

Inclusion UK Study Visit

Speech by Jan van Zijl

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Counselroom RWI

Counsel for Work and Income (RWI)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Netherlands, and the Counsel for Work and Income.

As chairman of the Counsel for Work and Income, I say on behalf of everyone here that we are delighted that you are starting your three day programme here at our organisation.

We first met with Inclusion in April 2006 on our visit to London, and we are pleased to be hosting you today.

Later on I will tell you more about the common progression on the Dutch labor and reintegration markets.

But there's a reason why I am chairman of the Counsel for Work and Income, so let me start by telling you what the Counsel for Work and Income exactly does and why it is so unique.

Counsel for Work and Income

The Counsel for Work and Income is the consultation institute for employers, employees and local authorities in the Netherlands.

Our primary role is to submit proposals to the government and other parties concerning the broad area of work and income.

The goal is to simulate a well functioning labor market.

Increasing transparency and improving quality in the reintegrationmarket is one of the most important tasks of our organisation.

Through the counsel employers, employees and local authorities deliberate on how they can solve labor market challenges in the Netherlands.

Despite their different approaches and values these parties are helped by cooperation.

We combine practice-based knowledge with research and analyses to produce the evidence that is necessary to push the labor and reintegration markets in the right direction.

Our products serve all of the players in the labor market.

Firstly of course the Minister and the State Secretary of social business and employment, but sometimes directly to the second chamber and the Department of Education, Culture and Science. But especiall the delivery agencies such as CWI (the Jobcentre Plus equivalent) and local authorities as implementers of labor market and reintegration policies.

The Dutch labor market is in constant movement.

The Counsel for Work and Income is concerned with structural matters, and at this particular moment the issues of an aging problem in which a lot of people retire and globalisation are high on the agenda.

Tendency of the market and structure: the labor market knows its own dynamic, but also lets itself be corrected.

Efficient and effective policy is a primary condition, the basis and shared approach is a second condition.

Because of its special composition the Counsel for Work and Income is the organization which brings local authorities together with occupational groups/sectors on a regional level.

Regardless its role of consultation platform the Counsel for Work and Income gives these parties concrete and practical assistance.

Special attention to the reintegrations market

The Counsel for Work and Income wants to improve the operation of the market and the quality of services delivered by this market.

Furthermore the Counsel for Work and Income hosts the chairmanship and performing secretariat for BlikopWerk, the English translation of which is “Vision of Work”.

Through this foundation employers and employees increase the transparency of the labor and reintegration markets.

Together, our goal is to achieve more effective support which results in less absence due to illness or inability to work, and ultimately, more people participating in the labor market.

The mission of BlikopWerk, or “Vision of Work,” is to inform customers about the quality of services delivered by reintegration companies.

BlikopWerk is a foundation, which means there is no profit-making dimension to our work.

For the development of new products and services we often receive an allowance.

In BlikopWerk, employers, employees, local authorities, people looking for work, and reintegration providers work together to develop products that are useful to everyone.

Blik op Werk wants to give jobseekers a good insight on (the quality of the services) offered.

Blik opWerk has introduced several tools and quality marks to encourage the development of higher quality services.

1. The Blik op Werk selection manual

The selection manual has the most complete overview of businesses who are active in the reintegration and labor market. In this overview you can find the results of surveys of customer satisfaction with reintegration companies.

2. BlikopWerk Quality Marks.

A quality mark that presents which companies on the labor and reintegration market deliver quality services.

3. BlikopWerk reintegration announcements

An overview of local tenders and assignments of the reintegrations and naturalization courses for the whole country.

4. BlikopWerk contracts benchmark

A benchmark in which objective information on achievements of contracted reintegration businesses by local authorities is stored.

5. BlikopWerk naturalization quality mark

A quality mark that measures the quality of a supplier of naturalization courses.

We believe strongly in these quality-related tools, because ultimately, people who need work must believe that the reintegration company they choose will deliver what they request: sustainable employment.

To conclude, I would like to tell you something about the current developments on the Dutch labor market.

Since 2006, a clear revolution has been visible in the Dutch labor market.

For the first time in years, everything is going the right way!

Jobs and vacancies are expanding.

The record in 2000/2001 is already outnumbered.

In some areas, there is already a shortage of employees.

And nowadays the threatening shortcomings of employees in the near future plays a great role.

Two weeks ago, the Council for Work and Income held its annual autumn congress.

The subject this year was usefulness in the labor market.

There I presented the results of a survey of 700 professionals and 2000 households in the Netherlands.

The survey assessed the way people feel about the current labor market.

The most important conclusions were:

- 1. Most people agree that employment will continue to increase to 2010.**
- 2. The complete unemployment will probably decrease.**
- 3. Retaining older employees useful: both the average employee and the average Dutch person think employers are not doing enough on this count.**
- 4. Employment participation amongst women will probably increase.**
- 5. Nearly everyone suspects an increase of new employees in the Netherlands.**
These employees are originally from Eastern Europe.
- 6. They are optimistic about the immigrant workforce and their changes of getting work compared to autochthonal people.**

Considering all of this there is a light optimism about the developments on the labor market till 2010 from the perspective of both labour market experts and the Dutch population.

However, the need for more flexibility continues to bring about more contradictions between employers and employees.

I have described just some of the challenges that the Counsel for Work and Income and BlikopWerk are addressing.

But you are, just like our next speaker, Sjaak Koehler, experts on the market and how it works locally.

Sjaak will now dive deeper into the current state of the reintegrationmarket and its relationship with local authorities.

Then Sietske van Rossum from BlikopWerk will show you some of the quality-related tools from Blik op Werk and talks about how they are being developed.

We are also joined by Jan Laurier, from the Landelijke Clientenraad, an organisation that ensures the unemployed person is represented in the key decisions affecting the development of the reintegration market.

We look forward to hearing about market developments in the UK, and we wish you an enjoyable and productive stay here in Holland.