



INNOVATIVE AND FLEXIBLE APPROACHES TO WORKING TIME

CASE STUDIES

THE NETHERLANDS



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CASE STUDY. THE NETHERLANDS

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1 HOW THE CASE STUDY EMERGED

The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the ongoing process of digitalization, the impact of an ageing labour force, and the imperative to address climate change, will collectively reshape the way modern workplaces are structured.¹ These pressing concerns compel employers to adapt, creating work environments that not only attract employees but also sustain productivity. Moreover, the Netherlands faces a significant challenge in labour supply, with projected near-zero growth between 2026 and 2040.² To address these challenges, it is crucial for relevant stakeholders—including the government, trade unions, employers, and employees—to engage in negotiations and develop innovative working time measures.

This has led to a proliferation of flexible working time arrangements in many European countries. In the Netherlands in particular, there are several companies that have already implemented the four-day workweek or are experimenting with it, such as Achmea (insurance), Luscii (home monitoring for hospitals), Loyals (marketing), Donker Groen (gardening) and more recently the software company Afas which has implemented the four-day workweek since June 2024 while maintaining

¹ Jaumotte, F., 'Digitalization during the COVID-19 Crisis: Implications for Productivity and Labor Markets in Advanced Economies' (IMF, 2023) IMF Staff Discussion Notes No. 2023/003 Paper, <<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Staff-Discussion-Notes/Issues/2023/03/13/DigitalizationDuring-the-COVID-19-Crisis-Implications-for-Productivity-and-Labor-Markets-529852>> accessed 20 April 2024 p. 19.

² De Nederlandsche Bank, 'Tight labour market calls for broad public debate' (DNB, 2023) <<https://www.dnb.nl/en/current-economic-issues/labour-market/>> [accessed: 20 April 2024]

the same salary for its employees.³ In addition, in the public sector many government agencies often work with four-day workweeks.

This case study examines the implementation of two working time measures in the Netherlands: the four-day workweek under Article 6.5 of the Construction & Infrastructure Collective Labour Agreement and the 30-hour Workweek proposed by CNV. Utilizing a mixed-methodological approach, including doctrinal and empirical research methods, the study combines desk research and qualitative interviews with a policy advisor, a member of the works council, a director in a trade union, and an employer in the construction sector.

2 MEASURES ADOPTED IN MATTER OF WORKING TIME

2.1 Introduction

This Case study consists of research into the drivers, barriers, and consequences associated with one collective agreement in the construction sector, signed by FNV and a proposed working time reduction initiative, shaped by CNV of a 30-hour workweek instead of 40 hours. The majority of information for this research is collected by four interviews with professionals in the field of working time measures and Trade unions, including a Director of FNV, a former construction employee and employer, and policy advisors of FNV.

The first measure, outlined in the Construction & Infrastructure Collective Labour Agreement, allows employees in the high-risk construction profession aged 55 and older to request a transition to a four-

³ Houtman, J. J., 'Vrije dag bij winstmachine Afas 'wordt geen gemeengoed' in bedrijfsleven', published in het FD on 12 June 2024.

day workweek.⁴ This arrangement, detailed in Article 6.5 of the agreement, aims to accommodate the needs of senior workers while maintaining productivity and safety standards.⁵ To work four days a week, workers in the sector can use paid leave days, such as vacation days or holidays, or combine buying a certain number of leave days.⁶ The accumulation of the workers' pension, vacation days, and additional annual days off, remains the same as that of a five-day workweek.⁷

The second measure is a proposal of the CNV to implement a nationwide reduction in the standard full-time workweek of 30 hours instead of 40 hours for all workers, without having an impact on pay.⁸ This initiative seeks to optimize work-life balance, enhance productivity, and mitigate burnout risks across the workforce.⁹ Furthermore, this proposal focuses on addressing pressing societal challenges and improving the well-being of a significant portion of the workforce. According to CNV, 1.4 million workers are close to burnout or facing significant stress due to various factors such as combining paid work with demanding caregiving responsibilities.¹⁰

By providing detailed research into the drivers, barriers, and consequences of two working time measures in the Netherlands, the case

⁴ CAO, 'Bouw en Infra CAO' (FNV, 2024) < <https://www.fnv.nl/getmedia/0477f2bb-04f6-4a98-b3cb-6e5f85d736fe/488-bouw-en-infra-cao-2024-interactiefv29022024.pdf?ext=.pdf&dtime=202404050739/47> > accessed 18 April 2024 page 60

⁵ Ibid

⁶ FNV, 'Vierdaagse werkweek 55-plus' (FNV, 2018) < <https://www.fnv.nl/getmedia/c7e13eb9-135b-43e2-a908-be92db3367c8/vitaal-doorwerken-in-de-bouw-infra-nov-2018.pdf> > [accessed: 9 June 2024].

⁷ Ibid

⁸ CNV, '30-urige werkweek' (CNV, 2019) < <https://www.cnv.nl/nieuws/30-urige-werkweek/> > [accessed: 18 April 2024]

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

study aims to provide a clear overview of the effectiveness of such measures. In addition, this study directly aligns with the objectives of the INNOVAWORKING project, which seeks to explore new and flexible ways of organizing work hours to adapt to changing societal and economic realities.

2.2 Measure 1: FNV's Four-Day Workweek Measure under Article 6.5 of the Construction & Infrastructure Collective Labour Agreement

Drivers behind FNV's Four-Day Workweek Measure

The three drivers behind the implementation of the four-day workweek under Article 6.5 of the Construction & Infrastructure Collective Labour Agreement which was settled on 13 December 2023 and valid for the period between January 1st 2024 and December 31st 2024, were rooted in longstanding agreements between FNV and employers.¹¹

Most workers in the construction sector begin working at age sixteen and there is just a small minority who make it to their retirement without physical complications.¹² This early start means that by the time these workers are approaching retirement, currently 67 years,¹³ they have spent several decades engaged in physically demanding labor. According to an interview with a professional who has decades of practical experience in the Dutch construction sector, it is clear that the physical toll of construction work is very significant due to constant lifting, pushing/pulling, kneeling/crawling, bending, carrying, turning, and the repetitive nature of

¹¹ Interview 1 with trade Union FNV, Director of the Construction Sector. (Utrecht, The Netherlands, 25 April, 2024)

¹² Interview 3 interviewee has worked 35 years as an employee and employer in the construction sector. (The Hague, The Netherlands, 17 May, 2024)

¹³ Rijksoverheid, 'AOW-Leeftijd 2024-2029' (2021) <
<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/algemene-ouderdomswet-aow/aow-leeftijd-2024-2029>> [accessed: 9 June 2024].

the work.¹⁴ Only a small minority of these workers manage to reach retirement age without experiencing serious physical complications. The long hours, repetitive tasks, and often hazardous conditions contribute to a high incidence of work-related injuries and chronic health issues.¹⁵

Another driver for working time measures for workers in construction is the aftermath of the Early Retirement Scheme (VUT) in the Netherlands. The VUT was particularly popular between 1975 and 2005.¹⁶ The VUT allowed employees to retire early by providing an income from the time they stopped working until they reached the age for state pension (AOW) and additional pension benefits. The benefits under the VUT were funded by contributions from employers and/or employees who were still in the workforce. However, the VUT only benefited those who left their jobs at the designated age and not those who left earlier or continued working beyond that age.

The transition away from the VUT towards more flexible early retirement schemes underscored the need for adaptable and financially sustainable retirement options. This historical context serves as a driver for the introduction of the four-day workweek measure for older construction workers. The four-day workweek, like the early retirement schemes, provides a way to reduce the workload for older employees while maintaining financial and pension stability, thus addressing both the well-

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Inspectie Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid 'Fysieke belasting in de bouw Veilig en gezond werken' (2015) < https://www.arbowetweter.nl/system/files/veilig-werken-in-de-bouw-fysieke-belasting_2012_tcm335-330126.pdf> [accessed: 9 June 2024].

¹⁶ Interview 3, interviewee has worked 35 years as an employee and employer in the construction sector. (The Hague, The Netherlands, 17 May, 2024)

being of the workers and the economic challenges posed by an ageing workforce.¹⁷

Barriers to implementation of FNV's Four-Day Workweek

FNV faced two concerns after the implementation of this initiative. Firstly, one challenge was the difficulty in accurately assessing the level of participation among workers in this alternative work arrangement. The absence of a formal reporting mechanism from employers to the FNV complicated the tracking process, as employers handle such arrangements directly with tax authorities, bypassing the involvement of the FNV.¹⁸ This lack of visibility into the utilization of the four-day workweek made it challenging for FNV to assess its effectiveness and potentially adjust the agreement.¹⁹

Furthermore, an unexpected barrier arose from the fact that there is an informal practice within the construction sector, workers often coordinate their commutes to job sites, travelling together for convenience and cost-efficiency.²⁰ In addition, construction sites are often location-specific for a long time. Introducing staggered days off, such as Wednesdays or Fridays, disrupted this established pattern of collective travel and caused logistical issues for employers. However, the sector demonstrated flexibility in resolving this issue. By predominantly scheduling Fridays as the day off for workers aged 55 and older utilizing

¹⁷ Interview 3, interviewee has worked 35 years as an employee and employer in the construction sector. (The Hague, The Netherlands, 17 May 2024)

¹⁸ Interview 1 with trade union FNV, Director of the Construction Sector. (Utrecht, The Netherlands, 25 April, 2024)

¹⁹ Interview 1 with trade union FNV, Director of the Construction Sector. (Utrecht, The Netherlands, 25 April, 2024)

²⁰ Interview 1 with trade union FNV, Director of the Construction Sector. (Utrecht, The Netherlands, 25 April, 2024)



the measure, the sector ensured that the communal travel arrangements remained largely unaffected throughout the beginning of the week.²¹

2.3 Measure 2: CNV's 30-Hour Workweek Initiative: Redefining Work-Life Balance

Drivers behind CNV's 30-Hour Workweek proposal

The proposal of CNV, published on 14 December 2019, is to implement a reduction in the standard full-time workweek from 40 hours of work to 30 hours, for all employees in the Netherlands, without impacting income.²² This initiative is intended to optimize work-life balance, enhance productivity, and mitigate burnout risks across the workforce.²³ Furthermore, this proposal focuses on addressing pressing societal challenges and improving the well-being of a significant portion of the workforce.²⁴ The ageing population in the Netherlands has created a gap in the workforce, particularly in senior positions. By reducing the standard workweek, the proposal seeks to create more opportunities for young people to enter the workforce and progress into higher roles more quickly.²⁵ Various sectors are experiencing high turnover rates due to irregular schedules, limited employee input in scheduling, and overall dissatisfaction with current work conditions. The 30-hour workweek aims to make job roles more appealing and manageable, thus driving employee retention.²⁶

²¹ Interview 3 interviewee has worked 35 years as an employee and employer in the construction sector. (The Hague, The Netherlands, 17 May, 2024)

²² CNV, '30-urige werkweek' (CNV, 2019) < <https://www.cnv.nl/nieuws/30-urige-werkweek/> [accessed: 18 April 2024].

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Interview 2 trade union FNV Policy Advisor Construction sector (online, 29 May, 2024)

²⁶ Interview 2 trade union FNV Policy Advisor Construction sector (online, 29 May, 2024)

The main driver behind the proposal is that the current norm for full-time work leads to gender inequality.²⁷ Women take on more caregiving responsibilities, which limits their availability for full-time jobs. In contrast, men typically have more time for full-time work. By reducing the standard workweek, both men and women can share caregiving duties more equitably, promoting a more balanced division of labour.²⁸ Additionally, the Netherlands faces an urgent societal issue with labour market shortages, partly due to the high prevalence of part-time work. The government has initiated the "Meer Uren Werkt" (More Hours Work) project, allocating 30 million euros definitively and 45 million euros conditionally to remove barriers to working more hours in social environments, organizations, and among part-timers.²⁹ Nonetheless, CNV views this as insufficient and therefore advocates for a fundamental shift in the perception and structure of working time in the Netherlands.

Another driver of CNV's proposal is the concern for the health and safety of employees. The structural adjustment of the measure is designed to tackle several core issues. By allowing employees to work fewer hours without a reduction in pay, the proposal aims to improve overall work-life balance, reducing stress and burnout. The proposal is expected to make jobs more attractive, potentially increasing workforce participation rates, especially among those currently unable to commit to full-time hours due to caregiving or other responsibilities. The underlying assumption is that a well-rested and satisfied workforce will be more productive during their working hours, offsetting the reduction in hours worked. There are several

²⁷ Minister Van Gennip, 'Kamerbrief over gendergelijkheid op de arbeidsmarkt' Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid <<https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl81faf0b369ece49dae1a6b122175f9996a3465fe/pdf>> accessed 5 June 2024

²⁸ Interview 2 trade union FNV Policy Advisor Construction sector (online, 29 May, 2024)

²⁹ Interview 2 trade union FNV Policy Advisor Construction sector (online, 29 May, 2024)

examples of scientific proof that maintain an improvement in health after a reduction in working hours. For example, (Tamakoshi, 2014) indicates the adverse effects of long hours on cardiovascular diseases, psychological issues, and reduced sleep quality.³⁰ Furthermore, (Lorentzon, 2017) where nurses worked for six instead of eight hours a day, showed that sleep quality significantly improved due to the reduction in working hours.³¹

Barriers to implementation of CNV's 30-hour workweek proposal

The difficulty of rehiring or reallocating labour among employees is one of the obstacles to putting the 30-hour workweek measure into practice. Although everyone will work fewer hours, this proposal cannot be realistically implemented because there are many more young people than senior people, according to current demographic trends.³² This raises the possibility of a labour shortage, which could make it more difficult to execute the shortened workweek, particularly in sectors of the economy where there is currently a labour deficit.³³

Flexibility is essential across all sectors to address the unique challenges they face. For instance, sectors that rely heavily on continuous operations, such as healthcare and manufacturing, would need to develop specific strategies to maintain productivity while allowing for reduced working hours. Additionally, another significant barrier is the stance of the government. The Dutch political climate, which is unpredictable, adds complexity to achieving the proposed changes, as government support

³⁰ Bannai, A., and Tamakoshi, A. 'The association between long working hours and health: a systematic review of epidemiological evidence' [2013] *Scandinavian Journal of work, environment and health* 2014;40(1):5-18.

³¹ O. Pintelon, 'De echte analyse van het Zweedse experiment' [2017] *Samenleving en Politiek* 2017(2): 65-70.

³² Kremer, J., 'De oplossing voor langdurige krapte is minder arbeidsvraag' [2023] *ESB*, 108(4826).

³³ Interview 2 trade union FNV Policy Advisor Construction sector (online, 29 May, 2024).

and legislative adjustments are crucial for the successful implementation of the 30-hour workweek.³⁴

Each sector addresses staffing issues by changing working or business hours in its way. For example, by hiring new staff, recruiting temporary workers, reducing hourly staffing levels, and eliminating understaffing.³⁵ Each sector also addresses overtime compensation in its way. Overtime pay rates are under discussion, as are the hours that count as overtime. In some sectors, the employer's right to impose working hours is bought out with a high premium. In other sectors, the premium is lower, and employees have more say over their working hours.³⁶ In libraries, for instance, business hours were often being made more flexible, with some libraries starting to open on Sundays. The motivation behind this move was primarily to improve service, and it has received support from both employees and works for councils. Studies indicate that staffing needs are almost always met by the existing workforce.³⁷ Regular part-timers, for example, may temporarily increase their working hours, or additional temporary staff could be hired.³⁸

Barrier one to implementation of the proposal is the way current 80/90/100 arrangements are structured, such as the Collective Labor Agreement Hospitals 2023-2025 of the Dutch Association of Hospitals, which allows employees to work 80% of their hours while receiving 90% of their pay and maintain 100% of their pension contributions.³⁹ Lower-paid employees are

³⁴ Interview 4 Coordinating Policy Officer for Government Inspections at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and Member of the Works Council of FNV (The Hague, 7 June, 2024).

³⁵ Tijdens, K. 'De 36-urige werkweek' [1996] Tijdschrift voor Arbeidsvraagstukken 1996-12 nr. 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Collectieve Arbeidsovereenkomst Ziekenhuizen 2023-2025.

experiencing difficulty with these agreements since they are only convenient to those who can afford salary reductions. This emphasises the necessity of more inclusive contracts with the government to guarantee that all industries have customised, adaptable work schedules that are affordable for every worker, irrespective of salary bracket.⁴⁰

Barrier two is the possibility of an increase in work pressure due to increasing the unpredictability and flexibility of working hours. When employees are faced with fewer working hours, there can be pressure to complete the same amount of work in less time, which is the current situation for employees of the government that make use of the *Regeling Partiële Arbeidsparticipatie Senioren*⁴¹ (translated: Partial Work Participation Scheme for Seniors).⁴² When using the PAS arrangement, employees reduce the average weekly working hours by 15.8%, without affecting their working hours. Salary, like the working hours, reduces by 15.8%. For the portion that employees working hours are reduced, they are on 'PAS' leave and receive a PAS supplement. The PAS supplement is part of the monthly income.⁴³

This shift can result in a more intense work schedule, with a larger focus on productivity and efficiency. Employers could require employees to adjust their hours to accommodate peak periods or unexpected workloads, reducing the predictability of work schedules. This unpredictability can be

⁴⁰ Interview 2 trade union FNV Policy Advisor Construction sector (online, 29 May, 2024).

⁴¹ Interview 4 Coordinating Policy Officer for Government Inspections at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and Member of the Works Council of FNV (The Hague, 7 June, 2024).

⁴² Collectieve Arbeidsovereenkomst Rijk 2022-2024 Bijlage 20: Regeling Partiële Arbeidsparticipatie Senioren (PAS).

⁴³ Ibid.

particularly challenging for employees who rely on a stable and consistent schedule to manage their personal and family responsibilities.⁴⁴

The increased work pressure and unpredictability can also have adverse effects on employees' health and well-being. While a shorter workweek is theoretically designed to enhance work-life balance, the reality might be different if the work becomes more intense. Higher stress levels and irregular hours can lead to burnout, mental health issues, and physical health problems, counteracting the intended benefits of reduced working hours.⁴⁵

It will take sector-specific solutions to make the 30-hour workweek a reality. For instance, in seasonal work, when employment is contingent upon the season, different approaches must be taken to account for the varying labour demand.⁴⁶ There's sometimes disagreement over how overtime would operate in a 30-hour workweek. It may be difficult to manage workloads and pay staff appropriately as a result of this uncertainty. One flexible option for shift work could be paid breaks; for example, working seven hours instead of nine, consisting of eight hours of labour and one hour of unpaid rest. Careful planning and negotiation would be necessary to make sure that this modification satisfies the demands of businesses and employees.⁴⁷

In summary, while the 30-hour workweek proposal by CNV presents a promising solution to various labour market challenges, several barriers must be addressed to ensure its success. These include the need for rehiring and redistributing work, making flexible and inclusive

⁴⁴ Interview 3 trade union FNV Policy Advisor Construction sector (online, 29 May, 2024).

⁴⁵ Piasna, A. 'Scheduled to work hard: The relationship between non-standard working hours and work intensity among European workers (2005-2015)' [2018] Human Resource Management Journal 28(1):167-181.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

arrangements across different sectors, and securing government support. By addressing these barriers, the proposal could lead to a more balanced, productive, and satisfied workforce in the Netherlands.

3 IMPACT OF THE MEASURES

3.1 Impact of FNV's measure

FNV is quite satisfied with the inclusion of this provision in the collective agreement (CAO) for this sector, particularly because it pertains to what is known as the 80/90/100 regulation.⁴⁸ This regulation allows employees in the construction sector to work at 80% capacity while receiving 90% of their salary and still accumulating 100% of their pension. This arrangement enables individuals to gradually reduce their workload in the years leading up to retirement without sacrificing their pension benefits. It's important to note that the specific percentages may vary depending on the specific sector, as seen in the Metal and Technology Collective Labour Agreement, which features a 60-80-100 provision.⁴⁹

One of the primary reasons for the success of this measure is the positive impact it has on the work-life balance of older employees. As workers age, the physical demands of construction work can become increasingly challenging. The four-day workweek provides them with a much-needed longer rest period, reducing physical strain and allowing more time for recovery. This arrangement not only enhances their overall

⁴⁸ Interview 1 trade union FNV, Director of the Construction Sector. (Utrecht, The Netherlands, 25 April, 2024).

⁴⁹ Collectieve Arbeidsovereenkomst Metaalbewerkingsbedrijf Artikel 74 a. Generatiepact.



well-being but also helps maintain productivity and there is a significant reduction in absence due to health issues in the sector.⁵⁰

The financial structure of the 80/90/100 regulation ensures that employees do not face a significant reduction in income or pension benefits, which might otherwise deter them from opting for reduced work hours. By securing 90% of their salary and full pension contributions, employees can enjoy more leisure time without financial worry, making this measure more attractive.

In addition to the immediate benefits for employees, the measure also reflects positively on employers and the industry as a whole. By supporting the health and satisfaction of their senior workforce, employers benefit from retaining experienced workers who might otherwise consider early retirement. This retention helps in maintaining a skilled labor force, which is important during a period when the workforce is ageing.

Furthermore, Employers mention the success is since there is a reduction in working days and not working hours per day. Reducing the hours of work per day results in difficulty in planning in terms of transportation and machine leasing. Furthermore, construction workers usually plan a job for a certain amount of days, weeks, or months, introducing a limit on working hours per day would put a significant burden on the sector in terms of scheduling.⁵¹

3.2 Impact of CNV's proposal

The positive consequences of implementing the 30-hour workweek proposal, according to CNV, are multifaceted and far-reaching. Previous

⁵⁰ Interview 1 trade union FNV, Director of the Construction Sector. (Utrecht, The Netherlands, 25 April, 2024).

⁵¹ Interview 1 trade union FNV, Director of the Construction Sector. (Utrecht, The Netherlands, 25 April, 2024).



research by CNV has shown that the 30-hour workweek enjoys significant support among the Dutch workforce. Nearly two out of three respondents believe that such a shorter workweek would enable them to reach retirement age in good health and reduce the incidence of burnout.⁵² This potential reduction in burnout is particularly critical given the recent doubling of people on the verge of burnout due to the COVID-19 crisis, increasing from 11% to 21%. With hundreds of thousands of people struggling, a new balance in work-life dynamics would relieve a lot of the pressure on employees.

If the 30-hour workweek is implemented, it is expected to lead to a decrease in burnout rates, lower absenteeism, and an improved work-life balance. Nearly half of the respondents in CNV's study anticipate that they would be more productive and efficient with a shorter workweek. This is because a better work-life balance allows employees to recharge, resulting in greater focus and productivity during working hours. The reduction in stress and fatigue, coupled with more time for personal life, contributes to overall well-being, which in turn enhances job performance.

The current economic upswing post-COVID-19 makes it a logical moment to transition to a 30-hour workweek. CNV argues that this is the perfect opportunity to implement such changes during collective labor agreement negotiations in various sectors. CNV Chairman Piet Fortuin emphasizes that the government should lead by example by reducing the standard workweek. Such a move would not only set a precedent but also encourage private companies to follow suit.⁵³

⁵² CNV, '30-urige werkweek' (CNV, 2019) < <https://www.cnv.nl/nieuws/30-urige-werkweek/> > [accessed: 18 April 2024].

⁵³ CNV, '30-urige werkweek' (CNV, 2019) < <https://www.cnv.nl/nieuws/30-urige-werkweek/> > [accessed: 18 April 2024].



Furthermore, a shorter workweek could help address gender imbalances in the workforce. By standardizing a 30-hour workweek, the proposal aims to provide a more equitable work structure, especially for those currently in part-time positions.⁵⁴ This change could facilitate a better balance between men and women in terms of caregiving responsibilities and professional engagement. Practical trials in companies have already shown positive outcomes, with employees reporting increased happiness, efficiency, and productivity. Iceland serves as a leading example of the benefits of a shorter workweek, and CNV hopes that Dutch companies and the government will adopt similar practices.⁵⁵

While the 30-hour workweek proposal by CNV has numerous potential benefits, some negative consequences need to be considered. One major concern is the potential impact on the economy due to labor shortages. With employees working fewer hours, businesses might struggle to maintain productivity levels, especially in sectors already experiencing a shortage of skilled workers. This could lead to increased operational challenges and potentially slow economic growth. Additionally, while the proposal to cut back to 30 hours suggests that reduced burnout and absence would lower costs for society, these benefits might take a long time to materialize. In the short term, employers may face higher costs due to the need to hire additional staff or pay overtime to cover the reduced hours, which could drive them to increase prices for goods and services. This compensation effect might not be immediate, potentially leading to economic strain and higher living costs, which could offset some of the intended benefits of the reduced workweek.

⁵⁴ Interview 2 trade union FNV Policy Advisor Construction sector (online, 29 May, 2024).

⁵⁵ CNV, '30-urige werkweek' (CNV, 2019) < <https://www.cnv.nl/nieuws/30-urige-werkweek/> > [accessed: 18 April 2024].

4 GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the two working time measures examined in this study highlight the need for innovative approaches to adapt to evolving labor market conditions in the Netherlands. The success of FNV's four-day workweek demonstrates the benefits of tailored solutions that address specific sectoral challenges, while CNV's ambitious proposal underscores the potential for systemic change to enhance overall workforce well-being. For these measures to be effective, ongoing collaboration among stakeholders, flexible implementation strategies, and supportive policies are essential. By addressing the drivers and overcoming the barriers identified in this study, these initiatives can significantly contribute to creating sustainable and attractive work environments in the Netherlands, ultimately benefiting both employees and employers.

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