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→ Representativeness of the European social partner organisations: Tanning and leather sector – Netherlands

The aim of this representativeness study is to identify the respective national and supranational actors (i.e. trade unions and employer organisations) in the field of industrial relations in the tanning and leather sector in the Netherlands. In order to determine their relative importance in the sector's industrial relations, this study will, in particular, focus on their representational quality as well as on their role in collective bargaining.

1. Sectoral properties

The tanning and dressing of leather subsector is a small and, during the last decade, declining sector in the Dutch economy. All of the companies in the sector except for one small enterprise are covered by a single, sector-wide, collective agreement. Of the employees in the sector, 95% are covered by this agreement. The employer organisation and the two, national trade unions operating in the sector are accepted parties in consultation and in collective bargaining.

Table 1: Profile of tanning and leather sector

	1995	2006**
Number of employers	80	45 (2005)
Aggregate employment*	n.a.	n.a.
Male employment*	n.a.	n.a.
Female employment*	n.a.	n.a.
Aggregate employees	3,500	1,800
Male employees	2,400	1,200
Female employees	1,100	600
Aggregate sectoral employment as % of total employment in economy	n.a.	n.a.
Aggregate sectoral employees as % of total number of employees in economy	6,063,000 total 0.06%	6,918,000 total 0.03%

Notes: * employees plus self-employed persons and temporary agency workers. ** data for 2005. n.a. = not available.

Source: Central Office for Statistics (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS*) The *Confederation of National Associations of Tanners and Dressers of the European Community (COTANCE)* has submitted different figures (see under 2b).

2. The sector's trade unions and employer associations

This section includes the following trade unions and employer organisations:

1. trade unions which are party to sector-related collective bargaining;
2. trade unions which are a member of the sector-related European federation, the [European Trade Union Federation: Textiles, Clothing and Leather \(ETUF:TCL\)](#);
3. employer organisations which are party to sector-related collective bargaining;
4. employer organisations or business associations which are a member of the sector-related European business federation, the [Confederation of National Associations of Tanners and Dressers of the European Community \(COTANCE\)](#).

2a Data on the trade unions

2a.1 Type of membership (voluntary vs. compulsory)

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Voluntary.

2a.2 Formal demarcation of membership domain (e.g. white-collar workers, private sector workers, textile employees, etc)

No formal demarcation applies.

2a.3 Number of union members (i.e. the total number of members of the union as a whole)

The Allied Industry, Food, Services and Transport Union ([FNV Bondgenoten](#)) is affiliated to the Federation of Dutch Trade Unions ([Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging](#), FNV). FNV Bondgenoten's total membership was about 470,000 persons in 2007.

The Industry, Food and Transport Workers' Union ([CNV Bedrijvenbond](#)), affiliated to the Christian Trade Union Federation ([Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond](#), CNV), is the second active trade union in the sector. CNV Bedrijvenbond's total membership was around 90,000 persons in 2007.

2a.4 Number of union members in the sector

In 2008, FNV Bondgenoten had 65 members and CNV Bedrijvenbond had 35 members in the sector.

2a.5 Female union members as a percentage of total union membership

An estimated 20% of the trade union members are women.

2a.6 Domain density: total number of members of the union in relation to the number of potential members as demarcated by the union domain (see 2a.2)

n.a.

2a.7 Sectoral density: total number of members of the union in the sector in relation to the number of employees in the sector, as demarcated by the NACE definition

The sectoral density is about 100 unionised workers out of 450 employees, which is the number of employees reported by the respondents. This generates a density of around 24%.

2a.8 Sectoral domain density: total number of members of the union in the sector in relation to the number of employees which work in that part of the sector as covered by the union domain

n.a.

2a.9 Does the union conclude collective agreements?

Yes, both trade unions have signed the 2008 collective agreement (see Question 4).

2a 10 For each association, list their affiliation to higher-level national, European and international interest associations (including cross-sectoral associations).

At national level, FNV Bondgenoten is affiliated to FNV and CNV Bedrijvenbond is affiliated to CNV, as noted above. At European level, both FNV Bondgenoten and CNV Bedrijvenbond are members of ETUF:TCL.

2b Data on the employer associations

2b.1 Type of membership (voluntary vs. compulsory)

Membership of the Dutch Federation of Tanners ([Federatie van Nederlandse Lederfabrikanten](#), FNL) is voluntary.

2b.2 Formal demarcation of membership domain (e.g. SMEs, small-scale crafts/industry, textile enterprises, etc)

The sector is the formal demarcation.

2b.3 Number of member companies (i.e. the total number of members of the association as a whole)

A total of 14 companies are members of the employer organisation.

2b.4 Number of member companies in the sector

A total of 15 companies operate in the sector, compared with 24 in 1995

2b.5 Number of employees working in member companies (i.e. the total number of the association as a whole)

Some 400 employees are working in the member companies. A further 12 employees are employed in one non-member company operating in the sector; the latter workers have no collective agreement.

2b.6 Number of employees working in member companies in the sector

A total of 400 employees are registered in the pension fund.

2b.7 Domain density in terms of companies: total number of member companies of the association in relation to the number of potential member companies as demarcated by the association's domain (see 2b.2)

n.a.

2b.8 Sectoral density in terms of companies: total number of member companies of the association in the sector in relation to the number of companies in the sector, as demarcated by the NACE definition

The sectoral density in terms of companies is 14 member companies in relation to 15 enterprises in the sector – that is, about 95%.

2b.9 Sectoral domain density in terms of companies: total number of member companies of the association in the sector in relation to the number of companies which operate in that part of the sector as covered by the association's domain

n.a.

2b.10 Domain density in terms of employees represented: total number of employees working in the association's member companies in relation to the number of employees working in potential member companies, as demarcated by the association's domain (see 2b.2)

n.a.

2b.11 Sectoral density in terms of employees represented: total number of employees working in the association's member companies in the sector in relation to the number of employees in the sector, as demarcated by the NACE definition

The sectoral density in terms of employees is 95%.

2b.12 Sectoral domain density in terms of employees represented: total number of employees working in the association's member companies in the sector in relation to the number of employees working in companies which operate in that part of the sector as covered by the association's domain

n.a.

2b.13 Does the employer association conclude collective agreements?

Yes.

2b.14 For each association, list their affiliation to higher-level national, European and international interest associations (including the cross-sectoral associations).

FNL is a member of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers ([Vereniging van Nederlandse Ondernemingen-Nederlands Christelijk Werkgeversverbond](#), VNO-NCW) at national level, and of COTANCE at European level.

3. Inter-associational relationships

3.1. Please list all trade unions covered by this study whose domains overlap.

FNV Bondgenoten and CNV Bedrijvenbond.

3.2. Do rivalries and competition exist among the trade unions, concerning the

right to conclude collective agreements and to be consulted in public policy formulation and implementation?

No, there are no rivalries between the trade unions; the sectoral unions of FNV and CNV both sign the collective agreements and are partners in consultation. Normal competition arises between the unions.

3.3. If yes, are certain trade unions excluded from these rights?

No trade unions are excluded from these rights. The Dutch General Independent Union ([De Unie](#)), which is no longer active in the sector, has withdrawn from concluding the corresponding collective agreements. De Unie concluded that too few of its members were present in the sector.

3.4. Same question for employer associations as 3.1.

Only one employer organisation exists in the sector; therefore, this question and those immediately following are not applicable.

3.5. Same question for employer associations as 3.2.

n.a.

3.6. Same question for employer associations as 3.3.

n.a.

3.7. Are there large companies or employer associations which refuse to recognise the trade unions and refuse to enter collective bargaining?

No.

4. The system of collective bargaining

4.1. Sector's rate of collective bargaining coverage

Since the collective agreement covers 14 of the 15 companies in the sector, this amounts to almost 100% coverage. Overall, three large companies are active in the sector, employing 75% of the employees. All of the companies in the sector are expanding into other economic areas besides leather tanning. In their new activities, they use waste products, as well as synthetic and rubber material.

4.2. Relative importance of multi-employer agreements and of single-employer agreements as a percentage of the total number of employees covered

n.a.

4.2.1. Is there a practice of extending multi-employer agreements to employers who are not affiliated to the signatory employer associations?

No, that is not necessary.

4.2.2. If there is a practice of extending collective agreements, is this practice pervasive or rather limited and exceptional?

n.a.

4.3. Sector-related multi-employer wage agreements* valid in 2006 (or most recent data).

* Only wage agreements which are (re)negotiated on a reiterated basis.

For the notion of 'sector-related', see the conceptual remarks in the accompanying briefing note. In case of regionally differentiated, parallel agreements, an aggregate answer explaining the pattern may be given.

Table 2: Sector-related multi-employer wage agreements

Bargaining parties	Scope of sector-related multi-employer wage agreements		
	Sectoral	Type of employees	Territorial
FNL (employers) FNV Bondgenoten, CNV Bedrijvenbond (employees)	Yes	All, except 5% of employees outside the collective agreement	-

The agreement is a transitional agreement for the period 2008–2009.

5. Formulation and implementation of sector-specific public policies

5.1. Are the sector's employer associations and trade unions usually consulted by the authorities in sector-specific matters?

The three organisations mentioned above are consulted on sector-specific matters but this happens only occasionally.

5.2. Do tripartite bodies dealing with sector-specific issues exist?

With the exception of pension funds, sectoral issues are handled on a bipartite basis by the employer organisation and the two trade unions concerned.

6. Statutory regulations of representativeness

6.1. In the case of the trade unions, do statutory regulations exist which establish criteria of representativeness which a union must meet, so as to be entitled to conclude collective agreements?

No statutory regulations apply with regard to representativeness.

6.2. In the case of the unions, do statutory regulations exist which establish criteria of representativeness which a union must meet, so as to be entitled to be consulted in matters of public policy and to participate in tripartite bodies?

There are rules on representativeness with regard to participation in the tripartite Social and Economic Council ([Sociaal Economische Raad](#), SER) and in the bipartite Labour Foundation ([Stichting van de Arbeid](#), STAR). As a result, in these bodies three trade union federations are represented: FNV, CNV and the Federation of Managerial and Professional Staff Unions ([Vakcentrale Voor Middengroepen en Hoger Personeel](#), MHP).

6.3. Are elections for a certain representational body (e.g. works councils) established as criteria for union representativeness?

No.

6.4. Same question for employer associations as 6.1.

No statutory regulations apply with regard to representativeness.

6.5. Same question for employer associations as 6.2.

There are rules on representativeness with regard to participation in SER and STAR. As a result, in these bodies three employer organisations are represented: VNO-NCW, the Dutch Federation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises ([Midden- en Kleinbedrijf Nederland](#), MKB-Nederland) and the Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture ([Land- en Tuinbouw Organisatie](#), LTO-Nederland).

6.6. Are elections for a certain representational body established as criteria for the representativeness of employer associations?

No.

7. Commentary

It is easy to discern the representativeness of the social partners in this small sector of the Dutch economy. Just one employer organisation exists, which represents all but one of the 15 companies in the sector; the one opt-out is a small enterprise. The two national trade unions, representing about 24% of the employees in the sector, are accepted parties in consultation and in collective bargaining. No jurisdictional disputes or recognition problems arise. A single, sector-wide, collective agreement covers all of the companies, except one. Of employees in the sector, 95% are covered by this agreement.

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