

## **Workshop activities concerning company-networks - Netherlands**

Directly at the start of the project Kenteq personnel working on the Shortage of Skilled Workers project contacted the Dutch representative of the Advisory Board. Mr. Van der Leest is Manager Vocational Education and Training at the MetaalUnie. The Metaalunie is the employers' organization for the SME-metal companies in the Netherlands. The MetaalUnie is active member of the European Metal Union, the European cooperating employers' organizations of the SME-metal companies. With Mr. Van der Leest the approach and current situation has been discussed from a national and European point of view. This visit led to a good view on the different national networks with relations to other countries and political background of these rather formal networks.

In the next steps of the project visits to three exemplary metal companies (Polynorm, Te Booy and Adriaanse) have been done to discuss experiences each company has within regional networks. This led to a view of the current situation of companies in the region cooperating in networks. The three companies were spread around the Netherlands and were different in size to get a picture of all types of companies.

In the next phase we had a short telephone interview with an expert on company-networks and the establishment of them. This expert works at the organization Hiteq. Hiteq is an innovation centre for future development, which develops future scenarios on several issues. Experience from the work at a consultancy company gave the interviewed expert even more background on the possibilities of the cooperation of companies in a network in a specific geographical region. This led to a more concrete view on the type of networks that had been established in certain regions in the Netherlands, what the function of the networks is and if they are effective.

Furthermore an interview took place with a Staff member of Kenteq. The function of Staff member means a network specialist for combining initiatives on employability and initial training that take place in all thinkable institutes that work on these issues in the Netherlands. This means this Staff member has a seat in all relevant networks in the South part of the Netherlands (which is his working region). He could provide us with some good ideas on the possibilities for regional networks in the Netherlands, and gave us clear examples of the targets with which a network is started.

Another interview has been held with the secretary of the SPOMM network. This regional network consists of some 30 companies working together to try to create enough inflow of students and to make sure that the right student ends up at the right company.

The information and views we got from these interviews and discussions led to the conclusion that networks of companies can contribute to the problem of a shortage of skilled workers, but that most of the time networks are not founded solely for this issue, which companies find to slim to work in a network for. In the Netherlands an important thing at the moment would be to make sure that a clear structure of networks is being developed, which might imply the merger or restructuring of



networks. This is necessary because already a lot of networks exist and no need for new network is there at companies. However companies find confusion on at which network to contribute for which issue. Networks have overlapping activities and working regions.

For the restructuring of networks of companies it is advised to analyse existing networks and their goals and to try to link network that cover the same issues or deal with the same type of companies. A careful approach is necessary as a lot of the networks are based on trust and friendship of companies.

Another interesting new approach would be to investigate the possibilities of virtual networks on internet. One can imagine a Hyves-like network but then with a specific accent and structure to support companies in a specific sector. Especially discussion on this platform could lead to interesting results.

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