



## DUTCH EMPLOYERS COOPERATION PROGRAMME



### SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY DECP EXPERTS

EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS HAVE A LOT OF CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS. HAVEN'T WE ALL? AFTER ALL, WORLD WIDE CHALLENGES LIKE THE CORONACRISIS DO NOT OCCUR OFTEN.

DECP SPECIALISTS COLLECT RELEVANT INFORMATION, COMPARE STUDIES WITH REGARDS TO THE EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM.

THIS ALLOWS THEM TO GIVE ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS. FOUR OF THEM GIVE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN THEIR FIELD OF EXPERTISE.

FREQUENTLY ASKES QUESTIONS.

**DECP ANSWERS WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH.**

## 1. Why should an employers' organisation take specific action in corona times?

"In times of crisis companies need central organisations that can deliver information and advice on how to deal with the crisis. Employers' organisations are reliable central organisations who can function as a one stop shop for information. They can make sure information is adequate, complete and responding to the needs and



concerns of businesses. In addition, employers' organisations have a role to play as an advisor to the government how to deal with the economy during and after the crisis. Employers' organisations are representative trusted partners for the government. They can translate business experiences into concrete advise what measures to take to ease the effects of the crisis. When this is done together with trade unions, the advice could even be stronger. Especially in times of crisis, employers' organisations should be there for their members and fight for business continuity".

*Peter Bongaerts, Director DECP*

"The COVID-19 crisis is one of the biggest crisis worldwide for the economy, which has an huge impact on members, on the economy, and on the employers' organisation itself.

Employers organisations have to show to members that they are there in times of need and of profound crisis. This period will be a test for many organisations to prove and show their relevancy and capabilities to members and potential members. If well done, it will maintain and increase membership. If badly done, it may affect profoundly your reputation and hamper future trust of your members in your capacities. This crisis is hence an opportunity, and a threat. And in a way an obligation to act fast, adequately in full service for your main asset, the members and the business community's.

Most employers' organisations are hence rapidly reorienting their normal functioning to be of support to its members: provide them with accurate and credible information, be of direct assistance to their needs at the workplace, with the workers, and in their economic financial management, during and after the crisis, and act as voice of business with the government via lobbying, advocacy and social dialogue. Later on they will have to reflect also on the longer term impact the Corona crisis and aftermath will have on their future development".



*Arnout de Koster, special advisor*

*Further reading:*

- introduction text [The employers' organisation as 1 stop shop](#)
- introduction text [Services](#)
- introduction text [Lobby and advocacy](#)

## **2. What are the main focus-points to take action on?**

Employers organisations concentrate on four types of action;

1. Act as *information channel* to their members on all the aspects of the COVID- 19
2. Act as *service centre* to help their companies individually to get through the crisis and cope with the consequences
3. Act as *policy influencer* to work with governments and trade unions to develop adequate policies
4. Be very *visible* and in communication with members and the public at large

In the first phases of the crisis, information and advice are crucial. Companies want to know what government rules apply to them and how to comply with these rules at the workplace. Business continuity is another important aspect and employers' organisations can be helpful with individual (legal) advice to help companies taking the right measures. For the business sector as a whole, employers' organisations have the overview of the main concerns and needs of their members. Therefore they should actively engage with the government in making policy plans to tackle the crisis. In dialogue with trade unions, employers' organisations can develop proposals to secure employment and advise the government accordingly in a tripartite setting.

*Further reading:*

- 1.2 [Guidelines and information](#)
- 1.3 [Exchange of experiences](#)
- 2.1 [Services](#)
- 2.2 [Advice](#)
- 2.3 [Risk assessment and consultancy](#)
- introduction text [Lobby and advocacy](#)

### 3. What active specific support can we give to our members?

Employers' organisations can give specific support to their members by adapting services to the specific COVID-19 context. They can for instance help companies with practical issues such as filling in forms, making templates available for labour contracts and calculating the effect of government measures for individual companies. Employers' organisations can advise companies on practices and policies for risk management and business continuity. They can do this on their own, by launching risk assessment tools and offering advisory services. But they can also stimulate platforms for peer-to-peer exchange or refer to specialists to assist companies with business continuity. Most important is to be there for your members and give all the support you can, preferably yourself or otherwise in partnership with others.

*Further reading:*

- introduction text [Services](#)
- 2.1 [Routine assistance for individual companies](#)
- 2.2 [Advice](#)
- 2.3 [Risk assessment and consultancy](#)

### 4. What can we do to be prepared for the 'after Corona' era?

For employers' organisations it is important to look ahead what the future will look like after the Corona crisis. The corona crisis will cause temporary or permanent changes in economies, markets and companies. This will lead to opportunities or threats for the position of individual companies and sectors. Difficult as it may be, it is important to find time to get together as an employers' organisation with your team and members to think about what is happening. Forward thinking about how to adapt modalities of support to the new economic reality is necessary. How can members services for instance be transformed into more digital services? And most difficult: are there any "pre-Corona darlings" (services or activities you offered to members before the crisis) which should be stopped?

*Further reading:*

- Special [What will the future of the employers' organisation look like](#)

## 5. What can we do (now) to kickstart the economy after Corona has been defeated?

There is no unique recipe for economic recovery and for short term measures that should be taken. Your members, the companies, know best what is necessary to change the economic situation and to improve market circumstances. Be in close contact with them: consult them about their needs and their expectations. Ask them what they can do themselves to kickstart their businesses and what they need from others – workers and governments – to operate successfully in the post-Corona reality. Involve trade unions to have a clear picture of workers' needs and possibilities to contribute to a favorable business environment. Involve sector organisations to have a clear view of specific industry needs. And put all these insights together in a roadmap for economic recovery with concrete short term measures that governments should take. Discuss these measures directly with the government or together with trade unions in a tripartite social dialogue.

*Further reading:*

- Special [What will the future of the employers' organisation look like](#)
- introduction text [Lobby and advocacy](#)



*Peter Boorsma, special advisor, about social dialogue*

## **6. Why is it useful to start talks with the trade unions as soon as possible?**

It is highly recommendable to get in *contact with the trade unions* to discuss consequences of the corona crisis for business and workers. Many topics concern both employers and employees. Think of working safely; government support for companies, unemployed or informal workers; confinement measures and policies to rebuild the economy. Workers have a big interest in the wellbeing of their company, for their jobs and for their salary.

*Discussing topics with the trade unions* helps to find a common ground which help to implement measures concerning health of workers, working hours etcetera. A lobby towards government has far more impact if it is a joint lobby by workers and entrepreneurs. While negotiating, think about the interest workers and trade unions might have or just ask them for it in order to find win-win-situations. Try to make package deals and work on mutual trust.

## **7. Which other parties we should involve in giving specific support to our members?**

Start talking with the *trade unions* and ask them about the situation and the worries of the workers and tell them about the employers' worries. Try to work together on working safely and on a joint lobby towards government. Try to make arrangements with the financial sector about longer terms to pay off credits and credits to overcome the crisis.

Negotiate with government about measures to support or relieve companies, preferably with the support of the trade unions. You probably must talk with government agencies in order to organise and guarantee *good information* about corona, health policies and economic, financial and social measures. Maybe you need the National Health Institute or Organizational Health Services for advice on how to work safely in different sectors.

In some cases, it may be wise to hire a legal firm to increase capacity in assisting individual members.

*Further reading:*

-3.2. [Preparation of policy positions](#)

-3.3. [Policy solutions via lobbying and social dialogue](#)

## 8. What kind of information is useful for our members?

Companies are looking for two kinds of information during and immediately after the crisis: on government policies and on business solutions.

1. Companies are looking for simple explanations of governmental policies. Explain in simple, non-legal language what the practical consequences are.
2. Companies don't want to reinvent the wheel. Provide them with examples: what do other companies, here and abroad, do?

Trust is why employers are turning to their employers' organisation. Make sure your information is thrust worthy, correct and adequate. And be transparent about your sources.

*Jannes van der Velde, special advisor, is answering questions on communication*



## 9. How should we present and distribute this information?

The most effective and efficient way to make the information available for members is by dedicating a special section of the website to this 'corona information'. Combine this with a special digital newsletter and/or posts on social media like Facebook or LinkedIn. The covid-19-crisis provides an opportunity to jump forward in using digital means of communication.

## 10. Should we present information exclusively for members?

If technically possible put the information on your website **behind a digital wall**. Only members should have a login code. This give your members an advantage over non-members. Teas others, like potential members, by publishing the headers of your articles on the open sections of the website.

## 11. How will this crisis change our organisation?

There are probably many lessons to be learned from this crisis. The most important lesson may well be how important it is that the business community is represented at all levels of government. This is the core activity of the employers' organisation as well as its unique selling point. Refocus your organisation according to this: advocacy and social dialogue are your core activities.

And use the covid-19-crisis to convince the business community how much they will need you in the next crisis (and between crises).

*Further reading:*

- 4.1. [Information for members](#)
- 4.2. [Advocacy and lobbying](#)
  
- Special [Look how information can be presented and shared](#)
- Special [What will the future of the employers' organisation look like](#)