

# The Netherlands: Working conditions in central public administration

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*This report deals with the development of working conditions for employees working in Central Public Administration in The Netherlands. Contrary to many countries, the distinction between public and private employees is very small. The main changes in the situation for public employees are a further equalisation of contracts to private employees, and for CPA employees in particular, a major exodus (leaving jobs for the private sector or leaving for retirement) in the coming years is expected. Working conditions in general are quite favourable for public employees, but the exodus may affect these conditions.*

## Introduction

This EWCO CAR is specifically focused on the so-called group of Central Public Administration (CPA) workers (for the concept of public administration, please refer to *code 84 – Public administration and defence; compulsory social security* of Eurostat’s [NACE rev.2 Structure and explanatory notes](#), always at central level). This category of public workers includes those workers that are employed by the Central Public Administration (CPA) in each Member State, including deconcentrated levels both at regional (Federal or quasi-Federal States) or local level (municipalities), that is to say, workers employed by the CPA irrespectively of the place where they conduct their work. Also, CPA workers include both civil servants and public employees. By way of contrast, public workers employed by the regional or local public administrations are excluded from the research.

The CAR’s coordinating team is fully aware of the existence of very important differences in the definition and delimitation of the “central administration” amongst EU Member States, depending on their historical, political and cultural traditions. These differences will have to be borne in mind when conducting the research, in particular when making international comparisons. In absence of data covering the subsector CPA, national correspondents must indicate that clearly in their answers and shall try to provide the most approximate available data (for example, referring to part of CPA [data on employment in ministries] or comprising CPA [for example “public administration”]).

The questionnaire focuses on the following topics:

- Brief description of the general structure of the national Public Administration and of recent changes and reforms introduced (around 250 words)
- Identification of main recent changes in the working conditions of Central Public Administration (CPA)’s workers, as well as their expected evolution in the near future Describe the main causes and rationale, both general and/or specific, behind these changes (around 1.500 words).
- Identify relevant institutions and bodies with responsibility for inspection and enforcement of compliance with regulations or legislation on working conditions in the national CPAs, as well as their main recent activities in this domain (around 250 words).

- Analyse comparatively the opinions and points of views of national social partners on the recent changes on the working conditions of CPA's workers. Describe possible social dialogue initiatives taken to improve working conditions or avert their possible deterioration (around 400 words).
- Make a final commentary on the main results (around 100 words)

Please give your answers as specifically as possible for the subheadings (1.1., 1.2.,...) in each block.

## **1: Brief description of the general structure of the national Public Administration and of recent changes and reforms introduced.**

### **1.1 What is the definition/concept of CPA applicable in your country? What are the main similarities and differences of this definition in relation to the one provided in the Background Note? Are there also other Administrative levels (regional/local), whose workers have a different status?**

The Background Note uses the definition of CPA or Eurostat Labour Force Survey. For our comparison, we use the CPA-definition used by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior (BZK) ([www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bzk](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/bzk)) and/or Statistics Netherlands ([www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl)). These organisations refer to CPA as those groups of employees adhering to the collective agreement of the Public Sector (SBI2008: O or 84). Anyone falling under the collective agreements of the Central Public Administration is classified as a CPA-worker. Eurostat uses a broader definition, but it is unclear to us which categories are included into their figures. Also, the figures of BZK/CBS help us to get a more detailed overview of developments within the public sector.

Within the public administration-definition in The Netherlands, the following distinctions are made:

- Central Public Administration – National (CPA): “Rijk”: these are the central administrative workers, divided over the central ministries and the agencies (with 85% of this CPA-employment). Included in these figures are personnel from defence, police, social security. There are no de-concentrated CPA-workers.
- Provincial (public) employment,
- Local (public) employment in the municipality

### **1.2 Describe possible different types of national CPA workers in terms of employment relationships/contracts (civil servants, public employees, etc) and their associated characteristics in terms of duties, rights, job responsibilities, ways to access to employment, etc.**

In the Dutch context, we prefer to talk of Public Employees rather than Civil Servants. We see Civil Servants as having very separate labour regulations in comparison to Private Employees. Because Dutch Public Employees have few differences in labour conditions to Private Employees, we will not use the term of Civil Servant.

National CPA workers have an employment relationship that compares to a very high degree with that of employees in the private sector. In the last 25 years, the employment relationship of the 'public employee' has approached to the rules of private employees. There only remains very little distinction between public and private employees (see further). The main distinction between public employees and private employees, is the fact that the Public Employer can regulate several elements of the employment contract with the Public Employee in a one sided way. Though this right still remains today, in practice the difference with Private Employees is quite small. Over the past 25 years, the following changes in the regulations for Public Employees have been carried through:

- The introduction of labour condition negotiations, the sector model (1989; 1993);
- The OOW-operation ("Overheidspersoneel onder de werknemersverzekering") which brought the Public Employees under the jurisdiction of the private employees social security-regulations (Sickness Law, Unemployment Law, Work Disability Law) (mid 1990s);
- Public services have been brought under the jurisdiction of the Law of Work Councils and the Law of Working Times ( (1995, resp. 1996);
- Privatisation of the public pension fund ABP (1996);
- The Health insurance law (Zorgverzekeringswet) has been made applicable for public employees (2006).

For contracted out workers to public administration institutions, normal regulations for Private Employees are used. Labour conditions are regulated by collective agreements for the different sectors of public employment.

The Dutch politicians from all political sides have the opinion that any difference between public and private employees should disappear. A first proposal for law (2012) couldn't get implemented because of the fall of the Rutte 1-government, but the intention of the current Rutte II-government is to implement changes that lead to complete equality between public employees and private employees. Only small groups of public employees will have different regulations (e.g. police, judiciary, defence).

The objective of the 'normalisation process' has always been to develop a more flexible system of labour conditions negotiation with as reference point, private contracts. A secondary idea was to achieve more mobility between public and private employment.

These changes have not always had the intended consequence. For example, the sectoralisation of public employment has led to more complex situations:

- differences in labour conditions between the sectors have become much bigger and are difficult to harmonize;
- It has been very difficult for governments to cut personnel costs in the crisis. Trade Unions have developed very strong negotiation positions;
- The current idea of the CPA is to develop a model of "One Central Civil Service". This has become very difficult to achieve;
- The objective to achieve a greater mobility from public employment to private employment has not been achieved: rather the reverse, public employment remains popular for many employees in the private sectors. This is mainly the case for lower salaried personnel who are better off as a public employee (Berkhout e.a., 2004).

In general, there are very little differences in recruitment procedures, wage systems, performance and appraisal systems for public and private employees.

### 1.3 Related to the previous point, give some figures on employment in the public administration and specifically on CPA employment in your country for the time period 2005-2012

Table 1. Evolution of CPA workers (x 1.000)							
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>CPA workers. Distinguish (if possible) [total: Statistics Netherlands, working years]</b>	457	450	449	449	460	474*	464*
Men	317	312	310	307	311	319	311
<b>Total Public administration workers</b>							
• Eurostat/LFS (persons)	-	-	-	562,1	560,5	547,8	534,1
• Statistics Netherlands (persons)	525	516	516	515	527	542	530
• Statistics Netherlands (working years)	457	450	449	449	460	474*	464*
• Ministry of the Interior (persons)	455	459	453	454	465	n.a.	n.a.
<b>CPA workers/total public administration workers**</b>							
• National (Rijk)/CPA + Judiciary + Defence + Police	248	253	256	257	262	n.a.	n.a.
• Provinces	13	13	13	13	13	n.a.	n.a.
• Municipalities	180	178	171	171	177	n.a.	n.a.
• Waterschappen (Organisation of dikes and waterways)	10	10	10	10	10	n.a.	n.a.

Notes: \* Provisional figures Ministry of the Interior (POMO)

Source: CBS Statline (SBI 87; labour years), Ministry of the Interior (POMO)\*\*

### 1.4 Briefly describe the major changes and reforms implemented in your country's CPA since 2008 onwards that have proven or very likely have changed/affected working conditions of CPA workers.

In section 1.2, we have described the major changes up to the current date. From 2008 on, the major issues that also affect working conditions are the following. The "Project Vernieuwing Rijksdienst" (project renewal central public administration) had as central goal to reduce the number of ministries and reduce the number of public employees with ten percent. Several actions are the result of this project:

- Development of one job classification: the 30.000 job categories have been reduced for all public institutions to achieve a greater job mobility between these institutions (the tax service was excluded from this operation);
- Harmonising the yearly performance appraisal system;

- In 2010, there was an agreement between trade unions and (public) employers on the Quality Agenda for the Central Government: the central goal is to use the competencies of public employees in a better way. The following actions are central: reduction of aggression and violence towards public employees, healthier work, more internal mobility, limiting of special bonuses and payments; introduction of “New Ways of Work”(HNW) (i.e. flexible work places, time- and place independent work, more ICT and social media). For the action on healthier work, the following actions are important:
  - Introduction of the Safe and Health Work Catalogue: more attention to working with computers, aggression and violence, burnout and psychosocial job demands;
  - Work Stress: the attention is oriented at personal coping and resilience (less to bad work organization);
  - Balance work-private (family) life
  - More attention to older workers
- Another development that affects working conditions, is the possibility to work more hours a week. Public employees have a full work week with 36 hours/week. However, they are allowed to work up to 40 hours a week. In 2010, some 3,7% of public employees did so.
- A last action is the improvement of the ‘professional decision latitude’ and the status of public employees. Due to the ageing of the workforce and turnover of CPA personnel (employees leaving for the private labour market), it is expected that the government will need to recruit more public employees, the government needs to improve the image of working for the government. Several project help to support this action.
- An important indication for working conditions of public employees is the number of public employees that become disabled from work. The following table shows the rise of work disability figures for public employees. This number has been rising with some 50% between 2006 and 2009. This rise is seen in all sectors, but is strongest in the health care sector. The rise is explained by several factors: e.g. demographic changes, increase in flex workers and the economic crisis, but also the introduction of a new disability system in 2006. In 2006 a new Disability Benefit System was introduced. In the old system the main goal was to compensate for income loss due to disability. The new system aims to stimulate return to work. The introduction of the new system initially resulted in a strong reduction of inflow into the disability system in 2006 as compared to the ‘old’ system.

**Table 2 Inflow per year into the Disability Benefit System (WIA)**

Table 2. Inflow into the disability benefit system from the Netherlands. This inflow has been rising since 2006.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>Civil service</b>	485	567	612	658
<b>All public employers</b>	1391	1643	1823	1830
<b>Private sector</b>	16810	17670	19780	n.a.

Source: BZK 2011; UWV

## Block 2: Identification of main recent changes in the working conditions of CPA's workers in your country, as well as their expected evolution in the future. Main causes and rationale, both general and/or specific, behind these changes

### 2.1 Please provide relevant information on the evolution in the time period 2008 onwards on the following working conditions-related variables specifically related to CPA workers in your country

The following two tables show the development of working conditions-related variables, specifically for public employees. For 2011, these figures are compared to the total of employees in The Netherlands (see: /xx). Our data source is the National Working Conditions Survey (NWCS; ; [NEA](#)) for 2008-2011, with a net sample of the Dutch employees from about n = 23000 per year. There are no data yet available for 2012. The figures which are marked in **bold** are significantly higher than the national average, the *italic* figures are significantly lower. Other figures are not significantly different. We don't have data on employment status and organisational issues.

Figures in the following tables, are for all public employees, not solely CPA.

	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Satisfaction with work (% satisfied)</b>	• 80	• 79,82,1	• <b>78,782,1</b>	• 83,681,8/77,9
<b>Satisfaction with working conditions (% satisfied)</b>				
<b>Pay systems and levels (% employees who answer this to have)</b>	• n.a.	• n.a.33,9	• 6,68n.a.	• n.a.34/36,2

<p>been important for choosing their present jobs)</p> <p>Salary ((% employees who answer this to have been important for choosing their present jobs)</p>				
<p>Job involvement (in-role-performance; 1-5)</p>				
<p>Autonomy at work (1-3)</p>				
<p>Number of hours worked/week</p>				
<p>Working time flexibility (1-10)</p>				
<p>Fear to lose employment (% yes))</p>				
<p>presence of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 88,46,23,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0,286,27,74</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0,190,65</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0,291,5/78,83,4/7,63,</li> </ul>

<b>precarious and/or atypical forms of employment /type of contract</b>	11,9	,30,9	3,7 0,4	7/7,50,8/2
<b>Open-ended contract (%)</b>				
<b>Temporary contract, possibility of fix cont.</b>				
<b>Temporary contract</b>				
<b>Temporary agency worker</b>				
<b>On call-contract</b>				

*Notes: N.a. = Not available*

*Source: NWCS*

For most variables, public employees are better off than the general employed population. Satisfaction in general, satisfaction with working conditions, satisfaction with salary is higher among public employees; even though salaries may be lower than with private employees. Job involvement lies at the same level as with private employees. Job autonomy is higher; the fear of losing employment was traditionally lower, but this figure has shifted in 2010: the fear of losing employment is now higher among public employees. Number of worked hours is higher than on average, but working time flexibility is perceived as higher. The percentage of public employees enjoying permanent/open-ended contracts is significantly higher than among private employees, and this percentage is getting higher each year.

For skills development, the NWCS covers several dimensions (see table 4). The perceived satisfaction with such investments is higher than among private employees. The percentage of public employees receiving internal and external training remains high and is clearly higher than for private employees.

**Table 4. Development of skills according to the employee. For 2011 public employees are compared to employees in private sectors.**

Table Summary – Development of skills according to the employee is relatively stable and higher for employees in public as compared to private sectors

	2008	2009	2010	2011
skills development (continuing vocational training activities, training activities paid by employer) (1-10)				
skills development: for past 2 years:				
followed an internal training (% yes)	• 79,9	• 58,376,9	• 55,578	• 56,777,3/56,755,1/42,2
followed an external paid training (% yes)				

Source: NWCS

The Ministry of the Interior (BZK) also publishes the average amount of euros spent on schooling and education each year (BZK, 2011). The following table shows the development of these investments (average euros per labour year).

**Table 5 - Average amount of euros per person year from 2007-2010 spent by the Ministries on education of their personnel.**

Table Summary - Average amount of euros per person year from 2007-2010.

2007	2008	2009	2010
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€ 1297	• 1302	• 1410	• 1369
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Source: BZK, 2011

In the following table, the figures on quality of work, health and well-being are included.

<b>Table 6. Quality of work, health and well-being by public employees. For 2011 the public employees are compared with employees from the private sectors</b>				
Table Summary - Quality of work, health and well-being by public employees. For 2011 the public employees are compared with employees from the private sectors. Quality of work is rather stable. Public sector is worse of on some indicators, like third party violence				
	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Exposure to risks and hazards, including violence and harassment (% yes)</b>				
<b>Burnout (average, range 1-7)</b>				
<b>job intensity (hectic; % yes)</b>				
<b>Job demands (average ; range 1-4)</b>				
<b>information on existing health and safety risks at work (% yes, a lot of information about working safely at work)</b>				
<b>Complex/difficult work (average; range 1-4)</b>				
<b>social support at work (average; range 1-4)</b>	• 2,87	• 3,252,85	• 3,262,83	• 3,22 2,86/2,89
<b>Supervisor</b>				
<b>Colleagues</b>				

<p><b>Reconciliation of working and non-working life (Work life balance, flexibility at work to fulfil personal or family matters, etc)</b></p> <p><b>Do you miss/abandon your family or family activities because of your work (% yes)</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51,7</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 52,3</li> </ul>
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Source: NWCS

The main problematic risk for public employees is from aggression and violence. This is reflected in the figure on ‘exposure to risks and hazards’. The percentage of public employees exposed to such risks, remains high. Stress at work (burnout) seems quite low, even if we can see that public employees report higher hectic work. But psychosocial risks are reported as lower than private employees. Complexity of work is reported as higher. Social support from the supervisor is seen as slightly lower. Support from colleagues is the same between the two groups. Information about existing health and safety at work seems to have diminished over the reported period. But the reconciliation of working and non-working life seems to be better for public employees.

- Changes in work-related values amongst CPA workers

The POMO 2010 measures ‘affective commitment’ of public employees (MWM, 2010). This measure is a part of ‘organisational commitment-scale’ (De Gilder, Van den Heuven, Ellemers, 1997). Public employees have a score of 3,27 that represents a high commitment. But the score is not different from how private employees feel themselves in regard to their employer. This is also the result in the NEA-data.

- As far as possible, highlight the main differences in the working conditions of CPA in comparison to private sector employees.

The following table shows the main differences in working regulations of CPA in comparison to private employees (source: <http://werknemersbijdeoverheid.nl/overzicht-inhoud/de-ambtelijke-status/verschillen-ambtelijke-en-private-sector?start=2>). These differences might change if the ‘normalisation-process’ is completed: the first table shows the difference which probably will disappear, the second table shows those differences that probably will remain because the Government retains some major different characteristics in comparison to private employers. In general, working conditions for public employees are regulated in the same way as for private employees.

**Table 7a. Comparison of legal regulations public and private employees (difference which probably will disappear)**

	<b>Public employees ('Ambtelijk stelsel)</b>	<b>Private employees ('Privaatrechtelijk stelsel')</b>
<b>Employment status and dismissal</b>	A formal and one sided appointment ; dismissal is only possible on the basis of limited list of dismissal grounds. One sided dismissal is possible without the interference of the judiciary system or unemployment office	A two-sided agreement; interference of the judiciary system or unemployment office is needed in case of conflicts over dismissal
<b>Legal protection</b>	Separate public protections rules apply (AWB, ABBB,); internal procedures to submit grievances and appeal; separate judicial organisation	Private law applicable; canton justice reviews dismissal procedures; separate system
<b>Working conditions and legal position</b>	Collective action of trade unions does not affect the public law rules; separate action to change agreements into law is needed to change obligations for public employees; majority vote of trade unions needed	One agreement with a trade union is needed for a collective agreements (CA); CA's only apply for members, unless general applicability is regulated

**Table 7b. Comparison of legal regulations public and private employees (differences that probably will remain)**

	<b>Public employees ('Ambtelijk stelsel)</b>	<b>Private employees ('Privaatrechtelijk stelsel')</b>
<b>Top level incomes</b>	Public employees may not earn more than the prime minister	No norms to regulate this
<b>Integrity</b>	Separate rules with high sanctions; regulations to support those reporting infractions of integrity rules; separate rules to prevent conflicts of interests; public officials must declare any conflicting positions	General notion of "behavior becoming a good employee" (private law); immediate dismissal with serious offences or misbehavior on the shop floor
<b>Limitation of basic rights</b>	Possible in certain areas; but legal basis needed	Not applicable in private law agreements
<b>General principles of decent management in all actions and decisions</b>	Applicable, also for employers	Not applicable (but: principle of reasonableness and fairness)
<b>Governance mechanisms</b>	Governance via budgets (financing from general means)	Governance via prices (financing from capital, turnover and profit)
<b>Own responsibility for unemployment risks</b>	Obligation for public employers; lack of bankruptcy risk, other business risk for unemployment	Not applicable
<b>Pension negotiations</b>	Recorded in the Law privatisation	Not recorded in law: but bottom

<b>between employers and employees</b>	of the ABP	up organisation of negotiation of employers and employees; pension fund or insurer controls the content of the system
<b>Membership Social and Economic Council; Foundation for Work (SER/STAR)</b>	No membership	Membership via employer federations
<b>Supplements to unemployment benefits</b>	Periodic supplements to unemployment benefits depending on career; supplement stops at end of unemployment	One time dismissal compensation on the basis van career and age, independent of unemployment benefit

**2.2 If available, and based on existing forecasting studies/researches, etc., please provide information on the expected evolution and trends in the number of CPA workers and their working conditions in the nearer future (coming 1-3 years).**

When presenting this information, it is strongly recommended:

- Please provide the information only for those variables where significant changes/differences can be identified. Distinguish the results having in mind positive/negative consequences.
- In case information on CPA workers is not available please provide information on all public workers.
- Please distinguish (if possible) your answers by type of employment status (civil servant, public employees), duration of contract (permanent, temporary) or type of occupation (manual/clerical, high skilled/low skilled), as well as by gender.

**A. The expected evolution and trends in the number of CPA workers**

The major BZK-study “The Great Exodus” (De grote uittocht, 2010) is currently the most important forecast for the number of CPA-workers. There are several other sources on forecasting of the number of CPA workers for the near future. The main sources are: Prognosis model Apollo from BZK and the ROA-figures (ROA, 2009; 2011).

The main prediction for the CPA is major reduction in number of public employees. There are several reasons for this:

- Budget cuts: from 2008 on, all Dutch governments have struggled to reduce the budget deficits. One of the main actions has been to cut back on the number of public employees. For the coming years, these budget cuts will continue and so the reduction in number of employees will continue.
- Demographic factors: in the following figure, you can see the age- and gender-composition of the CPA-employees. There is an overrepresentation of older men working for the central government. From this group, a major outflow is expected to start in the coming years. Next to this demographic effect, there is the ‘normal’

mobility to other sectors. Because there will only be limited inflow, the number of public employees will reduce quite considerably. From Table 2, we already know that there also exists a (rising) number of public employees leaving for disability reasons. The BZK-report calculated that, with no change in policies, by the year 2020, some 70% of current public employees will have left. It is clear from these calculations that either productivity of public employees should rise considerably, or else that the number of tasks carried out by public employees should be reduced.



In the ROA-calculations for the period 2011-2016, the overall picture for CPA and the education sector is one of a 2,7% shrink in number of public employees (ROA, 2011). Each year, a 2% shrinking of employment is planned. The main reason is to cope with delivering the necessary budget cuts to meet the requirements for the EU. These figures are not consistent with the first figures of the Exodus-report.

A remarkable change from the BZK-report of 2010, is that the previous hesitation that existed with the massive departure of public employees, has completely vanished from the political debate. The new Rutte II-government has appointed a separate minister to take care of the further reduction of public employees. One of the main actions is to outsource major tasks to the provinces and municipalities. Another action is to implement a further reduction of costs with 1,1 billion euros per year. The General Accounting Office of the government complained that the current policy makers have no strategic personnel planning to see what will happen to CPA public employment (Algemene Rekenkamer, 2012).

In the meantime, BZK has made a recalculation of the “The Great Exodus”. An estimation is made for those measures that could alleviate the staffing tensions that the CPA will experience. The most effective measures were those oriented at improving productivity of public employees. Other measures (fiscal measures to improve labour market participation, reduction of unemployment benefits etc.) were too general to be of impact for public employment. But the main feeling remained that qualitative mismatches between new skills coming in and tasks remaining would only become bigger (SEO, 2012).

For the Dutch labour market in general, a higher pensioning age has been implemented by law. The past years have also seen a lot of measures to reduce the possibilities for pre-pensioning or for reducing work load for older workers. So, at the same time, public employees need to work longer, but working at an older age will not become any lighter.

### **B. Their working conditions in the nearer future (coming 1-3 years).**

There are fewer figures available for the development of the working conditions in the near future. The overall picture for public employees in the previous section was a positive one. However, the reduction of employment in the future can only deteriorate this position. The main trends in the previous paragraph were:

- rising feelings of job insecurity: all the planned measures will lead to more job insecurity;

- high exposure to risks and hazards: it is not expected that this figure will rise (see further);
- High job intensity but compensated by high autonomy: we can see that autonomy of public employees is recently reduced, so the risk for work stress is rising. We can see risks for the manning of the CPA: this will lead to more risks for incumbent public employees;
- too little information about safety: this development is of concern for public employees;
- Declining complexity in jobs: this trend might point to more standardization of work.

The perspective of rising work stress is not yet seen in the forecasting study of BZK. In “The Great Exodus”, a survey was conducted to assess which issues would be central for retaining, recruiting and manning the public service in the near future. The following table shows the main results for the CPA, in comparison to education and police/defence.

<b>Respondents perceptions on developments relevant for recruitment and manning of personnel (% yes, important development)</b>	<b>Central Public Administration</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Safety sectors</b>
<b>More effort to put the right person on the right place</b>	46	28	43
<b>Improving skill development</b>	36	27	32
<b>Right sizing payment</b>	33	37	40
<b>More autonomy</b>	21	13	12
<b>Organise work otherwise, so productivity rises</b>	20	6	16
<b>More efforts to combine work and private life</b>	20	18	16
<b>Reduction of work stress</b>	18	54	21
<b>Promote higher pensioning age</b>	6	5	5
<b>Stimulate longer working hours</b>	3	2	2

*Source: BZK, 2011*

From the perspective of the CPA, the future seems to be a question of fitting people into the right jobs. Skill development and right sizing payment systems support such efforts. Less attention is directed at work stress, autonomy etc.

### **2.3 Please provide information on the likely causes of changes in the working conditions of CPA’s workers identified and their respective rationale. If possible, distinguish between causes related to cyclical reforms from and those related to structural reforms.**

For several of the trends, we have discussed causes of changes in the previous section 2.2. For two trends, we can provide some more background information:

- Exposure to risks and hazards: we know that aggression and violence are the main factors influencing these figures. We expect these figures to continue to decline in the following years as a consequence of current actions. One action is the Programme Safe Public Tasks. This programme started in 2007 and had as goal to reduce the percentage of public employees victim of aggression and violence with some 15% in comparison to the measurement of 2007. Public employees should be able to conduct their work in a safe, integer and respectful way. The current figures show that the number of victims of aggression and violence has declined with some 35% in 2009. But several measures needed to be persecuted more consistently. Another action was the creation of the ARO (a registration system to create an overview of the safety and violence issues in the Public Sectors).
- Reconciliation of working and non-working life (Work life balance, flexibility at work to fulfil personal or family matters, etc.): in 2010, a campaign started to improve the awareness how to combine the care of children or others, with work. The central government wants to support more possibilities for workers by stimulating 'New Ways of Work' (e.g. home work).
- We know that there will be a great exodus of public employees. We also know that the remaining public employees will need to work longer. The ROA (2009) has investigated if the current HR-policies are adapted to the new situation. From their survey, they could conclude that active ageing policies are missing everywhere in the CPA: too little training possibilities for elderly workers, no willingness to alleviate working conditions for elder workers, too little use of managers of the feedback given in the yearly performance appraisals. The only measure that is widely used is part-time work.

The overall picture may well be that the current (still) positive picture for public employees may well deteriorate quite drastically.

### **3: Compliance with regulations on working conditions**

Identification of specific institutions and bodies with responsibility for inspection and enforcement of compliance with regulations or legislation on working conditions in the national CPAs, as well as their main recent activities in this domain

#### **3.1 Please identify specific national institutions or bodies with responsibility for inspection and enforcement of compliance with regulations/legislation on working conditions in the national public administration in general and CPA workers in particular.**

Compliance of working conditions with regulations/legislation of all employees, also CPA workers, is a responsibility of the Inspection SZW (former: Labour Inspectorate).

Next to inspection, it is possible for sectors to develop some self-control of working conditions by means of the Work and health Catalogues. The Working Conditions Act contains clear goal prescriptions for companies and institutions. Employers and employee organisations can decide how to implement the law in their own sector. The advantage is that working condition policies can be more adapted to the local situations. The social partners need to make an agreement by means of a Work and health Catalogue (Working Condition Catalogue); that shows how they will comply with the goal prescriptions in the Working

Conditions Act. This can be done with a description of techniques, practical solutions, manuals, and norms that help improve healthy working and reduce risks. These Work and health Catalogues need to be approved by the Inspection SZW. For the CPA, there are six such catalogues. The catalogues cover the following risks: dangerous substances, physical demands, psychosocial demands, work places, instruments (De Vries e.a., 2011).

The Work and health Catalogues are the continuation of the Work and health Covenants that existed between 1999 and 2007. These covenants were a first form of self-regulation of working conditions in the different sectors.

### **3.2 Provide a brief description and available data of their activities and recent initiatives in the field of CPA working conditions taken since 2008 onwards.**

In April 2007, the Work and health-covenant for the CPA ended. The tasks and projects were taken over by the A+O-fund (Work and Training Fund for CPA-employees). The following projects were important:

- In 2006 the Ministry started an extensive program ‘Veilige Publieke Taak’ (VPT; Safe Public Service). The aim was to reduce violence and aggression by third parties towards public employees by 25%. Several studies were performed, e.g. to assess the size of the problem, and determine specific risk groups, tools were developed (e.g. quick scan, cost-benefit tool for organisations) and a help desk was installed. The recent focus was shifted towards local municipalities.
- Toolkit Health Policy: this toolkit has been transferred from the A+O-fund to the Expertise Center Work & Health (which is now part of another agency).
- Agressieregistratiesysteem Overheid (ARO): this has become part of the Work and health Catalogue Aggression and violence.
- Projects of the Expertise Center Work & Health (EC A&G): all projects are oriented at benchmarking, providing more awareness among managers and HR on health policies.
- Project Job Stress Ministry External Affairs.
- Pilot projects “Making use of unused talent”.

In 2011, the last Work and health Catalogue for the CPA was developed. All actions in 2011 and 2012 have been streamlined in the Quality Agendas of 2011 and 2012. The following projects were conducted in 2011: aggression and violence, health work, balance work-family life, senior programme, keeping diverse personnel, mobiliteit, promotion lines, new secretarial jobs, mediation, HR-competences of managers, social re-integration, and professional space. The projects could only be conducted because employer and employee organisations were in agreement for these projects. In 2012, the collective negotiations between social partners came to a stand-still. This meant that the Quality Agenda 2012 was only completed by the employer side. The following projects were listed: healthy work and vitality, leadership and professional space, mobility from work to work; New Ways of Work.

Most of the expertise of the central government on work and health for CPA used to be organised in the Expertise Center Work & Health. This center has been taken over by a new agency, the Werkmaatschappij (Work Society) and within this agency, the Expertise Center for Organisation and Personnel.

## **4: Social partners points of view**

Correspondents are asked to analyse comparatively the opinions and points of views of national sector social partners on the recent changes on the working conditions of CPA's workers. Describe possible social dialogue initiatives taken to improve working conditions amongst CPA workers and/or minimise negative consequences of changes.

### **4.1 Please reflect the points of view of the main social partners in the national public administration with respect to the recent evolution of working conditions of CPA workers, and their assessment of the current situation and perspectives about the future. Describe the elements of agreement/disagreement between them.**

#### **Employer side**

The employer side of CPA consists of two levels: the (new) minister for CPA and the secretary generals for the separate departments. The new minister for CPA is not prepared to start negotiations with the trade unions on the basis of the agreement between the social partners on Social Policy. The main argument is that this agreement does not comply with the spending cuts from the government.

#### **Employee side**

The main input into the discussion is to suggest a new social policy for CPA. The main ideas are to abolish the possibility for dismissal through restructuring, and to force employers to help public employees find new jobs within all the public sectors. For this rule, the trade unions are prepared to support changes to most of the rules regulating dismissals etc.

#### **Social dialogue**

Negotiations have stopped in the beginning of 2012. Since 2010, there have been no collective agreements between employers and trade unions. Because of the budgetary restraints, employers are not prepared to sign any agreement which leads to income rises for public employees. The consequence of this conflict is that all collaboration between both social partners has stopped, also on topics such as working conditions. This is clear from the Quality Agenda 2012.

At this moment, the trade unions have asked the Consultary and Advisory Commission (Advies en Arbitrage Commissie) for the CPA to give their opinion as to whether the employer side has to conduct an open and realistic negotiation with trade unions. Trade unions accept to have the negotiations at decentralised levels of the CPA. The main reason is to prevent restructuring from taking place without any control from trade unions side.

#### **Agreement**

Both parties agree that more mobility of personnel is needed to cope with the personnel shortages for the future. The project list of the Quality Agenda 2011 shows that all social partners want to act on these shortages and the consequences for work stress and skill

development. The Quality Agenda 2012 was only completed by the employer side. Those projects from 2011 building on the previous results were continued.

## **Disagreement**

The social partners seem to agree on the need for a new social policy. The fact that this social policy will lead to more costs for CPA, is not accepted by the government in general.

### **4.2 Identify recent social dialogue initiatives taken by public sector social partners in the last 3-4 years in order to develop/improve working conditions amongst CPA workers and/or minimise negative consequences of some changes. Briefly describe (objectives, activities developed outcomes) and assess them.**

In previous sections, we have listed the different social dialogue initiatives. The different actions have been conducted in the spirit of negotiating the working conditions between social partners. Both parties see the working conditions of the CPA as something they can and want to regulate. The impact of the budgetary restraints however has been underestimated by both social partners. The room for manoeuvre has been reduced over the past years. The decisions on working conditions and payment have shifted from the negotiation table to the political forum. The actions from social partners in the field of Work and health Covenants, Work and health Catalogues and the Quality Agenda's, have been fine-tuned to make the CPA an attractive place to work. But it seems that the political interventions and the stereotyping by political parties of what is happening in the CPA have made cooperative action impossible. The manning problems within the CPA will remain, and apparently, the employer side and the political level seem to deny the consequences of these problems.

### **4.3 Describe the public debate (if any) in your country regarding the status and working conditions of CPA workers with respect to other groups of public workers and to private sector workers.**

The public debate has mainly been dominated by the following issues:

- How to reduce national debt by cutting back on public employment?
- How to bring regulations of public employees closer to private employees?

The second issue would help to improve mobility from the public sector to the private sector. But it would also help to reduce (assumed) higher costs from CPA-employment. The main issue would be the higher dismissal costs for public employees. During the past 25 years, most of the actions to streamline the contracts of public employees to private contracts have been conducted within the CPA itself. A new fact is that Parliament seems eager to take action themselves because the remaining differences (mainly dismissal law) would not be overcome by public employees themselves. There is no feeling in Parliament or in the political parties that public employees suffer from bad working conditions, on the contrary. The main view is that public employees are (too?) well off.

## **Commentary by the NC**

NCs are requested to provide a brief commentary on main obtained results

The main results from the analysis are:

- An insight has been given into the development of general employment and working conditions of CPA-employees.
- The discussion in The Netherlands is about abolishing the differences between public and private employees. In comparison to most European countries, these differences are already very small. That is why we don't speak of civil servants, but of public employees.
- Working conditions of public employees are better than for most private employees. But for the future, a major exodus of public employees is foreseen. The current political debate does not take this manning problem into account which will surely lead to new working condition risks. The achievements of careful negotiation results over the past decades will probably be affected.

Steven Dhondt, TNO

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