

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF THE NETHERLANDS (SER)
Advice on Workplace Innovation



The Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) is an advisory body in which Crown-appointed members comprising employers, employees and independent experts work together to reach agreement on key social and economic issues. SER advises the Dutch government and Parliament on social and economic policy, offering both solicited and unsolicited advice. The recommendations made by the SER are public.

In 2020, the government at the time sent a request to tSER for advice on how to foster workplace innovation. On March 16, 2023, the Council adopted the [final text](#) in a plenary meeting.

Learning from other countries

It took a long time to come to an agreement. Some employers' organisations did not want advice that could lead to obligations. Other employers' organisations and the trade unions took a favourable view from the start. TNO participated in the working group that prepared the advice, which describes the benefits of workplace innovation for productivity, Innovation capacity and quality of working life and demonstrates good practice. It also refers to EUWIN, to Workitects, and to experiences with programmes in Finland, Germany, Scotland and Flanders.

European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN)



EUWIN was established by the European Commission in 2013 and is now entirely supported by contributions from an international network of partners co-ordinated by HIVA (University of Leuven). EUWIN also functions as a network partner for the H2020 [Bevond4.0](#) project.

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The advice is addressed both to the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment and the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate. One part of the advice is to learn from the experiences in other countries. This will be organised by the SER shortly. A second part of the advice is to create a subsidy for SMEs that want to apply workplace innovation. The third and most important part of the advice is to set up a Platform for Workplace Innovation. This should be initiated by the social partners in consultation with the government.

Platform for Workplace Innovation

The platform has a twofold objective:

1. Boosting, inspiring and supporting organisations that are applying or want to apply workplace innovation. The platform must therefore also play the role of driving concrete innovations. For example, a pilot in healthcare could be started.
2. Collecting, analysing, opening and disseminating expertise and knowledge related to workplace innovation. The function of the platform as a knowledge centre gives workplace innovation an independent place in the system of scientific research.

The platform has the following specific tasks:

- actively stimulating innovation in the organisation of work;
- disseminating practical knowledge and experiences with workplace innovation;
- act as a source of information and provide advice (e.g. on the SME incentive scheme proposed above) to employers and employees;
- linking technological innovation in practice with renewal of the organisation of work and involving workplace innovation in other major transitions (e.g. digitalisation, energy transition, etc.);
- making an inventory of barriers that companies (may) experience when introducing workplace innovation and contribute to possible solutions;
- setting up a research and monitoring programme for innovation in work organisation in conjunction with the social partners:
- Making suitable (re)design theories and criteria for the renewal of work organisation accessible, based on current scientific insights;
- developing a programmatic approach per sector;
- provide specific support to works councils.

Financial resources

The platform has a broad target group (employers, employees and experts, but also politicians and policy makers). Its focus should be on branch and sector organisations (private and public) and extra attention should be paid to SMEs to ensure that sufficient knowledge is available everywhere. It goes without saying that the intended platform works together with knowledge institutes such as TNO.

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An important precondition in the formation of the proposed platform is the extra resources, time and people to set this up. According to the SER, the necessary structural financing requires the government to make a substantial contribution and that an appeal is made to the ESF. In addition, private financing sources can be tapped. The platform's ability to operate independently is a crucial precondition for acceptance of any private resources.

Next step

The government's response to this advice may take some time. The maximum time for a response is six months. In the meantime, the social partners will already collect and discuss experiences from other countries and develop ideas about how the platform can be set up in the best possible way.

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