

Colombia Hans de Boer participates in DECP workshop

November 28, 2018 – ‘Make sure you have an eye for the concerns of your employees’. That was the message from Hans de Boer - chairman of VNO-NCW and DECP - to his South American colleagues in Bogotá, Colombia. De Boer was in Bogotá because of a trade mission of more than hundred organisations, led by the Dutch Prime Minister Rutte.

The directors and board members of the employers' organisations from Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia came to Bogotá for a workshop on working conditions and absenteeism, organized by DECP and ANDI, the Asociación Nacional de Empresarios de Colombia. "People are worried about the consequences of internationalisation and robotization for their work and income," said De Boer. "Only by taking these concerns seriously it will be possible to set up a social dialogue and make agreements with trade unions." Concern for employees and their possible problems is also essential to reduce absenteeism, emphasized De Boer.

The goal of the two-day meeting was to get to know each other, but above all to exchange knowledge and experience. For additional substantive input, DECP also flown in a Dutch expert on working conditions and absenteeism. It was the first time that employers' organisations from the four Andean countries met in such a setting.

The DECP workshop is part of a broader program to explore the possibilities of bipartite social dialogue (between employers and trade unions) in several South American countries. In Peru and Colombia DECP collaborates with Mondiaal FNV, in Bolivia with CNV Internationaal. In Peru, this led to a local variant of the Labor Foundation (Asociación para el Trabajo) in June 2018. In Bolivia, important steps were taken this year especially in the regions of Santa Cruz and Cochabamba.

During the workshop a number of concrete projects in the field of working conditions and absenteeism were presented. For example, the employers' federation in Santa Cruz (Bolivia), together with the regional union, has established a Council for Safety and Health at Work. The Peruvian *Sociedad Nacional de Industrias* is working on a project to transform the labor inspectorate from a body of lawyers who hand out penalties into an organisation of doctors and economists who help SMEs to create good working conditions.

ANDI has done extensive research into sickness absence among a thousand employers in Colombia. The results of the research are now being used to give politicians, the judiciary and other stakeholders insight into the harmful consequences for employers of the very detailed laws and regulations in this area.