

Extension due to a unique infrastructure

Until quite recently Paswerk was part of a majority of sheltered workshops giving exclusive implementation to the Sheltered Employment Act of The Netherlands. Since 2004 however there has been a development in which the knowledge and the infrastructure of such enterprises is also made use of by other groups at some distance from the labour market. All these workers and clients entrusted to the care of Paswerk have in common that they have difficulty in finding a regular place of work without assistance. Paswerk helps people on to the labour market by providing work experience, supervision and training, and mediating in job vacancies. As far as possible this is regular work, where necessary being the sheltered situation of their own workshop. Human development in relation to work is the main consideration in this process. The diversity of activities and types of work provide the possibilities of being a many-sided learning work undertaking.

The unique fact is that Paswerk, as a reintegration enterprise, has its own infrastructure directed to the provision of professional service. This ensures that the local authorities in the area of Zuid-Kennemerland have a practical device to conduct an effective policy aimed primarily at the lower regions of the labour market.

Participation is a fundamental concept of this policy. The fact that there is a tendency to be less concerned with the formal (welfare benefit) background of the persons concerned ("everyone must take part"), means that Paswerk has developed more broadly. Paswerk offers a temporary start for work to an ever increasing number of (target) groups. The underlying idea has not been lost sight of, that the weakest groups should be able to continue to rely on the protection of the sheltered workshop. Better still, Paswerk wishes to make available possibilities to those who cannot or who can no longer satisfy the production standards set by the Wsw act of The Netherlands. Being worth the wages no longer applies in this case. The inner need combined with the recognisable demand in the market lead to initiatives being taken in the field of the daily activities. These are funded by the AWBZ (Exceptional Medical Expenses Act of The Netherlands). Further steps are to be expected with regard to this adjacent "care" market. A smaller project organisation within Paswerk is busy with the planning and realisation of a Day Care Centre for (slightly) disabled, to which no employment component is linked.

Put to the test

The management has made use of the past year to gear the operations more adequately to the influx, moving on and discharge of employees and clients with an increasing diversity of backgrounds. A robust adaptation of the organisation was implemented, known as Blauwdruk, which was also intended to depict the primary process unambiguously. In the past the organisation experienced a certain dualism: should the commercial assignment taken precedence or the development of the client?

The renewed Paswerk organisation was put to the test more frequently than was to be expected. A period of reorganisation occurred following the problems of 2003 and 2004 which has led to the omission of annual losses. 2008 was also successful in this respect.

However, a stagnation in the economic development has been noted since the autumn of 2008. Whether or not Paswerk is sufficiently able to cope with the setbacks remains a question to which there is no unambiguous answer at the moment. The strong connection between the recession and public spending is expected to have a negative influence. In the past any classical production work certainly offered no counterweight to the cyclic nature of operational management. However, increasing diversity and flexibility in the service sector together with an improved monitoring function does have a positive effect. The reduction in market sensitive production work (packing, for example) has been going on for several years. This has been replaced by types of work which are less dependent on economic work in the service area (maintenance of parks, cleaning, catering, post, digitalisation). Nevertheless a prolonged period of economic decline added to a loss of turnover would also place Paswerk in the red in the long run.

Development of the organisation

Paswerk has made use of the favourable economic tide to develop the company according to three significant new standards:

- the development of (service) work which offers opportunities to both employees and clients on the (regional) labour market;
- the progress of employees and clients to ordinary business life;

- the application of advanced information technology in the administrative processes.

This change in direction cost the management considerable energy, but Paswerk was nevertheless able to realise an increase in turnover. It is partly due to that fact that the accounts have shown a final profit for the second year in succession.

The recruitment and selection of new employees is also characteristic of the development of the organisation in 2008. The financial reorganisation made it possible to take an up-to-date course and involve employees with specific capacities.

Significant new components of the progress model, which forms the basis for the process 'from in to out', are the Paswerk Academie and PasMatch. All the knowledge and experience in the area of personal, individual direction to the labour market are here gathered together. Know how, infrastructure and capacity are used for a greater diversity on client groups (Sheltered Employment Act Wsw, Wwb, Wajong, Wia, IRO etc).

Adaptation of division structure

Henceforth the business activities are covered by three divisions: Production (with the sections Industry, Wheelwork, Packing and Printing), Service (Parks maintenance, Post, Cleaning, Catering, Flexi workers/secondment) and Arcade, where those remaining are active in internal, sheltered work (largely packing and laundry work). New employees and clients are employed by one of these three divisions following the interview and the provisional period. Those who work for the Production and Service divisions are normally suitable to move on to a normal, external business.

Wsw and Wwb: complexity and substitution

The policy of work reintegration appears to have been a success for many groups. In cases where the underlying problem was not too complicated, many clients of the Wwb and employees of the Sw profited from effective arbitration in a relatively favourable situation on the labour market. Many people finished up in more or less regular jobs. In those situations where a more complicated individual problem was concerned (social, financial, psychological, such as addiction, relational problems, accommodation, criminality, debts, etc.) the possibilities and the results of employment

arbitration decreased dramatically. Since a considerable number of these clients for whom it was difficult to find work had applied for and received a Sw indication, the waiting list increased for those who were designated work within the Wsw.

In view of the nature of the problems causing some distance from the employment market, there is now another type of intake regarding the more classic Sw population. Whereas it used to be mainly a case of mental and health handicaps, for which good solutions could be found in the traditional workshops, it now is increasingly a question of complex (adaptation) problems in the personal area. Direct managerial staff are increasingly concerned: tension on the shop floor due to whimsical behaviour, an increasing absence and more intensive contacts with care and welfare departments. That means additional work which mostly means less time for the original job, that is to say supervisory work. "Human development related to work" is more often preceded by a considerable haul.

External developments

Legislation

The formal responsibility for the execution of the Sheltered Employment Act was transferred to the local authorities on 1 January 2008. The managerial process of change went smoothly due to good consultation. The local authorities have indicated further policy in three specific areas: waiting list, involvement and personal budget.

Waiting list policy

The length of the waiting list continues to be a concern. A programme has been undertaken, together with the local authorities and the UWV, giving advance knowledge so as to allow people to get acquainted with the use of the SW. The administrative link is quickly made as soon as it is their turn. The background to the waiting list policy is caused by the substitution of the Wwb by the Wsw. Now that large groups are confronted with reactivation a considerable portion appear to be eligible for an sw indication.

Client council

The formation of a representative delegation of the clients into a participation body was realised thanks to the Works Council (Ondernemingsraad).

PGB's

The primary task is the drawing up of standards to obtain a personal budget.

De Vries Commission

A fundamental reconsideration of the future of the Wsw related to other groups with arrears in the employment market was the task of the Commissie De Vries. Work according to ability is the essence of the advice. The committee chooses a uniform approach for all those who are unable to acquire a place on the normal employment market on their own. The wages system behind it is based on a legal minimum wage. Although the basic philosophy of the advice is strongly supported a review of the Wsw is not to be expected in the near future. Nevertheless a number of pilot projects are to undertaken.