

The Netherlands

ICCI Global Council Report – 15th November 2016

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

The recovery of the Dutch economy seems to continue like it was expected. Unemployment rates dropped to 6.3% of the workforce in the third quarter of this year. It is expected to reach a level of 6.2% in 2017. There is a slow but steady decrease of the un-employment rate benefitting remarkably many starters on the labour market. Unemployed people of over 55 years of age benefitted slightly but are still a category of great concern to all involved, both in politics and in the unions. Their rate of unemployment fell to 7.4% in the first three quarters of 2016.

According to the Central Statistical Office consumer confidence has risen and reached the highest level since 2007. Consumers judge positive about the economic climate, especially the willingness to buy increases. The Dutch Gross Domestic Product is expected to grow from a present 1.8% to 2.1% in 2017. Investment rates grow faster than these figures.

For everyone who can work, but not without a helping hand, there is the “Participation Act” which was introduced on January 1, 2015. The agreement was that the Dutch employers would create 125.000 new jobs for this group by 2020 starting in 2015. Every employer should have policy how they can contribute to this act and can be fined if they do not participate within their means. My personal experience with this act is that although there are some very positive signs, there are still many employers who are not at all focusing on this issue. They are still focusing on recovering the losses of the recent years.

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

Although there is some increase of awareness of the value of career guidance in some particular sectors like the education sector, 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.

Figure 4.2: Large-scale initiatives to develop flexible study opportunities and pathways or career guidance for adults, implemented since 2011, or currently in preparation, EU-28

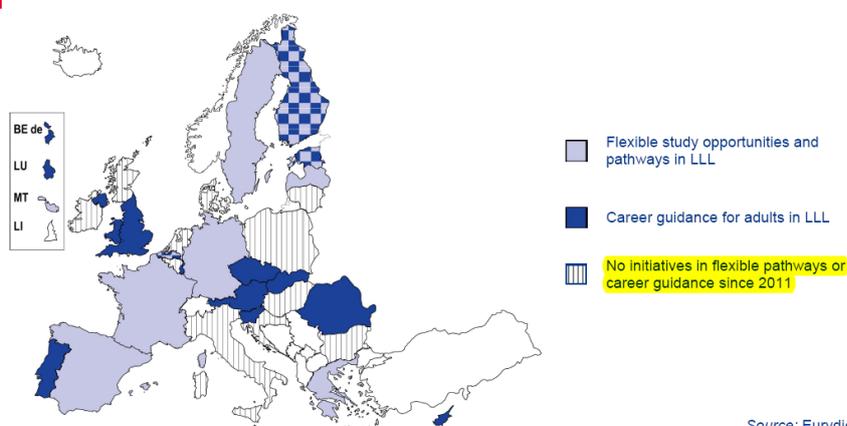
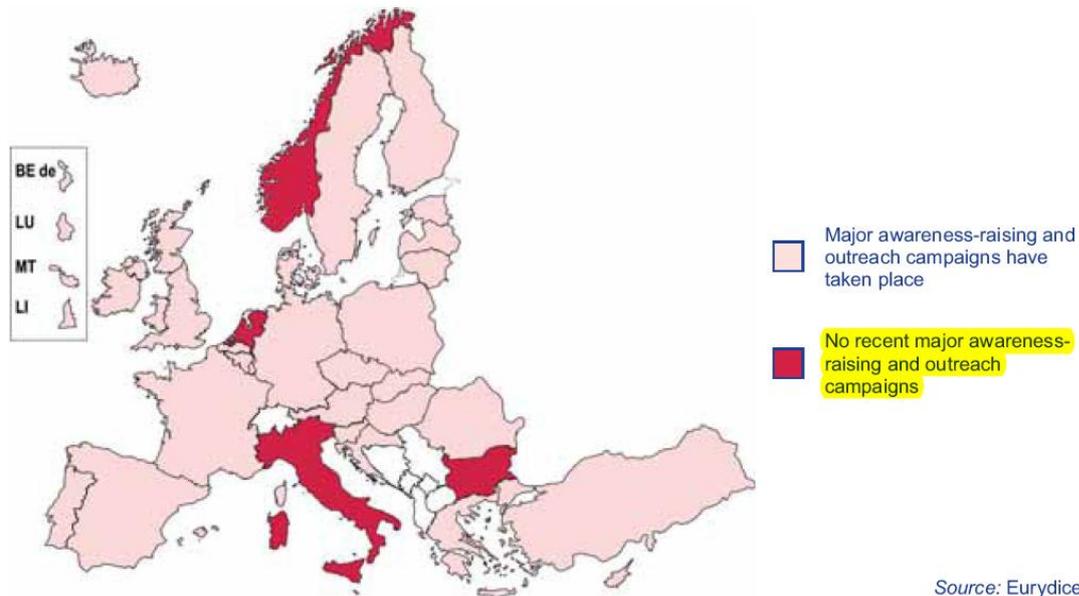


Figure 4.2 from the Eurydice report shows that almost half of the Member States report recent or forthcoming initiatives to improve career guidance for adults while about one third of the Member States report initiatives to develop flexible pathways in lifelong learning. Only, Belgium (Flemish

Community), Estonia and Finland report reforms in both categories. The Netherlands however are among the countries with no initiatives for Life Long Learning and career guidance in 2013.

Figure 5.3: Awareness-raising and outreach campaigns targeting adults, 2009-2014



The report also shows the map of the European member states (above) where awareness raising campaigns to promote the value of career guidance have taken place. The Netherlands is one of the countries where there had been no such initiatives until 2013. This year a new initiative was started by several unions and employers' organizations to force more attention for sustainable employability in the engineering and construction sector. It has only started in September and it's too early to make any comments on the effects of this try out.

The profession of career coaching in Holland is suffering of too many coaches on a free market where budgets for career guidance haven't been cut and fees for freelancers have been on a slide for many years in a row. In 2016 the national organization for career professionals, Noloc, continued growing to over 3000 members. Government bodies on regional level and on national level are solely starting to realize that they cannot do all the work without hiring career professionals and come up with new opportunities for career professionals based on extreme low fees.

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

In the past half year, there are no major changes to be mentioned on this issue. There is an increase of partnerships between individual career professionals which sometimes enables them to cooperatively submit bids on bigger projects where each might bring in its own specialization. Super specialization is a must, but provides no guarantee for more work.

There is a clear lack of leadership in our sector. The government, nor employers and unions take a clear stand and responsibility to develop career coaching and make it better available to everyone who can benefit of it. Short term focus and a basic unwillingness to pay for career services provides very limited opportunities for improvement.

November 13th 2016, Frans de Blocq