

The colourful union movement

Examples from the FNV's experiences





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Colophon

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Foreword by Agnes Jongerius

Keep up the good work!

As a social organisation, the FNV is central in society and of course that is why diversity is one of our major concerns.

When I became president of the FNV in 2005, we also decided to make diversity a spearhead at the same time. To that end, we formulated a number of lofty goals. Therefore, the FNV was required to increase its attractiveness and ability to gain new clients. We also wanted to fight for integration in the workplace and to achieve a sustainable improvement in the recruitment, promotion and career prospects of young ethnic minorities in particular. Furthermore, we sought to increase the active participation of women, ethnic minorities and young people in order to achieve a better reflection of the composition of our members. Of course, decisions like these don't just appear out of thin air. In fact, they stem from the core values that we set out in our mission statement, namely equality, solidarity, freedom, justice and sustainability.

Yet we do not do this for the sake of principles alone, we also have a practical interest in it. The Netherlands needs a strong union movement, and this is only possible if we embrace diversity. We will be shooting ourselves in the foot if we do not strive for diversity in terms of members, volunteers, directors and policy.

I felt somewhat impatient in this field: when I started off in 2005, things couldn't move quickly enough. There had been enough research and discussion, and now we were going to do something!

We can now safely say that we have actually achieved something.

This booklet shows what the FNV has been up to in the field of diversity. On the one hand, it shows that we have made good progress in recent years but on the other hand, it shows that we are not there yet. That's why there can only be one message: let's keep up the good work!

Agnes Jongerius,
FNV President



Integration

Discussions in the workplace

Employee cohesion

The *Discussions in the workplace* project was kickstarted by the murder of the Dutch director, Theo van Gogh, in November 2004, FNV Bondgenoten decided to approach companies, with the objective of initiating a dialogue between the various cultures that encounter each other every day in the workplace.

“It's very positive; things like this are important! It encourages people to talk about how to interact with one another. You won't solve the problem but you can reduce it significantly.” That is how one participant responded in 2006 to a meeting in the workplace that was organised by FNV Bondgenoten.

The *Discussions in the workplace* project came into being thanks to the efforts of the FNV Bondgenoten employee, Anne-Marie Snels, and the current policy-making employee, Jo Kant, from the same union. “The most important part of the project was organising and supervising discussions in the workplace. Discussions within the company – and from the boss, in his own time – on working together and collaborating with one another, among all those colleagues who considered this topic worth the effort.” These discussions were prompted by the murder of the film director, Theo van Gogh, in Amsterdam on 2 November 2004. All of the Netherlands was shocked. That same evening, twenty thousand people gathered at Dam Square in Amsterdam for a wake. There was social unrest, which was expressed in attacks on both a mosque and

an Islamic primary school. “I don't know if the tension at that time was also palpable in company workplaces, but FNV Bondgenoten believed that we should assume our share of responsibility in relation to this”, recalls Jo Kant. “We saw the workplace as a unique opportunity. That is where big groups of employees with all kinds of backgrounds work together on common tasks.”

One prerequisite for the discussions was that the composition of the attendees had to be reflection of the 'society' within the company. “We wished to encourage collaboration between the various cultural groups and ensure cohesion: talking about disputes and agreements. The workplace is a promising environment in which to do so.” The transport company HTM, which is based in The Hague, has 2,400 employees. It was one of the first 'quality' companies that was open to a *Discussion in the workplace*. “At the request of the FNV Bondgenoten, the discussion took place with a troubled department of controllers”, recalls HTM staff manager, Anja van der Toorn. “They often work in groups of three to six people, so there are always a lot of processes taking



■ Colours Works Councils deliver broader perspective

“As far as I am concerned, diversity is an enrichment”

For a long time, it is far from a given for immigrant employees to put themselves forward as a candidate for a position on the Works Council, certainly in the bigger companies. Yet a full spectrum of participants provides a better reflection of a company. The FNV Central Union and its unions place an essential role in making Work Councils more diverse.

“At times I found myself standing in line with ten nationalities. One Portuguese employee, one Russian, Moroccan, Turk, Romanian, Yugoslav, Syrian, Iraqi, one American and one Dutchman. You see that kind of diversity reflected everywhere in the company, not just in the office. In the canteen, everything comes up at the table during breaks. People try each other’s dishes and in between you can hear a lot of different languages.” Sorin Simion is the Chairman of the Works Council at Pingo Poultry, a poultry processing company. A good atmosphere at work is extremely important to him and his colleagues. The work is difficult and at those times, you have to be able to get on with your colleagues. The staff works in teams, which requires good communication. “Recently, there was a time when the atmosphere was not so good. There were a lot of changes both among the management and with regard to staff affairs. People were being fired. There was major uncertainty. People had the feeling that the management team did not respect them anymore. We at the Works Council wanted swift changes to this and raised this with the Board. Now the

atmosphere is good again.” The foregoing depiction has been taken from the ‘Together at work, together in the Works Council’ brochure that was published thanks to the FNV Bondgenoten and ABVAKABO FNV, among others. It contains ten different portraits that provide a full spectrum of suggestions on how to get immigrant employees interested in participating. Their core message is to make contact, talk to people and make it clear that you genuinely want to be their Works Council too. An increasing number of organisations have more and more people of different nationalities working them. This is only set to increase in the coming years. Working together in an organisation provides a common goal. In this respect, the workplace is a valuable place to achieve mutual bonding among people from very different backgrounds.

Multicultural representation will strengthen this. A Works Council will gain strength if it properly reflects the broad spectrum of staff. Moreover, it will send a clear message that everyone’s opinion is valued within the organisation, including the opinions of

place there. They are frequently required to collaborate and they have to be able to trust one another.”

It was also a colourful department of Dutch employees of Hindustan, Turkish or Moroccan descent. “Generally speaking, the collaborations go well”, says Van der Toorn. “Except from time to time, when irritation arises if they groups go to talk in their own languages. At mealtimes, the various population groups are more drawn to each other and there is a tendency to talk in their native languages. The native Dutch employees in particular find this annoying.”

This was also addressed during the *Discussion in the workplace*. “It was agreed that managers would talk to their employees about this.” Van der Troon thought that organising a discussion like this was a good initiative and would like to repeat it. “The great thing about it is that you get groups such as these together as a whole.”

In recent years a lot of material has been developed for conducting *Discussions in the workplace*, including the new manual ‘Working together, talking together’, which contains a step-by-step description of how to approach such a discussion. “We are now convinced that discussions in the workplace can take place primarily at the initiative of the Works Council. This theme fits in wonderfully with the social policy. It is difficult for trade union directors to come into companies with a suggestion like this. However, they can be involved in organising them.”

The results

The discussions revealed a lot about the workplace within various companies and sometimes lead to further campaigns. Therefore, an equal opportunities committee was set up within a research institute, following the workplace discussions.

immigrant employees. After all, the Works Council provides them with another channel for having their voices heard. Therefore, multicultural representation can contribute to the solidarity of all groups with the organisation.

Many representative bodies can address the issues in question by putting forward immigrant colleagues as candidates for the Works Council. Therefore, five arguments have been formulated for hiring immigrant employees in these Councils. The Works Council will better reflect the composition of employees in the organisation. It will create a bigger Works Council network among the employees in the organisation. Works Council members will get a broader view of the experiences of various groups of employees. It will lead to greater creativity and dynamism in the Works Council, ensuring a bigger pool of candidates for the Works Council elections.

However, immigrant employees need to be convinced to take that step towards the Works Council. They see numerous restrictions that actually do exist. The language barrier, for one, is often mentioned.

Unfamiliarity with the Works Council comes in at second place. In addition, cultural barriers form a glass ceiling. Many cultures have an 'old-fashioned' respect for authority. One does not criticise the management and there is no equal interaction.

On the other hand, however, there are many important advantages. A Works Council member can make his or her contributions to discussions about policy within the organisation. This will teach them more about the organisation and how it works. They can address specific issues affecting

groups of employees in the consultations between the Works Council and the Board. Works Council members gain valuable knowledge, for example on laws and regulations, and they can strengthen their skill set (holding discussions, conducting negotiations and making plans).

Works Council members often state that the trade union's crucial role in the elections is important. This amounts to preparing, supervising and supporting the candidates. Emphasising the importance of diversity within the Works Council and actively approaching potential candidates will encourage them to put themselves forward as a candidate. It means making the extra effort and making room for these candidates. In this respect, they believe that the trade union could be even more pro-active and take a clearer stand.

Immigrant candidates consider the active involvement of the union as a certain guarantee that there will be support available after the elections. Moreover, they experience the union as a potential 'ally', should problems arise at work due to their membership of the Works Council.

The results

The FNV has published a brochure entitled 'Together at work, together in the Works Council'. In addition, the FNV has developed a checklist containing nine easy steps that trade union directors can use to promote multicultural diversity when preparing and supervising the representative elections.



■ Jeroen de Glas, Chairman of FNV Youth:

“Quality is more important than ethnicity”

In the short time that FNV Youth has been in existence, the organisation has already made many inroads. One important action was initiating an SER¹ advisory service on immigrant youth and the labour market. It was represented in 2007. Many of its recommendations are now reflected in the policy of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. FNV Youth Chairman, Jeroen de Glas, explains the activities of his organisation.

FNV Youth was officially founded in 2006. The Board comprises two members, namely its Chairman, Jeroen de Glas, and Vice Chairman, Jamilla Aanzi. They were appointed by way of a job application procedure. It has a team of eight to nine employees. Just like the FNV, the FNV Youth deals with overarching themes, including, pensions, integration, flex-contracts and

social security, to name but a few. FNV Youth aims to influence the policy of the government, employers and even the FNV.

¹ The SER ('Social Economic Council') advises the Cabinet and the Parliament on the main structures of the social economic policy that is to be implemented. The SER employs independent, crown-appointed members, employers and employees jointly.

Integration is at the top of FNV Youth's agenda. "We wish to influence policy in the political arena and in educational institutions. One example of this is the recommendation made by the SER in 2007 entitled 'Think of the future instead of ethnicity'. The educational institutions should provide better, more intensive supervision during young people's education and when making their career choices. Pre-vocational secondary education-schools (VMBO) in particular should outline 'course-switching risk groups'. "Very often the parents of immigrant students have no idea what the education system looks like. That is why immigrant students require more constant supervision."

FNV Youth now organises soft-skills training programmes at schools itself. This is one of the recommendations from the SER report. That educational institutions are tasked with strengthening students' social competencies or so-called soft skills, which are required to participate in the labour market, including awareness of the impact of distinctive behaviour or appearance on potential employers. The social skills for job applications training programme is part of FNV Youth's soft-skills training programmes. "If you want a job, you must be able to make a proper job application and make a good impression. First impressions are extremely important", says De Glas. "All of this is addressed in our training programmes." Research from 2006 revealed that 40 percent of young people of foreign descent are unemployed. "The government did not want to publish the figures. That is why we went to the media to ask that attention be

paid. We said that a SER was required as soon as possible. We must turn that high unemployment figure into a high employment figure. Forty percent was and still is unacceptable. That is how the SER advisory service came into being. It was an unsolicited report and we haven't seen that in a long time."

Another important topic for FNV Youth is discrimination. Research from the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Agency revealed that 25 percent of employers would rather hire a Dutch employee than a Turkish one, if they had the choice. "That is downright discrimination", says De Glas. "You ought to look at the quality, not the ethnicity. FNV Youth is doing its best to get the issue on the agenda, not only via the SER but certainly also via the trade union centres and the unions themselves." FNV Youth will continue to follow the implementation of the SER's recommendations critically. "However", adds De Glas, "immigrant youth must also do something themselves. Stand up for themselves and at least become members of a trade union. Only then we can actually do something for them."

The results

Thanks to the efforts of FNV Youth in the SER, recommendations have been developed on immigrant youth in the labour market. Many of its recommendations are now reflected in the policy of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

■ FNV Women's Union paving the way for minority women

Managerial talent wanted

Seventy Dutch women with different backgrounds participated in the first project 'A place with FNV'. FNV Women's Union has now started on its second project 'Campaigning for Influence'. The goal is to stimulate the managerial talents of minority women and guide them into numerous managerial positions.

The project 'A place with FNV' is FNV Women's Union way of acquainting more minority women with FNV and how FNV works, but also to coach and train women to become more active in the various FNV management teams. "We have been having good results", said management participation project leader at FNV Women's Union, Nora Kasrioui, "because lots of women have become FNV members, attended training session and, in doing so, have gotten to know FNV as an association. This helped them to decide to take a managerial position. FNV has always been an association that has worked based on solidarity and emancipation. The ideal of stimulating people and help them develop by creating opportunities was put into practice in this project. Women realised that they could also fill a managerial position." Prior to this project, FNV Women's Union worked hard on promoting the formation of a broad FNV minorities network. It was done in collaboration with Stichting Zami (Platform for Black, Migrant and Refugee Women), Marokkaanse Vrouwenvereniging Nederland (Moroccan Women's Association of the Netherlands), Mama Cash and the FNV unions. They told women about the project 'A place with FNV' and seventy

highly-educated, committed minority women applied for the training programme.

The women were taught what the FNV does and what it stands for in sixteen meetings. In total, the project took two years. Twenty of the women immediately filled managerial positions after completing the programme. They became active in one of the union managements, a Chamber of Commerce, a Migrant Women's Network within FNV or an advisory committee.

Because this project was received so positively and proudly by minority women, the Women's Union decided to continue the good work. The union came up with 'Campaigning for Influence'. Whereas 'A place with FNV' mainly concentrated on getting acquainted with the union movement and finding out what opportunities there were for minority women within FNV, the women's union continued where the first phase project left off with 'Campaigning for Influence'. Nora Kasrioui: "FNV Women's Union assembled a management master class of 25 minority women who are being trained to become managers. These women are very committed and we managed to bring all sizes and shapes together in this exclusive management master class."



FNV Women's Union is also organising network training sessions for the second phase of this project that aim to make women aware of all the mechanisms that are involved in management. Up to now, most of the network training sessions have been over-subscribed by mainly young women. Kasrioui: "What I see as a really positive achievement is that the FNV unions and federation of trade unions are very supportive of our management master class. I lobbied their managements and was granted funding. I am so happy with the wonderful collaboration and the doors that are opening." The third phase aims to anchor the results in terms of management in this project. To achieve this, FNV Women's Union set up a group of minority women consultants from the Migrant Women's Network. This group of consultants will also tackle internal change within FNV and will be calling attention for the recruitment and retention of more minority women in the FNV top and for a change in the culture.

According to Kasrioui, the biggest challenge for now will be ensuring that the 25 women from the management master class are given a position within FNV. "I am going to keep my promises and I am proud to announce that I already have a few commitments from AOb, FNV Zelfstandigen and FNV Bondgenoten. I am positive that the other unions will soon follow. I really respect the outstanding women who are in our management projects. Each of the 25 women are strong, resilient women."

The results

The FNV Women's Union's first project, 'A place with FNV', allowed twenty women to immediately go on to fill middle management positions. The second project 'Campaigning for Influence' has 25 female participants of minority descent. They are also being prepared for management positions. This project mainly attracts young minority women.

■ Discrimination in the workplace

"The keyword is teamwork"

The *Landelijke Discriminatie Monitor* ('National Discrimination Monitor'), which publication was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, showed that non-Western minorities have more trouble on the labour market than the native Dutch. This conclusion was the starting point for a number of campaigns that aimed to combat discrimination during job interviews and in the workplace.

Worried by continuing indications of workplace discrimination, FNV opened the Discrimination Hotline in 2005. This decision was partly motivated by the fact that 30 percent of the complaints received by discrimination agencies - approx. 1600 a year - are work-related. Three months after the hotline was opened, 88 serious complaints had already come in concerning discrimination in the workplace. The majority of the complaints had to do with finding a job (recruitment and selection). Employees were refused jobs because they were wearing a headscarf or had a foreign-sounding name. About 25 percent of the reports were racist in nature: "I see the Netherlands as a white country and I want to keep it that way." And: "Foreigners should adapt or piss off to their own countries." Eight complaints concerned bullying. Minority employees were assaulted with insults such as: "I hate blacks" and: "I hate foreigners." In response to this, FNV urged the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) to start an investigation into the situation of ethnic minorities on the labour market. The conclusions of the investigations were as plain as day. When searching for paid work and a permanent employment contract, mi-

grants run into hurdles that cannot only be attributed to their lower level of education, less work experience and poorer language skills in Dutch. According to the research agency, this points to discrimination. Around 60 percent of Moroccans who were rejected in 2006, suspects or knows that it was due to discrimination. In Turks, this was 49 percent and Surinamese people and Antilleans, 17 percent. Ethnic minorities get the impression that they are often rejected for positions that have contact with clients. This especially applies to women who wear a headscarf. They adapt so that they won't be discriminated against.

The parties at the Participation Summit in June 2007 made commitments to promote participation of ethnic minorities in the labour force by measures such as combating discrimination. "We are now running an image-forming campaign", explained FNV's policy coordinator Daniel Garcia Soto. "We set up a task force of employer organisations, the three federations of trade unions, the Landelijk Overleg Minderheden (LOM-National Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee), Forum and the government. The keyword in this campaign is 'teamwork':



work together, be equal together and together around the table.”

The Ministry of SZW has formulated a number of items to be addressed. The ‘ethnic minority community’ cannot be categorised into a single group. According to the ministry, groups of non-western minorities face different problems. Negative stereotypes at the workplace must be combated and positive ideas must be invested in.

The idea-forming campaign aims to educate young people within the educational system, and it is also aimed at companies. Young people are educated on less popular sectors/professions. Companies are shown that a major part of the ethnic minority youth are highly-educated and that they are a regular part of the labour market. Companies are also stimulated to open up work placements to minority school kids.

The results

Partly due to FNV’s targeted lobbying, there is now a National Discrimination Monitor. The parties at the Participation Summit in June 2007 made commitments to combating discrimination in the labour market. This has now led to an ongoing image-forming campaign which aims to dispel the stereotypes about minority jobseekers.

2

Income

Educating migrants on AOW shortfall

‘Why didn’t we know this earlier?’

The Netherlands has an excellent pension system that allows employees to retire at age 65. This is known among migrants. However, the so called AOW benefits of anyone who has not lived in the Netherlands for fifty years are reduced. For many migrants, this information was a bombshell. FNV decided to start an education campaign and was able to put right a number of injustices with intensive lobbying.

“FNV has been campaigning on the AOW shortfall for a long time now, but it was mainly implemented by the individual unions”, explained FNV policy coordinator Linda Rigters. “There the desire arose to act jointly.” No luxury, it turns out. Tens of thousands of 65-plus pensioners are already experiencing an AOW shortfall and this number will only grow in the years to come. Several years ago, large groups of migrants retired. They were shocked and especially Surinamese people were surprised by their AOW benefits. Many of them immigrated to the Netherlands in the seventies when Suriname became independent. They felt like they were just moving from one Dutch province to another. However, when they retired they were suddenly considered to have lived in the Netherlands for a much shorter period of time. No one had told them that they should have lived in the Netherlands from age fifteen in order to be entitled to the full amount of their AOW benefits. Why didn’t we know this earlier?, they wanted to know.

An AOW pension is based on the minimum

social standard. If you get less AOW and you have not accrued enough or no company pension, you will be under the social minimum and you will have to apply for a supplemental social assistance benefit. A few years ago people with supplemental social assistance still fell under the standard rules for social assistance. They were required to fill in a check form. They were also supposed to take a maximum of thirteen weeks of holiday. These rules were meant to ensure that people on social assistance were available for the labour market, which was not relevant for 65+ pensioners. Many migrants had problems with this or did not know that they were entitled to supplemental social assistance and therefore never applied for it. They had their small pensions and just got by on their lower AOW benefits. However, many migrants did not have pensions and did not apply for supplemental social assistance. They ended up in undesirable situations.

FNV started a large education campaign. “We put out information everywhere: in mosques, community centres and club-



3

Members

FNV at colourful events

Solidarity should be visible

The Kwakoe Festival that attracts tens of thousands of visitors in a colourful area of Amsterdam every year has always been an excuse for FNV to set up a stand to inform the public. Especially for Islamic employees, FNV has always been a good opportunity for organising a common *Iftar* meal in the past few years. With regard to Islamic employees in particular, FNV's annual Diversity Day is also an occasion for bringing all the various cultures together and having them talk to one another.

The Kwakoe Summer Festival is the largest multicultural festival in the Netherlands held on every Saturday and Sunday in the months of July and August. This festival in the Amsterdam Bijlmer district is a platform for ethnic-cultural communities around the country. FNV Chair Agnes Jongerius regularly gives speeches during meetings at the Kwakoe Festival.

Each of the FNV unions also organise such a day every year. They hold workshops on FNV Local, discussions at the workplace, multicultural works councils, participation, black, migrant and refugee women and the AOW shortfall.

Iftar meals have become an annual FNV tradition. In September of this year, Schiphol and Amsterdam cleaners were offered a free iftar meal by FNV and FNV Bondgenoten. Over 300 people partook of it. Iftar is the meal that is eaten after sundown to break their fast during Ramadan. FNV is glad to participate because solidarity should be seen. It is not about the religious aspect but rather about the dialogue that the different participants engage in with each other.

Every year FNV Trade Union Confederation organises a Diversity Day when workshops and debates are held on current themes concerning diversity on the labour market.

houses, but also at meetings of ethnic minorities. We also continued our political lobbying."

The lobbying has now born fruit, as stated in the box. The suggestion of accruing AOW within forty years turns out to be a touchy issue. Especially in these times when raising the AOW age and 'continuing to work' is the motto, politicians are not very open to this FNV proposal. "That is too bad, but the current 65+ pensioners will not be helped by it either", explained Rigters. "We are also working on the assets test. It is pretty stringent. One soon has too many assets. However, the self-employed often have their pensions in their small houses in their homelands. The amount in the assets test

should be raised as well as the amount of the pension that you are allowed to keep. That's what we are lobbying for right now."

The results

Up to now, FNV's campaigning has ensured that elderly people with supplemental social assistance benefits are allowed to live outside of the Netherlands for 26 weeks a year. In addition, the administration of the supplemental assistance for 65+ pensioners has been transferred to the Sociale Verzekeringsbank as of 2010. People can now apply for an AOW pension and any other supplements at a single service desk.

Participation

Deficit sector projects

“We need to speak the language of the people”

FNV is working hard on getting both young and old ethnic minorities jobs in sectors where there are staff shortages. The FNV developed the successful work placement project *Doorlopende Leerlijn Politie* (Continuing Learning Line Police) for pupils in pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) years 3 and 4 and senior secondary vocational education (MBO). The project was implemented in collaboration with the regional Haaglanden corps. The objective is to awake interest for police work in more young people, help them get jobs and keep them. With a focus on ethnic minorities.

The driving forces behind the *Continuing Learning Line Police* project within the Haaglanden regional corps are its project manager, Ben Minkjan, and internal supervisor, Irma Neijman. According to Minkjan, young people are interested in police work and that also applies to young people from ethnic minorities. “Approximately 45 to 50 percent of police staff have a VMBO-level education. Over 70 percent of students following a VMBO education in the four major cities are ethnic minority students.

As a police organisation, if you want to have reflect society, then you should make an early start”, says Minkjan.

The essence of this project is to create a ‘continuous line of learning’ towards the Police Academy for students who are initially following professional studies in VMBO SD&V (sport, service and safety) or MBO.

The program starts off as early as in the third class of VMBO, with a trial stage that

takes them through things like the dogs, the horses, the report room and the holding cells. The last stage takes place while they are in MBO and ultimately, they even get to go along on a surveillance mission. The internships are not just intended to provide students with more knowledge about police work; a lot of attention is given to their attitude and behaviour.

Neijman thinks that in underprivileged areas such as the Schilderswijk in The Hague, where children have fewer opportunities to progress, it is important to pay attention to young people with potential. “By participating in our internship program, they will receive Dutch lessons, skills training programmes and a view of their possible future with the police. In the past, that was an unattainable and unrealistic goal for many. Now they don’t even want to go back to school after their internships have finished”, says Neijman.



The project was launched in 2006 and it is now being implemented by the Haaglanden regional corps, in collaboration with the *Mondriaancollege*, the *Variascollège*, the *Westhagecollege* in The Hague and the *Christelijk Lyceum* in Delft. From a financial point of view, that was made possible by a grant from the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, at the request of FNV. The FNV, joint schools and the Haaglanden regional corps have implemented a continuous learning programme that enables (both native and minority) students to progress from VMBO SD&V (Sports, Service and Safety) to the MBO in Safety and then to the Police Academy.

In many cases, participation results in a highly motivated and conscious decision to join the police force, often after the very first internship. A large number of students, i.e. around 90 percent of students, are very satisfied with their internship year. And a good example is easy to follow: the number

of VMBO/MBO students who want to go on an internship with the police force in The Hague has doubled in just one year. In 2009 there were a hundred VMBO-3 students, 85 VMBO-4 students and thirty MBO students. Interest is expected to increase even further due to the rising popularity of this study programme. The FNV considers the ‘Haaglanden approach’ so successful that it wants to promote it in other deficit sectors.

The results

The *Continuing Learning Line Police* project has already achieved many positive results. In any case, 80 percent of VMBO-4 students go on to complete the Police transition year, MBO in Safety. Furthermore, it was revealed that 70 percent of students from the MBO transition year succeed in finding a job within the police force.

■ FNV's Dutch in the workplace programme

The ABC in companies

What do you do if employees whose native language is not Dutch cause near-accidents because they cannot read the safety instructions? Or have some kind of quarrel with customers because they don't understand certain expressions? It was revealed that Polish or other newcomers often have a poor command of Dutch. The FNV decided to implement the 'Dutch in the workplace' project. "I've seen them make tremendous changes", said one satisfied manager of a cleaning company.

An employee whose native language is not Dutch arrives at work in the rain. His manager is standing by the window with a number of colleagues and says, 'Look what the cat dragged in!' The immigrant employee misinterprets the remark and he feels so insulted that he calls in sick for several weeks. Near-disasters can occur due to miscommunication, as in the case of Kist & Co, a company based in Bolnes near Ridderkerk that produces quality wooden crates for the vegetable and fruit sector. An employee at the company asked another employee, whose native language was not Dutch, for a size-10 wrench. His colleague misunderstood him and switched on the machine, as a result of which the employee almost lost his fingers.

The FNV has been aware of these examples for a long time. Therefore, in 2006 the trade union movement made a grant application with the Gak Institute Foundation with the goal of offering Dutch lessons in the workplace. The project was successfully launched in January 2007. The formula for Dutch courses in the workplace is simple. It requires a brief search for financing options. Furthermore, a course provider that determines that

language level of the (immigrant) employees is indispensable, as well as a free meeting room within the company. Give the teacher a tour of the company, provide him or her with any forms and texts that are essential in the workplace and the course can begin. The project involved courses for groups of employees. They worked on the language abilities required to function within their company or in order to take part in professional courses. Therefore, the courses offered a tailored service. Those course participants who passed all received a certificate. These certificates were designed together with the EVC Empowerment Centre. This approach also required active involvement on the part of the employer and the trade union. They made agreements about the organisation of and financing for the courses. Both of them acquired course participants and language buddies. In many cases the employer organised and facilitated the courses. Wherever possible, the courses were offered in the company within working hours. The project has now been run in various sectors: social work provisions, other companies with subsidised work, personal services, health-care, construction, cleaning and industry.

"The made mistakes due to miscommunication. They are unable to read the work lists and they do not understand the safety instructions. There is often a difference in companies between their language requirements and the actual Dutch-language skills of the employees", summarises Lucelle Timmermans, former FNV project manager of *Dutch in the workplace*. "That has consequences for safety and mutual communication. These employees seldom participate in consultations and they have very little contact with their colleagues. If a customer asks a cleaner to clean his cupboard and the cleaner does not understand him, that will cause irritation and then you, the company, will have a problem."

The cleaning company Asito Amsterdam West BV, noticed that the language level of some of its employees was too low to join the regular language courses which the company offers. "We saw employees going to their managers with papers", recalls branch manager, Annelore Grondman. "They did not understand what they had purchased or they could not understand a letter from the immigration police: it also happened that communication with customers did not run smoothly, which led to frustration." The courses lasted fifteen to 25 weeks. They attended three hours of lessons a week, mostly during working hours. Their Dutch-speaking colleagues became language buddies. They practised those words with their colleagues whose native language was not Dutch and helped them with their homework. Each teacher that joined the FNV project was provided with material for the company in question. And course participants were also in a position to

spontaneously state which words they had a greater need for. At the end of the journey, everyone was presented with a certificate in a festive manner.

The results, say most companies that have taken part, are there. The Asito cleaning company in Amsterdam is enthusiastic. "I have seen them make tremendous changes", says Annelore Grondman. "I always say: they have learned to stand on their own two feet. They have become more self-confident, they can explain their problems better and they interact with customers in a more positive manner. Internally, they also give more feedback: whether they see a stain on the floor or something else that is wrong. They go through life in a more active and assertive way." Grondman also sees developments at the cultural level. "Immigrants have a tendency to say yes to something and then not carry it out. They often find it difficult to handle our directness. Now they have a much better understanding of our culture."

The results

FNV's *Dutch in the workplace* project was concluded in September 2008. Since then, numerous language initiatives have been set up as follows:

- All participating companies intend to set up a follow-up programme.
- The project has been extended to various CAOs (Dutch Collective Labour Agreements).
- FNV Bondgenoten made *Dutch in the workplace* part of its *Decent Work* campaign.

■ From lobby employees to organisers

Diversity in all of FNV's policy

The FNV must do more to connect with the diversity in society. That is one of the spearheads that was established at the FNV conference in 2005. The trade union movement wants to represent the interests of all employees, regardless of their origin. And the FNV needs ethnic minorities if the trade union movement wants to continue to be indispensable. That is why the FNV has been active in the field of lobbying, agreements in the CAOs, hiring organisers, improving the integration and education of ethnic minorities.

The FNV is an important player when it comes to implementing government policy. While a lot happens in The Hague, the provinces, municipalities and districts are becoming increasingly important. Similarly, the FNV has been part of the Social Economic Council (SER) since it was set up in 1950. This is the government's highest advisory body, in which employers, employees and experts are represented. The FNV regularly outlines the position of ethnic minorities, as part of the SER advisory process. The trade union centre is part of other consultations and also lobbies in various fields such as the gap in Dutch state pensions (AOW) and combating discrimination.

Dutch employees have days off on a number of Christian holidays. Some people believe that it should be possible to exchange Christian holidays for Islamic holidays, for example. Research has shown that the population is extremely divided on this topic. The FNV considers this a topic in relation to which one can make practical arrangements in the CAO or within a company. This already happens in practice.

That way, one can take greater account of the specific needs of various groups of employees in a company or sector. The FNV has now recorded good arrangements in various CAOs.

Organising is a new way of organising employees that has come over from the United States. ABVAKABO FNV and FNV Bondgenoten are already working with it. The method is aimed at getting in touch with employees, to support them in representing their interests and organising themselves. In practice, the importance of trade union membership is clear. Organisers operate from within the workplace, as well as with long-term campaigns. And successfully: in the cleaning sector in particular, many campaigns and ultimately improvements have been implemented in the areas of wages and employment terms and conditions.

In recent years, the FNV made the effort to conclude a covenant on integration with the government and employees in relation to those with literacy difficulties. The decision was made to make integration part of the



project on people with literacy difficulties. The FNV will be actively seeking integration employees. Therefore, the input will be to brush up on their Dutch via their employee. This is based on their original trade so that any tutoring will ultimately be in the right place. Therefore, integrating employees follow this so-called dual path.

The FNV Trade Union Confederation has been organising information meetings on current social topics since September 2008. These are primarily aimed at ethnic minorities. Several themes are organised such as the AOW gap, migrants and elections and networks for Moroccan and Turkish girls. The most important theme for the target

group was the AOW gap. Recruiting new members in this way has proved to be a process of deep breaths. People can only register months and, in some cases, years later. However, in those cases they are also completely committed.

The results
Thanks to the proper arrangement of the CAOs, more and more companies are making room for specifically 'immigrant' holidays. The FNV is going to actively seek out people in the company who are eligible for an integration process. An information campaign, together with migration organisations, has brought the FNV closer to potential members.

FNV also makes use of diversity internally

More than just lip service

In its vision statement, the FNV asserts that participation in the labour market is extremely important with regard to the issue of integration. Therefore, it goes without saying that one should take on diversity in one's own organisation. That happens in different fields. Therefore, the FNV Trade Union Confederation set up a trainee project; the FNV has realised diversity within the directors of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, a plan of approach is being made for all staff managers within the FNV (unions) and the trade union confederation is also keeping an eye on sufficient diversity within the local groups.

As far as the FNV is concerned, it is self-evident that immigrants are given opportunities on the labour market. More specifically, for the FNV itself, this meant organising more internships. The trade union movement wants to be exemplary and show that it is not just about lip service. In 2007 two trainees were hired, initially for a period of one year with the option of renewing their contracts. Two managers worked on the process and two mentors worked on supervision. The trainee received a permanent package. The mentor supervised them in their work duties and in familiarising themselves with the organisation. One of them now has a permanent role at the FNV. In 2009 two new girls – one of Kurdish descent and the other of Surinamese descent – started off working as trainees. The FNV has decided to recruit people who have the potential to reach the top. One of them is in the local and diversity department and the other is in the Youth project department.

The general directors of the Chamber of Commerce are appointed by the members of the SER. Thirdly, Board Members are selected from the circle of entrepreneurs in the SME sector, a third from the group of other entrepreneurs and a third from employer circles. The FNV is involved in the latter. There are a total of twelve regional general directors of various Chambers of Commerce operating in the Netherlands. The members are appointed for a maximum of two terms i.e. eight years. The Directors should reflect the composition of the national and regional entrepreneurial and employee organisations, as well as those non-affiliated organisations. Almost half of the sixty Directors on behalf of FNV are women, half of the Directors have a freelancing background and seven Directors have an ethnic-minority background. In addition, the average age of the Directors has been lowered almost ten years. One of the objectives of the *Local Social Policy* project plan that was determined

in 2005 was that 50 percent of the active members in the local groups would be new, i.e. members that were not yet operating as active members at the start of 2006. At least 50 percent of them are women and at least 20 percent of them belong to an ethnic minority.

“It is a sensible arrangement”, said the project manager, Henny Siwabessy. “People should be able to identify with the trade-union movement. Each group has to live with specific problems. You cannot tar all immigrants with the same brush. Even within just one group, you have differences between the first and second generation, in terms of access and education. As soon as you know the context from which people are talking, you can better understand someone and then actually support them.” Compared to prior years, the last three years within FNV Local have seen considerable growth figures. The number of women increased greatly in 2005, from 35 to 125. As a percentage, this represents an increase of 18 to 35 percent. While the number of ethnic minorities was not registered until 2006, a rough estimate by FNV Local places the figure at around 4 percent. This figure was found to be 13 percent in 2009. The number of new members whose interest the FNV has managed to capture in his local groups has risen by 68 percent, which means that the target figure of 50 percent has been exceeded.

The various unions have active members from ethnic minorities who operate in different ways. This happens both within the regular activities framework and within

specific structures. One example of this is the Migrant Board of the ABVAKABO FNV. It has been in existence for twenty years or so and despite the fact that it ‘only’ has an advisory function; its influence can be felt clearly. The migrants’ sector Board of ABVAKABO FNV holds meeting four times a year to discuss the position of immigrants on the labour market and in the union. And puts important topics on the union agenda, such as the AOW gap that primarily migrant retirees are facing. Five years ago this led to the AOW campaign which the FNV is running to this day.

The results

- The FNV tried to guide immigrants who excel into a permanent job by way of a trainee project. As the first two have now settled in, two new top performers will now get their chance.
- The FNV is the only SER member that successfully achieved sufficient diversity within the general directors of the twelve Chambers of Commerce.
- The number of women in FNV Local rose considerably, from 35 in 2005 to 125 in 2009. As a percentage, this represents an increase of 18 to 35 percent. While the number of ethnic minorities was not registered until 2006, a rough estimate by FNV Local places the figure at around 4 percent. This figure was found to be 13 percent in 2009.



In conclusion

Mustapha Laboui, diversity project manager at FNV

“Diversity is a bigger part of policy these days”

When asked to become diversity project manager, he did not say ‘yes’ immediately. “It’s such a cliché: I am a Dutchman of Moroccan descent. I think it shouldn’t matter where you’re from.” Yet he did. He saw the challenges, perhaps precisely because this theme was so slow to develop. Four years on, Mustapha Laboui (1965) reminisces about the attention given to diversity both within and outside the FNV. “Diversity is a bigger part of the FNV’s policy these days.”

More than most, Mustapha Laboui knows first-hand what migrants in the Netherlands go through. “I came to the Netherlands in 1973, in the context of family reunification. Together with my mother and four brothers and sisters. My father had already been to the Netherlands in 1966 to work in a biscuit factory in Amsterdam. Like so many others, he thought it would only be for a few years. Ultimately, however, returning to Morocco was not an option due to the lack of work.”

According to Laboui, his father actually liked it in Amsterdam. It were different times, he says. “It was an entirely different climate. People were warmer and more helpful. He didn’t speak the language but people took him by the hand to show him the way to the post office, for example. His father was illiterate, as is his mother. They never had the opportunity to study. That is why they thought it was so important for their children to continue their studies. Laboui did well at school. “I was hired as an

interpreter at quite a young age. The Netherlands really is a land of paperwork. It soon became known among the Moroccan community that Laboui’s sun had a good command of Dutch and so I was given a lot of things to do. As a result, I learned about the problems that migrants face at a very young age. The least you can do is to do something in return. Both on a small scale, i.e. within the family. And on a larger scale; otherwise nothing will change structurally.”

His role as a young lobbyist shaped his life. “At the FNV Conference in 2005, the decision was made to make diversity a spearhead of policy. I was asked to become project manager, and I did not say ‘yes’ immediately. Diversity is a difficult subject; it develops slowly. If you take a ten-year break from this topic and take it up again, you could just as easily sit down at meetings and have your say. In addition, it was a bit of a cliché to ask me, as a Moroccan. I think it shouldn’t matter where you’re from.



Sometimes it can be more powerful if a white colleague tackles this subject matter. Ultimately, I thought: ‘I have sufficient baggage to do it, so I’ll just do it.’” When Laboui started in this position, he did have a number of ambitions. Including accelerating the process of diversity on the labour market. “I’m annoyed that it’s all moving so slowly. And if that’s what you think, then you should do something about it. The goals that were set looked good but they had to be specific. That’s where I saw the challenge.” Another intention was not to reinvent the wheel again. “There is a lot of existing expertise within all kinds of organisation. Together, we could achieve a lot. That resulted in over fifty information

meetings. All thanks to the good collaboration.” He reminisces with satisfaction on the three achievements that went well. “In the run-up to the Participation Top in 2007, I had to do a lot of internal lobbying to get the situation of ethnic minorities in the workplace onto the agenda. I succeeded. The AOW story of the past four years has also been a success. And in the Deficit sectors project, we developed a successful approach – together with the *Haaglanden* regional corps – to help young people from ethnic minorities to find a job. You can also use this approach in other deficit sectors. There are more successes I could mention but I am really happy with these three.”

The colourful trade-union movement

Dutch society is colourful and it is important for the trade-union movement to be so too. At the end of the day, the trade-union movement is for everyone. That is why diversity is of paramount importance to FNV. The FNV Trade Union Confederation and trade unions now work together on projects to encourage people from diverse backgrounds identify with the trade-union movement. Attention to diversity has always played a role in FNV's policy, regardless of whether it concerns younger employees or older people who are receiving insufficient state pension, to etiquette in the workplace or lobbying within the lobby dome in The Hague. In this booklet you can read how that policy is shaped.

