussions about mobility in the Netherlands are characterised by a rather marginal governmental intervention. Given the predominant role of the social partners as regulators of the labour market and policy initiators, most new substantive initiatives take place at the sector, subsector or firm level, with collective agreements as main regulatory instrument.¹ Government interventions are often limited to fiscal support, without delineating, for instance, the concrete shape that post-initial schooling should adopt within firms.

In order to offer a complete overview of the Dutch approaches towards the mobility of older workers, this report makes two main distinctions. On the one hand, it distinguishes two interrelated policy domains, working life-enhancing and mobility policies, that have had an impact on older workers' degree of activity during the last twenty years. On the other hand, the report makes a distinction between general policy frameworks, where the basic tenets of the policies are described, and the concrete policies adopted by either the Dutch government or the social partners. It should be noted that policy frameworks are not exclusively adopted at the government level, given the importance of bipartite consultations and collective bargaining (cf. *infra*, Labour Foundation). It should be noted, however, that an exhaustive overview of collective agreement level initiatives is out of the scope of the paper, given their large number (688 in 2011) (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2011, p. 2).

The remainder of this report is structured along the lines of the two distinctions mentioned above. The following Chapter sets out the Dutch institutional background in order to frame the crucial policy role of the social partners. Chapter 3 zooms in working life-enhancing policies, both at the general and the specific level. Chapter 4 does the same for mobility policies. In Chapter 5 a number of best practices at the firm level are discussed. Chapter 6 concludes with the most relevant reflections and provides some policy recommendations for the Belgian context.

¹ Sectors in the Netherlands are defined as all firms active in a certain category of products or services. Given the fact that collective agreements and the arrangement and provision of services such as mobility centers (cf. *infra*) or training are situated at both the sector and firm level, we refer to them generically as the 'collective agreement level' in this report.

CHAPTER 2

INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

Even though the Netherlands can be characterised in the first place as a Coordinated Market Economy (CME), it can by no means be regarded as a 'typical' Conservative, Western-European regime, as it incorporates several ingredients germane to other systems such as the strong involvement of social partners in decision-making or the introduction of market principles in the provision of career guidance services. The cornerstone of that regime is the Wassenaar Agreement, signed in 1982, which marked an end to both the involvement of the state in collective wage negotiations and the confrontational relationship between the trade unions and the employers, and which can be regarded as the watershed between the economic crisis of the 1970s and the 'Dutch Miracle' (high growth rates and low unemployment) of the 1980s. The Agreement institutionalised the style of corporatism that would later be baptised as the 'Polder Model', and which relies on deliberation (Mulder & Tjepkema, 1999) and compromises between the social partners regarding, among other, wage formation.² The following paragraphs shed some light on the way in which the principles contained in the agreement, as well as other institutional components, have contributed to shape the current mobility regime in function of Buchholz, Hofäcker and Blossfeld's (2006) typology (cf. Paper 1).

1. Employment relations system

According to the most recent version of the OECD indicators (Venn, 2009), the Netherlands' level of protection is equivalent to the average of the OECD countries after having been considerably relaxed during the 1980s and 1990s, partially as a consequence of the flexibility and security law that increased the flexibility of fixed-term contracts and temporary work.

The features of Dutch employment protection can, as in the other cases of this project, be grouped into three general categories.

² The agreement ended automatic wage indexation and thus state involvement in collective wage bargaining.

First, there is specific system of protection for (permanent) workers against individual dismissal. Such a dismissal, when deemed fair, may be due to the employee's conduct or his unsuitability, or to economic redundancy (in which case the employer needs to release financial data and proof that alternatives to redundancy were considered).

Dismissal may occur in two ways, provided that the parties to the employment contract do not agree about ending it. On the one hand, the contract may be dissolved by the civil courts 'for important reasons'. Although the procedure is short (1-30 days before notice can start) and the administrative burden little, the severance pays imposed by the courts are high, as opposed to the alternative. On the other hand, the contract may also be dissolved by an administrative entity, the Public Employment Service (i.e. the former *Centrum voor Werk en Inkomen*, CWI, currently UWV WERKbedrijf), which performs a preventive check of the dismissal (EIRO, 2003). Even though it approves most dismissals (84% in 2003) and the severance pays it requires are lower than the civil courts, the procedure is longer (4 to 6 weeks) and notice periods apply (1 to 4 months depending on the number of years in employment). Courts are used in 50% of the cases (OECD, 2004).

Second, a collective dismissal is deemed to occur when 20 workers or more are dismissed over a period of three months by one employer in one employment service region. In that case, a duty exists to consult with the Works Council and the trade union delegation at the employer's. The regional employment office should be notified as well. Furthermore, a default 30 day-waiting period applies, during which negotiations for a social plan are conducted (social partners may choose to refrain from it through collective agreements). The social plan usually outlines transfers, retraining, early retirement and financial compensation (not required, but severance pays are often used in practice). The selection of those employees to be dismissed should follow a 'mirror-image' of the age distribution among the workforce (OECD, 2008).

Third, some specific regulations apply for temporary work. Although no restrictions apply to the use of fixed-term contracts, employers may only use a maximum of three successive fixed-term contracts that do not exceed a period of three years. Temporary Work Agency (TWA) employment is generally allowed, except for seamen. As in the case of fixed-term contracts, there is a maximum number of renewals for TWA contracts (eight, each for a period of three months), after which any further renewal automatically converts to a permanent contract with the TWA.³

³ In 1999, the flexibility and security law increased the maximum number of temporary contracts and lengthened the maximum duration of TWA contracts. The latter was subsequently shortened following EU legislation in 2001 (OECD, 2004), which had as main consequence an increase in the use of temporary contracts vis-à-vis TWA work.

2. Occupational system (training)

According to an expert quoted by Anderson and Hassel (2008, p. 17), the Dutch skills system is 'a pragmatic and opportunistic mix of elements borrowed from other countries'.⁴ That mix has been strongly influenced by historical developments going back to the dissolution of the guild system after the French occupation of the Netherlands in the 19th century (Trampusch, 2010, p. 207), as well as by the economic crisis of the 1970s which set in motion the deregulation principles contained in the Wassenaar Agreement.

Two main features of the system are relevant to our analysis:

- *Strong involvement of the social partners in the provision of vocational and on-the-job training.* After the signature of the Wassenaar Agreement in 1982, vocational education and on-the-job training came to be regarded as the joint responsibility of the social partners and the state.⁵ Vocational training was streamlined in 1994 by the Law on Education and Vocational Training (*Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs*, WEB), which enhanced the links between vocational training and the industry, which gained formal influence on the system. Moreover, the number of apprenticeships increased during the 1980s. Regarding on-the-job training, the agreement laid the ground for the introduction of training funds by means of collective agreements. Those training funds (O&O funds) at the collective agreement level,⁶ also present in other countries such as Belgium, are managed by bipartite committees. They are financed by contributions of all firms covered by the collective agreement (0.1 to 0.64% of the gross wage bill, with 40% of firms participating according to Anderson and Hassel (2008, p. 21), and may support training by either 'awarding collective training days for a certain sector', funding individual training days for workers or supporting training programs up to 50%. However, firms themselves do still finance the largest proportion of training, and the levies destined to the funds are partially spent on administration costs (Anderson & Hassel, 2008, p. 19-20; Smith & Billett, 2006, p. 8-9).

A recent study (Donker van Heel et al., 2008) found that most O&O funds (78%) conduct training activities. The nature of the training varies, although there is a trend towards more general, development-oriented training next to specific training. The training objectives are summarised below.

⁴ The German system of qualifications and apprenticeships, the French tradition of state intervention and the Anglo-Saxon emphasis on the role of schools.

⁵ The immediately preceding period had been characterised by a strong involvement of the state in the provision of vocational training, for which the basis had been laid in the 1963 Mammoth Law (van Lutsenburg Maas, 1964).

⁶ For a detailed description of the funds, see Donker van Heel et al. (2008).

Table 2.1 Training activities of O&O funds

Type of training	Percentage of funds conducting activities in the field
Function-specific training	61
Vocational training for staff	48
Prior learning recognition pathways	37
Cooperation with training institution	31
Other	31
General training	18
Dutch language courses	7
Development-oriented training*	50

* Refers to employability. This can be extremely relevant in the framework of inter-sector mobility.

Source: Donker van Heel et al., 2008

The study found that most training activities were directed at current staff, but also that a large proportion of the funds organised activities for *potential* employees. Other target groups were older workers and youngsters. With regard to the nature of service provision, most funds are oriented towards collective rather than individual service provision, and they are financed through subsidies rather than refunds. Subsidies can be used to buy training services from either the funds' own educational institutions or other service providers (Donker van Heel et al., 2008).

- *Involvement of the state in the streamlining of vocational education and training.* In spite of the important role of the social partners in the provision of training, the Dutch state preserves an important role in the certification of vocational education. During the 1990s, the thus far fragmented landscape of vocational schools was replaced by an integrated system of Regional Education Centres (*Regionale Opleidingscentra*, ROC), which are financed by the Dutch government. In addition, national knowledge centres (*kenniscentra*) are in charge of skills certification at the sector level (they are also in charge of defining occupational profiles) (Anderson & Hassel, 2008, p. 19-21). However, there is a sharp distinction between the provision of initial education, which falls nearly entirely under the control of the state, and the provision of training at work, for which the social partners are regarded as being ultimately in charge.

3. Employment sustaining policy (employment programs)

The Wassenaar Agreement focused the Dutch policy debate on issues of 'deregulation and enhancement of autonomy of actors in society' on the basis of the subsidiarity principle, which emphasises the responsibilities of local actors (Mulder & Tjepkema, 1999, p. 64). Hence, the in-depth transformation of the Dutch labour

market policies that started in the 1990s and is still on-going has been largely inspired by a devolutionary rationale.

Clegg and van Wijnbergen (2011) identify three main pillars for the current Dutch activation strategies, product of a turn from a passive to an active welfare state during the last decades: the reform of social security, reintegration (i.e. activation of benefit recipients), and education and training (cf. *supra*), and argue that the main reforms have been situated in the realm of administration and governance,⁷ with the introduction of market principles to public services.

During the 2000s, active labour market policies in the Netherlands were built upon a mix of activation or reintegration and sanctioning measures against too little job-seeking or training efforts. In addition, subsidies for employers aimed to active the long-term unemployed, and special measures were foreseen for other target groups such as women, older workers (cf. *infra*) and younger workers⁸ (Tros, 2009). Within those integration measures, one of the most important reforms was the Eligibility of Permanent Invalidity Benefit Restrictions Act of 2001, which made both employers and workers accountable for the transition into invalidity.⁹ Essentially, the act set out a clear path to be followed in case of long-lasting illness, with as main features constant monitoring and cooperation between the worker, the employer, the public employment services and the occupational physicians. Furthermore, it made employers responsible for the payment of 70% of the ill worker's last salary for two years, with the possibility of extending it to three years if the employer's efforts to reintegrate the workers were insufficient.

In the field of governance, De Koning (2009) identifies five major changes in active labour market policies during the last two decades:

- the transfer of the responsibility for the activation of disadvantaged unemployed jobseekers from the Public Employment Service to the benefit agency UWV (for those entitled to unemployment insurance) and the municipalities (for those on social assistance). In addition, a one-stop shop (Centres for Work and Income) was created for the newly unemployed, where intake and activation services are provided. In 2009, CWI and UWV merged in a single instance;
- the strengthening of the role of the private sector in the implementation of activation policies.¹⁰ This was done by means of the Structure for the Administration of Work and Income (SUWI) reform of 2002, by which the PES became the purchaser of activation services by private companies (Borghi & van

⁷ For an in-depth treatment of the PES governance reform in the Netherlands during the first half of the 2000s see Struyven (2006).

⁸ It should be noted, however, that the current government has abolished the emphasis on particular target groups (personal communication Dutch government official).

⁹ Thanks to Liesbeth Van Parys (HIVA-KU Leuven) for the remark.

¹⁰ De Koning (2009) points, however, at the fact that the distrust in the market prompted by the 2008 economic crisis has led to a partial return to implementation by public agencies.

Berkel, 2007). According to Clegg and van Wijnbergen (2009), this evolution also entailed the marginalisation of the social partners as co-administrators of social policies¹¹ after allegations of ‘perverse effects’ by which disability benefits were used as a tool for restructuring (Borghesi & van Berkel, 2007);

- changes in the municipalities’ budgeting system for social assistance: budget and performance indicators were introduced, as well as incentives to reduce the number of benefit recipients (van Berkel, 2009);
- decentralisation of active labour market policies;
- regionalisation of active labour market policies.

4. Pension system

The retirement regime in the Netherlands, which was first implemented by law in 1919, originates from a mix of universal, Beveridge-style pension provision and an insurance-based system (Rein & Turner, 2001, p. 127), and is built on two pillars (OECD, 2011):

- a universal flat-rate state pension which varies according to household status. Even though this pension is, in principle, contribution-based, low-income people who do not make pension contributions are included in the system, and funded from tax revenues (Rein & Turner, 2001);
- a system of (private) occupational pensions. Even though the system is not compulsory, coverage is practically universal (91%) and often based on collective agreements (individual firms may opt out if they offer equivalent benefits). There is also broad informal agreement on the fact that the combination of public and private schemes should aim at a replacement rate of 70% of the last salary before retirement¹² (‘social convention’, cf. Rein & Turner, 2001, p. 130). The OECD observes that at the end of 2008 there were 656 pension funds, 95 of which were industry-wide and 550 single-employer plans. In addition, small firms often outsource the operation of their schemes to private insurance companies. Most of the occupational schemes are defined-benefit, based on lifetime contributions rather than on the last salary, and indexed either to industry-level wage growth or to prices.

Four additional observations can be made on the Dutch pension system. First, it should be noted that pension rights in the Netherlands are highly portable across jobs, especially within industries (Andrietti, 2001; OECD, 2011). Second, in some cases post-retirement work is compatible with the reception of pension benefits (which is not the case for the universal scheme). Third, as in the case of other industrialised countries, the tendency to promote early retirement through policies in the Netherlands subsided during the 2000s and made place for an increase in

¹¹ They had been involved in the management of PES since 1991 (van Berkel, 2009).

¹² The current tax system allows for a maximum coverage of 100% (OECD, 2011, p. 273).

the effective pension age. In 2006, the fiscal incentives for early retirement in the private sector were abolished by law, and a new, less generous pension system for the public sector was introduced. In addition, several other policies were introduced to increase the length of careers (cf. *infra*), among which a reform of the disability benefits legislation (cf. *supra*). The new arrangements reduce pension benefits unless workers extend their careers, and offer the possibility to retire between 60 and 70 years of age (Montizaan, 2011). Fourth, as it will become clear from the following sections, collective agreements play an important role in further shaping pension policies.¹³

¹³ See for instance the discussion on Functional Age Dismissal (*functioneel leeftijdsontslag*, FLO) for firemen in Chapter 4, Paragraph 2.3.

CHAPTER 3

WORKING LONGER POLICIES

The need to foster the labour market participation of older workers has long been a policy priority for Dutch policy actors: a series of often intertwined measures have been adopted since the early 2000s, both at the government and the social partners' level. Due to both the large amount of measures adopted at the country level and the highly decentralised nature of Dutch labour market institutions, it is difficult to provide an exhaustive overview of all measures. We therefore first offer a general description of national-level policies adopted by the tripartite partners (government, employers and workers) and their origins. Second, we shed some light on those initiatives most relevant from the point of view of the project (i.e. initiatives that stimulate the mobility of older workers) both at the national and industry branch level.

1. Policy framework

As most Western countries, the Netherlands experienced strong changes in its policies towards older workers throughout the 1990s and the 2000s: the facilitation of early retirement through either unemployment, disability or pension arrangements was reversed and made place for the encouragement of working longer through a variety of means.

Comprehensive ageing policies were adopted within the labour market domain since the beginning of the 2000s¹⁴ In 1999, the cabinet requested an advice from the Social and Economic Council (Sociaal-Economische Raad, SER), a tripartite advisory body,¹⁵ on the labour participation of older workers. The advice identified pension policies and stereotypes about older workers as the main reasons for the lack of participation, and outlined two main pathways to normalise the situation

¹⁴ The description of the policies up to the year 2006 follows the structure of the Vanmullem and Hondeghem (2006) report on employability.

¹⁵ The SER advices are drafted by tripartite commissions which also include independent members, experts and secretariat representatives, who are in charge of providing technical and knowledge support. They have the objective of informing policy and often serve as the basis for parliamentary debates. Even though SER advices are non-binding, the cabinet is obliged to inform the council whether the advice will be adopted or not.

of older workers in the labour market: an adequate age-conscious human resources policy within enterprises, and modifications for the incentive structure of pension arrangements.¹⁶

Policy efforts at the central level were subsequently mainstreamed through the establishment of a Taskforce on the Elder and Work (*Taskforce Ouderen en Arbeid*, TOA), which contributed to the policy debate with several recommendations organised along five dimensions: awareness-raising, age conscious human resources policies, employability, financial incentives and steering¹⁷ and structure. It mentioned the importance of collective agreements in fostering labour participation of older workers, as well as the role of ministries for the coordination of knowledge-related activities and the need for tripartite steering of the advices' implementation. In addition, the Taskforce commissioned a variety of projects, which included the creation of a prize (*Cum l'Oude*) for HR management, research and knowledge-gathering activities, media-related projects (documentaries), awareness-raising activities such as the provision of information to older workers wishing to become entrepreneurs, the production of recommendations for older workers and best-practice sharing ('*Derde Voortgangsrapportage kabinetsstandpunt 'stimuleren langer werken van ouderen'*, stand van zaken juni 2007', 2007, '*Voortgangsrapportage kabinetsstandpunt 'stimuleren langer werken van ouderen'*, stand van zaken juni 2005', 2005).

The cabinet's implementation of the advice took place during three years¹⁸ and encompassed several measures, summarised in Table 3.1, which were grouped under several categories: financial incentives, the relationship between labour costs and productivity, awareness-raising, schooling, adaptability and worker-employer relations, cross-sector mobility and entrepreneurship.¹⁹

¹⁶ The social partners were identified as the primary responsible actors in the change of policies, with the authorities as facilitating partner.

¹⁷ The word 'steering' here is used here as an imperfect translation of the Dutch 'regie'.

¹⁸ Periodical implementation reports were issued annually. It should be noted that some measures mentioned in the reports, such as a bill on demotion, were not realised.

¹⁹ Some measures had already been adopted during the 2000-2004 period on the basis of the National Action Plan on Employment. They included additional holiday entitlements for older workers, tax deductions and experiments with Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) (Hake, 2010, p. 5).

Table 3.1 TOA-based measures

Dimension	Adopted measures (2004-2007)
Financial incentives	Abolishment of financial arrangements favouring early retirement Introduction of life course savings accounts Abolishment of long-term unemployment benefits Introduction of job search requirement for older workers Shortening of maximum temporary coverage of unemployment benefits Introduction of means-testing Introduction of a right to preserve pension rights in case of demotion Tax exemptions for older workers Reform of the Disability Benefits Act
Rate labour costs/productivity	Tax exemptions for hiring older workers
Awareness raising	Financial assistance to employers (subsidies to projects, congresses, research) through the Temporary Subsidy Regulation to Stimulate Age-awareness Policies. Steering group 'Gray Works' (media campaign, website, toolbox for social partners, knowledge sharing and diffusion, symposia, creation of Senior Power and Cum l'Oude prizes)
Schooling	EQUAL (projects related to older workers' participation, training, awareness raising and development of HRM-models) Cooperation contracts with 33 regional or sector bodies on, a.o., recognition of prior learning, website, telephone helpdesk, subsidies for recognition of prior learning, personal plans on 'learning by working' Involvement of Platform Lifelong Learning and O&O funds for schooling in projects
Adaptability and worker-employer relations	Anti-discrimination legislation Creation of an Expertise Centre LEEftijd (age) Establishment of a Country-wide Diversity Management Network for knowledge steering (div) Exploration of the possibilities to introduce a Work Ability Index
Cross-sector mobility	Funding of pilot projects on inter-sector mobility
Entrepreneurship	Fiscal incentives for 65+ entrepreneurs (deductibility)

Three main observations can be made about the policies. First, they encompassed a broad range of policy instruments, both 'hard', aiming at providing a generic regulatory framework and 'soft', aiming at producing diffuse cultural change. Second, service provision by the state was often limited to the provision of subsidies or the distribution of information, whereas the execution of projects, for instance in the case of inter-sector mobility, was left to the social partner or institutions at the decentralised level. This fits into the general detachment of the

Dutch state from direct labour market interventions. Third, several of the projects were conducted at a small-scale, either at the enterprise or the sector level.

The policy attention towards the participation of older workers in the labour market did not disappear after a new cabinet was elected in 2007. At the tripartite meeting of October 2008, the social partners agree to prioritise the combat to unemployment of workers older than 45 ('Samen doen wat mogelijk is. Tripartiete Verklaring Najaarsoverleg 2008', 2008). In addition, the meeting called for the transformation, within collective agreements, of the so-called *ontzietmaatregelen*, which concede certain age-specific privileges to older workers such as complementary holidays, exemptions from night shifts or heavy work, and which are perceived as making older workers unattractive to employers.

Later in 2007, the new cabinet (Balkenende IV) established a Commission on Labour Participation to advise the cabinet on structural measures to increase labour participation to 80% (Commissie Arbeidsparticipatie, 2008). The commission suggested to take actions along three policy lines: the fast (re)integration of people in the labour market, the provision of job certainty for everyone and sustainable labour participation. It also proposed concrete measures within each line of action. Along with the enhancement of employability through the prioritisation of prior learning recognition, the most relevant measures for older workers were:

- the stimulation of longer working lives by means of financial incentives (i.e. tax exemptions), age-conscious HR policies, the transformation of *ontzietmaatregelen* into measures that facilitate working longer, and make phased retirement possible;
- the proposition to couple the state retirement age to life expectancy;
- the transformation of pension contributions into tax contributions (Commissie Arbeidsparticipatie, 2008).

During 2010, agreement was reached at the Labour Foundation, the bipartite body where collective bargaining takes place, on a new Pension Agreement (Stichting van de Arbeid, 2010). The agreement had two main components. On the one hand, several changes to the pension system were agreed on: it was decided to couple the pension age to life expectancy, what implies that by 2025 the legal retirement age will be 67. In addition, pensions will be coupled to earnings and some changes were agreed with regard to occupational pensions. On the other hand, it was agreed to improve the labour market position and the mobility of older workers by means of a policy agenda drafted and monitored by workers' and employers' representatives which would tackle age-conscious HR policies, recruitment and

selection, employability, schooling and labour flexibility²⁰ (including legal and social security aspects).

The Policy Agenda 2020, released in June 2011 by the Labour Foundation, defines older workers as older than 55 and sets as goal to foster a change in the mindset of employers and older and younger workers alike, as well as hr- and line managers, about working longer. The agenda advocates as cornerstone a change of mentality, from policies that aimed at sparing older workers from certain tasks or efforts to a policy of investment on all generations (i.e. an age-conscious human resources policy). It also aims at providing, rather than a concrete set of instructions or measures, a blueprint on which policy, both from the social partners and the state, can be designed and implemented (Stichting van de Arbeid, 2011).

The role division the policy agenda foresees is based on the same principles as other policies: whereas the social partners are the main responsible actors, government policies should enact 'flanking policies' (*flankerend beleid*), aimed at supporting the social partners. Concrete policy lines for the social partners set out by the agenda include a communication campaign, the promotion of employability and schooling through among other inter-firm and -sector schooling and personal budgets, preventive health policies, the transformation of *ontzietmaatregelen* and the promotion of the reintegration of the older unemployed.

However, the most relevant measures from the perspective of this project are those directed at enhancing older workers' mobility in order to prevent unnecessary early retirement. They include a mapping of the career and transition possibilities for workers at the sector level, the stimulation of mobility within organisations through rotation, internships and other measures, the implementation of internal mobility strategies in the case of dismissal and the stimulation of inter-sector mobility through schooling. In the context of the last measure the Foundation recommends agreements between sectors or large firms about from-work-to-work-policies that pay attention to cooperation with the public employment services, O&O funds (cf. supra), the stimulation of cooperation among adjoining sectors and the (preventive) deployment of mobility centres (cf. infra), public employment services and private agencies to help those workers in danger of being dismissed.

The agenda's recommendations for flanking policies are strongly permeated by the mobility approach as well. Mobility-related measures encompass:

- a 'mobility bonus' (tax exemption) for employers who hire older workers;
- a 'mobility bonus' for workers who change jobs;

²⁰ The double approach of the Pension Agreement suggests a political compromise between workers and employers: whereas the changes to the retirement age may have proved unpopular for trade unions, the fact that the obligation of working longer is to be supported by policies aimed at reinforcing the workers' position may have made it more digestible.

- a retraining bonus for employers for the costs of cross-sector schooling of previously unemployed workers, and a policy of preventive reschooling of the short-term unemployed;
- a ‘vitality regulation’ by which workers can save under a favourable regime and freely spend the saved resources in, for instance, periods of inactivity or schooling.

After the negotiation of the Pension Agreement, the new cabinet (led by Mark Rutte) proposed a ‘Vitality Package’ inspired by the notion of ‘sustainable employability’, which is composed of three main themes: health, schooling and mobility (cf. *infra*). It should be noted that the concept had already been included by the in its 2010 government plan, which states that only those collective agreements that pay attention to age-conscious human resources policies and the schooling aspects of sustainable employability will be declared generally binding.²¹

During late 2011, the ‘Vitality Package’ was officially introduced by the Dutch government, in which the notion of ‘sustainable employability’ is put forward (Minister van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid aan de Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer, 2011). The package takes over a number of the notions and measures defined by the Policy Agenda. It addresses the need to adopt a preventive approach towards schooling in order to avoid that the lack thereof becomes an obstacle for employability, and emphasises the need of career-related rather than function-related schooling. In addition, it encourages the social partners to introduce work-to-work budgets in collective agreements, to facilitate the transitions of workers in risk of being dismissed.

The package also includes a series of concrete policy measures:

- it creates a system of (financial) bonuses for workers who remain longer and employment, and for employers who keep workers older than 62 at work;
- it introduces mobility bonuses for employers if they hire workers older than 55 or workers older than 50 who receive social assistance;
- it introduces a ‘Vitality Savings’ (*Vitaliteitspakket*) program, which allows workers to save under fiscally favourable conditions and spend that money freely, for instance on periods of inactivity or training activities (cf. *infra*);
- it foresees European Social Fund subsidies to improve processes at the firm-level to ensure that workers can remain healthy and productive until retirement age;
- it lowers the minimum amount to obtain a tax exemption for resources spent in training activities.

²¹ If requested by the social partners, collective agreements may be declared ‘generally binding’ for industry branches as a whole. In other words, even employers who are not member of an organisation will be bound by the agreement.

2. Specific measures

The overview provided above sets out the general line of Dutch policies towards working longer. Given the large number of measures associated with working longer and with the mobility of older workers, this section zooms into two government initiatives adopted along that general line which may prove useful in the context of this project: the Vitality Savings and the Steering Group 'Gray Works'.

2.1 Gray Works (*GrijsWerk*)

Through the 'Gray Works' steering group, the Dutch government attempted to induce a cultural change in the attitudes towards older workers. As it has been said above, the Group was established for a period of three years following the TOA advice in 2004, and it was financed with subsidies from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. A list of the group's final outputs can be consulted in Regiegroep GrijsWerk (2008).

The group was officially established by a government regulation in December 2004, with the objective of setting up a communication campaign to:

- convince society of the usefulness and the need to work at a later age;
- offer orientation about the possibilities for working longer;
- combat prejudices about older workers and labour;
- supply best practices information about best practices to keep older workers active.

In its working plan, the group clearly interpreted its steering role in terms of bringing all actors to the right position so that they perform optimally. Its duties would therefore be to convince, influence, challenge, invite, connect, liaise, as opposed to adopting the position of initiator of policies to enhance the older workers' labour market participation. Its main target groups were employers, umbrella organisations, sector organisations, works councils, HR managers, local authorities, chambers of commerce, community organisations, trade unions and workers.

The main activities of the group regarding orientation were the construction of a baseline regarding the attitudes of labour market actors towards older workers, the creation of a system for information processing, the development of communication resources (Q&A sets, public relations tools, facts and figures, best practices, ...) and the organisation of communication activities to deploy the resources (lobby meetings, information sessions, workshops, toolboxes, a website, a newsletters, adverts).

In addition, the group planned activities to stimulate the conclusion of agreements regarding working longer (HR conscious policies, abolishment of early retirement, ...) among social partners. Among those activities were the collection of

information, the creation of a toolbox and the establishment of contacts with the social partners.

A third type of activity was monitoring and supporting existing activities, also with the help of information collection and toolboxes.

2.2 Vitality Savings (*Vitaliteitssparen*)

The Vitality Savings scheme replaces the Life Course Savings Scheme (*Levensloopregeling*) and the Salary Savings Scheme (*Spaarloonregeling*), which aimed at ensuring an equilibrium between time and income throughout different life phases. The subgoals of the former, inspired in the Transitional Labour Markets paradigm, were to diminish the pressure experienced during the busiest period of life (i.e. combination of family and career) and to facilitate early retirement.

Given the fact that the Life Course Savings Scheme was limited to a fraction of the population, and provided that it was mainly used for early retirement (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2011b), it was abolished in 2011 and replaced with the Vitality Savings Scheme, which boils down to a fiscally favourable savings system in which an individual is allowed to save a maximum amount (5,000 EUR per year and a total of 20,000 EUR), which is deductible from their work income tax, and which is exempted from taxes on savings. The savings can be used freely: it can serve, for instance, to cover a period of inactivity due to care, training or retraining or unpaid leave. There is, however, a limit in the amount that older workers (62+) may withdraw (10,000 EUR per year). A further distinction from previous schemes is the fact that the system is accessible to both workers and employers (Ministerie van Financiën, 2011).

Even though the implementation of the Vitality Savings has only started and its effects so far are unknown, it is relevant to look at the measure due to two reasons. In the first place, it constitutes a step towards the individualisation of budgets, which has been a recurrent issue in the Dutch policy recommendations for the last few years (cf. supra). In the second place, it may provide for an alternative to the lack of cooperation among sectors regarding inter-sector schooling if it proves to be used for training ends.

A note of caution is however necessary with regard to the Vitality Savings. In the first place, a recent analysis points at the fact that most workers planning to participate in the scheme intend to use the savings to finance early retirement. Secondly, the same analysis identifies workers with high incomes as the main potential users group, what can have inequality as a consequence (Knoef, Adriaens & Nelissen, 2011). Third, some respondents pointed at the fact that the allowed maximum may be insufficient to cover the training expenses which are necessary for inter-sector mobility.

CHAPTER 4

MOBILITY-ENHANCING POLICIES

The Dutch approach towards mobility, which has been present under several forms in the country's policy mindset during the last decade, displays two main features:

- Dutch policies feature a sharp distinction between voluntary and forced mobility. Both concepts have been used in a variety of discursive frameworks: to offer a response to the demographic challenge, to materialise a transitional approach towards citizens' lives and to counter the economic crisis;
- as in the case of worklife-enhancing policies, the epicentre of mobility policies lies not at the central government level as much as with the social partners at the collective agreement and sector level,²² although some general measures (cf. *infra*) have been adopted by the central government.²³ This fits, according to several respondents, within the relatively passive position of the Dutch state towards labour market dynamics, which was intensified during the 1980s (cf. *supra*).

The remainder of this section elaborates on both features by expanding, on the one hand, on the evolution of the general policy line adopted by the Dutch government and, on the other hand, on particular initiatives by either government or the social partners. Within those initiatives, we focus specifically on the Second Career Policy of the fire service, and the Career Pathways in the construction sector.

1. General policy framework

The policies aiming at prolonging working lives have been intertwined with more general mobility-related policy frameworks, which have received a special emphasis during the last four years. There is, however, a large difference between working longer and mobility policies: whereas the former have always been guided by the same substantive goal (i.e. an increase in the participation of older workers),

²² In the Netherlands, the current practice of collective agreements encompasses agreements adopted either at the subsector level, and agreements at the enterprise level adopted by works councils. As opposed to Belgium, there are no all-encompassing inter-professional agreements.

²³ Hence, it is extremely difficult to provide an exhaustive overview of sector-level initiatives.

no holistic policy approach towards mobility has been adopted by the Dutch government, in which different policy domains (occupational health, employment, pensions, training) are adapted to each other from a general point of view. As a consequence, the substantive character of mobility has varied strongly: in 2008 mobility was seen, within the broader policy framework, as a means of facing the economic crisis, but by 2011 it had acquired notoriety at a more general level, i.e. as an instrument to smoothen the functioning of the labour market, and more recently it has been framed as one of the components of 'sustainable employability'. This section aims at offering some general insights in the policy vision behind the three conceptions of mobility.

1.1 Mobility and short-term work-work transitions

Mobility came first to the policy foreground as part of the work-to-work approach developed in the context of the economic crisis. At the tripartite meeting of 2008 it was decided that, along with measures to avoid a wage-price spiral and to promote labour participation, measures would be adopted to stimulate work-to-work transitions. This implied, in other words, the construction of a support structure for forced mobility.

The work-to-work notion is rooted in the Dutch long-standing emphasis on labour participation. Even though the origins of the idea are not clear, one respondent suggested that it first emerged in policy circles through the report of the Commission on Labour Participation²⁴ (cf. *supra*), which highlighted the need to provide support, at the collective agreement level, to transitions from work to work as opposed to work-unemployment-work transitions. This is related to the finding that chances of employment increase when job search occurs from a position as opposed to unemployment. In this context, unemployment insurance is regarded a last resource rather than a source of income. It is also worth noting that Dutch policies feature a sharp distinction of responsibilities regarding work-work transitions: as long as a worker has *not* been dismissed or labelled as 'facing dismissal', his or her mobility is the responsibility of both him and his employer. From the moment the dismissal is officially announced, the public employment services (UWV) become involved in the transition.²⁵ In other words, work-work mobility is essentially in the hands of the social partners (Commissie Arbeidsparticipatie, 2008).

The outcome of the tripartite meeting, the Tripartite Declaration of October 7, 2008, emphasised the need to translate the 'from-work-to-work' principle into policies, and announced that the Labour Foundation would explore the possibili-

²⁴ Some respondents, on the other hand, suggested that it originated along with the notion of flexicurity.

²⁵ This proactive approach towards dismissal is rooted in a 2005 legal reform (de Kok, van Uitert, van der Hauw & Grijpstra, 2008, p. 79).

ties for social partners to contribute to those policies.²⁶ The principle was further confirmed in the Social Agreement that the social partners concluded in March 2009, and that set out the measures the Netherlands would adopt to confront the economic crisis. One of the basic tenets of the agreement was to keep as many people as possible at work and, alternatively, to limit the period of unemployment as much as possible.

In 2008 and 2009, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment adopted a series of measures in the context of the crisis, which aimed at facilitating work-work transitions (Rijksoverheid, 2010):

- on the one hand, funds for training-related activities were made available. Those activities encompassed the training and prior learning recognition of workers facing dismissal, as well as the establishment of *Leerwerkloketten* to advise workers and the unemployed, and a subsidy regulation for the combination of learning and working;
- on the other hand, it commissioned the establishment of a network of 33 ‘mobility centres’ by the Public Employment Services, in order to soothe the effects of the economic crisis on the labour market. The establishment of the mobility centres was related with the measures regarding ‘werktijdverkorting’, which temporarily allowed employers to ask for a reduction in the working time of (a part of) their workforce in order to reduce costs and preserve unemployment²⁷ (Schwillens, 2009a, 2009b).

At the social partners’ level, the creation of mobility centres was followed by a set of policy recommendations from the Labour Foundation with regard to work-to-work policies (‘Van-werk-naar-werk: nu en in de toekomst’, 2009). They defined the goal of work-to-work policies as to help workers in risk of being dismissed to find a new job without having to go through a period of unemployment, and recognised the specificity of sectors or industry branches. It also placed the responsibility for work-to-work policies explicitly at the level of the social partners, and the need to engage both public and private partners in the debate, including municipalities. Its advices were directed to the social partners, the public and private employment services and the authorities (including municipalities):

- for the social partners it indicated as main policy instruments to do so it indicated social plans (cf. supra) and other measures, including provisions in collective agreement. It also pleaded for the prioritisation of weaker categories of workers (such as older workers), the provision of information regarding work-to-work policies and the participation of small- and medium-sized enterprises

²⁶ This did not imply that entirely new policies needed to be adopted. Several measures adopted by individual companies during the 2000s were *a posteriori* classified as ‘work-to-work’ policies.

²⁷ The permission to apply this measure, which similar to Belgium’s temporary unemployment scheme, is normally subject to extraordinary circumstances. However during the economic crisis that requirement was temporarily lifted.

- in from work to work activities (for instance, by using policies designed at the collective agreement level). Regarding O&O funds it recommended cooperation with the public employment services (UWV) regarding the training of workers facing dismissal;
- the document identified the Public Employment Service as a facilitator of social partners-led work-to-work policies, and encouraged the adoption of a preventive approach by mobility centres in which, through cooperation with private service providers (i.e. temporary work agencies) services were adapted to employer and sector demand. Concretely, it proposed the involvement of public actors in those activities taking place *before* dismissal occurs through public-private partnerships (cf. *supra*, responsibility of the social partners) such as cooperation between O&O funds and the public employment services. A concrete example of such cooperation quoted by the advice was an agreement between the Public Employment Services and the umbrella organisation of temporary work agencies by which certain workers receiving assistance from a private service provider (temporary work agency) were entitled to receive training and reintegration support that were mediated by public mobility centres (i.e. destined to already unemployed workers) (advice);
 - recommendations were issued to private service providers regarding the quality of outplacement services and the need to pay attention to temporary workers and small- and medium-sized companies. It is interesting to note here, however, that private partners do not play a crucial role in the formulation or the direction of work-to-work policies, even though they do have a role in the implementation of policies, mainly by means of outplacement activities (cf. *infra*, social plans) and the provision of preventive services regarding employability and career counselling. As for TWAs, they are also little implicated in work-to-work activities (Raad voor Werk en Inkomen, 2008);
 - to the Dutch authorities, the Foundation advised, among others, to revise the legal conditions to become a client of UWV,²⁸ to foster cooperation with private partners (i.e. temporary work agencies) and to deploy municipal resources for work-work paths.

The advice led, among others, to the provision of subsidies to the social partners for work-to-work projects involving workers facing dismissal or dismissed during the implementation of the project ('Van-werk-naar-werk: nu en in de toekomst', 2009).

²⁸ Workers can only access UWV services in the four months prior to their dismissal. The Foundation asked for the removal of that requirement.

1.2 Mobility and long-term labour allocation

After the climax of the economic crisis, mobility was further developed in Dutch policy circles through the Cabinet's request for a SER advice on the long-term aspects of mobility (SER, 2011). A sharp distinction was made in the advice request between work-work transitions, which help to prevent unemployment in the short term, and the long-term evolutions of the labour market, in which the concepts of employability, adaptability, motivation, low frictional unemployment, flexibility, demographic change and changes in the allocation of labour across sectors acquire an important role. The request mentions especially the fact that several sectors such as education, care and safety will confront a lack of staff that cannot be exclusively tackled by intra-sector mobility.

The cabinet further asked the SER to provide an advice on both short- and long-term aspects of mobility, and to focus on obstacles and the potential role of the tripartite partners in fostering (a) inter-sector mobility *across* the market, the public sector and the care sector and (b) inter-sector mobility *within* the market, the public sector and the care sector.

The SER's advice, which built upon numerous quantitative studies mapping mobility in the Netherlands, focuses on voluntary job-to-job or external mobility²⁹ at the sector level, given the fact that most transitions in the Netherlands are of a voluntary nature. With regard to voluntary mobility it makes clear, in the first place, that mobility is not a goal by itself, but rather a means of ensuring a smooth functioning of the labour market. It advocates for an 'optimal' level of mobility between two extremes: too little mobility makes it impossible for a worker to leave his job, whereas too much mobility has too high costs in terms of, for instance, training and recruitment.

Whereas the advice conceptualises voluntary mobility as primarily the outcome of individual preferences and decisions, and hence the responsibility of individual workers, it encourages the social partners and the Dutch authorities to remove the obstacles for labour mobility and to create the conditions in which that mobility can take place. In other words, workers should be able to make use of career facilities to change jobs if they wish to do so. Those facilities should be tailor-made due to the large heterogeneity of sectors, firms and individuals.

²⁹ It is interesting to note that, according to one of the respondents, voluntary job changes anticipating unemployment are regarded as voluntary mobility, whereas they could also be seen as a specific type of forced mobility.

In order to stimulate mobility, measures are grouped along three categories:³⁰

- a change of mentality towards a ‘mobility culture’. Such a change should include awareness-raising on external mobility, age-conscious HR policies directed at mobility and stimulate workers to actively shape their careers (this can take the form of career advice and training, cf. infra projects in the construction sector), combating stereotypes about older workers and making sectors and jobs attractive in terms of, for instance, job security;
- investment in schooling and broad employability. Recommended policies encompass the inclusion, in collective agreements, of procedures that ensure the recognition of prior learning, the provision of career counselling and guidance within firms and sectors; the provision of individual budgets for sector-related schooling; the provision of financial assistance for cross-sector training (either directly or through tax exemptions) and the improvement of the cooperation between O&O funds;
- strengthening of the facilities that support voluntary mobility. This includes improvements in the provision of information and a strengthening of existing network structures across public and private actors.

As in the case of forced mobility, it is worth noting that the SER advice does not envisage any major role for private service providers.

1.3 Mobility as an element of sustainable employability

In 2009, the Dutch Ministry of Social Security and Employment requested a SER advice on ‘sustainable employability’ in which they highlight the need of enhancing employability so that the individuals’ chances of dropping out of the labour are minimised (Minister van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid aan de voorzitter van de Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2009). This need is set out against the broader policy goals of increasing labour participation (cf. supra) and of keeping older workers active until pension age. The request emphasises the need to take into account the employability of *all* workers as opposed to only older workers, and asks specifically, a.o. what the obstacles are for labour mobility in the framework of employability and the ways in which it can be avoided that workers in heavy occupations remain in the same function for a long time. This confirms a change of focus in Dutch labour market policies, from differential approaches to older workers, to a more streamlined series of policies applicable to all workers regardless their age.³¹

³⁰ It should be noted that, although the advice focuses on voluntary mobility, it often mentions the compatibility of its policy advices with work-to-work initiatives, as is the case of inter-sector schooling (SER, 2011, p. 118-119).

³¹ This change is, according to one of the respondents, also related to the fact that anti-discrimination legislation limits the policy space for age-specific instruments.

Although the advice has not been issued yet, a ministerial letter introducing the Vitality Package points at the fact that sustainable employability is conceived of in terms of three main pillars: health, mobility and schooling. In that framework, mobility is regarded as a means of keeping older workers in the labour force, and can thus imply either a change in the tasks executed by the worker, or a change of function to another firm within or outside a sector. The cabinet aims at increasing the mobility of older workers, the low educated and workers in small- and medium-sized companies. The sustainable employability framework has already been applied to the reports on collective agreements of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

2. Specific policies

As it has been made clear above, the Dutch state has mainly adopted the role of funder and promoter of policies regarding both mobility and older workers through, for instance, knowledge sharing (see examples in de Jong & Maes, 2012), whereas the ultimate responsibility for regulating and implementing concrete measures is left to the social partners in the context of collective agreement. Hence, this section focuses largely on the social partners' initiatives. First, some key figures of the measures adopted at the collective agreement are provided. Second, a state-sponsored measure (mobility centres) is described. Subsequently, two measures at the collective agreement level on firemen careers and the construction sector are set out.

2.1 Key figures on the role of mobility in collective agreements

Even though an exhaustive overview of the measures adopted at the collective agreement level is impossible to provide due to the large number of agreements, the continuous surveys of (twice per year) conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment provide us with some general figures with regard to the extent to which mobility and mobility-related policies are present at the sector and firm level. The most recent survey (second semester of 2011) took place on the basis of a sample of 100 agreements covering 87% of the workers (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2011a).

The survey places mobility, together with training and health, under the broader conceptual umbrella of 'sustainable employability', and adds a 'life course arrangements' chapter.³² We discuss both dimensions due to the fact that all discussed measures are directly related to mobility.

³² In this sense, we can observe that the way in which the survey reports are structured reflect policy concepts or priorities: the 2008 report, for instance, focused among other on from-work-to-work.

All agreements contain references to at least one of the components of sustainable employability. There are, however, large differences regarding the exact type of measures that is foreseen in the agreements.

Regarding health (see Table 4.1), measures range from risk inventarisation, which is widespread, to employability assessment by means of, for instance, a work ability index, which occurs only in four cases representing 4% of the workforce comprised in the sample. Proactive and preventive policy measures include health management (i.e. arrangements on labour conditions regarding the worker's current function that go further than compulsory legislative measures), vitality measures, that go further than the current function, and work-life balance measures to prevent drop-out. The number of collective agreements referring to risk inventarisation, catalogues and periodical check-ups registered an increase vis-à-vis 2010.

Table 4.1 Health measures in collective agreements

Health measures	Number of agreements	% of workers covered
Reference to risk inventarisation and evaluation	47	60
Reference to 'occupational medicine catalogue'*	29	44
Proactive and preventive policy	48	50
Periodical check-up	18	17
Possibility to adaptation of tasks	9	6
Possibility to workplace adaptation	4	1
Personal employability scan	4	4
Total	69	77

* An occupational medicine catalogue (*arbocatalogus*) is an instrument by which workers and employers describe the way in which they comply with the goals established by the government for working safely and in a healthy way. Such catalogues are not compulsory, but if present in a collective agreement they have consequences for the way in which labor inspection occurs (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, n.d.).

All the collective agreements in the sample include provisions on training. In spite of the wide variety of measures, it is clear that 'traditional' ones tend to predominate, as is the case for function-specific training and career performance interviews. By contrast, measures that potentially favour cross-sector mobility, such as cross-sector schooling, cooperation among O&O funds, are less widespread. The tendency to individualise training by means of personal budgets, personal development plans and rights or obligations to train is present, though not widespread, what indicates a possible evolution towards 'career rug sacks' (*loopbaanrugzak*).

Table 4.2 Training measures in collective agreements

Training measures	Number of agreements	% of workers covered
Firm development plan (<i>bedrijfsontwikkelingsplan</i>)	28	32
Cross-sector training	2	6
Sector development plan	1	1
Cooperation among O&O fund	1	2
Function-specific schooling	86	88
Time off for training	80	82
Performance interviews (<i>functioneringsgesprekken</i>)	65	71
Personal development plans (<i>persoonlijk ontwikkelingsplan</i>)	47	52
Personal development budget (<i>persoonlijk ontwikkelingsbudget</i>)	25	29
Obligation to train	42	52
Right to train	20	52
Prior learning recognition	36	46
Career check-ups	19	13
Career plans	4	4
Training arrangements in social plans	17	20
Total	94	100

Collective agreements also include some arrangements addressing mobility explicitly, through for instance (internal) mobility centres, which provide guidance with regard to both voluntary and forced mobility. Such centres are the most widespread measure across agreements, although it is clear that mobility is not as embedded at the sector level as training and health issues are (only 35% of the workers in the sample are covered by such measures). The provision of more innovative measures such as internships or rotation is barely present in the sample of agreements.

Table 4.3 Mobility measures in collective agreements

Mobility measures	Number of agreements	% of workers covered
Mobility centres	18	16
Career opportunities	12	13
Vacancy database	8	9
Stimulation of mobility	15	14
Internships	8	3
Function switch	6	5
Function extension	4	2
Rotation	3	2
Mobility allowance	1	1
Total	37	35

In addition to the mobility measures, the 2011 survey of collective agreements includes some information on life course arrangements. Such arrangements may include employer contributions to the savings schemes or provisions regarding sabbatical, training or care holidays. Those provisions are, however, not widespread: 35 collective agreements foresee employer contributions, whereas 55 make specific holiday arrangements.

2.2 Mobility centres

Mobility centres consisted of a public-private partnership among the public employment services, the municipalities, workers and employers, and private service providers, and their main function was to bring all relevant actors together to facilitate the work-work transitions of workers facing dismissal. They were funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, and their main task was to provide advice on work-work transitions and within- and cross-sector mobility mobility from a proactive perspective, to identify regional opportunities for work-to-work transitions, to advice small- and medium-sized companies and to implement work-work arrangements through, for instance, the provision of guidance and the drafting of 'mobility plans' that incorporated the recognition of prior learning. The centres were, in other words, a one-stop shop for employers regarding the implementation of policy instruments that could facilitate voluntary and forced mobility, and acquired a complementary role to the Public Employment Services in the sense that they covered workers who did not (yet) qualify as UWV clients (Schwillens, 2009a, 2009b).

In addition, they also supported employers under the *werktijdverkorting* scheme who wished to make use of training or to temporarily detach staff to other companies. Besides the 33 publicly supported mobility centres, the social partners were allowed to initiate own centres. Moreover, covenants were negotiated between

employers and the centres to provide additional support to small- and medium-sized enterprises.

The centres were positively evaluated by the main target group (employers). de Krieger (2010) quotes a mark of 7.4 out of 10. The total number of work-work transitions accomplished by the centres was 18,000 workers between January 2009 and June 2010. In February 2009, 410 firms covering 32,998 workers were receiving advice.

2.3 Second career at the fire department

The second career policies at the Dutch fire departments (*Tweede Loopbaanbeleid Brandweer*) are a direct consequence of the removal of the Job-related Early Retirement (*Functioneel Leeftijdsontslag*, FLO) scheme in the framework of a collective agreement. FLO is a special regulation for heavy occupations within the public sector³³ which foresees dismissal once an employer in those occupations has reached a certain age (in the case of the fire department, 55). A special benefit is paid out to the employee until he reaches the official age for retirement.

As a consequence of the general policy emphasis on the removal of early retirement incentives, FLO was abolished by the collective agreement of 2005-2007. The collective agreement also replaced it with a second-career policy, in which newly recruited personnel³⁴ is appointed for an indefinite duration. However, the duration of his function is limited to twenty years. Given the indefinite nature of the contract, his employer (the municipality) remains responsible for the workers' career until he finds an alternative position (de Vries & Klaver, 2009).

In order to organise the transition to a second career, guidelines for a Second Career Policy were drafted within the collective agreement. The policy is built upon three pillars. First, it is preventive, as the preparation for the transition starts as soon as the worker is recruited. Second, it is holistic or comprehensive, given the fact that it covers all aspects of the career: medical, educational, financial and human resources-related. Third, it regards the second career as a collective responsibility of employers and workers. The main characteristics of the general policy framework are:

- the drafting of a career plan, which is updated yearly;
- employer-provided funding and time off for training in the framework of the career plan;
- conditionality. Both the worker and the employer are subjected to reciprocal rights and obligations. The worker may be dismissed if he does not fulfil his, whereas the employer is obliged to keep the worker on the payroll. If, in spite

³³ In the Netherlands, fire departments depend on municipal authorities. Employment relations in municipalities are covered by a single collective agreement (*CAO-gemeenten*).

³⁴ Transitional provisions were included for already recruited staff.

- of both parties fulfilling their obligations the worker does not find an alternative career after twenty years, a compensation is paid to the worker;
- a periodical health monitoring system is developed;
 - the worker receives a yearly personal budget that he may use in the framework of the Lifecourse Savings Regulation;³⁵
 - workers should be recruited with a minimum educational level of vocational secondary education (*Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs* or MBO), or be schooled to achieve that level during their career, in order to increase their employment chances. Their second function should at least be of MBO level.

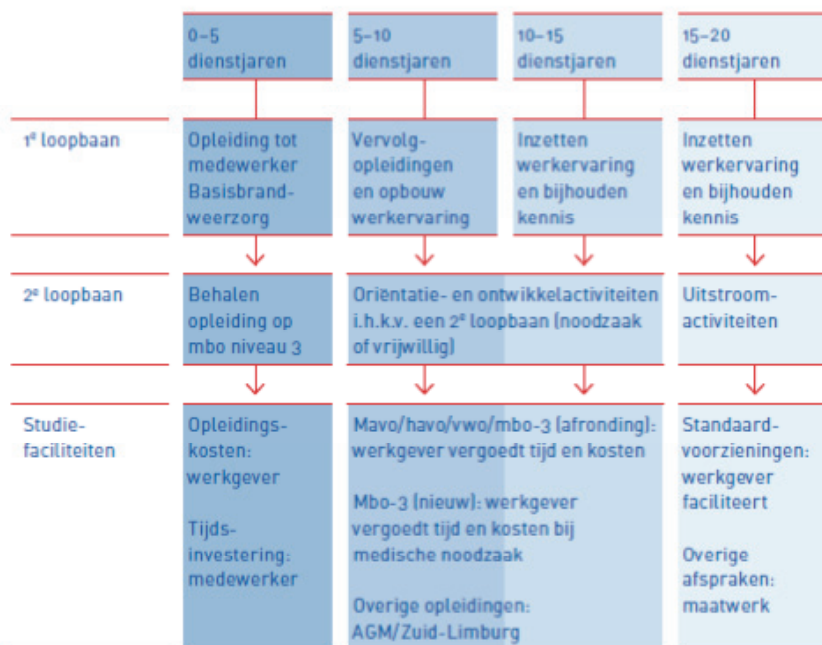
Within those general tenets, each fire department is responsible for the development and implementation of their own second career policies. In order to help them operationalise the policy, a project was commissioned to develop guidelines for its introduction and thus ensure some uniformity across fire departments. The project produced two general policy models.³⁶ First, a five-phased model was designed for the substantive operationalisation of the second career policy itself. The model was tested in the framework of the project by means of pilots in six fire departments. Second, an eleven-phased model was set up to guide policy makers at the local level when designing policies.

The five-phased model covers the twenty years the firemen's career will (in principle) last. It covers the intake and training, orientation, development, transition to another function and aftercare. Throughout the whole process, the transition to a second career remains central, whether it is through providing transparency regarding the duration of the function, the exploration of own competencies (for which prior learning recognition pathways can be used), training, the provision of training, internships or detachment to another function, career counselling or the follow-up of the worker if the transition does not fully succeed. Figure 4.1 illustrates the concrete implementation of the model with the South Limburg example.³⁷

³⁵ This scheme has been replaced in the meantime by the Vitality Savings (cf. supra).

³⁶ The project had a strong bottom-up character and adopted a participatory approach in which the needs of the individual fire departments were taken into account through focus groups.

³⁷ Other examples can be found in de Vries and Klaver (2009, p. 42-45).



Source: de Vries & Klaver, 2009, p. 42

Figure 4.1 Implementation of the Second Career policy in South Limburg

Regarding policy design and implementation, the second plan provides a detailed path for local fire departments to follow. It can clearly be inferred from the eleven steps that the approach policy implementation should be gradual and participative. It starts from the creation of support for the policy within the department, and it encompasses the collection of information regarding the current situation, the development of the policy, the assessment of the financial aspects thereof, the training of managers, the orientation of workers, the implementation of a pilot, the steering of HR processes and the adaptation of regulations within the fire department. The plan ends with the introduction of the policy.

The project was evaluated in 2010, and it came to mixed conclusions: the target group (the local fire departments) was satisfied with the developed instruments, and the evaluator found that the activities that had been carried out, among which the development of the instruments indicated above, had contributed to awareness-raising among both managers and staff. In addition, it was found that HR policies within fire departments acquired more relevance as a consequence of the project. However, it was also pointed out that support for second career policies was not uniform across fire departments: some among them had not realised the urgency of implementing second career policy (de Zwart, Molenaar-Cox, Veldhuis & van Egmond, 2010).

According to several of the respondents, the introduction of second career policies has been successful so far, in general terms. That success should be ascribed in the first place to its legally binding nature: fire departments had no other choice than

to adapt to it. In addition, they pointed at the structure of the sector, in which the strong inter-group relations among firemen could be used to construct support for the policy.

2.4 Career Project in the Construction Sector

The Dutch construction sector was indicated by most of the respondents as an example for best practices regarding the mobility of older workers. In order to illustrate their approach, we provide a short example of the Career Project in the Construction Sector (*Loopbaanproject Bouw*), by which workers wishing to change jobs or at risk of becoming disadvantaged were rechanneled to other occupations by means of a holistic approach (Ijsenbrant & van Dun, 2005; Ijsenbrant, van Dun & de Groot, 2005).

As in the case of the fire departments, the basis for the project was a collective agreement (2001) by which workers and employers decided jointly to stimulate career mobility. They did so in order to prevent the precocious exit of workers from the sector due to either lack of career perspectives or incapacity. As in the previous case, the project had a holistic approach in which the full transition of the worker was accompanied. In other words, it did not only focus on schooling. Moreover, it conceived of mobility as a broad concept, as it attempted to encourage both internal and external mobility inside and outside the construction sector.

The project, carried out by a private services provider, consisted of a pilot and an implementation phase, and had as main targets to accomplish two types of transitions: those of workers willing to leave the sector due to a clear ambition in the context of their career development, and those aimed at preventing that workers became unable to work (preventive approach).

Before the organisation of the project, a large-scale survey of construction firms and 30,000 individual workers was carried out, in order to probe the wishes of the target group. It turned out that 30% of the workers intended to change their function.

Before carrying out the pilot, a model for transition pathways was developed. It consisted of five phases: intake, further research, drafting of a Personal Development Plan, implementation of the plan and aftercare. Some highlights in the model are:

- the model foresaw constant one-to-one interactions, in which counsellors had the role of orienting, coaching, advising and mediating the workers. During the coaching, attention was also paid to the workers' environment (e.g. his family's attitude towards his career change);
- furthermore, large emphasis was laid upon confidentiality of the communication between counsellors and workers, especially towards the employer;

- the intake phase could be initiated by the workers, the employer or an occupational physician. The counsellor evaluated the case further by means of a specific instrument (QuickScan);
- during the further research phase, the workers' possibilities are explored by means of assessments, prior learning recognition, medical or competence tests, ... Workers can also be acquainted with other functions or sectors by means of one-day internships;
- the Personal Development Plan should be tailored to the workers' needs and capacities, and take into account his motivation. The plan includes arrangements on training and the funding thereof;
- the execution of the Personal Development Plan should be followed up by regular contacts with the counsellor;
- the aftercare phase includes follow-up until a new function is found, although no such guarantee is offered by the project.

The project was financed through O&O budgets, and received funds from the European Training Foundation. Its activities were furthermore strongly embedded in existing structures: the counsellors, who received special training for the project, were directed to counters established at existing sector-level cooperation structures, and cooperation with physicians was set up within existing structures dealing with occupational medicine.

The evaluation of the pilot was positive: 75% of the workers completed the pathway, and nearly 20% of the workers who started the pathway had found work before the end of the process, whereas 10% still became unable to work. Most of the workers (90%) were satisfied about their participation, with a drop (75%) during the last phase of the project. Several of them remained within the sector, for instance as calculators or salesmen of.

According to the evaluation, the following factors were critical for the success of the pilot:

- embedded training. Training should not be a goal by itself, but rather be approached as a means for the transition towards another work;
- sector-wide rather than firm-level organisation of the project. This offers the advantages of offering a broader labour market and access to funding from, for instance, European-level funds;
- independent character and yet embedded in existing infrastructure;
- cooperation with service providers for assessment, training and psychological tests, among others;
- combination of target groups (ambition and prevention, cf. supra) in order to avoid stigmatising;
- competent advisors;
- workers' and employers' involvement throughout the organisation of the pilot.

CHAPTER 5

FIRM-LEVEL PRACTICES

Given the decentralised nature of Dutch policy-making and the strong role of workers and employers, a myriad of initiatives regarding working longer and mobility, both voluntary and work-to-work, has emerged during the last years. Those initiatives, sometimes subsidised by the Dutch government or by the social partners at the collective agreement or sector (O&O funds) are of an extremely varied nature. This section provides a short overview of the most illustrative.³⁸ It is worth noting that they have a strong geographic dimension: most of them build on cooperation among firms located in the same area, whether they are active in the same sector or not.

1. Work-to-work policies in social plans

As it has been stated above, employers carrying out collective dismissals are obliged to negotiate a social plan with the workers' representatives. A survey of social plans (de Kok, van Uitert, van der Hauw & Grijpstra, 2008) identified several work-to-work measures which are largely situated at the level of large companies.³⁹

- internal mobility bureaus. Established at the firm level, mostly in firms with 500+ employees, they offer placement services to dismissed workers, whether in or outside the company. Those services include job search coaching, training and job search assistance. Furthermore, they can cooperate with the public employment services to facilitate the workers' transitions;
- outplacement services from private agencies. The Netherlands are the country where outplacement is used the most. The sector's value has been estimated at 200 million EUR, and per year 800 employees out of 100,000 make use of outplacement services. In addition, social plans often contain provisions regarding

³⁸ For inventories of best practices see for instance FNV Bondgenoten, CNV Vakmensen, De Unie & AWWN, n.d.; Punte, Conen, Schippers & Henkens, 2011; and de Jong & Maes, 2012.

³⁹ Small- and medium-sized companies make almost no use of social plans, although they do have some mobility-related policies (cf. *infra*).

- outplacement by private actors (Raad voor Werk en Inkomen, 2008; de Kok et al., 2008);
- some companies make use of ‘staff loans’ or secondment schemes, in which redundant workers are detached to other companies but remain employed at their original workplace. This can be done with either the aim of ensuring a transition to another firm or to eventually redeploy the worker at the first employer’s;
 - internal workers’ pools or mobility pools consist of keeping redundant workers at their organisation although they are removed from their former function. They make part of a temporary ‘pool’ and are deployed in a flexible way within the company;
 - external workers’ pools. The redundant workers are employed by an intermediary on a temporary basis. During the contract’s duration workers are guided to a new position and detached to new potential workers, and may receive supplementary unemployment benefits;
 - small- and medium-sized companies can make use of higher-level initiatives set up either by sector bodies, such as O&O funds, or by regional cooperation among employers. An example of such cooperation is the creation of Braincentre, a for-profit firm aiming at preserving the technical knowledge in a region or sector. The firm acts as a secondment agency and closes agreements with firms willing to hire dismissed workers. Other initiatives are related to the provision of information and networking among companies, and to the implementation of mediation activities by training funds.

De Kok et al. (2008) point at several critical factors for the success of the activities illustrated above, among which: the quality of the project’s organisation, the accessibility of mobility bureaus, the transparent formulation of the employer’s tasks and goals, a good financial organisation, pragmatism, trade unions’ and work councils’ engagement throughout processes as a whole, and the framing of mobility bureaus as an option to both workers aiming at career improvement and dismissed workers.

2. Route 67 - older workers in small- and medium-sized companies

The Route 67 project is the product of a cooperation initiative among Regional Training Centres, the social innovation centre of Stenden University, an employers’ organisation and a number of small- and medium-sized companies. It has as main goal to keep workers active until pension age by focusing on sustainable employability. Its target group are workers with a vocational level career.

The project includes the design of a roadmap that helps employers to design policies that will positively impact their workers’ sustainable employability and to be prepared against labour shortages in the future. The roadmap encompasses

11 steps, among which an analysis of HRM policies, workshops, employability scans, drafting of firm and individual plans, training, and evaluation. The outcome of the process, in which both workers and employers participate, should be a tailor-made company plan for sustainable employability, with an equipped team to implement it and workers conscious of the need to remain active. In addition, workers should have personal development plans (de Jong & Maes, 2012).

3. Working smart week

In 2010 and 2011, regional authorities from both the Netherlands and Germany (Eems Dollard Region), together with a temporary work agency and Stenden University organised a 'Working Smart Week' (*Slimmer Werken Week*). The target group of the initiative were the small- and medium-sized companies of the Dutch provinces of Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen, which were stimulated to cooperate internationally across the German border in the field of social innovation.

Both workers and employers can enrol themselves for the initiative. A team of students from Stenden University matches the workers' and employers' profiles with the assistance of the temporary work agency, and exchanges among companies are organised, in which enrolled workers are detached for one day to another company, after which they welcome a worker in their own firm (de Jong & Maes, 2012).

4. Regional HRM knowledge circles for SMEs metal-electro

In 2009, the O&O Fund of the metal and electric industry set up an initiative (*Regionale kenniskringen HRM voor MKB-bedrijven Metalektro*) to link personnel and organisation staff from SMEs in the sector regarding staff-related topics. Currently, the circles gather three to four times per year, and are kept active by five regional managers. Within the circles, participants can discuss topics regarding recruitment, development, training, career development or sustainable employability. The topic of each meeting is defined centrally, and every two meetings an external speaker is invited. Meetings are held every time at one of the members' firm.

Besides knowledge sharing, the initiative has contributed to forming a network of SMEs in the sector, which served as the basis to set up secondment schemes during the economic crisis (de Jong & Maes, 2012).

5. Labour pool Den Bosch/Plan H

In this geographically-based cooperation model, five employers' organisations from several neighbouring industrial areas encompassing 400 firms set up a pilot,

on their own initiative, to find out whether 50 redundant workers could be redeployed without needing unemployment benefits. The outcome of the pilot was a digital labour pool, in which firms place vacancies and the profiles of redundant workers. The system looks automatically for matches between employers and workers, and when a match is found the employer can contact the project team. If needed, the 'fit' is improved by training or guidance. Although the project is partially subsidised by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, employers pay for the matching and mediation services.

It is relevant to note that, given the fact that the firms in the industrial areas are active in different sectors, the labour pool helps to enhance workers' cross-sector mobility (Arbeidspool Den Bosch, 2010; de Jong & Maes, 2012).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The overview of Dutch policies provided throughout this report allows us to draw several conclusions and policy recommendations from the case.

The policy instruments having an impact on older workers' careers and mobility in the Netherlands, summarised in Table 6.1, share six main features:

- *A plurality of policy actors with a central role for the social partners:* older workers' and mobility policies in the Netherlands should not be seen exclusively in terms of state action: they are rather shaped by complex actor constellations involving the social partners, government, the public employment services and private services providers. There is, in other words, no main policy conductor (*regisseur*). It is clear, however, that given the structurally large role ascribed to the social partners at the industry branch level, they be interpreted in the first place as joint initiatives from workers and employers, with state policies having a function complementary to those initiatives. In addition, the marginal role ascribed to public employment services and private actors (outplacement providers, TWAs) in the formation of policies is remarkable.

The proactive nature of the social partners regarding mobility policies cannot be explained in a straightforward fashion. Whereas the institutional reforms of the last two decades with regard to retirement and incapacity benefits contributed to increase employers' accountability and the collective agreement tradition provides an institutional basis for social partners' actions, the relative ease with which the switch from a static career perspective towards a mobility-oriented paradigm occurred cannot be easily mapped out. In this sense, more research is needed in order to trace back the origins and diffusion of the mobility paradigm in the Dutch labour market policy setting.

- *Importance of the decentralised level as experimental field:* given the role of the social partners as policy initiators, most of the substantive measures adopted to promote the mobility of older workers are small-scale, often introduced by pilots. The emphasis on the sector level is complementary with the distribution of roles among the involved actors: whereas the state remains the main 'broker'

of mobility policies and at times its initiator and stimulator (through financial resources), responsibility for the development of mobility-enhancing initiatives is explicitly assigned to the social partners. The institutional infrastructure, in which employment relations and the occupational system are regulated at the sector level, facilitate the decentralised approach. This is the case, for instance, for training policies: training needs can be better met at a lower (sector) level thanks to the presence of the O&O fund.

- *Complementarity*: contrary to the UK case (see UK report in this series), there is a large degree of complementarity among the different policies affecting the mobility of older workers. Even though there seems to be little coordination across domains at the government level, the fact that attention is paid simultaneously to several policy fields affecting mobility, such as training (cf. prior learning recognition), health (occupational medicine), pensions and career guidance (mobility centres) creates a favourable climate for mobility-oriented policies to be developed at the meso-level. For instance, some of the sector-level initiatives assessed in this report, such as the Career Project in the construction sector, combined medical, training and career guidance elements.⁴⁰ In addition, the fact that the Netherlands have a well-built outplacement sector helps to facilitate work-to-work transitions in the case of forced mobility. In addition, the space left by the generally passive role of the Dutch policies is filled in by the social partners (cf. supra). This constitutes a fundamental difference vis-à-vis the United Kingdom, where no true social partnership exists.
- *Financial and regulatory incentives as the main way to induce behavioural change*: Dutch policies regarding mobility are anchored in the combination of ‘hard’ government-led financial and/or regulatory measures aiming at producing short-term behavioural change (cf. abolishment of early retirement, higher pension age) and softer policy instruments. For instance, the strong interest for preventive approaches towards inability in the construction sector may be related to the legislative reforms making the employer partially accountable for the worker’s disability (cf. supra).
- *Institutionally embedded policies*: none of the developed policies represents a Copernican revolution; most of the developed measures and/or instruments are strongly embedded in existing structures. For instance, education funds at the sector level have been intensively used to foster mobility.

⁴⁰ In other words, the holistic approach was made possible by the fact that tools had already been in the fields of occupational medicine and prior learning recognition.

Table 6.1 Mobility and worklife-enhancing policy instruments in the Netherlands

Type of instrument	Institutional filter				Barrier addressed
	Employment relations system	Occupational system	Employment sustaining policy	Pension system	
Nodality			Gray Works Route 67 Regional HRM knowledge circles Labour pools		Discrimination Stereotypes
Authority	Social Plans Collective agreement-based arrangements	Vitality savings	Vitality savings Social plans	Second career at the fire department (collective agreement) Career project in the construction sector (collective agreement)	Lack of training Experience concentration Lack of confidence
Treasury	Subsidies for mobility pilots				Multiple barriers
Organisation			Mobility centres		Multiple barriers

Those features are common to both working longer and mobility policies. When both fields are assessed from the mobility perspective, it becomes evident that, even if mobility has not reached the status of a transversal priority or theme within Dutch labour market policies, it has evolved to a central concept in some domains:

- within the policies directed at the labour market, mobility is regarded as a *means* to lengthen working lives;
- within broad labour market policies and planning mobility is seen as a means to face demographic change and to cope with economic change as some sectors shrink and others experience a fast growth. With regard to the latter, both inter-sector and forced mobility acquire an important role;
- mobility is part of the holistic approach towards sustainable employability.

There is, of course, a large gap between the policy vision of mobility as a means to accomplish the objectives mentioned above, and the true extent to which it fulfils those functions in day-to-day policy making. As it becomes clear from the analysis above, the implementation of mobility policies is fraught with several obstacles. In the first place, there is little support for inter-sector mobility among sector-level bodies. Second, the adoption of mobility as a policy concept has not fostered a homogeneous cultural change among workers and employers, but rather the proliferation of small-scale, single-shot initiatives. Older workers' relatively low degree of mobility remains to be identified as a problem. Third, that plurality of small-scale initiatives may entail a lack of global perspective. Due to the decentralised nature of Dutch policy-making, as well as to the lack of coordination across ministries on mobility issues, policy actors may not always be aware of their counterparts' work. Even though several information-sharing and information-gathering efforts have been conducted (such as Gray Works and the information-sharing activities commissioned by the TOA), there still seems to be room for improvement in this regard. Fourth, the adoption of mobility as a policy priority by the Dutch authorities displays some internal tensions: whereas voluntary mobility is in the first place a matter of personal preferences,⁴¹ the Policy Agenda 2020 with regard to older workers' participation foresees several measures to stimulate older workers' voluntary mobility. Similarly, the Dutch state perceives the lack of mobility as a problem at the collective level because it may inhibit labour participation. It follows that mobility should be stimulated, what in practice is to be clearly seen in the definition of 'sustainable employability' (cf. supra). Thus, Dutch policies seem to balance between the removal of obstacles for mobility (through, for instance, prior learning recognition) and the active encouragement thereof, through for instance the provision of subsidies for projects regarding inter-sector cooperation and the promotion of a 'mobility culture'. The social partners, by contrast, seem to offer some resistance to the active encouragement of

⁴¹ Several respondents made clear that voluntary mobility was in principle not a field for intervention by the Dutch state or social partners.

mobility, as illustrated by the lack of cooperation between O&O funds regarding inter-sector schooling.

Throughout the obstacles mentioned above, the question arises whether the current division of roles between the Dutch state and the social partners, in which the state adopts the function of facilitator whereas social partners are ultimately responsible for realising mobility-related goals, is the most adequate one to face the challenge of inter-sector mobility. In other words: is there a need for a 'conductor' of mobility policies in which a single actor acts as the coordinator of all policies, and to which extent can and should the Dutch state fulfil that role? As it becomes clear from the report, the role of both government remains modest. This limited role is even more pronounced for the public employment services, which have been the subject of an extensive institutional reform during the last years.

The question about the conductor role becomes even more relevant when we look at the fact that mobility policies are intertwined with other domains such as employment, health and training makes the question even more important. There seems to be no straight answer, given the highly differentiated nature of the different types of mobility. However, the realisation of inter-sector mobility clearly requires the intervention of a higher decision-making level. It is uncertain, however, whether that will happen given the Dutch tradition of non-intervention, which is further emphasised by the current government in view of budgetary cuts.

Policy lessons from the Netherlands

1. *Foster the involvement of social partners through a clear division of responsibilities.* The most salient characteristic of Dutch policy-making is undoubtedly the strong responsibility of the social partners in fostering mobility and ensuring work-to-work transitions. Even though their proactive role is strongly embedded in the country's institutional setting, the fact that it is explicitly confirmed in nearly all the policy documents that were analyzed (SER advice, answer to the economic crisis, Pension Agreement) brings clarity to the policy process.
2. *Regulatory space for cooperation among actors.* Whereas a clear definition of the policy actors' responsibilities leads to heightened accountability, a context of 'regulatory space' or flexibility allows those actors to cooperate and tackle 'gray zones', such as in the case of UWV employers cooperation for workers facing dismissal.
3. *'Soft' initiatives should be preceded by strong regulatory or fiscal measures.* In order to produce behavioural change in the short term, 'hard' measures favouring labour participation, such as the discouragement of early retirement and work-to-work provisions in collective agreements, prove to be the most effective. The alternative, which is inducing cultural change, appears more uncertain.

Simultaneously, matters of labour allocation (mobility) may be addressed through small-scale projects. This is clearly visible in the fact that the removal of early retirement preceded the consolidation of mobility as a policy priority in, among other, the SER advice. Similarly, the Second Career Policy at the fire department shows that the successful implementation of mobility policies is rooted in the compulsory nature of the measures abolishing early retirement.

4. *Gradual approach towards mobility policies.* Most of the discussed policy initiatives were introduced in the form of pilots or projects of a limited scale. This has the advantages of (a) allowing for tailor-made approaches depending on the sector at stake (for instance, sectors in which heavy occupations are predominant will require different approaches than administrative ones), (b) providing space for bottom-up initiatives and involvement and (c) facilitating trial and error approaches from which larger-scale policies can learn. Conversely, the approach requires sound strategies for the collection and diffusion of information and best practices. In addition, the importance of geographically-based cooperation regarding low-scale initiatives should not be overlooked, as in the case of Working Smart Week, Regional HRM Knowledge Circles and the Labour Pool Den Bosch.
5. *Need to coordinate across all policy domains.* The multi-faceted nature of mobility policies makes it necessary to ensure coordination across policy domains. This is clearly shown by the fact that the preventive approach towards incapacity in the Career Project was partially built into cooperation with occupational medicine services.
6. *There are other ways of dealing with collective dismissal than early retirement.* This is clearly exemplified by the variety of arrangements of social plans, which include both curative measures such as outplacement and preventive activities regarding employability.
7. *Need of a conductor to facilitate inter-sector mobility.* Given the difficulties experienced in the Netherlands to promote inter-sector mobility, it is clear that intervention at a higher level is needed. Such an intervention need not be (entirely) conducted by the state: the social partners at the cross-sector level may also be the most indicated to promote new initiatives.
8. *Need to have a clear, over-arching conception of mobility.* In order to avoid tensions across policy lines such as the ones identified above (voluntary mobility as an individual or collective priority), policy actors should reflect on their own conception of mobility before designing policies. In this sense, the SER advice can be quoted as a best practice.

9. *Need to map mobility patterns to inform policies.* The identification of target sectors (private sector) or groups of workers (i.e. older workers) in the Netherlands was strongly documented by research on mobility.
10. *Continuity may be crucial for policy success.* New policies were embedded in existing structures. This was the case, for instance, of the mobility centres, which essentially improved coordination across existing services and at the same time opened new venues for cooperation, which included preventive work-to-work measures.
11. *A strong network of private service providers may facilitate labour allocation.* The Dutch institutional structure to deal with mobility, especially with forced mobility, is well-equipped with a widespread network of providers of outplacement services. This contributes to facilitate labour allocation.

ANNEX

LIST OF RESPONDENTS

Name	Organisation	Date	Type of interview
Frank Tros	Universiteit van Amsterdam	16/11/2011	Telephone
Renee Roodenburg	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment	14/02/2012	E-mail contact
Martine Maes	NCSI	05/03/2012	Face-to-face
Margreet Xavier	AWVN	05/03/2012	Face-to-face
Rob de Krieger	RWI	06/03/2012	Face-to-face
Michelien van der Aalst	RWI	06/03/2012	Face-to-face
Dirk Scheele	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment	07/03/2012	Face-to-face
Sander Tjeerds	SER	08/03/2012	Face-to-face
Hans van der Meer	SER	08/03/2012	Face-to-face

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