

## **Narrative – UWV: Accuracy Under Pressure**

### **Context**

It is 2023. At the Unemployment Benefits Department of the UWV (Employee Insurance Agency) in Amsterdam, everyone is working hard to streamline the digital decision-making process. Each year, UWV receives hundreds of thousands of applications for unemployment benefits (WW). Thanks to digitalization, most decisions are made automatically based on income data from the Tax Authority. This usually goes well — but not always.

### **Main Characters**

- **Sophie**, team leader of the Benefits Decision Team, oversees the correct functioning of the automated processing system.
- **Erik**, case manager for objections, notices a rising number of complaints about benefit calculation errors.
- **Jeroen**, ICT architect, helped design the rules that determine when an application is approved.
- **Fatima**, data analysis officer, conducts random checks on benefit decisions and begins to see a pattern of recurring errors.
- **The applicant**, often a citizen in a vulnerable position, trusts that the system works correctly — until their benefit is not paid.

### **What's Going On?**

The atmosphere in the department is tense. There is pressure from upper management to process as many applications as possible automatically, with minimal human intervention. At the same time, unease is growing: decisions are not always transparent, there are signals of incorrect data, and some citizens are wrongly excluded. The system especially fails in cases involving combined incomes (for example, temporary workers or people with multiple small jobs).

Fatima has detected the issue. But where exactly in the system does the error occur? And who is responsible? Or is it simply the price of automation?

### **Process Description**

1. Application via the “My UWV” online environment (using DigiD authentication)
2. Collection of income data from the Tax Authority and former employer
3. Automatic assessment based on predefined rules
4. Decision: approval or rejection
5. Notification to the citizen
6. Payment or objection procedure
7. Revision or corrective action (optional)

### **Department Size and Atmosphere**

The department has about 60 employees. The culture is hybrid: partly operational, partly ICT-driven. There is loyalty toward the citizen, but also a sense of powerlessness when errors occur: “The system says no.” Tensions arise between employees who want to deviate from the system when in doubt and managers who insist on process discipline. Responsibility appears to be diffusely distributed.