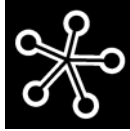


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THE WORK-FAMILY BALANCE ON THE UNION'S AGENDA

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**THE WORK-FAMILY BALANCE
ON THE UNION'S AGENDA**

ABSTRACT

High employment rates of both young parents and women increase the need for good childcare provisions. Employers can allocate time and money to their employees for this purpose, and trade unions are the appropriate actors to bargain over the relevant terms and conditions.

But is the employees' apparent need for childcare provisions reason enough for unions to make it an agenda item? What other factors can play a role in the unions' agenda setting?

A quantitative analysis of 278 distinct FNV bargaining agendas shows that, contrary to expectations, neither the share of women nor the share of young parents, covered by the collective labour agreement, are related to trade union agenda setting with respect to childcare issues. Rather, central recommendations and history dependence play important roles, along with the concept of communities of practice within FNV unions.

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Uit eerder onderzoek bleek dat er geen direct verband bestaat tussen vraag naar arbeid-en-zorgregelingen in CAO's en het aanbod ervan – deze regelingen komen voornamelijk in CAO's voor wanneer de werkgever daar de financiële ruimte voor heeft.

Betekent dit dat nu ook dat vakbonden niet daar waar dat nodig is inspelen op de vraag naar arbeid-en-zorgregelingen? Met andere woorden, komt de vraag van de achterban naar dit soort regelingen terug op de onderhandelingsagenda voor de desbetreffende CAO?

Onderzoek in 556 CAO's (278 recente CAO's en van elk de direct er aan voorafgaande CAO) laat zien dat, met uitzondering van het CAO-jaar 2001, alleen de mate waarin arbeid-en-zorgregelingen voorkomen in de vorige CAO bepalend zijn voor de onderhandelingsagenda.

En in 2001, het jaar waarin de Wet arbeid & zorg tot stand kwam, is nog iets meer aan de hand.

Hoe kunnen we het schijnbare gebrek aan relatie tussen vraag en aanbod van arbeid-en-zorgregelingen verklaren? Ligt hier gebrekkige communicatie tussen de sociale partners, of tussen vakbonden en hun achterban aan ten grondslag? Of moeten we de oorzaak in een andere hoek zoeken?

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I INTRODUCTION

Looking back at the years 1993 until 2003, two of the many labour-related developments that can be discerned are the increasing share of women working in the Dutch labour market and the rapid development of childcare and other work-family balance provisions in collective labour agreements (CLAs). The share of the female working population that is actually active on the labour market increased from 89.4 percent to 94.0 percent; of the group of both men and women active on the labour market, the share of women increased from 36.3 percent to 41.5 percent (CBS data 2004)¹.

Either these provisions are being included in collective agreements, or existing provisions are being expanded.

The reasons for this are obvious: from the employee's point of view, childcare provisions make it interesting for women to join or stay in the labour market; from the employer's point of view, although it may be a costly issue, these provisions may help attract and retain female employees. As Tijdens et al. (2002) have found, it is usually women who take care of combining work and family care. In the situation of one-and-a-half earners, typical for Dutch households with young children, women claim to be responsible for childcare twenty times more often than men. It seems plausible that there is a causal relation between these two.

This topic has been previously researched by Schreuder (2004). He constructed and tested a model to explain the level of work-family provisions in collective labour agreements, with the following independent variables: share of female employees, the negotiator's gender, size of the annual structural wage increase, CLA size, sector type (private or public), and CLA type (sectoral or company CLA). Curiously, the share of female employees covered by the CLA was not a significant factor in this model. Rather, economical factors seem to underlie work-family developments in CLAs, as indicated by the fact that the extent of work-family provisions and yearly wage increase levels are related. That is, CLAs with generous work-family provisions are also generous in terms of wage increase percentages, while CLAs where the employer has a less than favourable financial situation tend to score low on both accounts. CLA type was the only other significant predictor; sectoral CLAs tended to have higher levels of work-family provisions than company CLAs.

Apparently, the supply of work-family provisions in CLAs is not a response to female employees' demands. The absence of a relation between female coverage and work-family provisions in the *collective labour agreement* gives rise to the question whether or not trade union negotiators include work-family provisions as an important item on their *agenda* if the share of women is large. If they do, then there might still be a relationship between demand for and supply of work-family provi-

¹ Female working population: all women aged 16 to 64. Active working population: all people aged 16 to 64 holding a job of at least 12 hours per week.

sions, but in the sphere of trade union agenda setting rather than in the ultimate collective agreement. Charlesworth (1997), for instance, asserts that if the needs of female employees are to be recognised, their working time preferences should be part of the bargaining agenda. If trade union negotiators take these preferences serious, we may expect work-family issues on the union agenda. Nationwide research by Lake Snell Perry & Associates also shows that American women *and* men are strongly in favour of an agenda in which work-family issues are addressed seriously (Lake Snell Perry & Associates 2002). Although the American situation is not automatically relevant for the Netherlands, articles in Dutch newspapers regularly suggest similarities. So, do negotiators respond to their members' demands?

This paper aims to answer this question by investigating FNV bargaining agendas that are used during CLA negotiations. A new model will be constructed, including as explanatory variables not only the shares of women and young parents covered by the CLA, but also work-family provisions in the preceding CLA, the prominence of work-family items in central recommendations, and nearness of other negotiators.

2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When setting up a bargaining agenda for a specific collective labour agreement, do trade union negotiators take account of preferences of employees covered by the CLA? Research by Tijdens (2002) suggests that “the Dutch part-time economy facilitates a good fit between employers’ demands and employees’ preferences with regard to working hours”.² This may imply that negotiators have indeed looked at work-family preferences of employees whose CLA they are bargaining over, at least with respect to part-time work.

Hypothesis I, which has already been introduced in the previous section, is listed below concisely.

Hypothesis I: The larger the share of female employees that are covered by a specific CLA, the more work-family proposals are included in the agenda of the trade union bargaining for this CLA.

One could object that focusing on the share of women, although they make up the largest bulk of employees who may profit from work-family provisions, might conceal the fact that the most logical targets for these kinds of provisions are parents of young children. Picture a family, consisting of two fulltime working parents and at least one child who needs childcare. The ideal situation for giving optimal care would be brought about by *both* parents benefiting from work-family provisions in their CLA; not just the mother. Thus, if we assume that trade union negotiators look to those members that need a work-family balance most, then perhaps it would make more sense to relate the work-family balance on the agenda to the share of young parents per CLA. This leads to the alternative hypothesis I.I.

Hypothesis I.I: The larger the share of young parents that are covered by a specific CLA, the more work-family proposals are included in the agenda of the trade union bargaining for this CLA.

The apparent demand of the members of a trade union – female members or young parents demanding (better) work family arrangements – is not strong enough a factor by itself to explain a union’s agenda setting. Rather than eliminating it from the analysis, however, new explanatory variables may be added in order to shed some light on the agenda setting process.

² Otten and Smulders (2002) also come to the conclusion that Dutch employees are largely satisfied with their working hours.

Issues related to female labour appeared on unions' bargaining agendas as early as 1989, after recommendations of the Social-Economic Council (Van der Meer 2002). We can safely assume that trade union negotiators will not exert strenuous efforts to improve work-family arrangements in collective labour agreements that already have beneficial provisions. This means that, when trying to explain unions' agenda setting, the content of the preceding CLAs must be taken into account. Combined with the results of the collective bargaining – i.e. the new CLA – the picture becomes a longitudinal one, as is shown below in Figure 1. Note that this is not a causal model but a historical, or chronological model.



Figure 1. A time-line representation of CLA development.

CLA₀ is the collection of CLAs that chronologically precede the bargaining agenda, whereas CLA₁ is the collection of CLAs that are the result of the collective bargaining. This leads to hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2: The more work-family provisions in the preceding CLA, the less work-family proposals are included in the agenda of the trade union bargaining for the next CLA.

However, there are also reasons to refute this hypothesis, for example when taking negotiators' investment costs into consideration. If trade union negotiators are not able to achieve a specific bargaining goal within a single bargaining period, they will likely continue to pursue this goal in the next period. Even if central recommendations or union members propose other bargaining targets, invested time and commitment on the part of the negotiator will make him or her stick with the agenda item. This is called path dependence. It refers to the fact that current situations logically spring from situations in the past; decisions taken earlier influence the possible array of decisions that can be taken now. David (1985) was the first to coin this term in economics. He defined "a path-dependent sequence of economic changes [as] one of which important influences upon the eventual outcome can be exerted by temporally remote events, including happenings dominated by change elements rather than systemic forces." In other words, the outcome of a process depends on its past history, on the entire sequence of decisions made by agents and resulting outcomes, and not just on contemporary conditions. David used the introduction of the QWERTY keyboard layout as an example: even though the layout proved to be less efficient than other layouts, the fact that it was introduced onto the market before any other layout insured its survival. Too much had been

invested already to abandon the QWERTY layout. Following a similar line of reasoning, trade union negotiators may have invested a lot of time in bargaining over a specific issue, and they might not want to abandon this path and follow a new path, for fear of lost investment costs.

Recommendations at central union level can be seen as guidelines for trade union negotiators in setting up their agenda. Van den Toren (1996, 2001) has researched the impact of recommendations of the Foundation of Labour³ on CLAs. His results show that, although the influence of the Foundation itself is modest, the translation of their recommendations into the internal coordination policy of the FNV federation heavily influences collective bargaining, for instance with respect to wage setting and employability issues. This means that the content of decentralised bargaining agendas is determined by recommendations at central union level⁴.

Teulings and Hartog (1998), in their book on labour contracts, institutions and wage structure, also illustrate the power of the Foundation of Labour over member unions.

Finally, Van Houten (2004) has investigated the effects of central recommendations of the Foundation of Labour on decentralised bargaining agendas in the metal industry, and confirmed that the influence indeed exists with respect to several issues. The ideas discussed above lead to hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3: If work-family issues are included in central recommendations, the likelihood of work-family issues on the trade union's CLA agenda increases.

However, Strachan and Burgess (1998) firmly state that “integration of work and family responsibilities has become an important element in the promotion of the *decentralisation* of the Australian industrial relations system” (italics added). This seems to indicate a tendency to move away from the centralising influence of central recommendations, at least with respect to the work and family issue. This would also point to a refutation of hypothesis 3. Note that Strachan and Burgess’s research was carried out in Australia, which, although collective labour agreements are common there, might not reflect the Dutch situation accurately.

An important observation in relation to the influence of central recommendations is that negotiators often have their own agendas. During the span of several years, they bargain with employers; and what cannot be achieved during the negotiation rounds of one year, they try to achieve in the next year, or the one after that. This form of strategy is facilitated by FNV union policy to let nego-

³ The Foundation of Labour (in Dutch: ‘Stichting van de Arbeid’, or STAR) is a tripartite institution of government, employers and trade unions, primarily giving advice on national employment policy issues.

⁴ The FNV trade union confederation publishes these central recommendations once a year, in September.

tiators stay in one place if they like it there, also in order to give them the opportunity to build a network, get to know bargaining parties, and influence opponents slowly.⁵ If central union policies change during this time, negotiators may be faced with having to abandon their current agenda, in favour of concentrating on another theme. A conflicting situation may arise when a negotiator is not willing to give up on years of 'pushing the employer in a preferred direction'; the hypothesised relationship between central recommendations and decentralised agendas can be thwarted by this phenomenon.

In hypothesis 3 a vertical, downward effect was discussed. However, coordination processes also take place horizontally. Trade union negotiators usually do not operate alone; they confer and collaborate with colleagues. This gives rise to the thought that negotiators who work in the same industry, and are therefore professionally close, may share ideas more often than those who work in different branches of industry. In other words, when two negotiators move in the same 'community of practice', it is more likely that they will put similar items on their agenda, irrespective of central recommendations, union membership composition or the company they are bargaining against. Brown (1996), who first coined the term 'communities of practice', stated in an article on organisational learning, most efficient learning processes take place horizontally rather than through official training. In communities of practice – small groups of professionals with similar jobs – knowledge is passed along much more efficiently. His research concentrated on factory mechanics, who started out by learning about the machines they had to repair from manuals. After a while, however, they encountered technical problems they couldn't solve with just the manuals. They thought up solutions themselves and passed this knowledge along to colleagues, thus creating a shared knowledge database in the community of mechanics.

It is not difficult to see that what is true for knowledge, also holds for convictions, and thus, bargaining agenda items.

In this paper, the boundaries of communities of practice are defined as the boundaries of the specific FNV trade union; since there are 15 different FNV trade unions in the sample, negotiators belong to one of 15 communities of practice. It is likely that the results relating to this variable turn out to be poor, since only five of the possible communities contain cases, one of which, FNV Bondgenoten, holds 91 per cent of the cases. Therefore, the sample will be subdivided into different types of communities, defined by their respective fields of industry. The FNV calls these fields 'FNV bedrijfspgroepen', which can be roughly translated to 'FNV sector groups'. The distribution of cases over the sector groups is better suited for analysis.

⁵ This system has replaced the old rotation system at FNV, meant to give negotiators a wide range of experience. Source: M. van Klaveren, STZ Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

Hypothesis 4: CLA agendas from union negotiators operating within the same community of practice are more similar with respect to work-family issues than agendas from negotiators from different communities of practice.

When the four hypotheses are combined into one model, it has the following appearance (see Figure 2).

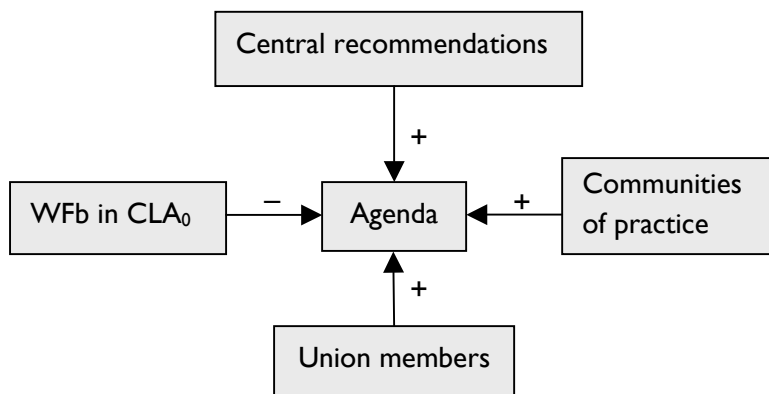


Figure 2. The theoretical model of factors related to the bargaining agenda.

The trade union agenda is the central element, the work-family balance of which needs to be explained. There are four different factors influencing the agenda: the central recommendations, in a top-down way; the union members, in a bottom-up way; communities of practice, which can be said to have a horizontal effect on the agenda; and the work-family balance (WFb) in the preceding CLA. The first three of these are unquestionably influenced by the media and public opinion, so they are not entirely independent factors, but since no direct connections between them are suspected, the model will be tested as it is.

Other factors that may explain specific union agenda setting with respect to work-family issues include structural wage increases in the CLA, gender of the negotiator, and CLA size, as has been explicated earlier in Schreuder (2004). Structural wage increase is an indicator for the financial situation of the employer, and if this situation is favourable, the employer may well use this reserve for financing labour conditions like work-family arrangements. Economic growth may also have a similar effect on the dependent variable. In times of growth, negotiators will likely make farther-reaching bargaining proposals than during times of recession. It is quite likely, however, that economic growth positively influences wage increase; analysis will have to show whether this is the case.

Negotiator's gender may have an effect on agenda setting, following the idea that female negotiators have a more direct feel for the need for work-family arrangements, being women themselves, and thus possibly more involved.

CLA size might have ambiguous effects: on the one hand, the larger the company or branch of industry, the more members the union will have, on average, which will create a larger social pressure to put work-family arrangements on the agenda. This effect is amplified by media attention for this issue. On the other hand, the expenses for the employer increase with the number of employees covered by the CLA, and since trade union negotiators obviously know this, they might relax their proposals, arguing that resistance with the employer to work-family proposals will probably rise along with CLA size. This argument is not very strong, however, since bargaining is a process of give and take, of asking more than you know you will eventually receive, so 'unreasonable' proposals are not uncommon.

In the next chapter, the dataset, the variables and the test methods are described.

3 METHODS

In this chapter, I will describe the sample, how the agendas were coded, how the independent variables were measured and which methods were used to test the hypotheses.

3.1 THE SAMPLE

The sample consists of 278 FNV agendas, related to the set of current CLAs negotiated by the FNV. Below I will explain how the sample was created.

The starting point is the selection of current CLAs (CLA_1 in Figure 1) that are contained in the DUCADAM dataset. In Box 1, details of this dataset are provided. The selection of current CLAs was made in 2003; it consists of as many distinct CLAs as possible that are valid in 2003 and have a starting date in 2001 or later⁶. In principle, every one of these CLAs can be linked to an agenda, a letter with union proposals that was sent to the employer or employers' organisation before the negotiations took place. To be able to test the model, however, the agendas need to be linked not only to the following CLA, but also to the preceding CLA (CLA_0 in Figure 1). The selection of preceding CLAs ($N=598$) is smaller than the selection of following, or current CLAs ($N=769$). The first reason for this is that some of the 769 recent CLAs have no preceding CLA – the company or branch of industry has decided to agree on a CLA for the first time. This is for example true for the Veronica broadcasting company. The second reason is simply lack of data; the relevant CLAs have not (yet) been coded by the trade unions. This is for example the case for the Tires and wheels industry.

The **FNV cao-databank** is a database of both textual and coded information, pertaining to all collective labour agreements that the FNV trade unions have negotiated in the Netherlands since 1995.

The textual part is an online database that stores CLA texts, bargaining agendas, pamphlets and legal documents.

The coded part of the database exists only offline. The FNV has converted the textual CLA data into values for more than 1100 variables.

The **DUCADAM Dataset** is a scientific translation of the coded part of the FNV cao-databank, relating to the years 1995 to 2003. It consists of 3752 CLAs.

Some of the variables are meta-variables that were not included in the FNV cao-databank, like branch of industry, negotiator's gender, number of employees covered and type of CLA. Coding is done in SPSS format.

For more information on both databases, see Schreuder & Tijdens (2003).

Box 1. Details of the FNV cao-databank and the DUCADAM Dataset.

So, the sample of agendas is all the agendas that follow the CLAs from CLA_0 chronologically *and* that are available in the FNV cao-databank. This resulted in 278 agendas.

The DUCADAM dataset is organised in such a way that each case is a CLA, regardless of the year in which it was negotiated. The 2003 CLA of the Rabobank is a different case from the 2002 CLA of the Rabobank, for example. For the analysis in this paper, though, the two need to be tied to each other *and* to the variables pertaining to the agenda, so that each case contains variables about CLA_0 , the agenda and CLA_1 . Another reason for the necessity of this linkage is that the dependent variable, the proposed improvement of work-family provisions, is defined on the basis of both the preceding CLA and the bargaining agenda; this is described in more detail in section 3.2.

Thus, I have transposed the original DUCADAM dataset by moving one group of cases (namely: the group of preceding CLAs, or CLA_0) before another set of cases (namely: the group of recent CLAs, or CLA_1), before adding data on work-family agenda proposals. Each case now consists of an agenda and two distinct CLAs that have the same name but different, consecutive validity periods.

As has been stated before, the 'FNV cao-databank' was used to collect information about work-family proposals in the agendas. A name-by-name search based on the 598 CLA names yielded 278 distinct agendas. The distribution of these agendas, which relate to the years 2001 through 2003, can be seen in Figure 3; it is shown per branch of industry. This is a representative sample of agendas in the Netherlands, because each branch of industry is represented to an equal degree – the number of agendas per branch of industry in the sample correlates almost perfectly with the number of CLAs (and thus agendas) in the population ($r = 0.986$).

3.2 SCORING THE AGENDA – THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE

In previous research (Schreuder 2004), all FNV negotiated CLAs have been scored on the extent to which work-family arrangements are integrated in the CLA. This score is called the Work-Family balance score. Depending on how profitable the work-family provisions are to the employee, the CLA is scored from 0 to 100, 0 being the worst score. For an exact account of the computation of this score, I refer to Appendix 3 in the mentioned report.

⁶ See Schreuder (2004).

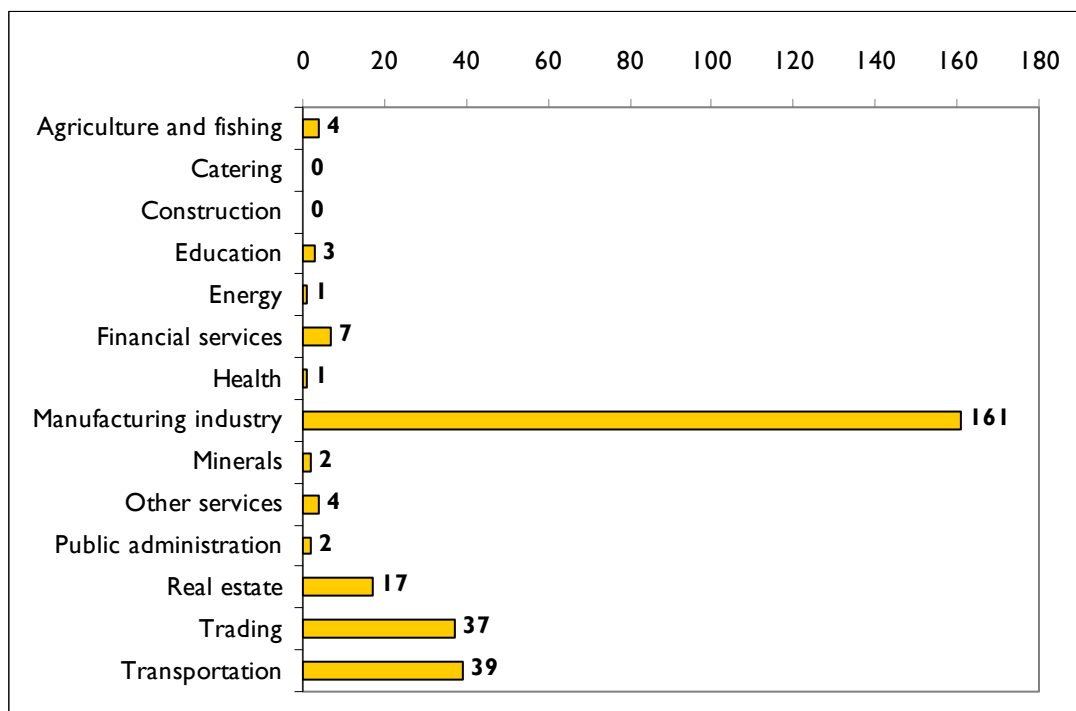


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of agendas (and CLAs) per branch of industry.

The sector names correspond to the SBI'93 1-digit classification system of the Central Bureau of Statistics.

The objective of this paper is to explain the contents of the bargaining agenda with respect to work-family arrangements, so we must create a measure for this too. The question that must be answered in order to measure the dependent variable is: how much does the union want to improve the work-family provisions in the CLA? Or, in other words: how much does the agenda *add* to the work-family balance score of the preceding CLA, in the hypothetical situation that all proposals on the agenda were fully met by the employer? To arrive at the answer to this question, I compute the fictitious work-family balance score of CLA_1 if all proposals on the agenda were fully realised into the CLA, and subtract the work-family balance score in CLA_0 from that. This is the mathematical definition of the dependent variable, which is called the 'Agenda work-family score'.⁷ For instance, if the work-family balance score in the preceding CLA were 23, and realising all agenda proposals made the score in the new CLA 29, then the agenda score would be 6.

The agenda work-family score is the sum of five sub-scores; one for each of the five types of work-family arrangement. These are part-time arrangements, childcare arrangements, parental leave arrangements, maternal leave arrangements and paternal leave arrangements. Each sub-score can take

⁷ Another interesting object of research for which this variable can be used would be to determine the level of bargaining success of the trade union. Comparing the agenda work-family score to the work-family balance score of CLA_1 would then be illustrative.

one of four to five different values; the value of the sub-score depends on the progressiveness of the proposal. Creating a work-family arrangement that was previously absent in the CLA is considered more progressive, and thus receives a higher score, than improving an existing work-family arrangement in such a way that it is up to the standard of the law; the proposal to improve the arrangements, but not specifically up to the level of the law, is deemed the least progressive. The law referred to here is the Work & Care Act of 2001, in which three of the five work-family arrangements are treated. Putting this kind of proposal on an agenda makes sense when realising the explicit statement in this law that CLAs are not bound by it in every aspect. For instance, the Work & Care Act states that female employees are entitled to six weeks of fully paid pregnancy leave, but also that social partners may deviate from this in their CLA by agreeing on a shorter period. Details of the coding procedures can be found in appendix I.

Many trade union bargaining agendas contain propositions on part-time constructions for older workers. Although these can be interpreted as part-time regulations for a specific target population, they are not intended to help parents with young children combine work and family life, and are therefore not included in the agenda work-family score.

3.3 OPERATIONALISATION OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The share of female employees covered by a CLA is estimated by the share of female employees in the branch of industry, this being the closest approximation possible. This is operationalised as the number of women working within a sub-branch of industry, divided by the total number of workers within the sub-branch. These data are obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands. After assigning one of the sub-branch codes to each collective labour agreement, the female employment share that corresponds to that sub-branch is attributed to the CLA.

Data on parents of young children (hypothesis 1.1) are unfortunately not available to the extent needed for the analysis. That is, no data exist on the share of young parents per CLA; not even at business sector level can data on the share of young parents be obtained. A proxy for this variable will be used, namely the share of fulltime employees aged 25 to 34. These people are most likely to have young children, and, since they work fulltime, to have need of work-family arrangements.

How the work-family balance score in the preceding CLA is computed has already been described in the first section of paragraph 3.2.

FNV central recommendations consist of a few main issues, which are deemed the most important bargaining stakes for the coming year, and several less important side issues. Depending on whether the work-family subject is a main issue, a side issue or not an issue at all, the importance of the

work-family issue in central recommendations will be characterised as great, medium or zero⁸, corresponding to scores of 2, 1 and 0 respectively.

Under the heading of the communities of practice of hypothesis 4, both FNV trade unions and FNV sector groups are nominal variables, which can take 5 and 16 values, respectively. The values are listed in the Results section, in Table 4 and Table 5.

Structural wage increase is measured at CLA level, and is computed as the total of the agreed wage increases in the CLA, divided by the duration of the CLA in years. Economic growth is computed as the Gross National Product (GNP) of the relevant year, divided by the GNP of the year before. 'Relevant' year means the year of CLA_t.

Negotiator's gender is 0 if the main FNV union negotiator who bargained over the CLA, and thus who constructed the union agenda, is a woman; it is 1 in case of a male negotiator.

The number of employees that are covered by the CLA is based on data from both the FNV trade union and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

3.4 TEST METHODS

Five different models will be tested, the first consisting of just the variables of hypothesis 1 and 1.1. Models 2 to 4 each consist of the variables of the previous model, extended with one independent variable. In other words, in model 2 hypotheses 1 and 2 will be tested simultaneously, in model 3 this is true for hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, and in model 4, hypotheses 1 to 4 are tested. Finally, in model 5, the control variables are added. There is no obvious reason for this order of testing, other than following the graphical model in a clockwise way. However, using different orders of model building yielded similar results in terms of strength and significance of the factors.

The first objective of this paper is to explain the number and extent of work-family items on trade unions' agendas by looking at the share of female employees that are covered by a CLA. The analytic procedure used to test model 1 is OLS regression.

The level or extent of work-family provisions in the preceding CLA, as described in hypothesis 2, will now be added to the analysis, generating model 2. This will also be tested using OLS regression.

Hypothesis 3 is the next step in the building of the model. The importance of work-family issues in central recommendations will be related to the content of the agenda's negotiated in 2001 to 2003 (the relevant years), once more by means of OLS regression.

⁸ In FNV central recommendations, the work-family balance issue is treated as one subject; specific work-family arrangements, like parental leave provisions, are dealt with only in the following, decentralised bargaining processes.

The measure by which the communities of practice from hypothesis 4 are compared is the average agenda work-family score. This will be tested by various non-parametric analyses, the first of which is cluster analysis. This will be used to determine whether specific trade unions, or, at a more decentralised level, FNV sector groups, form natural clusters. Clusters formation will be based on the average agenda work-family score per trade union or per FNV sector group. If the clusters turn out to approximately overlap with the different trade unions or FNV sector groups, then that is a clue that agendas are similar within communities of practice, but dissimilar between them. That would imply that the specific trade union or FNV sector group has an effect on the dependent variable.

Since cluster analysis yielded unsatisfying results⁹, a series of T-tests is performed to measure agenda differences, first between trade unions and then between FNV sector groups. A significant difference between the average agenda work-family scores of trade unions X and Y suggests that these trade unions have set different priorities with respect to work-family issues. To confirm the hypothesis about communities of practice and the spreading of ideas, dummy variables of the communities that consist of at least five negotiators are created, which are added to the regression analysis in model 4.

Finally, structural wage increase, gender of the negotiator, and CLA size are added to the model as independent variables. Economic growth is left out, because the correlation between economic growth and structural wage increase turns out to be large ($r=0.47$) and highly significant. The reason for choosing structural wage increase over economic growth is that it has more variation. See Appendix 2 for details.

⁹ For details, see Appendix 4.

4 RESULTS

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, statistical information is provided on work-family arrangement proposals as they are formulated on trade unions' agendas, followed by some descriptive facts about these proposals in relation to the actual arrangements, both in the preceding and in the following CLA. In the second section, descriptive data on the independent variables is summarised and tabulated, intended to give the reader an insight into the steering factors themselves in the agenda formation process. In the last section, both are combined to come up with answers to the four hypotheses.

4.1 BARGAINING AGENDAS' CONTENTS

162 of the 278 agendas have proposals in them to implement or improve work-family arrangements. Of these 162 agendas, almost half include proposals on childcare arrangements (see Table 1). In a slightly smaller number of bargaining agendas, parental leave proposals can be found, while the remaining three types of work-family balance arrangements exist in around 50 agendas each.

Work-family provision	Number of agendas
Working part-time	42
Childcare provisions	80
Paternity leave	53
Parental leave	71
Pregnancy and maternity leave	47

Table 1. Distribution of work-family provisions on the trade unions' agendas.

The numbers refer to the number of agendas in which mentioned provision is included.

The issue of increasing the level of work-family balance arrangements up to the standard described in the part-time law WAA is addressed in only three agendas. The Work & Care Act is a much more prominent subject on the agenda: increasing the quality of work-family arrangements to match the level described in this act is addressed in 29 agendas.

The absolute improvements that trade unions wish to make are, on average, small. On a scale from 0 (no work-family balance arrangements in the CLA) to 100 (best possible work-family balance arrangements in the CLA), most proposed *improvements* lie around 3 to 5 points, with a few exceptions of up to 37 points. Still, in a substantial group of agendas improvements of about 25 points are proposed. Details can be seen in the histogram below, Figure 4.

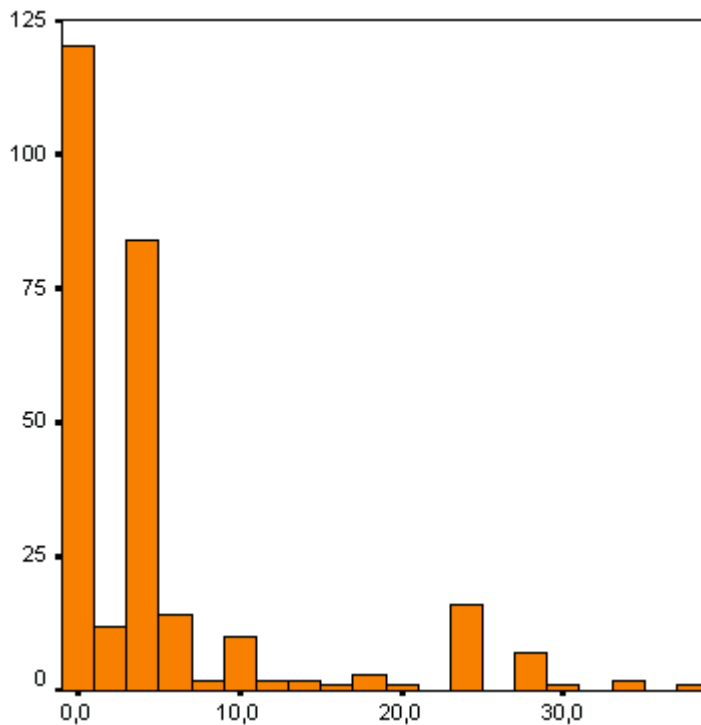


Figure 4. Trade unions' work-family provision proposals for improvement.

Each bar of the histogram depicts the number of agendas whose agenda work-family scores fall in the relevant range.

What has become of the proposals for improvement, when looking at the resulting CLAs? In less than 6% of the 162 agendas, trade unions have had to give in as far as work-family items were concerned – possibly in favour of other kinds of improvements. In exactly half of them, no change has taken place; in the remaining 44%, actual improvements have been accomplished. These improvements are not large, however: on average, 1.75 percent of the proposals on each agenda have actually been realised, with a maximum of 7.5 percent. In the histogram of Figure 5, these results are represented graphically.

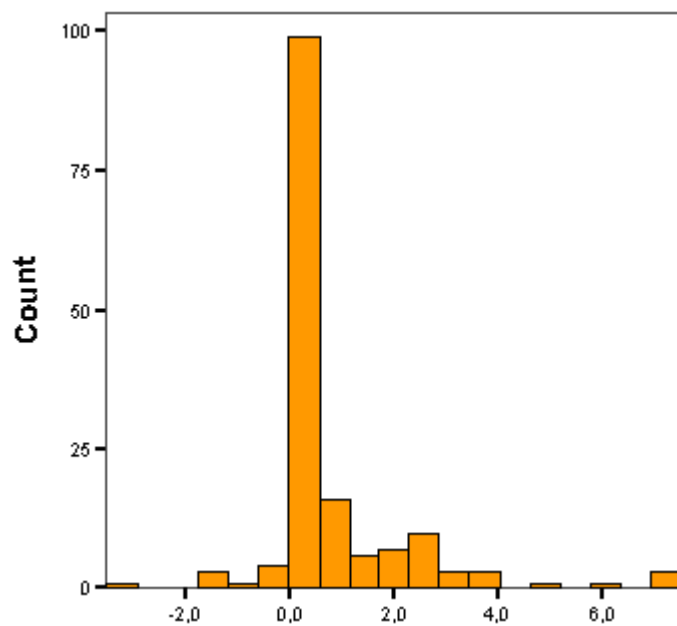


Figure 5. Percent of unions' work-family proposals that have been realised into the CLA.

Each bar of the histogram depicts the number of agendas whose realisation percentages fall in the relevant range.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVES OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

In this section, some descriptive statistics on the independent variables of the research model are detailed, in the same order as the hypotheses.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. dev.
Share of female employees (1)	272	4	79	28.7	13.3
Share of young parents (1.1)	276	8.0	41.4	21.6	4.4
Work-family balance in CLA ₀ (2)	278	0	59	15.0	12.4

Table 2. Descriptives of the share of women and young parents, and of the work-family balance in the preceding CLA.

There is a wide variety in the share of female employees per branch of industry, ranging from 4 percent in two CLAs in the metal industry to 79 percent in the Welfare CLA. The share of young parents varies from less than 10 percent in three education CLAs and the Welfare CLA to over 40 percent in four CLAs in business services.

Most of the work-family balance scores of the preceding CLA lie between 0 and 30 points, with a peak at 0 points. These are the CLAs that have no work-family provisions whatsoever. There is no clear pattern to which branches of industry take good care of their employees work-family-wise,

although relatively many banks and insurance companies can be found among them. The CLAs without work-family provisions appear not to have much in common either, industry-wise.

Each year, the FNV trade union confederation confers with government and employers' organisations in the Foundation of Labour, the result of which is a list of recommendations that is passed on to all decentralised level FNV trade unions. Recommendations are expressed in September, and take effect in the next year. In 2001, the work-family balance was the most important element in their recommendations. Two other issues main were addressed: schooling of employees and reduction of work pressure (FNV 2000). In 2002, increasing individual employees' voice and options in both time and schooling issues were the union's main objectives, with childcare, amongst others, as a secondary issue (FNV 2001). And in 2003, three main issues could be discerned: the life career, stimulation of disabled and unemployed people (re)entering the labour market, and thorough reforms in pension systems (FNV 2002). As a less important issue, again, childcare is mentioned. In appendix 3, a table is constructed listing all main and side issues of the central FNV recommendations.

Translating these data to numerical scores for each year yields the following results. In 2001, the work-family theme is a core issue in the recommendations, resulting in a score of 2. In 2002 and 2003, this theme has moved to a secondary position, which means these years are awarded a score of 1. Table 3 lists these scores.

Year	Work-family importance score
2001	2
2002	1
2003	1

Table 3. The importance of the work-family issue in the FNV central recommendations.

Communities of practice based on FNV trade union cannot be used in the analysis, since only two of the five trade unions have enough cases (i.e. more than five), as can be seen in Table 4.

FNV trade union	Number of CLAs
FNV Bondgenoten	256
FWZ	10
ABVAKABO	5
AOb	4
FNV Kiem	3
Total	278

Table 4. Trade unions in the sample.

Using FNV sector groups as a community criterion yields more suitable groups. In Table 5, the five largest groups will be selected for the analysis of models 4 and 5.

FNV sector group	Number of CLAs	Average agenda work-family score
Manufacturing	165	4.18
Trade	34	7.07
Transportation	29	2.55
Services	19	3.32
Shipping	9	3.33
Farming	7	
Education	4	
Government	3	
Arts	1	
G&G	1	
Metal industry	1	
Metaelectro	1	
Packing industry	1	
Printing	1	
Public market	1	
Sea service	1	
Total	278	n.a.

Table 5. Distribution of FNV sector groups in the sample, including average agenda work-family scores.

T-tests show that between these five groups, several significant differences exist, which is reason to construct dummy variables for the groups, so that regression analysis can be performed on them. The results of this will be described in the next section.

4.3 BARGAINING AGENDAS' CONTENT EXPLAINED?

In the previous section, the content (and the negotiation outcomes) of trade unions' agendas have been described, but they have not yet been explained.

4.3.1 UNION MEMBERS

Regression analysis shows that, contrary to expectations, demand for work-family provisions does not influence supply on the union's agenda. Neither the share of female employees, nor the share of young parents covered by the CLA has any effect on the agenda work-family score. The first hypothesis must therefore be refuted. See Table 6.

H	Model	1	2	3	4	5
1	Share of female employees	0,091	0,114	0,114	-0,055	-0,047
1.1	Share of young parents	0,056	0,056	0,056	0,061	0,078
2	Work-family balance score of CLA ₀		-0,190**	-0,190**	-0,132**	-0,125*
3	Work-family balance in central recommendations			excluded	excluded	excluded
4	Sector group number = 39 (shipping) ^a				-0,131*	-0,145*
4	Sector group number = 72 (manufacturing)				-0,225*	-0,286**
4	Sector group number = 73 (services)				-0,126	-0,163*
4	Sector group number = 74 (trading)				0,021	-0,026
4	Sector group number = 77 (transportation)				-0,249**	-0,293***
c	Structural wage increase (yearly average)					-0,003
c	Negotiator's gender					-0,062
c	Number of employees covered by CLA					-0,078

Table 6. Overview of the regression results.

The numbers in the first column (H) refer to the hypothesis tested. c stands for control variable.

^a The reference category consists of all other sector group numbers.

* significant at 10% level.

** significant at 5% level.

*** significant at 1% level.

After adding more variables to the model, as is the case when expanding model 1 to model 5, the relative strength of the share of young parents does grow, although it never becomes significant.

Apparently, FNV trade union negotiators do not tune the work-family part of their agendas to employee preferences, at least not on a decentralised level. This may be explained by the fact that trade union negotiators experience a lot of time pressure because of trade unions' cutbacks. Conse-

quently, proposal letters to distinct companies are sometimes copies of one another, only persons' and organisations' names having been changed. Reprimands from works councils or central union members are unusual, however.

4.3.2 HISTORY DEPENDENCE: THE PRECEDING CLA

In all models, the importance of the preceding CLA becomes clear. The results are significant and confirm the hypothesis: if the work-family provisions are already well worked out in the CLA, new proposals on the union's agenda are modest with respect to this issue. And, vice versa, negotiators tend to propose a lot of improvements for the work-family balance in CLAs in which these provisions are scarce. Viewed in a longitudinal way, this effect boils down to a strategy of first putting a lot of energy into introducing work-family provisions into the CLA, and then, after this part has turned out to be successful and these CLA provisions have been realised to a certain extent, reducing the importance of, and thus the time spent on of this issue.

The implication of this is that trade unions seem to have an ideal amount of work-family provisions in mind, and they strive to achieve that goal for all CLAs. The remarkable thing is that they do so irrespective of the employees that are covered by the CLA, which is illustrated by the fact that there is no effect of female employees or young parents on the union agenda.

4.3.3 CENTRAL RECOMMENDATIONS

At first sight, the central recommendations that the FNV issues each year in September appear to be related to the content of the decentralised trade unions' agendas, be it in an unexpected fashion. Pre-analysis shows that the effect is strongly negative, which would imply that a strong recommendation at central level leads negotiators to devote little attention in their agendas to this subject, and if the work-family balance is only a side issue in the central recommendations, negotiators tend to put it prominently on the agenda.

Year	Work-family importance score in central recommendations	Prominence of work-family issue on decentralised agendas
2001	2	3.43
2002	1	4.38
2003	1	5.24

Table 7. Relationship between central and decentralised policy on work-family issues.

While this may seem interesting in terms of miscommunication or ill will within the whole FNV trade union organisation, another explanation is easier to accept. In Table 7, the work-family importance scores are once more shown, this time related both to central recommendations and decentralised agendas. The numbers in the last column represent the proposed increase in work-family

balance score. To start with, the results might be questionable since there is not a lot of variation in the variables – and with only three years, one may wonder exactly how ‘hard’ these results are, even with the satisfying significance level of the effect.

The results may still be explained in the following way. Just as the process of bargaining must be seen in a context that spans more than just one or two years – negotiators usually try to achieve their goals in periods of five to even ten years – the relationship between central and decentralised policies must be spread out over a longer period. And then it becomes clear that the positive effect of the recommendations in 2001 cannot be found until in 2002 and 2003, when negotiators do indeed acknowledge the importance of the work-family issue.

However, since this result is based on observations in only three years, no solid conclusions can be drawn. Therefore, I decided not to include this variable in the final analysis.

4.3.4 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

In line with the expectations, the importance attached to the work-family issue by negotiators varies across trade unions. It turns out to be important which trade union a negotiator works for, as can be seen in Table 6. In four of the five large sector groups, an effect can be found. Remarkably, all of the effects are negative. What this means is that the unions’ proposals for better work-family provisions are relatively modest in these sector groups. That is, the proposed improvement is small compared to proposals in the reference group. A simple listing of the means per sector group shows us that the mean work-family agenda score for the reference group is indeed higher than each of the averages of the five sector groups. A table with descriptive measures on work-family agenda scores can be found in appendix 5.

The similarity of agendas within one FNV trade union reinforces the hypothesis that ideas are shared more easily within communities of practice than between them. This finding may be underscored by taking account of the fact that employers within one branch of industry tend to be similarly minded too with respect to certain issues, of which the work-family balance is one. This trend setting and following behaviour, which usually takes place within branches of industry, may be another proof of the importance of communities of practice influencing the union’s agenda.

As can be seen in Table 6, none of the control variables plays a significant role. Structural wage increase, as an indicator for the financial slack the employer has, was expected to positively influence the extent to which union negotiators made demands through their agenda, but neither the regression analysis nor simple bivariate correlation ($r = -0.026$) confirm this idea. Apparently, negotiators do not take the employer’s financial situation into account when forming their agenda, but rather

concentrate on following central recommendations and creating a set of work-family arrangements in the CLA that could be considered adequate for the average employee. Whether this is indeed the case could be checked through personal interviews.

Interestingly enough, when a selection is made of cases in which the agenda work-family scores are larger than zero ($N=154$), gender does seem to play a role ($\text{Beta}=-0.24$, $\text{alpha}=0.009$). In these cases, female negotiators appear to attach more value to the work-family issue than their male colleagues, which is translated into a higher agenda work-family score. Although this finding falls outside the scope of this paper, it will be scrutinised further in the next paper.

The finding of CLA size showing no significant effect illustrates the idea mentioned earlier (in chapter 2) that two, or even more opposing forces are in play. On the one hand, a large CLA size may increase pressure on negotiators to make the work-family issue a main item on the agenda; on the other hand, a large CLA size may decrease willingness of employers to meet the agenda proposal because it will mean increased costs.

5 CONCLUSIONS

When proposing and creating work-family provisions in collective labour agreements, unions do not base their exact proposals on the share of female workers covered by the CLA, or the share of parents of young children, as the concept of demand and supply would suggest. Rather, the emergence and improvement of these provisions is a large-scale, nation level development, propelled by unions in an attempt to set universal work-family standards for employees in all business sectors.

This is illustrated by the finding that work-family proposals are weak if the work-family arrangements in the current CLA are good, whereas if these arrangements are underdeveloped, negotiators make strong proposals. So, as hypothesised, the extent to which work-family provisions have been worked out in the preceding CLA is an important factor influencing the work-family content of the agenda. Here, a union policy is revealed to bring the work-family balance in each CLA to similar standards, irrespective of branch of industry. This is even more likely when considering the basic union prepositions of democracy and equality: every employee should be treated alike, and no employee should fall below or rise above a specific boundary of economic conditions. The same idea is underscored by the World Bank in her latest World Development Report, in which unions were stated to play an important role in the fair distribution of welfare (The World Bank 2005).

The union attitude described above may very well explain why unions do not relate work-family issues on their decentralised agendas to the employee population covered by those decentralised CLAs. Terms and conditions should be adequate in all business sectors, irrespective of the gender distribution. The main advantage of this approach is that all parts of the labour market remain attractive to women and young parents, and dynamic job flow will not be hindered by a lack of satisfactory work-family CLA provisions.

There may not be much difference between FNV trade unions concerning the goal to create satisfactory labour market-wide work-family balance provisions; there *are* differences in the magnitude of the proposals they make. The marked differences in attention for work-family issues between the FNV sector groups points to the existence of communities of practice within the entire FNV union, defined by the boundaries of sector groups. Negotiators that operate in the same field tend to 'borrow' ideas from one another; at least where the work-family balance is concerned. The same can be said for employers within one branch of industry, who sometimes look to one or more organisations that make innovative labour conditions (trend following behaviour).

6 DISCUSSION

The paper started out with the evidence-based assumption that the primary beneficiaries of work-family provisions are women, especially women who care for one or more young children. A necessary condition for trade unions to be able to respond to women's preferences is that these are being communicated to unions in an effective way. In order for employees to influence the union agenda, or in weaker terms, to make their preferences known, they need to be a member of the union. Union members can exert influence on the content of the CLA they are covered by – that is the basic idea behind becoming a member of a trade union. Several times before and during the CLA negotiations, member meetings are held to which each member is invited. Moreover, members can express their wishes through (online) questionnaires, they have the right to vote for or against an agreement, and they can even become active board members, giving them the opportunity to participate in collective bargaining. If the – usually small – sample of members that visits these meetings is representative for the entire member population, or even the population of employees that are covered by the relevant CLA, only then would it be legitimate to refute hypotheses I and I.I. However, the sample may be skewed, because union members interested in visiting member meetings and expressing their preferences are usually older, male employees. This will not result causally in a work-family oriented agenda, even though the population covered by the CLA may consist largely of women or young parents.

This is a keen illustration of a continual dilemma trade unions have to deal with. On the one hand, unions strive to achieve satisfactory wage and working conditions for everyone, member or not. The government, with the public interest in mind, also makes recommendations along these lines. On the other hand, a union is essentially an association with members whose interests they support. Shouldn't unions primarily work for their members, who pay union contribution?

The lack of correlation between female employees and the union agenda remains an issue, and may be scrutinised in much more detail by interviewing FNV negotiators. This is one of the subjects of the next paper, in which some light will be shed on the negotiator's role in the CLA formation process.

In this respect, it will also be interesting to find out how negotiators react to the yearly central recommendations of the FNV trade union confederation. To what extent and within how much time will they adjust their agendas to these recommendations? What happens when central recommendations conflict with a negotiator's personal goals; will the negotiator still pursue his or her own goals, adjust them or follow the recommendations completely?

A final discussion point is this. One may remark that since unions try to create balanced work-family provisions in the labour market, so that all employees can more or less achieve a comparable work-family balance, a more logical dependent variable would be the resulting CLA as the unions would like to see it. That is, what the new CLA would look like if all union proposals were fully accepted by the employer or employers' association. Analysis with this dependent variable yields very similar results as those that have been described in this paper, however.

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APPENDIX I: COMPUTATION OF AGENDA SCORES

This appendix is an account of the computation of the scores that are attributed to the bargaining agendas. Details on the work-family balance scores *in CLAs* that are mentioned below can be found in Schreuder (2004).

Instead of coding the exact proposals in the bargaining agendas, which, if at all possible, would involve extensive, time-consuming and still arbitrary computations, three different types of proposal are discerned. These are:

- Proposals for the introduction of a new work-family provision into the CLA;
- Proposals for examining possibilities of introducing a new work-family provision into the CLA, or for improvement of an existing work-family provision in the CLA;
- Proposals for bringing the work-family provision of the CLA up to the level of what either the Work & Care Act or the Working Time Adjustment Act prescribe.

The score that an agenda item of one of these types receives depends on the kind of work-family provision (part-time, childcare, paternity leave, parental leave or maternity leave provisions).

	Part-time	Childcare	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Maternity leave
New	10	10	3	5	5
Improvement	+3	+3	+1	+1.5	+1.5
Law	15	n.a.	5	11	8

Table 8. Points attributed to agenda work-family scores, divided by type of work-family provision (columns) and type of proposal (rows).

The reason that some types of work-family proposals receive more points than others is that the total number of points a work-family provision can receive is larger.

APPENDIX 2: ECONOMIC GROWTH AND WAGE INCREASE

Below are two histograms showing the variation in economic growth per CLA year and the structural wage increase per year. It is clear that the second variable has more variation, and is therefore the more likely candidate for use in the analysis.

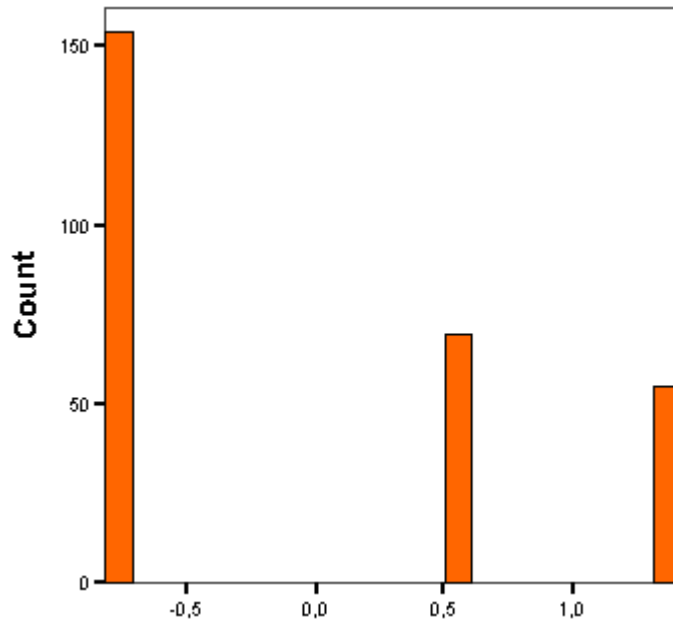


Figure 6. Histogram of economic growth as a percentage of the Gross National Product in the Netherlands, for the CLA years 2001, 2002 and 2003.

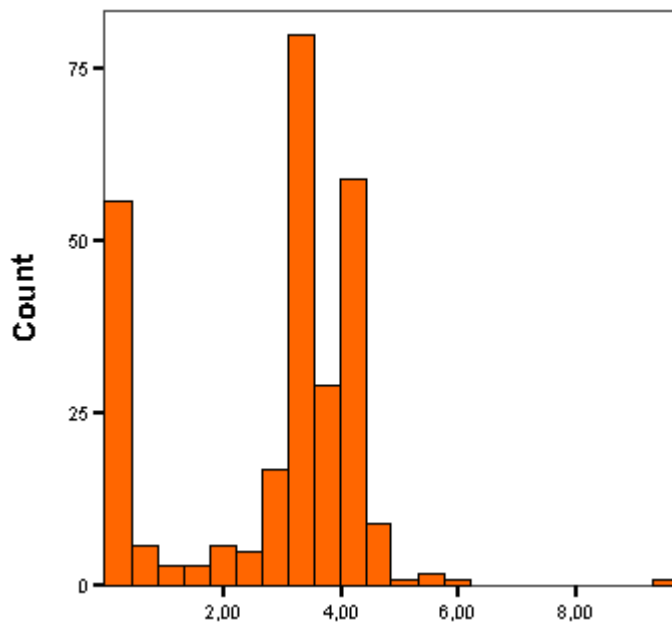


Figure 7. Histogram of yearly structural wage increase (in %), per CLA.

APPENDIX 3: CENTRAL FNV RECOMMENDATIONS OVER THE YEARS

In the table below, the contents of the FNV central recommendations are shown with respect to work-family issues. The year refers to the year in which these issues have to be initiated into collective labour agreements.

Year	Main issues	Side issues
2001	Reducing work pressure. Improving the work-family balance. Improving rights to training and schooling.	WAGES Total wage increase 4.5%, of which 4% is to be used for actual wages. OTHER Offensive labour market policy: equal opportunities for all, protection of (partially) disabled employees. Increasing voice and choice in working time without employees losing security. Equal pay for equal work. Modernising pension systems. Decentralising policy execution and providing a basis for individual choice systems.
2002	Increasing voice and choice in working time issues. Increasing voice and choice in schooling issues.	WAGES Total wage increase 4.5%, of which 4% is to be used for actual wages.
2003	The life course career (“levensloopbaan”): employee training programs (POPs) and voice in working time. Disability and reintegration of employees. Modernising pension systems.	WAGES Total wage increase 3.5%, of which 3% is to be used for actual wages. Equal pay for equal work. Protecting low wage groups. Controlling top executive wages. Secondary pecuniary incentives unlinked to primary wage increase. OTHER Childcare. Labour conditions. Work pressure. Fighting poverty. Labour terms and conditions of entrepreneurs without staff. Employment of ethnic minorities. Strengthening unions in underdeveloped countries. Improving the flow from subsidised to regular jobs.

Table 9. Central FNV recommendations for the years 2001, 2002 and 2003.

APPENDIX 4: CLUSTER ANALYSIS

Cluster analysis on the dependent variable, proposed improvement of work-family provisions, yields three highly asymmetrical clusters. The first cluster consists of only one case in which the bargaining result would be a deterioration of work-family provisions; the second cluster covers almost all of the cases; and the third encompasses the three extremes at the upper side of the agenda work-family scores.

Cluster	Number of cases	Values
1	1	-10
2	274	from -5 to 29
3	3	34, 34, 37

Table 10. Cluster analysis on the dependent variable.

This distribution resembles the FNV's sector group structure in no way at all, so cluster analysis is abandoned as a mechanism to identify communities of practice.

APPENDIX 5. AGENDA SCORE DESCRIPTIVES

In the table below, descriptive statistics are given for the agenda work-family scores of the five largest FNV sector groups and of the reference category, which is all other sector groups combined.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Mode	St Dev
Sector group = shipping	9	0	10	3,33	0	0	5,00
Sector group = manufacturing	165	0	34	4,34	1	0	7,54
Sector group = services	19	0	27	3,63	3	3	5,86
Sector group = trade	34	0	27	7,07	3	3	8,97
Sector group = transportation	29	0	24	2,55	0	0	5,40
Reference category	22	0	37	9,09	3,75	0	11,35

Table 11. Descriptive statistics for agenda work-family balance scores per FNV sector group.

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