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Independent Workers and Industrial Relations in Europe
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Table of Contents

1. Definition of the National Framework on New Autonomous Workers ................................................. 4
2. Legal and Institutional Framework ........................................................................................................... 9
3. Public Policy Support for New Autonomous Workers ............................................................................... 11
   From VAR to DBA .................................................................................................................................. 11
   Special Financial Arrangements for Self-Employed .................................................................................... 14
   Income-Dependent Contribution to Primary Health Insurance ................................................................. 14
   Financial Support for Independent Entrepreneurs .................................................................................... 14
   Fiscal Policy ........................................................................................................................................... 14
   Questions about Effectiveness ..................................................................................................................... 15
   Support for Specific Groups of Autonomous Workers .............................................................................. 15
4. Collective Representation and Social Dialogue ......................................................................................... 16
   Unions in the Netherlands ........................................................................................................................ 16
   Representation and Support of Autonomous Workers ............................................................................... 17
   Not Quite Unions ..................................................................................................................................... 20
   Labour market intermediaries .................................................................................................................... 21
   Mutualization by workers .......................................................................................................................... 22
   Platforms ................................................................................................................................................ 22
Case Studies .................................................................................................................................................. 24
   Case Study I – Kunstenbond ...................................................................................................................... 25
   Case Study II – Yacht ................................................................................................................................. 29
   Case Study III – PZO-ZZP Nederland ....................................................................................................... 32
References ....................................................................................................................................................... 36
Appendix .......................................................................................................................................................... 41
   Appendix I – Translation of popular sectors among self-employed ....................................................... 41
Table of Figures

Figure 1: Increasing Share of Self-Employed Without Personnel (CBS, 2014) ...................... 5
Figure 2: Representatives of Female/Male Self-Employed Professionals .......................... 5
Figure 3: Popular Sectors among Self-Employed Without Personnel (CBS, 2014) ............. 6
Figure 4: Average Income of Self-Employed Professionals in the Netherlands (CBS, 2013) 8
Figure 5: Comparison of Self-Employed and Employees’ Social Security System .......... 9
Figure 6: Three Types of Standard Model Agreements ..................................................... 12
1. Definition of the National Framework on New Autonomous Workers

In the Dutch context, autonomous workers are distinguished from temporary workers who have temporary employment contracts, either with employers directly, or with temporary work agencies. Autonomous workers are labeled as Freelance or ZZP (Zelfstandige Zonder Personeel: self-employed without personnel). Their legal form is that of entrepreneurs (as opposed to employee). Most self-employed professionals hold a one-man business or a private limited company (Dutch: BV). They (need to) work for multiple clients and work at their own expense and risk.

Over the past years, the growth of autonomous workers in the Netherlands has been remarkably high. Although in 2014 the share of autonomous workers in the working population was only just above the EU average (OECD, 2014), it has grown rapidly over the past decade. 10 years ago, the share of self-employed without personnel was similar to that in France, Germany and Austria (about 7 percent) – well below the EU average. While in these countries the growth has be following the EU average of about 1 percentage point, in the Netherlands the share of self-employed without personnel has grown with 3 percentage points to about 10 percent in 2014 (CBS, 2014) and can be expected to grow to about 15% in 2030 (CPB,2014, 2015).

It brings the number of self-employed professionals to around 800,000 who indicate self-employment as their main source of income and another 600,000 who use it as secondary income (IBO, 2014).

Also within the Netherlands, the growth of self-employed without personnel has been exceptionally high (CBS, 2014). In 1999 only 5.9% of the working population was self-employed. In 2008, already 8.6% of the working population worked on a self-employed base (Dekker, 2010). The growing share is clearly shown in figure 1, comparing the growth of self-employed without personnel against that of employees and that of self-employed with personnel.
Breaking self-employed professionals down by gender, we find that self-employed without personnel are predominantly male (Annink & Den Dulk, 2012). Although, the amount of women has increased over the past decades (in 1999, the representation of male and female self-employed was 67% and 33%, respectively) at present self-employed are still predominantly men (CBS Statline, 2014, based on EBB).

In the projections of the CPB towards 2030, the share of men working on a self-employed base will increase further. It will rise from 12% in 2010 to 19% in 2030, whilst in their projections the number of women working as self-employed without personnel will only rise slightly from 8% in 2010 to about 9% in 2030 (CPB, 2012, 2015).
In general, self-employed are older than employees. There are relatively few self-employed under 35 years. In 2009, 79% of them were older than 35 years (Dekker, 2010). Most of the self-employed fell in the range of 45-55 years (31%) (CBS Statline, 2014). In addition, self-employed professionals are more highly educated compared to employees. Among them, 42% are highly educated, whereas highly educated employees account for 37%.

The share of self-employed without personnel varies between sectors. The most popular sectors of self-employed workers are specialized business services, construction industry, trade, and health- and social-care (figure 3). In some sub-sector, self-employment is even more wide-spread. For instance, 70% of creative artists and 79% of writers and translators report being self-employed (Van Liemt, 2014).

Self-employed professionals constitute a rather heterogeneous group. Further analysis shows large variations in income (CBS, 2014). The stated reasons why people decide to work on a
self-employed base varies. Generally, self-report data indicate that most self-employed persons seem to be happy with their choice, reporting more positive scores on joy in work, having possibilities to develop themselves, fit of working hours with private life, and work pressure than employees and also self-employed with personnel (Josten et al., 2014). Employers like working with self-employed because of their flexibility and their specialist knowledge. For a minority, the starting motive is negative, e.g. threat of unemployment or inability to find a suitable job (De Vries et al., 2011).

The situation for the Netherlands seems to be somewhat more positive than that of other European countries. EU research shows that about 55% of self-employed people in Europe report choosing self-employment for income gain or greater autonomy, whereas in the Netherlands 78% report acting on an opportunity. At the same time, 28% of self-employed in Europe report choosing self-employment due to a lack of alternatives (Annik & Den Dulk, 2012). In the Netherlands, only 8% reports choosing self-employment due to unemployment threat and 9% due to lack of suitable job opportunities (Hoevenagel et al., 2015). In the Netherlands financial considerations are hardly given as main motive for self-employment (Zandvliet et al., 2013). 16% indicates fiscal possibilities affected their choice to become self-employed. This consideration was more important in case low income self-employed (Hoevenagel et al., 2015). In hindsight, the vast majority of self-employed without personnel reports to be happy with the choice they have made, although studies since 2010 report a slightly rising share of people that would chose for employment given the choice at this point in time (5% in 2010 (De Vries and Vroonhof, 2010), 6% in 2013 (Vlasblom and Josten, 2013), and 12% in 2015 (Hoevenagel et al, 2015).

Objective data describing the situation for self-employed without personnel sketch at some points a less positive picture. There is large income disparity within the group of autonomous workers, with a group that is relatively well-off, but also a group earning minimum wages. Gross income is lower than that of employees, but net income of self-employed is often on par due to the availability of fiscal policies for entrepreneurs and the possibility for self-employed to make lower (or no) reservations for unemployment, sickness, disability and/or pension (IBO, 2015). Self-employed are largely excluded from social insurance schemes against risks, such as sickness and disability, old age, and unemployment (Dekker, 2010). Indeed, they work at their own expense and risk.
As indicated above, the income of self-employed professionals does not only variate among different sectors, but also within sectors. The figure presented below shows, however, that income also varies across regions in the Netherlands. An overview of the average income of self-employed professionals in different Dutch regions can be found in figure 4 (CBS, 2013).

The red and dark-red regions are in and around areas of the big Dutch cities Amsterdam, Utrecht, The Hague and Rotterdam. Thus, it can be assumed that in and around these urban regions, self-employment is most profitable.

Figure 4: Average Income of Self-Employed Professionals in the Netherlands (CBS, 2013)
2. Legal and Institutional Framework

As legal entrepreneurs, self-employed without personnel are expected to make their own arrangements. They are not included in the social security system for employees (Dekker 2010) and only qualify for benefits on a minimum level. They are included (and have to pay premiums for) the basic collective old-age pension, but they are largely excluded from other insurance schemes against risks, such as sickness and disability, and unemployment (Dekker, 2010). Furthermore, they need to ensure to take measures themselves to raise their pension to an acceptable level. On the other hand, as entrepreneurs, there are a number of fiscal arrangements open to self-employed autonomous workers that are not open to employees. However, it depends on the strengths of their labor market positions and their negotiating power, whether these fiscal instrument eventually benefit the entrepreneur, or the hiring organization through lower gross rates. Figure 5 below summarizes the differences between self-employed and regular employees with respect to the social security.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Care</th>
<th>Self-Employed</th>
<th>Employee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension</td>
<td>1st pillar, 3rd pillar</td>
<td>1st, 2nd, 3rd pillar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability/Sickness</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Two years wage continuation, benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>Basic, means tested benefits</td>
<td>Unemployment benefits up to 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection from Dismissal</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Strict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Bargaining</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Comparison of Self-Employed and Employees’ Social Security System

Health insurance in the Netherlands entails that every person, who lives or works in the Netherlands, is legally obliged to take out a standard basic package of health insurance to cover the cost of, for example, consulting a general practitioner, hospital treatment and prescription medication (Government of the Netherlands, Health Insurance, n.d.). The government decides what is covered in the standard package that all insurers have to offer. Healthcare insurers are obliged to accept anyone who applies for the standard insurance package and must charge all policyholders the same premium, regardless of their age or state of health. Besides the basic package, people can choose for additional coverage. The opportunities here are the same for employed and self-employed. Insurance companies offer collective contracts with discounts for members to many different kinds of organizations.
The Dutch pension system consists of three pillars (Van der Smitte, 2013). The two main pillars are the General Old Age Pensions (AOW, first pillar pension) and the supplementary pensions (second pillar pension). The AOW provides a basic pension which is coupled to the statutory minimum wage. The second pillar consists of collective pension schemes that are administered by a pension fund or insurance company (Van der Smitte, 2013). There are different types of pension funds, such as industry-wide funds or corporate pension funds for employees, or pension funds for independent professionals, such as medical specialist and dentists. In the Netherlands, companies and pension funds are strictly separated. The third pillar pensions are private pension provisions in addition to AOW and the collective secondary schemes (Van der Smitte, 2013). The private pension schemes are provided by an insurance company or bank. As entrepreneurs, self-employed have to contribute to the general old-age pension, but otherwise have to make their own provisions for old age pension.

Insurance for sickness and disability is voluntary for self-employed. Self-employed call in sick less often than regular workers and research does not show a heightened risk of long-term illness (Josten et al., 2014). However, only one in three self-employed has made provisions for disability and the number of insured workers has even slightly decreased from 35,6% in 2010 to 33,2% in 2013 (Vroonhof and de Vries, 2014). 80% of those who apply for work-related disability insurance are accepted with further consideration. 68,8% of those without insurance state that the high costs are the reason for not taking the insurance (De Jager, 2012).

While employees are collectively insured against unemployment, self-employed are expected to make their own provisions in this regard and finance the provisions for this through the rates they charge to their clients. In case income drops below the social minimum, both long-term unemployed and self-employed entrepreneurs have the right to receive a supplement based on the Supplementary Benefits Act. However, the amount is always dependent on financial circumstances and those of family and if applicable, partner (European Commission, Netherlands: Unemployment, n.d.).

Self-employed cannot rely on collective ways of dealing with risks as negotiated by unions in collective labor agreements (in Dutch: CAOs) that are negotiated collectively between employers (or employer organizations) and trade unions regarding wages and other conditions of employment (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Answers for business: CAO (Collective Labour Agreement, n.d.).
3. Public Policy Support for New Autonomous Workers

In the Netherlands, autonomous workers are treated as entrepreneurs. For the self-employed without personnel there is no special legal form. They often opt for the legal form of a one-man business (Dutch: eenmanszaak) or that of a private limited company (Dutch: besloten vennootschap, BV). They need to charge and pay VAT on their income. If income is low, however, they could be eligible for a small business tax scheme (in Dutch: kleineondernemersregeling). Some services, such as journalism and education, are exempted from VAT. However, it should be noted that self-employed, who are considered as entrepreneurs for the purpose of turnover tax (VAT), are not automatically considered as entrepreneurs for the purpose of income tax. The latter requires that the self-employed fulfills a number of condition. If these are not fulfilled and the self-employed is not hired by a company or client, the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration regards the incomes as regular incidental earnings (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Answers for business: Self-employed professional: turnover and income tax, n.d.). In that case, self-employed professionals are not eligible to claim tax deductions that are available to entrepreneurs.

Self-employed have to observe most parts of the Working Conditions Act (Arbowet) and the Working Conditions Regulation (Arboregeling). They need to make their own provisions for unemployment, sickness, and also business risks. Self-employed professionals do not require a separate qualification in order to establish a business in the Netherlands. However, there are various professions where certain requirements need to be fulfilled (e.g. health- and social-care sector).

From VAR to DBA

Due to the significant differences in fiscal treatment and employment law between employees and self-employed, it is important for both clients and self-employed to be sure of the fiscal and social security related status of the business relationship. Is there an employer-employee relationship or not? Regulation was desirable, both for fighting bogus self-employment, and to provide clarity for legitimate actors. This was an issue in various branches and sectors. In 2001, a so-called Declaration of Independent Contractor Status (Verklaring Arbeidsrelatie, VAR) was included in the Dutch tax legislation (Vendrig et al., 2007). It required the self-employed to apply for a VAR declaration from the tax authority, indicating the expected nature of the relationship. In 2005, the legal consequences of the VAR were extended. From now on, with a
VAR declaration, a hiring company or client could safely assume that this relation would not be considered as an employer-employee relationship. In other words, it clarified how the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration would assess the nature of the business relationship beforehand. However, there were three important problems with the VAR. It had to be estimated beforehand, it made only the self-employed worker responsible for the employment relationship, and thirdly, it was administratively cumbersome, as the declarations had to be renewed annually. To deal with these issues since 1st May 2016, the VAR has been replaced by the Employment Relationships (Deregulation) Act (Wet deregulerende beoordeling arbeidsrelaties, DBA). Self-employed and hiring companies or clients can now choose to work according to a standard model agreement. If they do so, the business relationship is not considered an employment relationship; for instance, the hiring party is exempt from withholding any payroll taxes and contributions to collective insurances with regard to that particular contract. In order to accommodate self-employed professionals and the hiring companies or clients, the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration is offering three different kinds of standard model agreements (figure 6) (e.g. Ministry of Economic Affairs, Answers for Business: Model agreements, n.d).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Model Agreement</th>
<th>This model agreement covers most business relationships that do not involve employment.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector or Profession Specific Model Agreements</td>
<td>This is suitable for everyone working according to certain sectoral or professional standards or conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Model Agreement</td>
<td>This specific model agreement can be used by all self-employed working in the same sector or profession for which that model agreement was drawn up specifically.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Three Types of Standard Model Agreements

If none of these model agreements is suitable, the self-employed and his/her hiring company or client can also create a customized agreement, which then has to be assessed by the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration. If approved, it can serve as a model agreement for this situation in the future as well. The model agreements are not mandatory. In case the situation is clear beforehand, no agreement is necessary (such as in the case of a photographer, making a picture of the annual team day of a company or a plasterer working on private person’s home).

If self-employed professionals decide not to work according to these agreements, she/he and the hiring party are still obliged to assess whether or not an employment relationship exists and payroll taxes should be withheld.
The Dutch Tax and Customs Administration decided to implement a transitional period until 1st May 2017 in order to be able to adopt working methods to the new system and to satisfy the requests of organizations representing the self-employed, the unions, as well as the employer organizations.

However, implementation problems and seemingly fundamental unclarities about the conditions that characterize the employee status with their roots in the 100 year old labor law have halted the implementation of the law for the moment. Adoption of the new model agreements was slow and also there were also some undesirable shifts in contracting behavior of client organizations, expected to massively shift away from working with self-employed, reverting to less desirable employment constructions. A survey by TNS on behalf of the ABU and the Bovib released in September 2016 already indicated that self-employed and companies/clients still barely work with these model agreements (TNS, 2016). 87% of self-employed professionals and 90% of client organizations did not work with model agreements yet. Many expected an agreement would not be required. Client organizations furthermore perceived the agreements to be unclear and vague, giving only limited certainty about the value of the agreements for future assessment of their situation by the tax authority. Some client organizations also expected that their hiring of self-employed would decrease due to the new model agreement. 16% of self-employed expected a decrease in hiring by clients; 14% of clients expected to hire less self-employed; and 10% expected they would completely stop working with self-employed, reverting to other options, such as pay rolling. About half of the employment intermediaries reported a decrease in clients wishing to work with self-employed, and 39% reported a growth in their other services such as pay rolling and placement. More than half of the intermediaries however also pointed out that the number of self-employed wishing to use their intermediation services was staying the same (TNS, 2016). Whilst these findings were preliminary, they reflected the nature of the regulatory change: it has placed the responsibility for the employment relationship squarely with both self-employed and clients’ organizations. Furthermore, it gives the tax authority the possibility to evaluate in retrospect whether self-employed and clients have actually worked according to the model agreement of their choice.

The discussion about the DBA law heightened during the fall and at the end even the Unions declared that, although the law seemed to work regarding bogus self-employment, the side-effects for bonafide self-employed were out of proportion. On December 8th, the Dutch parliament debated the issue of the transition period from VAR to DBA at length. Eric Wiebes,
Dutch State Secretary of Finance, stated that there was no need to take rapid steps in regard to the adaption of the new DBA law (Ruts, 2016) upon which parliament agreed to postpone the implementation phase of model agreements until January 1st, 2018, as such buying time to address the key problems with the DBA legislation.

**Special Financial Arrangements for Self-Employed**

The status of being self-employed does not only give employers and employees flexibility. It also entails (labor) cost advantages. First of all, for organizations self-employed are *exempt from withholding payroll taxes and contributions to collective insurances* that are due for employees. These might turn into cost advantages to the extent that the autonomous workers leave out provisions for these costs from the rates they charge.

Besides these arrangements, that are a number of fiscal instruments aimed at stimulating entrepreneurship and innovation that are open to self-employed entrepreneurs (IBO, 2016:4).

**Income-Dependent Contribution to Primary Health Insurance**

Self-employed entrepreneurs, and thus also self-employed without personnel, pay a reduced income-dependent contribution for the mandatory standard basic health care insurance.

**Financial Support for Independent Entrepreneurs**

People starting their own business from a position of unemployment and self-employed who temporarily get into financial difficulties that threaten the viability of their company can ask for temporary financial support by their municipality. It can take the form of an interest-free loan, a special start-up loan, or an income supplement.

**Fiscal Policy**

Fiscal support for entrepreneurs can be aimed at the income of the self-employed entrepreneur and it can be aimed at the profits from the enterprise.

*Fiscal support for entrepreneurs.* There are various tax breaks for entrepreneurs, such as for self-employed, those starting a business, small-business tax exemptions, and the possibility to build up a pension. These arrangements not only reduce income tax, but also increase an individual’s eligibility for income-related supplements (such as housing allowance).

*Fiscal support for Enterprises.* Arrangements to stimulate small businesses aim to support investment and innovation and do this by providing tax breaks to companies, lowering taxation on profits. These are also open to self-employed who are making a profit.

*Additional pension arrangements.* These arrangements provide taxation rules that facilitate self-employed to build up an old age provision in the third pillar of the pension scheme. Here,
they can annually reserve 9.8 percent of their profit with a maximum of 8631 euros (under certain conditions). At the same time, these provisions can remain intact when the regular income of the self-employed drops under the social minimum, she/he has right to receive a supplement based on the Supplementary Benefits Act.

**Questions about Effectiveness**

The fiscal support for the self-employed is under scrutiny for two reasons. First, they can be seen as improper labor tariff subsidies. Analyses show that at the level of the minimum wage employees are up to 40% more expensive than a self-employed worker, this might affect the choice to hire the self-employed worker (IBO, 2015). These fiscal arrangements increase the gap between self-employed and employees and are important causes of the fast growth of self-employed without personnel in the Netherlands (Dekker, 2016; Bosch et al., 2012). Second, research shows that self-employed without personnel only have a limited role in creation of innovations nor seem to grow their businesses (employing others), which begs the question of the effectiveness of these fiscal supports with this audience (IBO, 2016). Sector studies show that self-employed without personnel do not noticeably improve the innovativeness of sectors (Berden et al., 2010; Dosker et al, 2011) and on a macro-level the growth of self-employed in the Netherlands has not coincided with an increase in R&D expenditures (Stam, 2013). Furthermore, only few self-employed without personnel eventually grow their business and start employing staff. Self-employed without personnel do seem to have an important role by offering their specialist knowledge and experience supporting and facilitating innovation (Vroonhof and de Vries, 2015).

**Support for Specific Groups of Autonomous Workers**

There were times when Dutch authorities specifically supported self-employed people in the art sector (Van Lient, 2014). The ‘Law on Work and Income for Artists’ (WWIK) provided a supplementary income to recent art graduates and to established artists in case of a temporary drop in income. The WWIK offered artists a basic income at 70% of the social assistance level. In 2010, a total number of 3500 self-employed made use of this regulation. However, this arrangement was abolished in 2010 (Van Lient, 2014).
4. Collective Representation and Social Dialogue

Unions in the Netherlands

On the ETUI website, Fulton (2015) presents a comprehensive overview of the Dutch Union landscape. The general description of the Dutch Union landscape draws extensively on his review. In the Netherlands, 18% of employees are union members, and the proportion has been gradually falling in recent years (Fulton, 2015). There are three main unions federations: FNV, CNV and VCP. FNV is by far the largest of the three in terms of members. In 2014 CBS (CBS, 2014) still reported 1,131,600 members for FNV, 287,100 for CNV and 54,100 for VCP. FNV and CNV both have a long history, a broad membership base, and trace their roots back to organizations with a clear religious or political orientation. The FNV (Dutch Union Federation) emerged from the merger of the socialist and the catholic union federations, whereas the CNV (Christian National Union) comes from a tradition of Protestant trade unionism (Fulton, 2015). The third union federation is the VCP (Union for Professionals), previously MHP (Union for Middle groups and Higher Personnel). It was founded in 1974 as to represent senior staff facing increasing pressure at the workplace. Contrary to the other two mentioned unions, VCP emphasizes that it is an organization without religious or political connections. In 2014, the MHP became VCP after turmoil within the MHP. In 2013 ‘de Unie’ left the MHP taking over half of its members, claiming that Dutch union structures made it difficult to win support for union concerns. Currently, ‘de Unie’, together with smaller unions, such as the RMU and the LBV, is one of a number of organizations, which is not affiliated to the three main confederations. Indeed, CBS figures show that total number of member of these smaller unions was 289,100 in October 2014, around 100,000 more than two years earlier (Fulton, 2015).

Over the past years, FNV, by far the largest union confederation, has also been under pressure to innovate. Discussions about its future in 2011 and 2012 were followed by reorganizations of the federation, where it could not take along all of its member unions. By the end of 2014, the largest FNV unions merged into one large union with 900,000 members to strengthen its voice, with a clear sectoral organization within the union. A number of unions, with about 200,000 members remained independent unions affiliated with the FNV union federation. CNV, in contrast, has seven affiliates, of which the three largest are the CNV Vakmensen with 135,000 members (operating primarily in manufacturing, and construction), CNV Publieke
Zaat (public sector) with 75,000 members and Onderwijsbond CNV, the education union, with almost 54,000 members.

The third union federation, VCP, organizes over 50 individual union organizations, mostly representing managers, professionals and more senior staff. Direct affiliates of VCP include the police union ACP, the pilots’ union, VNV, and VHKP, a union representing senior staff at the airline company KLM (Fulton, 2015).

**Representation and Support of Autonomous Workers**

While in Dutch policy research there are extensive evaluations of policy options within the context of the existing organization of work focusing on the individual employment relationship, we found no studies addressing the newly emerging organizational context aiming to serve and represent autonomous workers. Studies and evaluations are extensively dealing with the distinction between entrepreneurial business relationships and employment relationships, how existing regulation affects the choice for self-employed or employees, and investigating attitudes of and challenges for autonomous workers. Evaluations of the newly emerging landscape, however are also influenced by the emerging organizational forms that facilitate and support autonomous working. In the same way that the maturing temporary work agency industry has affected the evolution of the market for temporary employment (Van Driell and Koene, 2011; Koene, Garsten, Galais, 2014), we can expect the emerging organizations supporting autonomous workers will affect the evolution of the organization of autonomous work (e.g. Pichault and Naedenoen, 2016).

With the fast growth of the group of self-employed without personnel and the great variation in their labor market position (Dekker, 2016; IBO, 2015), the question how to support autonomous workers and how to represent them has become a pressing issue for unions and a market opportunity for LMIs and other, newer, organizations that see a possibility for services that would support either the self-employed, or their users, or both. Because average self-employed without personnel are older males, relatively highly educated, and with not significantly lower net income, in labor market policy making there is a reluctance to treat them in other ways than regular self-employed entrepreneurs (IBO, 2015; Bekker & Posthumus, 2010). However, over the past years, trade unions have been exploring ways to serve this growing group of workers and also how to deal with this new opportunity for employers. Already in 2010 trade unions were looking for ways to make collective agreements for the self-
employed, for instance regarding pension rights and disability benefits (Bekker & Posthumus, 2010). The weak position of some self-employed (Bekker & Posthumus, 2010; Dekker, 2016) and the risk of unfair competition have been triggers to further explore ways in which to include clauses on conditions and tariffs for self-employed in collective agreements. However, their wish to counter ‘false self-employment’ has also run into problems with EU competition law. This tension has been explored in a 2014 ECJ ruling on the legality of minimum fees in collective agreements for self-employed musicians hired to replace employees on a temporary basis in the Netherlands under EU competition law that become known as the FNV KIEM case (ECJ Case C-413/13). At the same time most unions have set up services especially aimed at the growing group of self-employed without personnel.

*FNV Zelfstandigen* is an independent organization affiliated to the FNV federation. It serves as an advocate for self-employed. It was founded in 1999 and aims to strengthen the position of self-employed professionals through targeted and active lobbying. Moreover, they provide assistance and support to self-employed without personnel with professional advice, legal assistance, issues regarding debt, discounts on insurance and an inspiring network. It has 12,000 members (FNV Zelfstandigen, Wie zijn wij, n.d.).

*CNV Zelfstandigen* offers two types of memberships. A membership of only CNV Zelfstandigen, with (mostly paid) access to services for self-employed or a membership of CNV Vakmensen combined with that of CNV Zelfstandigen for people who work as employee next to having their own business. The services are presented as one of the offerings of CNV Vakmensen and not as an independent union.

The *VCP*, the union federation for professionals, addresses the interests of its members at the level of national socio-economic and societal policy-making. It aims to represent the interests of ‘all professionals’ and pays special attention to separate professions. It represents all Dutch union federations in Eurocadres. VCP mentions self-employed (zelfstandigen) explicitly as one of the target groups it aims to represent. Among its affiliated members are many professional associations of senior staff and civil servants, but also the federation for medical specialists. While most of VCPs associated unions traditionally focused on employees, many have been adding some services for self-employed as they find out that many of their (relatively highly educated) members chose self-employment after termination of their contract (e.g. union for highly educated technical personnel – (VHP2, 2013)
Some unions, however, have a long history with autonomous workers and/or have experienced a quick growth of self-employment among their members, which is reflected in a clear set of services relevant for both employees and self-employed members.

The Dutch Association of Journalists (Nederlandse Vereniging van Journalisten, NVJ), is affiliated to the FNV federation. It represents the material and immaterial interests of its 7500 member journalists in the Netherlands, both employees and self-employed professionals in (photo) journalism, reflected in a broad range of services for its members. It is an independent, non-political, non-governmental association striving for press freedom and good working conditions for professional journalists. (NVJ, De NVJ, n.d.).

For the Kunstenbond (Arts Union), the union for artists, the growing share of self-employed led them to reconsider their position within the Union. In July 2016 the Kunstenbond became independent again to better serve the needs of its dual constituency. Founded as Kunstenbond in 1977, it had merged into FNV KIEM in 1998. However, over the past years it experienced a quick increase in the preference of employers for flexible employment arrangements and self-employment, partly because of the increasingly volatile funding conditions for companies in the arts and partly also because of a shift in climate in the sector. Its members increasingly opted to operate as self-employed professionals. The new Kunstenbond expected to best serve the quickly evolving interests of artists and creatives as independent union, affiliated with the FNV union federation. (Kunstenbond, n.d.)

The Kunstenbond was not the first union to reconsider its position to better serve the needs of their self-employed members. In 2012 FNV ZBo, the FNV union for self-employed without personnel in the construction industry, choose to become an independent organization called Zelfstandigen Bouw (Self-employed Construction). In the construction sector, a growing number of workers was not covered by collective agreements, operating either as temporary agency workers or as self-employed base. Whilst at first, the union tried to broaden the scope of its collective labor agreements in order to prevent a large difference in labor costs between the various groups of workers (Bekker & Posthumus, 2010), eventually Zelfstandigen Bouw opted for a different route. By becoming independent it expected to be able to do more for the self-employed. “We remain the service provider and advocate for entrepreneurial craftsmen in construction and wood and from now on we are also there for the self-employed electrician, plumber, heating engineer” (Chairman Charles Verhoef quoted in the Financiele Telegraaf, 8 October, 2012). Zelfstandigen Bouw has 10,000 members and presents itself as service provider and advocate for its members. (Zelfstandigen Bouw, n.d.)
Alternatief Voor Vakbond (AVV) (alternative for Union) actually presents itself as “a young and modern trade union.” According to AVV at present there is not enough attention for the interests of young people, flexible contractors, and self-employed. In negotiating collective agreements, it aims to actively include both union members and non-members, using for example, the input a “CLA-panel” for which anyone in the relevant sector can apply (Pikaart and Vanderveen, 2015). The lack of advocacy for self-employed and flexible workers was one of the key reasons for founding AVV. For self-employed AVV takes an advocacy role in policymaking about. Examples given by AVV are topics such as social insurance, pensions, regulations for transition from unemployment, and tax treatment. They do that by acting as a collective partner for these group of workers. Its main objectives are firstly, to use its support model at many places as possible and secondly, to make the pension system fairer for those worker (AVV, n.d.).

Not Quite Unions…

Besides unions and former unions with a clear grounding in membership and advocacy, other actors providing support and services for the growing group of autonomous workers emerged over the past 15 years.

In 2001 a number of sector organizations, amongst which are three IT associations, cohered around shared lobbying issues and founded PZO-ZZP (Platform Zelfstandige Ondernemers), clearly positioning itself as a platform for independent entrepreneurs (and thus not as a union). Regulation was desirable, both for fighting bogus self-employment, and to provide clarity for legitimate actors about the fiscal and social security related status of the business relationship (employer-employee relationship or not?). In 2001, a so-called Declaration of Independent Contractor Status (Verklaring Arbeidsrelatie, VAR) was included in the Dutch tax legislation (Vendrig et al., 2007), which was a major issue of concern. In 2002 the organizations founded PZO-ZZP, as a shared channel for advocacy. PZO-ZZP has been granted one of the 11 employers’ seats in the Social Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) by the Dutch Employers association and the association of small and medium-sized enterprises where it serves the interests of self-employed without personnel. PZO-ZZP is a lobbying organization.

Whilst all the previous organizations started from an advocacy perspective, ZZP Nederland, at present the largest ZZP-organization in the Netherlands with almost 40,000 members, had a very different origin. It was founded in 2005 by Johan Marrink as a website with helpdesk to provide newly self-employed with information about entrepreneurship. The website was turned
into a foundation to create a collectivity so its self-employed members could benefit from the discounts health insurance providers gave to collectivities. Because of the collective, self-employed who are member of ZZP Nederland can now choose between discounts on collective contracts with 6 health insurance companies and by now also discounts on, for example, administration software, car lease, and legal help. In comparison, the membership fee for ZZP Nederland is low: 20 euros annually, compared to 135 euros at PZO and 198 euros for FNV ZZP. ZZP Nederland now presents itself as “the most important employers’ organization for self-employed without personnel in the Netherlands. Goal is to stimulate entrepreneurship for small businesses. With almost 40,000 individual members ZZP Nederland is also an appreciated point of contact for government, that invites us often to talk about laws and regulations for self-employed without personnel.” (ZZP Nederland, n.d. - our translation).

**Labour market intermediaries**

The existing staffing industry considers self-employed professionals as a market segment in their services offerings. Depending on their history as, for example, general temporary work agency, specialized secondment/placement agency, or organization focusing on recruitment & selection. The staffing agencies provide services to both autonomous workers and ‘client organizations’ whom they provide with relevant HR services.

*Randstad*, is an example of a large generalist Dutch professional staffing agency. Services for high-skilled professionals are provided through *Yacht* (*Yacht*, n.d.). *Yacht* places specialist with client organizations, engaging the required professionals using the type of contract they prefer, e.g. interim, trainee, or self-employed. As a staffing agency, *Randstad* not only provides service to autonomous workers, but also to “client organizations.” With the changing regulation in the Netherlands (from VAR to DBA), it helps client organizations with the assessment of legal/tax risks with its present pool of self-employed. (*Randstad*, n.d.)

*IT Staffing* presents itself as ‘the biggest placement/secondment agency for independent professionals working in IT’. It offers IT professionals the possibility to register with the firm and promises a great diversity in IT-assignments and client organizations. IT staffing also offers temporary employment arrangements for people “who feel they are not ready to operate as self-employed yet.” Registration with IT-staffing is free. The company actively matches professionals with jobs. It also provides placement, contract handling and pay rolling for client organizations (*IT staffing*, n.d.).

*USG People* is another platform that is one of the largest HR service providers in Europe, with activities mainly focused in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and France (*USG*, n.d.).
People are employed via USG People at companies and institutions in continental Europe. With USG freelance solutions it has established an assignment-repository for freelancers together with a number of partner organizations, also offering freelancers administrative support. At the same time USG also provides clients matching and placement services for self-employed professionals, for example through USG legal professionals.

*Projob* is an intermediary assisting in permanent and temporary recruitment, payroll services, search and selection of interim professionals, career coaching and trainings (*Projob*, n.d.). It was founded in 1995 and is based in Amsterdam, resulting in immense knowledge of Amsterdam’s labor market. They have been highly successful in recruiting for the industries in Human Resources, Finance, Logistics, Marketing & Communications, and Customer Service.

**Mutualization by workers**

Considering initiatives of mutualization of workers, an initial scan of the field gives us several examples of organizations. Associations for self-employed without personnel, providing variety of membership benefits, cooperatives, where members are selectively admitted and work is shared between members, theatre collectives that are making joint productions, but where individual members also actively pursue other activities (e.g. productions for television, etc.). There is an immense growth of cooperatives. Next to regular cooperatives we have seen the emergence of “bread funds” (*Broodfonds*), these are collective peer-to-peer insurance platforms that support self-employed in cases of illness (*ZZP Nederland*, 2016). Members can contribute monthly payments between 33,75€ to 112,50€ and can, in case of illness, rely on ‘donations’ based on their contribution. These donations are between 750€ and 2500€ per month. However, members can only make use of this financial support for a limited period of time.

*SmartNL* is another example of organization through the mutualization of workers. Smart is focused on the creative sector. Following it highly successful Belgian mother organization, it is established as a cooperative for autonomous workers in the creative sector. It is an organization for architects, actors, and writers; basically for all creatives, who want to have their businesses better organized while focusing on the creative process themselves (*SmartNL*, n.d.). It provides a novel way of organizing independent project-based workers.

**Platforms**

There are also initiatives that do not present themselves as traditional service provider, but do seem to explore the possibilities to develop a community. *ZiPconomy*, for example, presents
itself as “an independent knowledge platform and community to bring together stimulating and opinionated views on organizations and the market for interim professionals” (ZiPconomy, n.d.). It aims to stimulate innovation through the exchange of knowledge and research. At the same time, it also present information about its partner organizations and presents a nascent job board.

*Aim for the moon* is community connecting ambitious entrepreneurs with mature companies which are often struggling to realize new, scalable businesses. It aims to connect start-up teams from their network of self-employed entrepreneurs with companies looking to innovate. They connect start-up teams and mature companies in order to co-create and realize new businesses from scratch. They connect *creatability* in form of entrepreneurs and *scalability* in form of big companies in order to achieve a meaningful impact, with their infrastructure providing new ways of connecting self-employed with traditional organizations (*Aim for the moon*, n.d.).

Interesting are the network/platform organizations in consulting. In consulting there are many self-employed independent consultants. Here companies such as *Eden McCallum*, *Comatch* and *Virtual CC* serve as pioneers in the field of innovative strategy advice creating a new type of service offering, with lower pricing than traditional firms. Their mission to create better consulting experiences for consulting – both for their clients and their networks of independent consultants (*FD*, 2016). Providing professional project management, they bring together clients and experienced consultants, sometimes also managing the projects. As such they create platform organizations, where temporary teams of independent consultants work on client projects, with next to zero overheads. On the one hand these organizations provide quality assurance and some scalability for client organizations. At the same time, they provide a branded acquisition network for their independent consultants.
Case Studies

Based on the presented trade unions, organizations, and platforms described above, three cases were selected. The first case, the Kunstenbond, focuses on the large amount and steadily increasing number of self-employed artists. The Kunstenbond (Arts Union) organizes artists and workers in the creative sector, presenting an example of a sector-specific trade union. The second case presents the organization Yacht, a labor market intermediary, founded by Randstad in 1999. Yacht connects around 3500 high skilled self-employed professionals with client organizations, amongst which 1500 self-employed [numbers need checking]. Lastly, PZO-ZZP Nederland is a lobbying organization focusing on self-employed professionals without personnel. It holds the Dutch seat in the European Forum of Independent Professionals (EFIP) and in the Netherlands, it holds one of the seats reserved for small and medium-sized enterprises in the Social Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Type of Members</th>
<th>Main Services</th>
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</table>
| Kunstenbond    | Trade Union          | Artists (both employees and self-employed) | - Advocacy  
                             |                      |                  | - Administrative and legal services |                     |
| Yacht          | LMI; Temporary Work Agency | High-skilled professionals (self-employed and employees) | - Matching, placement, administrative support  
                             |                      |                  | - Networking and training  
                             |                      |                  | - Indirect advocacy through sector organization |                     |
| PZO-ZZP        | direct advocacy and umbrella organization | Self-employed professionals (labelled as entrepreneurs) | - Advocacy  
                             |                      |                  | - Growing set of services (now still partly outsourced) |                     |
Case Study I – Kunstenbond

Description of the Organization

Kunstenbond is a union for artists and was originally founded in 1977. In 1998, it merged with FNV KIEM, the arts and media division of FNV, a Dutch trade union with approximately 1.1 million members. FNV KIEM is the successor of the oldest national union of the Netherlands; the printers’ union ANTB, which was exactly founded 150 years ago on June 1st, 1866 in Amsterdam by representatives of printing and compositors. On 11th June 2016, however, members of FNV KIEM got together in The Hague and decided to split the association. Kunstenbond became an independent union again. For Kunstenbond the main reason was to better serve the specific needs of its members of whom 65% was self-employed, whereas the majority of the other members of FNV KIEM were employees.

1st July, FNV KIEM officially split into Kunstenbond and FNV Media & Culture. Until 1st January 2017, a transition period was introduced for the establishment of Kunstenbond and the transition of FNV members. The media & culture sector of FNV KIEM, with its 28000 members, remained with the FNV and was now integrated into the main union as FNV media & culture.

Kunstenbond, with approximately 6000 members, became an independent union affiliated with FNV. In principal, the two new unions aim to be complementary; FNV KIEM serving professionals in the media and culture sector and Kunstenbond serving creative professionals in the art and creative sector. Still, in some areas, the distinction is not clear yet. Even though Kunstenbond is specifically designed for artists, the group of classical musicians, for instance, remained with FNV KIEM. Reasons for this may have been rational, such as the feeling to have more power as FNV, as well as pragmatic: the union representative who had been responsible for the classical musicians for years already remained in FNV KIEM.

Currently, the board of Kunstenbond consists of 12 people; each of them more or less responsible for one sector. In addition, they also have three functional departments (legal, administration and communication.) Five people of the board are also negotiating collective agreements, such as collective labor agreements for employees or collective agreements for about, for example, copyrights.

Kunstenbond is structured in six departments: Visual Arts, DAMD (animation and visual arts), Theatre and Dance, BV Pop (Beroepsvereniging Popmuzikanten - Professional Association of Pop Musicians), Classical, and Art Education.

Even before, as part of FNV KIEM, already worked quite independently. It focuses on a
specific target group with distinctive needs, similar to the journalist union or the education association. In order to specifically meet the needs of artists and creative workers, they collaborate with fellow trade unions and other organization in the Netherlands, such as NTB, NVJ.Act, BBL, Platform BK, etc. Kunstenbond is convinced they can be more effective if they are not a small part of the big union, but rather being one union itself; remaining autonomous. The board now is independent of FNV and they are able to make their own decisions. They have their own money, own income, and can act upon the specific needs of their members. Although Kunstenbond is independent, it still relies on (and has to pay for) some services FNV provides.

**Members**

Kunstenbond focuses on people in the creative industry who work as artist or creative worker in the Netherlands. Thus, the Kunstenbond is a union for everyone actively involved in the creative or art sector; ranging from actors and singers to illustrators and app developers. As a trd union, Kunstenbond organizes employees, but also has a large share of self-employed members. Especially in the art sector, it is increasingly common to work on a self-employed basis. Before splitting, FNV KIEM had around 4,500-5,000 members self-employed members within a union of 30,000 people. Now, after the separation, they have 4,000-4,500 members being self-employed; being the vast majority of its 6,000 members. Thus, they moved from an organization dominated by employees to an organization with predominantly self-employed as members.

As it is working to support the rights of individual workers Kunstenbond it is responsible for collective agreements for employees. Nevertheless, Kunstenbond welcomes both regular employees and self-employed professionals. For self-employed Kunstenbond creates tools and provides administrative and tax services, that support their work as self-employed entrepreneurs.

Memberships cost 10€ or 17€ per month, for representation and lobbying for general and sector-specific matters, legal advice and legal support, and expert legal assistance and legal advice. Members benefit from discounts on insurance and trainings that contributes to their personal development. In addition, they support lobbying for a strong and healthy art sector and for their specific sector. Lastly, students have a chance to be a member of Kunstenbond for free, where they can benefit from legal support.
Collective Representation and Strategies

In the art sector, self-employed professionals are generally not primarily motivated by the money or the establishment of their own business. This gives Kunstenbond quite some different views compared to other unions that serve self-employed professionals in other sectors.

Kunstenbond aims to keep fulfilling the lobbying and advocacy role it offered as part of FNV KIEM, such as individual and collective advocacy and interacting with the Social Economic Council in order to propose improvements in labor market position and regulations. They strongly lobby in The Hague to maintain self-employment. Moreover, they offer services in relation to studio policy, training, legal support in work conflicts (regularly going to court), tax-services, collective negotiations, etc. Kunstenbond engages in policy preparation in the area of, for example, development of sustainable self-employment, copyright protections, stronger position and rights for creative self-employed, and collective bargaining. They work hard to enrich and protect the value of creativity for society and for the creators. Moreover, they engage in frequent political lobbying for the creative sector from regional to international levels in collaboration with various other organizations. All these actions are aimed at strengthening the social dialogue, which they aim to address in this sector.

An issue related to strengthening the social dialogue is its financing. This is a very dominant issue the Kunstenbond and other actors are facing in that process. In order to have a stronger voice, at least some resources are needed. The government, however, promotes the view of not being able to finance, support, or subsidize the process of social dialogue specifically. The current minister of social affairs, Lodewijk Asscher, used to provide some extra funding for these actions. However, the monetary support as well as legal arrangements are not that much in place anymore. Former arrangements that supported self-employed artist where all terminated, as government felt that there was no legal legitimate title to pay. One of the former arrangements was the retraining program for dancers, which entailed that dancers got the chance to be retrained for another profession, such as being a lawyer or photographer, at the end of their dance career. The support for retraining was paid partly by the government and partly by the dancers but was stopped due to the non-existence of legal title to pay. The Kunstenbond aims to re-establish those kinds of arrangements and also engages in other cases that facilitate better working conditions for self-employed artists. Recently, Kunstenbond was also involved in negotiating copyright contract law, which is very important for protecting income from creative acts. Kunstenbond thus actively engaged in coming to an agreement with regard to remunerations for copyrights; such as being eligible for a certain profitable percentage
the ‘owner’ of the copyright can make. The field is a very difficult area, with multiple stakeholders and a lot of legal battles benefiting from the experience and specialist knowledge of Kunstenbond’s negotiators.

Results and Future Perspective

In the Netherlands, the creative industry employs around 200,000 people and it is still steadily growing. In order to develop further in the future as a trade union that offers excellent service to its members, Kunstenbond considers to combine forces with other associations, such as ACT for actors, DuPho for photographers, and authors unions, such as the Dutch association of writers and translators. These associations would benefit from Kunstenbond’s lobbying power and the tools and other services it provides for self-employed. In turn, these associations would bring in relevant professional knowledge and expertise regarding their sectors, making it possible to develop tailored and specific services for members. Indeed, quite a few members of Kunstenbond are also part of other associations and therefore pay twice in order to get the best assistance and support possible. As this at present also increases competition, cooperation is even more important.

Some examples of joint activities existing abroad inspire kunstenbond, such as the organization Equity in England, which is a union for actors and a professional association (Equity Annual Report, 2006). This quest for cooperation is also about finding a way to position a lot more organizations together in order to lobby jointly, where various organizations complement each other, people from Kunstenbond drawing up the image of “lego blocks” in a larger whole. Kunstenbond could then be working primarily on advocacy in areas of the labor market, income, law, and social security and other associations could focus on the professions as well as on bringing the people who are in the same situation together. This could result in an increasingly value-adding platform for self-employed artists. Kunstenbond’s aim is to work together and be part of such cooperation; enabling the best services for artistic self-employed professionals.
Case Study II – Yacht

Description of the Organization

Yacht presents itself as a binding force between professionals and organizations. Yacht is a division of Randstad, one of the largest professional employment organizations worldwide. It was founded already in 1999 to place high-skilled professionals in temporary positions and has currently 400 employees. It distinguished its operations from temporary work agencies with its focus on interim professionals and the professional project managements for its client organizations. Yacht offers challenging work for independent professionals and support in networking and personal development. To its client organizations it offers well-trained high-quality interim professionals. Yacht operates in eight fields. These eight fields are IT, Finance, Engineering, Legal, HRM, Social Domain, Marketing & Communications and Supply Chain Management & Procurement.

Yacht positions itself broadly as an expert in building lasting and growing relationships in the professional domain. Their premise is that clients and professionals need to know each other well in order to connect properly and therefore, they highly emphasize the best suitable match, rather than a contract form. In describing its proposition to professionals, it offers both employment opportunities and services for interim professionals that remain independent and work through Yacht as independent professionals.

Yacht is part of the Randstad Group Netherlands and has offices in eight different Dutch cities. Randstad is the second-largest HR service provider after Adecco. While Randstad is primarily focusing on low- and middle-educated people, Yacht is entirely focused on highly skilled professionals.

As stated already, Yacht emerged from Randstad in 1999 and remained completely owned by Randstad until now. Yacht only exists in the Netherlands, as in other countries the focus on high professionals is still part of Randstad’s activities. In the Netherlands, Yacht currently has 3,500 affiliated professionals of whom about 1,500 are self-employed.

Members

The concept of ‘membership’ is not directly fitting to describe the high-skilled professionals working through Yacht. Yacht operates in eight different sectors, namely IT, Finance, Engineering, Legal, HRM, Social Domain, Marketing & Communications and Supply Chain Management & Procurement. It aims to strengthen the relations between individual high skill workers and client organizations. The company fulfills that role for the professionals in its
network in several ways. The organization provides recruitment and placement services, placing professionals for regular jobs in client organizations, they place independent professionals on project basis in client organizations, and they also employ professionals who then work on project with clients for Yacht. All these professionals are considered members of the Yacht network, but what probably comes closest to ‘membership’ are the self-employed professionals that work through Randstad on temporary assignments. These members are not required to pay a fee, instead Yacht charges a fee to client organizations for placement of self-employed interim professionals. This is their sole revenue stream, as they do not generate revenue by offering, for instance, databases to other organizations (the information about their self-employed professionals is highly confidential). The Netherlands also has strict regulations for private professional employment organizations prohibiting them to charge individual workers placed in a temporary position.

Yacht takes care of contracting and administration. They establish two kinds of contracts: one standardized contract with the self-employed professional as soon as they get hired by a client organization (based on the model agreements (DBA)) and one, more individualized, contract, for the company hiring a self-employed professional.

Yacht focuses on high skilled professionals and charges relatively high fees to the client organization for deploying their professionals. This gives them a certain degree of negotiating power, as they actively consider the needs of the hiring company and those of the self-employed professional. Depending on market conditions, it is easier or harder to negotiate with either of these parties. For instance, IT professionals have strong negotiating power, as their market is currently booming due to digital developments. Given their scarcity, their rates are quite high.

Besides functioning as a labor market intermediary, Yacht is also offering other services to its members. It creates online networks, which give the independent professionals access to a wealth of knowledge, and they organize events, such as food for thoughts and roundtable sessions on controversial topics. In addition, they initiate meetings on the latest developments, so that their members all updated. Also, training programs are offered, such as trainings for the sector-related specialties (e.g. in IT or engineering), but also for personal development, such as presentation courses.

**Collective Representation and Strategies**

As a labor market intermediary, political involvement or lobbying processes are not the primary focus of Yacht. However, they are involved in lobbying for certain topics in The Hague.
They do that together with ABU, the largest association for professional employment organizations in the Netherlands, which in turn, is cooperating with VNO-NCW. The main issue, which they are currently lobbying around is the new Employment Relationships Deregulation Act (wet DBA), introduced in 2016. Even though Yacht is aware of the fact that the old system (VAR) did not work properly, their position is that the DBA is too complicated. A second topic they are lobbying for is reduction of the gap between a regular (open-ended) employment status and self-employed professionals with project-based contracts. The latter group is associated with greater insecurity, even though Yacht is convinced that this should not matter. Thus, Yacht is lobbying for the equality among professionals with project-based contracts and employees with open-ended contracts.

Even though Yacht is lobbying together with ABU, they operate quite independently. They also develop their own initiatives to support the professionals working through them. For example, Yacht cooperates with banks in order to provide self-employed professionals easier access to mortgage offers.

**Results and Future Perspective**

For Yacht self-employment stands for flexibility and employability, which Yacht highly promotes. For them, it is a good development that more and more people are becoming self-employed and are consequently adding value to many organizations. Therefore, they expect to grow further in the future. Yacht believes that self-employed professionals remain a value-adding part of their client organizations, as well as of the overall Dutch economy. However, self-employed are quite often not fond of pitching themselves an taking care of administrative paperwork. Thus, Yacht also adds value to self-employed by taking care of administration and acquisition for them.

In the future, Yacht aims to remain an independent organization under the name of Randstad, specifically serving the segment of highly skilled interim professionals.
Case Study III – PZO-ZZP Nederland

Description of the Organization
The association Platform Independent Entrepreneurs (PZO-ZZP) is a lobbying organization and feels highly committed to the approximately 800,000 currently self-employed professionals in the Netherlands. It does this both in The Hague and Brussels through the European Forum of Independent Professionals (EFIP). Furthermore, PZO-ZZP has been granted one of the 11 employers’ seats in the Social Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) by the Dutch Employers association and the association of small and medium-sized enterprises, where it serves the interests of self-employed without personnel.

The overall objective of PZO-ZZP is to represent the interests of its members in order to optimize the business environment and to provide a full-fledged place for self-employed in Dutch society. Since the government plays a crucial role in regulating and defining the position of self-employed professionals, PZO-ZZP does so primarily by pursuing a political lobby. They want to increase the recognition of the importance of self-employment for the Dutch economy and achieve better regulation for them, commenting on proposals for new legislation and the removal of barriers to self-employed. Thus, PZO-ZZP mainly considers itself a lobby organization. Their current lobby topics are: VAR DBA, Self-employed pension, Employment unsuitability, Europa/EFIP, Contract/tender, Mortgage lending, Facilities for self-employed, Pension under own management, and Education.

PZO-ZZP exists since 2002. In 2001, a variety sector organizations from the IT sector cohered around shared lobbying issues and founded PZO-ZZP (Platform Zelfstandige Ondernemers), clearly positioning itself as a platform for independent entrepreneurs (and thus not as a union). The organization is operation at national level and has always remained independent, however, they are still closely working with VNO-NCW and MKB-Nederland, the association of Small and Medium Enterprises in the Netherlands. They are located in the same building and share some supporting services, such as ICT support. Another organization they are working with is ZZP Nederland, an organization that also solely focuses on self-employed professionals. As they see their members as entrepreneurs and not as employees, the individual focus is more important for them than the collective.

PZO-ZZP is an organization that solely consists out of self-employed professionals, except for the director, who is an employee it is, as note themselves an association of self-employed,
for self-employed, by self-employed. In their view this enables the organization to better identify self-employed professional arrangements and problems, as the self-employed running the organization experience it first-hand. They are hiring self-employed professionals for their administration and are also offering a lot of training to them, in order to have good people that support them.

Members & Collective Representation and Strategies

PZO-ZZP currently has 20,000 members. Together with VNO-NCW and MKB-Nederland, which also serve self-employed professionals, they represent a platform of 100,000 self-employed. In the Netherlands, PZO-ZZP is the biggest organization for self-employed professionals.

They are having two different kinds of members and consequently also two types of membership. Self-employed professionals can either apply for an individual membership, which is 135€ (in case of automatic debit it equals 125€) or can apply for a membership for sector-specific collectivities, such as the health-care or legal sector, where each member is asked to pay 29€. These two kind of members, however, are associated in in one board.

In order to not only serve their members with lobbying processes, PZO-ZZP also offers opportunities for its members to meet other self-employed professionals. Examples are the PZO Ondernemerstaffel, consisting of 8 people addressing all kinds of topics about entrepreneurship, where self-employed professionals are able to ask any kind of questions and can engage in multiple discussions. In addition, they organize Knowledge Cafés, in different geographic regions in the Netherlands, in cooperation with VNO-NCW in order to bring self-employed professionals together at local level.

As stated above, PZO-ZZP’s core business is lobbying. They generally support their members in subjects that go beyond and are not specific to their profession. These are in general agreements that aim to improve working conditions for all self-employed. However, for very large sector-specific collectivities, such as the one for translators, they lobby for rather specific issues. Translators, for example, have to deal with rather specific laws throughout their work and they have fixed tariffs since 1983. Thus tariffs are low and self-employed translators have to deal with difficulties in regard to the payment of their insurance and pension funds. Thus, PZO-ZZP is already for quite long time lobbying for better tariffs for this group of self-employed professionals. This is, however, only the case if certain groups are largely represented in their organization.
In terms of lobbying PZO-ZZP is in the unique position that they have seat in the SER, the Dutch Social Economic Council, and in the EFIP, the European Forum of Independent Professionals. AT SER, PZO-ZZP engages in debates about labor market and social economic environment, in these debates it PZO-ZZP cooperates with ZZP Nederland. At EFIP, key discussions are about the definition of self-employed; are they entrepreneurs or employees?

**PZO-ZZP Ledendiensten**

PZO-ZZP also aims to support its members in order to optimize and professionalize their business. For a long time it has outsourced these member services through the ZZP Service-desk, run by the Dutch Network Group (DNG), who maintains the ZZP service desk for PZO-ZZP, but also, for example, a service desk for small and medium sized enterprises.

However, two years ago they started to rethink this service. With the outsourced service, their aim was to make some really good offers to their members, such as with certain discounts. However, having outsourced them, they started realizing that they had no real grip on what kind of discounts where offered and what deals were arranged. Therefore, they have now started to develop their own platform in order to offer services internally; overseeing and selecting their own services more precisely and better connecting to its members. This, consequently, would also strengthen PZO-ZZP’s lobbying position, as the organization now could get a clearer overview of questions and demands of its self-employed members.

PZO-ZZPs own platform is going to have three pillars of member benefits. **Insurances**, where self-employed, will, for instance, get advice where to go and which types of insurances are needed, **fiscal and legal matters**, where advice and support is provided, and lastly **member benefits**, where self-employed can benefit from products, such as for instance an railways Business travel card (NS business card), or simply discounts for theaters and cinemas. In order to optimize these services PZO-ZZP also aims to cooperate with HarveyBloom, which is a cooperation of self-employed lawyers and fiscalists, providing their services to PZO-ZZP. Members will have the chance to get answers to first line questions, which is for free and is normally pieces of advice and also to second line questions, where members can pay for legal or fiscal service for a discounted rate.

A second reason for PZO-ZZP to offer these services themselves, is that they believe it will increase their attractiveness to members. An offering beyond sole lobbying purposes will
provide their members with a diverse range of advantages of their membership and thus more ‘value for money.’

Results and Future Perspective
In general, PZO-ZZP states they are aiming to achieve results that affect the long-term. The current debate about the DBA (Employment Relationships Deregulation Act) is a good example. It is a key topic affecting the labor market for self-employed workers. Since this law was announced, PZO-ZZP is actively opposing it.

In its history PZO-ZZP was founded to influence the debate on the prior regulation for self-employment, the VAR and it has been engaged to improve the positions of self-employed ever since by influencing the debates on the VAR, and after that on the DBA law. For PZO-ZZP, self-employed professionals are necessary for the Dutch economic climate, as they promote flexibility and value-adding contributions of self-employed professionals. In their view the change in the labor market that would occur with the new DBA law would prevent many self-employed professionals to practice their profession under that status of self-employment. Thus, together with VNO-NCW, they will fight against this in order to stop the already emerging difficulties for self-employed professionals.

In addition, PZO-ZZP is aiming for adjustment of Dutch labor law. The present labor law dates from 1907 and has not been changed since, making it ill-suited for dealing with many issues, amongst which the definition of self-employment in a modern Dutch labour market.
Internal Draft – WP3 Country overview & Case Studies the Netherlands

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### Appendix

**Appendix I – Translation of popular sectors among self-employed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialistische zakelijke diensten</td>
<td>Business Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouwnijverheid</td>
<td>Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handel</td>
<td>Retail trade and Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gezondheids- en welzijnszorg</td>
<td>Health- and Social-Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landbouw, bosbouw en visserij</td>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultuur, sport en recreatie</td>
<td>Culture, Sport, and Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informatie en communicatie</td>
<td>Information and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overige dienstverlening</td>
<td>Other Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verhuur en overige zakelijke diensten</td>
<td>Real Estate, Renting and Leasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onderwijs</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrie</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financiële dienstverlening</td>
<td>Financial Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vervoer en opslag</td>
<td>Transportation and Storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horeca</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onroerend goed</td>
<td>Property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openbaar bestuur</td>
<td>Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbedrijven en afvalbeheer</td>
<td>Water Supply and Waste Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energievoorziening</td>
<td>Energy Supply</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>