

**DUTCH
PRESIDENCY
OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE
EUROPEAN
UNION**

**EU
2016**





GENERAL INFORMATION

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is divided into four constituent countries or *landen*: the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. 98 per cent of the territory and population of the Kingdom are situated in the European Netherlands. The countries of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten are located in the Caribbean and have their own parliaments. With a population of around 17 million inhabitants living in an area of only 41,854 km², the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy with federal elements. The bicameral Parliament, the *Staten-Generaal*, consists of the Lower House with 150 members, elected every four years in direct national elections, and the Senate, counting 75 members elected by the provincial parliaments. The latter can approve or reject laws, but has no right to initiate or amend them. The head of government is the Prime Minister, an office held by Mark Rutte since 2010. King Willem-Alexander serves as the representative head of state with mostly symbolic functions.

ECONOMY

The Netherlands is regarded as a socially and economically liberal country, ranking the 17th freest country out of 177 in the Index of Economic Freedom of the Heritage Foundation. With an estimated GDP of \$869.5 billion in 2014, the Netherlands is the 17th largest economy in the world reaching the 13th highest nominal GDP per capita with \$47,635. Having a stable industrial basis, the country is the world's fifth largest exporter, making the economy heavily dependent on foreign trade. The unemployment and inflation rates are both low with 6.8 and 0.7 per cent, respectively. The port of Rotterdam is the biggest transport hub in Europe and the prime access point to markets in Germany, France, Switzerland and the UK. The Netherlands' biggest trading partner, both for imports and exports, is Germany.

Despite being a relatively small country, the Netherlands is, after the United States, the second-largest exporter of food and agricultural products in the world. The foodstuff industry is, thus, the largest industrial sector and accounts for up to 21 per cent of the total export value. The Dutch food industry is highly mechanised and productive. The labour productivity level of the Netherlands is one of the highest in Europe. Other big industrial sectors are the metal and engineering industries as well as the electronic, machinery and chemical sectors. The Netherlands also has a strong financial service and tourist sector. Amsterdam's Stock Exchange is one of Europe's largest stock exchanges. Due to the openness of the Dutch economy, the Netherlands was affected considerably by the global financial crisis and the subsequent European debt crisis but now is on its way to recovery. According to the European Commission's autumn 2015 forecast, the ongoing Dutch economic recovery is expected to continue in 2016 with an estimated growth rate of 2.1 per cent.



PRIORITIES

MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The EU needs to develop a common border, asylum and migration policy and use the Common Foreign and Security Policy to tackle the root causes of conflicts in its neighbourhood. The Dutch Presidency will focus on making connections between Member States, namely, fostering solidarity and collective responsibility in order to face common challenges and the consequences of current international developments. Therefore, the Netherlands will work towards the development of a common and cooperative approach between Member States to improve the management of the current migratory flows, especially the reception of refugees in the neighbouring regions and in Europe. Burden sharing as well as the reappraisal of the Dublin system and the Schengen area will be key issues during the Dutch Presidency.

EUROPE AS AN INNOVATOR AND JOB CREATOR

The Dutch Presidency seeks to reinforce the role of the European Union as an innovator and creator of jobs

in Europe. The creation of structural growth and innovative jobs will feature prominently on the agenda of the Dutch Presidency and its work will be continued by the two other presidencies of the Trio, i. e. Slovakia and Malta. With this aim, the Presidency will prioritise implementing existing agreements in all Member States, stimulating entrepreneurship in sectors with high growth potential, advancing the adoption of measures related to the Digital Single Market Strategy and concluding balanced agreements with third states. The focus will be set on promoting innovation in all economic sectors, including investing in research and development as well as high-quality education, in order to provide people with the right skills for the future.

SOUND FINANCES AND A ROBUST EUROZONE

Sound and “future-proof” European finances and a resilient Eurozone will be the third priority of the Dutch Presidency. Agreements made within the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) must be maintained and the Dutch Presidency will actively support the implementation of reforms in order to

maintain stability in the EMU. The Dutch Presidency will, thus, focus on moving structural reforms forward and deepening the European Monetary Union as well as coordinating macroeconomic policies, including starting a debate on a new and reformed Multiannual Financial Framework.

FORWARD-LOOKING CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICY

As a fourth priority, the Netherlands will emphasise the close cohesion among the issues of climate change, environment and sustainability. The development of the initiatives and proposals included in the Circular Economy Package will also feature prominently on the agenda of the Dutch Presidency. On 25-26 January, the Netherlands will organise a stakeholder conference on the circular economy in Rotterdam. The Netherlands is also committed to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and will coordinate its efforts in this field with the European Commission. The Commission is planning to present in 2016 a proposal for achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.



WHO IS WHO

FOR MORE
INFORMATION,
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PICTURES:



KING
WILLEM-ALEXANDER
Head of State



MARK
RUTTE
*Prime Minister / Minister
of General Affairs*



LODEWIJK
ASSCHER
*Deputy Prime Minister /
Minister of Social Affairs
and Employment*



BERT
KOENDERS
*Minister of
Foreign Affairs*



RONALD
PLASTERK
*Minister of the Interior
and Kingdom Relations*



JEROEN
DIJSSELBLOEM
*Minister
of Finance*



HENK
KAMP
*Minister of
Economic Affairs*



ARD
VAN DER STEUR
*Minister of
Security and Justice*



JEANINE
HENNIS-PLASSCHAERT
*Minister
of Defence*



>> WHO IS WHO



VVD

**EDITH
SCHIPPERS**

*Minister of Health,
Welfare and Sport*



PvdA

**JET
BUSSEMAKER**

*Minister of Education,
Culture and Science*



VVD

**MELANIE SCHULTZ VAN
HAEGEN-MAAS GEESTERANUS**

*Minister of Infrastructure
and the Environment*



VVD

**STEF
BLOK**

*Minister for Housing
and the Central
Government Sector*



PvdA

**LILIANNE
PLOUMEN**

*Minister for Foreign
Trade and Development
Cooperation*



PvdA

**SHARON
DIJKSMA**

*Minister for the
Environment*



PvdA

**MARTIJN
VAN DAM**

*Minister
for Agriculture*



VVD

**KLAAS
DIJKHOFF**

*State Secretary of Security
and Justice and Minister
for Immigration*



**PIETER
DE GOOIJER**

*Ambassador, Permanent
Representation to the
European Union*



POLICY FIELDS

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

A long-term goal of the Dutch Government is to find ways to feed a growing world population. The solution involves climate-smart agriculture and reducing food waste throughout the entire production and supply chain. Concerning the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Netherlands will urge the Commission to simplify the CAP in order to alleviate burdens on farmers, especially in the dairy and pig sector. The imbalance between patent law and plant breeders' rights is also on the agenda. The Netherlands plans to ease this discrepancy to open up access to genetic sources. With regard to fishery legislation, the Dutch Presidency will focus on concluding agreements on multiannual plans for sustainable fish stock management and expanding the landing obligation to prevent food waste. Finally, the Netherlands will make an effort to tackle the trade in illegally harvested timber.

COMPETITIVENESS

The agenda of the Dutch Presidency regarding the internal market and industry will include the examination of the Single Market Strategy for goods

and services, the mainstreaming of competitiveness across all EU policy areas, the implementation of the Better Regulation Agenda as well as the further development of initiatives and legislative proposals within the framework of the Digital Single Market Strategy. The Presidency will also explore measures and tools to better support SMEs and facilitate access to finance.

DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

With regard to the digital economy, the Dutch Presidency aims to foster an integrated approach on the Digital Single Market (DSM). Intrinsicly connected with the DSM is the revision of the telecom framework. The Presidency will facilitate discussions on digital platforms, cloud computing and the upcoming review of the roaming wholesale market. Other topics, on which the Presidency is committed to make progress, are the announced proposal for a decision of the Council and the Parliament on the 700MHz frequency band for mobile broadband and the Directive on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites. A key event during the Presidency will be the High Level Meeting of Directors-General of Telecommunications on 20 April 2016 in Amsterdam.

ECONOMIC POLICIES AND TAXATION

The completion of the EMU and the strengthening of the European Semester will be the main priorities of the Dutch Presidency in the economic field. The Netherlands aims at strengthening the implementation of country-specific recommendations as well as promoting structural reforms and better governance in the Member States. Therefore, the Netherlands will set the focus on the compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact and will encourage sharing best practices between Member States. Furthermore, the Presidency will work towards the set-up of a European Deposit Guarantee Scheme. In the field of taxation, the Dutch Presidency will focus on the reform of the corporate tax system based on the OECD's base erosion and profit shifting project and the fight against tax avoidance.

EDUCATION AND YOUTH

With regard to education, the Dutch Presidency will concentrate on the contribution of education to jobs and growth in the framework of the New Agenda for Skills and Jobs as well as on vocational education and



>> POLICY FIELDS

training. The Agenda is one of the Commission's priorities for 2016 and it will coordinate its work with the Presidency in this field. Countering and preventing radicalism through youth work will be another important issue. Other priorities regarding youth will include encouraging the participation and integration of young people with mental health problems in the labour market and developing the new cycle of the structured dialogue "Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe – Ready for Life, Ready for Society".

ENERGY

The Presidency will give priority to actively taking up the initiatives related to the Energy Union, namely: the review of the Energy Labelling Directive; the anticipated review of the Security of Gas Supply Regulation; and the review of the Decision to set up an information exchange mechanism for intergovernmental agreements. Further, the Presidency aims at giving political guidance for the legislative proposals on Electricity Market Design, expected by the end of 2016. The Netherlands will also address other initiatives, which are expected to be published by the

Commission in the next months, such as the LNG and Storage Strategy and the Heating and Cooling Strategy. Key energy events will be a high-level energy event on the North Sea Regional Cooperation in February, an Informal Ministerial meeting on Electricity Market Design in April and the Energy Council in June.

ENVIRONMENT

The Netherlands aims at incorporating both economic objectives and sustainable use of resources in a model for sustainable growth. The Commission's proposed initiative "Next steps for a sustainable European future" and the Circular Economy Package are seen as key elements in this regard. The Netherlands aims to advance the implementation of the European Climate and Energy Package until 2030 and make concrete progress in the areas of the Emissions Trading System and new national targets for CO₂ emission reduction. The Netherlands intends to improve and simplify EU environmental legislation, in particular by promoting the British-Dutch-German "Make It Work" initiative. Other important issues will be the amendment of the Directive on the reduction of national

emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants, the fitness check of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the preparations for the next session of the assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

FOREIGN AND DEFENCE POLICY

The foreign policy agenda of the Dutch Presidency is determined by current international developments, such as the refugee crisis and the situation in Eastern Europe. The Netherlands will focus on strengthening the link between internal and external policies and on the effective use of the EU's instruments to contribute to a "safer, more just and future-proof world". The promotion of human rights worldwide (including the link between business and human rights) and the strengthening of the Common Foreign and Security Policy will feature prominently on the agenda. The Netherlands will adopt an integrated approach to complex issues such as migration, cyber security and terrorism. Within the defence field, the Netherlands will support the development of an integrated European Strategic Framework for Security Sector Reform.



>> POLICY FIELDS

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Based on the EU-Turkey Action Plan and the results of the Valetta Summit, the Dutch Presidency will take forward the implementation of the European Agenda on Migration, the Relocation Mechanism and a European list of safe countries of origin in order to address challenges caused by the refugee crisis. Other priorities of the Presidency will be the implementation of the Internal Security Strategy 2015-2020, the proposal to amend the framework decision on terrorism, improved rules on firearms and a proposal on combating fraud and counterfeiting on non-cash means of payment. The Netherlands will also draw attention to cyber security, combating human trafficking and promoting victims' rights.

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AND HEALTH POLICIES

Enhancing the free movement of workers will be one of the focal points of the Dutch Presidency. It will support the actions of the Commission in the field of social dumping as well as its efforts to avoid a "brain drain" by revising the Posting of Workers Directive. The Netherlands

will continue discussions on applying the Directive on Gender Equality in other settings than the workplace as well as on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies. Other priorities include combatting work-related cancer through an amendment of the Carcinogens Directive and improving the quality of foodstuffs via a common approach at EU level. The Presidency will also work towards the improvement of Member States' knowledge sharing on poverty reduction.

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

During the Dutch Presidency, the European trade agenda will be dominated by the negotiations on the EU's bilateral free trade agreements with the US (TTIP), South American countries and a number of Asian countries, the follow-up to the 10th Ministerial WTO Conference and the EU Regulations on trade in conflict minerals and on torture instruments. Key agenda items will include international corporate social responsibility and the enhancement of sustainability of global value chains. With respect to development, migration and the

implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will be the main issues of the Presidency. It also intends to increase monitoring and accountability in policy fields, such as poverty reduction and inclusive growth, gender equality, institutions and the rule of law as well as climate change, oceans and biodiversity.

TRANSPORT AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The key transport issues of the Dutch Presidency will be the Fourth Railway Package and the Aviation Package. The Netherlands will strive for the conclusion of negotiations on the proposed regulation on market access to port services. Further, the Council plans to make progress towards European harmonisation in the area of intelligent transport systems (ITS) and self-driving vehicles. With regard to telecommunications, the Presidency will try to push forward the revision of the telecoms regulatory framework, promote a free and open internet, review the wholesale market for roaming and the use of the 700MHz spectrum band. In addition, the Netherlands will try to conclude talks on the Directive concerning the accessibility of government websites during its Presidency.



FURTHER INFORMATION

GOVERNMENT OF
THE NETHERLANDS
[Communique of the Netherlands-
Slovakia-Malta Presidency Trio](#)

DUTCHNEWS.NL
[Dutch face 'tough task' as EU
president: foreign policy chief](#)

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[Dutch diplomat: 'Is there a
mini-Schengen plan? No'](#)

EUWATCHER
[Looking ahead: the Dutch
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[Dutch face „tough task“ as EU
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FINANCIAL TIMES
[Refugee influx threatens fall of EU,
warns Dutch PM](#)

REUTERS
[EU's Eastern members must do more
to stem migrant inflows - Dutch PM](#)

TELECOM PAPER
[Dutch presidency prepares
EU plans for 700 MHz band](#)

THE GUARDIAN
[Netherlands plans to rein in tax
avoidance during EU presidency](#)

THE WONK (FTI CONSULTING)
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