

Joint report on the implementation of the telework agreement

1) Country: The Netherlands

2) Organisations:

- Trade unions: FNV (Netherlands Trade Union Confederation), CNV (National Federation of Christian Trade Unions in the Netherlands) and MHP (Trade Union Federation for middle classes and higher level employees), members of ETUC.
- Employers: VNO-NCW (Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers), member of UNICE; MKB-Nederland (Royal Dutch Association of SME's), member of UAPME; LTO (Dutch Association for Agriculture and Horticulture).

3) Implementation of the telework agreement in the Netherlands

The European telework agreement was implemented in the Netherlands by a Recommendation of the Labour Foundation¹ to companies and sectoral social partners. This Recommendation was issued in September 2003.

The text of this Recommendation includes:

- an introduction with reference to the agreement of the European social partners; the full text of the European agreement was included in the annex;
- a description of the development of telework in the Netherlands in qualitative and quantitative terms;
- a description of the main elements to consider with respect to agreements on telework in collective bargaining and/or in dialogue with works councils and individual workers. The following main elements were recognised:
 - the definition of telework
 - the voluntary character of telework
 - equality with respect to working conditions as comparable workers
 - training and career development opportunities;
- in an annex: description of relevant legislation with respect to telework;
- in an annex: some examples of texts on telework in existing collective agreements.

The instrument of a Recommendation of the Labour Foundation was chosen because this is the instrument national social partners in the Netherlands use, according to their national practices, to promote dialogue and agreement on issues concerning working conditions in collective bargaining at company or sectoral level and/or with works councils and individual workers.

¹ The Labour Foundation is a national consultative body organised under private law. Its members are the three peak trade union federations and three peak employers' associations in the Netherlands. The Foundation provides a forum in which its members discuss relevant issues in the field of labour and industrial relations. Some of these discussions result in memorandums, statements or other documents in which the Foundation recommends courses of action for the employers and trade unions that negotiate collective bargaining agreements in industry or within individual companies.

4) Other actions

- In December 2005, the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers VNO-NCW issued a brochure called: Telework, something for you? This brochure was sent to all companies and sectors being direct or indirect member of VNO-NCW. The publication of this brochure was accompanied by a comprehensive article in VNO-NCW's magazine, containing descriptions of good practices in companies.
- VNO-NCW also provides for a dossier on telework at their internet website
- VNO-NCW's Director General is member of the Advisory Board of the Teleworkforum. This foundation aims to stimulate teleworking in the Netherlands by promoting all benefits to a variety of stakeholders.
- In a number of collective agreements trade unions have proposed to come to terms on a number of main issues concerning telework, notably concerning contractual status, working time (number of hours/days at home, attainability/availability, and workload), infrastructure, equipment at home and expenses (to be paid by the employer), teleworkers' involvement in information, (work) consultation, participation and negotiation, avoidance of social isolation, teleworkers' training and careering rights, data security, (limitations to) control and checking, pay systems, and social security issues.
- At various occasions during the last years, trade union federations have talked with various stakeholders about some main issues concerning telework, for example with the so-called Telework Forum in the Netherlands, and with the Ministry of Transport, trying to reach ground to incorporate telework agreements in mainstream labour relations. This work could be done by building further on earlier research and earlier publications on telework, for example performed and issued by the trade union federation MHP during the 90's.

5) The developments of telework in the Netherlands

It is difficult to demonstrate the developments of telework in the Netherlands in quantitative terms, because different definitions are used by research institutes. Nevertheless some figures.

According to 'Statistics Netherlands' the percentage of people that telework in the Netherlands has increased from 6% in 2002 to 8% in 2004. The larger the company the more people telework. According to information from Eurostat the percentage of companies in the Netherlands in which telework takes place is: 70% for large companies, 44% for medium-sized companies and 20% for small companies.

According to another study² the total amount of teleworkers in the Netherlands was 14,5% in 1999 and is expected to grow to 25.2% in 2005. In the same period the amount of telehomeworkers in the Netherlands will increase from 4% to 9.7%.

² Telework in the Netherlands, May 2006, dr. Albert Benschop (University of Amsterdam) and drs. Connie Menting (TeleDock)