



## **‘Het nieuwe werken’, here to stay or not?**

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## **Executive Summary**

The first part-time jobs came into development in the 1950's. Due to shortage of (female) workers companies started offering part-time jobs to married women. Only part-time jobs were offered since the norms and values of that time viewed raising children and doing the household as the primary task of women. The right for employees requesting to work part-time has been incorporated in collective labour agreements (CAO) since 1983. From then on, working part-time became a more accepted way of working.

Working part-time is widely accepted nowadays, and, as a result of, other ways of flexible work evolved from it. 'Het nieuwe werken' is such a form of flexible work. It is a technology-driven working method that puts the focus on the individual and makes it possible for people to decide how, when and where they work. Working time and place independent are keywords to this concept. The pillars of 'het nieuwe werken' are: 'mentality & culture change', 'work environment' and 'technology & communication'.

Introducing new concepts probably always causes misconceptions. These are often partially true or not true at all. Therefore is it important to erase them and to prevent new misconceptions from coming into existence.

The Netherlands faces several problems: diminishing birth rates, the baby boom generation will soon retire and a new generation, generation Y, will join the labour market. This generation demands a different, more flexible way of working with a better balance between work life and personal life.

The government can play a role in promoting 'het nieuwe werken'. Their role would be of greater importance than just having companies promote the concept. The government is an authority figure, and their messages probably will be taken more seriously by the population.

There are always positive and negative sides to a new concept, and 'het nieuwe werken' is no exception. 'Het nieuwe werken' comes with advantages and disadvantages for both employee and employer. Yet, changing a disadvantage into an advantage is fairly easy with the help of processes and regulations. But there are more obstacles. Regulations conform Dutch law, are hard to maintain and to control as they conflict with 'het nieuwe werken'.

The Netherlands is not the only country experimenting with flexible ways of work. Demand for a better balance between work life and personal life is increasing in other countries too. Finland and Sweden have the highest flexibility rate in the world when it comes to flexible work. It is interesting for the Dutch to review the methods used since aspects of those methods could very well fit in ‘het nieuwe werken’.

Microsoft the Netherlands is one of the first companies in the Netherlands to successfully implement ‘het nieuwe werken’. They had to overcome some barriers, but now Microsoft employees would not trade it for the world.

‘Het nieuwe werken’ is here to stay; the new generation demands it, social issues and environmental problems force us into exploring new flexible ways of working and there are more advantages than disadvantages to ‘het nieuwe werken’.

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## **Preface**

This thesis is written in order to fulfill the requirements for a Bachelor Degree in European Studies at The Hague University. It deals with the question whether 'het nieuwe werken' is here to stay or not. I became interested in 'het nieuwe werken' as I started thinking about my future, and realized that a typical nine-to-five job and going to the office everyday is not for me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my parents, Marc and Elma de Hoon. They have always been there for me, and without their support and love I would not be where I am right now. Thank you. Thanks also to min älskling Jeff, without his support and love this thesis could not have been written. Jag älskar dig.

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*Roxane de Hoon*

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## 1. Introduction

The media is in a frenzy about 'het nieuwe werken', stories and articles in favour or against swirl over the internet and one thing is clear; 'het nieuwe werken' is one hot item. The first question that comes to mind is whether 'het nieuwe werken' is a one day fly or something to be taken seriously. My central question therefore is: *'Het nieuwe werken', here to stay or not?*

### Sub questions

In order to answer my central question the following sub questions need to be answered:

- How did participation of women in the labour force influence the development of part-time work?
- What is 'het nieuwe werken'?
- What are the misconceptions about 'het nieuwe werken'?
- Is our society in need of a different way of working?
- What are the pros and cons of 'het nieuwe werken'?
- What countries are leading in ways of flexible work and why?
- Which company has successfully implemented 'het nieuwe werken' and what is the outcome?

The history of the participation of women in the labour force and with that the development of part-time work will be discussed in chapter two. In chapter three will be explained what the concept of 'het nieuwe werken' means, misconceptions are reviewed and attention is paid to the question whether our society is in need of a new way of working. Chapter four is about possible obstacles and the pros and cons for both employee and employer. Methods of flexible work used in other countries are addressed in chapter five. A case study of a company that has successfully implemented 'het nieuwe werken' is reviewed in chapter six, and in the final chapter, the conclusion, an answer will be given to my central question.

### **Justification of Research methods**

My main research method has been desk research. This, due to the fact, that a lot of the information is recently written. To conduct my research I have used several books, papers, rapports, articles, and online news links.



## **2. Participation of women**

How did we get from a society with the traditional role model as norm, to our society as it is nowadays: women and man are equally valuable in all aspects of life, and working part-time or flexible hours is nothing out of the ordinary. That is why, before we dig deeper into what 'het nieuwe werken is', we need to understand how we got here. With the participation of women in the labour force part-time jobs came into existence. Part-time jobs were the first signals of a different approach, a more flexible way of work. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is how the role of women changed over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how part-time work evolved.

### **2.1 Mid 50's**

In the 1950's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the traditional role division was still the standard in the Netherlands. The male works and provides for his family, while the female stays at home and dedicates her life to taking care of the household and children. This method had worked for centuries, leaving out exceptions, and could have worked for many more years to come. However, as soon will be discovered, a lot will change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A start is when the action incompetence of married women is dissolved in 1956; a woman no longer needs her husband's permission to close an employment contract. The ban for married women to be employed as a civil servant is abolished in 1957. (Schippers, 2002) However, wages and the social security system were still based on a breadwinner way of thinking. This had great influence on social security when unemployed or of age. Because the man earns the family income, he has the right to his salary and social security but social security for women was regulated through marriage. This meant that marriage was a woman's life insurance; being married meant financial stability, but on the other hand it also meant being financially dependent.

Adult working women were rare around the 1960's. Women that worked were usually unmarried, and they often did work that was 'suitable' for women. The average age at marriage was 23 in the 1970's and marriage meant, for at least 90 per cent of the women, to give up a paid job. It is, however, during these years that the first part-time jobs came into existence. (Schippers, 2002)

## **2.2 The first part-time jobs**

The Netherlands dealt with shortage of people after WWII. Many lives were lost during the war, and the economic damage was tremendous. To rebuild the economy many workers were needed.

Companies tried to recruit young, unmarried women at first. However, this reservoir soon became smaller as women married younger and had to quit their jobs because they wed, moreover was the school leaving age raised. It became clear during the mid 50's that shortage of female workers was permanent of nature. A few companies, Bruynzeel, Philips and Verkade, came up with a plan; offering part-time jobs to married women. (Verdeelde tijd, 2008) In order to remain competitive and able to adapt to changes in the market, this tactic was essential.

The industry sector and service sector expanded rapidly during the 50's and 60's, of which trade held the biggest share. Many employment opportunities were created in retail when chain stores emerged. Suspected is, that in such chain stores the first part-time jobs came into existence since it is known that many women there worked part-time. However there are no known records available to support this. (Verdeelde tijd, 2008)

The first part-time jobs were simple and consisted mainly of manufacturing jobs. Since part-time jobs were created to get married women to work, it was not the intention to have other groups, than married women, working part-time. This meant that working married women, working men and working unmarried women did not have equal rights to a paid job.

Furthermore, part-time jobs were restricted to company rules which could differ per company. For instance, Philips maintained restrictions such as: not employing married women whom had children younger than six years old, and women with school going children got a job only if their husbands approved and if the children were accommodated for after school and during holidays.

Towards the end of the 60's part-time jobs in the government became available, mainly because of banning the law that stated that married women were not allowed to work for the government. Abolishing this law meant a free pass for married women who wanted to work, although it almost always meant working part-time. Because of the norms and values of that time, only part-time work was found acceptable for married women who wanted to work (again). Soon, in the sixties, these perspectives about women changed. (Schippers, 2002), (Verdeelde tijd, 2008)

### **2.3 The 1960's & 70's**

The number of women attending universities steadily increased due to establishing student grants, and a small group of women who wants a place in the labour force comes into existence. However, this is not without difficulty. Both men and women find household chores and caring for children a woman's main priority and most important task. The first 'battles' of choosing between going to work or taking care of her children, are therefore lost by work.

During the sixties the number of women that follows a higher education increases rapidly. Women wanted more in life than caring for household and children. They wanted to develop their own talents, become financially independent and have more social contacts. It becomes a political affair in the 70's. Women movement groups and the women's labour union demand equal rights for women to practise paid labour, something only reserved for men. (Schippers, 2002) Perspectives changed fast, in 1965 84 per cent of the population was opposed to the idea of women with school going children working, in 1970 this was down to 44 per cent of the population. (Verdeelde tijd, 2008)

### **2.4 Years that followed**

In the years that followed many things changed. The amount of people attending universities, both men and women, continued to increase and for the first time attention was paid to working part-time by the government in their policy.

The concept of working part-time was used by the government as an instrument to rearrange paid work, as they kept in mind the increasing unemployment and the emancipation of women. The government had to give part-time work a place in their own employees policy. The tax system was reformed in 1973; the income of a woman was no longer added up to her husband's income, but a system of individual tax charges was created. (Verdeelde tijd, 2008)

Due to the second oil crisis in 1979 and the subsequent collapse of the world economy, the Dutch economy deteriorated. Again something had to be done to remain competitive. Perspectives of trade unions and employers' association lay miles apart. Trade unions did not like the working conditions of part-time jobs, which often were pretty bad, and employers' associations favoured part-time jobs since these jobs did not cost as much. The turning point came with the 'Akkoord van Wassenaar' in 1982. Employers' associations agreed on a general reduction of working time, from 40 to 38 hours, in exchange for a wage restraint. (Verdeelde tijd, 2008), (H. Langenberg, 2007) The

agreement also contained other ways to rearrange labour, such as working part-time and advanced retirement. The right for employees requesting to work part-time has been incorporated in collective labour agreements (CAO) since 1983 and working part-time became a more accepted way of working. (Verdeelde tijd, 2008)

## **2.5 Working part-time nowadays**

In 2011, working part-time is widely accepted in Dutch society and the number of part-timers is still growing. 45 per cent of the Dutch employees works part-time. (W. Hooftman J. K., 2010) Prejudices, however, have not yet faded. The majority working part-time is still female (73%), part-time jobs are often taken by working mothers, part-time jobs are often the more 'simple' jobs and for men it is more difficult and not as accepted to work part-time (19%).(W. Hooftman J. K., 2010), (Deeltijdtalent.nl), (Deen, 2003)

## **2.6 Other ways of flexible work**

Since the introduction of part-time work more ways of flexible work have been introduced and evolved from it. Fundamental reasons for implementing flexible work are: competitive advantage, employees wanting a different way of work and changes in the market. Four common ways of flexible work in the Netherlands are:

- Flexible start and end times: Not being restricted to working from 8 am until 5 pm. Employees have the freedom and the possibility to start working and end their day between certain hours.
- Teleworking/working from your home: The word 'teleworking' says it all. Employees work office hours from their own home or somewhere else. It is possible that certain regulations for the workplace exist. For example safety and health regulations.
- Flexible hours: An employee works fewer hours a day. For example working school hours; employees work when the kids are in school.
- On-call work: The employee works only when needed, and the employee is paid the hours he or she works. Sometimes a minimum of hours is drawn up in a contract to prohibit that someone is waiting a long time.

(Hoogers, 2011), (Sophocles, 2007)

### 3. ‘Het nieuwe werken’

In 2010, a coalition of the Dutch government, several businesses and initiator ‘Natuur en Milieu’, launched the campaign for ‘het nieuwe werken’. This campaign was organized because recent and upcoming developments in our society demand a different way of working. The initiators of this campaign hope to reach a broader audience, and to interest people for this working method. However, the phrase ‘het nieuwe werken’ is kind of vague. It suggests that this is some new way of working, but what is new today is old tomorrow. Does that make the concept of ‘het nieuwe werken’ one worth trying? This chapter provides more insight to what ‘het nieuwe werken’ is, why we would need it and what role the government could play. (Erna, 2010)

#### 3.1 What is ‘het nieuwe werken’

‘Het nieuwe werken’ is a vision to create a better balance between personal life and work life, yet also to make work more effective, efficient and fun for both the organisation and employee. It is a technology-driven working method that puts the focus on the individual and makes it possible for people to decide how, when and where they work. Working time and place independent are keywords to ‘het nieuwe werken’. (Bijl, 2009, P. 27), (Buijs, 2010)

A mistake often made is that people solely see ‘het nieuwe werken’ as ‘working from your home’. ‘Het nieuwe werken’, however, is much broader to apply. Indeed, working from your own home can play a big part in ‘het nieuwe werken’. But that is not solely the idea behind ‘het nieuwe werken’. ‘Het nieuwe werken’ rests on three pillars:

- Mentality & Culture (change in the organisation/human)
- Work Environment
- Technology & Communication

These pillars are the building bricks for ‘het nieuwe werken’; it is impossible for an organisation to implement ‘het nieuwe werken’ fully and correctly by selecting and using only one element out of three. The three pillars, however, are not a blueprint for ‘het nieuwe werken’, and applicable in every organisation the same way. Organisations are mutually diverse which makes it necessary to carefully research how to implement the pillars specifically for ones organisation. Since ‘het nieuwe werken’ is best explained by

the three pillars, these are further explained in the next subparagraphs. (Haterd, 2010, P.15), (Vught, 2010), (Hereijgers, 2010)

### **3.1.1 Mentality & culture change in the organization**

The way people work dates back to the industrial era. During that time, and the following time period (until now), the production process was the central point of focus. Machines took over peoples jobs and people were disposable; it all revolved around making the production process more efficient and people were just means to an end.

This way of working drastically changes with 'het nieuwe werken'. No longer is the process itself the central point of focus, but the individual. This does not mean that the process is not longer important or has become irrelevant. On the contrary. The difference lies in the fact that we know now that a process cannot give a company distinctive value in the long term; a process can be computerized and perfected, but still be copied by the others. The individual and his/her skills cannot. With 'het nieuwe werken' the individual himself/herself becomes the distinctive value and the central point of focus. As Dik Bijl (2009), describes it:

no longer is the individual disposable and in support of the process, but is the process there to support the unique work of the individual. A well structured, and for the greater part, computerized process does not make the individual disposable but enables the individual to use his human strengths: knowledge, analysis, creativity and empathy. ( P. 28)

This requires a 360° turn in a company; both mentally and culturally. Organisations get caught up in their company cultures with unintentional behaviour of employees, habits, rules and processes. Because it has always been done a certain way, has been accepted and is regarded to as 'normal', companies do not see the need for change or a different approach.

Culture is created overtime and therefore hard to change. Organisations as such and the management team need to view their employees from a different perspective. The current way of bookkeeping proves this. On the balance sheet individuals (employees) are regarded to as 'expenses' whereas a table or premises labelled are as 'assets'. If knowledge is the most important asset for a company, and that knowledge is confined to the heads of employees then why put employees on the balance sheet as expenses? (Haterd, 2010, P.34)

Keywords to 'het nieuwe werken' are 'to work place and time independent'. Giving an employee freedom to decide for themselves when, how, where and with whom to work, creates the most efficient spending of time for both employee and company.

But with freedom comes great responsibility. Employees working anytime and anywhere are likely to spend fewer hours in the office with superiors able to look over their shoulder. Which means that the responsibility to do the job rests on the shoulders of the employees entirely. This requires a huge mental change; flipping the switch from being (partially) judged on being (visible) in the office, to being judged purely on the delivered output.

However the mental change does not only have to occur on the employee side. Superiors need to make a mental change just as much. The keyword here is 'trust'. In this day and age a superior, most of the time, is able to 'check' and 'control' their employees since they are visible in the office eight hours a day. Superiors can steer their subordinates in every direction they want them to, and can even tell a subordinate how to work. With 'het nieuwe werken' working in an office building eight hours a day is not as self-evident. Employees can work from their home, any place else, or work a couple hours a day in the office and the remaining hours at home. So, instead of being able to 'check' and 'control' the subordinate and steer him in the appointed direction, a superior now has to trust that the subordinate will do the job correctly. A huge mental shift is required: from working on bases of 'check' and 'control' to start working from bases of 'trust'.

Both changes in the company culture as well as changes in the mindset of the employees are indispensable in order for 'het nieuwe werken' to work. However, like all changes, these cannot and should not be expected to change overnight. . (Bijl, 2009, P. 66-67), (Wermenbol, 2010)

### **3.1.2 Technology & communication**

The possibilities of technology, and with that the development of various ways of communicating, have skyrocket over the course of the last century. Technology innovates faster than ever; the impossible is now possible.

20 years ago it was unimaginable that a mobile phone could be as big as your hand and weigh only a 100 grams. The introduction of internet is only recent history, but once tried who could live without it? Living in our society without a mobile phone and/or internet would be unthinkable. A fairly recent innovation, therefore, is not hard to guess; internet on the mobile phone. The contradiction could not be bigger.

Developments in ICT over the last five to ten years made it, technologically speaking, possible to work time and place independent and, at the same time, affordable. The ability to work wherever and whenever is a critical factor of success for 'het nieuwe werken', of which technology is of great importance. According to Dik Bijl: (2009)

Technology is on one side the catalyst and the drive behind 'het nieuwe werken'. But, on the other side technology is nothing more than just a catalyst and drive behind 'het nieuwe werken'. Having the newest technologies available does not lead itself to 'het nieuwe werken'. An employee can possess the newest smart phone and laptop, but if his manager expects him to work from 08.00 until 17.00 o'clock and the employee does not get the freedom to work wherever and whenever he wants, those toys are useless. Thus depends the value of the ICT means used very much on the setting where they are used. (P. 40)

Of the technological developments that occurred in the past couple years, there are two most important for 'het nieuwe werken': internet in combination with mobile networks (speech and data). Internet and mobile networks offer employees the possibility to both communication (email and phone conversations) and work related documents (email on both computer/laptop and mobile phone). Mobile networks made it possible to converse in locations where there is no private line. But sending text messages and chatting now also belongs to commonly accepted ways to communicate with colleagues.

Looking back on the past century and the speed at which technology innovates, it is only common sense that technologies now used will be outdated in five years time. Thus, it is important that (communication)technologies implemented now can be easily changed for something newer in the future. (Haterd, 2010, P.20-23)

### **3.1.3 Work environment**

Just as much as the organisation and the employees have to change for 'het nieuwe werken', so has the physical work environment. Thanks to technological innovations individuals are now able to work place and time independent. As long as they have their supporting technologies, they can create their 'office' at home, in the garden or anywhere else they like.

This means that the role of the office(building) needs to undergo changes. The 'new' office is an effective office, an efficient office, a meeting place and a business card' (Bijl, 2009, P. 49) Knowledge employees execute two kinds of activities in the office: communication work and concentration work.



When re-structuring the office from a 'classical' office, with its long hallways and small offices, to an 'effective' office, with open plan floors, these two activities should be taken into account. In effective offices rooms are created for people to work in quiet, arranged business meetings and chill areas to hang out with colleagues.

Assigned work places are often sacrificed to create flex work places; employees choose daily where to sit. Because employees have business meetings, are on holiday, have fallen ill or work part-time the average occupation of the assigned workplaces lies around 50% to 70%. This comes down to big savings on space as in the efficient office with flex work places 30% to 40% less work place is needed. (Bijl, 2009, P. 51) 'Het nieuwe werken' allows the employee to work wherever he or she desires.

Thus changes the office from a work place to a meeting place, both formal and informal. The (interior)design of an office can help a great deal in arranging meetings by designing pleasant surroundings; the office becomes a place where employees feel comfortable to relax and at the same is a place to work.

### **3.2 Misconceptions about 'het nieuwe werken'**

The phrase 'het nieuwe werken' is kind of vague, the concept might be even harder to grasp and 'het nieuwe werken' shows similarities with already existing ways of flexible working. Behold the ingredients for misconceptions. Which is exactly what happened when 'het nieuwe werken' was introduced. Many people grasped the idea of 'het nieuwe werken' partially, not at all or had/have different ideas to what the concept is. When misconceptions continue to exist it is difficult to reach the objectified goal and to get everyone on the same page. Several misconceptions about 'het nieuwe werken' keep creeping up. In order for the concept to be judged fair, erasing those misconceptions is important. Therefore a list of five common misconceptions about 'het nieuwe werken' is composed. (Bijl, Werken2.0), (Bijl, 2009, P. 33-35)

'Het nieuwe werken' is not:

- *Working from your own home:* Strictly speaking 'het nieuwe werken' is to work time and place independent. Indeed, that could mean that an individual works from their own home, but in this case refers the word 'place' to any location an individual is able to work. That might as well be the individuals home, but also a hotel or even the beach. Next to that the individual is with 'het nieuwe werken' no longer confined to office hours (working anywhere and anytime). The working method 'working home' does exist too, but often is limited to working at home

during office hours or it refers to working overtime next to the hours that have already been worked at the office. Thus the concept of 'het nieuwe werken' is much broader. (Bijl, 2009, P. 33)

- *100% the individuals decision where and when to work:* If everyone were free to decide for themselves when and where to work, without deliberating a superior and/or co-workers, it would be a madhouse. Therefore, making when and where to work 100% the individuals decision is impossible. Some sort of consultation is necessary to work with 'het nieuwe werken'. For instance: choosing one day for meetings to discuss ongoing projects and other matters. Or publish agendas (both private and business appointments) to co-workers so they know when their colleague is available. Next to that, working in a company means, inevitably, working together. The concept of 'het nieuwe werken' does not eliminate this. Meeting up requires good planning as more people work according to 'het nieuwe werken'. That too makes it impossible to leave it up a 100% to the individual when it comes to when and where to work; one has to bear in mind the colleagues agenda.
- *A one size fits all solution:* Many, mistakenly, see 'het nieuwe werken' as something that should work the same way for everyone. For example: Person A feels most comfortable with the way he works now; every day at the office from 09.00 until 17.00. Person B believes he is at his best deciding himself what hours to work. 'Het nieuwe werken' could work for both person A as well as person B, even though the way they want to work lies miles apart. With 'het nieuwe werken' the emphasis is put on the individual, which makes it possible to mould the concept into individual specific needs. Thus, both person A and person B are able to work hours that suits their needs best.
- *Freedom and happiness/ 'vrijheid blijheid':* A deep sense of mistrust and fear of letting go is shown by the idea that 'het nieuwe werken' is just freedom and happiness. As is assumed, now that the controlling factor of being in the office is removed, that working with 'het nieuwe werken' leads to people not working or working not as hard during their working hours. It might be true that 'het nieuwe werken' provides more freedom and even more happiness to the individual. However 'het nieuwe werken' asks something in return: responsibility. The responsibility to do the job without the controlling factor of being in the office could weigh quite heavy on the shoulders of some employees. 'Het nieuwe werken' is not just freedom and happiness. This concept appeals to the maturity of people; and since most working individuals are adults, that appeal, to take on that

responsibility, is justified. Next to that, are certain rules or the instalment of a framework very much possible with 'het nieuwe werken'. For example: determining what amount of work and what quality is expected of the employee within a certain timeframe. The output can be randomly sampled to see if the employee has met the standard. (Sturman, 2009), (Bijl, 2009, P. 33)

- *A way to cut back costs:* A money driven attitude is not the right attitude for 'het nieuwe werken', since the concept is about putting the focus on the individual. If the employee feels 'het nieuwe werken' is just another method from the management to cut back costs, he or she will turn against the management; once more the company is about saving and making money instead of having the best interest of the employee at heart. Nevertheless, practice has proven: an important side effect of 'het nieuwe werken' is saving money. Office buildings are re-structured to hold fewer people, which cuts back costs on rent, heating and air-conditioning. As well as saving money on travelling expenses as fewer people travel to work at the office. (Bijl, 2009, P.81-83), (Bijl, 2009, P. 33)

### **3.3 Our society in need of 'het nieuwe werken'?**

The question whether 'het nieuwe werken' is necessary is quite broad. Every organisation can view the necessity of implementing a new way of working in the light of their own problems, causing the intensity of the problem, and therefore the necessity to vary. However, there are several reasons for implementing a new way of working that cover problems of organisations and have influence on our entire society. These reasons will be further discussed in the next subparagraphs.

#### **3.3.1 Shortage of people, means and facilities**

Shortage of people and means demand a more efficient way of working. Demographical developments and social issues are the main reasons for this shortage. The Netherlands, and many other western countries, watch the life expectancy of their population rise and deal on the other hand with diminishing birth rates and a wave of obsolescence. (Record aantal immigranten in 2010, 2011)

This will result in a shrinking labour force: the elderly retire, but live longer, and there are not enough (highly educated) youngsters to fill up the gaps the elderly leave. To illustrate: the ratio between pensionable and potential labour force in 2040 will be one on two, now that is one on four. (Kalfsbeek, Het nieuwe werken, een integrale verandering, 2010, P.8)

This requires a different approach towards work; a more efficient and effective method. Social issues such as: climate change, traffic jams, the economic crisis and the energy

problem, are other reasons for the shortage. The government appeals to businesses more and more to help oppose these issues, since these issues are just as much problematical cases for businesses as they are for the government. For instance: their employees get stuck in traffic jams, arrive at work late and irritated which has a direct influence (unintentionally) on their work.

However, society faces another problem: traditional sources of energy will eventually wear out, and use of space, mobility and environment will be further regulated and restricted in order to, for example, withstand climate change. The appeal to businesses is on one hand because they have the means, technology and management to make a change, and on the other hand because they are also partially responsible for creating these issues.

### **3.3.2 Generation Y**

Though, not only social issues and demographical developments have influence on our society. The relationship between employee and employer is also subjected to change. The employee of today depends less on the employer, since the employee has the opportunity to engage in collaborations all over the world. The employee has become the centre of his own little organisation and the need to stay with a company for a long time is now less apparent.

A new generation will soon be joining/ has already joined the labour force. This generation, generation Y, was born after 1980 and has been brought up in times of tremendous technological development and economic prosperity. They fundamentally differ from previous generations; generation Y has been pampered by their parents, questioned their parents and grew up using the great technological innovations of our time.

Whereas other generations tried to fit in and adapt to (existing) boundaries, generation Y does not feel the need to fit in; generation Y is high-performance, high-maintenance, knows how to use the newest technology and believes in their own worth. That makes them less likely to respond well to the command & control culture which is still common in many companies today. A balance between work life and personal life and freedom on the job are of great importance to generation Y. For this generation phrases like 'work life and personal life balance', 'using social media/new technologies at work' and 'deciding yourself where and when to work', are no buzz words but something they expect to put into practice on the job.

To commit this generation to an organisation, an organisation needs to offer jobs that unite these characteristics. (Kalfsbeek, Het nieuwe werken, een integrale verandering, 2010, P.8), (Armour, Money, 2005), (D.Coenen, 2006), (Torisk, 2008), (Generatie Y stelt hoge eisen en heeft veel wensen, 2011)

### **3.4 Government versus business life**

No distinction between 'het nieuwe werken' within the government and businesses is made in this rapport. 'Het nieuwe werken' still remains: 'a vision to create a better balance between personal life and work life, yet also to make work more effective, efficient and fun for both the organisation and employee'. In essence both the government and businesses are organisations and both need to restructure the same aspects (the three pillars) in order to implement 'het nieuwe werken'.

However the role they play in society is essentially different. Whereas businesses are role models up to a certain point, the government is a role model for the entire society and an authority figure. Thus is it of utmost importance for the government to practise what they preach. In 2010 the campaign 'het nieuwe werken doe je zelf' was launched by a coalition of companies and government. Because the government participated in this campaign they gave a signal to society, and to companies, that they take this concept seriously and that others should too. Had they not participated, then the shout out for 'het nieuwe werken' probably would not have been that strong.

Though, it is not likely that the government can implement laws that oblige people to work according to 'het nieuwe werken'. They can send a (strong) message but that is probably all.

## 4. For better or worse

'Het nieuwe werken' sounds very appealing to many. What is not to like about lots of freedom, and still getting paid? And what is not to like about a higher productivity and more content employees? However, to every positive side there is negative side and 'het nieuwe werken' is no exception. In this chapter both pros and cons for employer and employee are listed and other obstacles are reviewed. (Achtergrond, 2011)

### 4.1 The employer

Implementing 'het nieuwe werken' brings along a lot of consequences for the employer. In the next subparagraphs we will take a closer look at the benefits and the drawbacks of 'het nieuwe werken' for the employer.

#### 4.1.1 Drawbacks

- The first drawback that comes to mind are the **costs**. Although 'het nieuwe werken' has the pleasant side effect that often a lot of money is saved, implementing 'het nieuwe werken' does require an initial investment. 'Het nieuwe werken' thrives on technology; employees can work anywhere at anytime, and therefore a well maintained technological infrastructure within the company and corresponding technological devices for employees are crucial. Next to that transforms the office into a meeting place: flex work places, chill areas and concentration pits need to be created.
- **'Het nieuwe werken' requires a cultural and mentality change in a company.** Instead of actually seeing the employee at work and doing his job, now the employee can work anywhere. The manager has to learn to give direction to people from a distance and criticize output only. This transition is difficult and not every manager likes this method. (Habets, 2009)
- **Not every employee is ready and/or qualified to work anytime and anywhere.** Chances are, that employees abuse the trust the company puts in them and do not work or deliver bad work. (Habets, 2009)
- On the other hand is it possible that **employees work too hard, and too often** just to show that they are in fact working.
- **Synergy**, the effect of more people working together is greater than one person working alone, **could be lost** because employees focus too much on their own contribution to the company. (Habets, 2009)

#### 4.1.2 Benefits

- Since employees can determine their own work schedule, and they know when they work best and when suits them best, they work harder (**=higher productivity**), work more **efficient**, will be more dedicated to the company (**=preserve employees**), are more **flexible**, and are **less likely to call in sick**. (Habets, 2009), (Brenghetnieuwewerkeninkaart, 2010)
- It is possible after the initial investment, as discussed in the previous paragraph, that companies start to **save a lot of money**. With no one having their 'own' desk because of flex work places, and people not coming to the office a lot of money can be saved on: floor space, air-conditioning/heating, travel expenses and energy costs.
- Implementing 'het nieuwe werken' is a chance to **remain attractive for future employees**. The new generation and developments in our society, as discussed in the previous chapter, demand a different approach to work with more flexible hours, a better balance between work life and personal life and not being obliged to go to the office. The labour market will be in their favour (more demand than supply) which means that an organisation that has implemented 'het nieuwe werken' will stand out.

#### 4.2 The employee

Probably the most important player when it comes to 'het nieuwe werken' is the employee. 'Het nieuwe werken' revolves about making life better for the individual. In the following subparagraphs it is researched what the benefits and the drawbacks of 'het nieuwe werken' are for the employee.

##### 4.2.1 Drawbacks

- **Working together, affinity with colleagues and trust are possibly harder to realize** when the majority of employees is regularly working from another place than the office. (Tien nadelen van het nieuwe werken, 2011)
- The **boundary between work life and personal life no longer exists**, the employee works whenever/wherever and is always accessible. The possible danger is that people always work and do not know when to stop.
- Employees could be afraid of them **not being in the office**, and thus being physically invisible, **could hold-up their career**. (Achtergrond, 2011)

#### 4.2.2 Benefits

- **A better balance between work life and personal life.** Employees can create their work life around their personal life now that they can determine their own schedule. (Habets, 2009), (Breng het nieuwe werken in kaart, 2010)
- **Cost of childcare declines:** parents can work from their home while the children are there, or they work, for example, during school hours and resume work related activities when the children are asleep.
- Choosing where to work, at home, somewhere else or in quiet rooms at the office leads to **higher productivity and better results** because the employee is more focused. (Breng het nieuwe werken in kaart, 2010)
- Both **travelling time and travel expenses**, in case the employer does not reimburse all travel expenses, **decrease** because the employee does not have to go to the office as much. (Breng het nieuwe werken in kaart, 2010)
- **Employees will feel more satisfied** with their jobs and their employers, they feel more in control and feel trusted by their employer.

#### 4.3 Conclusion

As described above, 'het nieuwe werken' brings both advantages and disadvantages along. Though, transforming a disadvantage into an advantage is fairly easy. For instance; losing personal contact with colleagues, and managers who find it difficult to adapt to the change. In the first case regularly meeting with colleagues (at the office, home, café) could help a lot, or the use of a program such as msn. Managers who find it difficult to adapt to the new circumstances could be helped with the right guidance by, for example, a mentor. One has to keep in mind that most disadvantages, in this case, are caused because people are afraid of the unknown.

#### 4.4 Obstacles

An organisation can influence most disadvantages as rules and procedures can be invented to turn them into advantages. However, on the road to 'het nieuwe werken' more obstacles will be found. As those obstacles are restricted in law, it is impossible for those obstacles to be influenced directly by an organisation.

Dutch law regarding work is outdated and should be revised. When 'het nieuwe werken' is successfully implemented, the employee has a lot of freedom. According to legislation companies have the duty to 'care' for their employees and the employees newfound independence, after implementation of 'het nieuwe werken', does not go well with this



'care duty'. The legal relation between employee and employer changes when the employee becomes more independent; legally speaking decreases the authority of the employer which could have repercussions in cases of demotion or redundancy. An employee who is not performing as he/she should, or an employee who is abusing the freedom of 'het nieuwe werken' cannot be send back to the office easily. A judge will rule that rights have been granted, and that those rights cannot be taken away. (Schaaf, 2011), (Hoogbergen, 2010)

Furthermore, 'het nieuwe werken' enables employees to work anywhere. 'Anywhere' is what causes the problem. It is conform Dutch law that a work place needs to meet special safety and health requirements. This in order to prevent employees from working in unhealthy environments or under dangerous circumstances. But who will check if employees working 'anywhere' work in an environment that meets these requirements? An inspector could hardly visit all places an employee works.

Proper solutions to these obstacles are hard to find, as it is the law itself that is the obstacle. 'Solutions' created by companies such as: registering in the employment contract where the employee is allowed to work, are not risk free and thus is the call to update Dutch law to match contemporary ways of work.

## 5. Flexible work method in international aspect

A global survey, amongst 7,7000 businesses in 39 countries, by the accounting organisation Grant Thornton International revealed that Finland (92%) and Sweden (86%) have the highest percentages of flexibility at work. Japan, Greece and Armenia have the lowest percentages. The Netherlands came in at place 6 with 82%. Benchmarking is important for further improvement of 'het nieuwe werken'; learning from the best to see what could be done different and what else is possible. The numbers one and two, Finland and Sweden, are more thoroughly examined in the next subparagraphs. What ways of flexible work stands out in those countries, and what can we learn from them? (Want a flex work schedule? Global survey says look for a job in Finland, Sweden or Australia; avoid Japan, Greece or Armenia, 2011)

### 5.1 Finland

Finland, is one of the most sparsely populated countries in Europe. The majority of the population lives in the south of Finland of which one fifth is concentrated in the region surrounding Helsinki, the capital of Finland. In general the number of men and women working full-time in Finland is high, especially the amount of women is remarkable; Finland has one of the highest participation rates in Europe. (Finland, 2011), (Women's specific situation in Finland, 2003), (Social policy in Finland-an overview, 1996), (Labour Market, 2011) Yet, Finland awaits the same problems as the Netherlands: the baby boom generation will soon retire and although fertility rates are high, in comparison to European standards, they are not high enough to sustain population growth. With flexible work arrangements the Finns hope to turn the tide. (A. Brook, 2008), (Lilja, 2005)

#### 5.1.1 Flexible work in Finland

The concept of flexible working first surfaced in Finland during the economic recession in the 90's. Collective bargained agreements decreased and personalized working hours and schedules became more common. At first these methods were put into practise because the use of plants, equipment and facilities needed to be intensified and because an increase of profitability was desired. Later on, the focus shifted to the employees' well-being.

Nowadays in Finland, traditional work weeks are replaced with flexible work hours and new work arrangements, as working time and work arrangements depend on the

constantly changing economic structure, content of work and the demand for workforce. (Working time and occupational health) Moving along with every move the market makes requires a flexible attitude towards working, which is what the Finnish have. Only 53% of the Finns worked traditional work hours (day work and between 35 and 40 hours a week) in 2003, nowadays about half of the Finnish workers have no specific starting or ending times and approximately one in ten of the Finnish men decide their own work schedule (that is almost double of the EU average). (Sutela, 2009)

The tendency to work flexible hours is highest amongst the upper white-collar employees. Within this group, and especially the mid-age category, teleworking has become a common way of working flexible hours.

Several experiments with work hours have been conducted in Finland. One of them is the four-shift working hour arrangement. (Sutela, 2009) This concept was used at the Fazer bakery Oululainen in Lahti and was designed for senior employees. The idea of this system is that employees over the age of 50 work for three weeks and then have one week off. Employees having one week off results in a reservoir of labour, from which the employer, during peak periods, could recall people to work. Most of the Finnish work full-time, part-time jobs do exist although these functions are mainly held by students or retired employees. The government, however, is actively encouraging part-time work and uses two methods: (Sutela, 2009)

- Part-time retirement combined with part-time work. 58 year old people or older can be granted part-time retirement. This means that the employee stops working full-time and reduces his or her working hours to a maximum of 60% of the full-time working hours. Part-time pension is 50% of the difference between regular earnings and part-time earnings.
- Parents part-time childcare leave. This comes down to reducing the amount of working hours until the child has finished the second year of school. The financial compensation is 70 Euros when the child is younger than 3 years old or is in the first or second year in school. Parents have to reduce their work hours to a maximum of 30 hours a week to be granted this compensation. This second option, however, is not commonly used.

### **5.1.2 What do the Finnish think?**

The Finnish are happy with the possibility to work flexible hours; they have more time for their personal lives, are less frequently ill and are better motivated workers. However, they have discovered the downside of flexible work hours. They experience 'negative'

flexibility when their employer expects flexibility from employees for the good of the company, but they cannot use flexibility for their own personal needs. There needs to be a balance between flexibility to benefit the company and flexibility to benefit the employee. (Ergol, 2001)

## 5.2 Sweden

Sweden is the third largest country by area in the European Union with only 9.4 million inhabitants and their standard of living is amongst the world's highest. In the year 2010 Sweden was the country with the fastest economical growth, the highest innovation and the most competitive economy in the European Union. (Sweden, 2011) Scandinavia is known for their progressiveness; the number of women in the labour force is almost equal to the number of men, education is free and their flexible and extended parental leave is unrivalled. (Improving Work-Life Balance - What Are Other Countries Doing?, 2005), (Een Zweedse sage, 1999) However, in Sweden also came the call for a better balance between work life and personal life. In the next subparagraph two common ways of flexible work in Sweden are explored:

- Flexitime
- Designing your own schedule

### 5.2.1 Flexitime & designing your own schedule

The concept of working 'flexitime' is widely embraced and accepted in Sweden. Working 'flexitime' means that a day consists of a core period and (a)'flexitime' period(s). During the core period, certain amount of hours, the employee has to be in the office and during 'flexitime' the employee can choose when to work. This is subjected, obviously, to achieving a certain amount of hours on daily, weekly or monthly basis. A flexitime workday could look like this: (What is Flexitime?)

- Start work between 07.00-10.00 (flexitime)
- Attendance obliged from 10.00-12.00 (core period)
- Lunch break between 12.00-14.00 (flexible lunch hour)
- Attendance obliged from 14.00-16.00 (core period)
- Leave work between 16.00-19.00 (flexitime)

Most 'flexitime' schedules have a debit and credit margin of, often, 8 hours. This means that working more hours than obliged (by a 40 hour work week, a person is obliged to have worked, in 4 weeks, 160 hours) the individual is in credit, working fewer hours means that the person is in deficit. When exceeding the preliminary determined margin of credit it is possible that those extra hours are lost, when crossing the line in deficit it is possible that the individual is cut on his or her payment. Saving up enough 'flexitime', staying within the allowed margin, can turn into time off. (What is Flexitime?)

Another common way of flexible work in Sweden is 'designing your own schedule'. (Sturman M. , 2010) The beauty of this concept is that it gives freedom and flexibility to people who do location bound work, for example in a hospital or factory. These employees usually are overlooked when it comes to working flexible hours since it is thought that flexible work and being location bound does not mix. 'Designing your own schedule' works as follows: the company establishes a frame, which consist of, for example, the needed capacity and competences for a certain amount of hours/days, and it is within this frame that the employees individually fill out when they want to work. If work hours or people collide, it is up to the group or the software used to create the schedule to work out a solution. (Improving Work-Life Balance - What Are Other Countries Doing?, 2005), (Witteveen, 2011)

### **5.2.2 What do the Swedish think**

The Swedish are very fond of both 'flexitime' and 'designing your own schedule'. These flexible work methods allow them to find a better balance between work life and personal life, and they feel more in control now that they decide the working hours. (Wiles, 2006), (Sturman M. , 2010)

## **5.3 Other countries**

Though Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands find themselves in the top ten of best performing countries on the subject of flexible work, they are not the only countries with initiatives to work smarter and create a better environment for workers. In the next subparagraphs we briefly review initiatives from France and Belgium.

### **5.3.1 France**

In 2000 a law was introduced that reduced the traditional work week from 39 hours to 35 hours for companies with more than 20 employees. This law was expanded in 2002 to companies with 20 or fewer employees. Since the introduction of this law, several amendments have been made. One amendment raised the allowed amount of overtime

without needing special authorization from a labour inspector from 130 hours to 180 hours each year. In addition to that overtime rates were adjusted (in agreement with representatives from businesses, government and civil society) which unified and simplified the system, and started overtime payment after the 36<sup>th</sup> work hour. A time savings account, in which overtime hours are 'saved', allows employees to use their saved time for time-off, to switch to a part-time job and, the newest option, to trade it for cash. (International Approaches to Improve Work-Life Balance, 2004)

### 5.3.2 Belgium

To develop more flexible working time, manage a better work life and personal life balance and increase employment (especially amongst women and workers older than 50) the Minister of Labour came up with 'time credits'. These time credits were meant for private sector employees and allows employees to:

- stop working for the maximum of one year, without losing social security rights or the employment contract. Another option is to reduce weekly hours and work part-time. Time credit can be expanded to a maximum of 5 years, depending on the collective agreement.
- reduce their working hours by one-fifth of working time for a maximum of five years. In practise this means working four days instead of five.
- reduce working hours by one-fifth to one-half if the employee is at least 50 years of age

An unemployed person must take the place of an employee on a break in the public sector. (International Approaches to Improve Work-Life Balance, 2004)

## 5.4 What can we learn from these countries

Initiatives launched in Sweden, Belgium and France fit well in the idea of 'het nieuwe werken', they provide more responsibility and freedom for the employee and create a more flexible work environment.

However, as stated before, 'het nieuwe werken' is not a blueprint applicable for every organisation nor should be expected that initiatives successfully launched in other countries are. The diversity in Europe amongst (work)cultures is huge, what works for one might not work for another or it takes a lot of time to persuade that this certain way works. For example, 'designing your own schedule' is a big hit in Sweden and in the Netherlands pilots have to started to introduce this concept. However the concept of 'designing your own schedule' will, so far, not fly in the Netherlands. Whereas in Sweden the trade unions

are a big supporter of the concept, trade unions in the Netherlands are sceptical about 'designing your own schedule', since it causes more individual labour agreements between employer and employee which, they feel, is in conflict with the collective thought of a collective labour agreement. (R. Buikema, 2010)

The lesson learned: initiatives launched in other countries linked to flexibility/'het nieuwe werken' should be considered and tried (pilots) carefully to see if it fits in our society. However, for some concepts it is just too 'early'; they might find acceptance later on as 'het nieuwe werken' keeps evolving and is in need of new initiatives.

## 6. Case study Microsoft

Much has been said about this relatively new way of working and while some companies have been carefully taking the first steps towards a more flexible way of working, a few companies are far ahead of the others. One of these companies is Microsoft. In the Netherlands one of the first companies to implement 'het nieuwe werken'. The Dutch office is the guinea pig for Microsoft offices worldwide, who have been following the progress closely. However, not only Microsoft offices worldwide follow the developments in the Dutch office with interest. Now 'het nieuwe werken' is fully implemented in the office building of Microsoft, many visitors come each year to see this new way of working, and the corresponding office, with their own eyes. In this chapter a case from practice is shown to illustrate 'het nieuwe werken'; what were Microsoft's reasons for 'het nieuwe werken', how do employees feel about 'het nieuwe werken', what were the difficulties and what is the outcome?

### 6.1 Why start with 'het nieuwe werken'?

Productivity levels needed to be raised, and a focus had to be put on durability. On top of that Microsoft employees graded their workplace and their work life and personal life balance with a lousy 5 in 2005. (Schagen, 2010) Something had to change; employees were dissatisfied, the focus needed to shift to durability and higher productivity levels were desired. Right at that time a contract for a new Microsoft building at Schiphol is signed by former facility manager Robert Tempels and writes Microsoft executive Bill Gates a white paper about his vision for the company; a new way of working. (Bijl, 2009, P. 133-139) His vision: with the use of new technologies it would be easier for people to combine their personal and their work lives. The thought behind the paper was that if people would work place and time independent the productivity levels would rise. This white paper is called 'The new world of work' and it was translated into Dutch as 'het nieuwe werken'. (Wermenbol G. , Het nieuwe werken vraagt om een mentaliteitsverandering, 2010), (Schagen, 2010)

#### 6.1.1 The office

The office transformed, and became a meeting place. Microsoft offers its employees work places based on their activities; 'concentration pits' if an employee needs to focus, areas where people can work together, lounge areas (with computer games) to relax or to have meetings, conference rooms and even a powernap room complete with cuddle wall. (Bijl,



2009, P. 139) No closed doors, only flex work places and no one has their 'own' office/desk (including directors). Employees walk in the morning, if they come to the 'office' at all, and work wherever they like and where their needs are suited best. This Microsoft office building and interior has embodied the idea of 'het nieuwe werken'. (Ringelstijn, 2008), (R.Oele, 2008)

#### **6.1.2 The employees**

As Microsoft employees rated their workplace and the possibility for a work and personal life balance with a 5 in 2005, now it receives, on the same variables, an 8 and are productivity levels rising. (Schagen, 2010) Implementing 'het nieuwe werken' caused these conditions to improve drastically. Though, changing the way people work might have hurt at the beginning, now Microsoft employees would not trade it for the world. Their work life and personal life balance has improved drastically since they decide when and where to work. There is no need to feel guilty about leaving work early to pick up the kids; they make up for those hours later that evening, when the kids are asleep. (Bijl, 2009, P.140) Furthermore, colleagues from different departments consult each other more often since the visible/physiological boundaries (doors) are gone which also stimulates the bond between colleagues. (Putten, 2010)

#### **6.1.3 What was the outcome of the first year?**

The employee is happy; they feel trusted by their employer because they are allowed to decide how to divide their time, it is easier to combine work and a personal life, they have more control over work pressure and they get more done in less time. For the Microsoft 'het nieuwe werken' has resulted in: (De cijfers), (Stegeman, 2011)

- A higher productivity level, + 28 minutes per day per person
- Accessibility of the employees increased with 23%
- Work place went from 19m<sup>2</sup> per person to 11 m<sup>2</sup>
- Traffic from and to the office (car) is reduced by 6%
- Amount of e-mail is reduced by 30%
- IT administrator costs are reduced by 1,1.00.000
- 10% less flights

and for the first time Microsoft won the prize for 'best employer' in 2008 and more recently in 2011. (Bijl, 2009, P. 141), (Praveen, 2011)

#### **6.1.4 Difficulties**

'Het nieuwe werken' is a never ending story. 'Never ending' refers both to keeping up with technology, as technology is improving everyday, as well as to the possible danger of employees never stop working. Boundaries between work life and personal life tarnish.

People decide when and where to work, and technology enables them to do so. Being accessible all the time is a potential threat when employees work 24/7 and do not know when, or how to stop working. Furthermore a big risk, according to Microsoft employees, is that 'het nieuwe werken' affects the feeling of solidarity and the individual result agreements could lead to a solo performance or even anti-social behaviour. (Bijl, 2009, P.140), (Putten, 2010)

#### **6.1.5 Conclusion**

Microsoft is very pleased with the outcome of 'het nieuwe werken'; their goals are reached and even though there are some difficulties to overcome, they are not insurmountable. The most important thing is that their employees are proud of their company now that Microsoft disseminates its own vision. (Bijl, 2009, P.140), (Schagen, 2010)

## 7. Conclusion

This paper was written to answer the question whether 'het nieuwe werken' is here to stay. In order to come to the conclusion several sub questions, as described in the introduction, are answered in the various chapters of this paper. The central question will be answered in the following conclusion; *'het nieuwe werken' here to stay or not?*

I think not. When looking back in history much of it comes down to a certain 'demand' and 'availability'. Women started working part-time because companies realised that they could not continue to exist without having married women amongst their workers; demand for part-time jobs was created. Since then working part-time never left the Dutch labour market. In time more ways of flexible work have developed. Women want(ed) to work more hours and demand(ed) other possibilities, besides working part-time, and therefore part-time work evolved into other flexible ways of work such as: working school hours or working from your own home.

'Het nieuwe werken' is such a form of working flexible. The vision behind this concept is to make work for both employee and employer more fun, efficient and effective. Yet, at the same time create a better balance between personal life and work life. It is a technology driven method; working according to 'het nieuwe werken' would not be possible if we did not have the technological innovations available we have now. We may conclude that the idea of 'het nieuwe werken' is ground-breaking. There is no denying that 'het nieuwe werken' brings both negative and positive sides along for employer and employee. Nevertheless most of the drawbacks, by creating rules, processes and the right guidance, can be turned into pros since drawbacks often exist because people are afraid of the unknown. Thus outweigh the pros the cons and should drawbacks not be a reason to not implement 'het nieuwe werken'.

A success story in our own country is Microsoft. Microsoft has implemented 'het nieuwe werken' and is very content with the outcome. Although they faced some difficulties, the end results are that good that other Microsoft companies have started to implement 'het nieuwe werken'. Their conclusion: everyone should try it, it makes everyone happier.

In other countries the demand for flexible methods of work is increasing. For most western countries counts that they face the same problems; not enough children are born to sustain population growth and on the other hand a large part of their labour force will retire in the coming years. Worldwide Finland and Sweden have the highest flexibility percentages. A lot of things can be learned from Finland and Sweden. They each have different approaches to flexible work that would fit right in 'het nieuwe werken'. Looking

into methods those countries use can help develop 'het nieuwe werken' even further and expand its target group.

Yet, again do we come to the word 'demand'. Our society changes; birth rates diminish, a wave of obsolescence awaits us and a new generation is joining the labour force. Also demand social issues and environmental problems a different approach to work. It is common sense that with fewer people to fill up the gaps, a different more flexible way of work is essential. Flexible hours and deciding yourself where to work, for example, could mean that women working part-time now are willing and, more importantly, are able to work more hours since they can choose when and where to work. This would fit right in with the aspects of 'het nieuwe werken'. Add to that the fact that we deal with a new generation that expects and demands different things out of life and work. They demand a better balance between work life and personal life, want to work flexible hours and expect to use social media and new technologies at work. It is for all the reasons above that one may conclude that 'het nieuwe werken' is definitely here to stay; it ticks all boxes and it is the response to the existing demand.

The last sentence and first sentence of this conclusion demands an explanation as they contradict one another. It is my believe that 'het nieuwe werken' is not here to stay. It is just another station on the road of development. As technology continues to innovate and the impossible is made possible, so will developments in the way we work and the way we think. New generations will be born, each with their own view on the world and with believes on how they want to work and live their life. This does, however, not mean that I believe that 'het nieuwe werken' is not effective. On the contrary. I believe that 'het nieuwe werken' is just one step in the right direction, and therefore will just 'stay' for a short while and that many more steps will follow.

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