

Labour Inspectorate and the Quality of Working Life in the Netherlands

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PREFACE

Europe is becoming more and more a reality. To achieve a common market in the nineties the twelve memberstates are working together in preparing many initiatives and measures. This affects also very much the field of workers' safety and health.

As a result of this process, mutual interest in situations and trends in the member-states is growing rapidly. Adequate information about what is going on in Europe could eventually be vital for the harmonization process. That is why a lot of research has been done into national methods and practices. For the same reason officials of the labour inspectorates frequently pay a visit to colleagues in other countries. Also surveys are held to obtain systematic information about new developments and initiatives in the member-states. This is also noticeable for the Netherlands. This booklet is produced to meet the increasing number of requests for information about the Dutch way of improving quality of working life.

This publication aims to be an introduction to the current state of affairs regarding legislation and organization of working conditions policy in the Netherlands.

We have focussed on the needs of the foreign reader, who is interested in the legal context, executive bodies, in-company provisions, and network of experts, research institutes, consultative bodies etcetera which are all operating in the field of quality of working life.

The book intends to be nothing more than a first guideline, to give an accurate insight into some basic aspects of the Dutch situation in the early 1990's.

In order to become acquainted with the Dutch situation, we firstly give an overview of major aspects of social and economic life in the Netherlands. Some elementary data are presented on the population, economic situation, labour market, social security, and industrial democracy (Chapter 1). Subsequently Chapter 2 gives an overview of the relevant legal context and legislative structure. The main dimensions of the Working Conditions Act are presented in a nutshell.

The major national or sectoral institutions directly or indirectly operating in the area of quality of working life are presented in Chapter 3. The legal tasks and the organizational aspects of the following are described: the Labour Inspectorate, the Working Environment Council, social security institutions, research institutes, consultancy bureaus and educational institutes.

Chapter 4 describes the regulations applying and activities (compulsorily or voluntarily) carried out at plant level. Works council and health and safety services are among the major aspects described.

An overview of elementary statistics on working conditions or relevant activities in this field is presented in Chapter 5. It provides some quantitative impressions based on working conditions research, social security statistics and government reporting systems.

The booklet ends with an overview of relevant bodies, institutions or agencies which may be approached for further information (Chapter 6).

I hope this book will provide essential information to all interested in the crucial aspects of the quality of working life in the Netherlands. Moreover, I hope this book will portray the Dutch Labour Inspectorate, not only as an inspectorate celebrating its centenary at the beginning of the nineties, but also as a modern organization, prepared for its future tasks in a united Europe.

ir. A.J. de Roos Director-General of the Labour Inspectorate.



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I. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE IN THE NETHERLANDS: AN OVERVIEW

This Chapter aims to give an idea of the economic background of Dutch legislation and practice on matters of quality of working life matters. Firstly we present some major characteristics of the Dutch economy as a frame of reference. Next we describe the role of government and the central organizations of employers and workers vis-à-vis working conditions policy. Most of the Dutch legislation on quality of working life and social security is prepared in "tripartite" councils before the proposals are laid before parliament. At the end of the Chapter are given the main points of the relevant legislation on quality of working life and social security.

I.1 The economic structure of the Netherlands

The Netherlands is a small nation, located in the North-west of Europe. It was a founder member of the European Community. It is a densely populated country with a developed industrialized economy and a relatively high standard of living (see Table I.1).

Table I.1 Selected statistical comparisons, the Netherlands and the EC (twelve countries).

	NL	EC
Population (x 1000) (1987)	14,665	322,772
Land area (km ²) (1987)	41,785	2,260,680
Percentage of population (1987)		
under 15 years	18.7	18.9
15 - 64 years	68.9	67.2
65 years and over	12.4	14.0
Death rate per 1,000 population (1987)	8.6	10.2
Registered unemployment, average		
percentage of working		
population (1987)	10.0	10.6
Labour force participation rate (1987)	40.6	44.0
Civilian employment per sector (1987)		
agriculture	4.7	7.9
industry	27.1	32.8
services	68.2	59.2
Migrant workers		
per 1,000 employed (1987)	35	52
Average hours usually worked		
per week ('87)	33.9	39.5
Unionization rate (as percentage)	30	?
Gross domestic product per capita		
(at current prices and		
exchange rate; ECU - 1986)	12,285	10,939
Social security transfer as		
a percentage of GDP (1987)	26.4	18.8

Sources: Eurostat, 1989, Enquete naar de arbeidsmarkt;
 OECD, 1987, Historical statistics 1960-1987;
 OECD, 1988, Labour force

In the Netherlands most people are employed in white collar jobs. The employment figures in Table 1.2 show that the service sector is the main job supplier.

Table 1.2 Number of jobs per economic sector

	x 1000	%
Agriculture	79	1.6
Industry	866	17.9
Energy	67	1.4
Construction industry	321	6.6
Commercial services	1586	32.7
Non-commercial services	576	11.9
Public services	742	15.3
Self-employed	613	12.6
Totals	4850	100.0

Source: Centraal Planbureau (1989)

The agricultural sector is highly mechanized. Milk, milk products, pork, vegetables, flowers and bulbs are examples of the main export products.

Major sectors in Dutch industry are: metallurgical industry, food industry, chemical industry, paper and printing industry and the electrotechnical industry.

Dutch industry is relatively strongly export oriented.

Several Dutch enterprises have developed into large multinational corporations of which Philips, Unilever, Shell and AKZO are the mostly well known. Table 1.3 shows some employment figures for the different types of industry.

Table 1.3 Number of jobs per industrial sector

	x 1000	%
Metallurgical, Optical	189	21.2
Food, Drinks, Tobacco	162	18.2
Chemical, Rubber	111	12.5
Paper, Printing	104	11.7
Electrotechnical	101	11.3
Wood working, Building materials	67	7.5
Car, Aircraft	65	7.3
Textile, Cloth, Leather	46	5.2
Iron & Steel	34	3.8
Oil refinery	11	1.2
Totals	890	100.0

Source: Centraal Planbureau (1989)

From a historical point of view the Netherlands began as, and still is, a trading country. Its geographical position at the mouth of the Rhine and other big rivers is favorable for trade and transport activities. Many people are employed in the harbours and airports, on merchant vessels or within one of the many companies in the road transport sector.

A wide variety of commercial services such as banking and insurances, exist as a support for the trade and transport activities.

The Netherlands has a well educated workforce. Pupils attend school until they are at least 16 or 17 years old and if they attend high school or university they do not start their career until the age of 23 to 25.

Even during their working life many people attend courses or follow distance learning programmes in order to obtain a higher qualification. Figures based on recent surveys show that in one year 35% of the total workforce is following courses and training. The Netherlands has reached an advanced level in several branches of scientific and applied research. Many international conferences are held in the Netherlands.

Despite economic growth in recent years, unemployment is a matter of continuous concern in the Netherlands. Depending on the definitions applied 500,000 to 700,000 persons are registered as unemployed which is rather high compared to the total workforce of 4,5 million people. In addition about 850,000 persons receive a full or partial disability pension and the annual average sickness absence rate amounts currently to about 29 calendar days.

1.2 National social and economic policy

The Dutch government has always been built upon a coalition of several political parties. During the eighties there was a coalition comprising the Christian Democrats and the Liberal party, but after the elections of 1989 a coalition was formed between the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats.

In Dutch society a division still exists connected to religious background. Although its importance is decreasing, social life is still split up into three so called pillars: Roman Catholic, Protestant and nondemominational. For this reason there are several central employers and trades union organizations.

The Dutch employers are well organized. The most important central organizations are: the Federation of Netherlands Industry (Verbond van Nederlandse Ondernemingen - VNO), the Netherlands Christian Employers Federation (Nederlands Christelijk Werkgeversverbond NCW), the Dutch Christian Federation of Small and Medium sized Enterprises (Nederlands Christelijk Ondernemersverbond - NCOV), the Royal Dutch Union of Small and Medium sized Enterprises (Koninklijk Nederlands Ondernemersverbond - KNOV) and three central agricultural employers organizations.

The workers are less well organized: about 30% of the workforce are members of trade unions, but there are large differences between the various economic sectors e.g. the printing industry resembles a closed shop system; in the commercial services, however, less than 10% of the employees are unionized. The largest unions are to be found in industry and the public services.

There are three central organizations of trade unions: the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging - FNV), the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions in the Netherlands (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond - CNV) and the Federation of Trade Unions for Middle and Senior Staff Personnel (Vakcentrale voor Middelbaar- en Hoger Personeel - MHP) for white collar workers.

Government, central employers and employee organizations meet frequently in advisory or negotiating boards related to social and economic affairs. A lot of disputes or bargaining on social or economic issues are handled within this so called social-economic triangle. The class struggle is primarily fought out in meeting rooms, which results in quite harmonious labour relations. Compared to other countries strikes and industrial disputes are relatively rare. Many industrial conflicts are settled rapidly in court. The judgement given there is usually accepted by both parties.

One of the most important advisory bodies for the government is the Social Economic Council (Sociaal Economische Raad - SER). Policy proposals are discussed in this Council with representatives from employers and employee organizations and independent experts appointed by the government. Decision making on many labour, social and economic affairs is prepared by and discussed within this council, before the responsible minister presents his plans for new legislation to parliament. Recent subjects discussed have been: quality of working life issues (e.g. standards for working hours) and disability pension programmes.

The Minister for Social Affairs and Employment - in other words: the minister of Labour - is responsible for legislation on working conditions and, more generally, on quality of working life. In preparing new legislation about quality of working life the minister will always consult another advisory committee, comparable in importance with the Social Economic Council: The Working Environment Council (Arboraad), which consists of representatives of employers and trade union organizations. In addition representatives from government and other public bodies have a consultative voice in this council.

At the level of the central employers and employee organizations frequent discussions are held to formulate general starting points for the collective bargaining in the different sectors and companies. In the eighties these central agreements resulted in an almost steady wage level. In recent years there has been a growing concern for quality of working life in the negotiations between employers and trade unions.

Some points of general interest about the Dutch collective bargaining agreements can be mentioned. Collective labour agreements mostly lack sections on merit rating systems. This seems to be almost unique in a western industrial country. Piece-work and individual bonus payment systems have almost disappeared; most employees receive a fixed salary. During the recession of the eighties trade unions succeeded in bringing down the working week to 38 hours on average. Since the end of the eighties labour agreements have contained more and more sections about working conditions. At the beginning of the nineties trade unions are trying to raise wages for the first time in the past decade.

In the next part of this Chapter we will go into some elements of the Dutch Social Security system which are relevant for the quality of working life.

1.3 Social Security in the Netherlands

The Dutch Social Security system is considered to be very complete, covering many contingencies and different categories of inhabitants. For many risks benefit levels are considered to be high, particularly when compared to other countries. Consequently, as in many other West European countries expenditure on social security schemes comprises a considerable percentage of labour costs.

The unemployment programme in the Netherlands has many similarities with arrangements in other countries, as to qualifying conditions and level or duration of benefit payments. Under the Dutch scheme unemployment benefits may be awarded, covering 70% of earnings (maximum Fl. 266,- per day as at 01-01-'90), payable for a maximum of 26 weeks, depending on the prior work period. After this time is up social assistance programmes come into force.

The Netherlands has, however, taken a somewhat different position to the rest of Europe regarding early retirement schemes. There are no statutory provisions for men and women for early retirement before age 65.

However, in a number of branches and firms private supplementary schemes provide interim benefits for workers opting to retire from the age of 60 (VUT plans). In 1987 about 50% of employers in industry and commerce provided such arrangements, which are being used yearly by 0.7% of employees. The percentage of males aged 55-64 who had ceased gainful employment in this way rose from 6% (1977) to 23% (1986) and is now equal to the proportion of disabled in this age category (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 1984, 1987). In addition to these provisions employees may receive extra annual leave periods in the years immediately before retirement (International, 1982).

More important for our subject are regulations regarding work or non-work related social security programmes for health risks (industrial injuries, sickness, disablement). Prior to 1967 separate accident compensation legislation existed in the Netherlands, which not only had its own administrative procedures but also provided more generous compensation for loss of earnings due to the accident (as compared with "sickness"). In the case of invalidity due to an industrial accident, benefit was set at a higher level and was payable over a longer period; in addition, the Accident Acts covered the costs of medical treatment and rehabilitation.

The disappearance of the accident compensation legislation and its integration into a single Sickness Benefits Act, ("Ziektewet", 1967) means that there is no difference so far as employers, workers or the social insurance system are concerned, whether incapacity for work is the result of sickness, of accident (industrial or otherwise) or of an occupational disease. When an accident occurs, the employer is required to send a notification form to the industry association which administers sickness benefits (along with the sickness

notification). This procedure is mainly for statistical purposes and to detect industrial accidents which require attention.

Irrespective of its cause the Sickness Benefit Act provides benefits which amount to 70% of daily earnings. Collective labour agreements, however, generally provide topping up of these benefits to 100% of earnings.

Whereas the Sickness Benefit Act covers temporary work incapacity (lasting up to one year), the Disability Insurance Act (Wet op de Arbeidsongeschiktheidsverzekering, 1987) provides income replacement in case of permanent disablement. The programme recognizes seven degrees of disablement, with a minimum of 15-25%. The maximum benefit income-ratio is 70% of previous earnings. Many collective labour agreements provide a supplement up to 100% for a number of years.

1.4 Industrial Democracy

The most important Act relating to industrial democracy is the Works Councils Act. The **Works Councils Act** is applied to all private undertakings above a certain size. The rights of public servants are slightly different and based on a government settlement. In the Dutch situation two types of works councils are found: those in smaller undertakings or institutions with 35 - 100 employees; the other in the larger firms employing more than 100 employees. The rights of the small works councils are slightly different from those of the larger works councils. Table 1.4. on the next page shows some characteristics of Works Councils in different European countries.

The members of the works councils are elected every two years. Every employee who has worked for at least one year in the undertaking or institution can be elected. Every employee who has worked for at least six months in the undertaking or institution is allowed to vote.

In many cases trade unions nominate their own candidates and therefore union members have a relatively strong position in the works councils.

In general the principal rights of the works councils are:

- The right to use normal working facilities like a meeting room, telephones, xerox-machines and the like;
- The right to follow courses during working time (at least 5 days each year);
- The right to install special committees for e.g. financial affairs or work environment matters. These committees prepare the material for the discussion in the works council;
- The right to receive all relevant information from the employer;
- The right to comment on the employer's policy on investments, financial affairs, changes in ownership, etc;
- The right to approve or reject arrangements relating to personnel matters like working hours, salary arrangements, health and safety policy, etc;
- The right to invite (external) experts to meetings of the works council;
- The right to accompany the labour inspector during his visits to the establishment;

- The right to ask for a judgement from the labour inspectorate in cases of dispute with the employer on working environment issues.

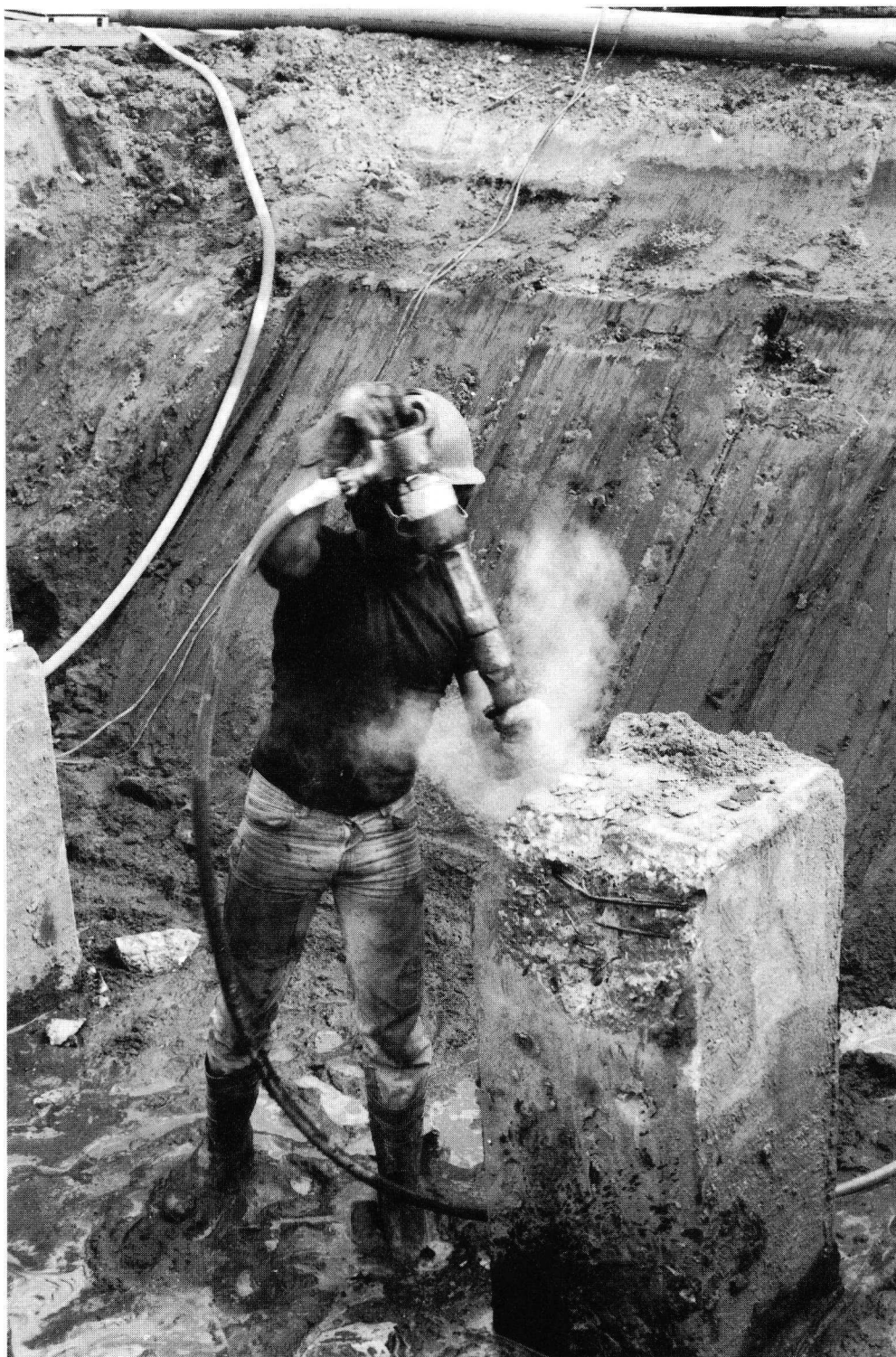
Members of works councils are legally protected against dismissal.

Table 1.4. Some characteristics of Works Councils in several European Countries.

	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	France	Netherlands
Minimal number of employees	100	- (35)*	5	50	35/100
Composition: representatives from employer employees	+ +	+ +	- +	+ +	- +
Members	6 - 25	4 - 12	1 - 31	3 - 15	3 - 2
Nomination by	trade unions	open	unions/ 3 and more employees	unions	unions/ 10 or 30 employees
Rights:					
Information	very specific	specific	general	general	general
approval	no	no	dismissals only	no	several topics
bargaining	no	possible	several topics	no	possible
Delegates to the Board of Directors	no	> 50 empl.; 2 members	> 500 empl.; 40-50% of the members	2 members (advising)	nominate objectives

Source: H. Slomp, In: OR-Informatie, 21-02-1990.

* Agreed by central agreement between employers, employees and government.



2. LEGISLATION ON QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the major characteristics of the Dutch legislation on the quality of working life.

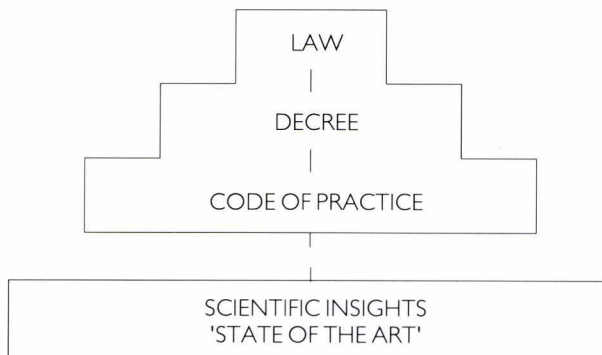
The most important act on quality of working life in the Netherlands is the Working Environment Act (Arbowet). This Act passed through parliament in 1980, but it took 10 years before it was fully implemented. The Working Environment Act aims to increase the level of safety in the workplace and to improve both the physical and mental health and the well-being of workers. As from 1990 all persons working for an employer are covered by this Act, both in the private and the public sector, in large corporations and in small firms.

Before going into the details of the Working Environment Act, we will describe the general legislative structure as a frame of reference.

The basis of legislation is provided by a variety of laws, such as the Working Environment Act. These laws provide the minister with the powers to enact Decrees, e.g. an asbestos decree, based on the Working Environment Act. The next level is represented by codes of practice as prescribed by the Labour Inspectorate.

These specify rules applicable to the day-to-day situation. It goes without saying that many safety and health standards have been developed through scientific research. Only a few of them have been given a legislative status in the Netherlands; most of these standards have only the status of the generally recognised 'state of the art' (cf. Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Legislative structure of Dutch legislation



We have already mentioned the Working Environment Act, the main Act on working conditions. In the field of quality of working life other laws are also relevant, as they may directly or indirectly affect the employer's working conditions policy.

Acts on safety and health

- Working Environment Act;
- Mining Act;
- Homework Act;
- Off shore labour Act;
- Dangerous Machinery Act;
- Pressure Vessels Act;
- Dangerous Substances Act;
- Nuclear Energy Act;
- Pesticides Act.

Acts on working hours

- Working Hours Act;
- Mining Act;
- Stevedoring Act;
- Driving Hours Act.

Industrial democracy

- Works Councils Act.

From time to time these acts are adapted to new circumstances, to shifts in insights or in political interests. Together they constitute the framework of the Dutch legislation on quality of working life. A larger number of decrees and codes of practice have been based on these laws.

As a member of the European Community, Dutch legislation has to conform to EC Directives and Recommendations. In general it is assumed that Dutch legislation on quality of working life already meets the EC standards derived from article 118a of the Single European Act. A few adaptations will have to be worked out before 1992. It is clear however that EC-legislation will affect Dutch legislation more and more in the future.

As already mentioned, the most important law in this context is the Working Environment Act and the decrees based on this act. The next part of this chapter provides a more detailed presentation of this Act.

2.2 The Working Environment Act

Since 1980 there has been a major change in Dutch health, safety and well-being legislation because of the introduction of the Working Environment Act (WEA).

The WEA is primarily an enabling act: it is essentially a framework which forms a basis for

supplementary decrees. A second important aspect of the WEA is that it defines the roles of the minister, the labour inspectorate, employers, workers, works councils, safety and health specialists and of the Working Environment Council (cf. 3.2 and Chapter 5). Each of them are given responsibilities, rights and duties regarding the working environment. The WEA regulates the organizational set-up of both the structure of the occupational safety and health system within companies and the way in which public supervision and monitoring are to be organized.

The Act includes basic standards on both the physical and psychological aspects of the working environment.

The aim of the WEA is not only to ensure a just standard of health, safety and well-being. The employer is also required to organize the work in such a way that the health, safety and well-being of the worker are assured to the highest possible level.

The well-being element is comparatively new in the Dutch working environment legislation. Well-being can be divided into the following elements:

- The workplace should be laid out in accordance with ergonomic principles;
- The employees should have the possibility to organise their own work in accordance with their own professional qualification;
- The employees should have sufficient opportunity to determine their own work pace.
- The employees should have sufficient opportunity to keep in contact with their colleagues;
- Each employee has the right to know what the purpose and the result of his labour is.

Well-being implies that the employee has a balanced clustering of tasks, including control tasks and resulting in a varied and autonomous job. Needless to say monotonous jobs do not meet these criteria.

Although the employer is responsible for the work environment, the workers have a certain responsibility for their own safety and health and they are obliged to cooperate on health and safety matters with their managers.

This law applies to all fields in which employees are active, except for mining and off shore occupations which are covered by separate legislation. For some area's like schools, prison services, the armed forces, fire brigades and police institutions, there can be some exemptions. In addition, the Act can be extended to self-employed persons like farmers and craftsmen.

In the remainder of this section we will present briefly the major highlights of the WEA.

2.2.1 General duties of employers

2.2.1.1 General concern for safety, health and wellbeing at work

- In organizing the work, such methods of production and work must be adopted that the greatest possible level of safety and health protection will be reached and the well-being will be improved.



- The use of tools, machines, appliances and substances that may endanger the workers' safety and health must be avoided.
- The safety and health hazards must, to the extent that is practicable, be prevented at their source.
- The lay out of a work station must be in accordance with modern ergonomic principles.
- Monotonous, repetitive work must be avoided.
- When jobs are designed and allocated, account must be taken of the workers' personal characteristics, such as age, sex, physical and mental constitution, work experience, skills and knowledge of the working language.
- The content of a job must be determined in such a way that the work contributes to the worker's qualification. The worker should have sufficient possibilities to fulfill his tasks in accordance with his own professional skills. Also there should be sufficient possibilities to maintain contact with other workers. The worker should be informed about the purpose and the results of his work.

2.2.1.2 Company policy, annual plan and report

- Employers with 35 employees or more have to prepare an annual written plan of their safety, health and well-being policy.
- The company policy should be evaluated regularly and adapted whenever necessary.
- Employers with 35 employees or more have to report annually on the content and results of the policy during the past year. These reports should also provide figures of accidents and sickness absence.
- The policy towards health, safety and well-being as well as the annual plan and report have to be presented to and discussed with the works council.
- Both the annual plan and report have to be sent to the regional office of the Labour Inspectorate.

2.2.1.3 Safety assessment reports

- Specific factories particularly in the chemical sector have to prepare safety assessment reports.
- These reports contain information about the various production processes of a particular plant, the potential risks and the measures that need to be taken in cases of emergency.

2.2.1.4 Information, education and training

- Every worker has to be informed about both the hazards in his work and the work procedures to avoid them. If this is necessary, the worker must be trained to perform his tasks in an appropriate way.
- When circumstances alter, information, education and training activities should be repeated.

2.2.1.5 Reporting of accidents and occupational diseases

- All accidents resulting in injuries or considerable material damage, must be recorded in a register to be kept in the establishment or institution. Serious accidents and any occupational diseases which are discovered must also be reported to the labour inspectorate.

2.2.2 General obligations of workers

The workers must show such care and attention as may be necessary in connection with their work to prevent dangers to their own safety or health and those of others.

Specifically they shall:

- use machines, appliances, tools, substances, and equipment correctly;
- use the personal protective equipment provided by the employer correctly;
- not alter or unnecessarily remove the safety devices fitted to machines, appliances, etc.;
- participate in the instructions organized for them;
- immediately report any dangers they have noticed.

In exchange for these obligations, the worker has received the right to stop work in cases of serious and immediate danger to his life or health.

2.2.3 Co-operation between employer and workers

The WEA contains rules on the cooperation of employers and employees with regard to working environment matters. The employer and workers shall co-operate in striving for the best practicable safety, health and well-being. Over and above the Works Councils Act, the WEA offers some extra rights for Works Council members, such as the right to paid leave for educational reasons, the right to consult fellow workers, the right to receive information from the employer and the right to accompany a Labour Inspector during his visit to an establishment or institution. The Works Council is allowed to set up a permanent Working Environment Committee. As already mentioned, the employer has to discuss his health and safety policy with the Works Council (or the Working Environment Committee). Items to be discussed may be new investments, the establishment of new premises, the introduction of new materials or working methods, the annual health and safety plan, the annual report, monitoring results, accident reports and sickness absence rates. It is seen as an essential point that employees have an opportunity to influence the policy of the company or institution.

2.2.4 Health and safety experts

Every worker employed in industrial and stevedoring firms employing 500 or more workers must be covered by so called expert services for safety and health ("deskundige diensten"). Up to the present in the construction industry only *health* services have been compulsory; *safety* services will almost certainly become compulsory in the near future.

The expert services may be divided up into separate safety, health and well-being services and may be combined or company specific or regional. In this last case a workers' representatives must be appointed to the board of directors.

The main function of the safety experts and the occupational physicians is to be independent consultants for both management and workers or Works Council. Apart from this

consultant role, the expert services have operational tasks, which we will describe in the following paragraphs. All statutory expert services must be approved by the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment.

2.2.4.1 Occupational health services

The objective of an occupational health service is to protect and to promote the worker's health. To this end the following tasks - amongst others - are legally prescribed:

- to evaluate the policy of the undertaking towards the health, safety and well-being of the workers and to put forward recommendations;
- to carry out pre-employment medical examinations;
- to carry out periodical medical checks of workers who are exposed to a particular health risk in the performance of their work;
- to hold regular consultation hours for the employees;
- to assist with the rehabilitation of (partly) disabled workers;
- to recommend measures to reduce hazards from toxic agents, dust, noise, vibration, radiation, etcetera and to avoid occupational diseases;
- to set-up a first aid organization inside the establishment;
- to recommend measures to reduce sickness absence;
- to keep themselves informed about working conditions, such as temperature, humidity, ventilation, dust, lighting, noise, the ergonomic design of the work stations and the hazards due to work pace, working hours, shift work, piece work and the automation of production processes.

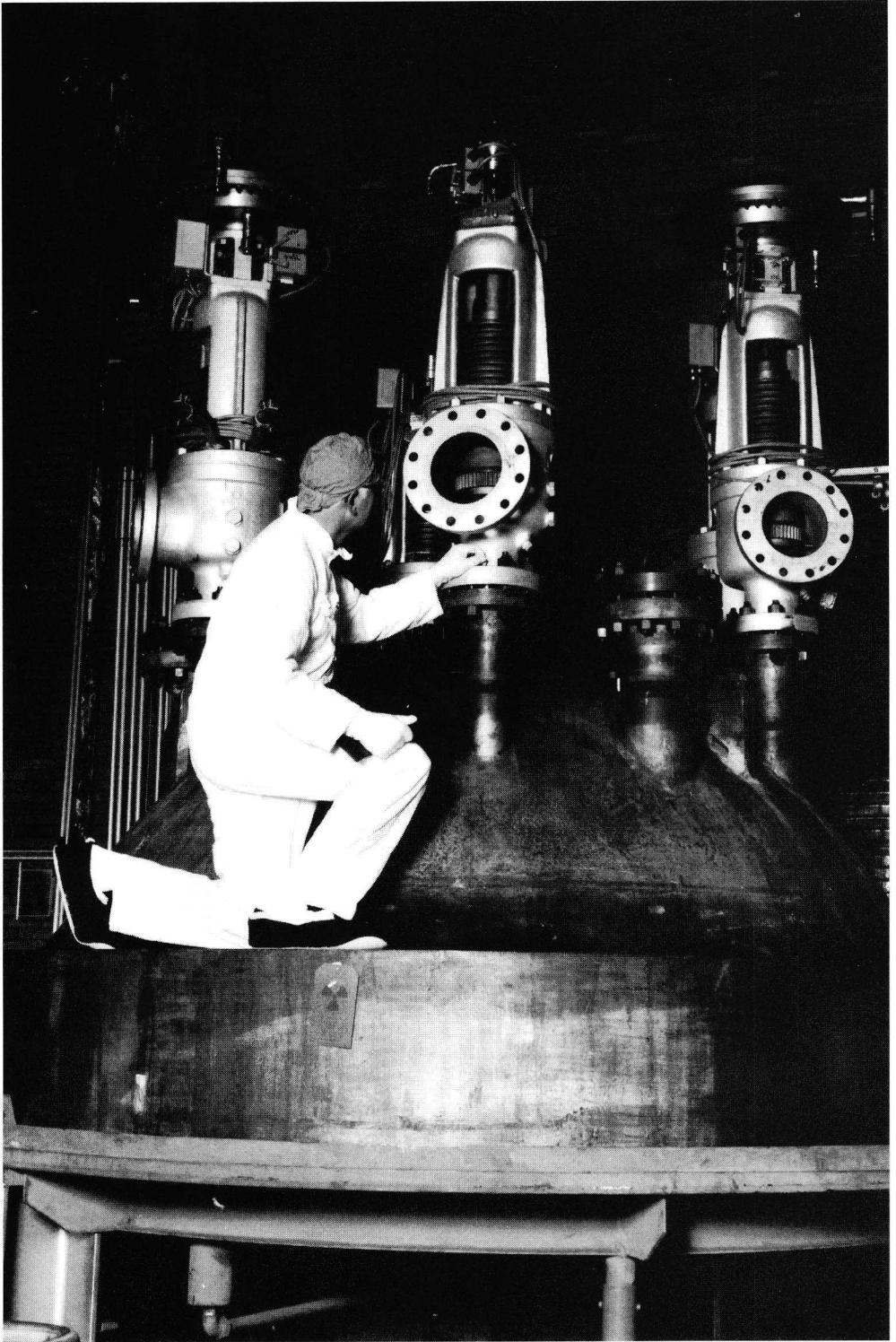
The health service sends its recommendations to both the employer and the Works Council. In addition the Works Council receives a report annually from the health service, indicating the problems which deserve attention in the policy of the undertaking. The medical and personnel information which members of a health service receive, have to be treated in accordance with privacy protection rules.

2.2.4.2 Safety services, safety experts

The objective of a safety service - or of a safety expert operating alone - is to protect and promote the workers' safety and occupational hygiene. To this end at least the following tasks must be carried out:

- to evaluate the policy of the undertaking towards the safety and occupational hygiene of the workers and to put forward recommendations on: production methods, the use of machinery, tools, equipment and substances, the lay out of work stations, job content, etc;
- to recommend measures to reduce hazards from dangerous substances, dust, noise, vibration, radiation, etcetera and to avoid accidents;
- to assist with information and training activities;
- to assist with the preparation of the company's annual safety plan and report, safety assessment reports and accident reports and to carry out accident analysis;
- to keep themselves informed about developments in (safety) technology.

The safety service or the safety expert forwards his recommendation to both the employer and the Works Council. In addition the Works Council receives an annual report



from the safety service. This report has to indicate the problems which deserve attention in the health and safety policy of the undertaking and to provide suggestions to ameliorate the situation.

2.2.4.3 Tasks with respect to well-being

New in the WEA is the obligation that employers have to contribute to the well-being of employees in their workplaces. This obligation can be divided into two categories: ergonomics and organizational development (cf. 4.1). The first task means the application of ergonomic principles in the design of work stations.

The second task implies the application of modern insights into organizational development in order to reduce stress or other psychological strains in the work situation.

2.2.5 Rules to ensure a safe, healthy and fulfilling working environment

The WEA enables the Minister to enact decrees on the following main topics:

- the dimensions, construction and safe condition of buildings, precincts, roads, ships and other workplaces;
- toilets, washing and cloakroom facilities, canteens, etc;
- emergency exits;
- the prevention of accidents due to fire and explosions;
- precautions against dangers from electricity and radiation;
- lighting, temperature, climate, ventilation, noise, vibration;
- the production and spread of gases, vapours and dust;
- the use, handling and storage of hazardous substances;
- safety related to the condition and use of machines, tools, appliances, equipment, tanks, means of transport, etc;
- personal protective equipment;
- the language of safety signs and instructions for use;
- communication facilities for workers employed in isolated workplaces;
- work pace, job content and work organization;

These decrees are sometimes issued to meet the standards of the EC legislation. We will discuss some of the main decrees later in this chapter (see 4.2).

2.2.6 The Labour Inspectorate

The WEA provides the legal basis for the tasks and responsibilities of the Labour Inspectorate. The enforcement of the WEA and other Acts relating to quality of working life Acts is the main task of the Inspectorate. The WEA provides powers for the Inspectors, such as the right to enter all establishments or institutions, to carry out inquiries and to take actions. The Labour Inspectorate can issue instructions to employers or - which is a stronger instrument impose a requirement on them. The Inspector can even put a stop to an activity, when immediate danger arises.

Employers, employees, companies and institutions are obliged to give any relevant information which is required by the Inspectorate.

Inspectors are not allowed to reveal either confidential business information coming to their knowledge or the names of persons submitting complaints or reporting contraventions.

2.2.7 The Working Environment Council

The Working Environment Council ("Arboraad") is a national tripartite body which has an advisory task to the government. It consists of representatives of the Government, the central employers and employees organizations. It gives advice either when asked or on its own initiative about the policy of the Labour Inspectorate. It comments on new acts and decrees and can bring forward its own proposals for new policy or legislation.

2.3 Decrees

The Working Environment Act provides a basis for a number of decrees in which additional rules are set out. There are three kind of decrees, related either to a specific sector, to a particular problem of working conditions or to organizational aspects.

2.3.1 Decrees related to a specific branch of industry

These rules comprise standards for various aspects of working conditions, like the quality of buildings, the safety of machines and equipment, transport safety, climate, noise, lighting, toxic substances, fire protection, etc. The branches covered are as follows:

- Industry and workshops ("Veiligheidsbesluit voor Fabrieken en Werkplaatsen");
- Agriculture ("Landbouwveiligheidsbesluit")
- Inland waterways transport ("Veiligheidsbesluit Binnenvaart");
- Stevedoring ("Stuwadoorsbesluit");
- Commercial and non-commercial services ("Restgroepenbesluit").

The Mining Act provides the basis for a decree for mine work; so do the Home Work Act for homework and the Off Shore Labour Act for off shore labor.

2.3.2 Decrees related to particular working environment problems

These decrees are less systematically developed than the decrees per industrial sector (see 4.2.1). The main decrees are:

- Safety Decree for Electrical Installations;
- Sandblasting Decree;
- Asbestos Decree;
- White Lead Decree.

2.3.3 Organizational Decrees

The Working Environment Act allows the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment to issue additional rules for the application of the Act. This type of decree may specify such things as the minimum size of company required to set up a health and safety service or the criteria for approving such services. Other decrees govern the production of safety assessment reports, annual safety plans or safety reports.

2.4 Remaining legislation on health and safety

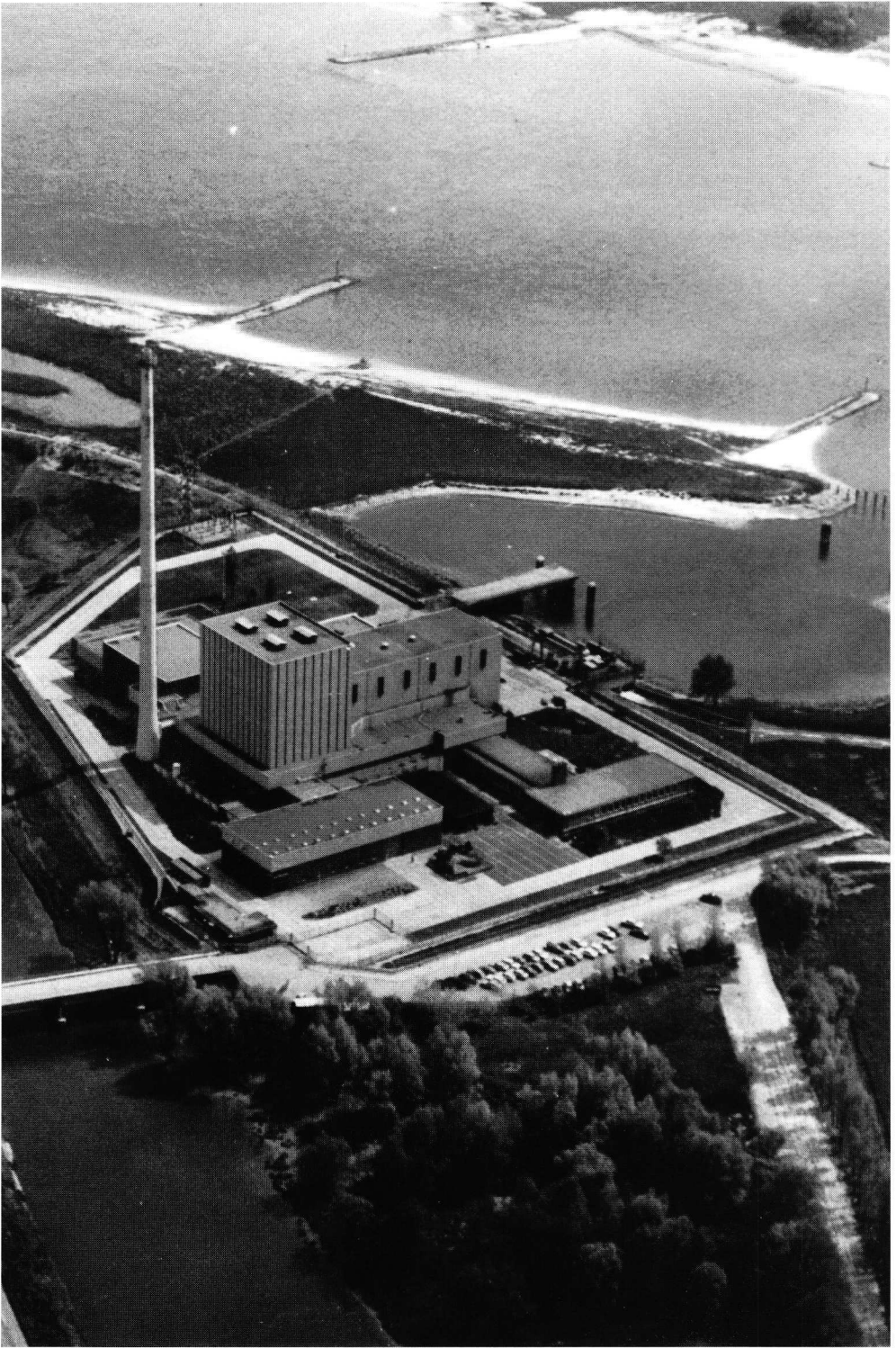
It is important to realize that the Working Environment Act is a quite recent act. The WEA introduced a somewhat different system of health and safety legislation compared to its predecessors. The WEA is essentially an Act that sets goals rather than specifying detailed standards. A lot of the precise, technical standards are left to be worked out and agreed by the different parties involved: employers, employees, Labour Inspectorate and expert services. In some cases this extends to the development of new common standards. It goes without saying that these standards have to meet the goals that are laid down in the Working Environment Act. This approach means that the law can fix common goals on the one hand, while on the other hand it is enough flexible to be applicable in differing situations of the full range of companies and institutions.

Although there are no longer any coal mines in the Netherlands, a **Mining Act** is still in operation. This Act is now applied to related activities like the exploitation of natural gas, oil and salt. For historical reasons the enforcement of the Mining Act is not carried out by the Labour Inspectorate, but by a specialised service: the State Mine Supervision ("Staatstoezicht op de Mijnen"), which is part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. This service is also given the job of enforcing a fairly new Act: the **Offshore Labour Act** ("Mijnwet Continentaal Plat"). This act sets rules for the health and safety of workers on the drilling platforms in the North Sea.

The **Home Work Act** ("Huisarbeidswet") extends the provisions of the Work Environment Act to home work and prohibits certain kinds of work as home work. The person who contracts work to home workers is responsible for their working conditions as well.

The **Dangerous Machinery Act** ("Wet gevaarlijk werktuigen") forbids the selling or use of certain machines without an official test certificate. This Act is applied to only a very few machines, like elevators, threshing machines, sanding machines, spinning machines, etcetera. The Inspectorate for Hazardous Equipment ("Dienst Gevaarlijke Werktuigen"), part of the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment, supervises the certification procedures which are carried out by private institutes.

The enforcement of the **Pressure Vessels Act** ("Stoomwet") is also carried out by the Inspection for Hazardous Equipment. This Act prescribes safety rules for all types of production processes in which high pressure plays a role. In the near future this Act will become part of the Dangerous Machinery Act.



The **Pesticides Act** ("Bestrijdingsmiddelenwet") contains rules for trade in and use of pesticides. Pesticides have to meet certain requirements before they can be brought onto the market.

Furthermore there is a special act for the transportation, packing, storage and disposal of hazardous substances, the **Dangerous Substances Act** ("Wet Gevaarlijke Stoffen"). The supervision of this act is carried out by the Minister of transport. There is a special service within the Ministry of Transport, called the Inspectorate for Dangerous Substances ("Korps Controleurs Gevaarlijke Stoffen"), which is empowered to enforce the Act.

The last act that is relevant for health and safety is the **Nuclear Energy Act** ("Kernenergie-wet"). This act contains rules for work inside nuclear power stations and for work with ionizing substances.

2.5 Acts on working hours

Some of the afore mentioned Acts also contain rules about working hours. Almost all workers are legally limited to a maximum working week of 48 hours and to 8½ hours in any one day. This is laid down in the **Labour Act** ("Arbeidswet"). Employers have the opportunity, however, to ask the Labour Inspectorate for a permit for overtime, which will normally be granted. In practice, however, most employees work a 38 hour week on average because of the collective agreements between employers and trade unions.

For various sectors there are special decrees on working hours, e.g. shopwork, cinemas, chemist's, swimmingpools, etc.

There is a special **Driving Hours Act** ("Rijtijdenwet").

In this Act rules are set out for truck and bus drivers. Because of the international character of these professions, the rules are harmonized within the EC.

The **Mining Act**, the **Stevedoring Act** and the **Offshore Labour Act** contain special working hours rules for their respective sorts of sectors.



3. NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED WITH QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE

Several governmental and non-governmental institutions are active at a national level in the Netherlands in the field of quality of working life. The most important ones will be described in this Chapter.

The Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment ("Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid") is the most important governmental body in the field of quality of working life. Two of its Directorates-General are relevant to our subject: The Directorate-General of Labour ("Directoraat-Generaal van de Arbeid") and the Directorate-General of Social Security ("Directoraat-Generaal Sociale Zekerheid"). The former functions as the central office of the Labour Inspectorate; the latter is responsible for the preparation and the implementation of the social security legislation.

3.1 The Labour Inspectorate

The first three labour inspectors were appointed in 1890. A century later the Labour Inspectorate is an organization with about 300 inspectors and 200 clerical staff, working in 8 districts and a central office with about 350 employees. As Figure 3.1 shows the Directorate-General of Labour consists of 4 central Directorates, 8 districts of the Labour Inspectorate and a special Inspectorate for Hazardous Substances.

The 8 District Heads have (traditionally) had considerable authority and a great degree of autonomy. A District Head is responsible for managing the district, setting the Districts priorities for enforcement (in addition to the national priorities) and for the application of the legislation in practical situations.

District Heads and senior inspectors are mainly recruited with a university degree. The inspectors have either a university or higher technical collage degree and usually have several years management experience in industry or other suitable environment. The next grade is the Technical Officer usually with a higher technical qualification. A medical practitioner is attached to each district to give advice on medical and occupational hygiene matters. The inspectors also have the possibility to call in the various specialists from the central office, the Directorate-General of Labour.

The communication between the Directorate-General and the districts has been greatly improved profoundly since the introduction of a computer network. Each district has an immediate connection with the central computer of the Directorate-General. New regulations are sent to the districts via the computer network and the inspectors can consult central information systems, while the data collected are stored centrally to build up databanks which can be used for (statistical) analysis.

Due to the fact that the various quality of working life Acts contain few detailed regulations, great emphasis is laid on the guidance notes ("Publikatiebladen") which are prepared by the Directorate-General.

These guidance notes contain codes of practice and set standards for working conditions. These notes - whilst essentially giving guidance - may be raised to the status of legal requirement by the District Head in laying down standards in a particular case. In addition the Directorate-General of Labour issues a lot of booklets, brochures and leaflets as a result of the scientific research which it commissions and as a contribution to the dissemination of information about legislation and government policy towards quality of working life.

The Labour Inspectorate also carries out visits to individual establishments in the case of serious accidents, workers complaints, risk assessments of new developments, advice to management and works council consultancy, etcetera. These activities always tend to grow uncoordinatedly and to curb this coordinated industry projects are set up. Table 3.1 shows the number of visits to establishments compared to the total number of establishments. These figures indicate the need to reduce the attention paid to large establishments and to increase it with respect to very small establishments. Compared to the number of employees, however, the number of visits generally is corresponding.

Table 3.1 Number of visits made to establishments

employees per establishment	number of establishments	%	number of visits	%	employees per size group (%)
1 - 9	362,318	69.6	24,240	30.3	31.4
10 - 19	32,098	6.2	13,840	17.3	8.4
20 - 49	22,133	4.3	10,160	12.7	13.4
50 - 99	8,272	1.6	6,960	8.7	10.8
100 - 199	3,588	0.7	5,360	6.7	9.3
200 - 499	2,043	0.4	4,720	5.9	12.4
500 - 749	364	0.07	1,360	1.7	3.9
750 - 999	152	0.03	640	0.8	2.3
1000 - >	233	0.04	2,480	3.1	8.1
unknown	89,019	17.1	0	-	
construction sites	-	-	9,520	11.9	
ships	-	-	960	1.2	
Totals	520,220	100.0	80,240	100.0	

Source: Annual report Labour Inspection, 1988.

Some 600,000 establishments with about 4.5 million employees in total have to be covered by the Labour Inspectorate. In order to improve efficiency the Labour Inspectorate tends to work on projects related to specific industrial sectors. Each project starts with a general inquiry into the quality of working life within a sector. The main

problem areas are selected and subsequently a programme is set up for the particular sector. This programme always contains inspections, but may also contain dissemination of information, the stimulation of training activities, the development of improved working methods or production facilities, the introduction of checklists and the introduction of management consultancy activities. The result of such a project should be a general increase in the attention for the improvement of working conditions in a particular sector.

The Labour Inspectorate works in a broad and complex field. Therefore priorities have to be set. In the remainder of this section we will present the main topics in the policy of the Labour Inspectorate during the first part of the nineties.

The first project in the sector oriented approach is directed towards the health and safety of dock workers.

Rotterdam, the largest port in the world, Amsterdam and several smaller ports offer a lot of employment. The work of the dockers is still relatively dangerous and may threaten their health particularly because of heavy lifting and contact with toxic substances. Furthermore new transport technology is being introduced in the harbours, which leads to new hazards. By means of research, dissemination of information, consultancy and inspections the Labour Inspectorate is trying to improve the working conditions.

The second industry project deals with the construction industry. The problems there are well known: high accident rates, ergonomic problems, noise, climate, hazardous materials, etc. Labour Inspectorate, employers organizations and trade unions are now working together to improve the quality of working life in the construction industry. On the one hand the Labour Inspectorate has increased the frequency of inspections of construction sites and on the other is trying to influence the somewhat carefree culture of that industry. Labour inspectors are aiming to stimulate activities by both employers and employees directed towards the improvement of working conditions. In addition the Inspectorate is trying to influence the safety standards of the tools, machines and materials used in the construction industry.

Similar projects are being set up in the metal industry, furniture industry, dredging activities, transport, rubber industry, hospitals and agriculture. Some of these projects will be completed within one year; others will last several years. Each year new sectors will be selected on the basis of accident rates, sickness absence rates or complaints. Besides these nationwide projects, the districts also develop their own projects, which are carried out within the border of the district.

Another way of setting priorities is by the selection of issues from the broad field of quality of working life. In this respect the Labour Inspectorate is working on themes such as noise, toxic substances, physical strain, the use of alcohol during work and the so called "sick building syndrome". In these projects research plays an important role. After such a first step new legislation is prepared, information is disseminated over the country, model projects are developed and training for labour inspectors and safety and health specialists is organized to spread the knowledge.

A final part of the Labour Inspectorate policy is oriented towards working conditions of specific groups of employees, e.g. home workers, children, pregnant women and women working in night shifts. These groups amongst others - need special attention to prevent problems with quality of working life.

Almost all the activities of the Labour Inspectorate are set up in cooperation with representatives of employers- and employees organizations. The Labour Inspectorate therefore maintains a network of relations with advisory bodies, research centers, private consultants, educational institutions and institutions that can play a role in the dissemination of information. A number of these institutions will be described in the next part of this Chapter.

3.2 The Working Environment Council

The Working Environment Act provided the basis for the establishment of the Working Environment Council. This Council is the national advisory board on this topic mainly for the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment.

In this Council 8 representatives from central employers organizations, 8 from central employees organizations and 7 from governmental bodies discuss working environment matters and particularly proposals for new legislation. Only the employers and employees representatives have a right to vote. The chairman of the board is independent.

The main task of the Council is to provide advice about quality of working life matters, such as:

- the policy of the Minister towards quality of working life;
- the preparation of new legislation;
- research planning;
- the policy towards State aids for innovative workplace projects;
- the issuing of exemptions.

The Working Environment Council which meets every month, has set up several working committees for specific issues, e.g. regarding the approval of occupational health services, asbestos problems and threshold limit values. Within these committees external experts play an important role.

The Working Environment Council is the most important body through which employers and employees organizations influence Governmental policy with respect to quality of working life. Therefore it prepares comprehensive reports and discussion papers which are discussed at the Council's meetings. The advice given by the Council is also comprehensive and is published.

In most cases the initiative for getting an issue discussed lies with the Minister. He sends proposals to the Council - in most cases about new legislation - for advice. Many of the discussions can be characterized as follows: the employers would like to have low, flexible and liberal standards, whereas the trade unionists make a plea for high and fixed standards.

The result of these discussions is often a compromise, but sometimes separate advice is sent to the Minister. In most cases the Minister then produces a compromise.

Compared with bargaining topics like wages, working hours, employment and social security regulations, quality of working life normally receives relatively less attention from both employers organizations and trade unions. However, the sharp increase in disablement rates at the end of the eighties has attracted the attention of both employers and employees to the quality of working life and the functioning of the social security system.

3.3 Occupational Associations

Occupational Associations ("Bedrijfsverenigingen") have been set up for the implementation of the social security legislation. These Associations are managed by representatives of employers organizations and trade unions. There are 26 Occupational Associations, covering all the private sectors of industry, transport, construction, commercial services, agriculture, etc. 16 of these Occupational Associations have combined their administrative activities. This cooperative body is known as the Association Joint Administration Office ("Gemeenschappelijk Administratie Kantoor - GAK"). This Office covers - amongst others - the sickness and disability benefits for about 1,5 million insured people.

The Occupational Associations not only administer a number of social security benefit programmes; for several years they have also attempted to stimulate the prevention of temporary or permanent work incapacity by offering a range of services for their members. They provide information and consultancy on the improvement of working conditions, company sickness absence strategies, and counselling of long-term sick employees. For this purpose the Associations cooperate with other national or industrial institutes. But up to the present the main attention of the Associations is focussed on the administration and correct adjudication of the various social security benefits.

3.4 National institutes for information, education, consultancy and research

This section aims to give an impression of the most relevant institutions that operate at a national level.

Some of them deal with information, some with consultancy, others with research, statistics or education and training in the field of quality of working life.

Some institutes have a combination of these functions.

3.4.1 Information

There is a growing tendency to cooperate on matters of dissemination of information about working conditions.

The Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment, especially the Directorate-General of



SZW

Minister
en Werk

AKTIE BOUWKEET 1990

OOK VOOR KLEINERE BOUWWERKEN
EEN GOEDE SCHAFT- EN
TOILETGELEGENHEID

- GEMIDDELD 1000
- PUNCH
- VELDE
- HANDELSZAK
- INGADE MET SCHAF
- TOILET MET WASSPOELING
- HANDELSZAK

MAAK VAN UW KEET EEN KEET!

SCHIFTEN MET SCHUPOEDER

MET W.C.
GELEGENHEID

"ZAK IS LEKKER
POKE
ZAK IS



Labour and the Dutch Institute for Working Environment ("Nederlands Instituut voor Arbeidsomstandigheden - NIA") play a central role in this process.

The Ministry for Social Affairs and its Directorate-General of Labour play an important role in the dissemination of general information about legislation and try to gain the attention to and improve the awareness of the Dutch population of the risks of bad working conditions like noise, toxic substances or bad ergonomic layout of the workplace. Most of the information is printed, but more and more audiovisual materials are being commissioned by the Ministry. In addition to this, as we mentioned earlier, the Ministry issues many booklets as a result of the research projects that have been carried out by various research institutes commissioned by the Directorate-General of Labour.

NIA directs its information to managers, experts, members of works councils, health and safety committees and groups of employees within undertakings and institutions and also to teachers and educational staff members of schools and training institutes. For this purpose NIA works closely with a number of large publishers and the largest Dutch distributor of audiovisuals (TFC) and takes part in projects like the "Janus" quarterly and the International Chemical Safety Cards project of EC and World Health Organization. NIA produces the main periodical about quality of working life in the Netherlands, the monthly "Arbeidsomstandigheden" (Working Conditions).

As mentioned above, the Occupational Associations also play an important role in the field of dissemination of information about working conditions. It goes without saying that they tend to restrict their information activities to their own sector. The Association Joint Administration Office ("GAK") carries out this task for some of the participating Occupational Associations.

In both the construction industry and agriculture there are specialized institutes for the improvement of working conditions, respectively the Foundation Arbouw and the Foundation for Health Care in Agriculture ("Stigas"). These two foundations also carry out information dissemination.

3.4.2 Consultants

From the foregoing it may be clear that there are many suppliers of consultancy on working conditions. Major sources of expertise can be found in specialized institutes, occupational associations and governmental agencies (Labour Inspectorate).

Both the Dutch Institute for Working Environment ("NIA") and the Association Joint Administration Office ("GAK") have a special consultancy unit of about 25 people. NIA works mainly in the 100 largest companies; GAK mainly in smaller sized firms.

People working within research institutes sometimes act as consultant. Researchers from a number of universities and from the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research ("TNO") should be mentioned here.

In addition various, mostly private, engineering bureaus and private consultants are often asked as an adviser to help in the development of better workplaces. In the construction industry there is a special safety consultancy bureau ("ABOMA"), which is managed by a board of employers and employees representatives.

It almost goes without saying that a lot of consultancy is done by the safety and health experts who are working within the various regional and company safety and health services.

The main body of consultants is formed by at the Labour Inspectorate. In their daily contacts with all kinds of companies and workplaces the 300 labour inspectors form an important consultancy institute. They provide advice and give guidance on the implementation of the working environment legislation.

Most of the consultants have to be paid for their work.

There are three different situations. Some of the above mentioned consultancy bureaus are financed by the industry they work for. In that case (e.g. GAK, ABOMA) the consultancy is free of charge for the individual company. Most of the other consultants charge market prices for their services. In some cases it is possible for individual companies to receive State aid to help them over the financial threshold to consult an expert. Finally the Labour Inspectorate. This body gives advice free of charge.

3.4.3 Research

The majority of the research on quality of working life is carried out by the Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research ("TNO"), the Dutch Institute for Working Environment ("NIA") and institutes linked to or part of universities.

There is no national research planning nor a central research fund across the whole field of quality of working life. The most central role is played by the Directorate-General of Labour. This Directorate spends every year about 7 million ECU on research projects. In some cases universities have their own funds for research. Sometimes the employers organizations and trade unions fund research in this field. Some research is done for the EC (DG V) or the European Foundation in Dublin.

Because of this situation many research projects are oriented towards the development of new legislation and regulations, but there is also some fundamental research into specific areas such as toxicology, professional diseases, risk assessment, etc. Most research has a strong applied character. For the Directorate-General of Labour the main research themes for the nineties are:

- evaluation of the effects of legislation;
- development of policy instruments, tools for health and safety experts and educational programmes;
- ergonomics;
- the programme "Technology and work organization";

- working conditions in various industries;
- alcohol abuse at work; Stress; Nuclear plant safety;
- Desk research on toxic substances; development of TLV's;
- Development of standardized measurement methods for substances in the working environment;
- Risks of carcinogenic and genotoxic substances;
- Risks of micro-biological material;
- Health and hazard surveys on specific substances;
- Noise reduction;
- Reduction of vibration;
- Working hours in various sectors;
- the functioning of the social security system;
- analysis of statistical data on sickness, disablement and accidents.

As this overview again shows: research in the field of quality of working life, commissioned by the Directorate-General of Labour, will be strongly attached to the preparation and enforcement of new legislation and therefore has a strong applied character. However, a number of research institutes such as universities and TNO carry out their own research programmes in the field of working environment.

3.4.4 Statistics

Whereas the conditions for research in the field of working conditions may be considered as favourable, the provision of statistical data on this subject is less developed in the Netherlands.

"Traditional" risks like industrial injuries and occupational diseases are poorly recorded and reported.

The abolition in 1967 of a separate injury benefit scheme with appropriate reporting procedures affected the quality of industrial accident statistics. Attempts have been made to improve the reporting system.

Much more data regarding sickness absence (and disablement) are available in the Netherlands. Several institutes or social security bodies provide data for various segments of employees or industries.

Finally, the only nation-wide source giving some quantitative overview of working conditions is provided by the Life Situation Survey, which is carried out every two years. This inquiry provides an insight into the complaints of employees about unfavourable working conditions (noise, vibrations, monotony, work speed, etc.) they have experienced.

3.4.5 Education and training

Up to 1990 not much attention has been paid to working conditions matters within schools for vocational training, but more and more people are becoming aware of the necessity to teach young people to behave properly and to be conscious of safety and

health during their work. They need to know what hazards there are and how to avoid them. In addition the schools themselves have recently been brought under the Working Environment Act and this is beginning to stimulate thought about the importance of incorporating working conditions items in the normal lessons. However there still is a lot to be done before the optimal situation is reached.

The education and training of safety and health experts has grown in the eighties to a higher level. Health practioners, occupational hygienists and most ergonomists have a university education; most safety experts have a higher technical college background, supplemented by a special post-technical high school course of 200 contact hours. Academic occupational hygiene courses are provided by the Agricultural University Wageningen. The same institute provides post-doctoral courses in industrial toxicology, in cooperation with Utrecht University. Post-doctoral education in occupational health care is provided by three institutes (NIPG/TNO, Leiden; CORVU, Amsterdam and University Nijmegen). There is also an intermediate level for safety specialists. Occupational nurses have a college degree.

Special courses have been set up by training institutes for members of works councils and health and safety committees. These courses are subsidized by a foundation called G.B.I.O. This foundation is managed by representatives of employers organizations and trade unions and receives money by means of a payroll levy on all private employers.

Some post-graduate educational activities are organized by the Dutch Institute for Working Environment ("NIA").

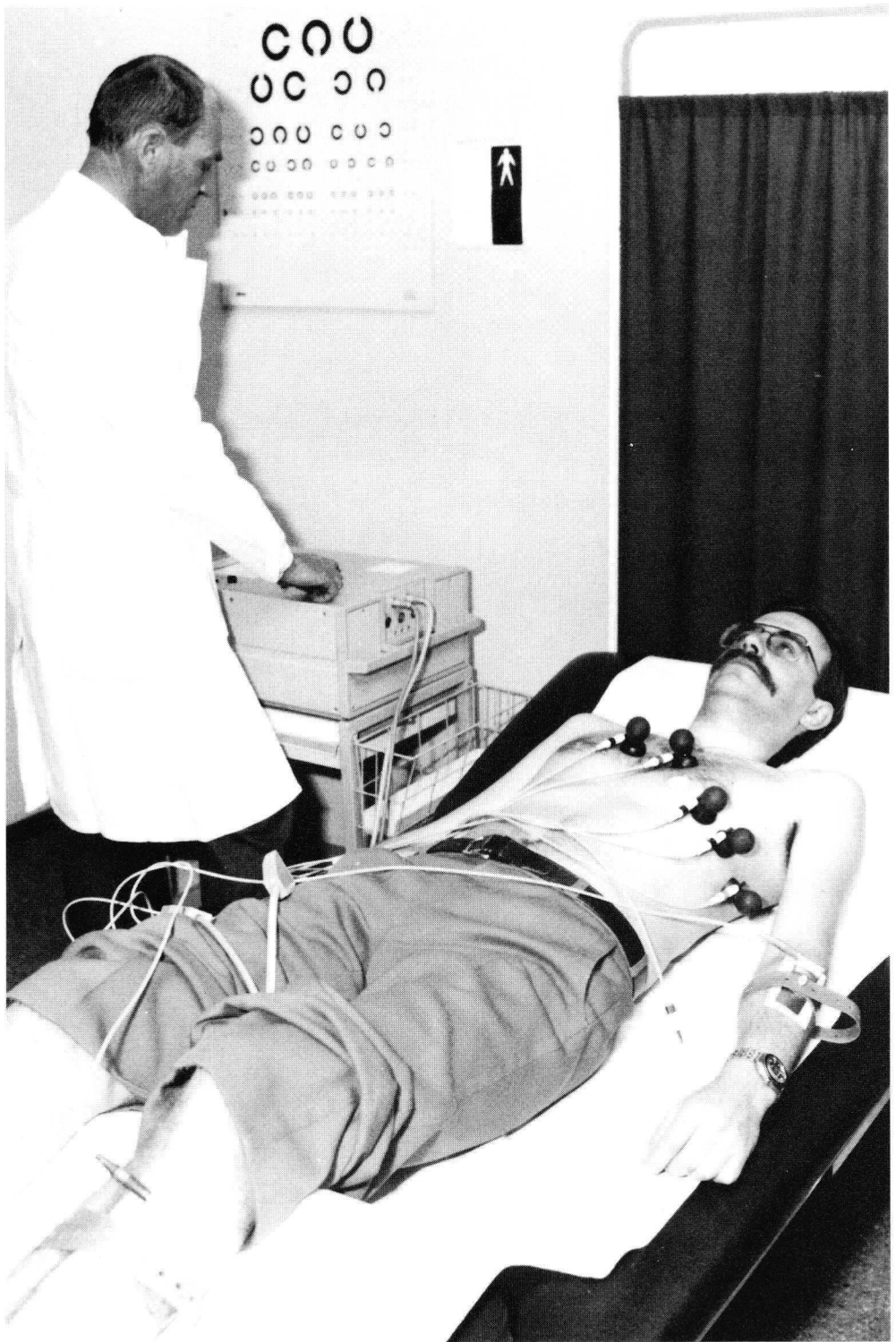
This institute offers the following possibilities:

- Vocational training for safety specialists (intermediate level) in close cooperation with a large distance learning institute ("PBNA");
- Vocational training for safety experts (higher level) in close cooperation with 4 higher technical schools;
- Basic course for ergonomists in cooperation with the Dutch Society for Ergonomics ("Nederlandse Vereniging voor Ergonomie - NVvE");
- Workshops for health practioners, ergonomists and occupational hygienists in cooperation with the TNO Institute for Preventive Health Care ("NIPG-TNO").

A number of institutes are organizing courses and workshops for members of Works Councils and Health and Safety Committees, seminars for health and safety experts, personnel officers, managers and other policymakers and lectures for health and safety specialists, members of Works Councils, Health and Safety Committees and other people engaged with the day to day occupational safety and health care.

A post-graduate course for Health, Safety and Wellbeing (academic level) is organized by the University of Amsterdam and a post graduate Risk Assessment & Control course for safety experts by the Delft University of Technology.

NIA is working on the production of educational materials for regular vocational schools and for the courses that are held in training institutes for members of Work Councils and Health and Safety Committees.



4. ACTIVITIES AT PLANT LEVEL

This section deals with the activities carried out inside factories, offices and other institutions. The role of the Works Councils and of health and safety experts is crucial at this level.

4.1 Works councils

According to the Works Council Act ("Wet op de Ondernemingsraden") a Works Council is compulsory for all undertakings and institutions with 35 or more employees. The Working Environment Act provides additional rights for Works Councils e.g.:

- the right to install a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee,
- the right to accompany the labour inspector during his visits to the establishment,
- the right to discuss the management's general policy as far as it has consequences for the health, safety and well-being of the employees.

From a review of practice the actual state one can conclude that the majority of the Works Councils in establishments with more than 100 employees have installed a special Health, Safety and Well-being Committee. In their first phase of existence these Committees have primarily dealt with administrative matters like the formulation of the Committee's regulations, education and training and the development of a regular consultation structure with the Works Council, safety and health specialists and management. In the next phase they have paid attention to a number of more or less minor points that could be improved in the working conditions. Some Committees have carried out surveys on working conditions in their own establishment. Subsequently they have formulated plans to work systematically on these points. This seems to be the current situation of many Committees. Only a few Committees have succeeded in affecting more fundamentally management's policy towards improving working conditions.

For instance by discussing the way investments have to be done. Then few committees try to combine a proper development of technology and production methods with equally proper standards for working conditions.

In small sized companies the situation is less well developed. Hardly any Works Council - if there is one operates successfully in the working conditions field. As main causes for this situation the labour relations in those firms and the general lack of specific knowledge can be indicated. In addition it can be stated that the influence of trade unions in these small establishments is too weak to improve this situation rapidly.

The Working Environment Act is rather new. Its first part came into force in 1983; the last part in 1990.

Employers, employees, safety and health experts, trade unions and the Labour Inspectorate need time to get used to working within the framework of this Act.

At first there was some enthusiasm, but the implementation took more time than many people had hoped. The first thing which needs to be improved is the level of knowledge within the establishments. A proper legal framework doesn't work when there is no accurate knowledge inside the factories and institutions. A lot of work still has to be done in this respect.

Trade unions, Occupational Associations, the Directorate-General of Labour, the Dutch Institute of Working Environment amongst others try to raise the knowledge level of people working inside factories, offices and other institutions. They develop courses, print leaflets, brochures and periodicals and the production of audiovisual materials. All these information activities are still growing. Research is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts.

In this decade of rapid growth of computerized information systems, the central institutions in the field of working conditions are trying to keep up with these developments. These modern information systems may bridge the gap between the relatively small number of experts outside and the many people inside factories, offices and other institutions that are working on the improvement of quality of working life.

4.2 Health and safety services

Under section 4.1.4 we first met the health and safety services. In this section we aim to give an impression of the present state of these services and their activities. Firstly some figures. The estimated number of Health services in the private sector is about 130, 50 of them are operating on a regional basis; the others are company services. It is estimated that only 30% of employees in the private sector are covered by occupational health care provisions.

Only companies and institutions with 500 or more employees are required to set up a health service or to become a member of one. Because of an agreement between employers organizations and trade unions in the construction industry and in the road transport sector all companies are covered by one of the regional health services mentioned above. The industry-specific activities for these two sectors are coordinated by a central institute for each sector.

In other sectors many smaller companies participate voluntarily in the regional occupational health services. Other firms have made arrangements with a general practitioner to provide pre-employment medical examination. Many other firms have no occupational health care at all.

Most of the time of the health services is spent on pre-employment medical examinations, periodical health checks and consultation hours, but there is an increasing tendency to monitor working conditions as well. For this reason the larger health services have appointed occupational hygienists and ergonomists and even safety specialists.

The situation is somewhat different for safety services. With only a few exceptions - e.g. in the construction industry and for civil servants - all safety services are in company. The

estimated number of safety services is 300. The majority of the services employ only one - mostly fulltime - safety engineer. The estimated number of employees covered by these services is (....). Industrial enterprises with 500 and more employees are required to have a safety service attached to them. Smaller undertakings often have a part-time safety technician while companies with less than 100 employees have no safety specialist at all as a rule.

Safety engineers spend most of their working time on projects aimed at the improvement of sub-standard working situations, e.g. noise reduction or the development of measures to reduce the level of toxic substances in the working environment. Another important part of the regular task of the safety engineer is to carry out training and instruction for employees. Monitoring working conditions is a third part of their work and accident investigation is a fourth issue. Unfortunately most safety engineers do not report great success in changing the design of new production systems. This more preventive approach to improving working conditions is still rather rare in Dutch firms and institutions. Nevertheless, safety engineers play an important role in the improvement of working conditions. Their very presence guarantees a certain amount of attention for safety matters.

Research indicates that they can be seen as the backbone of safety development inside Dutch undertakings.



5. SOME STATISTICS ON QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE

In Section 3.4.4 we have already indicated that quantitative information on aspects of working conditions and their consequences are scattered and limited in this country. For example due to the particular Dutch social security arrangements information on occupational accidents is restricted whereas surveys on working conditions or experts operating in this field only have a limited scope. Notwithstanding some recent figures, for some aspects of quality of working life and its related bodies or experts some recent figures can be given, which gives a first indication.

Firstly, the economically active population in the Netherlands is characterized by a relatively small proportion of females (38%) employed and a high proportion of part time workers (24%). In particular female employees are usually part timers: only 54% work more than 30 hours per week.

A survey regularly carried out on the life situation of (a sample) of the Dutch population recently gave the following overview on (complaints on) working conditions by employed persons (percentages positive answers).

Table 5.1 Percentage experiencing the given working conditions by age (1986)

Aspects	Age group					Total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	
Shift work	18%	12%	8%	9%	5%	11%
Noisy work	30%	23%	26%	24%	12%	25%
Dirty work	36%	26%	27%	22%	22%	27%
Smells	13%	10%	10%	10%	5%	10%
Dangerous work	11%	11%	8%	9%	7%	9%
Heavy work	41%	22%	21%	23%	20%	26%
High work speed	53%	52%	52%	51%	36%	50%
Monotony	15%	13%	8%	9%	9%	11%

For some sectors special surveys can provide additional information on (objective and subjective) working conditions, improvements applied, etc.

A well-known indicator of working conditions, namely data on the level of occupational injuries data suffers from some restrictions in the Netherlands. Due to the prevailing recording and reporting procedures occupational injuries were until recently incompletely notified. Consequently, available figures may give only a limited impression. Per 1000 employees 17.7 occupational injuries (causing work incapacity) were reported (1987); about 1% of reported injuries were fatal. As in many other countries the highest incidence rates were reported in the construction sector, followed by the agrarian and industrial sector which show high rates. The lowest levels are found in service industries.

Traditionally more information is available on work incapacity, be it sickness absence, or (permanent) disability. The yearly percentage of days lost due to sickness was 8.8% (1989). On average a Dutch employee was absent for 32 (calendar) days, which exceeds the yearly number of days holiday. Some basic figures are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Major sickness absence characteristics of Dutch employees (1988)

Characteristics	Sickness absence percentage	Absence frequency	Average duration per spell
Sex:			
Males	8.0	1.72	6.6
Females	10.6	2.15	17.7
Age groups:			
25 years	7.5	2.42	11.0
26-35 years	9.3	2.21	14.8
36-45 years	9.1	1.74	18.8
46-55 years	10.5	1.47	25.8
56-65 years	10.4	1.15	35.0
Occupational status:			
Manual	11.3	2.00	20.2
Staff	6.3	1.76	12.8

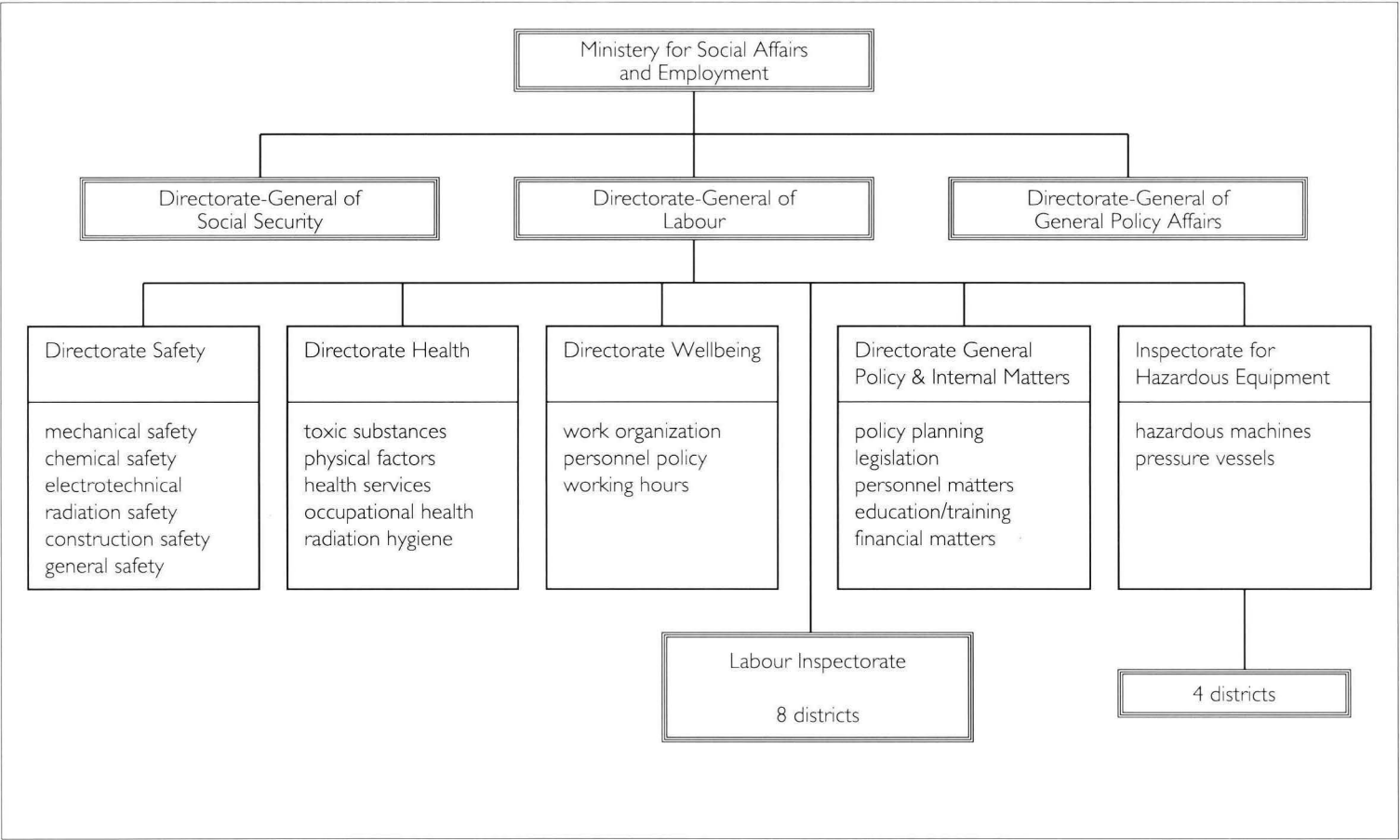
Disablement, (semi-) permanent work incapacity has risen alarmingly in the Netherlands in the last two decades. Due to eligibility criteria and labour market effects the number of disablement pension recipients is double the number of unemployed. At the end of 1989 about 780,000 received disablement benefits; over 80% is found in the highest class of work incapacity.

Whereas many recipients previously worked in the industrial sector, a shift towards the service sector can be observed now.

Several groups of experts or institutions are involved in policy regarding working conditions and prevention of work incapacity. For the entire working population are about 300 labour inspectors in service, covering about 600,000 firms. In addition working conditions are covered by about 1400 (full- or part time) safety experts, either working for companies, or on their own account, or employed by occupational health services or occupational associations.

Occupational health care is not as far developed as in many other countries, and statistical information is moderate. The association of occupational physicians has about 1000 members. In contrast to most other countries the occupational physician in the Netherlands may also evaluate work the degree of incapacity. In practice about 52% of company doctors combine their job with such social security tasks.

Figure 5.1 Organisational scheme of the Directorate-General of Labour (including the Labour Inspectorate)





6. KEEP IN TOUCH

This chapter provides a list of relevant institutions in the field of quality of working life in the Netherlands. The institutions are listed in alphabetic order of their English names. We also give their Dutch translation and their adresses.

The numbers on the right represent the following categories:

- 1 Governmental bodies and advisory councils
- 2 Central employers organizations
- 3 Central employees organizations
- 4 Central social security organizations
- 5 Institutes providing information
- 6 Institutes for consultancy
- 7 Educational institutes
- 8 Research institutes
- 9 Occupational societies

ADRESSES

Agricultural University Wageningen
Departement of Toxicology
Landbouw Universiteit Wageningen
Vakgroep Toxicologie
P.O. box 8129
6700 EV Wageningen

Association of Occupational
Health Service Institutes - FGB
Federatie van gezamenlijke
Bedrijfsgezondheidsdiensten - FGB
P.O. box 87761
2508 DD Den Haag

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ADRESSES

Consultancy Bureau for
Safety in the Building Industrie

Algemeen Bureau voor
Ongevallenpreventie en
Materieelzaken - ABOMA

P.O. box 141

6710 BC Ede

Directorate-General of Labour
(including Labour Inspectorate)

Directoraat-Generaal van de Arbeid

P.O. box 69

2270 MA Voorburg

Disablement Insurance Fund

Algemeen Arbeidsfonds - AOF

P.O. box 100

2700 AC Zoetermeer

Dutch Association of
Occupational Health Nurses

Nederlandse Vereniging voor

Verpleegkundigen in Bedrijven - NVVB

Boutershemstraat 21b

4611 KA Bergen op Zoom

Dutch Christian Federation of
Small and Medium sized Enterprises

Nederlands Christelijk

Ondernemers Verbond - NCOV

P.O. box 5803

2280 HV Rijswijk

Dutch Normalization Institute

Nederlands Normalisatie

Instituut - NNI

P.O. box 5059

2600 GB Delft

Dutch Occupational Hygiene Society

Nederlandse Vereniging

voor Arbeidshygiëne NVvA

P.O. box 71452

2507 BB Den Haag

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ADDRESSES

Dutch Society for Ergonomics
Nederlandse Vereniging
voor Ergonomie - NVvE
P.O. box 75665
1070 AR Amsterdam

Erasmus University Rotterdam
Institute for Occupational Health
Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam
Instituut Bedrijfsgezondheidszorg
P.O. box 1738
3000 DR Rotterdam

Federation of Netherlands Industry
Verbond van Nederlandse
Ondernemingen - VNO
P.O. box 93093
2509 AB Den Haag

Federation of Occupational Associations
Federatie van Bedrijfsverenigingen
P.O. box 8300
1005 CA Amsterdam

Federation of Trade Unions for
Middle and Senior Staff personnel
Vakcentrale voor Middelbaar en
Hoger Personeel - MHP
P.O. box 400
3990 DK Houten

Foundation Arbouw,
Foundation for the Improvement
of Working Conditions in the
Building Industry
Stichting Arbouw
P.O. box 8114
1005 AC Amsterdam

Foundation for Health Care
in Agriculture
Stichting Gezondheidszorg in
de Agrarische Sector - STIGAS
Prinsevinkpark 19
2585 HK Den Haag

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ADDRESSES

General Pensionfund
for Public Employees
Algemeen Burgelijk
Pensioenfonds - ABP
P.O. box 4476
6401 CZ Heerlen

Inspectorate for Hazardous Substances
Korps Controleurs Gevaarlijke Stoffen
P.O. box 20901
2500 EX Den Haag

Labour Inspectorate
Adress: see Directorate General of Labour

Ministry of Employment
and Social Affairs
Ministerie van Sociale Zaken
en Werkgelegenheid
P.O. box 69
2270 MA Voorburg

Netherlands Federation of Christian
Trade Unions in the Netherlands
Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond - CNV
P.O. box 2475
3500 GL Utrecht

Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics
Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek - CBS
P.O. box 959
2270 AZ Voorburg

Netherlands Christian Employers Federation
Nederlands Christelijk
Werkgeversverbond - NCW
P.O. box 84100
2508 AC Den Haag

Netherlands Institution
for Safety and Health
Nederlandse Vereniging
voor Veiligheidskunde - NVVK
p/a GAK-AB
P.O. box 8300
1005 CA Amsterdam

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Netherlands Or

Netherlands Organization for
Applied Scientific Research

Humanization of work Bureau

Nederlandse Centrale Organisatie
voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk
Onderzoek - TNO
Bureau Humanisering van Arbeid
- HUMAR

P.O. box 124
2300 AC Leiden

Netherlands Organization for
Applied Scientific Research

TNO Institute for Preventive
Health Care - NIPG

Nederlandse Centrale Organisatie
voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk
Onderzoek - TNO
Nederlands Instituut voor
Preventieve Geneeskunde NIPG

P.O. box 124
2300 AC Leiden

Netherlands Trade Union
Confederation - FNV

Federatie Nederlandse
Vakbeweging - FNV

P.O. box 8456
1005 AL Amsterdam

PBNA

PBNA

P.O. box 9053
6900 GS Arnhem,

Royal Dutch Union of Small and Medium sized Enterprises

Koninklijk Nederlands
Ondernemersverbond KNOV

P.O. box 379
2280 AJ Rijswijk

Social Economic Council
Sociaal Economische Raad - SER

P.O. box 90405
25609 LK Den Haag

ADDRESSES

Social Fund for the Building Industry
 Sociaal Fonds Bouwnijverheid - SFB
 P.O. box 637
 1000 EE Amsterdam

Social Security Council
 Sociale Verzekeringsraad - SVR
 P.O. box 100
 2700 AC Zoetermee

TFC Audiovisual Media
 TFC Audiovisuele Media
 P.O. box 320
 6880 AH Velp

**The Association Joint
 Administration Office**
 Gemeenschappelijk
 Administratiekantoor - GAK
 P.O. box 8300
 1005 CA Amsterdam

**The Association Joint
 Administration Office
 Consultancy for Working
 Conditions and Absenteeism**
 Gemeenschappelijk
 Administratiekantoor - GAK
 Adviesbureau
 Arbeidsomstandigheden
 en Verzuimpreventie - AB
 P.O. box 8300
 1005 AC Amsterdam

**The Dutch Institute for
 Working Environment - NIA**
 Nederlands Instituut voor
 Arbeidsomstandigheden - NIA
 P.O. box 75665
 1070 AR Amsterdam

**The Netherlands Society of
 Occupational Medicine**
 Nederlandse Vereniging voor
 Arbeids- en Bedrijfsgeneeskunde - NVAB
 P.O. box 2012
 6020 AA Budel

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Working Environment Council
Arbo raad
P.O. box 3013
Den Haag

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SOME FURTHER LITERATURE ON THE NETHERLANDS

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COLOFON

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