



NEWS REPORT

Date: 15 April 2013
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Title: Social Accord Struck Between Employers, Trade Unions and Government
Country: The Netherlands
Context
Issue at stake: Business-labor accord amends coalition program and delays austerity measures
Ground of discrimination: Disability / All grounds
Source: Social Accord:
Field: Employment
Legislative provisions: -

Content:

In response to a so-called Social Accord between trade unions and employers' organizations, the Dutch Coalition Government (consisting of liberals and social democrats) has postponed and amended a number of austerity measures it announced in November 2012 when it took office. The Coalition was in need of an accord as it lacks a majority in the Dutch Senate. Without support from the social partners, it feared it would be unable to pass the 2014 budget.

The accord stems from negotiations between (most notably) the Netherlands' biggest labor organization, FNV, and its largest employers' organization, the VNO-NCW. These negotiations are a traditional part of the Dutch polder model, a system of tri-partite economic policy making including employers' organizations, trade unions, and the national government, effectively involving all stakeholders.

The social accord more or less offers a blueprint of the country's social policy for the next decade, therefore deemed 'historic' by Mark Rutte (prime minister). Containing a great number of crucial measures, it is impossible to describe the full agreement in detail. Still, from a non-discrimination perspective, it is essential to highlight two measures: the abandonment of a planned quota system seeking to ensure more employment for disabled people; and plans to address 'undue flexibilization' of the labor market. The latter is important because this flexibilization tends to disproportionately burden particular vulnerable groups in the labor market, like women, young people and immigrants.

First of all, on the instigation of social democrat party PvdA, the Coalition Agreement contained a proposed 5% quota, a positive action measure reserving jobs for disabled people. In the Social Accord, this quota is off the table for the next couple of



years, as employers promised to hire more disabled workers. Only if they fail to do so, a legal obligation may be imposed after all in 2017.

Secondly, the accord includes the intention to target 'undue flexibilization'. In recent years, the number of fixed-term contracts expanded enormously. Next to that, the number self-employed freelancers increased. This category of workers has experienced severe consequences of the economic downturn, as they cannot call upon social security schemes. The accord intends to tackle the excesses of this development.

Address of the webpage: The full Social Accord may be retrieved using [this](#) link (last accessed 15 April 2013). The Minister of Social Affairs and Employment's letter to Parliament and the official Government statement can be found [here](#) (last accessed 15 April 2013).