

Share your ideas on the Netherlands' new Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation policy

The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Liesje Schreinemacher, is currently developing a new policy document. The general policy direction is determined by the coalition agreement and current events. But the minister is also keen to gather inspiration from civil society, think tanks, researchers and the business community. This online consultation gives you the opportunity to contribute your ideas for the new policy.

The coalition agreement emphasises that global trends, shifting power dynamics and instability in the regions surrounding Europe are having an increasing impact on the Netherlands and the world at large.

- Russia's invasion of Ukraine has dramatically altered perceptions of peace and security in Europe and this in turn will affect new policy on foreign trade and development cooperation.
- The COVID-19 crisis is not yet over and its effects will still be felt in the future. Extreme poverty and inequality have increased, and are more and more concentrated in fragile states. Human rights – particularly those of women and LGBTI people – and space for civil society are under pressure. We are also seeing persistent disruptions in value chains, a factor that is contributing to the increasing inflation around the world.
- The shift towards a sustainable and digital society, including through increased integration of artificial intelligence, is well under way. These twin transitions – digitalisation/innovation and climate/sustainability – can accelerate and strengthen each other, and have the potential to transform societies and economies in the coming years.

New focal points

In response to all these developments, we need to update our foreign trade and development cooperation policy and identify new focal points. To this end, Ms Schreinemacher's new policy document will elaborate on her policy objectives, based on the priorities set out in the coalition agreement of the fourth Rutte government. It is due to be presented to parliament before the 2022 summer recess.

Inviting views from third parties (consultation) is an important way of obtaining information relevant to the drafting of the policy document. The minister is keen to engage in various ways with different target groups, stakeholders and experts, both in the Netherlands and abroad. This online consultation is a key part of that process. By answering a number of questions, you can provide your input on the new foreign trade and development cooperation policy document.

Main points of the new foreign trade and development policy

With regard to foreign trade and development cooperation, the coalition agreement identified the following main issues:

- 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 small and medium-sized enterprises (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 responsible business conduct (RBC), and will introduce national RBC 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 carefully focused. This will enable us to do more to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address 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 will work 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 national partners like the Dutch Relief Alliance. The emergency aid budget will include funds for the provision of psychosocial care.

Source: 2021-2025 coalition agreement ‘Looking out for each other, looking ahead to the future’, 15 December 2021.

The minister has said that she intends to continue the combined approach to aid and trade: *‘The way in which aid and trade can reinforce each other will be one of the integral themes of the policy document.’* – Liesje Schreinemacher, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

The policy will also respond to developments with the war in Ukraine: *‘Many Ukrainians are fleeing the ongoing Russian aggression. I am therefore making €20 million available to help provide these refugees with food, water and medical care.’* – Liesje Schreinemacher, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

Target groups for this online consultation

National and international partners in the areas of foreign trade and development cooperation, as well as other stakeholders, are invited to share their ideas and knowledge about these topics. We are particularly interested in receiving input from the following parties, in the Netherlands and abroad:

- civil society organisations, including NGOs
- internationally operating businesses and trade associations
- think tanks, scholars and researchers
- cities and regions with international ambitions
- young people
- the Dutch general public

Your response

You can give general feedback on the design of the new, comprehensive strategy and the elements that you consider most important. We would also appreciate receiving answers to the above questions, including your ideas about specific action/commitments.

Please substantiate your responses as much as possible with arguments and include sources where relevant.

Publication of responses

Responses will be published during the course of the consultation, provided the person who submitted the response gave their consent.

You can respond to this online consultation via the ‘reageren’-button, where you can find the English questions.