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### Representativeness of the European social partner organisations: Commerce - Netherlands

Grünell, M.

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## → Representativeness of the European social partner organisations: Commerce – Netherlands

*The commerce sector plays an important part in the Dutch economy with traditionally stable employment. The labour relations in the sector are heterogeneous. The size of companies varies enormously, from small, family-run retailers through to multinational companies. This diversity is reflected in the organisational structure of the social partners, in particular in employer organisations.*

### 1. Sectoral properties

#### Development of employment

Table 1: Sectoral properties

	1998	2008
<b>Number of companies in the sector</b>	166,925	159,830
<b>Source of company data</b>	Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS)	CBS
<b>Aggregate employees</b>		1,137,000
<b>Male employees</b>		606,000
<b>Female employees</b>		531,000
<b>Share of sectoral employees in %</b>		15

### 2. The sector's trade unions and employer associations

This section includes the following trade unions and employer associations:

(i) trade unions which are party to sector-related collective bargaining (In line with the conceptual remarks outlined in the background information included in the accompanying excel spreadsheet, we understand sector-related collective bargaining as any kind of collective bargaining within the sector, i.e. single-employer bargaining as well as multi-employer bargaining. For the definition of single- and multi-employer bargaining, see 4.2)

(ii) trade unions which are a member of the sector-related European Union Federation (i.e. UNI-Europa – Commerce)

(iii) employer associations which are a party to sector-related collective bargaining

(iv) employer associations (business associations) which are a member of the sector-related European Employer/Business Federation (i.e. EUROCOMMERCE)

#### 2a Data on the trade unions

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

Voluntary.

##### 2a.2 Formal demarcation of membership domain (e.g. white-collar workers, private-sector

#### About this document

**ID:** NL1008019Q  
**Author:** Marianne Grünell  
**Institution:** University of Amsterdam, HSI  
**Country:** Netherlands  
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**workers, employees in the food service sector, etc.)**

There is no formal demarcation, although the union De Unie is oriented at middle-ranking and senior personnel. The unions are mainly organised according to food and non-food economic activities.

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

The total membership of FNV Bondgenoten was around 477,000 in 2009. FNV Bondgenoten is associated with the Dutch Federation of Trade Unions (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging, FNV), which had a total membership of 2,400,000 in 2009.

CNV Dienstenbond (CNV's services union), affiliated to the Christian Trade Union Federation (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond, CNV) is the second union active in the sector. The membership of CNV Dienstenbond is around 80,000. CNV's total membership amounted to 350,000 in 2009.

De Unie is affiliated to the MHP, a union association for middle-ranking and senior personnel. De Unie has a membership of around 80,000; the MHP had total of 160,000 members in 2009.

**2a.4 Number of union members in the sector**

The union respondents of FNV and CNV refuse to provide information on the union members in the sector since this is a sensitive issue. In the food and superstore sector the membership figures are blurred by the many flexible employees (women, pupils and students), who work only a few hours a week. In wholesale and in the non-food sector a large majority of employees are on a standard contract. Here membership of a union is more common and widespread.

It can be assumed that membership is around the national average in wholesale and in the non-food sector.

While the FNV Bondgenoten is active throughout the sector, the two other unions focus more on one or two individual branches. CNV Dienstenbond is mainly active in retail and wholesale and De Unie is almost exclusively active in the wholesale domain. De Unie has 1,500 members; with a total of 45,000 employees in wholesale, this translates to a density of 3.3%. However, in some branches within wholesale membership is more concentrated and density is thus higher.

The total sectoral union density is 10%, according to respondents.

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

In the commerce sector as a whole, female membership is between 25 and 35%, according to our respondents. In the non-food domain female membership is between 20 and 30%. In the food domain one may assume that female membership is higher. Respondents observe that female membership is growing.

**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)**

**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 total sectoral union density is 10%, according to respondents.

**2a.9 Does the union conclude sector-related collective agreements?**

The three unions mentioned – FNV, CNV and De Unie – conclude sector-related collective agreements. Unlike FNV Bondgenoten and CNV, which conclude agreements in the whole sector, De Unie is almost exclusively concerned with collective bargaining in the wholesale sub-sector.

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

Please document these data union by union.

FNV Bondgenoten is at national level affiliated to the Dutch Federation of Trade Unions (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging, FNV). At European level the union is member of UNI-Europa.

CNV Dienstenbond is affiliated to the Christian Trade Union Federation (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond, CNV) at national level. At European level CNV is a member of ETUC and at international level of ITUC. The CNV Dienstenbond is member of UNI-Europa – Commerce and at international level WOW.

On the national level De Unie is affiliated to the MHP, a union association for middle-ranked and senior personnel. De Unie is active in UNI-Europa – Commerce; the MHP is a member of UNI-Europe.

**Table 2: Union fact sheet: Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging Bondgenoten (FNV Bondgenoten)**

Affiliation to European-level organisations	Unie Europa
Affiliation to national-level organisations	FNV
Engagement in sector-related collective bargaining	yes
Type of membership	voluntary
Consultation in sector-related matters	yes
Union's domain with regard to sector	overlap
Domain overlap with other unions in sector	yes
Domain overlaps occur with the following unions in the sector	CNV Dienstenbond, De Unie
	<b>2009</b>
'Active' union members total (in employment)	n.g.
Union members (incl. non-employed), total	n.g.
'Active' union members in the sector (in employment)	n.g.
Union members in the sector, total (incl. non-employed)	n.g.
Female membership as a % of total members	0
Source of sectoral membership figures	Est. Social Partner
Union density – active members	n.g.
Sectoral density – active members	n.g.
Sectoral Domain density – active members	n.g.
Union density – total members	n.g.
Sectoral density – total members	n.g.
Sectoral Domain density – total members	n.g.
Description of union's domain with regard to sector	complete coverage
Representation of other groups than employees in the sector	no

**Table 3: Union fact sheet: CNV Dienstenbond**

Affiliation to multinational organisations	WOW (World Organisation of Workers)
Affiliation to European-level organisations	UNI-Europa – Commerce
Affiliation to national-level organisations	CNV
Engagement in sector-related collective bargaining	yes
Type of membership	voluntary

Consultation in sector-related matters	yes
Union's domain with regard to sector	overlap
Domain overlap with other unions in sector	yes
Domain overlaps occur with the following unions in the sector	FNV Bondgenoten, De Unie (MHP)
'Active' union members total (in employment)	n.g.
Union members (incl. non-employed), total	n.g.
'Active' union members in the sector (in employment)	n.g.
Union members in the sector, total (incl. non-employed)	n.g.
Female membership as a % of total members	n.g.
Union density – active members	n.g.
Sectoral density – active members	n.g.
Sectoral domain density – active members	n.g.
Union density – total members	n.g.
Sectoral density – total members	n.g.
Sectoral domain density – total members	n.g.
Description of union's domain with regard to sector	n.g.
Representation of other groups than employees in the sector	no

**Table 4: Union fact sheet: De Unie (MHP)**

Affiliation to European-level organisations	De Unie is active in Uni-Europe – Commerce
Affiliation to national-level organisations	De Unie is a member of CMHP
Engagment in sector-related collective bargaining	yes
Type of membership	voluntary
Consultation in sector-related matters	yes
Union's domain with regard to sector	sectional overlap
Domain overlap with other unions in sector	yes
Domain overlaps occur with the following unions in the sector	FNV Bondgenoten, CNV Dienstenbond
	<b>2009</b>
'Active' union members total (in employment)	1,500
Union members (incl. non-employed), total	45,000

'Active' union members in the sector (in employment)	1,500
Union members in the sector, total (incl. non-employed)	1,500
Female membership as a % of total members	n.g.
Source of sectoral membership figures	Est. Social Partner
Union density – active members	3%
Sectoral density – active members	0.1%
Sectoral domain density – active members	n.g.
Union density – total members	3%
Sectoral density – total members	n.g.
Sectoral domain density – total members	n.g.
Description of union's domain with regard to sector	n.g.
Representation of other groups than employees in the sector	no

## 2b Data on the employer associations

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

Voluntary.

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

There are no formal demarcations; on pragmatic grounds the associations are organised around wholesale and retail, size of companies and products (food, non-food).

MKB-Nederland and the Council for Dutch Retail (Raad Nederlandse Detailhandel, RND) facilitate sector-related associations, including those formed to conclude collective agreements. RND facilitates 12 branch associations, which actually conclude the collective labour agreements. Most member associations of the RND are large national retail companies and chain stores in food as well as non-food. CBW-MITEX represents SMEs and large retail enterprises, some of which are also members of RND. The federation for SMEs in the retail trade is the National Shop Council (Nationale Winkelraad). Furthermore, the Expert centre for independent retailers, Vakcentrum (voor zelfstandige ondernemers in de detailhandel) organises independent food retailers. Vakcentrum is facilitated by the Central Council (wholesale) Foods, CBL.

The Central Council (wholesale) foods (Centrale Levensmiddelen(groot)handel, CBL) facilitates the three main collective agreements in the sector:

- The collective agreement for chain stores in food retail, in which employers are represented by the Association of food retail chain stores (de Vereniging Grootwinkelbedrijf Levensmiddelen; VGL). The VGL is a member of the RND.
- The collective agreement for independently owned food retail stores, in which employers are represented by the association for independent food retail stores (Vakcentrum).
- The collective agreement for food wholesale, in which employers are represented by the Federation for Wholesale in Food (Federatie voor de Groothandel in Levensmiddelen, FGL).

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

In retail, of the total number of potential member companies, fewer than 50% belong to one of the branch organisations and federations. The organised companies are thought to employ more than 90% of all employees in the retail trade. (This figure includes the numbers of food retail enterprises organised in the CBL.)

In the food wholesale including retail the association VGL organises all companies/branch associations; it has 15 members (density 100%). The FGL, with 11 members, also has a density of almost 100%. Vakcentrum has 1,800 members of a total of 2,800 companies (density: 64%).

Member companies of VGL and FGL include large multinationals such as Ahold, Aldi, Lidl and Metro.

#### **2b.4 Number of member companies in the sector**

See 2b.3

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

In the food retail and wholesale sub-sectors, organised by CBL, some 240,000 workers are employed. Of these 240,000, VGL member companies employ 140,000 workers, FGL companies employ 16,000 and Vakcentrum member companies employ 60,000. The remaining 24,000 workers are employed in companies where the collective agreements are indirectly linked to one of the three main collective agreements.

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

See 2b.5.

#### **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)**

#### **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 density in terms of companies in the sector is estimated at around 50%.

#### **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**

#### **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)**

#### **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 density in terms of employees in the sector is at least 90%. (E, respondents)

#### **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**

#### **2b.13 Does the employer association conclude sector-related collective agreements?**

The branch organisations conclude nearly 40 collective agreements in the 16 to 18 branches in retail (food retail supermarkets, food retail specialist shops and non food-branches; Hoofd Bedrijfschap Detailhandel, HBD). The three branch organisations in wholesale conclude three main collective agreements. In addition to these multi-employer agreements, six to eight company agreements are concluded.

As mentioned, the associations concerned are assisted by CBL, RND and others in concluding the agreements.

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

All organisations mentioned are linked to either the national organisation MKB-Nederland or VNO-NCW. For example, Vakcentrum and the National Shop Council are members of MKB-Nederland, while VGL and FGL are members of VNO-NCW. The two national organisations – MKB-Nederland or VNO-NCW – are presently merging.

Detailhandel NL is a member of EUROCOMMERCE and aims to represent the Dutch food retail branch

at European level. RND and CBL are members of Detailhandel NL; they assist branch organisations in concluding collective labour agreements. Thus RND and CBL also participate in EUROCOMMERCE.

Some associations are also active at the international level. For example Vakcentrum is a member of the International Federation of Grocers' Associations.

## 2b Data on the employer associations

**Table 5: Employers' organisation fact sheet: Vereniging Grootwinkelbedrijf Levensmiddelen (VGL)**

Engagement in sector-related collective bargaining	yes
Consultation in sector-related matters	yes
Type of membership	voluntary
Organisation's domain with regard to sector	sectionalism
Domain overlap with other organisations in sector	yes
Domain overlaps occur with the following organisations	Vakcentrum, FGL, national shop council
	<b>2009</b>
Number of member companies, total	15
Number of employees in member companies total	140,000
Number of member companies in sector	15
Number of employees in member companies in sector	140,000
Source of membership figures	Est. Social Partner
Domain density – companies	100%
Sectoral density – companies	0.01%
Domain density – employees	100%
Sectoral density – employees	11–14%
Description of organisation's domain with regard to sector	Food
Representation of particular subgroups of enterprises	Large companies

**Table 6: Employers' organisation fact sheet: Federatie voor de Groothandel in Levensmiddelen (FGL)**

Affiliation to multinational organisations	no
Affiliation to European-level organisations	Via Detailhandel NL, FGL is a member of EuroCommerce
Affiliation to national-level organisations	VNO-NCW
Engagement in sector-related collective bargaining	yes
Consultation in sector-related matters	yes
Type of membership	Voluntary



Organisation's domain with regard to sector	sectionalism
Domain overlap with other organisations in sector	yes
Domain overlaps occur with the following organisations	VGL, Vakcentrum
	<b>2009</b>
Number of member companies, total	11
Number of employees in member companies total	16,000
Number of member companies in sector	11
Number of employees in member companies in sector	16,000
Source of membership figures	Est. Social Partner
Domain density – companies	100%
Sectoral density – companies	Very high: 91–100%
Sectoral domain density – companies	100%
Domain density – employees	100%
Sectoral density – employees	1–2%
Sectoral domain density – employees	100%
Description of organisation's domain with regard to sector	Food, wholesale
Representation of particular subgroups of enterprises	Wholesale

**Table 7: Employers' organisation fact sheet: Vakcentrum**

Affiliation to multinational organisations	International Federation of Grocers' Association
Affiliation to European-level organisations	Via Detailhandel NI affiliated to Europe Commerce
Affiliation to national-level organisations	Central employer organisation VNO-NCW
Engagement in sector-related collective bargaining	yes
Consultation in sector-related matters	yes
Type of membership	Voluntary
Organisation's domain with regard to sector	sectionalism
Domain overlap with other organisations in sector	yes
Domain overlaps occur with the following organisations	VGL and FGL
	<b>2009</b>
Number of member companies, total	1,800
Number of employees in member companies total	60,000

Number of member companies in sector	1,800
Number of employees in member companies in sector	60,000
Source of membership figures	Est. Social Partner
Domain density – companies	64%
Sectoral density – companies	Very high: 91–100%
Domain density – employees	71%
Sectoral density – employees	5–6%
Sectoral domain density – employees	64%

### 3. Inter-associational relationships

#### 3a Inter-union relationships

##### 3a.1 Please list all trade unions covered by this study whose domains overlap.

The domains of the three unions – FNV, CNV and de Unie – overlap; within the unions there are specialisations in either the food or the non-food domain.

##### 3a.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, the three unions consult each other and cooperate harmoniously. Thus their position is not at all disputed.

##### 3a.3 If yes, are certain trade unions excluded from these rights?

No.

#### 3b Inter-employer association relationships

Although there is some overlap in activities, the organisations cooperate on a practical level.

##### 3b.1 Please list all employer associations covered by this study whose domains overlap.

Some overlap concerning employer associations in the retail and wholesale of food can be observed, but the respondents stress that this is for practical reasons concerning the division of labour. The different employer parties signing the collective labour agreements confirmed this.

##### 3.b.2 Do rivalries and competition exist among the employer associations, concerning the right to conclude collective agreements and to be consulted in public policy formulation and implementation?

Although there is 'healthy' competition among the organisations, no problems are reported concerning the right to conclude agreements or be consulted.

##### 3b.3 If yes, are certain employer associations excluded from these rights?

No.

##### 3b.4 Are there large companies or employer associations which refuse to recognise the trade unions and refuse to enter collective bargaining?

Yes; the supermarket chain Lidl is the one unfortunate exception here, according to the FNV respondent.

### 4. The system of collective bargaining

According to the commodity board the HBD (Hoofd Bedrijfschap Detailhandel [see 5.2 below]), almost 40 collective agreements are concluded in the retail domain.

Some collective agreements are very similar and are jointly bargained. They include two of the three main collective agreements: the agreement for chain stores in food retail and the collective agreement for independently owned food retail stores. See 2b.2 and 4.3.

Regarding non-food, one collective agreement covers all relevant employees (40,000–45,000 altogether) via the extension procedure. This collective agreement for the technical, non-food wholesale branch is the key agreement; three multinational companies add to this agreement their own regulations.

**4.1. Estimate the sector's rate of collective bargaining coverage (i.e. the ratio of the number of employees covered by any kind of collective agreement to the total number of employees in the sector).**

In retail and wholesale and in food retail the coverage is 95%. Given the two employers' associations with a (member) density of 100% this figure comes as no surprise. The coverage in retail in food and food for catering is also inclusive since collective agreements are extended to the whole branch; two-thirds of the companies are organised and so the agreements meet the requirements for extension.

**4.2. Estimate the relative importance of multi-employer agreements and of single-employer agreements as a percentage of the total number of employees covered. (Multi-employer bargaining is defined as being conducted by an employer association on behalf of the employer side. In the case of single-employer bargaining, it is the company or its subunit(s) which is the party to the agreement. This includes the cases where two or more companies jointly negotiate an agreement.)**

In retail and wholesale in food 80% of agreements are multi-employer agreements.

In the technical, non-food domain there is only one, extended, multi-employer agreement (since the three company agreements are 'top ups' of this key agreement).

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

Yes, in retail and in wholesale extension procedures are applied.

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

This practice is pervasive.

**4.3. List all sector-related multi-employer wage agreements\* valid in 2008 (or most recent data), including for each agreement information on the signatory parties and the purview of the agreement in terms of branches, types of employees and territory covered.**

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

**Table 8: Sector-related multi-employer wage agreements**

Bargaining parties	Purview of the sector-related multi-employer wage agreements		
	Sectoral	Type of employees	Territorial
Food/Levensmiddelenbedrijf VGL (empl. rep.) Vakcentrum (empl. rep.) Cooperaties (empl. rep.) Union FNV Bondgenoten Union CNV Dienstenbond	Domain-wide	All 240,000 (except staff)	-
Non-Food/wholesale/Techn Groothandel Technische groothandel (empl rep) Union FNV Bondgenoten Union CNV Dienstenbond Union De Unie	Domain-wide	All 45,000	-

**4.4. List the sector's four most important collective agreements (single-employer or multi-employer agreements) valid in 2008 (or most recent data), including for each agreement information on the signatory parties and the purview of the agreement in terms of branches, types of employees and territory covered. Importance is measured in terms of employees covered.**

## 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? If yes, which associations?**

The social partner organisations mentioned above are occasionally consulted on sector-specific matters (similar to the practice in other economic sectors). After consultation, issues are usually arranged on a bipartite basis; for example with respect to vocational training. Politically more contested issues – flexible working and age criteria for example – have been evaluated by the authorities and communicated with the sector. Since no legal problems arose during the evaluation the sector is able to deal with the issue itself. Worthy of mention here are initiatives of the authorities directed at specific groups – the unemployment Taskforce among young people or the part-time jobs Taskforce for women. These committees make an appeal to the sector for commitment.

**5.2. Do tripartite bodies dealing with sector-specific issues exist? If yes, please indicate their domain of activity (for instance, health and safety, equal opportunities, labour market, social security and pensions etc.), their origin (agreement/statutory) and the interest organisations having representatives in them:**

HoofdBedrijfsschapDetailhandel, HBD and Bedrijfscommissie Groothandel, BGH are bipartite Commodity boards. Membership is obligatory. The boards advise the authorities on sector-specific matters, for example the location of shops. HBD and BGH are comparable with the Commodity boards in the agricultural sector.

**Table 9: Bodies dealing with sector-specific issues**

Name of the body and scope of activity	Bipartite/tripartite	Origin: agreement/statutory	Unions with representatives (reps)	Employer organisations with reps
Commodity boards (estbl. by SER) have to promote business operations and represent the collective interests of the businesses and the persons involved (art. 71 of the Industrial Organisation Act (Wet op de bedrijfsorganisatie 1950) ( <a href="#">NL0307102F</a> ))	Bipartite	Statutory	FNV Bondgenoten CNV Dienstenbond	Nationale Winkelraad (MKB-Nederland) Raad Nederlandse Detailhandel, Centrale Vereniging voor Ambulante Handel

\* Sector-specific policies specifically target and affect the sector under consideration.

## 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? If yes, please briefly illustrate these rules and list the organisations which meet them.**

There are no statutory regulations 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? If yes, please briefly illustrate these rules and list the organisations which meet them.**

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 union federations are represented: Federations of Dutch Trade Unions (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging, FNV), Christian Trade Union Federation (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond, CNV) and MHP, the national union federation for middle and higher personnel.

**6.3. Are elections for a certain representational body (e.g. works councils)**

**established as criteria for union representativeness? If yes, please report the most recent electoral outcome for the sector.**

No.

**6.4. Same question for employer associations as 6.1.**

There are no statutory regulations with regard to representativeness.

**6.5. Same question for employer associations as 6.2.**

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 employer associations are represented: VNO-NCW, MKB-Nederland, the employer association for SMEs and LTO-Nederland, the organisation for the agricultural sector. Commerce (CEO Vakcentrum) is also represented.

**6.6. Are elections for a certain representational body established as criteria for the representativeness of employer associations? If yes, please report the most recent outcome for the sector.**

No.

## 7. Commentary

Labour relations in the Dutch commerce sector are heterogeneous. The size of companies varies enormously, from small, family-run retailers through to multinational companies. This diversity is reflected in the organisational structure of the social partners, in particular in employer organisations. The many different organisations are pragmatic and cooperate where possible and are in the process of streamlining their associations. The membership density is high: from 50 to 100% of entrepreneurs are member of one of the employer associations. On the employee side the field is much less complicated: the three main unions – of FNV, CNV and MHP (De Unie) – conclude all collective agreements. Of these agreements 80% are multi-employer agreements. All collective agreements have full coverage, either through 100% membership density on employer side or via the extension procedure. Union membership density is a sensitive issue. Respondents estimate that around 10% of employees are organised, with greater density in the non-food domain and wholesale than in the retail. Density figures are somewhat misleading because of the increase in the number of flexible workers: women, students and pupils in small, part-time jobs. The exact density figures are kept secret by FNV and CNV. Even so the representativeness of the unions is not questioned, either in consultation by government or by employer organisations.

Marianne Grünell, University of Amsterdam, HSI

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