

The Netherlands

ICCI Global Council Report – 9th May 2017

1. What is happening in your country in the economy, politically and labour market.

The recovery of the Dutch economy has continued as expected and was mentioned in the report of November 2016. A solid trade surplus which was created during the past years, has proved to be a strong and healthy base for the start of 2017. Average growth of the economy in 2016 turned out to be 2,1%, which was the highest since 2007. Expected growth in the year 2017 is forecasted to be at least 1,6% (ING bank) but inflation increased as well from 0,3% in 2016 to 1,1% in March 2017. The growth is mainly caused by increased consumer confidence. Investment rates in 2016 did not meet the expectations however in 2016. The lower growth expectations for 2017 are partly caused by substantially lower benefits of natural gas revenues.

Politically the parliamentary elections of March 15 2017 were the most important issue for The Netherlands during the reporting period. Attempts to agree on a coalition of 4 parties (of the 28 parties which participated in the elections) are presently going on. An important issue in the formation of a new parliament is the sharp decrease of available Dutch natural gas which had been a strong back bone for the Dutch economy during the past decades. This accelerated the discussion about how the Dutch will solve their energy needs in the future using less fossil fuels. The Paris agreements are broadly supported but the “how to...” question is a tough part of the negotiations. It needs time for all parties involved to take a clear stand in this, but both employers organizations and labour organizations support the move towards the gradual reduction of fossil fuels soon. Too many citizens have suffered severe damage to their properties the past decades due to light earthquakes because of natural gas extraction. The main political issues for the new cabinet will be “wind, warmth and work”.

The labour market showed the biggest growth in five years. Unemployment rates dropped from 6.3% last November to a present 5.1% of the workforce. There has been an unexpected fast growth of jobs during the first quarter of 2017: 14%. Most the new jobs can be found in secondary and higher education levels. A sharp increase in jobs shows the construction sector. ICT showed a slight loss of new jobs. It is interesting from the career professionals point of view to watch the talents that showed increased interest of the employers compared to November 2016. The demand for the talent “Customer focus” increased with 16%, “Initiative” 15%, and “Verbal communication” 14%. These talents are clearly related to the increased dominance of the internet on the labour market.

Uncertain global and European political issues, such as the Brexit and its influence on the future of the EU can influence these figures in the months ahead. Re-introduction of borders all over Europe hits Holland as a small and trade oriented country heavy.

2. What is happening in the profession of career coaching and what is going on in professional career coaching organizations?

The profession of career coaching in the Netherlands has struggled the past years with the question of how to further professionalize the profession and how this can / should be made measurable. Last November this report mentioned about “there is very little awareness of the potential rate of return of career guidance among employers and employees. The government shows little to no interest at all to improve this situation.”

Noloc, the Dutch Association of Career Professionals, has been working on their own system of audits the past years but is looking for cooperation in this field and there might develop a renewed cooperation with specialized organizations in this field.

Noloc itself has a strong focus on further professionalization of the profession since years through their Commission of Development and Professionality. This commission has produced an interesting paper “the Career professional of the future, the future resistant career professional”. This paper can provide guidance for Noloc to help the career profession to remain fit for their work in the upcoming future.

Noloc and the organization of professional Jobcoaches have merged their activities starting January 2017 thus including a new group very specialized career professionals.

3. What strategies are career coaches using to compete in today's market place?

Career coaches need to create a clear and distinctive personal profile if they are working as private entrepreneurs as most Dutch career coaches do. Super specialization remains a must, but still provides no guarantee for more work. Making the added value of guidance tangible and convincing is difficult for many career professionals with limited entrepreneurial skills. There is this contradiction that career coaches often need to develop and provide distinguished training in (many) new fields of attention like sustainable employability. This leads to the fact that many career professionals have more than one "super specialization".