

Partners in Europe



Many of the developments on the labour market for hospitals relate to issues facing almost all European hospitals. The Dutch social partners believe that structural cooperation between European employer and employee organizations is vital for coping with these developments. They are therefore playing an active role in the European Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital Sector. This participation is supported by the StAZ, the Organisation of Social Partners in Hospitals in the Netherlands (Stichting Arbeidsmarkt Ziekenhuizen).

What is the StAZ?

The StAZ is a partnership in which the Dutch employers' organization NVZ (the Dutch hospitals association) and trade union/employee organizations (ABVAKABO FNV, CNV Publieke Zaak, FBZ, NU'91 and De Unie Zorg en Welzijn) work together in the field of labour market policy. The aim of the StAZ is to help create a flourishing labour market and promote high standards among employees in health care. One of its main priorities is to ensure that the hospital sector is an attractive place to work for both existing and new personnel.

Activities carried out by StAZ in this respect include:

- setting up innovative projects, e.g. aimed at reducing aggression from patients and visitors in hospitals;
- collecting and disseminating knowledge, e.g. about workplace health promotion;
- organizing meetings and conferences where hospitals can exchange ideas about improving employee availability and career opportunities;
- conducting research, e.g. into obstacles, questions and opportunities in the area of recruitment and retention;
- assisting Dutch hospitals in applying for ESF subsidies;
- facilitating contacts between Dutch hospitals to discuss best practices.

The Dutch social partners believe that they can achieve more in collaboration than in isolation. By joining forces in the StAZ, they can effectively help Dutch hospitals to maintain and improve the quality and quantity of their workforce at the required level. Furthermore, this collaboration enables them to make efficient use of the resources available in the field of labour market policy.

How does the StAZ contribute to the European social dialogue?

The Dutch social partners actively contribute to the European social dialogue. The StAZ supports them in many ways, both practical and advisory:

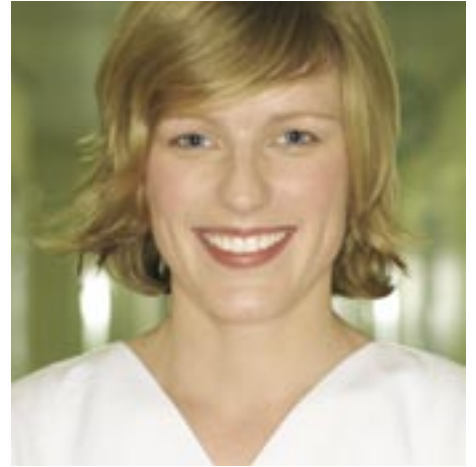
- The StAZ advises, informs and facilitates the Dutch social partners taking part in the European Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital Sector.
- The StAZ is an observer in the Committee.
- The StAZ supports various projects set up by the Committee. For instance, she participates in a project with HOSPEEM and EPSU, setting up research and pilots to stimulate social dialogue in new EU member states.
- On behalf of the Dutch social partners, the StAZ organizes conferences and meetings where European social partners can exchange experiences and meet each other informally.

What else does the StAZ do in Europe?

To increase the involvement of Dutch employers and employees in hospitals in 'Europe', the StAZ provides them with information on relevant European legislation through newsletters, workshops and a website. The StAZ is participating in several European networks. These networks will give hospitals access to information about the best practices that have been developed by institutions across Europe. They also allow hospitals and social partners to contact European policymakers, subsidy providers and interest groups, to assist them in both daily work and strategic developments.



The European Social Dialogue



The European social dialogue is the discussion between European social partners in the hospital sector, aimed at promoting the interests of the European hospital sector in Brussels. Social partners from practically all European member states participate in the dialogue.

In recent years, the European Commission has come to rely more and more on the input of social partners. Thus, in September 2006, European social partners EPSU and HOSPEEM set up the European Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital Sector. Through this committee, they can directly influence EU policy in the field of healthcare and the healthcare labour market. According to Article 138 of the EC Treaty, the committee must always be informed and consulted about relevant proposed legislation

and policy documents. Furthermore, it can sign binding covenants and issue a joint standpoint on a new directive. The European Commission is then obliged to take this standpoint into consideration.

By joining in the European Social Dialogue Committee, EPSU and HOSPEEM want to increase the participation of the European hospital sector in EU policy and ensure that European legislation for hospitals responds to the current situation in practice. They are also working to strengthen the quality of care and labour in European hospitals by promoting knowledge sharing. For example, the Committee enables the European hospital sector to exchange solutions for shared problems and formulate a joint response to European developments.

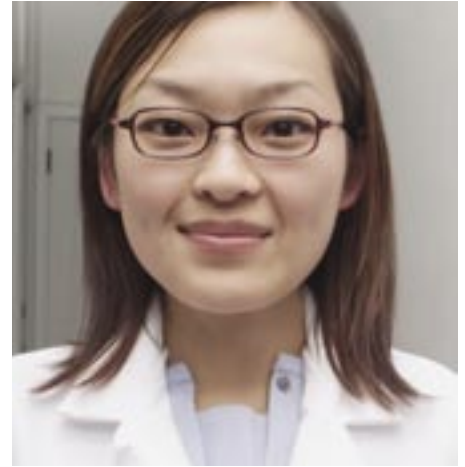
Programme

The objectives of the European Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital Sector are to:

- Promote the interests of employers and employees in hospitals at European level
- Influence the development of European employment and healthcare legislation and policy
- Provide a network for sharing information and experiences
- Propose solutions for problems and challenges faced by European hospitals
- Strengthen the social dialogue in new member states.



Themes



Over the next few years, the following themes will play a prominent role in the Committee:

- The Aging population: in the near future, hospitals will be confronted with an increasing number of ageing patients and staff. The European Social Dialogue Committee is taking steps to find solutions for these developments in the age distribution. These include participating in EU policy discussions on demographic changes, creating sector awareness of the problem and sharing practical experience and research.
- Skill needs: the European social partners aim to ensure high quality healthcare through qualified personnel. This involves a high standard of training for new employees and additional training in response to medical, technical and organizational developments. The Committee wants to contribute by initiating supplementary research, exchanging information at European level and advising on European policy regarding qualifications in the healthcare sector.
- Recruitment and retention of personnel: this theme includes a variety of topics: from basic employment terms to optimised working conditions and career development. The Committee seeks to promote hospitals as an attractive sector for old and new employees across Europe by focussing on the exchange of experience, the dissemination of best practices and close intercourse with European Commission in all relevant policies.

- Migration of personnel: the problems arising from migration are twofold. On the one hand, unilateral migration can lead to a 'brain drain' in the countries of origin. On the other hand, personnel and employers in the receiving countries are confronted with language problems, cultural differences, problems recognizing training qualifications and over-qualification. The Committee plans to tackle these problems by promoting transnational cooperation, providing more information about migration and looking for long-term solutions to personnel shortages.

Development of the European Social Dialogue

Before the establishment of the European Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital Sector, the European social partners also met regularly for consultation. The main driving forces behind this consultation were the European employer and employee organizations in the hospital sector: CEEP (HOSPEEM) and EPSU. They held regular discussions with national social partners

(affiliated partners) about the main challenges facing European hospitals.

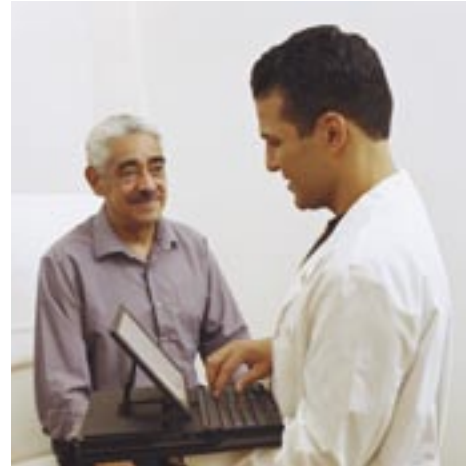
To support this consultation, the StAZ organized a conference in 2004 on behalf of the Dutch social partners. This conference brought together about a hundred participants from 23 countries to meet each other informally and discuss best practices.

The establishment of the European Social Dialogue Committee of the Hospital Sector by EPSU and HOSPEEM has increased the strength, influence and reach of this European social dialogue. However, further expansion of the dialogue is vital: the more social partners take part, the better the European hospital sector can make its voice heard in Brussels.



“Now that the borders are opening in Europe, there are more opportunities for employees to work outside their own countries. It is important that the qualifications they have built up as healthcare workers remain of value and that they can find work at a similar level. The terms of employment in the different European countries must also remain in step with each other. It is therefore important that social partners participate – with the assistance of the StAZ – in the European social dialogue.”

Elise Merlijn, ABVAKABO FNV



“By participating in the Europeans social dialogue, employers and employees in the European hospital sector can directly influence decisions made in Brussels that affect them. Without this influence, hospitals run the risk that European policymakers will introduce rules that are not practicable. By keeping a finger on the pulse and participating in the discussion through the European Social Dialogue Committee for the Hospital Sector, hospitals can exert more influence on what Europe demands of them and can offer them.”

Hans Schirmbeck, NVZ Dutch hospitals association



The **StAZ**



The **StAZ** supports initiatives aimed at putting European hospitals and social partners in contact, providing them with information and inviting them to work together.

Would you like to know more about the Dutch hospital sector and the solutions it has proposed for problems that may exist in your country? Or would you like to get in touch with Dutch employer and employee organizations?

Then do not hesitate to contact the StAZ. We will be happy to talk to you.

Organisation of Social Partners in Hospitals in the Netherlands (StAZ)

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SIHZ
Organisation for Social
Partners in Hospitals in
the Netherlands

European Social Dialogue

Partners in Europe

Dutch participation in the European
Social Dialogue of the Hospital Sector

