

Modernising Working Conditions

To elaborate on modernisation, the purpose of modernisation and creating support for modernisation.

Many organisations would like to modernise their working conditions (i.e. *terms of employment*). What is actually meant and intended by modernisation and why should you want it? And how can you modernise in such a way that it generates solid support and little hassle?

Why modernise terms of employment?

There are several reasons why organisations want to modernise their terms of employment, including:

- 1) The current terms of employment do not (no longer) match what the organisation stands for and what the organisation wants. They do not fit the employer brand.
- 2) The current terms of employment hinder Agile working.
- 3) The current terms of employment do not (no longer) match what is demanded on the labour market.
- 4) The current terms of employment contain arrangements that are too expensive or not in line with the market.
- 5) The current terms of employment are written down in such a way that nobody understands them anymore.
- 6) The current terms of employment are very regulatory and controlling, which does not suit employees who have many responsibilities of their own.
- 7) The current terms of employment create hassle and/or are difficult to administer.
- 8) The current terms of employment are not (no longer) in line with the law.

What is meant by modernisation?

So, there are plenty of conceivable reasons why organisations want to modernise their terms of employment. Yet it is not always clear what exactly is meant and intended. For instance, modernisation may relate to content, process, presentation, cleaning up outdated terms of employment or to the structure of the collective agreement or arrangement. We will briefly elaborate on these points.

“Modernisation of working conditions should bring a lot of positive energy, but it can also cause discomfort.”

Modernisation of content

Content modernisation involves, for example, the following topics, which are also interrelated:

- 1) Sustainable employability and development.
- 2) Employee self-responsibility.
- 3) Dialogue: the conversation between manager and employee ('The Good Conversation', 'Great Conversations', 'Continuous Dialogues') replaces existing formal conversation cycles.
- 4) The reward system; modernisation by introducing a different pay system or The New Pay and more room for team rewards.
- 5) Professional feedback, replacing the traditional appraisal system.
- 6) Choices is employment conditions, for example better work-life balance, more individual choices, green mobility, transport budget and benefit budget.
- 7) Up-to-date legislation to which existing terms and conditions of employment should be adapted.

Modernising the process: developing together (co-creation)

Arranging working conditions is not only about the content, but also in the way parties together create that content: the process. Traditionally, this process is a negotiation between the employer and the unions or between the director and the works council.

A modern way of arranging terms of employment is for the parties to develop the terms of employment together, in proper consultation. The terms of employment are then established in co-creation, which in practice results in much less fuss and more support among employees and management.

In our terms of employment projects, we therefore adopt a co-creation approach whenever possible, see below.

Modernising presentation

Terms of employment are quite often written down as inaccessible text in an unattractive booklet. This does not invite reading. Consequently, many employees and managers often do not know exactly what the terms of employment are and how they should be applied. Modernising the presentation can help.

Modern terms of employment are often written in simple, accessible language with an appealing and inviting layout. This makes frequent use of digital options: pdf on intranet, internal and external links in the document, handy search functions or a simple terms of employment app.

Cleaning up outdated terms of employment

It happens quite often that terms of employment are not updated when laws and regulations change. As a result, the employment conditions package becomes outdated. In addition, terms of employment were agreed in the past that are now out of date, such as senior days or reduced working hours.

We conducted an earlier study on a large company collective agreement; it turned out that 25% of the arrangements in that collective agreement no longer had any added value for the employer or the employees. So, there is often old ballast in employment packages. Modernising is also clearing out that old ballast.

Modernisation in the form of modular development

In this form of modernisation, we group the terms of employment into recognisable modules, so that each module can be modernised. In doing so, we also regulate the effect of one employment condition on another per module, so that the package becomes simpler and easier to administer.

Matching what you are and want to be as an organisation

Whatever change is desired, it is always important that terms of employment match your organisation. This is not only important for your own employees, but also increasingly looked at in the labour market. And vice versa, with terms of employment that do not fit your culture, you are sending the wrong message to employees. See the images below.

What to take into account?

If – all things considered – the organisation wants to modernise and knows what it intends to do with it and how it intends to do it, there are a few points to consider.

Key principles

Modernising working conditions should generate a lot of positive energy, but it can also cause discomfort. Therefore, key principles that also help build support are:

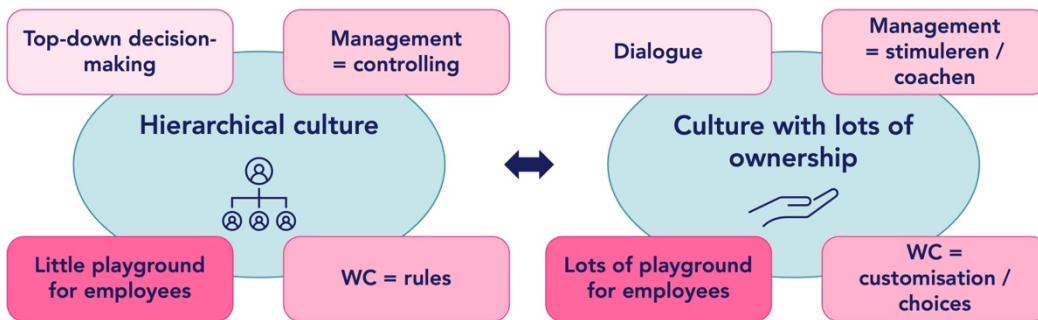
1.

Equivalent package before and after modernisation.

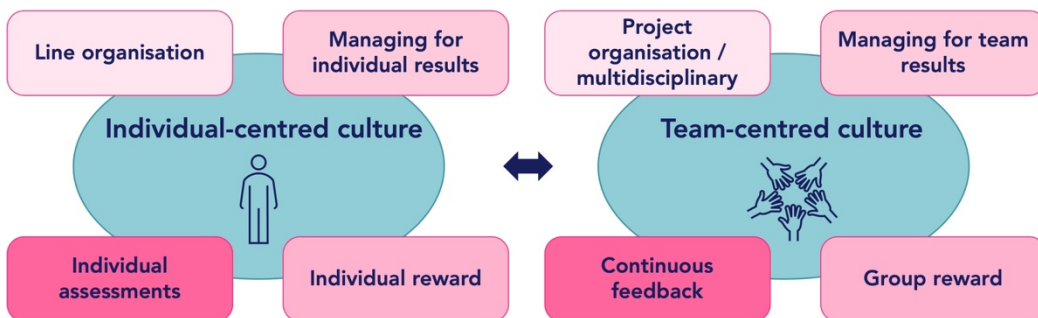
2.

Good transitional measures when working conditions expire or are replaced.

1. Culture and working conditions (WC)



2. Culture and working conditions (WC)



Lead time

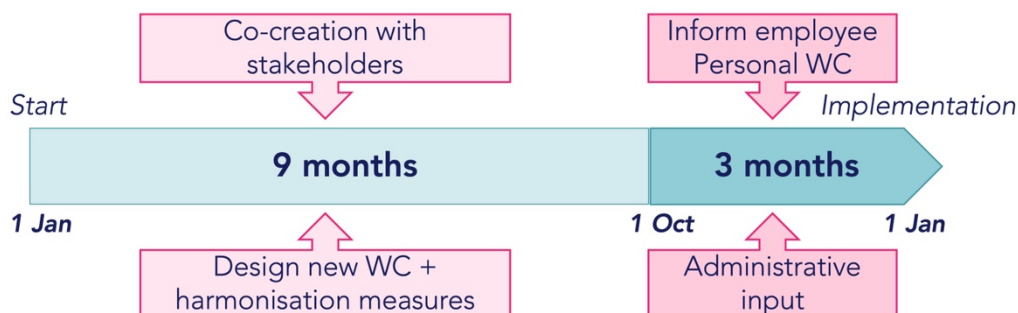
Generally, 1 January is a convenient effective date for modernised terms of employment. Otherwise, administrative implementation becomes more difficult.

The development time (that is, the period from start of the process to adoption of texts of harmonisation measures and employment conditions agreements) takes about nine months. This gives enough room if a co-creation approach is used for this (see below).

If consultations become more complex, they may take longer. For example: when it becomes more difficult to get decision-makers (management, works council, unions) to the table in time, when the works council finds it difficult to come to an opinion or when it is difficult to get the unions' supporters on board.

De Administrative input takes approximately 2 to 3 months. The implementation towards employees can take place simultaneously with the administrative input and takes about 3 months also.

The lead time is thus easily 12 months in total; a modernisation of working conditions (WC) process must therefore start at the beginning of the year if it is to be implemented by the following 1 January (see diagram).



Quintop's Approach

Our approach to modernising employment conditions aims to build support from the outset and to manage and reduce complexity as much as possible.

One way we do this is with our design approach, which in short means that we first help formulate joint principles or design requirements, then work out the broad outlines of the modernisation and only then draft a detailed regulation.

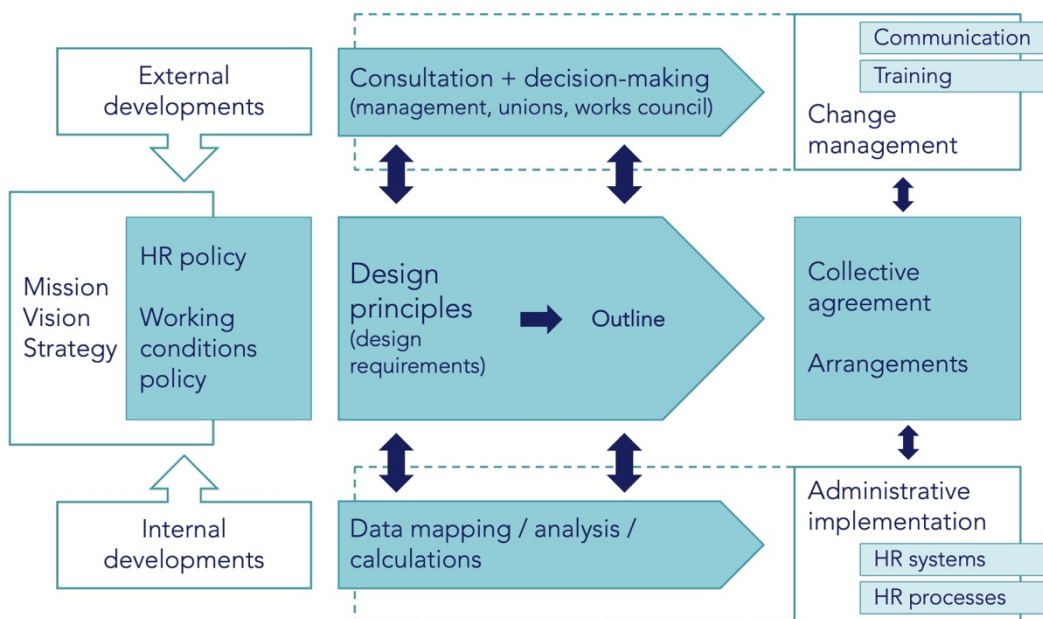
Preferably, we develop the new terms of employment in co-creation between interested parties (employer and trade unions or director and works council). Our design approach is very suitable for co-creation processes.

Priority

Modernising employment conditions can have a lot of impact on the organisation. It is therefore a good idea to weigh up the following questions beforehand:

1. How important do we think it is to modernise working conditions and who cares?
2. What improves with modern working conditions?
3. What is not going well because of current working conditions?
4. How important is modernisation of working conditions compared to other important projects in the organisation?

In a nutshell, our design approach is as follows:



Five phases

Basically, there are five successive phases in our approach:

- 1) Inventory of existing working conditions using a format specially developed by us for this purpose.
- 2) Formulating joint policy principles in one or more workshops.
- 3) Drawing up and jointly defining the outlines of the modernisation and any transitional measures. To this end, a blueprint will be drawn up. We calculate the blueprint in outline form.
- 4) Drawing up and jointly determining the text of the new terms of employment.
- 5) Implementation.

Communication

We pay a lot of attention to communication and to creating support among employees. This limits risks of unrest and hassle.

Our experience

We have carried out various modernisation assignments, sometimes combined with harmonisation of working conditions, including for:

- Amnesty International.
- Noordhoff Publishers.
- CfPB.
- OCLC (also harmonisation).
- Stakeholders of the collective agreement CNV Connective (also harmonisation).
- InWork.
- VI Company.
- Stakeholders of the collective agreement health centres.
- Stakeholders of the collective agreement UMC's.
- DSB Bank.
- ABN AMRO.

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