

Looking out for each other, looking ahead to the future

2021-2025 Coalition agreement

People's Party for Freedom and Democracy

(VVD), Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA),

Democrats '66 (D66) and Christian Union (CU)

15 December 2021

Introduction

As we present our ambitious plans for the future, the Netherlands is enduring yet another wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has been difficult for so many people in the Netherlands and there seems to be no end in sight. COVID-19 holds a magnifying glass to our shared responsibilities and ambitions, making us more aware of them than ever before.

This Coalition Agreement sets out our plans for the government's forthcoming term of office. Our priorities include combating climate change, tackling the nitrogen pollution crisis, building affordable new housing, improving the healthcare system, making substantial investments in our security and in combating crime that undermines society, promoting equality of opportunity and fighting discrimination, improving socioeconomic security by addressing labour market imbalances and reducing poverty and debt, introducing targeted tax cuts and investing in our future prosperity through education and innovation and by ensuring a healthy investment climate for entrepreneurs and companies.

Another of our ambitions is to improve government itself. The first step is to improve and expedite the process of compensating those affected by the serious errors made in the childcare benefit system and by earthquake damage in the province of Groningen. The strong government that we envisage is understandable, communicative, approachable and committed to the human dimension. This is the kind of government we need to regain public trust. To this end, we will strengthen the organisations that implement government policy.

The plans that we have as coalition partners cannot be realised in just one term of government and will require broad support in society. So we want to work together with local authorities, social partners and the implementing organisations. Many of the challenges we face require a European or even a global approach. That is why the Netherlands intends to play a leading role in promoting a strong and effective European Union.

As politicians, when we talk about society we need to take a critical look at ourselves too. Our efforts to change the broader culture of public administration must also involve changing the political culture. We need a political culture in which we build bridges instead of amplifying differences. To that end we intend to find ways to work with constructive parties in the House of Representatives. Of course, this will include vigorous debates on the issues. And that is a good thing, as long as we treat each other with respect. We reject rhetoric that is intended to harm people and will speak out against the use of language that is hurtful and threatening.

It is also crucial that members of parliament – from opposition and coalition parties alike – are able to perform their oversight and legislative roles. Strengthening the democratic legal order, the foundation of our society, deserves the attention and joint commitment of the government and the House of Representatives.

We want to focus on making real improvements in people's lives. The people of the Netherlands want a reliable government that delivers. Then they will have room in their lives to join with family, friends, colleagues and volunteers at local associations in making a meaningful contribution. The result will be a society in which government enables people to work and achieve together.

In short, we envisage a country which is sustainably prosperous for current and future generations, in which everyone can participate according to their abilities; a country built on a bedrock of socioeconomic security for all and offering the prospect of progress in life and society.

Table of contents

1. The democratic legal order

Strengthening the democratic legal order

Media

A better future for the entire Kingdom

2. A sustainable country

Climate and energy

Agriculture, nature and nitrogen deposition

Housing and spatial planning

Infrastructure

3. Security and a strong society

4. Socioeconomic security and equal opportunities

Education and development

Labour market and income

Towards a society in which everyone can be open about who they are

Newcomers and social and civic integration

5. A prosperous country

An enterprising, innovative and fair economy

Culture and creative industries

Digitalisation

6. Health

Healthcare

Medical ethical issues

7. International affairs

Foreign policy

Migration

Appendix: Finances

1. The democratic legal order

Strengthening the democratic legal order

The democratic legal order is the foundation of our society. That foundation has developed cracks. We want to restore trust between the people and government. But that is only possible if government is reliable, trusts the people and is committed to the human dimension. We want to work to make government transparent, accessible and understandable. We also want to work to strengthen the culture and structure of our democratic institutions. This means bolstering the independent supervision and democratic scrutiny of the executive branch, improving access to justice and enabling citizens to exercise greater influence on policy.

Relationship between people and government

- We will work to ensure that **government is reliable, just, service-minded and close to the people**. We want to ensure that people can always get in touch with government bodies personally, for example via a contact centre that people can turn to with questions, and we want to secure the continuity of essential services as much as possible. The government will continue the **Working on Implementation programme (Werken aan Uitvoering)**, in close cooperation with municipalities, the first tier of public administration.
- We will assess the **simplicity, feasibility and human dimension of legislation**, and make improvements as necessary. A person who unintentionally makes a mistake should not immediately be treated as if they have committed fraud. When legislation is implemented, there must be scope for flexibility if the consequences for individuals are disproportionately severe. Where possible, professionals will be given more latitude for decision-making when implementing laws. To this end, we will be including **hardship clauses** in legislation.
- In line with the report by the Temporary Committee on Executive Agencies (TCU) (Parliamentary Paper 35387, no. 3), there will be greater focus **on the 'feasibility assessments' that are carried out by the executive agencies**, greater efforts will be made to understand the capabilities of systems and IT, proposals made by members of parliament will be assessed to determine their feasibility and 'doability' (in other words, what the public is able to do in practice), and a 'generational assessment' might be introduced. Major bills will be preceded by a **framework letter** outlining the main points. The effects of legislation on implementation will be evaluated after one year (implementation assessment).
- We will expand access to justice for individuals and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by reducing **court fees**. And we will strengthen the legal aid system.
- A service will be established to provide accessible independent **legal assistance and advice to taxpayers**, similar to the American 'Taxpayer Advocate Service'.
- We will encourage **civic participation and citizens' initiatives** at local level, such as a 'challenge right' which allows people to take over public tasks from the municipalities and use public funding to carry them out.

Strengthening democratic institutions

- We want to make the **separation between parliament and the government clearer**. We want to strengthen parliament's oversight and legislative roles. We want to work constructively with parties that wish to take responsibility and will actively seek to collaborate with them. In doing so, we will conduct debates in an open and respectful manner.
- Supplementary to the funding proposed in the motion submitted by MP Rob Jetten and others

(Parliamentary Paper 35300, no. 19), we will **strengthen the position of the House of Representatives** by increasing the structural funding for the Secretary-General's office, the Analysis and Research Department, the Legislation Office and other departments.

- We will ask the government to make proposals for improving **information provision to the House** and, if necessary, to expand public access to documents. Civil servants and members of parliament will be given more latitude to exchange factual information. The Public Records Act (*Archiefwet*) will be revised and implemented consistently in all ministries and executive agencies.
- We will ensure that **supervisory authorities**, such as the Data Protection Authority, the National Ombudsman, the Court of Audit and the Advisory Board on Regulatory Burden, and the inspectorates receive additional funding so that they can carry out their tasks properly.
- When senior civil servants are appointed via the **Senior Civil Service**, greater consideration will be given to domain-specific expertise, and rotations will be less frequent.
- We will take steps to better safeguard the **independence of inspectorates**. To that end, the government will draft a bill on the national inspectorates.
- Work will commence or continue on the proposals that the government has presented to the Council of State, the House of Representatives and the Senate for implementing the recommendations of the **National Commission on the Parliamentary System** (Remkes Committee).
- We will start **working out the details of a process of constitutional review** in line with the advice given by the National Commission on the Parliamentary System. This will involve determining how constitutional review can best be aligned with the Dutch legal system.
- We will carefully consider the **position of local government** and the role of mayors in local government in order to ensure they are future-proof.
- When necessitated by the public interest, the government will **exercise its authority to issue instructions to subnational authorities**, taking into consideration local autonomy and appropriate safeguards.
- In order to **improve the stability of funding for subnational authorities** and increase their autonomy, a new funding system for the period after 2025 will be developed in the coming years. Consideration will be given in this process to the possibility of expanding their scope for taxation. Alternatives to property tax (OZB) and motor vehicle tax (MRB) will also be considered. During this government's term of office, funding for subnational authorities will be determined largely in accordance with a system in which their allocations are linked to movements in the central government budget.
- In addition, the increase in **upscaling reductions** in funding will be terminated, subnational authorities will receive funding to implement climate policy via a special-purpose grant and, in line with the advisory committee's conclusion, additional funding will be made available for youth care. Starting in 2024 extra youth care policy measures will be introduced, in addition to the current reform agenda. Measures may include setting standards for duration of treatment or introducing a co-payment, or a combination of these.

Childcare benefit affair

- The parents and children affected by the serious errors made in the childcare benefit system have suffered a great injustice which has had major consequences for them in every facet of their lives. **Generous compensation and emotional healing** are crucial elements of an effective remedy for the injustice done to them.
- In the **recent revision of the recovery operation**, options for expediting and improving the process were sought with parents, municipalities and other concerned parties. This revision must succeed so that the needs of parents and children can be better met, by ensuring that personal contact is established at an

earlier stage, by giving municipalities a more substantial role as a fixed point of contact for parents and in providing targeted support, and by focusing more attention on emotional recovery throughout the process.

- Parents have made it clear that they need **peace and clarity**. The principles underlying the recovery process are therefore exercising due care, taking individual differences into account and offering meaningful assistance. This takes time, so the recovery operation is expected to continue until 2023, and may take even longer.
- To restore trust and make improvements for the future, more is needed than just financial recovery and emotional healing for the parents and children affected. We aim to **abolish benefits** of this kind altogether so that people are no longer confronted with complex rules or demands for large repayments. To this end we will fundamentally reform the childcare benefit system over the coming years. The childcare allowance for working parents will be increased in stages to 95% of the costs of childcare. The benefit will be paid directly to childcare centres in the future, so that parents can no longer be confronted with demands for large repayments. There will only be a small co-payment for parents. We also intend to reform and simplify housing benefit. In the meantime we will continue to improve the current benefits system (Parliamentary Paper 31066, no. 898).
- We will rigorously continue to pursue the **broad-based approach to reducing poverty and debt** and ensure improved, responsible government debt collection practices, with commitment to the human dimension. We will take all the aforementioned measures in order to improve the relationship between government and the people.

Damage due to gas extraction in Groningen

- A major effort needs to be made in the coming years to restore the trust of the people of Groningen. To that end, in consultation with the regional authorities, **prospects for solutions** will be given to the residents and business owners of the earthquake zone in the near future, on the basis of what is realistically feasible. If necessary, extra funds will be made available.
- The following starting points must be respected: the operation to reinforce and repair buildings damaged by the earthquakes will be **completed in a way that makes sense and is more generous**; residents will have as much control as possible over the renovations to their own homes, and the work done will be based on individual needs; if residents so desire, repairs and reinforcement work can be carried out as joint projects; making permanent repairs to foundations is, in principle, also part of the reinforcement and repair operation.
- The principle of **'reverse burden of proof'** applies. To expedite the resolution of complicated situations, a mandate regulation will be further developed.

Media

Freedom of the press is key to a well functioning democracy – nationally, regionally and locally. We know that journalists are increasingly subject to threats and aggression. This is unacceptable. We are firmly committed to freedom of the press in the Netherlands. For this reason, we are working to ensure that our country is a safe environment for journalists to carry out their important work. In doing so, we will continue to combat disinformation and fake news.

- The public broadcasting system is deeply rooted in society, represents the spectrum of social and political

opinion in the Netherlands and provides a pluralist offering of independent, quality media content. But this independent source of pluralist content is under pressure. The media and access to information are becoming more and more susceptible to domination by large commercial companies, many of which are foreign. The **Competition Act will be modernised** in order to ward off that domination. It is especially important to maintain a public media domain so that there is a recognisable, independent and reliable source of information.

- We will therefore continue implementing the measures set out in the **vision letter on the future of the media landscape** (Parliamentary Paper 32827, no. 157), including the phased halving of the amount of advertising on the public broadcasting system's linear channels and intensifying cooperation between public and private media parties that work together to offer Dutch content. We will also introduce an investment obligation for large foreign streaming services.
- In addition, we will **expand the budget for investigative journalism**.
- To better safeguard the **independence of the press at local level**, national funding will replace the current financing from the Municipalities Fund and we will increase our investment.
- Within a year, in addition to the quantitative requirements concerning membership of broadcasting associations, **new criteria for admission to the public broadcasting system and for accountability** will be established to improve the quality of programming and ensure that the public service broadcasters are better rooted in society.
- We will endeavour to create a **National Memory** (*Het Geheugen van Nederland*) by purchasing the archived material of the Institute of Media Culture (*Beeld en Geluid*) and making as much content as possible available royalty-free.
- Wherever possible, programmes produced by the Netherlands Public Broadcasting Service (NPO) will be made **accessible to people with a hearing or visual impairment**, using audio description, sign language interpreters, written and spoken subtitles and other instruments.
- We will make a total structural investment of €30 million in media.

A better future for the entire Kingdom

Within the Kingdom, we share a past and a future. A future that we will shape together. The three Caribbean countries of the Kingdom have endured 10 years of economic stagnation and the hardship caused by hurricane Irma and the pandemic. The Netherlands wants to help them embark on a path to sustainable growth. We will do that in accordance with the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands: on the basis of equality, reciprocity and a fair exploration of any wishes to amend the Charter. In the Caribbean Netherlands we will continue to work to ensure that Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius are on an equal footing with the rest of the Netherlands.

Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius

- We will **strengthen the job market in the Caribbean Netherlands** (Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius), paying special attention to the position of young people, and we will take measures to reduce poverty. The Kralendijk Agreement is the point of departure for Bonaire. We will encourage a social dialogue on Saba and St Eustatius.
- We will make clear agreements with the public bodies to ensure that the **funding of basic services** is structurally sound.
- We will invest in the economies of the Caribbean Netherlands and take measures to **make life more affordable**. We will work to implement the outcome of the review of the minimum income standard. We will do this in various ways, including increasing social assistance, ensuring utilities are affordable and expediting the transition to fully sustainable energy and sewerage systems and improving the drinking

water supply system so that the fixed costs of utilities decrease. We will support projects aimed at increasing local agriculture so that food imports can be reduced and we will exploit the enormous potential for more ecotourism.

- We are going to better protect the unique culture and natural environment of Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius, both on land and in the sea.
- We will make a total structural investment of €30 million.

Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten

- Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten, the three other countries in the Kingdom, are constitutionally autonomous and bear responsibility for good governance and sound public finances. The relationships between the three countries and the Netherlands are based on the principle of reciprocity. Due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects, there is an urgent need to **strengthen and improve governance** and the management of public finances in Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten.
- The Netherlands will continue to work with Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten on **good governance, tackling corruption** and **permanently strengthening their economies and education systems** on the basis of long-term agreements.
- We want to eliminate the **democratic deficit** in decision-making by the House of Representatives in respect of draft Kingdom legislation by creating scope for a proportional vote by the Caribbean countries.
- We will make voting in **European Parliament elections** just as easy for eligible voters living in Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten as it is for eligible voters in the Netherlands in Europe.
- We are going to make an **economically viable contribution to the economic development of the Caribbean countries** by opening up the guarantee schemes of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), the National Growth Fund (*Nationaal Groeifonds*) and schemes for sustainable energy production (SDE++) to applications from the entire Kingdom.

2. A sustainable country

Climate and energy

Climate change is the greatest challenge our generation faces. Good climate policy provides opportunities to build a strong and sustainable economy and create new jobs. We will make the Netherlands ready for the future – climate-neutral, fossil-free and circular – with a clean energy supply and green industrial policies. The Netherlands is a prosperous country that aspires to be a European leader in the transition to a green economy. Just as our ancestors joined forces to create polders and build the Delta Works, we too will work together to build a green future. We intend to make every effort to keep our country and our planet a safe and pleasant place to live. We therefore aim to achieve the climate goal of no more than 1.5 degrees of warming set out in the Paris Agreement, and we will seek to enhance biodiversity. This government intends to enable households and communities, companies and corporations, towns and villages to make the required sustainable transitions. We will ensure that everyone can do their part, that the polluter pays and that no one is left behind. In this way we can do justice to the planet, future generations and each other.

- The Netherlands aims to be a European leader in the fight against global warming. To become climate-neutral by 2050, we are **tightening up our 2030 goal set out in the Climate Act to a reduction in carbon emissions of at least 55%**. We are firmly committed to this goal, and will if necessary take extra steps to achieve it. To ensure that we achieve this goal, we have agreed to focus policy on greater reductions, which will **amount to approximately 60% in 2030**.
- We will need to continue pursuing ambitious carbon emission reductions **after 2030**, too. We will aim for a reduction of 70% by 2035 and 80% by 2040. To achieve this, we will make preparations during our term in office to introduce a road usage charge system in 2030, and for the construction of new nuclear power plants. We will also make our energy networks future-proof during this term in office.
- The appendix sets out **how the additional emission reductions for 2030 are to be divided among sectors**. It gives only an indication of the distribution, costs and benefits, and it will be up to the government to put in place a comprehensive package that reduces emissions sufficiently, with adequate consideration of leakage effects, practicability, cost effectiveness and the Netherlands' earning capacity. We will ask the policy research agencies and other bodies to assist in producing up-to-date calculations of the impact.
- A **Minister for Climate and Energy Policy** will be appointed to oversee policy and the Climate Fund. We will strengthen the **implementation capacity** of central government and other authorities, to ensure that transitions are made. An independent scientific advisory body (similar to that in the United Kingdom) will assess and advise on policy. An analysis of the effects of policy plans on different generations will ensure that policy is developed on the basis of a broad definition of prosperity. We will actively involve the public in climate policy.
- A **€35-billion Climate and Transition Fund** for the next 10 years, over and above the current Renewable Energy Grant Scheme SDE++, will help to create the required energy infrastructure (for electricity, heat, hydrogen and CO₂), put in place a green industrial policy and make transport and the built environment more sustainable.
- The procedures for new large-scale infrastructural projects of national importance are currently too slow. We will speed them up by taking an approach similar to that in the **Crisis and Recovery Act**.

- After the European Union (EU) has adopted the 'Fit for 55' package, we will **revise** our climate policy in line with the projected impact on carbon emissions and with a view to affordability for households and SMEs.
- An ambitious climate policy requires **enough skilled professionals**, both now and in the runup to 2050. We will set to work with educational institutions, public authorities and the social partners to train professionals and provide retraining or refresher training where necessary.

Industry and business

Future industries will run on clean energy and bio-based raw materials, and will produce circular products. It is our ambition to be at the head of the field in this transition to green industry. This will require a green industrial policy, an approach based on reciprocity between public authorities, business and society. This will not be a voluntary matter; it will be based on robust, binding, customised agreements that ensure that Dutch industry sets the standard for sustainability in Europe and worldwide. This will make the Netherlands more attractive for business and keep sustainable jobs in the country.

- We will **raise the level of ambition** in industry. To achieve our higher national ambitions, we will in principle look first to the sectors in the European Emissions Trading System (ETS), alongside our 'Fit for 55' commitments.
- We will make **binding, customised agreements with the 10 to 20 biggest emitters** of greenhouse gases, taking account of the connections between companies in industrial clusters. These customised agreements will be based on reciprocity, with the government facilitating the new energy infrastructure and entering into agreements stipulating ambitious sustainability goals. We will also make agreements with these companies on long-term investments in the Netherlands, on co-investment in training, on good employment practices and on the quality of the living environment.
- We will provide an extra incentive for companies to make their operations more sustainable by **increasing the marginal levy charged in addition to the price stipulated in the Emissions Trading System (ETS)**. To create certainty, a gradually increasing price floor will be introduced for the ETS price, preferably in agreement with neighbouring countries. Any additional income from the marginal levy and the increasing price floor will be ploughed back into the Climate Fund to help make business more sustainable.
- Extra investments will be made in research and innovation in **climate-neutral technologies**. The emphasis will be on large, coordinated programmes that will also help to keep the costs of the energy transition affordable. An ambitious climate goal and implementation programme will be announced for the **circular economy**. The government will seek to set a good example in this respect. We will ensure that climate policy is better aligned with circularity.
- **We will help SMEs to become more sustainable**, providing information and advice on the steps they can take. We will encourage them to become more sustainable and simplify the rules for businesses. In future climate policy we will take account of the impact on SMEs.
- We will ensure a clean, healthy living environment by stepping up action against **environmental crime and environmental risks**. The report of the Advisory Committee on Licensing, Supervision and Enforcement (the Van Aartsen Committee) will be considered in this process.

Energy mix

We will always need energy, but we will switch to sources that do not cause greenhouse gas emissions and aim to for greater energy savings. After 2030 we will quickly work towards a fully climate-neutral energy supply, rapidly reducing use of fossil fuels while at the same time ensuring security of supply and affordability.

- We will stimulate the **supply of renewable energy**, through extra offshore wind farms, more solar panels on roofs, geothermal energy, green gas and aquathermal energy. At the same time, we will scale up production and imports of hydrogen.
- We will reduce the consumption of woody **biomass** for energy generation as quickly as possible, with due consideration for cost-effectiveness. Biomass will be used for the highest-quality applications possible, based on Lansink's ladder. Woody biomass for energy must be sourced in the EU, so that we can monitor compliance with the sustainability criteria. We will ensure that the development of sustainable heating alternatives is accelerated.
- Nuclear energy can complement solar, wind and geothermal energy in the energy mix, and can be used to produce hydrogen. It also makes us less dependent on imported gas. The **Borssele nuclear power plant** will therefore be kept operational for longer, with all due consideration naturally given to safety. The government will also take the necessary steps for the construction of **two new nuclear power plants**. This means that, among other things, we will assist commercial operators in their exploratory studies, support innovation, carry out tender procedures, consider the contribution (financial or otherwise) to be provided by public authorities, and prepare legislation where necessary. We will also ensure safe, permanent storage of nuclear waste.
- We will introduce clear **standards for the distance between homes and new wind turbines on land**, and we will encourage local residents to participate (financially or otherwise) in local wind turbine projects in order to enhance local support. Given land use pressures, we will especially encourage large-scale solar energy projects on roofs, and introduce the necessary standards to that end. Solar fields will be permitted only if multifunctional use of the land is possible, on state-owned land for example.
- **Gas extraction in the province of Groningen** will be phased out as quickly as possible, according to plan, because our main priority is the safety of the people of Groningen. We will need to continue importing foreign gas for some years, to meet our energy needs. We will conclude the Ternaard procedure. No new permits will be issued for gas extraction in the Wadden Sea. We support gas extraction in the North Sea, and will introduce a mandatory minimum percentage for gas storage, based on winter demand, to reduce our dependency on other countries.
- We will explore ways of reducing **financial incentives for fossil fuels** and then discontinue all financial measures that stimulate use of these fuels. We will do this as far as possible in collaboration with other countries, with a view to keeping our country attractive for business.
- To achieve our goals over and above the Paris Agreement, we will increase our **capacity for carbon capture and storage (CCS)**. A ceiling will remain for CCS and will be adjusted where necessary so that the goals can be achieved.

Built environment

The best energy is energy not used. This has always been the case, but it has become even more important at this time of high energy prices. A more sustainable home not only leads to lower emissions and more comfortable living, it also reduces people's energy bill. We will set to work with ambition, pursuing a smart and pragmatic policy to make our homes and businesses more sustainable. We will make it easier for homeowners and entrepreneurs to become more sustainable, starting with insulation. Under the National Insulation Programme manifesto homes will be insulated faster, smarter and affordably. We will also focus on sustainable heating, taking full account of affordability for households, especially those in low and middle income brackets, and SMEs.

- We will take a programmatic approach to insulating homes faster, smarter and affordably, with a **long-term National Insulation Programme** that includes commitments and resources up to at least 2030. We will actively approach people, starting with the homes with the poorest insulation, and offer extra support to low and middle income households.
- We will use standards and positive incentives to encourage **landlords to make poorly insulated rental housing more sustainable**. In time, poorly insulated homes will be banned from the rental market. It will also be made easier for residents' associations and homeowners to make homes more sustainable, using the Energy Retrofit Fund, which will also be opened up to SMEs.
- In the short term **hybrid heat pumps** are a good heating solution for most homes. Standardisation, in combination with a grant covering the additional costs to households, will enable suppliers to install more and more heat pumps. Along with insulation and green gas, this could make housing much more sustainable without confronting consumers with complex decisions which effectively make such projects inaccessible.
- At district level we will focus on creating **sustainable heating networks** where this can be done in a cost-effective way. The non-profitable portion of collective heating projects will be partially funding under a national grant scheme, to keep it affordable for households.
- An **obligation to supply green gas** via the national grid will be introduced.

Road transport, aviation and shipping

We intend to radically reduce emissions from transport. This sector has achieved the least emissions reduction since 1990. If aviation and shipping are included, transport emissions have in fact increased. Reducing emissions is vital if the climate goals are to be achieved and air quality is to be improved.

- We will continue to invest in **clean transport** for the sake of the climate and also to improve air quality in our towns and cities. We will provide stimulus for electric vehicles (EVs) and the development of the market for used EVs, while avoiding excessive stimulus. We will also provide support for sustainable urban logistics and freight transport. The rollout of the vehicle charging infrastructure will be accelerated. The use of sustainable biofuels in fuel blends will be encouraged.
- We will make agreements with businesses and public authorities about encouraging staff to **work from home**.
- We will also take steps to make **aviation fuels** more sustainable. To make the aviation and shipping sectors greener, we will for example invest in the development and production of synthetic kerosene in the Netherlands. The Netherlands could play a pioneering role in this.

- We support the European Commission's proposals for a **tax on kerosene** at EU level. We also support the proposals for greener shipping. The Netherlands takes the view that leakage effects should be prevented as far as possible. The availability of shoreside electricity will also be expanded.
- We aim for all new cars sold to be zero-emission by 2030. In 2030 we will launch a **road usage charge** system for all road transport, and the necessary legislation will be introduced during this term in office. The system will be based on vehicle tax, with the rate dependent on the number of kilometres driven each year. The tax will not be bound to time or place and will replace all existing tolls, such as those for the Western Scheldt Tunnel, the Kil Tunnel and the planned extension to the A15. This means that drivers of both electric and fossil-fuel vehicles will pay for using the roads.
- We will continue with our proposals for increased sustainability put forward in the Civil Aviation Policy Memorandum 2020-2050 (2020), including emission ceilings for airports. We will increase the **flight tax** and part of the revenue will be used to make aviation more sustainable and reduce its impact on the living environment.

Climate adaptation

The major floods in Limburg this summer confronted us once more with the fact that climate change is happening here and now, and has direct impact on our country. Besides climate mitigation, therefore, we must also work on climate adaptation.

- We will invest more money in the **Delta Fund** to catch up on the backlog of maintenance and accelerate the implementation of the National Delta Programme. We will continue to invest in our dikes, dunes and dams. Resources will also be made available to better protect the stream valleys in Limburg and elsewhere.
- We will work towards **revised delta decisions** that guarantee safety from flooding, an adequate supply of fresh water, and a futureproof infrastructure. Water and the soil/subsurface will be lead considerations in spatial planning. Water authorities will therefore be involved in the process at an earlier stage, and flood risk assessments will carry more weight.
- **Heat stress** during hot weather is a growing problem and causes excess mortality, mainly among vulnerable groups. To combat this, we will encourage more vegetation, water and light-coloured materials in densely built-up areas to provide more shade, evaporation and reflection of heat.

Agriculture, nature and nitrogen deposition

The Netherlands is one of the most fertile but also one of the most densely populated deltas in the world, with an agricultural sector of global renown. We want to protect our unique natural environment, restore lost biodiversity and provide prospects for the agricultural sector. Over the coming years we will make substantial investments in sustainable farming and robust natural habitats in order to redress the balance. To restore the state of the natural environment in the Netherlands, we intend to take a broad approach differentiated by region. This approach will not only address the problem of excess nitrogen deposition, but also pursue national and European targets for and the challenges associated with water quality, soil, climate and biodiversity. A differentiated approach will lead to major changes in rural areas. In this process, we will make clear what the prospects are for different forms of agricultural production, on a region by region basis. Since this approach requires long-term, predictable and coherent policy, we will be setting up a generous transition fund. We will initiate the transition to circular agriculture with a good revenue model that will enable farmers to make the necessary changes and reflect the value that society places on sustainable practices, and that will offer future

prospects for young farmers. We expect banks, suppliers, the processing industry and supermarkets to take responsibility for their role in this process.

- We will restore the balance between nature and farming by continuing the transition to **circular agriculture** in terms of feed, manure, soil, leaseholds, animal welfare and the necessary innovations. We will close various loops in agriculture by using waste flows to produce feed, replacing artificial fertiliser with organic fertiliser, and focusing on land-based dairy farming. Agreements on this will be made with agricultural suppliers and the food processing industry.
- We will encourage **new revenue models** for products and services like 'bio-based' building materials, carbon credits and nitrogen fixing. Long-term agreements and appropriate remuneration will increase opportunities for agri-environmental stewardship and landscape management. We will create an intermediate land use class between nature area and farmland: landscape area. This, along with an increase in nature area, will enlarge the habitat of vulnerable species, taking us closer to achieving the goals of the Birds Directive and Habitats Directive.
- A **National Programme for Rural Areas** will tackle the challenges in agriculture and nature, with a transition fund that will be **worth a cumulative €25 billion up to 2035**. Administrative agreements with provincial authorities will set out the conditions for releasing funds from the central government budget. The Environment and Planning Act provides the instruments for nature improvement and a basis for granting permits. Ecological analyses will be performed to determine what is needed to achieve goals for nature restoration, climate and water quality on a region by region basis. An ecological authority will be responsible for the scientific and legal soundness of these analyses. A strong management organisation will support this process, and make adjustments where necessary. We will also make clear what future prospects exist for farming in each region.
- The deadline for achieving the **goals of new legislation on reducing nitrogen deposition and improving the natural environment** will be brought forward from 2035 to 2030, in line with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Nitrogen Pollution (the Remkes Committee) that every sector make a proportionate contribution to reducing nitrogen emissions.
- To create scope within environmental limits for activities that cause nitrogen pollution, **permitting is based on well-founded frameworks and requirements**. A comprehensive nitrogen strategy will enable more permits to be issued in the foreseeable future. Uncertainties do exist, however, given the scale and the duration of the transition. The government will address any unintended effects that may arise using existing instruments, or develop new instruments where necessary.
- In the regional approach, **more extensive farms, conversion to organic or sustainable production, innovation, legalising certain activities and relocating others** are all ways to accelerate the process of greening agriculture. Many older farmers do not have a farming successor and this is something the approach will take into account. In regions where the emission reduction and nature restoration challenges are so big that voluntary measures are no longer sufficient, we will discuss the options with the farmers concerned.
- A **land bank** will make it easier for young farmers to start a farm and find space to grow. The land bank will release vacant parcels to farmers who wish to become more extensive, convert to sustainable or organic production, or relocate. Parcels may also be released for nature development.
- We will strengthen the **position of the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA)**. This will require considerable public investment in the authority's public tasks. The roles of inspection and supervision will be separated. We also hope to introduce cost-covering fees for chargeable activities. We will reform the system of user fees by introducing packages and subscriptions that are differentiated by size of company and that reward good practice and compliance.

- We will speed up the ongoing shift to **integrated crop protection** by setting interim goals, facilitating innovation and precision agriculture, encouraging green alternatives and by separating the roles of agricultural advice and sales. Rules on the use of plant protection products will be aligned with the Water Framework Directive. We will conduct research into the effects of these products on the health of farmers and local residents.
- In line with the recommendations of the Council on Animal Affairs (2020) we will initiate a voluntary agreement on developing a **humane livestock farming sector** in consultation with farmers, commercial parties, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. It will include a time horizon, instruments and financial support. The agreement will provide the basis for new legislation on humane livestock production that also strikes a balance with public health. This legislation is to enter into force during this government's period in office.
- Along with other parties in the production and supply chain, and in collaboration with the Netherlands Authority for Consumers and Markets, the government will enter into binding agreements to strengthen **farmers' position in the chain**. We expect banks, suppliers, the food processing industry and supermarkets to take responsibility for their role in this process. Where necessary, this will be ensured by means of a statutory framework. We will expect supermarkets to be transparent about the steps they are taking to make their entire range demonstrably animal-friendly and sustainable. This includes adopting sustainable purchasing policies and paying farmers a fair price. We will investigate what role consumers can play in helping to make sustainable farming a reality. To help people make responsible choices, food produced in the Netherlands will be labelled as such. The government's procurement policy will include a commitment to buying sustainable, locally produced food.
- The Dutch greenhouse horticulture sector has a great deal of potential to be a frontrunner in low-energy circular production of high-quality produce. The sector could even become carbon-positive, though it is currently too reliant on natural gas. We will encourage rather than discourage this transition by creating the conditions needed for **greenhouse production** to become more sustainable and for the sector to become a leader in low-energy circular production.
- There will need to be adequate scope and prospects for innovation and diversification in **fisheries**, given the challenges facing this sector.

Housing and spatial planning

A good, sustainable and affordable home in a pleasant neighbourhood is one of life's basic essentials. However, many Dutch people are currently unable to find housing that meets their needs. Our priority is to ensure a home for everyone, whether they wish to buy or rent.

- We will **accelerate the building of new homes to around 100,000 a year**. We will endeavour to ensure that at least two thirds of these homes are affordable rentals, or owner-occupied homes priced below the National Mortgage Guarantee Scheme.
- The **levy on landlords will be abolished**. We will enter into binding performance agreements with housing associations to ensure that capacity for investment created by the abolition of the levy is used to create more flexible housing, build affordable rental homes, renovate existing homes and make them more energy-efficient, and improve the quality of life in neighbourhoods. Where necessary, housing associations will be given project grants, funded jointly by the housing associations themselves, based on the value of their housing stock.
- We will focus particularly on **building homes for first-time buyers, senior citizens and middle-income households**. In view of the acute housing shortages among students, people needing emergency

accommodation, labour migrants and the homeless, we will endeavour to build 15,000 temporary homes each year, and create 15,000 extra units by transforming offices into homes. We will also create more scope for alternative types of accommodation and cooperative residential projects set up by private occupants. Central government will take on more responsibility for housing asylees by making regional agreements regarding temporary accommodation, thus relieving the pressure on local authorities. Procedures for building temporary housing will be further simplified.

- We will publish a **revised National Housing and Homebuilding Agenda**, which will include agreements on the number of homes to be built and putting in place the necessary preconditions, such as sufficient permitting capacity and construction workers. We will accelerate homebuilding by encouraging innovation. We will scale up the building of prefabricated homes and facilitate circular building. The agenda will remove obstacles to climateproof and nature-inclusive building.
- **We will build throughout the Netherlands**, in both urban and rural areas. Homes will be built in 14 designated urban development areas and in high-potential brownfield sites along railway lines and canals, preferably making use of existing infrastructure and transport hubs. New-build areas must be developed in conjunction with public services, infrastructure (including public transport) and nature protection. Greenfield development must go hand in hand with the creation of green space in compensation. Central government will contribute some of its own real estate and land to help reduce the housing shortage by creating extra, affordable rental and owner-occupied housing.
- A **Minister for Housing and Spatial Planning** (VRO) will be appointed to help local and provincial authorities decide where to build homes. The minister will enter into performance agreements with these authorities. The Buildings Decree will be improved, and impediments to homebuilding removed. To resolve financial obstacles to the development of land for specific projects, we will extend the homebuilding incentive scheme and the Housing Fund scheme. We will also continue to give adequate consideration to regions experiencing population decline.
- We will make a total of **€7.5 billion available** over the next 10 years **to realise good transport connections for new residential areas** in the 14 designated urban development areas and elsewhere. These resources will be added to the Mobility Fund. The Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management, the Minister for Housing and Spatial Planning and regional authorities will jointly decide on how these resources are spent.
- The government will focus on achieving **good spatial planning**, protecting the natural environment, addressing foundation problems resulting from subsidence, preventing cluttering and the construction of large, anonymous, windowless buildings that diminish the aesthetic value of our landscape, and incorporating the energy transition into spatial plans. To this end, we will update and tighten up the National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment, and launch an implementation programme.
- **Hyperscale data centres** make disproportionate demands on our sustainable energy supply, relative to their social and/or economic benefits. We will therefore tighten up national regulation of and the criteria for issuing permits for such facilities.
- The Minister for Housing and Spatial Planning will **oversee and coordinate spatial planning policy**, in terms of both urbanisation and other challenges with a major spatial element.
- We will **reduce rents for social housing for people on lower incomes** and increase the rent for people on higher incomes, step by step, to the level of private-sector rents. To help current housing association tenants in ground-level homes take their first step on the property ladder, they will be given the opportunity to purchase their home, subject to certain conditions. We also hope to help first-time buyers onto the property ladder, for instance with a new form of subsidised owner-occupancy that will not further increase house prices.

- **A form of rent protection will be introduced for homes in the mid-market rental segment**, set at such a level that they remain affordable for middle-income households while it remains profitable for institutional investors to invest in this type of housing. To encourage housing associations to build homes in the mid-market rental segment, the market test will be suspended for the duration of this government's period in office. We will simplify the system for valuing homes and access to rent tribunals. Tenancy agreements for indefinite periods will remain the norm.
- The **introduction of a notification requirement, registration requirement or landlord permit**, particularly for larger organisations that rent out properties, will enable local authorities to take more targeted measures to combat discrimination and dishonest landlords.
- Any **outstanding student loan** will be considered when first-time buyers apply for a mortgage. We will make it easier for senior citizens to cash in on the value of their home. The loan-to-value ratio will not be tightened up during this government's period in office.
- The **increased gift tax exemption for young people buying a home** will be scrapped.

Infrastructure

We set store by good accessibility throughout the country. The transport and logistics sector is important to the Dutch economy. A robust infrastructure ensures we can travel to work and college and visit family. We maintain our infrastructure well and it is high-quality, climate-adaptive and seamlessly connected. Safety, awareness of new developments and sustainability are important factors. Continued investment in the transport infrastructure and in resolving bottlenecks is essential.

- We will spend a **structural €1.25 billion** to catch up on the **backlog in the management and maintenance of our roads, railways, bridges, viaducts and waterways** and for their maintenance, renovation and replacement in the future, which also serves transport safety.
- **Road safety** remains a focal point of policy. We will ask local authorities to explore where the maximum speed can be feasibly reduced to 30 km/h in built-up areas. The speed limit on other roads will remain unchanged.
- With regard to the proposed widening of the **A27 at Amelisweerd**, we will consult with regional parties on whether alternative measures that do not necessitate a widening of the road could be equally effective in resolving the accessibility problems caused by congestion here. This should include providing access to new residential developments in the region (particularly Rijnenburg) by means of a rapid transit system as well as by car. If it is found to be a feasible solution, the region's proposal will be approved. If not, the current decision-making procedure on the road-widening plans will continue.
- We will reserve funding for the eventual construction of the **Lely rail link** from Lelystad to Groningen with regional and EU co-financing. Over the coming period we will work out how this rail link can help strengthen the economy of the northern Netherlands, provide access to new residential developments and improve international rail connections with northern Germany, as part of the 'Delta Plan for the North'.
- We will invest in the **expansion and improvement of the infrastructure** for public transport, bikes, cars and water transport, to ensure good, faster connections between urban centres and the surrounding regions. We will focus these efforts on the biggest bottlenecks identified in the Integrated Mobility Analysis 2021, on connections in the regions, and provincial trunk roads.
- New residential developments in the 14 **urban development areas** and elsewhere will have good connections by public transport, bike and car. A total of **€7.5 billion** will be added to the Mobility Fund for

this purpose over the next 10 years.

- We will work to ensure better **international rail connections, including night trains**, which connect with high-speed rail links across the border, to ensure that the Netherlands has sustainable travel connections. We will seek contributions from European funds to our investments in better cross-border connections. We will encourage the shift of road freight transport to rail freight and waterways.
- We will develop **hubs** where travellers can easily transfer from their car (or a car share), bike (or bike share), train or metro, based on real-time multimodal travel recommendations. We will also make every effort to make public transport more accessible for people with disabilities. We will invest in bike parking at public transport hubs and in fast cycle routes. To keep commuting affordable, the government will increase the tax-free threshold for reimbursement of travel expenses.
- We will seek to ensure **good inland shipping connections** by more effectively coordinating the operation of locks, bridges and road traffic and providing good moorings.
- Thanks to Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, the Netherlands has excellent connections by air with the rest of the world. Schiphol also provides many jobs, both directly and indirectly. It helps to make the Netherlands an attractive base for multinational companies. We want to preserve this important hub function.
- At the same time, we must consider the need to **reduce the negative impacts of aviation** on people and the environment. The vicinity of the airport faces various challenges associated with emissions of nitrogen, fine and ultrafine particulates, noise pollution, quality of life, safety and housing. These demand an integrated solution that will provide certainty and a prospect both for Schiphol in its role as transport hub and for the surrounding area. Decision-making on these issues, and on the opening of Lelystad airport and the new low-altitude approach routes, will take place in 2022.
- **The aviation sector will also have to contribute** to carbon emission reduction. We will discourage short-haul passenger flights, which should lead to a decline in carbon emissions over and above the targets in the 'Fit For 55' package.
- We will actively support **European agreements** on fair taxation of aviation. A level playing field within the EU and in relation to third countries is our main concern here. We want to see rail travel become a good alternative, in terms of both travel time and cost, to short-haul flights within Europe.
- At national level, we will introduce an obligation to **add bio-kerosene** to aviation fuel and promote the production of synthetic kerosene.

3. Security and a strong society

Security is an important condition for living in freedom. Prevention and penalisation are essential elements of effective security policy. As organised crime and other forms of crime that undermine society grow more pervasive, they are eroding the rule of law. This calls for a tough, targeted approach in the coming years. To enhance our security, structural funding increasing to €1 billion will be reserved for various purposes including combating crime that undermines society and strengthening prevention measures, the police force, the intelligence services and the entire justice system.

Justice and security

- We will **strengthen the entire justice system and improve access to justice** with measures such as sufficient and predictable funding in the criminal justice system. We will raise the level of expertise throughout the criminal justice system to bolster efforts to stem **cybercrime**. Cooperation between the police and special enforcement officers (BOAs) will be further professionalised, with due regard for the differences between their roles and responsibilities.
- The **Code of Criminal Procedure** will be modernised. We will shorten processing times and eliminate backlogs in the justice system. We will safeguard the position of victims of crime.
- We will increase our efforts to **make the administration of justice more effective for society at large**, focusing more attention on **restorative justice** – alternative forms of dispute resolution – working with partners from the social domain where possible and following the example of the community justice and mediation approaches. We will reduce the number of legal actions initiated by government against individuals. We will encourage the publication of more court judgments.
- We will **make justice more accessible to individuals and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)** by reducing court fees by 25%. We will strengthen the legal aid system in line with scenario 1 of the recommendations issued by the Van der Meer Commission, which evaluated the points allocation system in the government-funded legal aid system. The entire legal profession will be expected to make a substantial social contribution.

Crime that undermines society

- **A rigorous, realistic and effective approach is needed to tackle crime that undermines society.** This will entail strengthening and making a substantial investment in the criminal justice and security system, from community police officers to criminal investigation teams, and from the judiciary and the Public Prosecution Service to the Prisons Service and the Probation Service. By carrying out these improvements, we will be implementing the Pact on the Rule of Law.
- The **approach to tackling crime that undermines society will be bolstered** by adapting legislation, investigation practices, sentencing, information exchange and detention. In this regard, we will apply the lessons learned by the Italian authorities in their efforts to combat the Mafia. We intend to compare the circumstances in our high-security prisons (EBIs) with those in the Italian prison system with a view to preventing individuals from running criminal networks from inside prisons.
- We will **strengthen international cooperation** to dismantle cross-border networks and identify new developments in crime at an early stage. We will introduce tougher checks to combat fraud and corruption at logistics hubs.
- The **National Crime Squad** will be equipped with the staff and funding needed to intervene effectively.
- To aid the fight against organised crime, measures will be taken to ensure that **major offenders are**

investigated and prosecuted more effectively. For example the state's evidence scheme will be improved and penalties will be increased for offences such as illegal possession of firearms, assisting escape from prison, and illegal production, large-scale trafficking and large-scale possession of drugs.

- Criminal revenue models will be tackled more rigorously by **intensifying efforts to stop criminal money flows**, for example by allowing the proceeds of crime to be confiscated when conviction is not possible. We will take possession of criminal assets and give greater priority to financial investigation and intelligence aimed at disrupting money flows. Confiscated money and assets, such as those of individuals who cannot explain the origin or their ownership of valuable goods, will be used for the public good wherever possible, mainly in the neighbourhoods most affected by crime.
- We will crack down harder on companies and managers that **facilitate crime which undermines society** or are involved in money laundering or environmental crime.
- Law enforcement officers, journalists, judges, lawyers, public servants and other guardians of the rule of law are fighting to keep us safe but in doing so are at risk themselves. Violence and intimidation are on the rise. For this reason, the **system of surveillance and protection** will be improved.
- We are firmly **committed to freedom of the press** and to supporting journalists, who must be able to do their important work safely and freely. We will continue to finance the fund set up to help protect freelance journalists.
- To fight crime effectively it is important for all parties at every level to **work together and exchange information more effectively.** We will also provide the capacity and expertise they need to carry out their tasks better. We will ensure that information sharing has a sound basis in law, and provide for appropriate safeguards, such as purpose limitation and proportionality, and proper supervision.

Prevention

- To **prevent young people from getting involved in crime**, more community police officers and youth officers will be deployed and a **broad-based, cross-discipline community approach** aimed at promoting livability, safety and security will be developed. We will comply with the statutory standard of at least one community police officer per 5,000 inhabitants. The police and the criminal justice authorities should serve as the backbone of a community approach that aims to make vulnerable neighbourhoods more resilient to crime that undermines society, through a combination of security policy, social action to create positive change and opportunities to escape drug-related crime and other illegal activities and enter employment or education. The multiannual livability and security programme advocated by the municipalities will be taken into account in developing this approach.
- By focusing on a **broad preventive approach** that involves more youth workers, we can prevent young people from slipping into a life of crime or becoming habitual offenders. We will do this by, for example, identifying vulnerabilities at an early stage and pursuing proven methods.
- **The police and the mental health services (GGZ) will work together more closely** and ensure that people presenting with distressed behaviour receive individualised care and are not arrested unnecessarily.
- To **prevent reoffending**, we will continue working towards a more individualised approach in the prison system that focuses on reintegration into society. Training and upskilling for inmates in prisons and housing for former detainees will be facilitated.

Drugs

- To curb problematic drug use, we are intensifying our commitment to an active and **effective approach to prevention**, focusing in particular on protecting vulnerable young people.

- The experiments being conducted on the basis of the **Controlled Cannabis Supply Chain Experiment Act** will be continued and expanded to include a major city. In the near future criteria will be established for assessing the outcomes of the experiments in terms of crime, public health and prevention. The government will submit its position on the evaluation of the experiments to the House of Representatives and the Senate in 2024. The outcome of the experiments will be the most important factor in the government's response. Prior to the evaluation report, legal and practical preparations – based in part on interim monitoring – will be carried out so that the outcome of the experiments can be acted on as soon as possible after completion.
- A national commission will be established to investigate the **status of MDMA** ('ecstasy') in the context of public health and to issue an advisory opinion on the advantages and disadvantages of medicinal use, which will include a multidisciplinary analysis of health risks, prevention and the European context and relevant treaties.

Radicalisation and extremism

- We will protect society from the threat of **all forms of radicalisation and hate speech**, from jihadism to left- and right-wing extremism. We also need to focus more attention on the disruptive impact of antigovernment and antidemocratic sentiment and disinformation. Our approach will be centred on prevention, monitoring, investigation and prosecution, and imposing stiff penalties on offenders. Meeting the challenges of radicalisation and extremism requires a resilient society, a presence in vulnerable neighbourhoods and a robust intelligence and security infrastructure. The maximum sentence for participating in a terrorist organisation will be increased to 20 years.
- The course of action taken under the previous government with regard to **jihadist travellers who join IS** will be continued. The act of 25 November 2015 concerning long-term supervision, measures to influence behaviour and restrictions on personal liberty will be supplemented with provisions related to terrorist offences.

Human trafficking / prostitution

- Tackling human trafficking will remain a priority. We will continue to implement the action plan **Together Against Human Trafficking** (*Samen tegen mensenhandel*).
- Human trafficking is a serious affront to human dignity. The government will therefore combat exploitation and make assistance more accessible. Article 273f of the Criminal Code will be updated to improve the prosecution of offenders.
- **We will also improve assistance for all sex workers.** Programmes designed to help sex workers wishing to leave prostitution will be expanded and made permanent. Participants can request and obtain an urgent-need certificate for emergency rehousing in another area. We will strengthen the legal status of sex workers by, for example, providing access to insurance cover, business bank accounts and other financial services.
- **We will also introduce the Sex Work Regulation Act**, which provides for a national licensing requirement and a national register. We will take into account the Council of State's response to the bill concerning the licensing interview and the position of financial service providers, security workers, transporters and landlords in relation to the ban on pimps. We will scrap the administrative fine for sex workers so that unlicensed sex workers will not be discouraged from seeking help and information. In addition, under this act clients who report abuses or lodge a criminal complaint will not be subject to criminal prosecution.

4. Socioeconomic security and equal opportunities

Education and development

Everyone in the Netherlands deserves to have a good life and should be able to participate. This starts by ensuring that all children, young people and students have equal opportunities for learning and personal development. We therefore want to strengthen the quality of education, and make sure every child gets a good foundation in reading, writing and arithmetic, as well as citizenship education. This also means investing in the quality and number of teachers and school leaders. Equal opportunities will be enhanced by investing in childcare, early childhood education and enrichment activities at school. We will strengthen vocational and higher professional education as well as university education. And put safeguards in place for social safety and equal treatment.

A good foundation

- A master plan will be devised so that every child will learn to read, write and do arithmetic, using teaching materials proven to be effective, like those used in the National Programme for Education. We want to see real improvements in the **general quality of education and in children's foundational skills in particular**. We will be clearer about what we expect from schools, for instance regarding curriculum revision. We will **focus more strongly on the quality of education** and take action faster in the case of underperforming schools. **Citizenship** will be fully integrated into the curriculum and will be taught by teachers with the necessary qualifications.
- We will equip schools for their task by ensuring **investments directly benefit teaching** as much as possible. To this end, funds will be disbursed using the same system as for the funds provided to schools to relieve the pressure of work. Schools will give better account of expenditure and effectiveness, without this leading to an increase in their administrative burden. We will give school leaders and teachers more control and enhance parents' and pupils' scope for participation.
- **Special secondary education** will be brought under the secondary education sector as soon as possible.
- **Practical training** is a form of education in its own right. We will work towards allocating funding directly to practical training schools, subject to the results of a study currently being carried out by the Knowledge Centre for Vocational Training and Labour Market (KBA Nijmegen).
- A total structural budget of €1 billion per year will be invested in strengthening the quality of education.

Enhancing equal opportunities

- We will ensure that every child gets **a good start in life, with childcare provision that focuses on their development**. This will also make it easier for parents to do paid work. The childcare allowance for working parents will be increased in stages to 95% of the costs of childcare for children under 12. In the future, the allowance will be paid directly to childcare centres, so that parents no longer risk being confronted with large demands for repayment. Depending on how this works out in practice and what effects can be observed, we may decide to raise the allowance to 100%.
- We will **prevent children starting school with a learning deficit** by encouraging parents of children with a language disadvantage to enrol them in early childhood education (ECE) programmes, enhancing the quality of these programmes and strengthening the relationship between childcare and preschool provision. We will invest in **enrichment activities at schools** as part of municipalities' broad anti-poverty strategy. Schools will decide for themselves what activities are needed to reduce inequality of

opportunity, such as homework coaching, sports or cultural activities. Schools will organise this with community groups and libraries. We will start with schools where the need is most pressing.

- We will enable every child to achieve their potential, whether they have a learning deficit or excel at school. We will take a **structural approach to strengthen schools where a large part of the pupil population has a learning deficit**. Achieving equal opportunities is not done through equal treatment. A differentiated approach gives every child the best possible start in life.
- We will improve the **transition from primary to secondary education**. To this end we will encourage schools to make the first few years of secondary school as broad as possible. We will encourage **mobility between the different levels of secondary education as well as differentiation**, so that every pupil is given maximum opportunities to learn and develop. We will enable pupils to take school-leaving exams in different subjects at different levels.
- We will continue and expand the **community service scheme**, so that young people can come into contact with new social environments, contribute to the community, develop new skills and discover where their interest lies. There are community service projects in the areas of healthcare, welfare, security, defence, sports, nature and climate change.
- We will continue efforts to **improve appropriate education**, with a view to an inclusive educational system in which children with and without special needs all go to school together.
- We will make sure there are no **children missing out on full-time education** by offering every child a form of education; this includes setting up a digital school.
- A structural budget of €1 billion per year will be invested in enhancing equal opportunities and the community service scheme.

Investing in good teachers and school leaders

- In order to improve the quality of education in the Netherlands, we need to invest in the quality and number of **teachers and school leaders**. A structural budget of €800 million per year will be reserved for this.
- We will initiate efforts to **improve the quality of teacher training**, with a focus on effective teaching methods, digital skills, appropriate education and the option to specialise in teaching younger or older children. We will increase the number of university-educated teachers.
- We will **give priority to in-service and further training** and encourage professional development. We will ensure teachers get support at the start of their career, and make lateral-entry teacher training better and more flexible.
- To tackle the **teacher shortage** we will encourage teachers to work more hours.
- We will **close the pay gap** between primary and secondary education, and strive for a single collective labour agreement covering all teachers and administrators in primary and secondary education. We will **improve the employment conditions** for school leaders and teachers at schools with a large number of children with learning deficits.
- We will **strengthen the position and quality of school leaders**, so that a learning culture can evolve at every school focused on providing every child with the best possible education.
- We will invest in **reducing the pressure of work**. Schools can choose how they do this, for instance by reducing class sizes or increasing the number of classroom support staff. We will facilitate the use of digital tools to reduce teachers' pressure of work and improve the quality of education.

Robust vocational education

- By means of **technology-oriented senior general secondary education (Techniek-HAVO)** and **small-scale secondary vocational education (MBO)**, we will enhance the range of labour-market oriented education and training. We will ensure as broad a range as possible of secondary vocational courses at regional level, so that students never have to travel far to school. We will boost opportunities by removing obstacles and encouraging progression to further education.
- Government, educational institutions and the private sector will sign an agreement laying down that every student in secondary vocational education can do a **work placement**, for which they will receive an **appropriate allowance**. We will put an end to work placement discrimination.
- We will strengthen the quality of vocational education by means of lessons in **basic skills and citizenship**, taught by qualified teachers. We will also provide scope for guest lessons by people from the world of work.
- We will review the pros and cons of the binding recommendation on the continuation of studies in MBO, and take a new decision on whether or not this recommendation should be binding.
- We will **strengthen the regional training centres (ROCs)** for secondary vocational education, so that they are also equipped to offer lifelong learning for adults and provide classes for newcomers to the Netherlands from day one, in accordance with the new Civic Integration Act.
- We will promote the **equal treatment** of students in MBO, higher professional education (HBO) and university.

Robust higher education (HBO and university)

- We want higher education to be accessible to everyone regardless of their parents' income. As of the 2023/2024 academic year we will reintroduce a **basic grant for all students**, in addition to the **income-related supplementary grant**, with due attention to the feasibility and tenability of the student finance system. These changes will not affect the public transport card for students, the current student loan conditions and the investments which were promised when the student loan system was introduced.
- Anyone who was a student when no basic grant was available will be able to choose between **cancellation of part of their student loan or a continuing education voucher**. We will set aside €1 billion for this compensation, in addition to the existing budget for continuing education vouchers.
- We are setting course for a knowledge-based economy, characterised by **investment in independent research and development**, free from outside influence, in line with the goals of the Lisbon Strategy. To this end we will set up a **fund in which we will invest a total of €5 billion over 10 years**. We will make higher education funding more predictable by removing the perverse incentive effects of enrolment-based funding, reviewing and increasing the amount of flat-rate funding, and achieving a better balance between direct funding for research ('the first flow of funds') and funding via research organisations ('the second flow of funds'). This will provide more scope for tackling work pressure, offering staff permanent employment contracts, and maintaining a good range of higher education courses in regions with declining populations.
- If existing and proposed instruments prove inadequate in managing major fluctuations in **the number of students**, including international students, we will consider the need for new instruments.
- Universities should collaborate on **courses with low student numbers and courses in Dutch language and culture**, and guarantee a comprehensive and appropriate range of courses now and in the future. We will ensure that every bachelor's degree graduate can enrol in a subsequent master's degree course at the same institution, while maintaining scope for specialisation.
- Courses with **selection procedures** should explain how the procedure relates to the course content, why

it is effective and what safeguards are in place to ensure equal opportunities.

- The **binding recommendation on the continuation of studies** (BSA) system will be amended. Students who do not obtain the required number of credits in their first year will be given the chance to meet this requirement in the second year. If a student's progress is clearly inadequate, institutions will retain the right to issue a binding recommendation at the end of the first year and will help the student choose a course that is more in line with their interests and/or capacities. This amendment to the BSA system will also enhance students' wellbeing.
- We will promote a safe setting for the free exchange of ideas and **safeguard academic freedom**. We will establish a framework governing academic collaboration with countries where academic freedom is restricted. 'Open science' and 'open education' will be the norm, provided national security is not compromised.

Safeguards for social safety and equal treatment

- We will ensure **social safety and equal treatment** for pupils and teachers at all schools, creating a safe educational environment for all. The Inspectorate of Education will pay extra attention to social safety, and will also be tasked with investigating individual cases, lodging criminal complaints if necessary. We will broaden the Safety at School Act to include teachers.
- We will ensure that parents also receive assistance and that their voices are heard. The confidential inspectors at the Inspectorate of Education will also function as an independent **reporting centre for breaches of social safety**, where pupils and parents will be able to report their complaints.
- We will take decisive action against poorly performing school boards, in line with the Expansion of Administrative Instruments (Education) Bill.
- We will ensure **equal treatment upon registration for all potential pupils** regardless of their socioeconomic and cultural background.
- An **admissions policy** based on the belief or ideology on which the school's teaching is based must not at the same time involve direct discrimination based on race, nationality, sexual orientation or civil status. There is therefore no need to amend Article 23 of the Constitution.
- We will take **swifter action against** formal or informal educational institutions, and their representatives, that operate in a way that is in **conflict with the principles of integration, democracy and/or the rule of law**. We will expand the scope for such interventions and investigate ways in which these can be carried out.
- We will suspend funding if there is evidence that an institution is involved in practices that conflict with the rule of law.
- **Teaching materials that impart to children values that conflict with the principles of democracy or the rule of law will be banned**. In the case of complaints, the Inspectorate of Education will assess whether the teaching materials in question promote such values.
- Schools will be explicitly **forbidden from accepting funding from organisations that undermine our democratic legal order**.

Labour market and income

Employers and businesses ensure our country thrives and are crucial to our prosperity. Thanks in part to everyone's flexibility and the support packages, unemployment is low. At the same time, the gap in the labour market has grown and, according to the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 28% of people in the

Netherlands are financially vulnerable. In addition, the nature of work is changing due to digitalisation, robotisation and globalisation. This makes the future unpredictable, but also presents opportunities.

We therefore intend to carry out a number of major labour market reforms to enhance the socioeconomic security of low- and middle-income earners and to cut taxes. This will ensure that it pays to work, that running a business and taking on employees remain an attractive option, that our welfare increases, and that labour shortages in vital industries can be alleviated. These shortages will pose a challenge to the government, too, as it seeks to fulfil its ambitions in this coalition agreement. We will also continue to tackle poverty and debt. The final report of the Advisory Committee on Employment Regulation (Borstlap Committee) and the chapter on the labour market, income distribution and equal opportunities in the medium-term advisory report by the Social and Economic Council provide the guiding principles for how the labour market of the future will be organised.

- We will invest a total of €500 million a year in **labour market reform, labour market reintegration, and measures to tackle poverty and debt**. We will also set aside €300 million a year to reduce the burden of tax and social insurance contributions on SMEs by means of measures concerning continued salary payments to employees on sick leave.
- **We will reduce the differences between permanent and flexible employment contracts**. Too many people in the Netherlands are dependent on temporary contracts. This creates uncertainty. In line with the Social and Economic Council advisory report, on-call contracts, agency contracts and temporary employment contracts will be better regulated. In order to increase the internal flexibility and agility of businesses, the government will consult with representatives of employers and employees to devise a form of budget-neutral part-time employment benefit, paying due regard to workability and affordability.
- We aim to **abolish the system of benefits administered by the Benefits Office** so that people no longer get lost in a maze of complex rules or face demands for large repayments. We will take the first steps in this process during the term of this government. It is also our ambition to **simplify and reform the tax system** and we will make a start with this task as well.
- **We will make it more financially attractive to take up paid employment and we will reduce the poverty trap**. We will introduce a minimum hourly wage based on a 36-hour working week (private member's bill introduced by Gijs van Dijk (Labour Party) and Senna Maatoug (Green Left Alliance), (Parliamentary Paper 35335)). We will raise the minimum wage in stages by 7.5% and will retain the link with benefits (except the state pension (AOW)) in order to reinforce the minimum income standard. Older people will benefit from an increase in the elderly person's tax credit.
- At the same time we will **reform and simplify housing benefit** by abolishing the maximum eligible rent and switching to a system of standard rents based on income. We will make sure that everyone is able to bear the burden of this reform, especially people on the lowest incomes.
- In addition, we will implement a **€3 billion tax cut** that will especially benefit low- and middle-income groups, people in work, and families. Over the term of this government and beyond, this measure will help meet our aim of ensuring a balanced and – on average – positive development in purchasing power for all.
- **Clarity for the self-employed**. Genuinely self-employed people will be supported, and enterprise stimulated. The further development of an online tool can help provide certainty in advance for self-employed people without employees as to the nature of their employment relationship. False self-

employment will be combated by means of better enforcement under public law in the event of a suspected employer-employee relationship. We will introduce an **incapacity insurance scheme for all self-employed people**, designed in such a way as to avoid unfair competition and excessive income risks for individuals. In so doing we will take account of the preconditions set by the pension agreement. The self-employed person's tax deduction will be reduced by €650 annually to €1200 by 2030. During the term of this government, self-employed people will be compensated by means of an increase in the employment tax credit.

- In spite of a very tight labour market, there are still too many people who are not getting a look-in and are being left on the sidelines unnecessarily. Therefore, in the years ahead we will provide **more support to get people into work**, acting in concert with representatives of employers and employees, municipal authorities and the Employee Insurance Agency. In addition, we will help more people who have poor employment prospects find jobs, and we will expand the number of places in sheltered employment.
- We will expand the labour market infrastructure as a stimulus to **job mobility and the transition from benefits to work**. This will include instruments for reskilling and upskilling in support of the transition to occupations with high rates of unfilled vacancies. Experience gained with the regional mobility teams during the COVID-19 pandemic will be taken on board.
- We will also promote **lifelong learning** by means of study entitlements. The option of terminating employment contracts via a job-to-job route, as set out in the medium-term advisory report, will be worked out in more detail in consultation with employer and employee representatives.
- We will take measures to **improve the labour market participation and position of people who are unable to work through sickness or disability**. In consultation with employer and employee representatives, we will also examine how we can reform **'harsh' provisions in the Work and Income (Capacity for Work) Act (WIA)**, with due regard for workability, affordability and rationale.
- If employees are unable to work due to sickness, the primary focus is their recovery and return to work. In order to improve the system of **continued salary payments to employees on sick leave**, reintegration in the second year will in principle be directed via the "second track", and entry into the WIA will be restricted as far as possible, in line with the recommendations of the Social and Economic Council.
- We will relax the **limits on additional earnings in the Participation Act** and we will work with municipal authorities to ensure that long-term social assistance benefit claimants are actively approached and are helped and incentivised to seek work. We will also ask benefit recipients themselves to assume an active role. Account will be taken of their individual talents and limitations, and we will proceed on the basis of trust, providing scope for solutions that are tailored to specific circumstances. We will amend the **rules on shared living costs**, so that members of the household who are under the age of 27 no longer count as 'cost sharers' for the purpose of calculating social assistance benefit.
- We will make it **more attractive for parents to combine work and care** by gradually increasing the subsidy for childcare costs to 95% for working parents. We will also promote gender equality in the labour market by increasing paid parental leave to 70% of a parent's pay, combating pregnancy discrimination, and improving controls on wage differences. We will stimulate participation in the labour market, an increase in the number of hours or days worked per week, and a proportionate representation of women in managerial positions.
- We will implement the **pension agreement** to ensure a good and decent pension for all generations.
- We will rigorously continue to pursue the **broad-based approach to reducing poverty and debt**. We will take measures to halve the number of children who grow up in poverty in four years, adopting a clear, realistic and relative definition of poverty. We will **review the minimum income standard every four years** to ascertain whether it is still sufficient to meet living costs and participate in society.

- We will promote financial education, prevention and early identification of warning signs, so that we can **avoid problem debt or intervene promptly to alleviate it**. In order to prevent people getting stuck in an intractable situation, it will be possible for civil society organisations like housing associations to share signals about vulnerable people, subject to legal safeguards such as purpose limitation and proportionality. We will give people more scope to put aside a reserve.
- Municipal authorities will be given more scope to tackle **functional illiteracy**.
- We will reduce the duration of the debt assistance process and improve access to the Debt Repayment (Natural Persons) Act. We will make it possible to deal with problem debt more quickly by creating more opportunities to agree a debt payment arrangement with creditors.
- We will set **stricter requirements for protective guardians** and will counter the accumulation of debt by imposing a ceiling on increases, interest and collection charges. We will ensure improved, responsible government debt collection practices, with due regard for the human dimension. Steps will be taken to counter the selling on of debt as a revenue model.
- The government will adopt the recommendations of the advisory committee on the **incomplete accrual of AOW entitlements by elderly people of Surinamese origin (Sylvester Committee)**. We will follow up on the information given in this regard by the Advisory Division of the Council of State as a matter of urgency and will consult with the Surinamese community and the House of Representatives on this matter.

Towards a society in which everyone can be open about who they are

We want everyone in the Netherlands to be able to be free. Free to be who they are. Free from discrimination and racism. Free to develop themselves. It still happens too often that people in the Netherlands are given fewer opportunities or are excluded on the basis of their origin, gender, colour, race, age, beliefs, sexual orientation or disability. This is unacceptable. We will therefore pursue an active policy of equal opportunities and anti-discrimination.

- A democratic society can only function if we draw a line when one person's freedom threatens another's, if everyone gets involved and if we take action against discrimination. There is no room in our society for homophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, misogyny, sexual exploitation (including online), honour killing, female genital mutilation, child marriage, forced marriage, hate speech, or violence against minorities or people whose beliefs are different from our own. We will take a range of measures to combat these problems, for example by tackling online threats, protecting victims, encouraging people to report incidents to the police, and imposing consequences with regard to the granting of visas.
- A robust democracy should protect itself against organisations that aim to undermine democracy under the rule of law. We can do so, for example, on the basis of the recent amendment to Book 2 of the Civil Code that enters into force on 1 January 2022.
- We will strengthen the position of the National Antidiscrimination and Antiracism Coordinator, the National Coordinator against Anti-Semitism, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, the National Ombudsman and the municipal antidiscrimination bureaus through the provision of sufficient personnel and funding. We will work with them to draw up a long-term plan to combat all forms of discrimination, hate speech and racism.
- We will take robust action against both online and offline misogyny. We will combat domestic violence against women, including sexual exploitation.

- We will take action against organisations that engage in discriminatory or racist behaviour by levying fines and imposing a duty to report to the authorities discriminatory requests made to estate agents, landlords, temporary employment agencies and real estate brokers. Organisations that engage in conduct of this kind may also be excluded from the award of government grants and contracts, and the government will take up opportunities to use anonymous recruitment and open hiring practices.
- There is no place in our society for institutional racism. We will oppose ethnic profiling. Government and executive agencies must set the right example in this regard. We will continue working to encourage people to report incidents to the police by deploying antidiscrimination detectives and bolstering the Pink in Blue police network.
- We will continue to work, on the basis of the Rainbow Agreement, for acceptance, safety and equal opportunities for the LGBTQI+ community. We will implement this agreement carefully by means of legislation (including private member's bills) and policy.
- We will continue to consider proposals for the regulation of surrogacy, and in so doing will make use of the report of the Committee Investigating Intercountry Adoption in the Past (Joustra Committee).
- Because people with a disability must be able to participate in society on an equal basis, we support the inclusion of a prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of disability in article 1 of the Constitution. We will also apply this principle in practice. Accessibility will become the norm.

Newcomers and social and civic integration

In a just society, a person's origins should never be a hindrance to their prospects. Integration into society is therefore essential, both for individuals themselves and for Dutch society as a whole. For integration to be successful, people need to take responsibility themselves and society needs to give everyone the opportunity to develop their talents. This requires participation: learning the language, working, actively taking part in society and respecting the fundamental freedoms and equalities that are enshrined in our Constitution.

- In order to promote the integration of newcomers to the Netherlands, **we will proceed with the new Civic Integration Act**. The reintroduction of civic integration requirements for Turkish newcomers will also go ahead as planned. It is vital that newcomers (migrant workers and asylees) integrate into our society as quickly as possible. Reciprocity is the point of departure in this regard, because integration is a two-way street. Newcomers will need to practise citizenship, learn Dutch and find work. Asylum seekers whose asylum applications stand a good chance of success will be given Dutch language lessons from day one and we will remove barriers to doing paid or voluntary work.
- Newcomers will be encouraged to get the best out of themselves. This includes learning the Dutch language. Acquiring the **highest possible level language proficiency** – preferably B1 – remains the objective. We will make agreements with municipal authorities so that deficiencies in language skills can be addressed as quickly and effectively as possible. For those who struggle to attain level B1, raising language skills to that level as far as possible will remain the goal for those seeking naturalisation. To this end the government will explore the options for solutions tailored to individual circumstances, in line with the scope for tailored solutions to satisfy the civic integration language requirement.
- For people with multiple nationalities who wish to hold solely Dutch nationality but are unable to renounce their other nationality or nationalities, we support a **Dutch private-law register of unwanted nationality**.
- **Societal initiatives** to promote civic integration will be supported. Via voluntary networks and young

people doing community service, we will link up newcomers to the Netherlands with a 'buddy' to introduce them to Dutch society.

- We expect newcomers to endorse our democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights and **respect fundamental values**. We will take vigorous action against honour killing and restrictions on the freedom of girls, women and other vulnerable people, and against anyone who engages in such activity. There will also be greater scope for taking criminal action against those guilty of aiding and abetting offenders. We will protect the victims of forced marriage, abandonment and female genital mutilation, for example by having courts issue protection orders and placing a ban on hymenoplasty procedures and on advising or urging people to undergo such a procedure. Workers in the health and care sector and in education will be required to report honour violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Undesirable foreign influence and financing will be tackled. We will **counter undesirable foreign influence** as much as possible. Measures will include continuing the work of the Problematic Behaviour and Undesirable Foreign Financing Task Force (Parliamentary Paper 35228, no. 39) – which will be further strengthened – and proceeding with the debate on the Civil Society Organisations (Transparency) Bill (Parliamentary Paper 35646).

5. A prosperous country

An enterprising, innovative and fair economy

Our economy is driven by businesses and entrepreneurs. Because they are indispensable to the Netherlands, an attractive business climate is essential. For a thriving society and growing economy we need enthusiastic startups, strong small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), independent self-employed people and a committed business community. In the Netherlands businesses large and small will join forces to boost our future earning capacity. Only in this way will we have the resources we need to invest in our prosperity and in our public services. We want an economy that works for people. An economy in which employers form a long-term bond with their employees, working with them to create an enterprising, innovative and fair economy.

- The **COVID-19 pandemic has been a difficult period** for businesses and there appears to be no end yet in sight. The government will make an effort to create solutions for financially sound businesses that find themselves in debt due to COVID-19 and cannot therefore move forward.
- **Small and medium-sized enterprises are important to this coalition.** We will strengthen the growth and innovative capacity of SME entrepreneurs and businesses and encourage entrepreneurship. This means taking a measurable approach to regulatory pressure, including an SME assessment when preparing legislation to check whether the rules are also practicable for SMEs. It also means making it easier to hire and retain staff, removing unnecessary barriers to financing, closing the financing gap, supporting businesses when it comes to digitalisation and sustainability, creating a better position for entrepreneurs in bankruptcy law, and making more strategic use of public procurement.
- We will **strengthen the business community and business climate** and adopt a clear strategy to stimulate a manufacturing industry that operates at the leading edge. We will do so by ensuring a well-educated workforce and addressing the shortage of technically and practically trained workers. And by providing a stable and predictable business climate and pushing for a level playing field and protection against unfair competition from outside Europe. We will ask companies do their fair share and take account of people and the environment. We are committed to achieving strategic independence by manufacturing crucial products and semi-finished products in Europe and by protecting critical processes and preventing unwanted control in critical companies.
- We will continue the **National Growth Fund** through investments in projects focused on knowledge building, research, development and innovation. In this way we will strengthen our earning capacity and boost our economic growth in the long term.
- **Public-private partnerships** in knowledge and innovation will remain a key part of business policy. The top sector policy will also be continued. We will increase public investment in knowledge and innovation by establishing a science and research fund and intensifying the focus on knowledge and innovation in the Growth Fund.
- Thriving shopping streets are crucial for **quality of life in towns, cities and villages**. The government will work with local authorities to tackle the issue of vacant retail premises and encourage cooperation between the retail, hospitality and culture industries. Tourism will be given a fully fledged place in economic policy, with efforts being made to spread visitors across the country.
- We will allow the mixing of functions in retail by **regulating 'blurring'** in shopping areas in a responsible manner, with strict monitoring of alcohol abuse.
- We will support the **continuity of family businesses** by making genuine business succession easier and fairer. At the same time, measures will be taken to combat improper use of the scheme.

- We will move towards a knowledge-based economy where we **invest in research and development**, in line with the Lisbon objectives. We will strengthen the foundations of our knowledge institutions and innovative ecosystems, such as the space cluster at the European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC), and encourage them to collaborate within the region and internationally. We will support innovative startups and scaleups and focus mission-driven innovation policy on the three major transitions: climate and energy, digitalisation and key technologies, and the circular economy.
- Every region counts. **We will continue the Region Deals programme**. We will strengthen public-private partnerships to capitalise on regional economic opportunities. Together with the Brainport region, we will continue to develop the mainport status. The specific position of the border regions will be taken into account in legislation. To this end, we will work with Flanders, Wallonia, North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony to address bottlenecks.
- In order to maintain a level playing field we will facilitate **social entrepreneurship** by introducing a new legal form for businesses, the social enterprise. There will also be a single clear framework for social enterprise with reporting requirements, and the government will provide for an exception to the Competition Act with an amended proposal for sustainability initiatives.

Culture and creative industries

Culture is essential to our society and is an investment in our society: the connecting, inspiring and stimulating power of art and culture brings people together, challenges them and opens up new perspectives. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the cultural sector's capacity for innovation, but also its vulnerability.

- To make recovery, renewal and growth possible again, we will **invest €170 million a year** on a structural basis in the creative and cultural sector.
- In doing so we will focus on **improving the labour market position** of creators across the creative industries, from media and fashion to music. This includes fair pay. We will stimulate cultural entrepreneurship.
- There will be a **recovery plan** to strengthen professionals, institutions and amateur associations and help them get back on their feet.
- We want to make culture accessible to all, including through **good regional distribution** across the Netherlands and additional investments in **cultural participation**.
- We want to provide greater focus on our **shared history**. That is why the state will contribute to a National History Museum and a Slavery Museum. In the run-up to the 2023 memorial year, we will pay extra attention to dialogue about the history of slavery and modern racism.
- We will encourage **music and cultural education at school**, including museum visits.
- We want to ensure that **every municipality has future-focused library facilities**.
- We will involve the **creative industries** in major challenges facing our society.

Digitalisation

The current digital revolution offers tremendous opportunities for our society and economy. We will capitalise on these opportunities with excellent digital skills, a strong European digital market, high-performance digital infrastructure and ambitious cooperation in technological innovation.

At the same time, digitalisation is creating a digital divide and growing inequality in our society. Our security, rule of law, democracy, human and fundamental rights, and competitiveness are also under pressure. This demands solid ground rules, supervision and strategic autonomy.

- Science, business, startups, scaleups, knowledge coalitions and government will join forces to **capitalise on the opportunities offered by digital technology**. We will stimulate innovation and invest in chip technology and key technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing. At European level we will address the market power and data power of big tech and platform companies to improve the competitiveness of businesses and better protect the privacy of citizens.
- The Netherlands will be the **digital hub** of Europe and will have robust, superfast and secure internet in all parts of the country.
- We will take the lead and, in the EU context, commit to **strengthening cooperation between member states in the field of digitalisation**, including human-centred deployment of artificial intelligence, digital ethics, development of digital identity, cybersecurity and open source.
- To give everyone the opportunity to keep up with advancements we will offer digital knowledge and skills training in education and through reskilling and upskilling programmes. We will address **digital illiteracy** in a targeted way through a public-private digital literacy strategy, and improve the accessibility of digital government services, while retaining alternatives to digital government communications.
- We want to ensure that the intelligence services are better able to leverage their capabilities and expand their capacity to assertively detect and counter **new and growing digital threats and attacks**, with safeguards for proper and effective supervision and digital civil rights.
- **We will better protect our businesses, critical infrastructure and economic capital** through centrally coordinated structural cooperation between, for example, the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), the Digital Trust Center (DTC), government authorities, businesses and scientists. They will be able to share information on digital vulnerabilities and hacks faster and more easily.
- Cybercrime, including the use of ransomware, severely undermines security. We will therefore invest in a broad **multiannual cybersecurity approach** and in cyber expertise in the police service, the judicial system, the Public Prosecution Service (OM) and in the field of defence.
- **We recognise fundamental civil rights online**. We will therefore strengthen secure digital communications and will not employ facial recognition without strict legal limits and control. We will invest in a strong position for the Data Protection Authority and strengthen cooperation and coherence between the various digital supervisory authorities. There will be statutory regulation of algorithms to ensure that they are checked for transparency, discrimination and randomness. An **algorithm supervisory body** will monitor this. Government will set a good example by not collecting and sharing more data than is necessary and will develop rules for data ethics in the public sector. People will be able to use a personal **digital identity** and control their own data.
- We will make major online platforms responsible for tackling **disinformation and hate speech**. We will provide additional protection for children from inappropriate online advertising, marketing directed at them and digital profiling, and give them the right not to be tracked.

6. Health

Healthcare

Healthcare is of the utmost importance for everyone. We have become all the more aware of that in the coronavirus crisis. Everyone needs to be assured of appropriate and affordable care: young and old, now and in the future. This requires cooperation, time for the patient and space for all who work in the healthcare sector. A healthy society requires us to take responsibility for ourselves and for each other. Our healthcare system is based on solidarity, because we want everyone who needs healthcare to have access to it. We have a high standard of care and the system itself is not in question, but improvements within the system are necessary. People are concerned about whether the care of the future can still be provided and whether it will remain affordable. We will have to work on that. We will also need to look at health in a broader sense: education, sport, housing, socioeconomic security and the human environment are all contributing factors. The life expectancy of vulnerable people is seven years shorter than the average and they spend 15 years longer living in poorer health, and an unhealthy lifestyle in growing children generally puts them at a disadvantage. This is unacceptable. We want to keep healthcare affordable, available and accessible for everyone, and that requires good, robust political choices and reforms, which take time and must be based on appropriate care as the norm.

Coronavirus crisis

- We will use the lessons learned from the coronavirus pandemic, such as the importance of cooperation, decompartmentalisation and new (digital) ways of working, and get ready to face future health crises by **strengthening our pandemic preparedness**. This means a commitment, including at European level, to such issues as not being dependent on others for medicines and medical devices, safeguarding public interests and establishing care reserves in consultation with experts. We will also strive for flexible scaling-up and deployment of intensive care capacity, especially in terms of human resources. We will also strengthen public healthcare.
- The coronavirus crisis has pushed the healthcare sector to its limits and continues to do so. Work pressure, absenteeism and staff shortages have been further exacerbated by the crisis. **Working in healthcare must be made more appealing**. It is for that reason that salaries have been increased. Good employment practice is also required, including targeted improvements in staff appreciation and the irregular hours allowance. This will be supported by a training agreement with the nursing home, residential care and home care (VVT) sector. We will ensure more control, a practical approach to regulatory pressure, good training and upskilling, and better cooperation between formal and informal carers. Working more hours in healthcare should also be worthwhile in terms of remuneration.
- We will consider whether a **Chief Medical Officer**, operating on the basis of technical expertise, could contribute to better public healthcare.

Prevention, sport and physical activity

- We want a greater focus on prevention and on a healthy lifestyle from an early age. An unhealthy lifestyle in growing children generally puts them at a disadvantage. **We will therefore target avoidable health inequalities**. We will continue to pursue the goals of the National Prevention Pact with the aim of producing a healthy generation by 2040, with a focus on young people and sport, nutrition and physical activity. This will require a broad approach that encourages healthy choices and discourages unhealthy ones, without restricting people's freedom of choice.
- We will stimulate sport and physical activity as a way of promoting good health. Sports clubs are a good place to start a healthy lifestyle, which is why we will help them to be ready to get people physically active again.

- We will broaden the National Prevention Pact to include **mental resilience**.
- We will increase the **tax on sugary drinks** and raise the excise duty on tobacco. We will make binding agreements with the food industry on healthier foodstuffs. We will look at how we can introduce a sugar tax in the long term and reduce VAT on fruit and vegetables to 0%.
- We will set aside extra funding for **research into and treatment of Alzheimer's disease, obesity and cancer, in both adults and children**.
- To gain a better understanding of the social impact of addiction, we will appoint a **National Rapporteur on Addiction** who will report periodically on the scale of and trends in addiction.

Health system ('cure' and 'care')

- **Appropriate care** is the norm. That means the care provided is proven to be effective and overtreatment is avoided. This term also refers to care that is focused on health, functioning and quality of life, a care pathway that patients decide on together with their attending doctors, and care that is provided in the right place. Uncomplicated, standard treatment will be readily available throughout the country, whereas specialist centres will provide complex, less-routine treatments. We will enable supervisors and administrators to manage this properly. We will improve and broaden the assessment of what types of care should fall under the standard health insurance package, based on a framework for appropriate care. In addition, we will look at proven effectiveness – including in terms of cost – of care provided under the Chronic Care Act (WLZ), the Youth Act and the 2015 Social Support Act (WMO). Appropriate care means that secondary care providers cannot charge more for the same service, but also that the role of general practitioners (GPs) is strengthened and that they have sufficient time and capacity.
- Planned and emergency care should be made future-proof. Based on the premise of the right care in the right place, we will ask the Dutch Healthcare Authority (NZA) to draft **regional surveys** that could lead to a readjustment of the healthcare landscape, in which integrated cross-domain supply and appropriate care for everyone in the Netherlands, regardless of where they live, will be the norm.
- We will tighten control of the rising costs of expensive medicines and medical devices and we want them to be marketed at a fair price. We will pursue transparency in pricing structure and negotiations, partly through European cooperation.
- Thanks to the combination of appropriate care and general practice nurses, the mental healthcare sector (GGZ) will be able to concentrate on patients with more complex disorders, thus reducing overall admissions. To alleviate the pressure on crisis care, we will expect all GGZ professionals to work on-call shifts in the evenings, at night and at weekends.
- We will promote healthy aging and aging in place or in other forms of accommodation if that is more appropriate. This means, for example, that we will invest in sheltered and other forms of housing for older people, homes designed for aging in place, informal care, digital care, home automation and fall prevention. It is not unreasonable to expect individuals themselves to play a part in this respect. We will encourage municipalities to identify vulnerable elderly people at an early stage and help them to stay in their own homes for longer.
- For future-proof elderly care, **housing and care will gradually be separated** so that aging in place for longer is given even greater stimulus. There will be specific focus on innovative forms of housing and on ensuring that everyone, regardless of income, will be able to afford to stay in their homes for longer with the appropriate care.
- People with disabilities have untapped potential for society and sometimes need practical support. We will continue to invest in disability care and continue the excellent initiatives from the *Onbeperkt meedoen* (Participation Without Limitations) programme. The personal budget remains an ideal instrument for

giving individuals control over their own lives, with a key role for appropriate care.

- Good, timely and appropriate youth care, in which a child's own setting plays an important role, will help prevent more impactful interventions. We will clearly define what we mean by youth care and we will enable municipalities to provide it. The procurement of specialised youth care (including youth mental healthcare) will be centralised further. We will improve the child protection system, with a focus on the legal protection of children and their families.
- Everyone will retain ownership of their own health data. The exchange of data between patients and their care provider and among providers will be improved in accordance with data protection legislation, with a focus on uniformity. A well-functioning personal health environment for patients is the ultimate objective.
- **In health insurance, we will make the compulsory excess smarter and more affordable.** Patients will not be charged their entire excess in one go if their healthcare costs exceed the amount of the excess, but rather a payment will be charged per service up to an annual maximum of €385. We will also monitor and counteract the accumulation of copayments, for instance by capping copayments under the Medicine Reimbursement System (GVS).
- The '*abonnementstarief*' – the fixed rate for copayments for care services covered by the Social Support Act (WMO) – has limited the accumulation of care costs and is transparent and simple to implement. Due to the increasing use of home help, the availability of WMO services is under pressure. That is why, with a view to keeping these services affordable for low- and middle-income groups, we will work towards a **fairer system of copayments for home help** based on national standards. This will ensure that help and support remain accessible.
- Providers and insurers reach agreements on appropriate care, affordability and efficiency on the basis of a contract. We will **improve the contracting process**. If there is no significant reduction in the provision of non-contracted mental healthcare and district nursing, stricter measures will be required, such as compulsory quality registration and independent needs assessment. If this is insufficiently effective, a small copayment or lower reimbursement of non-contracted care will be considered. Patients' freedom of choice will be preserved throughout.
- We are committed to creating **clear insight into the quality** of the care provided and will **tackle unethical healthcare managers and companies**. We will take action against fraud and improper use, for example of real estate, especially if the basic healthcare provided is inadequate. In addition, we will impose further conditions to prevent or combat excessive distribution of profits by healthcare providers. Under strict conditions, it may be possible to attract risk capital for investments in care quality.
- Medical specialist group practices, which are typically based in hospitals, also have a responsibility in the transformation to appropriate care, the manageability of hospitals and the prevention of perverse incentives. **If medical specialist group practices show insufficient improvement within two years, legislation will be introduced to ensure that all medical specialists become salaried hospital employees.** Legislation is currently being prepared for this purpose.
- Having a place to live is vital for someone's socioeconomic security. We are committed to **preventing homelessness**, modernising community shelter services and providing housing with appropriate support for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Medical ethical issues

Medical ethical issues revolve around values, such as autonomy, the need to protect human life, and scientific progress. They require careful and respectful debate, giving due consideration to social dialogue, recommendations by the Health Council of the Netherlands, ethical reflection and legislative evaluations.

Integrated approach to pregnancy, abortion care and birth

In perinatal care, the health of mother and baby, women's autonomy and appropriate care and information are paramount. Over the coming years, we will improve integrated maternal care, ensure newborns have a good start in life and work to prevent unintended and unwanted pregnancies. We will guarantee accessible abortion care and, in view of the impact an abortion can have, endeavour to improve aftercare and reduce the number of abortions.

- Sex education is available to teenagers, young adults and women in vulnerable situations, and addresses safe sex, mutual consent and the consequences of – and options in the event of – unwanted and unintended pregnancies.
- We will gain more insight into the reasons for abortion, so that we can work with civil society organisations to provide the right information and support to reduce the **number of unwanted and unplanned pregnancies and the number of abortions**. To this end, we will also make contraception easily available and free of charge for vulnerable groups.
- We will **strengthen the role of GPs** in maternal care, especially for women in vulnerable situations.
- **Members of parliament will be able to make their own decisions on how they will vote on several pending private member's bills on amending the Termination of Pregnancy Act (WAFZ)**, notably the bill on amending the WAFZ in order to improve the provision of information and support to women with unwanted pregnancies (35338), the bill on amending the WAFZ and a number of other laws concerning legal medical termination of pregnancy through a general practitioner (34891), and the bill on amending the WAFZ in order to abolish the compulsory time for reflection before termination of pregnancy (35737).
- We will **improve aftercare** for women who choose to terminate their pregnancy, give up their child for adoption or foster care, or give birth in secret.
- We will make **non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) and a 20-week ultrasound scan** available to all women free of charge. As part of the prenatal screening, sufficient time will be devoted to counselling, reflection and information about living with a disability.
- We will raise awareness of and improve access to healthcare for sick or premature babies and support research into improving **neonatal care**.
- We will implement the **Solid Start [Kansrijke Start]** programme in every municipality, thus supporting mothers and newborns in the first 1,000 days, which are crucial for health, wellbeing and a child's later development.

Growing older and dying with dignity

At the end of their life, self-determined or otherwise, people deserve to be treated with compassion. We would all like to grow old with dignity, but not everyone experiences it that way. By respecting differences, we will improve end-of-life care.

- We remain committed to **growing old with dignity**, primarily through providing appropriate elderly care. We will continue the social coalition 'United against loneliness' [*Een tegen eenzaamheid*]. In addition, we will encourage intergenerational contact, for example through voluntary community service and through forms of collective housing in which both young and old people can afford to live.
- We will strengthen the **expertise of physicians** in dealing with end-of-life issues, including voluntary termination of life, and encourage timely discussions between physician and patient about end-of-life wishes, so that patients can consider the various options (advance care planning).

- We will start work on the upcoming fourth evaluation of the **Termination of Life on Request and Assisted Suicide (Review Procedures) Act** to clarify the difference between euthanasia and palliative care. We will make improvements to palliative care, including that provided in hospices.
- On the subject of **end-of-life assistance on request for elderly people who indicate they are ‘finished with life’**, opinion is divided in society at large and among politicians, and this coalition is no exception. Members of parliament will make their own personal decision on the private member’s bill entitled End-of-Life Assistance on Request for the Elderly (Review Procedures) (Parliamentary Paper 35534).

Embryo Act

The coalition parties have differing views on issues pertaining to the Embryo Act. These issues touch on the desire to prevent serious diseases and on the need to protect human life.

- On the basis of the third evaluation of the Embryo Act (2021), the government will amend certain elements of the Act, including a change in the definition of ‘embryo’ to take account of developments in the field of embryo-like structures (ELS) and provisions on two types of human/animal combinations that currently fall outside the scope of the Embryo Act. The Health Council of the Netherlands will be asked to advise on the desirability and acceptability of extending the 14-day limit in the Embryo Act. We will also participate in the dialogue on germline modification at European level.
- The parliamentary parties of Democrats ’66 (D66) and of the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) will prepare two private member’s bills. First, an initiative on pre-implantation genetic diagnostics for carriers of serious hereditary defects that may occur in subsequent generations. Second, the first steps will be taken towards a private member’s bill on lifting the ban on creating embryos for purposes other than to induce pregnancy, subject to conditions and approval of the research by the Central Committee on Research involving Human Subjects (CCMO). Initiators of these bills will start an extensive consultation process, the outcome of which will be taken into account when drafting the legislation.

7. International affairs

Foreign policy

We live in a world of instability and shifting power dynamics in the regions surrounding Europe. As a result of the positions taken by countries like China and Russia, and the US pivot to Asia, we must be more active in protecting our freedom, security and prosperity. We face major global challenges, such as climate change, the fight against the pandemic, migration, the demands of economic recovery and inequality. The international legal order, human rights and vulnerable groups are also under greater pressure. All these challenges demand a leading role by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and a strong, decisive EU. Europe brings the Netherlands peace, security and prosperity. Besides an economic community, the EU is also a community of values. It must be a player, rather than a playing field for other great powers.

European Union

- The Netherlands will play a leading role in making **the EU more effective, economically stronger, greener and more secure**. The Netherlands will also work closely with like-minded countries, and where necessary we will form leading groups to find solutions in such areas as climate, migration, security, trade and combating tax avoidance. We will implement EU directives.
- Member states that act in ways that are contrary to shared values, agreements or democracy based on the rule of law will be called to account, for example through the **rule of law mechanism**.
- We will work to secure open **strategic autonomy for the EU** and to encourage innovation and smart industrial policy. This will give us a leading role in digitalisation and new technologies.
- In **EU foreign policy**, we will campaign to abolish veto rights concerning decisions on sanctions, human rights violations and civilian missions. We will then explore other components of EU foreign policy in which limiting veto rights may be advisable and feasible in the interest of greater effectiveness.
- We will explore options for a **European security council** and make specific proposals.
- We will advocate a tax on digital services, a flight tax, a CO₂ border tax and a minimum tax rate for company profits, to prevent unfair competition between member states. These taxes will in principle be collected nationally. We will also work with other member states to prevent tax avoidance.
- We will promote a **sound and prudent macroeconomic policy** and necessary reforms by member states, aimed at sustainable debt, higher growth rates and upward convergence. We will take a constructive approach to the modernisation of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), as long as it is aimed at ensuring debt sustainability and upward economic convergence. In this process, we will demand effective enforcement of the SGP.
- To increase democratic legitimacy, we will advocate empowering the European Parliament to remove an individual European Commissioner. We will explore ways of improving the 'lead candidates' (Spitzenkandidaten) system in European elections. We are open to treaty changes in response to the Conference on the Future of Europe, if the changes are in the interests of the Netherlands and of Europe.
- We will strive to make **decision-making in the EU more transparent** for citizens and national parliaments, and to make the results and added value of EU policy more visible. We will enshrine this in a Europe Act.
- We will campaign in the EU for **closer cooperation with and greater support for Western Balkan countries**. We will be strict and fair in accession processes.

Foreign affairs

- We will **shape foreign policy along the following five lines**: 1) promoting international cooperation by

playing a leading role in the EU and other multilateral organisations, strengthening transatlantic ties and forming new partnerships; 2) focusing more on our international interests; 3) reducing our dependence on others for strategic goods and raw materials; 4) continuing to promote respect for human rights in our foreign policy; 5) providing better and more accessible services for Dutch nationals abroad (for instance through a stronger network of missions).

- We will make strategic use of the **EU's economic power**, for example by imposing sanctions that can be extraterritorial.
- Engagement in **military missions** will be in accordance with international law and preferably based on a clear UN Security Council mandate; we will draw lessons from earlier missions.
- While respecting our obligations to our allies, we will contribute to a **world free of nuclear weapons**.
- **We will combat foreign interference**, for example by making espionage a criminal offence. As national and international security are increasingly interwoven, we will establish a national security council.
- The **Netherlands Nationality Act** is leading in some situations to undesirable outcomes. We will review the automatic mechanism under the Act by which Dutch nationals with multiple nationalities residing outside EU territory lose their Dutch nationality after 10 years, and will facilitate their retaining Dutch nationality alongside their other nationality. For those who have lost their Dutch nationality since 1 April 2003, we will facilitate their regaining Dutch nationality.
- Together with the other countries affected by **the attack on flight MH17**, the Netherlands will continue doing everything possible to **establish the truth, hold the perpetrators accountable and achieve justice for the victims**, by prosecuting and trying the perpetrators and by other means.
- We will condemn and take targeted action against **human rights violations**, paying special attention to the most serious violations (such as crimes against humanity), and violations of the freedom of religion and belief (including the persecution of Christians), LGBTIQ+ rights and freedom of the press. The current envoys for specific themes will retain their positions. We will increase our contribution to the Human Rights Fund.
- Together with a representative group of like-minded EU member states, the Netherlands will examine the question of **recognising genocides** and consider the conditions for joint recognition of genocides. In this regard, judgments by international courts or tribunals, scientific research and/or determinations by the UN Security Council will carry great weight.
- In the **Middle East Peace Process**, the Netherlands will continue to work for a two-state solution, and for improved relations and practical cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians.

Defence

- During this government's term of office, we will invest €10.7 billion in maintenance and additional defence spending. We will make a structural spending increase of €3 billion.
- A **strong NATO** will remain the cornerstone of our collective defence. However, European countries will have to resolve conflicts more often themselves. We will **strengthen our armed forces** and substantially **raise spending** with a view to fulfilling their three constitutional tasks and our international obligations.
- We will put the armed forces on a **solid footing**. To this end, the Ministry of Defence will modernise its pay structure and human resources policy, and eliminate current shortfalls in materiel, ICT, stocks and medical capabilities. We will strengthen combat support and combat service support and increase supplies available for deployment in order to enhance deployability. The Ministry of Defence will dispose of surplus real estate and will modernise and ensure the sustainability of the property it does need, bearing in mind the regional impact.
- We will invest in **modern materiel** (including through digitalisation, innovation and the acquisition of

needed new capabilities), on the basis of a multiannual perspective.

- We will **deepen our partnerships with neighbouring European countries**. To ensure our ability to continue to properly carry out these core tasks, we will launch a multiyear process of developing intensive partnerships and strengthening our specialised capabilities. This will increase the number of personnel and raise the quality and efficiency of our armed forces. We will for example work towards joint procurement, improve interoperability and take further steps towards merging Dutch and German army units. We will also work with neighbouring countries on maintenance.
- Within NATO, the Netherlands will concentrate more on **protecting our own region**.
- We will strengthen our specialised capabilities in **cyber technologies and intelligence**, in close consultation with our principal partners.
- At EU level we will step up cooperation in the form of **joint missions and exercises**, including counter-piracy missions, research & development, military mobility, cyber defence and the fight against disinformation. We will support the development of EU Battlegroups into a Rapid Deployment Capacity. To this end the EU's military headquarters will be strengthened, while avoiding duplication of NATO resources as much as possible .
- In the interests of our **strategic autonomy**, while respecting EU rules, we will bear in mind the importance of a vital Dutch defence industry, operating on a more level European playing field.
- The Netherlands will play an active role in **developing European defence capabilities**, and will accordingly join in the growing consensus on mutual recognition of licences.
- We will take the special position of the Ministry of Defence into account in the formulation of **central government-wide rules** and policy.

Foreign trade and development cooperation

- The Netherlands will conduct an **active trade policy**, with trade and investment treaties (such as CETA) as a major instrument. We will press for these treaties to set high standards for fair production, human rights, food safety, sustainable growth and climate action.
- At the same time, we will **protect Dutch businesses from unwanted investments and unfair competition**. We will support both larger businesses and SMEs so that they can be successful in the wider world. We will make our trade instruments greener, in line with the provisions of the Paris and Glasgow agreements.
- At EU level, the Netherlands will support **legislation on international corporate social responsibility (ICSR)**, and will introduce national ICSR legislation that promotes a level playing field with neighbouring countries and is in line with the implementation of possible EU legislation.
- We will promote arbitration where possible through the new multilateral investment court or national institutions, and by making supplementary mechanisms transparent.
- We will structurally raise spending on development cooperation by €500 million a year to move closer to complying with the international norm, and will spend these extra funds on the global vaccines programme COVAX, on helping developing countries make a new green start on climate mitigation and adaptation, and on reception in the region (possibly as part of broader migration agreements).
- We will ensure that development cooperation policy is focused on making a greater **contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and addressing the root causes of poverty, terrorism, migration and climate change. We will pursue these ambitious goals together with national partners, including civil society, and international partners.
- We will develop a **Dutch Global Health Strategy** and aim to eliminate HIV, in the framework of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and tuberculosis by 2030.
- We will also formulate a **dedicated Africa strategy**, aimed at encouraging economic development founded

on equality, reducing poverty, improving respect for human rights and limiting irregular migration.

- Part of the development cooperation budget will still be available for **emergency aid**, for example through Dutch partners like the Dutch Relief Alliance. The emergency aid budget will include funds for the provision of psychosocial care.

Migration

The Netherlands stands for a just, humane and effective asylum and migration policy. We seek to manage migration as effectively as possible and increase our control over who enters the Netherlands, who may stay and who must return. Migration policy rests on two parallel pillars, which must be implemented simultaneously and in a coordinated manner: on the one hand, improving and strengthening the procedures for legal migration; on the other hand, limiting irregular migration, combating negative effects and abuses associated with migration, and promoting return in cases of unlawful residence. Our aims are to ensure that migration takes place in the most structured way possible, limit undesirable migration flows as much as possible, and maintain and strengthen public support for migration, in conformity with international agreements and EU legislation. In the years ahead this will require financial and other support for reception in the region and more effective and smarter cooperation within the European Union. However, it will also require putting our own house in order, with faster and more thorough asylum procedures, more consistent implementation, reduction of negative effects, and earlier steps towards integration or return.

Labour migration

- Demographic developments, including migration, have a major impact on the labour market and the housing market in the Netherlands. To **increase our control over migration** and our ability to quickly anticipate trends, we will seek to periodically assess expected labour, knowledge and asylum migration. We could also follow the German example of working with **policy targets** for numbers of migrants. The Advisory Committee on Migration Affairs (ACVZ) will produce an advisory report on this subject, which will be given great weight in policy development.
- **More structured labour migration**: free movement of persons is guaranteed within the EU. Labour and knowledge migration also takes place from outside the EU. Various businesses and sectors badly need these people. To combat abuses associated with labour migration, we will implement the recommendations contained in the report of the **Migrant Worker Protection Task Force** (Roemer Committee), to combat the exploitation of employees, tackle substandard housing, and prevent unfair competition and displacement on the labour market.
- As part of **agreements with third countries** on the return of failed asylum seekers, we will devise policy to on granting visas in a targeted way and permit temporary legal, circular labour migration, as part of strict reciprocal undertakings.

Asylum

- There is always room in the Netherlands for people who are fleeing from war, violence and persecution. We take responsibility for the plight of these people at international level as well. Together with other European countries we will continue to contribute to humanitarian assistance to refugees on the Greek islands and elsewhere. We are committed to an **effective, humane European asylum policy**. During this government's term of office, we will work for a fundamental revision of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), as proposed by the European Commission and set out in the government assessment. However, if this revision does not progress quickly enough, we will continue to work on it with a leading group of like-minded countries.
- In the event of a humanitarian crisis or a sharply increased influx of people applying for asylum in the

Netherlands, we will work with like-minded and surrounding countries in the areas of **border controls, relocation and further operational cooperation**. This will give us a mechanism for acting effectively in times of crisis.

- In the area of EU migration policy, we will press for **migration partnerships with third countries** that satisfy the material preconditions of the Refugee Convention to manage migration flows and ensure return. In exchange for undertakings concerning, for example, trade, aid, support for reception, and temporary legal, circular labour migration, we will make agreements with countries of origin on taking back failed asylum seekers and combating irregular migration. At the same time, countries that do not cooperate may be denied instruments that are important to them, such as visas.
- To combat irregular migration and human trafficking, we will seek to **further strengthen the protection of the EU's external borders**, within the framework of international treaties. Harsher penalties will also be introduced for people smuggling.
- To tackle the **root causes of migration**, we will strengthen our foreign trade and development cooperation. We will increase our contribution to the reception of refugees in the region.

Putting implementation in order

- The Netherlands' asylum procedure looks good on paper, but in practice there is room for improvement. We will comprehensively implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Long-Term Resident Foreign Nationals (the Van Zwol Committee). This will ensure that procedures are completed on time and with due care, prevent applicants from needlessly initiating procedure after procedure, safeguard the human dimension, and stop failed asylum seekers from blocking their return and departure. In keeping with one of this committee's recommendations, the government will consider in the near future how the best interests of children can be better taken into account in the asylum procedure, bearing in mind international case law and the policy of neighbouring countries.
- The **financing of partners in the asylum system (particularly the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) and the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA)) must be made more stable** and thus more future-proof. We will make a structural investment of €200 million a year for this purpose. We will strengthen the IND's expertise on the assessment of LGBTI people's and converts' applications, involving outside experts in this process.

Reception and return

- Antisocial behaviour by asylum seekers, often nationals of safe countries, undermines public support for the reception of genuine refugees and the quality of life of neighbourhood residents. This is also harmful for staff and other residents at reception centres. For this reason, a series of robust measures has been adopted in recent years to combat this antisocial behaviour. We will continue and intensify the current **approach to antisocial behaviour** in and around asylum seekers' centres and in public transport.
- **People who may not lawfully remain in the Netherlands must return to their country of origin.** We will strive to take effective measures aimed at or contributing to the return or departure of people who are not allowed to remain in the Netherlands. We will do this by expanding intensive support and monitoring as part of the return process, tightening up the duty to report to the COA, organising education in the language of the country of origin at family locations in asylum seekers' centres, and expanding the National Immigration Facilities (LVV) to form a network with national coverage in which reception is always aimed at return. Independent reception by municipalities will then no longer be needed and will no longer be funded by central government. As the culmination of a thorough process, the law on **decisions imposing exclusion orders on aliens** will be amended to apply to failed asylum seekers who must and can leave but are not cooperating in their return or departure. We will focus particularly on those who engage in antisocial behaviour.

- After taking the measures described above in the interests of return, we will raise the Netherlands' quota with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**) from 500 to 900. This higher quota will also cover **exceptional situations** in which an appeal is made to the Netherlands in the name of European solidarity.
- We will continue the consideration of the **bill establishing the procedure for determining statelessness** (Parliamentary Papers 35687). We will also assess whether there is a need for additional study into the numbers and treatment of long-term undocumented residents and stateless persons in the Netherlands.

Appendix: Finances

Thanks to prudent budgetary policy, the government has sufficient financial buffers to weather the coronavirus crisis well, as far as finances are concerned. The major challenges facing us in the next few years will again be very demanding financially. However, robust action must not come at the expense of a sound budget in the longer term. With this in mind, this government will apply a trend-based budgetary policy with clear ground rules.

- We will strike a balance between solving major societal problems and exercising fiscal prudence. Our aim is for the budget deficit to be restored to a downward trajectory as soon as possible. We will accept a higher debt temporarily in order to solve problems facing society, and we will then seek to reduce the debt. Taking into account external circumstances, the associated underlying EMU balance is -1.75% of GDP.
- This means a structural budget margin of approximately €13 billion and a larger incidental margin for the next 10-15 years. This incidental margin will enable us to solve the major societal challenges we face, such as climate change, nitrogen deposition and maintenance backlogs. The reasoning is that if these problems are not solved now, the costs will increase further in the long term. Funds amounting to €60 billion will be formed for tackling climate change and nitrogen deposition. These funds require a robust decision-making mechanism and governance, along the lines of the Multiyear Infrastructure, Spatial Planning and Transport Programme (MIRT) and the Delta Fund. Their governance will be based on a number of goals and principles: providing planning certainty for the longer term, extended powers for the ministers responsible, monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness by the Minister of Finance, and strong parliamentary scrutiny.
- The effects of this coalition agreement on public finances are set out in the budget appendix. Spending will be increased substantially to solve societal challenges. When it comes to the long-term sustainability of public finances, the rising cost of healthcare is a cause for concern. The government has therefore decided to increase spending on, for example, pandemic preparedness during its term of office. In the long run, the increase in healthcare costs will be curtailed and this will contribute to a healthy long-term budget.
- The budget rules already in force will continue to be applied. This means that setbacks will be absorbed within the relevant ceiling, while windfalls from underspending will be credited to the balance. The adjustments recommended by the 16th Budget Margin Study Group will be adopted. They include creating an investment ceiling, decoupling revenue from expenditure as much as possible and communicating about the year-on-year trend in expenditure and revenue.
- Windfalls will be dealt with according to the following formula. If the estimated actual long-term EMU balance is better than -1% of GDP, 50% of that margin will be earmarked for tax cuts and 50% for debt repayment. This means that, initially, windfalls arising from the actual balance being better than the long-term target will be used entirely to pay off the national debt. This will be decided at the main decision-making point in the spring. At that time decisions will also be made about the consequences of changes in healthcare spending and how they will affect healthcare contributions; the policy of automatically increasing taxes to offset falling healthcare contributions will be abandoned. From now on, decision-making will need to be explicit.
- After the government has taken office there will be one main decision-making point in the spring, when decisions will be made on general revenue policy. The government will apply real, fixed expenditure ceilings. Total government revenue reflects the changing economic climate, while policy-related changes in the tax burden are governed by the revenue framework. This means that the government budget acts as an economic stabiliser.

- Higher inflation than expected in this coalition agreement will lead to higher nominal expenditure than expected, but also to higher nominal revenue than expected. Higher inflation therefore does not pose a direct threat to the health of public finances. If higher inflation were accompanied by a higher real interest rate, this would lead to setbacks. The national debt has an average maturity of around eight years, which helps to guard against this. Finally, higher inflation can result in loss of purchasing power, unless salaries rise sufficiently to offset it. Each year, the coalition will take this into account when making decisions on purchasing power at the main decision-making point.

Financial overview

This government has chosen to tackle major societal challenges relating to nitrogen deposition, climate change, maintenance backlogs and housing construction. In addition, it will invest in a promising start in life for children (education and childcare), socioeconomic security and middle-income groups. It will also allocate extra money for a strong, service-minded government sector that puts people first. The coalition will spend extra money on pandemic preparedness. At the same time, it will take measures to flatten the steep rise in healthcare expenditure, with a view to the long-term health of our public finances.

The coalition will continue to invest in both national and international security. Defence spending will be further increased to bring it into line with the EU-NATO average. The coalition will also use money from the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility to finance its plans, including those set out in this coalition agreement. The coalition will increase taxes aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle, greening and combating tax avoidance, and will introduce targeted tax cuts, especially for low- and middle-income groups, people in work, and families.

in millions of euros positive amounts worsen the balance		2022	2023	2024	2025	Structural
I. Democratic legal order		1,803	5,014	6,071	6,138	2,011
a.	Government in order	722	1,224	1,294	1,294	681
b.	Subnational authorities	1,050	3,749	4,731	4,814	1,300
c.	Caribbean Netherlands	31	41	46	30	30
II. A sustainable country		405	4,167	7,258	9,724	3,265
d.	Nitrogen Fund (25bn until end of 2035, of which 20bn until end of 2030)		700	1,300	1,500	0
e1.	Climate and Transition Fund (35bn until end of 2030)		800	1,980	3,310	0
e2.	Other climate expenditure		12	78	94	55
f.	Abolition of landlord levy		470	900	1,420	1,710
g.	Infrastructure (incl. water)	405	2,185	3,000	3,400	1,500
III. Security and a strong society		220	640	960	1,100	1,000
h.	Security	220	640	960	1,100	1,000
IV. Socioeconomic security and equal opportunities		2,450	7,069	9,970	11,713	12,237
i.	Education, Culture and Science	2,250	2,770	4,300	4,200	3,700
j.	Introduction of student grant (abolition of loan system)	5	590	610	180	1,000
k.	Childcare for people in work (abolition of childcare benefit)	19	59	224	1,716	2,249
l.	Increase in minimum wage (and simplification of housing benefit)			900	1,400	1,400

m.	Tax cut for middle-income groups		3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
n.	Labour market (incl. poverty and debt)	176	650	936	1,217	888
V. A prosperous country		50	250	300	300	0
o.	Region Deals	50	250	300	300	0
VI. Health		785	1,495	1,226	42	-4,519
p1.	Care	545	1,195	866	-268	-4,819
p2.	Spending increase for pandemic preparedness	240	300	360	310	300
VII. International affairs		821	2,233	4,444	4,756	3,556
q.	Defence	500	1,900	4,100	4,200	3,000
r.	Development cooperation and international affairs	321	333	344	556	556
Other		8	-3,595	-3,970	-4,241	-4,240
s.	Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)		-1,500	-1,500	-1,500	0
t.	Taxes	8	-2,095	-2,470	-2,741	-4,240
Total		6,541	17,273	26,259	29,532	13,310
EMU balance ¹		-3.2%	-2.3%	-2.4%	-2.5%	
EMU debt		58.6%	59.0%	59.6%	60.4%	
Underlying balance (coalition target) ²						-1.75%

¹ The calculations assume an earning effect of 42% for the government's term of office.

² With a balance of -1.75%, the debt will stabilise at 60% of GDP, assuming an interest rate of 0% and nominal GDP growth of 3%.

Explanatory notes

To clarify the coalition's efforts on climate change, the table below sets out the climate measures in the coalition agreement. It provides an initial estimate of the possible CO₂ effect; the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) needs to make a more detailed calculation. The values in the table indicate the bandwidth of the possible effect. The measures need to be fleshed out. The PBL will have to perform calculations for the climate package as a whole in order to obtain a good estimate of the overall CO₂ effect. The expenditures for and costs of the new government's other priorities, such as nitrogen deposition, infrastructure, education, security and defence, are detailed in the budget appendix.

The distribution across sectors is also indicative. It is up to the government to adopt a comprehensive package that leads to sufficient reductions and takes account of leakage effects, feasibility, cost-effectiveness and the Netherlands' earning power.

Measure		Bandwidth in Mtonnes (lower – upper) (indicative, 2030) ³		2022	2023	2024	2025	Structural	Cumulative (2030)
Electricity sector		0.5	2.0		100	300	400	0	6,000
<i>Expenditure</i>									
1.	Grant scheme for zero-carbon gas-fired power plants (Fund)	0.5	2.0		50	100	150	0	1,000
2.	Construction of nuclear power plants (cumulative 5bn) (Fund)				50	200	250	0	5,000
Industry		5	6		-26	-61	-138	-128	-864
<i>Expenditure</i>									
3.	Monitoring and enforcement of energy-saving obligation	0.1	0.5		0	0	0	14	56
4.	Incentive programme for developing and scaling up recycling	0.1	0.1		7	8	9	7	70
5a.	Mandatory percentage of recyclate in building materials	0.15	0.3		3	4	4	3	30
5b.	Circular supply chain projects	0.01	0.01		2	2	2	2	16
6.	Carbon capture and storage (CCS)	0	0		0	0	0	0	0
<i>Revenue</i>									
7.	Tightening of industry CO ₂ tax regime	4.0	4.0		0	0	0	0	0
7a.	Increasing minimum price of CO ₂ (not a flat tax)	0.0	0.0		0	0	0	0	0
8a.	Energy tax rate structure ('Fit for 55') (gas and electricity)	0.5	0.5		-250	-500	-500	-500	-3,750
8b.	Reduction of renewable energy surcharge (ODE) rate in 2nd and 3rd brackets (electricity)	0.0	0.0		288	500	500	500	3,788
8c.	Use of Hermans motion budgetary envelope (75m)	0.0	0.0		-75	-75	-75	-75	-600
9.	Abolition of energy tax exemptions – mineralogical and metallurgical processes	0.1	0.5				-78	-79	-473

³ The CO₂ savings of each individual measure cannot simply be added together, partly because the measures interact. The PBL needs to perform calculations for the package as a whole to obtain a good estimate of the overall CO₂ effect.

Built environment		7	7		247	635	1,254	637	11,120
<i>Expenditure</i>									
10.	Encouragement of hybrid heat pumps (150,000 per year) (Fund)	0.9	0.9		0	0	150	0	900
11.	National Insulation Programme (Fund)	0	0		0	180	360	0	3,350
12.	Expediting insulation standard for rental housing (linked to abolition of landlord levy)	1.0	1.0		0	0	0	0	0
13.	Enhancing sustainability of social housing (Fund)	1.0	1.0		0	100	330	0	2,750
14.	Energy performance standards for new industrial buildings	0.1	0.1		0	50	50	0	500
<i>Revenue</i>									
15.	Shift in 1st energy tax bracket (electricity)	1.3	1.3		247	305	364	637	3,620
15a	of which 1st bracket for gas (+5.23 cents)				-227	-275	-320	-493	-3,043
15b	of which 1st bracket for electricity (-5.23 cents)				474	580	684	1,130	6,663
16a	Blending obligation for green gas (20%)	2.88	2.9		0	0	0	0	0
16b	Energy bill compensation for green gas	0	0		225	225	225	225	1,800
16c	Use of Hermans motion budgetary envelope (225m)	0	0		-225	-225	-225	-225	-1,800
Agriculture and land use		6	6		0	0	-145	-133	-836
<i>Expenditure</i>									
17	Nitrogen package (costs elsewhere move in unison)	5.0	5.0		0	0	0	0	0
<i>Revenue</i>									
18a	of which limitation of input exemption for combined heat and power	1.0	1.0				-100	-100	-600
18b	of which abolition of reduced rate for greenhouse horticulture						-45	-33	-236
Mobility		3	4		-400	-603	-722	-512	-5,097
<i>Expenditure</i>									
19	Greening of passenger transport and travel behaviour	0.3	0.5			14	29	29	265
<i>Revenue</i>									
20	of which motor vehicle tax (MRB++) for electric/fossil-fuel vehicles (based on mileage)	2.5	2.5					0	0
21	Reduction of car and motorcycle tax (BPM) exemption for vans to 0% in 2026	0.7	0.7			-217	-351	-141	-2,162
22	Increase in tax-free travel allowance (budget series moves in unison with tax table)	-0.2	-0.2						
23	Increase in flight tax (target 400m)	0	0		-400	-400	-400	-400	-3,200
Infrastructure, innovation and customised approach		0	0		750	1,450	2,150	80	22,580
<i>Expenditure</i>									
24	22bn for 1) Grant for early-phase upscaling; 2) Infrastructure investment (hydrogen, heat, charging infrastructure, etc.); 3) Binding, customised agreements for industry (green industrial policy), incl. stimulating SME innovation (Fund)				700	1,400	2,070	0	22,000
<i>Revenue</i>									
25	Increase in budget for energy investment tax credit (EIA)	0.2	0.2		50	50	50	50	400
26	Increase in budget for environmental investment tax credit (MIA) / accelerated depreciation of environmental investments for entrepreneurs (VAMIL)	0.3	0.3				30	30	180
Other		3.0	6.0		300	500	800	0	5,600
27	Effect of 'Fit for 55' (EU)	1.0	2.0						
28	Effect of National Climate Agreement + August decision-making	2.0	4.0						
29	Implementation costs of subnational authorities and research bureaus				300	500	800		5,600
30	Scrapping link between Renewable Energy Grant Scheme (SDE) and renewable energy surcharge (ODE)	0.0	0.0		0	0	0	0	0
Total		25.4	31.0		971	2,221	3,599	-56	38,504

