

Social convoy and sustainable employability in The Netherlands

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1 Analysis of country-specific conditions for dismissals and instruments counteracting mass dismissals

1.1 Country-specific economic situation and labour market development

In the development of the Dutch labour market, three different time periods can be distinguished: From 1973 to 1982, the country was in an economic recession, followed by a restructuring phase from 1983 to 1993, and finally there was a phase of economic growth from 1994 to 1999 (CPB, 2000a). On the average, the employment rate rose by 3.3 % per year between 1997 and 1999, with a corresponding increase in the work force potential; nevertheless unemployment was reduced. This upsurge on the market can be explained by a moderate development in labour costs for businesses, by tax reductions, by favourable external cyclical movements on the labour market and the large decline in unemployment. In a European comparison, this rise in the employment rate and the reduction in unemployment are remarkable. After the unemployment rate had reached the European average in 1990, it fell noticeably below this mark and is projected at only 3 % for 2001. The rise in employment rate will only be about 2 % for 2001 because of the largely exhausted work force potential, the weakening economy and the increase in wages.

The reason for the successful development of the economy can be found in the expansion of the Dutch "Polder Model" which had been drawn up by employers, labour unions and the government during the period of economic recession in order to lend the Dutch economy new impulses (Dickmann, Eijkhout, Loeve, Mares & Sinkeldam, 1999). The negotiations of the three parties led to agreements on moderation in wage rises in exchange for a reduction in working hours. Labour unions and employers' federations were henceforth responsible for collective labour agreements and wage negotiations. This model led to a decline in unemployment and to necessary leeway for the economy to make new investments and achieve commensurate interest on their capital. In The Netherlands today, economic policy is characterised by deregulation, privatisation and liberalisation of markets (Houtman, Smulders & Klein Hesselink, 1999).

In the last ten years, the work force potential rose by 110,000 persons a year, which can be explained by the introduction of various measures. What really made this change possible was labour market-oriented policy, the favourable economic situation, the demographic change and the increased participation of women on the labour market. The rise in the employment rate came about mostly through part-time work and flexible work contracts, in particular through the employment of women, many of whom were job returnees. Their participation rate in the work force increased from 31 % in 1975, one of the lowest rates in Europe, to 52 % in 1997; whereas the rate for men remained the same. Older and young employees also profited from this increased employment rate. On the whole, a saturation point seems to have been reached, as a growing number of vacant job offers, principally in the

technical sector, can, according to employers, be filled only with difficulty. With the exception of agriculture, the employment rate in all economic sectors has risen.

The flexibilisation of work in the nineties has become obvious in the growing number of flexible and part-time contracts, as well as in an increase in internal mobility. Voluntary external mobility has declined over the last decade. Like the voluntary job-switches, the number of forced job-changes, i.e. dismissals and bankruptcies, has strongly declined since 1993. Disability has become an increasingly important reason for dismissal, while business economic reasons and mass dismissals have become less dominant. The overall employment protection legislation in The Netherlands is moderate, equalling the average European strictness rate.

Although the temporary as well as the long-term unemployment rate could be lowered (in 1998 it was 48 % of the total rate), there are groups specifically at risk: women, immigrants, low skilled unqualified workers and young people. The differences in unemployment rates between these risk groups and other groups of employees have practically not altered with the positive growth of the Dutch economy and employment. In the context of labour market policy in The Netherlands, we must also mention specifically the high levels of sickness absenteeism and elevated disability rates in The Netherlands. Empirical estimates and comparisons with other EU countries indicate that about half of the participation in disability schemes can be characterised as hidden unemployment. If The Netherlands would count disabled workers in the same way as other European countries do, the unemployment rate would at least be equal to the EU-average.

1.2 Instruments for counteracting mass dismissals

In The Netherlands, retention of existing staff and reintegration of employees into the labour market receives more attention than avoiding individual dismissals. Retention of current staff, intensive training of both employees and unemployed and further exploration of unused potential are needed to resolve bottlenecks in the tight labour market. A combined effort of companies, institutions, social partners and the Dutch government will be needed to achieve these objectives. The government places emphasis on preserving jobs for older employees, preventing illness and disability, advancing employees to higher company positions, promoting the employment of women and immigrants and also making work more rewarding (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2000a). In addition, the government is presently working on an "employability agenda" and a plan of action ("In goede banen"). Both measures aim at further qualifying employees as well as unemployed for the labour market and enabling those who have not yet completed a course of job training to obtain one.

A further type of government-supported measures to prevent dismissals is reduced working hours. This has recently been applied for KLM to respond to the economic problems faced by the company following the terrorist attacks in the United States.

Employment protection legislation is another mean to prevent dismissals. Any dismissals must be well-founded, and, in some cases, must be authorised by the Public Employment Services responsible. Employers must fulfil specific conditions in the case of collective dismissals; in general, a form of redundancy pay measures will be negotiated which are accompanied by various supportive measures. The regulations do not provide for severance pay or increased unemployment benefits, but they can frequently be negotiated within the company.

Outplacement and training are the most common solutions deployed by businesses in The Netherlands to adapt workers to consequences of restructurings and dismissals. The favourable economic situation and growing tightness of the labour market in The Netherlands over the last five years have caused companies and outplacement agencies to use outplacement instruments in a different manner. There is a clear shift from outplacement as a curative to a preventive instrument, a shift from “cure” to “care” (Campagne et al, 2000; Schreiner et al., 1996). “Career management” and “career counselling” are starting to replace the traditional concept and name of outplacement (Campagne et al., 2000). While the outflow of workers used to be the core-business of outplacement agencies, in recent years their main sources of income have shifted to managing the through-flow and internal mobility in companies. De Vries (2000) argues that the instruments deployed in outplacement have greatly changed over the last years. Clear “cookbook-like” recipes (like dress-code and CV layout) for dealing with redundant employees have given way to encouraging employability and self-entrepreneurship, preventing painful situations and forced dismissals, supporting companies in change-processes from an early stage onwards, and developing career management strategies. Outplacement has become one of many instruments in managing external mobility of workers that should preferably be avoided.

These developments have obscured the definition of outplacement. Elements that are important in distinguishing outplacement from other sorts of career counselling are:

1. Breaking the employment contract between the employer and employee is clearly the presupposed aim;
2. Expert counselling and advice during the process;
3. Payment of the outplacement process by (former) employer;
4. Always leads to a new destination in the occupational career.

In the literature, however, there seems to be no consensus among different scholars on the use of these elements in the definition of outplacement. In practice, the difference between outplacement and career management is not very clear. Outplacement, can for example, be the outcome of a career management process. The term “career management” is employed when a person has a job, wants another job, has never had a job (recent graduates) or wants a new job (e. g. unemployed, returnees and repatriates). A specific version of career management is career counselling. Here the purpose is to find out how certain skills, personal talents and co-operative behaviour could be better deployed under different circumstances

(Campagne et al., 2000). "Career coaching" takes place when people have reached a deadlock in their working situation and if they are in search for other possibilities within or outside working relations, or if they wish to clarify the results of their personal functioning in their co-operation with others.

Like the outplacement agencies, the Dutch government, labour unions and companies have shifted their focus from a curative to a preventive approach in dealing with restructuring and dismissal. In the current dynamic labour market, employees can no longer strive for life-time employment, but have to rely on their employability to keep a sense of security. "Life-long employment is to be replaced by life-long employability" is a motto frequently found in The Netherlands, where in recent years the question was seriously discussed as to how an individual's employability can be improved (e.g. Gaspersz & Ott, 1999; Van de Werf, 2000). The concept of employability describes the ability to find a new job under constantly changing conditions on the labour market. Today, large companies in The Netherlands take for granted that they will continue to train their employees. A new study by the Dutch government (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 1999) shows that nearly all collective labour agreements in the large companies contain agreements on the continuation on company-related and general education measures; some of them concern the special case of upcoming dismissals. Despite their importance, companies have a critical view of the offer of continuing education measures which teach employees basic skills instead of know-how directly related to a current job because such knowledge will prove useful only on the long run.

In a recent study, based on a sample of 1013 Dutch organisations, De Vries, Grundemann, van Vuuren, & Willemsen (2000) find that 32% of the companies are pursuing an employability policy. A far larger percentage, 88%, has regulations that intend to stimulate the employability of workers. Most often, these are regulations on schooling and training. One interesting approach is to hire employees not for a certain task but based on contracts in which the job is guaranteed on the premise of obligation to continuing education (Van de Werf, 2000).

Apart from furthering qualification for employees, companies can deploy a broad range of measures and devices in order to stimulate employability. Task enrichment, promotion of internal mobility, additional task familiarisation periods, self-assessment test and labour market scans are some of the possible instrument that companies can deploy to stimulate the employability of their employees. Gaspersz and Van Ott (1999) have investigated initiatives taken by twenty companies in The Netherlands to stimulate the employability of their workers. These instruments are schematised in table NL-1.

Table NL-1: Instruments for encouraging employability (Gaspersz & Ott, 1999)

Curative, external employability stimulation	Preventive, internal employability stimulation
Stimulation of employable skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadening training • Creation of job- and learning-experience posts • Finding trainee posts 	Stimulation of employable skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of not only vocational/specialist skills, but also broad education • Changing tasks: task-extension and -enrichment, task or job rotation, job sharing, project-based organisation of jobs • Allowing employees to use work time for training • Self-assessment tests • Drawing up a personal employability plan • Job counsellors for advising on careers • Discussing career management in performance discussions • Certification of received training and/or working experience • Proliferation of jobs
Stimulation of mobility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial stimulation (e. g. wage supplementation, leave- or incentive bonuses, financial aid for becoming self employed) • Offering return-guarantee • Job management and counselling 	Stimulation of mobility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations of staying in the same job • Interim jobs • Creation of an internal temp agency • Organisation of a mobility fair • Registration of interests • Valuation of work experience for internal applicants in case of missing the formal diplomas
Stimulation of knowledge of the labour market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping contacts with companies in the same region • Creation of a network with other companies for exchange of information on each others internal labour markets • Labour market scan • Mobilisation of executive networks • Training of job application skills 	Stimulation of knowledge of the labour market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive communication on internal vacancies in other parts of the company • Allowing for the creation of internal and external networks

Source: Gaspersz & Ott, 1999, p.62

Job rotation is one of the most commonly used instruments by businesses. This can almost naturally be achieved by a project-based organisation of work. An instrument similar to job rotation applied by Dutch companies is allowing employees a *broad spectrum of tasks*, which are changed regularly. The tasks can be added within the frame of the present job or continuously changed. Two examples often applied add

tasks at the same level (task extension) or delegate tasks at a higher level (task enrichment), respectively. Further measures offered by companies such as so-called *mobility fairs* aim at raising employee mobility and might include workshops, information on job vacancies and self-employment, training in making applications and job marketing. In addition, some firms allow their employees to accept *interim jobs outside the company*. The work contracts then establish the conditions for the "absence" as well as for the guarantee of the employee's return. The employee has the opportunity to work elsewhere temporarily. Among the large companies, there exist more and more mobility centres, which aim at the formation of a cluster of various instruments which can be applied to stimulate greater mobility. Such centres are often founded with the intention of accommodating employees who have become redundant because of intended personnel reductions. But the centres are also open to employees who voluntarily change jobs.

The pool concept can be found in different traits. Know-how pools can be constituted to function as a sort of internal temping agency to fulfil temporary vacancies. It can also be linking several companies in the same branch or sector to optimize the deployment and training of staff in response to fluctuations in demand. Pools can also be used in project-based companies. A new form of pool can be found in the outplacement market. In a pool, employees are admitted in an active mediation-programme, of which the costs are shared by the (former) employer and the social security system. Continuation of pay and re-employment in another job will help to keep the labour market value and sense of self-esteem of the individual involved (Smeulders, 1997).

2 General intervention schemes for the unemployed

2.1 Overview of interventions

In recent years, the Dutch government has come up with major policy measures, aimed at a more efficient reintegration of unemployed and a less direct public intervention. Active labour market activities have received more attention in the last few years, while the spending on income maintenance programmes has decreased. An important measure in this respect is the "New Deal" policy ("*Sluitende Aanpak*"), in which each unemployed person is made an offer of a training, a work experience project or a job within twelve months since the beginning of unemployment. The privatisation of the reintegration activities of the public employment service (PES) and the reorganisation of the social security system are other important measures to further an efficient reintegration of unemployed in The Netherlands. Finally, tightening the criteria and sanctions for people receiving unemployment insurance benefits has been a strategy of the Dutch government to encourage reintegration of unemployed.

Recently, major changes have taken place in the structures for mediation and reintegration of the unemployed. The Dutch government has launched a policy of less

direct intervention in the provision of employment services. The reintegration activities, consisting of activities such as counselling, school education, job training and job placement will be fully privatised in 2001 (CPB, 2000b). Furthermore, the creation of a single public agency in 2001, that will be held responsible for the execution of traditional administrative tasks, will need to facilitate the job search process for unemployed. (Dickmann et al., 1999).

Even despite the strong decrease in the unemployment rate, the number of participants in active labour market programmes has greatly increased over the last decade. It can be speculated that this increase is due to the favourable economic climate and the tight labour market in The Netherlands. The intervention programmes are mostly aimed at vulnerable groups like long-term unemployed, immigrants and women. The "New Deal" policy, however, is targeting new-unemployed to prevent them from becoming long-term unemployed.

Job brokering by employment offices is an important mean of active labour market intervention. In addition, there are training programmes and subsidised job offers for the unemployed in both the public and private spheres. Presently, The Netherlands are conducting special programmes for vulnerable groups on the labour market (long-term unemployed, unemployed young people, and women). PESs use profiling techniques to determine the individual prospects of finding a job, which results in individually tailored support. Unemployed are assigned to four possible phases of prospects of work, which each come with its own special policy instruments. The most common instruments are: offering information on vacancies, training application skills, mediation, offering educational programmes, subsidised jobs and social activation. Additional measures for special risk groups are for example special stimulation projects for ethnic groups, facilitating child-care and part-time work to encourage the participation of women, and special tax measures for elderly workers.

Another measure toward reintegration of the unemployed in The Netherlands was established when the requirements for receiving unemployment benefits were stiffened and sanctions were placed on financial advantages of unemployment over a job, which had sometimes been the case in the past. As a result of the prospects of an increasing shortage in the work force, the Dutch government is also attempting to better integrate older employees into the labour market. To achieve this goal, companies that hire these older employees receive tax reductions under certain conditions.

Apart from the public institutions responsible for the (re)integration of unemployed on the labour market, several private outplacement agencies are active in offering job seeking support for dismissed workers. Temp agencies (e. g. Start and Randstad) have created special business units to perform outplacement activities. Also, reintegration agencies (e. g. Kliq) that originate from the PES, offer coaching, counselling and training for dismissed and unemployed employees. Finally, a number of traditional private outplacement firms, organised under the "Nederlandse Organisatie van Bureaus voor Outplacement en Loopbaanbegeleiding" (NOBOL), the

branch organisation for agencies for outplacement, retention and employability, offer outplacement services. The first two types of agencies mainly focus on group-outplacement of low-skilled to middle management employees, while the main part of the clients of the latter outplacement agencies consist of individual counselling of highly educated workers.

2.2 *Innovative elements of successful intervention schemes*

Because of the recent start of some of the most important intervention programmes, not much information on the effectiveness of active labour market policies in The Netherlands is available. The effectiveness of the "New Deal" policy, proposing training, job experience or a job to all new unemployed within a year of their unemployment, has not been evaluated yet because of its recent introduction. For the same reason, no information can be given on the Unemployment Activation Act (WIW), which is one of the most important programmes in The Netherlands at the moment for the reduction of long-term unemployment.

As for other labour market instruments used in the past, training programmes have been found to reduce unemployment more than relieve jobs (Jongen et al., 2000). This is likely to be due to differences in targeted group, unemployed youngsters versus long-term unemployed, and due to differences in the extent to which participants receive training. Individuals that participate in training programmes (re-)gain (lost) skills. In this way training programmes speed up the process by which workers move into private sector employment. Programmes that provide subsidies for firms that hire previously long-term unemployed job seekers are not informative in data on the outflow. Finally, an interim evaluation of social activation experiments shows that a great number of long term unemployed started re-exploring job-possibilities. Not only do these programmes positively stimulate chances of long-term unemployed on the labour market, the social integration of participants, often suffering great personal problems, is also promoted (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Serail, 1998).

Motivation of the participants proves to be a major factor for the success of an intervention measure. In a recent study by the Central Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, the search behaviour of unemployed has been studied using a database from the PES. Instruments of active labour market policy such as training, use of career offices and public employment jobs, are found to have a low pay off in terms of improved chances to get regular work. In contrast to this, differences in motivation are found to have strong effects. The analysis shows that a higher motivation increases the effectiveness of the instruments (CPB, 2000c).

Another decisive factor in the successful reintegration of unemployed proves to be early intervention. Van Leuvensteijn and Koning (2000) find that the length of the unemployment spell has a negative effect on the job finding rate. This study suggests that after an unemployment spell of half a year, the decrease in the job finding rate for recipients of social assistance benefits and unemployment insurance can be

attributed for 20 to 25% to sorting effects that are caused by individual characteristics. After a three- to four-year period, the probability of finding a job deteriorates further, but only because of individual duration effects. The “New Deal” policy, targeting the newly unemployed is meant as a supplementary policy to prevent workers from becoming long-term unemployed.

The emphasis on vulnerable groups alone is being discussed critically in The Netherlands. In a recent study, Van Leuvensteijn and Koning (2000) argue that labour market policies should not rely on profiling at the start of an unemployment spell. Targeting specific groups at the moment of inflow into unemployment bears a great risk of long term unemployment for those unemployed that are (initially) classified as having good job prospects. Additionally, it is questionable whether observed, administrative characteristics of the unemployed are sufficient to estimate accurate profiling measures. They argue that supplemental policies, for example by encouraging search activities, active counselling and monitoring of all workers that have spent a certain length of time in unemployment, are needed (Van Leuvensteijn & Koning, 2000). The “New Deal” policy, which offers unemployed a training programme, a subsidised job or a regular job within one year of inactivity, is meant to overcome this problem.

The average rate of re-integration of unemployed following a measure was 60 %. The efforts toward job integration were most successful for young unemployed, and most difficult with regard to long-term unemployed. The introduction of output-related arrangements in the future is meant to increase the success of reintegration activities (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2000c).

3 Specific outplacement/replacement interventions

The Netherlands represent the country with the highest outplacement/replacement coverage (800 interventions per 1 million inhabitants) in Europe. In contrast, the rate for Germany is only about 10-25 interventions per 1 million inhabitants. This is quite remarkable if the low unemployment rate and the decrease of the number of dismissals in The Netherlands over the last five years are considered.

3.1 Overview of interventions

In The Netherlands, the first outplacement/replacement counselling was founded in the 1970s. At first, the clients were top-level managers, but after a short time, this instrument was adapted for lower level employees, too. This application increased in the second half of the 1980s. In the last decade, in the wake of ever greater competition because of globalisation, massive restructurings in large concerns such as Philips, Hoogovens and Shell caused thousands of job losses. The jobs in these companies had long been viewed as jobs for life. Then, as a result of these decisive changes, increasing awareness arose, among employees as well, of the necessity for ensuring permanent employability in the face of reduced job security. Especially in

the wake of these industrial changes, outplacement/replacement interventions were put into action. Following renewed economic prosperity in The Netherlands in recent years and the sharp reduction in the availability of skilled workers, outplacement/replacement has become less of a curative than a preventive strategy; that is, this type of counselling aims now more at managing phases of job transition and business-internal mobility. The name and traditional orientation of outplacement is being altered in favour of the idea and the name “career counselling” or “career management”. Interventions are becoming increasingly instruments of activating employee self-help potential during critical transitions, which go beyond assistance in writing job applications, and coaching for job interviews. Whereas employee reactions during job application and the drawing up of application documents made up the main part of the counselling in the beginning phase of this concept, instruments connected to the idea of outplacement/replacement counselling are now being further developed. Nowadays, the concept of employability, the path to self-employment and the prevention of problematical transitions stand in the forefront. Companies counsel their employees in career management. Outplacement/replacement supports the process of restructuring from the very beginning. Thus, outplacement/replacement is becoming one of many instruments supporting external and internal employee mobility.

The basic outplacement procedure is the following:

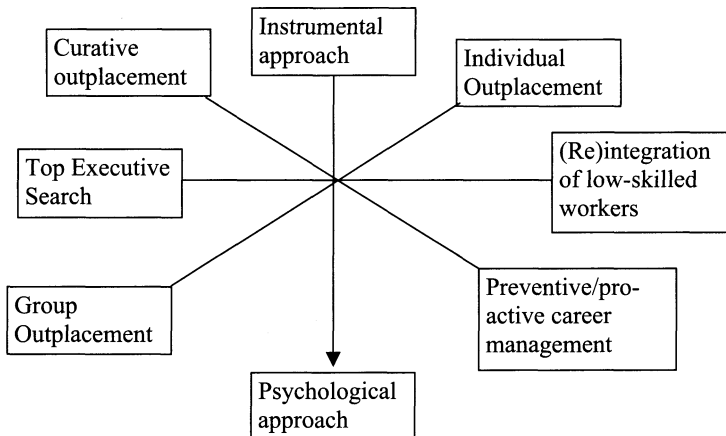
1. The first aim is to define an appropriate and motivating objective for the (dismissed) employee, which is realistic and saleable in the labour market place. The objective should best capture the experience, capabilities, personality and motivation of an individual and should also fit in with current labour market trends. Information is acquired through a series of in-depth interviews, assignments and a review of past accomplishments of the participants. Usually instruments include career and personal surveys, ability analysis and personality profile questionnaires. This first part of counselling aims to respond to the questions: who am I, what am I capable of doing and what do I want? (Campagne et al., 2000)
2. The aim of the second part of counselling is to generate an interview for the candidate. This can be achieved by training different job search skills and identification of the labour market. Training in networking, designing a curriculum vitae, verbal presentations and practice interviews are possible elements of training. This part of the counselling aims to respond to the questions: where can I find what I want and how do I get there? (Campagne et al.)

Some agencies/consultants put great emphasis on the first part of the process. The common idea among these consultants is that psychological stabilisation and encouragement of the candidate, out of balance by the dismissal, will automatically lead to getting the right position or finding the right destination. Other agencies and consultants put greater emphasis on the pragmatic part of the process in “finding a

job as best one can as soon as possible". Another distinction that can be made here is that between individual and group outplacement. Kruijthof, President of the Association of Career Management Consulting Firms in Europe (AOCFE), argues that individual outplacement has become ever more important in recent years (Interview 20-9-2000). Kruijthof and Hamaker, director of the Career Management Institute, both argue that the Dutch outplacement market is mature compared to other European countries, in the sense of using progressive and advanced instruments to support individuals and groups in outplacement-processes (Interview P.T. Kruijthof, 20-9-2000; Interview G. Hamaker, 27-9-2000).

The market for outplacement activities in The Netherlands is very diverse. Different outplacement- and career-management agencies operate in different segments of the market, for different target groups, using different techniques. This private market for reintegration of (future) unemployed or, more specifically, outplacement, can be schematised as follows:

Figure NL-1: Elements of the outplacement market in The Netherlands



The favourable economic situation and tight labour market have induced a shift from an instrumental to a psychological approach, from group to individual outplacement, from curative to preventive outplacement, and from top executive search to outplacement of individuals in lower organisational levels. The privatisation of the reintegration activities of the PES will possibly further this last aspect.

The trade unions have embraced outplacement as a way to alleviate the process of dismissals. Outplacement is often part of the social plan that employers and trade unions agree upon. Outplacement has also become an important feature in collective bargaining. For example, in the collective labour agreement of the wood industry, the parties involved agreed to develop a policy to retain employees that have become redundant for economic reasons in the branch. Training, labour pools and

outplacement will be used as instruments to realise this retention in the coming years (FNV Bouw, 2000).

3.2 Effectiveness and good practice of outplacement/replacement intervention schemes

Reliable statistic figures on the effects of outplacement in The Netherlands are not available. The many different agencies offering outplacement services, varying from traditional outplacement agencies to special business units of employment offices and temp agencies, only provide figures on a limited number of individual cases. There is no scientifically reliable data available on the effects of outplacement on an aggregated level. Furthermore, the number of mass-dismissals and group outplacements has been limited over the last five years. The Dutch branch-organisation for outplacement-agencies has, however, collected statistical information that gives some insight in the outplacement market in The Netherlands (Schreiner, 1996). These figures only report on individual outplacement candidates. In 1994, most of the candidates were men (80%), highly educated (Higher Vocational Educational and Academic in 73% of the cases) with an average age of 41 years. The average duration outplacement counselling was some nine months. In most cases outplacement was suggested by the employer. In 25% of the cases, the employee has suggested to start an outplacement procedure. Although the employer generally pays for the outplacement counselling, in 70% of the cases the employee can choose the agency.

Typical for the individualistic culture in The Netherlands is the striving to adapt the outplacement or replacement process to the specific needs of the individual(s) involved. There is no one best way to help individuals find a (better suited) job. In overviews on techniques deployed by Dutch companies and placement agencies to stimulate or assure the internal or external mobility of their employees, it becomes obvious that a wide range of interventions are possible.

Since analyses on an aggregated level have not been described in Dutch scientific literature, various examples of successful joint interventions in The Netherlands will be described here.

Work and Mediation

The concept of "Work and Mediation" has been developed as a joint intervention project between employers, labour unions, the PES, the Insurance Administration Office (GAK) and the outplacement unit of Start temp agency. The central idea of this concept is the combination of mediation, e. g. by means of active job search and networking of the outplacement agency and the ex-employer, and guidance, e. g. by means of training, individual counselling and emotional support. The concept was first successfully applied for supporting dismissed Fokker employees in finding another job, and subsequently implemented in a number of other large restructuring operations like RDM and Stork. The restructuring of RDM, a large company active in

the metal engineering sector, in 1994, has been extensively recorded and evaluated. In this reorganisation 235 employees were guided in finding another job. The group was offered a two-year contract by Start, during which the candidates received tailor-made counselling, training and (temporary) jobs. This concept allows for a transfer from work to work, instead of searching for a job being unemployed. Both the network of the temp agency and contacts of RDM (e. g. clients, suppliers and competitors) were actively drawn on to find new jobs for the candidates. During this period, the co-ordination of the different flows of money (e. g. payment of posting, unemployment benefit pay, sickness leave payments) was taken over by Start, which relieved candidates of complex administrative paperwork between periods of work and inactivity. The integration of different techniques (e. g. job placement, counselling, training), the successful collaboration of different parties involved, the intensive guidance individually tailored to the person and the taking over of administrative paperwork, all contributed to 92% of the candidates finding another job within two years after the start of the project. A study by the GAK (Doodeman & Halfhide, 1997) shows that the period of inactivity of ex-RDM-employees was 60% lower compared to a control group of dismissed workers in the same branch that were not involved in the project, leading to a saving in expenditures on unemployment benefits of more than EUR 2,7 million.

Re-orientation Project Agricultural Profession

Since 1995, the County Organisation for Agriculture and Horticulture (GLTO) and the re-integration agency of the PES, collaborate in order to support farmers that want to make a switch to a non-agricultural profession (Dam, Vaanholt & Langeslag, 2000). The “re-orientation project agricultural sector” (in Dutch: HAS-project) was initiated to respond to problems in the agricultural labour market. Counsellors involved in the project communicate with the candidates in their own dialect. In emotional matters like the shut-down of companies and coping with grief, the use of dialect has proven to be important. The programme starts by making an inventory of threats and chances in the current situation. Additionally, a career plan is made which describes the steps needed to find a position in the labour market. Being often born and raised within the agricultural sector, farmers generally do not have a good idea of other job-possibilities. Several computer-programs are used to define job-possibilities, capacities and wishes of the candidate, and to match candidates with potential employers. Furthermore, apprenticeships are organised for almost all candidates. This has proven to be important for this particular group. Reunions are frequently organised in which (ex)candidates get the opportunity to exchange their experiences. Over the last five years, over 200 farmers have found another job by means of the HAS-project. The nature of these jobs varies from bus driver to metal worker and help-desk employee.

PTT Post

Starting in 1995, the re-structuring of the Dutch Post Office Services (PTT Post) in business-units, and the computerisation of a great number of processes made an

estimated 6,000 employees redundant (Hoek, 1997). This estimation dropped to 5,5 thousand when the strict freeze on recruitment of new personnel, starting in 1992, showed to be effective. From the start, it was agreed that forced dismissals had to be prevented as much as possible. It could not be guaranteed however, that all redundant employees would be re-deployed within the same company. In order to support both employees and management in the change process, an internal employment agency was founded, called Job Consult, with local offices around the country. The aim of this agency was to support redundant employees in finding an appropriate alternative for the loss or change of their jobs. Practical job-search training for individuals and groups, information on in- and external vacancies, assessment tests, IQ- and potential-tests, labour market scan, in- and external apprenticeships, lending out and through in- and outside the company, were some of the instruments. An active search attitude was demanded of the employee, as well as the willingness to be both geographically and functionally mobile. Being theoretically and practically capable of managing career changes proved to be one of the critical success aspects for the role of the manager. Also, the responsibility of the manager for the redundant employee during the whole process of mediation proved to be important for the success of the operation. For Job Consult, the individual approach and the local offices, located on the "problem spots", proved to be successful. Over the period of one and a half years, an appropriate solution had been found for almost all redundant employees.

Dutch Railway Services

The privatisation of the Dutch Railway Services (NS) makes some 6,500 employees redundant over the period 1993-2000 (Gaspersz & Ott, 1999). In 1993, NS and the trade unions have agreed on a social plan to soften the damage and to solve problems of individual workers. For every department, the number of cuts in staff is being determined. The selection of redundant employees is made by the "last in, first out"-principle. Additionally, the outflow of elderly workers is being stimulated. The NS tries to prevent forced dismissals. The NS have founded five local employment policy offices to support redundant workers in finding a new job. The goal is not to find an appropriate job as quickly as possible, but to find a job that really suits the individual. During the time of their mediation, the employee stays in the pay of the company and continues keeping all rights and obligations. All tasks are dropped immediately, in order to have full-time liberty to search for a new job. The period of mediation is of 2.5 years for workers that have not reached the age of 35 years, and 3 years for workers of 35 years of age and up. After that period the employment is terminated.

In the first phase, the role of the employment office is to support individuals in overcoming the initial emotional shock of their dismissal. This shock has been quite considerate, the NS being a typical life-time employment company. After this the consultants involved support individuals in defining their wishes and capabilities. Stimulating knowledge and skills, stimulating the willingness of mobility, and stimulating the practical knowledge of the labour market are the three paths to help

redundant NS workers in finding another job. In order to stimulate knowledge and skills of individuals, every training that increases the probability of finding a job is compensated for. Additionally, educational and work-experience apprenticeships are important instruments. The willingness to change jobs is stimulated by the organisation of a workshop, treating topics like personal orientation and training of application- and conversation-skills. Additionally, every two weeks follow-up workshops are organised on these subject. Also, participants discuss the progress of the job search with a job consultant every week. In order to further labour market knowledge of participants, among other subjects, are informed about vacancies, terms of employment in other companies and self-employment. The employment policy office has made intensive contacts with companies, institutions and temping agencies. By means of a computerised system, the wishes and capacities of the candidates are matched with the demand of this network. In cooperation with a temping agency, the employment office uses temporary jobs as an instrument for mediation to a fixed-term job.

ABN AMRO

A department in a big Dutch bank, ABN AMRO, had to be cut in half within a period of three years, following a computerisation process (Gaspersz & Ott, 1999). The computerisation of the department resulted in both a quantitative and a qualitative mismatch of the current staff. It was agreed within the company that forced dismissals would not take place. Until present, the large Dutch banks have succeeded in avoiding forced dismissals, partly out of fear of damaging their solid, reliable image. This is quite a striking achievement for a branch that has been so profoundly touched by the consequences of computerisation of their work-processes.

In the ABN AMRO case mentioned here, the production process was analysed using a so-called "Business Process Redesign". The employability policy that was plotted was not only aimed at the future redundant employees, but also at the workers who would keep their position after the reorganisation.

From the beginning onwards, employees were encouraged to receive broad schooling and training oriented towards non-banking sectors. In order to stimulate the willingness to change jobs, all employees were free to participate in a re-orientation programme, consisting of several group and individual interviews by an external agency. Additionally, the bank's internal Re-employment Services and an external agency co-operated in offering a career change support-programme to employees that were seriously considering a job-switch. An individual repatriation grant was offered to employees that were faced with a financial decline in their new job situation. Also, employees were offered a return guarantee in case the contract of the new job was not extended. In order to promote labour market skills of individuals, several instruments were deployed. Re-employment Services collected vacancies, which could be consulted in a Job Centre, supported individuals in internal and external applications, gave advice in repatriation negotiations and made contact with local companies. A special newspaper was edited as part of the re-organisation process. Finally,

employees that were not able to find another job outside the bank were included in a so-called "flying squad", which functions like a sort of internal temping agency.

At present, the results of this reorganisation are not described in Dutch literature. Sceptics suggest that the possible risk of the strategy deployed in this case, which is to further the employability of all workers, will create a creaming-off effect e. g., that "the best" will leave and "the weak" will stay behind.

A group of teachers on unemployment payment scheme

A large public social security agency commissions an external outplacement agency to further the reintegration of a group of ten teachers on reduced pay (Campagne et al., 2000). Most of the individuals in the group are frustrated about their career path, and feel that they are put under pressure by the social security agency.

In total, eight training sessions, twelve workshops and five individual conversations are being organised to support the participants in finding a job. The group sessions turn out to fail completely, because of the low level of motivation and feelings of resistance of the participants. The mutual support and learning that was envisaged by organising group sessions appeared to have the adverse effect. The individual sessions proved to be more successful. Nine months after finishing the project, six candidates had found a new job, and two participants had started a training-programme. The outplacement consultant involved concludes that in the case of a group or an individual that is not motivated to find another job, it is important to first work on the motivation of the candidate, before offering instrumental support.

Individual case

After a reorganisation, an external outplacement agency is asked to guide a group of twelve employees that have become redundant (Campagne et al., 2000). One of them, the 53-year old Gerrit, has been working with the same company for 39 years as an assembly line worker. After an accident in the past, Gerrit has difficulties in keeping up the pace, working under pressure and remembering things. He uses tranquilizers to deal with this. His social situation is fragile.

After an initial and several follow-up conversations, it soon becomes apparent that the chances of Gerrit finding a regular job are almost zero. Because of his age, low skills, physical and mental complaints and limited mobility, Gerrit and the agency decide that a job through the Provision of Sheltered Workshops Act (WSW) would be more appropriate. However, the admittance procedures for jobs in sheltered workshops are bureaucratic and take much time. Additionally, after admittance, there exists a three-year waiting list.

Because of his mental condition, Gerrit was not capable of dealing with all the formalities and practicalities of his inscription at the PES, and of starting up his admittance procedure at the WSW. The outplacement agency has intensively supported Gerrit in dealing with and circumventing bureaucratic procedures. Active and practical support in networking, training of application and networking skills,

active motivation, and offering an exercise book, are other means deployed by the agency to further Gerrit's reintegration.

Eleven months after starting the outplacement process, Gerrit has found a job as a janitor at a primary school. He has a great variety of tasks, and indicates that he is very satisfied with his new job. His use of tranquilizers has diminished. His former employer has taken care of a financial compensation in the social plan.

4 Recommendations for a future concept of an integrated outplacement/replacement approach: Resources, deficits and future tasks

The labour market in The Netherlands is, in many respects, unique with regard to the re-integration of the unemployed. First, there has to be cited the large number of persons placed in the category "unable to work because of handicap", whereas in other European countries they would be classified simply as "unemployed". It would be interesting to study if and how outplacement techniques can be applied to this group of disabled workers. One could argue that a handicap places workers at a distance to the labour market in a similar way as elderly or foreign employees. It would also be interesting to understand which outplacement instruments are most suitable for the different target groups. A tailor-made outplacement counselling is important, since length of service, job position, level of employability, reasons for dismissal and other variables demand for various ways of outplacement counselling.

Second, another interesting development in The Netherlands is the privatisation of the PES (Public Employment Service). This experimental situation opens up the question of what government placement agencies can learn from private initiatives. The private market for outplacement/replacement in The Netherlands seems to be quite well developed at present. There has been a recognisable transition from curative to preventive instruments. In this context, an interesting question arises as to how effective preventive instruments such as promotion of employability are in warding off dismissals, and also of how a process of outplacement is to be organised more effectively in this way.

Third, a very particular aspect of the situation in The Netherlands is the tense labour market, one tending toward full employment. This situation makes it difficult for companies to recruit new qualified workers. For this reason, the instruments of outplacement/replacement counselling or in-house continuing education concepts toward creating long-lasting employability have gained great significance, as they are able to make the company more attractive for the present employees as well as for employees to be recruited. Therefore, in The Netherlands, the discussion on unemployment and dismissals is not only viewed from a perspective of social justice, but also from a perspective of economic interest by companies. We argue not only to examine regulations in furthering a social fair treatment of unemployed and employees that are at risk of being dismissed, but also to consider the economic interests of companies in this respect. The hypothesis is that a fair treatment of

employees that are at risk of being dismissed will be encouraged if the employer has a clear economic interest.

The private market for outplacement in The Netherlands seems to be quite mature. There has been a clear shift from curative (outplacement) to preventive instruments for career management. This shift also becomes apparent within the Dutch unions. They put greater emphasis on a pro-active, preventive approach (e. g. furthering employability) and less on a curative approach (e. g. social plan). Striving for "life-time employability" is slowly starting to replace the concept of "life-time employment" in the tripartite negotiations between the unions, employers and the government. This is part of a long-term development with the emphasis shifting from job-security to employment-security. Furthering employability of employees offers them a better protection in the current (and future) dynamic labour-market than protecting the legal status of employees. Collective bargaining incorporates ever more agreements about training, job rotation, personal development plans and intentions by the employer to facilitate career management. This gives employees the necessary resources to move in the labour market. A major part of these resources consists of training, and for another part of experience as well as the readiness to anticipate changes. Therefore, in order to support job mobility, it is necessary that employees should be given permanent (extra) training, and that the employer should offer them the opportunity to do so.

An integrated concept for outplacement/replacement should therefore not only focus on active and passive social plans, but also on pro-active measures. A future task would be to evaluate the effectiveness of this pro-active approach.

One of the most striking aspects of the Dutch literature on the effects of both public and private interventions in relation to (future) unemployed is the lack of reliable scientific quantitative data. The effectiveness of various instruments has rarely been evaluated in a quantitative manner. This is quite remarkable given the amount of money spent by the Dutch government, private enterprises and trade unions on intervention programmes to encourage reintegration or prevent unemployment. The great variety of agencies involved and instruments deployed to support (future) unemployed in finding a job may be one of the reasons for this lacuna. One of the most important future tasks would therefore be to collect quantitative data on the effectiveness of various instruments deployed to further the reintegration of unemployed or prevent employees from becoming unemployed.