

DEVCOBA

Developing **C**ollective **B**argaining in the Care Sector

WP5 Policy Recommendations THE NETHERLANDS

Frank Tros
(University of Amsterdam)

December 2025



Co-funded by the
European Union

DEVCOBA is co-funded by the European Commission – DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (Grant Agreement no. 101126385)

1. Title of the recommendation

Enlarging part-time contracts (in particular in ECEC)

2. Problems/needs addressed

Labour contracts in the Dutch care sector are small, while there are at the same time persistent problems in labour scarcity. Staff shortages in care providers are not only effecting too high work pressures for care professionals but are also a reason why the sector is not yet prepared for the intended reform and growth in providing more ECEC provisions in the country. Furthermore, small part-time contracts in ECEC have led to working patterns of working three days a week, which is not always ideal for the workers because of the too-long working days and low income for mostly female workers.

3. Recommendation

Unions, employers' associations, and the government should smoothen regulative and practical barriers in making the small part-time contracts bigger in the whole care sector, and specifically in ECEC. They should focus on increasing the impact, scaling up, and spreading out of already running local pilots and experiments in restructuring of tasks, combining ECEC jobs with primary education, and promoting 'good conversations' between management and ECEC professionals to harness the potential of enlargement of part-time contracts in the whole sector, while at the same time guaranteeing better job quality.

4. Target Actors

- X Trade unions
- X Employer organisations/care providers
- X Bipartite bodies
- ☐ Tripartite institutions
- X Government

5. Rationale and supporting evidence

In ECEC in the Netherlands, one third of the workforce works less than 22 hours a week, giving high potential for increasing the capacity of the sector to grow and to generate more rewarding labour contracts for female workers. A pilot study in ECEC found that ECEC workers want to work longer hours if the barriers can be discussed and removed. Bipartite bodies in ECEC (sector fund) see potential in the restructuring of tasks, combining ECEC jobs with primary education, and in promoting 'good conversations' between management and ECEC professionals, as instruments to enlarge part-time contracts. Reconsidering working patterns in ECEC might at the same time to be integrated with making solutions to the current too-long working days of many pedagogical employees.

6. Expected impact

- Improvements in job quality by better labour contracts with higher income (for women).
- Reduced labour shortages by increasing the number of working hours.
- Higher capacity in ECEC to be ready for growth in ECEC provisions.
- More healthy working patterns by making working days shorter.

1. Title of the recommendation

Promoting direct participation for care professionals (in particular in LTC)

2. Problems/needs addressed

Social, organisational and technological developments in particular LTC are going fast, and management tries to control these changes by top-down directives. LTC professionals, however, feel overruled by new policies and regulations, and feel their professional autonomy is being undermined. To increase acceptance and involvement among the professionals, as well as to guarantee sustainable employability for (older) employees, better dialogue at the workplace level is needed. This problem of social and organisational change and the need for dialogue at the workplace level is also relevant in other care subsectors like ECEC.

3. Recommendation

Unions and employers' associations should push for better implementation of their (new) regulation in the Collective Agreement about 'Employee participation in proposed organizational changes' in the organisations of care providers. Trade unions can also mobilise and support works councils in LTC to address this issue in their organisations. In ECEC, social partners should learn from this regulation and practises in LTC.

4. Target Actors

X Trade unions

X Employer organisations/care providers

X Bipartite bodies

☐ Tripartite institutions

5. Rationale and supporting evidence

LTC professionals themselves ask for more voice and involvement in technological and organisational change. They complain about too many top-down directives from management. More structural dialogue between professionals and managers about work-related changes are needed to secure sustainable employability of (older) workers and to prevent early exit out of the sector. The new CA regulation in LTC about this issue is an innovative case in the industrial relations in the Netherlands. It reflects the problems and needs in the sector and is also an example for social partners in other sectors to promote socially responsible workplace innovations.

6. Expected impact

- Improvement of job quality by increasing job autonomy and involvement of care professionals.
- Reduced staff shortages through retaining professionals with more job satisfaction and through more dialogue about supporting the sustainable employability of care professionals.
- Improved service quality by better use of professional competencies and social and technological innovation.