

WageIndicator



in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, India, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, United Kingdom, United States

[www.wageindicator.org](http://www.wageindicator.org)

## THE *WAGEINDICATOR* WEB-SURVEY: INTRODUCING THE WAGEINDICATOR

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### Its history

The *WageIndicator* is an international, continuous web-based operation. A national website has content about wages, working conditions, labor standards or other work-related topics. It has a crowd-pulling *Salary Check* providing free information on occupation-specific wages, controlled for individual factors. After having explored the pages with wage information, web-visitors are encouraged to complete the continuous, international comparable questionnaire on work and wages with a prize incentive.

The project started in 2000 in the Netherlands with a large-scale, paper-based survey to collect data on women's wages. In 2001 a *WageIndicator* website was launched for the first time. Its *Salary Check* showed wage information for 45 occupations, using the coefficients of occupation-specific wage regression analyses, based on the survey data. Ever since, the *Salary Check* is updated annually, using the web survey data. After five years, it provides wage information for 400 occupations.

In 2004, similar websites were introduced in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Italy, Poland, Spain, and United Kingdom, funded from the European Commission.<sup>1</sup> In 2005 and 2006 websites were launched in Brazil, India, South Africa, South Korea, Argentina, and Mexico, funded from Netherlands Development Aid.<sup>2</sup> In 2006, a website in Hungary was launched, funded from the European Commission.<sup>3</sup> In September 2006, a website in the USA was launched, thanks to funding from the Harvard Law School, Labor & Worklife Program, Cambridge. By the end of 2006 *WageIndicator* is operational in 17 countries in four continents. Five more countries -

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to two 3-year grants of the Netherlands Development Aid Fund, provided through FNV Mondiaal, for the GLOBAL I and GLOBAL II project.

<sup>3</sup> Thanks to a grant from the European Social Fund.

including Russia and China – are on the brink of joining too. From 2007 onwards, when funding from the first two grants will gradually finish, most national teams aim to continue the national website(s) based on their own resources.

Technically, the *WageIndicator* websites, web surveys and *Salary Checks* are developed, managed and maintained in the Netherlands. They are hosted on three server hotels in the Netherlands, the USA and India. Its open source Content Management System (CMS) allows for easy updating websites by national web managers. Its Questionnaire Management System (QMS) is a database with a Master questionnaire with all questions in English and country-specific questionnaires in the national languages. The QMS also allows for uploading and downloading questionnaire related information.

## The *WageIndicator* Foundation

The *WageIndicator* concept is owned by the *WageIndicator* Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to labor market transparency by providing accurate wage and wage related information. Its mission statement reads:

*“Share and compare wage information. Contribute to a transparent labor market. Provide free, accurate wage data through salary checks on national websites. Collect wage data through web surveys.”*

Thus, the public at large contributes to scientific information gathering, and scientists in return provide information free of charge to the public.

On 17-9-2003 the Foundation was established under Dutch law. Its founders are the Amsterdam Institute of Advanced Labor Studies (AIAS) of the University of Amsterdam, the Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions (FNV), and career website Monster. They make up the Board of Supervisors. The Foundation has a lean management structure. Director Paulien Osse manages subcontracting companies for web programming, web design, data and questionnaire management, and web journalism. The Foundation plus these four subcontractors together make up the international support team. The Foundation’s director supervises the overall management and supports the national web managers, involving the international support team whenever need arises. Professor Kea Tijdens, University of Amsterdam, is responsible for the scientific part of the survey and the dataset. Initially financed from grants (see footnotes 1 to 3), in each country a team of researchers and web managers could be formed and made responsible for the national website.

## The wage information pages

The wage information pages at the *WageIndicator* websites are critical in attracting visitors. Each national *Salary Check* shows wage information for a number of occupations, controlled for variables such as gender, tenure, education, supervisory position, promotion at the current firm and region. The *Salary Check* uses the coefficients of occupation-specific wage regression analyses, based on the survey data. Annually, *Salary Checks* are updated, using the web survey data. In addition, many *WageIndicator* websites have included the crowd-pulling VIP pay check, presenting wages earned by movie stars, heads of state, and other Very Important Persons.

For the initial start of the *Salary Check* pages, the so-called *WageIndicator-checks* have been developed. These *WageIndicator-checks* use national occupation-specific

wage data from other sources, as long as a national *WageIndicator* dataset is not yet available. These alternative data may come from establishment earnings, survey data, or other sources.

From the visitor's emails, four main reasons for consulting the *Salary Check* pages emerge. The pages are consulted for job mobility decisions, mostly in an initial stage of the decision making process, for annual performance talks with employers or at the start of wage negotiations, by school pupils and students who face occupational choices, and by employers particularly in small and medium sized companies, whenever they recruit staff or start wage negotiations with their employees.

In some countries, a need exists for wage information from other countries. For example, as of late 2006 the *WageIndicator* website in Poland [www.twojezarobki.pl](http://www.twojezarobki.pl) presents for a selection of occupations also wages earned in the United Kingdom and as of early 2007 wages earned in the Netherlands. Additional pages present information for Polish workers who consider looking for a job in these two countries. These pages provide information about permits needed, cost of living, working conditions etc. The confederations of trade unions TUC (United Kingdom) and FNV (Netherlands) are involved in this project.

A current project proposal – submitted January 2007 - aims to offer information especially for international truck drivers in and between the European continent and Central Asia. Countries like Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany and the Netherlands will be involved. Many more cross-country applications may be expected to be in demand and could be developed, provided time and resources.

## Web-marketing and media coalitions

In all participating countries a desire for free wage information is apparent, leading to high numbers of web-visitors to the national websites. Each month the *WageIndicator* website in the Netherlands has over 300,000 unique visitors. It ranks among the highest dedicated websites in the country. Within a few years most national *WageIndicator* websites become middle-sized Internet players in their countries, given proper publicity and web-marketing. The Belgian website for example started in 2004, was elected the best website of the year 2006, and now attracts 40,000 visitors a month. The German website is growing fast. By the end of 2006 it had 100,000 visitors a month. The website in Argentina, only launched early 2006, now has already 30,000 visitors a month and the highest intake of questionnaires per visitor.

Web marketing is complicated but critical in attracting web-visitors. The marketing policy of the *WageIndicator* unfolds along several lines. First, the information presented with the *Salary Check* and at the web pages must offer high quality. Second, visitors must trust both the information provided and volunteering their data in the survey. Trust is ensured through cooperation with top universities, confederations of trade unions such as UNI, FNV, DGB, or TUC, the ILO in some other countries, or career sites. Third, cooperation with web-based partners is critical. Current cooperation includes major web-portals, such as UOL (Brazil), and Microsoft's MSN portal in UK and Netherlands. Fourth, cooperation with media groups or publishing houses with a strong Internet presence is critical. Current cooperation includes *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Poland), *Politiken* (Denmark), *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa), *El Pais* (Spain), *Rheinische Post*, *Stern*, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, *Sueddeutsche* and other newspapers (Germany), *Business Week* (USA), *Times of India* (India, pending) and *De Telegraaf* (Netherlands). Fifth, cooperation exists with the career site *Monster*, the world's largest job site, notably with *Job Korea*, *Monster.co.uk*,

Monster.be and Monster.nl. In addition, in some countries national websites cooperate with temp agency sites or with employment agency sites. Sixth, all national teams aim for free publicity.<sup>4</sup> Finally, each country has at least one website, but sometimes more. This is quite natural in multilingual countries, like Belgium. The US team is planning a Spanish website. Quite a number of national teams created a separate website addressing women. The Netherlands has additional websites for youth, 40+, the health care and the self-employed. All these websites offer different content and look-and-feel, but the *Salary Check* and the *WageIndicator* web survey are similar.

In recent years several new web tools have been developed, such as the gross-net checker, the minimum-wage checker, the lifetime earnings checker, and the time-budget checker. These tools all contribute to attracting visitors. Whenever possible, the checkers are up-scaled to the national teams who want to include them in their website(s). A great success is the VIP-pay check, sporting wages of football players, movie stars, heads of state, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> See results at [www.wageindicator.org/main/WageIndicatorgazette/inthepress](http://www.wageindicator.org/main/WageIndicatorgazette/inthepress).