



Rijksoverheid



## ***Our vision of Europe***

### *Opinions, ideas and recommendations*

#### Topics

- Values and rights, rule of law, security
- A stronger economy, social justice and jobs
- European democracy
- Digital transformation
- Education, culture, youth and sport

3 December 2021

This document is a translation of the report entitled 'Onze kijk op Europa; meningen, ideeën en aanbevelingen', the Dutch-language version of which was published on 3 December 2021 at [www.kijkopeuropa.nl](http://www.kijkopeuropa.nl). This translation is a simplified version in which the original layout (illustrations and other stylistic elements) has been removed for translation purposes.

## ***Our vision of ...***

### *Report summary: all recommendations one by one*

Through the citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe', we have gathered the opinions and ideas of Dutch citizens on the future of Europe. This has led to the following recommendations being made to the European Union on the first five topics.

### ***Values and rights, rule of law, security***

It is important that the EU protects the rule of law. At the same time, Dutch citizens think that account should be taken of the different traditions and cultures within Europe. While cooperation within the EU can have a number of different benefits, it should bring added value for all stakeholders. This also applies to the sharing of security information. Sharing everything with everyone would soon make cooperation rather inefficient..

1. Ensure that everyone can feel free and safe
2. Enlarge the EU only if it brings added value
3. Work together, in particular to combat international crime and terrorism

### ***A stronger economy, social justice and jobs***

The Dutch see many opportunities for strengthening Europe's economy. However, it is not always possible to compare one country with another. In particular, the tax system should be fairer and clearer. And we, as Europe, should focus more on our strengths, such as quality and diversity. In that context, EU member states can work together to ensure equal opportunities on the European labour market.

1. Take account of similarities and differences
2. Play to Europe's strengths
3. Develop a tax system that is fair and clear
4. Ensure that no-one is left behind

### ***European democracy***

While the Dutch do not need to know every single thing about the EU, they do want more transparency and understanding. For example, the perspectives of other EU member states can help paint a broader picture. In addition, the Dutch believe that the EU should engage in dialogue with citizens more often, and then preferably on an ongoing basis. It is important not only to take account of different interests, but also to ensure that decisions are taken more quickly than at present.

1. Provide a broader perspective on Europe
2. Find new and ongoing ways in which to listen to citizens
3. Be clearer and more transparent about decisions
4. Ensure that problems can be resolved more quickly

### ***Digital transformation***

Society is becoming increasingly dependent on the internet, and Big Tech is becoming more and more powerful. This is sometimes a source of concern for Dutch people. It would therefore be helpful if the EU could draw up European (privacy) rules and standards. Those rules and standards should then be

comprehensible and workable for everyone. Dutch people prefer to get support and information from their national government, in their own language.

1. Ensure a fast, secure and stable internet connection everywhere
2. Lay down clear rules and standards for internet companies
3. Combine privacy rules with practical implementation and explanation

### ***Education, culture, youth and sport***

Young people studying abroad could learn more about their host country than they do at present. And countries with lower levels of knowledge should not let all their talent go abroad in a brain drain. Dutch people see topics such as culture and unethical practices in sport as a matter more for the member states themselves. And they place a high value on citizens being able to communicate in their own national languages. In general, and above all else, everyone in Europe should feel free to be themselves.

1. Do encourage students to study abroad but go about it sensibly
2. Leave matters such as culture and sport primarily to the member states
3. Ensure that Europeans get to know and respect one another better

## ***Introduction***

Between 1 September and mid-November, the citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe' enabled all Dutch people to share their opinions and ideas on the future of Europe. The Netherlands is putting the recommendations that came out of this dialogue, together with the opinions and ideas gathered, to the European Union (EU). This report focuses on the first five topics. The other four topics will be addressed in a follow-up report at the beginning of 2022.

### ***About 'Visions of Europe'***

The EU wants to know what its inhabitants think about Europe. The EU is therefore organising the Conference on the Future of Europe. The opinions and ideas of inhabitants throughout the EU will eventually feed into the future plans for Europe. As part of that Conference, the Netherlands is organising the national citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe'.

'Visions of Europe' was launched on 1 September with the online gathering of opinions and ideas by means of a survey involving a representative panel. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the initial insights gained from the panel survey and formulate specific recommendations, we organised topic-based dialogues online. The dialogues were open to anyone who wanted to get involved. We also criss-crossed the country to talk to young people and other (harder-to-reach) groups.

### **From schoolgoers, students in senior secondary vocational education (MBO) and university students to farmers, migrants and the Minister himself.**

In October and November, a total of eight online topic-based dialogues took place with an average of 30 participants at each meeting. We also organised one online topic-based dialogue and seven on-site topic-based dialogues with various groups of Dutch people. For example, we talked to the Turkish community in Schiedam and were hosted by volunteers from the Piëzo Foundation in Zoetermeer. There, we were also joined by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Knapen. The Minister discussed the dialogue and the opinions on the future of Europe with the participants. Finally, we organised six meetings with various groups of young people. For example, we were hosted by a secondary school in Helmond, an MBO institute in Doetinchem and the University of Leiden.

*'I'm always happy to speak my mind at the water cooler. That's why I felt I had to get involved in this.'*

Participant in a topic-based dialogue

### ***About this report***

Based on the opinions and ideas we have gathered over the past few months, the EU has been presented with recommendations from Dutch people. The conversations which took place between Dutch people gave rise to interesting discussions and innovative ideas. Suggestions were also made through the panel survey and open research. Some of those ideas are included in this report. The content of this report thus reflects the voice of the Netherlands: our vision of Europe.

Of course, just as there are differences between European countries and citizens, we in the Netherlands do not always see eye to eye with one another. But it is precisely those differences that are worth so much and an important feature of a democracy. The recommendations stem from the most prevalent opinions and ideas voiced by participants in 'Visions of Europe'. We also describe the concerns, thoughts and feelings which are less common, but struck us during the dialogues and in the online research.

*'It was great to be able to discuss things with people with opposing views (for and against) in small groups. Very different from the way in which things are often discussed on social media.'*

Participant in a topic-based dialogue

Nine topics have been identified for the Conference on the Future of Europe. Those topics are also at the heart of the Dutch citizens' dialogue 'Visions of Europe'. In October, we published an interim report containing initial insights and follow-up questions based on the panel survey. In the second report, we describe the opinions, ideas and recommendations on the first five topics for the Conference Plenary in December. The next report, covering the remaining four topics, will be published in mid-January.

#### **Current report - December 2021**

- Values and rights, rule of law, security
- A stronger economy, social justice and jobs
- European democracy
- Digital transformation
- Education, culture, youth and sport

#### **Next report - January 2022**

- Climate change and environment
- Migration
- Health
- EU in the world

#### ***What happens next?***

The Conference on the Future of Europe brings together the ideas, opinions and recommendations of all the EU's inhabitants. The meetings will discuss not only the results of all the national citizens' dialogues, but also the outcome of other initiatives from the Conference. For example, there are also European Citizens' Panels, and all EU citizens (including Dutch citizens) can access a European Digital Platform.

*'It's good that the EU is taking this initiative. I also hope that something will actually be done with the results.'*

Participant in a topic-based dialogue

The Conference will close in the spring of 2022. The Netherlands will then draw up a final report on the citizens' dialogue: a compilation of this report and the next report (covering the remaining topics). The Conference will produce recommendations for its Presidency: the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. They have committed to explore ways in which to follow up on the recommendations. For the Netherlands Government, the results also constitute a valuable contribution in terms of shaping the country's EU policy.

The process in the run-up to the spring of 2022 can be summarised as follows:

#### ***Timeline***

##### **Visions of Europe**

1 Sept	12 Oct	22/23 Oct	15 Nov	17/18 Dec	21/22 Jan	22/24 Apr		
Gathering ideas online								
Topic-based dialogues								
		Interim results (interim report)		Interim report on the topics of economy and democracy	Interim report on the topics of climate and EU in the world	'Our vision of Europe' final report		
		↓		↓	↓	↓		
		Conference meeting		Conference meeting	Conference meeting	End of Conference	→	Recommendations for Presidents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Parliament</li> <li>• European Commission</li> <li>• Council of Ministers</li> </ul>
				↑	↑	↑		
More opinions and ideas on the future of Europe:								
Citizens' dialogues				European Citizens' Panels		European Digital Platform (incl. for Dutch citizens)		

### *Structure of this report*

This report focuses on five topics. For each of the topics we describe the following:

- Recommendations based on all strands of the citizens' dialogue
- Impressions of the opinions, ideas and discussions raised in the (online and physical) topic-based dialogues and suggestions from the online research, in words and images.

A statement of accountability appears at the end of the report.

## ***Values and rights, rule of law, security***

The EU monitors the rule of law in all EU countries, and seeks to stem inequality in the EU. It also strives to protect all Europeans from terrorism and crime. To achieve this, the EU adopts measures and rules, and EU countries work closely together.

How does the Netherlands view this?

### ***Recommendations - Our view on security and the rule of law***

**68 % of Dutch people find security and the rule of law important and think that the EU should tackle these issues.**

#### **1. Make sure that everyone can feel free and safe**

78 % of Dutch people think it's important for the EU to protect the rule of law and our fundamental rights and freedoms. We also find the protection of consumer rights important: a large majority are happy that the EU makes manufacturers put the same information on packaging in all countries. Many Dutch people also think, however, that the EU should take account of differences in traditions and (governance) cultures in Europe. Also because otherwise it is difficult to work together efficiently. Above all, we think it's important for everyone in Europe to feel free and safe. This includes having a roof over your head, and access to education and care. As well as knowing that products in European shops are always safe.

#### **2. Only expand the EU if enlargement brings added value**

44% of Dutch people think that the EU should not take in more countries. 25%, on the other hand, are in favour of enlargement. The existing member states already have their differences as it is. Many Dutch people think that we should sort this out first. And, if new countries do join, they must also genuinely be able to meet our conditions. Both now and in the future. A lot of Dutch people think enlargement should also bring added value for the existing member states. What's more we think that there are also other ways of nations working together on security and stability. For example, we are sometimes worried about Russia's influence on countries on the EU's eastern border. It is important for the EU to address this.

*'Enlargement should not be about costs and benefits, but about a vision of stability.'*

#### **3. Working together above all to fight international crime and terrorism**

68 % of Dutch people think that EU countries' security services should share their information with each other. But we also think it's important for countries to retain the right to decide what information they do/do not want to share. Sharing everything with everyone would soon make cooperation rather inefficient. And now that the EU is so big, we must remain critical when deciding when it is/is not appropriate to share sensitive information. We want to remain confident that our privacy is being protected. We think that most of all it makes sense to work together in fighting serious and international crime such as cybercrime, drug trafficking and terrorism.

*'If you drive through a red light in the Netherlands, they really don't need to know about it in Spain.'*

### **Discussions and ideas online and in person**

*'When you punish a country that doesn't follow the rules, it's the poorest people in that country who are the first to suffer. That is why I think talking is better than doling out punishments.'*

*'Let's first make sure the current club is stable. And only then start thinking about enlarging.'*

*'We can also be critical of our own rule of law. That is not perfect either.'*

*IDEA: 'Set strict rules on integrity for politicians throughout Europe to prevent them from being too easily influenced.'*

*IDEA: 'Increase cooperation between the police and the judiciary in EU countries.'*

### **MBO college students in Doetinchem: 'If you want to be in the EU you must obey the rules'**

At *Graafschap College* in Doetinchem about 20 nursing students discussed what they consider the biggest benefits of the EU: the free market, a common currency - the euro - and that, as a European, you can easily live and work in other EU countries. 'And that EU countries can support each other. Together you're stronger', said one of the students. The importance of rules was also discussed. If countries don't obey the rules, it is often difficult to punish them severely. According to the students, this could be made a little easier. One of the students mentioned the deterrent effect. 'If penalties are severe, other countries also see what can happen if you don't play by the rules.'

### **The Indo-Surinamese in Utrecht: 'Trust in the rule of law is sometimes lacking'**

*Stichting Asha* is an Indo-Surinamese voluntary organisation in Utrecht. One discussion participants had in the topic-based dialogue was the importance of citizens' rights: the right to a roof over your head, but also, for example, the right not to be discriminated against. The volunteers who took part said that there should be rules to protect the rights of all European citizens. Right now, it is not always clear what is decided in the Netherlands and what is decided at European level. That sometimes makes it difficult to have trust in public authorities. Also because now and again the public authorities do get it wrong. 'You could say that the state ought to defend me, but sometimes they mess up, like in the child benefits scandal', said one of the participants. 'The EU should see to it that the rules are actually respected,' said another.

## ***A stronger economy, social justice and jobs***

Small- and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the European economy. The EU therefore wants EU countries to work together on recovery plans so that we can emerge economically stronger from the pandemic. In the long term, the EU's goal is to make the European economy healthier, greener and more digital. How does the Netherlands view this?

### ***Recommendations - Our vision of the economy and jobs***

**61 % of Dutch people find the economy and jobs important and think that the EU should deal with these issues.**

#### **1. Take account of similarities and differences**

71 % of Dutch people think that the EU should make sure that businesses work together more to make the European economy stronger. But only a few of them think that more EU money should go to businesses. Above all, we think cooperation could be more efficient. Different companies are investing in the same new technology, sometimes also with public money. If we had a European vision of the economy, we could spend that money more efficiently. Of course, the differences between countries should still be taken into account.

*'The agricultural sector in the Netherlands is so modern. It 's not really comparable to agriculture in other countries.'*

#### **2. Play to Europe's strengths**

Dutch people believe that there are many opportunities for strengthening Europe's economy, but that choices have to be made. That is why we think that the EU should mainly focus on playing to its strengths. We think, for example, that Europe is good at digitalisation, sustainability and infrastructure. And, perhaps more importantly: quality and diversity are synonymous with Europe. It is precisely because we are a diverse continent, with different opinions and ideas, that we should tap into much more than the economic benefits. That is how Europe can set itself apart from the Chinese economy, for instance.

#### **3. Develop a tax system that is fair and clear**

82 % of Dutch people think that EU countries should work together to make sure that all businesses in the EU pay their fair share of taxes. Including the very big companies. Some of them move to other countries just because they can pay less tax there. The EU should do something about this, for instance, have a minimum rate for all countries. On the other hand, we think that taxation is a matter for individual countries, which have their own objectives and circumstances. All in all, we find taxation a complicated issue. And that is why we would like to see a better tax system that is fair and clear for everyone in Europe.

*'Cucumbers should be straight everywhere, but tax rules can differ. Isn't that crazy?'*

#### **4. Ensure that no-one is left behind**

71 % of Dutch people think that the EU should help create more jobs. We think that certain groups deserve special attention, such as young people and people who are not in the labour market. That could be done through grants for companies, but also by giving employers and workers extra support. We are thinking, for instance, of advice or simply very practical things. Sometimes such support can be more efficiently organised from within the EU, and sometimes it is more a matter for the member states

themselves. EU countries should ultimately ensure equal opportunities on the European labour market together.

### **Discussions and ideas online and in person**

*'Speed up automation in Europe so that goods now coming in from China are made here again.'*

*'Take the bitcoin revolution and other cryptocurrencies seriously. People dealing in them are dismissed as tax evaders, even though blockchain technologies like this are the future.'*

*'Shareholders are not the only stakeholders in the European economy. You can't do anything without workers.'*

*'Europe needs to do more for people with disabilities. At the moment, it's much too hard for them to find suitable jobs.'*

*'Lots of European rules are complicated and constantly changing. That makes it hard for businesses to innovate.'*

*'When I was having building work done for my company, my local contractor could have easily got started on the job much sooner. But first I had to put the contract out for European tender. Such a rigmarole.'*

### **Participants in the online dialogue: 'What do we think of big business?'**

The increasing power of big business was discussed at one of the topic-based dialogues. Some participants would like to see the EU taking a harder line on this - because businesses sometimes make massive profits but pay little tax on them thanks to clever tax constructs. Other participants pointed to the 'bigger picture': these companies create lots of jobs and are good for the national economy. 'You shouldn't chase them away', someone said. 'EU countries should put their heads together on this', said another. 'Big companies can play countries off against each other. That is why we, as the EU, must form a more united front.'

### **Nature-inclusive farmers: 'Set targets instead of limits'**

*BoerenNatuur* is an association of agricultural collectives. One of the things discussed by a group of members was European regulations for farmers. On the one hand, they think that the EU is a good thing, such as making it easy to export to other countries. On the other hand, they think that policy could often be clearer. 'But we are increasingly all on the same page,' someone said. In particular, there is still room for improvement in procedures: they are often still very bureaucratic and time-consuming. One of the participants said that regulations should, above all, not be too detailed. 'Set clear targets instead, such as clean water. Then we can decide for ourselves how wide the sluices should be.'

## ***European democracy***

The EU encourages Europeans to vote and also wants to involve EU citizens in European decision-making and policy outside the electoral period. The EU is also taking initiatives to strengthen democracy, such as an action plan focusing on free and fair elections and a free press. How does the Netherlands view this?

### ***Recommendations - Our vision of European democracy***

**60 % of Dutch citizens find European democracy an important topic and think that the EU should play its part.**

#### **1 Give a broader view of Europe**

Dutch people have noticed that when the media cover Europe, it is often when there's a crisis. We don't hear much about the daily decisions. As citizens, we do not need to know everything, but getting a clearer overall picture would help us form sound opinions. It would be interesting, for instance, to hear other countries' views on the EU more often. The media and education can play an important role here. That said, the media must still be able to make their own choices, as Dutch people place a high value on press freedom in our democracy.

*'We often only hear about the EU when there's a crisis. This is stoking negative perceptions of Europe.'*

#### **2 Find new and ongoing ways of listening to citizens**

51 % of Dutch people think the EU is not sufficiently in touch with society. To improve this, the EU should engage in dialogue with citizens more often, and preferably on an ongoing basis. That's why Dutch people find the Conference on the Future of Europe a good initiative. Referendums can also be a valuable tool, but Dutch people have differing views on this. Some topics may require specialist knowledge. Talking to citizens should never be a box-ticking exercise. We find it important that we are taken seriously.

#### **3 Be clearer and more transparent about decisions**

Dutch people sometimes find Europe very complicated. People don't have the same level of background knowledge. The EU should take this into account more. We want the EU to become more transparent and for it to be easier to keep up with developments. The Netherlands government also has a role to play here. Many Dutch people are interested in European decisions but find the official channels too difficult to access or too complicated. Also, everyone has different interests and needs. So you should also be able to choose which topics you wish to hear more about. Young people are often interested in Europe, but don't see much about it on their social media accounts, for instance.

*'While, on holiday in Hungary I saw a large notice near a newly planted wood: 'Made possible by the EU.' I'm sceptical about Europe, but actually felt some pride then.'*

#### **4 Solve problems more quickly**

Dutch people find it very difficult to understand how European democracy works, but EU decision-making does often seem to be very slow. In European elections we mostly see alliances between national parties. Perhaps there are other ways of addressing European interests? Roughly one third of Dutch people think that it should be possible to vote for foreign candidates in the European Parliament elections. Roughly the same number of Dutch people disagree. The most important thing is to take sufficient account of different interests. And solve problems more quickly than we currently do.

*'In elections I like to be able to identify with someone and know what he or she stands for. The person doesn't need to be Dutch.'*

#### **Discussions and ideas online and in person**

*'Get rid of countries' veto rights. The majority should decide.'*

*'Set up citizens' focus groups for important decisions, perhaps even on a mandatory or semi-mandatory basis, like juries in the US.'*

*'Ensure that EU politicians and civil servants regularly touch base with the 'grassroots' and do not just stay in the Brussels bubble.'*

*IDEA: 'I think every news bulletin should devote a few minutes to European matters. Or why not start a daily or weekly news programme about Europe?'*

*IDEA: 'Maybe European politicians should appear more on TV shows.'*

*'As a young person I hardly ever read anything about Europe. I'm curious about Europe but don't want to spend much time on it.'*

#### **Young people from 'Coalitie-Y' in Utrecht: Discussion about holding referendums**

Members of Coalitie-Y - a group of youth organisations - held a lively discussion on the use of referendums. Opponents mentioned the danger of simple 'yes' or 'no' questions, since the issues are often much more complex. One of the participants said: 'We can vote for the EU and stand as candidates. With referendums you weaken those options.' Supporters of referendums said it was a good thing to know what citizens think: this can provide guidance. Referendums could also contribute to general awareness about the EU: what proposals are on the agenda and what choices should be made.

#### **Civil society volunteers: 'Countries need to understand each other better.'**

The Piëzo Foundation in Zoetermeer brings together volunteers who contribute to society in different ways. The participants in the topic-based dialogue expressed their concern about the growing divide in Europe. That applies to countries' views on the LGBTIQ community, for instance. When countries do not understand each other's views, cooperation is difficult. 'All the more reason to get to know each other better', said one participant. 'We simply don't know nowadays how people are thinking in other countries. We don't understand each other's cultures and backgrounds sufficiently. That's necessary if we are to take good decisions together.'

## **Digital transformation**

In our online world increasingly high demands are being set for internet connections, safety and privacy. The EU feels some responsibility in this area and is committed to ensuring that no-one is left behind in the digital society. The EU is also investing in digital solutions to social issues. How does the Netherlands view this?

### **Recommendations - Our vision of the online world**

**45 % of Dutch citizens see the online world as an important issue and one that the EU should address.**

#### **1 Ensure a fast, secure and stable internet connection everywhere**

61 % of Dutch people think the EU should ensure that everyone in Europe has access to a fast and stable internet connection. We are all aware that the internet is playing an ever-increasing role in our lives. Our children are growing up with digital education. Both national and international communication are increasingly online. The internet's considerable autonomy sometimes worries us. As a result, many Dutch people think the EU should invest in this area, providing the investment is efficient. Protection against online crime is, in our view, the most important issue to be tackled at European level. However, it is also good to focus on combating internet crime at national level.

*'If I imagine a cyber attack on our flood defences, I feel very vulnerable.'*

#### **2 Lay down clear rules and standards for internet companies**

75 % of Dutch people think the EU should ensure that internet purchases are equally secure in all EU countries. Almost all of us are buying more things abroad and share sensitive data when doing so, which sometimes feels unsafe. It's hard to know which websites you can trust. It would be good for the EU to draw up European privacy rules and standards that everyone could understand. The power of large internet companies often worries us too. We feel we have some responsibility ourselves for handling our data sensibly, though we also think the EU can play a role in this area. EU countries need to work together to ensure that companies such as Google and Facebook do not get too much power.

*'There's not much we can do as a small country against a 'global player' like Facebook.'*

#### **3 Combine privacy rules with practical implementation and explanation**

Following the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Dutch citizens know that all countries must comply with the same privacy laws and regulations. We are pleased we can count on this legislation, since our privacy is important to us. Some Dutch people find the rules sometimes go too far or are illogical. Besides, the legislation can generate a lot of work for employers. We also think that more attention needs to be paid to the practical implementation of the privacy legislation, with more support and guidance for both citizens and businesses. Here we think the main role is for the member states. Problems or questions relating to privacy are best addressed with our national authorities and in our own language.

### **Discussions and ideas online and in person**

*IDEA: 'Set tougher requirements for programmers and businesses and ban insecure programming languages.'*

*'Provide free European antivirus software to create a European firewall.'*

*'When I cross the border into Germany my mobile phone suddenly loses its coverage. Surely that shouldn't happen any more?'*

*'With our iPhones we can be tracked anywhere. That's also our own fault.'*

*'It's not convenient to have to fill in a different type of privacy form in each country.'*

*IDEA: 'Establish European internet policing. That's an obvious area for EU action.'*

### **Participants in the online dialogue: 'Good internet access everywhere is in our own interest'**

There was an interesting discussion in one of the topic-based dialogues on the EU's role in the online world. All the participants agreed that it was important to have good internet connections throughout Europe. But should this be a matter for the EU? Several participants felt this was mainly a task for individual Member States. Another participant pointed out that good and stable internet connections abroad would also benefit the Netherlands: 'We earn billions in trade with other EU countries. So it's in our own interest that these countries operate well.'

### **School pupils in Helmond: 'Same rules and penalties for internet criminals'**

In the Dr. Knippenbergcollege in Helmond, 15- and 16-year-old pupils discussed the problem of online crime. They regularly hear about this in the news: for example, that there's been a data breach in a company, or that a country such as Russia or China is trying to steal data. As internet criminals often work across borders, they find it logical for European countries to cooperate on this. That means setting rules, but also penalties, they think. 'If hackers from Russia are trying to invade our space, the EU must retaliate.'

## ***Education, culture, youth and sport***

EU countries are responsible themselves for the areas of education, culture, youth and sport. The EU can and does provide support by, for example, promoting quality education and multilingualism, protecting cultural heritage and supporting cultural and sporting sectors. How does the Netherlands view this?

### ***Recommendations — Our vision of education, culture, youth and sport***

**45 % of Dutch people consider education an important issue and think that the EU should deal with these issues. For youth, culture and sport, the figures are 39 %, 23 % and 19 % respectively.**

#### **1 Do encourage students to study abroad but go about it sensibly**

Many Dutch people consider that studying abroad has a positive impact on young people. It contributes to personal development. What's more, studying abroad can help Europeans to better understand each other. It can also contribute to better integration. Many Dutch people therefore consider it a good thing that there is an Erasmus programme that encourages study abroad. But we are also pleased that the EU is keeping a critical eye on this. In practice, for example, international students tend to stick together and do not always learn much about the country in which they are studying. The EU also needs to avoid a situation in which countries with lower levels of knowledge end up with a brain drain with all their best talent studying abroad.

*'Vocational-level exchange programmes should also be developed.'*

#### **2 Leave issues such as culture and sport to the Member States**

58 % of Dutch people think that the EU should do more to protect Europe's cultural heritage. Like the temples in Greece, for example. On the other hand, we think that local culture is primarily the responsibility of the countries themselves. The same applies, for example, to problems in sport. This is an important issue, but it cannot be one of the EU's core tasks. Basically, Europe needs to prioritise and a lot of money is needed for other things. Sometimes financial contributions are what's needed, but there are other ways of working together too, for example by sharing knowledge and ideas.

*'Protection of culture is a matter for the countries themselves. But if world heritage is being neglected, then I definitely think the EU should intervene.'*

#### **3 Ensure that Europeans get to know each other better and respect each other more**

Dutch people like it when other Europeans speak English well. It makes life easier when we are abroad. And if, for example, we want to communicate with migrant workers in the Netherlands. At the same time, many Dutch people consider it very important that we continue to speak and value our own language. We also want to respect other differences within Europe. Whether it is culture, education or sport, everyone should feel free to be themselves. Differences can sometimes be a source of conflict, but they are also precisely what makes Europe such a rich continent. Many Dutch people therefore think that countries should take the time to become familiar with each other's customs and ideas.

*'I see the EU as a group of friends. We respect our differences and I can appeal to them for help if I need to.'*

### **Discussions and ideas online and in person**

*IDEA: 'Alongside the local curriculum, introduce a shared European curriculum at all levels of education.'*

*IDEA: 'In addition to a Capital of Culture, there should also be an educational, youth and sports capital (or country) each year.'*

*'What connects us in the EU is precisely the fact that we all have our own country's culture. And so we are not defined by a single culture.'*

*'Instead of highlighting the negative things, we should try to promote sport more.'*

*'I am integrated here, I pay taxes, but I am and remain Latin American. I cherish my language, music and food. These are not issues for Europe.'*

*'There is too much talk about the economy in Europe. And too little about well-being.'*

### **Students at the University of Leiden: 'Language is important, but must remain a free choice'**

At the University of Leiden, history students discussed this. They consider it important for people to speak more than one language. For them, knowing more languages is fantastic for one's personal development, good for trade and for political relations in the EU. They think that languages should be offered at school but should not be made compulsory. Similarly, the students consider that a second language does not necessarily have to be a European language. 'If you live in Eastern Europe and choose to learn Russian, then you're entitled to', said one of the participants.

### **Turkish community in Schiedam: 'Ensure fair job opportunities for all young people'**

At Stichting Hakder in Schiedam, one of the things the local Turkish community spoke about was the importance of fair employment opportunities for everyone. All those present agreed that the EU should require companies to offer traineeships or jobs to young people with few opportunities. They reported that young migrants in particular have difficulties finding traineeships and jobs. 'Some of them do not even go to the doctor because they are afraid that they will have to pay for it themselves. So they are very unlikely to apply for a traineeship or a job', one of the participants said. 'Businesses need to do more about this and the EU should encourage that.'

## ***Statement of accountability***

Visions of Europe is made up of different, interlinked dialogue formats that gather Dutch citizens' views and ideas on the future of Europe and the EU. This section provides evidence of the way in which the interlinked dialogue formats comply with the guidelines applicable to national Citizens' Panels in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

### ***Design of interlinked dialogue formats***

The following forms of dialogue have been used:

#### **1. Panel survey**

Survey of a representative cross-section of the Dutch population.

#### **2. In-depth online topic-based dialogues**

Dialogues in which the results of the first interim report 'Our vision of Europe: initial insights and follow-up questions (8 October 2021)' are explored more with a group of Dutch people.

#### **3. Dialogues with specific groups**

Meetings with Dutch people who are not accustomed to participating in (online) surveys and panels.

#### **4. Dialogues with young people**

Meetings focusing on the European topics that are most relevant to young people.

#### **5. Online open research: Questionnaire and 'Swipe to the future'**

The panel survey questionnaire could also be completed by all Dutch nationals, including those resident abroad. This questionnaire was open from 1 September 2021 to 14 November 2021. In addition, during the same period, every Dutch person was able to participate through the 'Swipe to the future' tool, an online tool with 20 statements.

### ***1 Panel survey***

The Dutch citizens' dialogue Visions of Europe (Kijk op Europa) was launched on 1 September 2021 with a panel survey. In this statement of accountability we briefly describe the design and implementation of this panel study.

#### ***Goal and target population***

Visions of Europe was launched with an online questionnaire exploring how Dutch people feel about the future of Europe. The questionnaire was presented to a representative panel and made accessible to all Dutch people (including those living abroad). In addition, the online tool 'Swipe to the future', which featured 20 statements that people could give their views on, was also available to everyone. The results of the panel survey provided input for the various topic-based dialogues in the follow-up to the Visions of Europe citizen dialogue.

The target population for the panel survey consists of all Dutch citizens aged 18 or over and registered (from the time the field work began) as Dutch residents in the municipal Personal Records Database. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), on 1 January 2021 this target group numbered 14 million 190 874 people. The lower limit of 18 years is in line with the voting age. This is the population identified for the panel survey.

### *Field work*

To obtain a statistical picture of ‘the Dutch’, a survey was conducted of a nationwide panel of over 100 000 members (ISO-certified, Research Keurmerk group, Dutch Market Research Association). These members have all registered for the survey panel and regularly give their opinions on a range of topics. In addition to their personal motivation for providing input, they are also paid for filling in the surveys. Various scientific studies have shown that respondents who receive financial compensation for filling in surveys do not give significantly different answers from those who do not (source: Does use of survey incentives degrade data quality? Cole, J. S., Sarraf, S. A., Wang, X., 2015).

Field work started on 11 August 2021 and ended on 19 September 2021. A single data-collection method was used: internet research. The members of the survey panel each received an email containing a personalised link to the online questionnaire. After two weeks the panel participants received a reminder email. Invitations to participate were sent in batches and in stratified form (with due regard to equal distribution among subpopulations) until the required number of respondents had been reached.

### *Sampling and distribution*

The guiding principle for the study’s design was that a minimum of 3 600 respondents would have to participate in order to achieve good statistical reliability. This number also provided a good distribution across various background characteristics in the population. Dutch people do not come in one shape or size. For this reason the study ensured in advance that the sample was properly distributed to factor in a number of characteristics. The Netherlands is a relatively small country, but regional opinions can differ. A person’s attitude to the relative importance they attach to a topic may (also) be determined by where they live. For example, people who live in rural areas may feel differently about security to urban dwellers. In addition, studies by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) have shown that more educated people generally support the EU more than less educated people, and that young people are more often pro-EU than older people (source: ‘Wat willen Nederlanders van de Europese Unie?’ (What do the Dutch want from the European Union? Netherlands Institute for Social Research, The Hague, 2019).

To address this, we assigned quotas in advance across the following characteristics, to ensure a representative sample distribution: (1) region (using COROP regions), (2) age and (3) level of education. [note: a COROP region is a division of the Netherlands used for statistical purposes.] In addition, the sample reflects the following background characteristics: sex, origin, primary day-to-day activity and political leanings.

The COROP regions were developed using the nodal principle (population centres which provide services or which serve a regional function) on the basis of commuter flows. Here and there, the nodal principle has been abandoned in favour of provincial boundaries. After a redrawing of municipal boundaries crossed the COROP boundaries, these regions were adjusted (source: CBS). Within the COROP regions, we ensure a good distribution across the following age groups: 18-34; 35-54; 55-75 and over 75.

Finally, we also ensured a representative distribution across levels of education. The sample distribution of respondents is in line with the national distribution of the highest level of education attained, which is as follows:

### Highest level of education attained

Low: primary education, pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) (years 1-3), senior secondary vocational education (MBO) (year 1)	32.1 %
Medium: senior general secondary education (HAVO) or pre-university education (VWO) (years 4-6), senior secondary vocational education (MBO) (years 2-4)	44.6 %
High: higher professional or university education	22.9 %
Unknown	0.4 %

### Response

In total, 4 086 respondents took part in the panel survey. The target of 3 600 fully completed questionnaires was met.

Response by COROP region and age group	18-34 years	35-54 years	55-75 years	75+ years
North Drenthe	11	14	17	5
South-East Drenthe	10	12	14	4
South-West Drenthe	7	10	11	3
Flevoland	29	33	28	6
North Friesland	20	22	25	8
South-East Friesland	12	13	14	3
South-West Friesland	8	11	11	4
Achterhoek	22	27	34	11
Arnhem/Nijmegen	52	53	55	15
Veluwe	44	48	51	17
South-West Gelderland	16	18	20	5
Greater Delfzijl	2	4	5	1
East Groningen	7	10	12	3
Rest of Groningen	36	26	28	8
Mid Limburg	13	17	21	7
North Limburg	17	20	23	7
South Limburg	38	40	52	17
Mid-North Brabant	34	35	35	11
North-East North Brabant	41	43	51	14

**Response by COROP region and age group**      **18-34 years**    **35-54 years**    **55-75 years**    **75+ years**

Response by COROP region and age group	18-34 years	35-54 years	55-75 years	75+ years
West North Brabant	40	47	49	15
South-East North Brabant	55	56	58	18
Greater Haarlem	13	18	18	7
Greater Alkmaar	14	19	19	6
Greater Amsterdam	116	104	88	23
Het Gooi & Vechtstreek	13	21	19	7
IJmond	12	14	15	4
Top of North Holland	22	27	30	9
Zaanstreek	11	13	12	3
North Overijssel	25	28	25	8
Twente	41	44	46	14
South-West Overijssel	10	11	12	3
Utrecht	96	100	89	27
Rest of Zeeland	16	21	23	8
Zeelandic Flanders	6	8	9	3
Greater Leiden & Bollenstreek	30	31	31	10
Greater The Hague	63	70	57	18
Delft & Westland	19	15	15	4
Greater Rijnmond	103	107	99	31
East South Holland	22	24	25	8
South-East South Holland	24	26	26	9

**Response by level of education**

Low	1 382	34 %
Medium	1 747	43 %
High	915	22 %
Unknown	42	1 %

### *Reliability and representativeness*

With 4 086 respondents, it is possible to make observations about the population with 95 % reliability and a 1.53 % margin of error. The reliability and margin of error of the results depend on the size of the sample. The larger the sample, the more reliably and/or accurately the results can be extrapolated to the population as a whole.

The reliability level is defined as 1 (100 %) minus the significance level. It is normal to assume a significance level of 5 %, which means a reliability level of 95 %. This means that, if the study were to be repeated in the same manner and under the same conditions, the results would give the same picture in 95 % of cases.

The accuracy level (expressed as the margin of error) indicates the range of values within which the actual value in the population lies or, in other words, how far the results from the sample might deviate from the results that would be obtained if the entire population were to complete the survey. A margin of error of 1.53 % means that the actual value in the total population may be up to 1.53 % higher or lower than the value in the sample. In practice, this means that, if a survey result from the sample indicates that 50 % of respondents find a particular topic important, the actual percentage may be up to 1.53 % lower or higher than 50 % (i.e. between 48.47 % and 51.53 %). A margin of error of up to 5 % is common and generally accepted in (statistical) quantitative research.

Besides reliability, the representativeness of the sample is also important. Since the invitations to participate in the survey were sent in batches and stratified, the results are representative in terms of COROP regions and age groups within each COROP region. The response is also in line with the national distribution of the highest level of education attained.

### *Other background characteristics*

The respondents in the panel survey were asked a number of extra background questions. The questions covered gender, views on the EU, origin, primary day-to-day activity and which political party they would vote for if an election were to be held now.

49 % of respondents were male, 50 % were female and 1 % preferred not to answer this question.

51 % of respondents thought it was a good thing that the Netherlands is a member of the EU, 13 % thought it was a bad thing, and 36 % saw it as neutral or did not have an opinion.

95 % of respondents were born in the Netherlands. For 89 % of respondents, both parents were born in the Netherlands. For 5 % of respondents, both parents were born abroad.

### *Respondents' current political leanings*

<b>Party</b>	<b>%</b>
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)	14 %
Party for Freedom (PVV)	13 %
Socialist Party (SP)	8 %
Democrats 66 (D66)	6 %

<b>Party</b>	<b>%</b>
Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)	6 %
Labour Party (PvdA)	6 %
Party for the Animals	4 %
GreenLeft (GroenLinks)	4 %
Christian Union	3 %
JA21	3 %
Farmer-Citizen Movement (BoerBurgerBeweging)	2 %
Forum for Democracy	2 %
Reformed Political Party (SGP)	2 %
Volt	2 %
DENK (THINK)	1 %
Van Haga Group	1 %
BIJ1	1 %
Den Haan party	0 %
Other	2 %
Blank ballot	3 %
Prefer not to say	13 %
Would not vote	5 %

*What is your main day-to-day activity at the moment?*

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>%</b>
Pupil/student	6 %
Part-time employee	16 %
Full-time employee	31 %
Self-employed	3 %
Homemaker	5 %
Jobseeker	2 %

**Occupation****%**

Volunteer	2 %
Unfit for work	6 %
Retired	27 %
Other	1 %
Prefer not to say	1 %

**Questionnaire**

The questionnaire and this report were commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and drawn up by an independent external organisation. The questionnaire has a modular structure and comprises the following sections, which correspond to the topics identified for the Conference on the Future of Europe:

- key topics and Europe's role
- climate change and the environment
- health
- the economy and jobs
- the European Union's role in the world
- security and the rule of law
- the online world
- European democracy
- migration and refugees
- education, culture, youth and sport

When developing the questionnaire, close attention was paid to the quality, reliability and validity of the phrasing of the questions. The aim was to ensure neutral, non-leading wording of questions, statements and choices. In addition, the questions were reviewed to ensure that they were written in plain language (B1 level).

The questionnaire was tested qualitatively in a face-to-face setting with test respondents belonging to the target group, to see how the questions came across to different types of respondent. The wording was adjusted wherever it proved to be too complex.

**Methods of analysis**

Two methods of analysis were used in this study:

**Univariate analysis**

In univariate analysis, descriptive statistics are used to describe variables in a study. In this study, frequencies and averages have been used.

**Bivariate analysis**

Bivariate analysis looks at the relationship between two variables, in this case the relationship between the importance of the various topics and whether or not the EU should deal with them on the one hand, and the background characteristic of age on the other. Significance testing was used to determine

whether different age groups attach different degrees of importance to a given topic, and think differently about whether or not these are topics the EU should deal with.

### *Reporting and completeness*

This report includes (visual) representations of the results of all questions put to the survey panel respondents. For some questions, respondents were able to give 'open' answers (as opposed to choosing from a set of multiple-choice answers). These open answers were then categorised and incorporated into the report. Ideas that respondents shared in the free comment fields serve as input for the various topic-based dialogues in the follow-up to the Visions of Europe citizens' dialogue.

## **2. In-depth online topic-based dialogues**

The key topics of the Conference on the Future of Europe were discussed in more depth in eight online topic-based dialogues. The aim of the dialogues was to find out *why* people think the way they do, and their underlying reasons and feelings. What concerns them and what opportunities do they see? During the dialogue sessions, participants were also given a chance to contribute suggestions and ideas about the topics. They were also able to raise issues that are not part of the Conference but that are important to them.

The topic-based dialogues took place on 12 and 14 October and on 9 and 11 November. In October, there were four online topic-based dialogues on topics in the Economy and Democracy cluster. In November, there were four online topic-based dialogues on topics in the Climate and EU in the World cluster. An average of 29 people participated in each dialogue session (231 in total). Participants were recruited from the panel members (see 1) and through social media.

## **3. Dialogues with specific groups**

We know that certain groups of Dutch people are less used to taking part in (online) surveys and panels. To gain a representative picture of the 'voice of the Netherlands' it was important to let them express their ideas and opinions too. That is why we also organised some in-person dialogues for Visions of Europe. The opinions and ideas we gathered through them have been used as one of the bases for the recommendations.

### *Target groups*

There is no clear definition of target groups which are difficult to reach. Research and experience have shown that Dutch people from **non-Western backgrounds** are significantly less likely to participate in surveys and discussions voluntarily. Since they form a large group (14 % of Dutch people), they were selected to participate in the Visions of Europe dialogue. The same weightings have been applied as for **people with low levels of literacy**. That is also a large group (2.5 million Dutch people), which partly overlaps with the group of migrants (39 %). Finally, a dialogue was conducted with a group which rarely appears in surveys and discussions, and **is critical of Europe but has a lot of professional dealings with it**. Businesses in the agricultural sector were selected to take part.

The above groups were approached through organisations they belong to, such as migrant associations, interest groups and professional organisations. Because we limited the number of dialogues to eight, we could not cover everyone. That makes the choice of participants somewhat arbitrary. When selecting participants, we also mainly looked for people who were enthusiastic about taking part and helping mobilise the grassroots, as well as at practical issues such as availability for dates and locations.

On-location dialogues were held with members of the following organisations:

- *Stichting Hakder*, Alevi community, Schiedam
- *Stichting Asha*, Hindustani community, Utrecht (2 dialogue sessions)
- *Piëzo*, civil-society organisation, Zoetermeer
- *Taal doet Meer*, literacy organisation, Utrecht
- *BoerenNatuur*, association of agricultural cooperatives
- *Marokkanen Dialoog Overvecht* (Overvecht Moroccan Dialogue), Moroccan community, Utrecht
- *Femmes for Freedom*, interest group for women from a migrant background, The Hague

A total of 110 people took part in these dialogue meetings.

#### **4. Dialogues with young people**

Young people are a priority target group for the Conference on the Future of Europe. To actively encourage their participation in the Visions of Europe citizens' dialogue, and to give the opinions and ideas of this group extra weight, five in-person dialogue meetings were organised especially for young people. A planned sixth meeting with young people had to be cancelled due to Covid restrictions.

Meetings were held at the following institutions:

- *Studievereniging Geschiedenis*, history students' association, Leiden University
- *Dr. Knippenbergcollege*, secondary school, Helmond
- *Coalitie-Y*, Socio-Economic Council (*SER*) youth association
- *Graafschap College*, MBO institute, Doetinchem
- *CSG Jan Arentsz*, STEM secondary school (*technasium*), Alkmaar

A total of 95 young people took place in the dialogue meetings.

#### ***Discussion techniques used***

The Socratic method was used for the online topic-based dialogues, the dialogues with specific groups and the dialogues with young people. This method has been used for years in the Netherlands for our 'Dialogue Day', when people across the Netherlands speak to each other about issues that concern them. In the Socratic method, the moderator applies the following principles:

- Let everyone tell their story
- Don't immediately tell a counter-story
- Treat each other with respect
- Speak for yourself ('I think' instead of 'they say')
- Ask for explanations if nothing but generalisations come up
- Don't judge, investigate opinions instead
- Allow silence if people need time to think

The dialogues follow this pattern: divergence - convergence - divergence. The starting point is that first you have to diverge (make room for individual feelings and opinions) before you can converge (discuss possible directions) and finally diverge again (e.g. gather individual recommendations). Theory and practice show that this pattern ensures a smooth dialogue.

All dialogues were led by professional facilitators.

## **5. Online open survey: Questionnaire and 'Swipe to the future'**

The panel survey questionnaire was also open to all Dutch citizens, including those resident abroad. It was open from 1 September 2021 to 14 November 2021. In addition, during the same period, every Dutch person was able to participate through the 'Swipe to the future' tool, an online tool with 20 statements.

### *Response and implementation*

In total, 1 967 respondents filled in the questionnaire and 6 968 fully completed the swipe tool. The questionnaire and swipe tool were open to all; there were no prior conditions or selection criteria for taking part. Questions in the questionnaire could be skipped (there were no mandatory questions) to maximise response. Participants answered 'I would rather not say' much more often in the questionnaire than in the representative panel survey.

The backgrounds of participants in the open questionnaire and swipe tool differed from those of the participants in the representative panel survey in a number of ways. The results of the open questionnaire and the swipe tool are not representative, unlike those of the panel survey. The results of the online open survey were used to supplement the panel survey. They give an insight into prevailing feelings and ideas in the Netherlands. The suggestions for improvement given in the free-text fields were used in the sub-topic 'Discussions and ideas online and in person'. The swipe tool was used to gain an insight into some prevailing feelings in the Netherlands. The results were taken into account when preparing the recommendations. Since representativeness is a requirement, this report only takes limited account of the results of the online open survey.

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