

# 50TH IER COMMITTEE MEETING – NLD NATIONAL REPORT

## 1: Economic context in the Netherlands

The Dutch economy remains resilient, but the outlook is cautious. GDP growth is expected to slow after 2025, with CPB (Central Planning Bureau) projecting 1.4% growth in 2026 and 1.1% in 2027, while the European Commission projects 1.0% in 2026 and 1.1% in 2027.

Inflation is easing in the CPB baseline, but remains sensitive to energy prices and geopolitical uncertainty. CPB projects CPI inflation at 2.3% in 2026 and 2.1% in 2027, while the European Commission expects Dutch inflation to rise to 3.2% in 2026 due to higher energy prices.

Wage growth is moderating but remains high. CBS (Central Statistics Bureau) reports that collective agreement wages increased by 5.0% in 2025 and by 4.5% in the first quarter of 2026.

The labour market is cooling, but still tight. CBS recorded an average unemployment rate of 3.8% in 2025, increasing slightly to 4.1% in Q1 of 2026. However, the labour market is still very tight for technical occupations, especially engineers, production leaders in industry or construction, machine mechanics and finishing construction workers

!! *Dutch companies still operate in a relatively strong economy, but investment conditions are constrained by high labour costs, energy uncertainty, labour shortages, grid congestion and nitrogen-related permitting issues.*

## 2: Cba Metalektro 2026, stability in uncertain times

The 2026 MET agreement is running from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026. It covers the Basic, Senior Staff, A+O (Labour market and Development Fund) and RVU (Early Retirement) agreements (see paragraph 4). The agreement was deliberately framed around stability, predictability and joint responsibility in a period of economic and political uncertainty.

The wage package consists of a structural wage increase of 2% plus €43 per month as of 1 January 2026 and a one-off net payment of €100 in November 2026.

## 3: Restructuring trends in automotive

The Dutch automotive sector is shifting away from large-scale passenger car assembly towards a smaller, more specialised ecosystem of suppliers, heavy vehicles, special vehicles, mobility technology and high-tech components. The sector is repositioning around zero-emission mobility, charging infrastructure, hydrogen infrastructure, battery technology, digitalisation, autonomous vehicles and circular materials.

VDL Nedcar remains the most visible restructuring case. Following the planned stop of BMW Group production and the lack of an immediate follow-up vehicle project, VDL announced the reduction of more than 2,000 jobs by 1 March 2024, leaving around 450 jobs. Besides support from VDL Nedcar (social plan), social partners in MET Industry provided additional job coaching and training, specifically focused on retaining technical talent for the MET sector. Despite these efforts, almost half of the former VDL employees left the MET sector for a job elsewhere, such as transport and logistics, food industry and the chemical industry.

## 4: Gender pay gap and collective bargaining

The Netherlands has postponed the implementation of the EU Pay Transparency Directive to enter into force on 1 January 2027. The Dutch government states that in 2024 women in the private sector earned on average 14.5% less per hour than men; after correction for relevant characteristics, the private-sector gap remained 6.1%. In the MET sector, the corrected pay gap is 2.3%: significantly lower but still too much. However, the most severe structural issue in MET is the unequal gender representation in higher paid roles and scales.

The bill will require employers to use an objective system for valuing and classifying jobs, prohibit questions about previous salary, and require employers with more than 100 employees to report periodically on pay differences. The cba MET Industry contains sectoral job classification systems that are helpful to reduce unjustified pay differences. A key FME point is that the Dutch draft law does not yet provide a strong “cba safe harbour” recognising collective agreements and sectoral classification systems as evidence of objective and gender-neutral pay structures.

## 5: Emerging practices in collective bargaining

Collective bargaining in the Netherlands is increasingly used to respond to structural drivers such as skills shortages, ageing, digitalisation, energy transition, competitiveness, absenteeism and regulatory burden. Social partners in MET negotiate several agreements, besides the ‘standard’ issues such as remuneration and working conditions.

### *Strategic agenda*

The Strategic Agenda 2022 to 2027 is a joint social partner agenda aimed at a successful, competitive MET sector that provides good work and contributes to prosperity and wellbeing in the Netherlands and the EU. It connects three priorities: constructive labour relations, a stable labour market with lifelong learning, and industrial policy for a competitive technological industry. The agenda explicitly stresses continuous dialogue between employers and employees, not only during formal collective bargaining rounds.

### *Agreement on Labour market and Development Fund (A+O)*

The 2026 A+O agreement strengthens the role of lifelong learning, including the Skills Passport pilot and regional “Techno hubs” (public-private cooperation in professional development and innovation), and long-term funding of social partner projects such as Social Safety, Employee Ownership in Professional Development and the health & lifestyle programme “5x Better”.

### *Early Retirement Agreement (RVU)*

The RVU agreement links early retirement for heavy work to sustainable employability and future criteria for physically demanding occupations.

### *Senior Staff Agreement*

The Senior Staff agreement includes a task force to explore alternatives for the income threshold, reflecting the need to modernise collective coverage for a diverse workforce.

**!!** *Dutch collective bargaining in the MET industry is broader than wages and working conditions and provides a social partner platform for skills and employability. In recent years it is even evolving towards social dialogue and cooperation on industrial transition and sector competitiveness.*