

GO DUTCH

Learnings from The New Zealand Initiative's
visit to the Netherlands, 22-27 June 2025

Oliver Hartwich

THE
NEW ZEALAND
INITIATIVE



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Oliver Hartwich is the Executive Director of The New Zealand Initiative. Before joining the Initiative he was a Research Fellow at the Centre for Independent Studies in Sydney, the Chief Economist at Policy Exchange in London, and an advisor in the UK House of Lords. Oliver holds a Master's degree in Economics and Business Administration and a PhD in Law from Bochum University in Germany.

ABOUT THE NEW ZEALAND INITIATIVE

The New Zealand Initiative is an independent public policy think tank supported by chief executives of major New Zealand businesses. We believe in evidence-based policy and are committed to developing policies that work for all New Zealanders.

Our mission is to help build a better, stronger New Zealand. We are taking the initiative to promote a prosperous, free and fair society with a competitive, open and dynamic economy. We develop and contribute bold ideas that will have a profound, positive, long-term impact.

© The New Zealand Initiative Ltd

Published November 2025 by

The New Zealand Initiative
PO Box 10147
Wellington 6143
New Zealand
www.nzinitiative.org.nz

Views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The New Zealand Initiative, its staff, advisors, members, directors or officers.

ISSN
2624-0092 (print)
2624-0106 (online)

Printing arranged by TBD Digital

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	
The Netherlands: a small country with a big impact	03
CHAPTER 2	
A country built on water	05
CHAPTER 3	
Depoliticising reform: the ATR model	09
CHAPTER 4	
Innovation ecosystems	11
CHAPTER 5	
Industry and innovation	15
CHAPTER 6	
A culture of follow-through and personal responsibility	18
CHAPTER 7	
Energy, security and geostrategy: the Dutch pivot	21
CHAPTER 8	
Investing without fear: FDI as an opportunity	23
CHAPTER 9	
National narrative and identity	24
CHAPTER 10	
Conclusion: What the Netherlands taught us	27
APPENDIX 1	
Members of the delegation to the Netherlands	28
APPENDIX 2	
Media mentions of our delegation	29
Endnotes	34





CHAPTER 1

THE NETHERLANDS: A SMALL COUNTRY WITH A BIG IMPACT

This study tour was The New Zealand Initiative's fourth international delegation visit since 2017, after Switzerland, Denmark and Ireland. As before, we travelled not to collect business cards but to collect ideas that work in practice. We looked for lessons that could be adapted at home in New Zealand.

The Netherlands is compact. Its population passed 18 million in 2024.¹ Its surface area is about 41,540 square kilometres, which is smaller than Canterbury's 44,508 square kilometres.²

The Netherlands' economic weight belies its size. Dutch agricultural exports reached €123.8 billion in 2023.³ Rotterdam handled 438.8 million tonnes of cargo in 2023 and 13.4 million twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU) in containers and remains Europe's largest port.⁴ Amsterdam's Schiphol airport connected to 301 destinations in 2024.⁵ On incomes, GDP per capita in terms of purchasing power is about US\$84,000, according to the latest World Bank series.⁶

The influence is institutional as well as economic. The Netherlands hosts the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court in The Hague.⁷ Its expertise in climate adaptation is organised through the national Delta Programme and landmark projects such as Room for the

River.⁸ Dutch water know-how is also promoted internationally via networks like the Netherlands Water Partnership, often framed as "water diplomacy".⁹

Three long-standing themes help explain this outward pull. Trade has been central for centuries. Openness to ideas has shaped public life. Above all, a shared effort to manage water has forged habits of cooperation.

These themes are taught deliberately. The 'Canon van Nederland' sets out 50 "windows" of national history that students encounter throughout their schooling.¹⁰ The public face is consistent, too. Since 2020, the official NL brand has presented the country as "co-creating pioneering solutions to global challenges".¹¹

This framing is not cosmetic. It meshes with policy. The Netherlands is among the most open investment regimes in the OECD's FDI Regulatory Restrictiveness Index and pairs that openness with active investor servicing.¹²



The Dutch story matters for New Zealand. Both countries are small, export-reliant democracies that depend on reputation and relationships. The Netherlands does enjoy one structural advantage we cannot replicate: proximity to the European single market, with 450 million consumers within a day's truck drive. Rotterdam's success as Europe's largest port relies partly on this geographic reality.

Acknowledging this difference, the Dutch still demonstrate how small nations can maximise their advantages through institutional

quality. They align the national narrative, institutions and delivery. We saw this at collaborative research centres like Wageningen and TU Delft, in discussions on regulatory quality and foreign investment and in the quiet consistency of national branding. The message was the same in each place: know your strengths, organise around them, keep execution steady.

This report distils the most transferable lessons from the visit. It is not an idealised portrait. Like any country, the Netherlands has challenges of its own.

Our aim is practical: to weigh which Dutch ideas could lift New Zealand's economic performance, improve governance and strengthen social outcomes.

The test we apply is simple and in line with the Initiative's philosophy: are the ideas likely to deliver better results over time when adapted to New Zealand's context?

CHAPTER 2

A COUNTRY BUILT ON WATER

When our delegation stepped onto the viewing platform at the Maeslantkering outside Rotterdam, the scale felt almost surreal. Two steel gates, each 210 metres wide and 22 metres high, can swing shut to seal the shipping channel against a North Sea surge. Ball and socket joints ten metres across carry the load. It is dramatic, but for the Dutch it is routine – an operating asset in a wider system of flood defence rather than a monument.¹³

That routine rests on hard geography. About a quarter of the Netherlands lies below sea level, and around 60 percent of its land surface is vulnerable to flooding from the sea and the major rivers. These are not interpretive metaphors but measured risks

that shape policy, engineering and public finance.¹⁴

History explains the Dutch mindset. The North Sea Flood of 1953 killed 1,836 people and inundated roughly 150,000 hectares, displacing around 100,000 residents. The response was the Delta Works, a multi-decade programme of dams, sluices and storm surge barriers that still underpins national safety.¹⁵

What impressed us, however, was not only what the Dutch built but also how they governed the task. Regional water authorities – the *waterschappen* – are among the country's oldest democratic institutions. They hold elections every four years, raise their own ring-fenced water taxes and take

day-to-day responsibility for local flood protection and water quality.

National infrastructure and standards sit with Rijkswaterstaat, which works alongside those regional authorities. The institutional design keeps the mission clear, the funding stable, and accountability close to those at risk.¹⁶

The Maeslantkering embodies that blend of engineering and governance. Built between 1991 and 1997, it operates with automated decision rules tied to forecast sea levels and is designed to withstand a five-metre storm surge. It is also sometimes used to keep the port open, a practical expression of balancing safety and commerce.¹⁷





Crucially, Dutch thinking has evolved from a single aim (keeping the water out) to a more adaptive approach. Room for the River lowered floodplains, shifted dikes and carved side channels so that high flows could spread safely rather than threaten cities. For example, the programme's Nijmegen project moved a dike 350 metres inland and created a new river island, improving both safety and amenity. It is a model of working with water rather than against it.¹⁸

In Rotterdam, that philosophy is visible at street level. The Benthemplein Water Square is a public plaza in dry weather and a retention basin in storms, with three basins holding up to 1.7 million litres of rainwater before slowly releasing it. It is flood management, urban design and civic life in one space.¹⁹

Adaptation now extends offshore and into the North Sea. Dutch policy integrates offshore wind build-out with maritime spatial planning in one of the most

intensively used seas in the world, setting spatial rules while coordinating nature protection, shipping and energy infrastructure. This is not an environmental add-on but a planning discipline that reduces conflict and accelerates delivery.²⁰

The Netherlands has also made water management an export strength. Public agencies, universities and firms collaborate abroad on flood protection and climate adaptation, a form of diplomacy that both serves partners and refreshes Dutch capability at home.²¹

Culture matters here. The *waterschappen* grew from the simple logic that if one farmer neglected a dike, the whole community suffered. Scholars have linked that habit of collaboration, often called the polder model, to a wider Dutch preference for negotiation and consensus.²²

There are direct lessons for New Zealand. Our main risks come from rivers and rain, not the coast, but they still cost a lot.

Treasury's initial estimate put the economic impact of the 2023 North Island weather events at roughly NZ\$9–14.5 billion, and new work by NIWA indicates that human-induced warming increased Cyclone Gabrielle's total rainfall by about 10 percent, intensifying peak flooding. The case for institutional clarity and long-horizon investment is not theoretical.²³

So, what should we take from the Dutch experience?

First, secure and hypothecated funding for flood protection, as Dutch water authority taxes provide, reduces the temptation to defer maintenance when budgets are tight.

Secondly, democratic accountability for water management, via elections to specialist bodies with a clear mandate, can build trust and facilitate tough trade-offs.

Thirdly, a multi-purpose design raises public support by delivering urban amenity, biodiversity and safety, as Rotterdam's Benthemplein demonstrates.

But the broader point is simple. The Netherlands did not conquer water once; it learned to live with it. The Dutch did so by being pragmatic, collaborative and ambitious.²⁴ They then also applied the lessons learnt to other areas of business and policy as well.





CHAPTER 3

DEPOLITICISING REFORM: THE ATR MODEL

We met representatives of the Adviescollege Toetsing Regeldruk (ATR), the government agency tasked with reducing regulatory burdens, at our conference hotel in Amsterdam. The officials were direct and calm. There was no ideology. Only the quiet assurance of people who see good rule-making as a craft. Their organisation exists to test the burden of new rules before they become law. It felt very Dutch.

ATR's independence is not rhetorical. It rests on a formal establishing order from 2017 and a dedicated statute adopted in 2025. Together they require ministries to seek ATR advice on proposals that create measurable burdens and anchor the body as an arm's length check early in the policy cycle.²⁵

This model has deep roots. Since 2000, a predecessor body, ACTAL, pushed for measurable burden reduction. In parallel, the Netherlands pioneered the Standard Cost Model, a simple way to quantify the time and money rules impose on firms and citizens. The method then spread across Europe and underpinned EU-wide reduction efforts.²⁶

How does it work in practice? Ministries must send proposals with significant burdens to ATR

before Cabinet or Parliament sees them. They must include quantified estimates of administrative and compliance costs using the government's measurement handbook, which builds on the Standard Cost Model.

ATR focuses on four questions: Is intervention necessary? Are lighter options considered? Will it work for those who must comply? Are costs mapped properly? Early, informal contact is encouraged so problems can be fixed before formal advice is issued.²⁷

Transparency creates accountability. ATR publishes its opinions online, and the government must state in each explanatory memorandum how it responded. If ministers choose not to follow advice, they must say so in public. That single obligation shifts behaviour upstream.²⁸

The bite is visible in the data. ATR's 2023 annual report records that negative opinions outnumbered positive ones for the first time, often because lighter alternatives were missing or costings were incomplete. If adopted unchanged, proposals examined in 2023 would have raised structural burdens by about €275 million for businesses and €43 million for citizens,

based on ministries' own figures. The point is not the headline. These numbers are published, argued over, and used to redesign proposals before enactment.²⁹

Volume and speed both matter. In 2022 alone, ATR handled 576 advice requests, mixing early engagement with formal opinions. Interim reporting in 2023 shows the same pattern – iterative work that fixes problems before they harden into law.³⁰

None of this is controversial politically. ATR's advice is non-binding. Elected leaders still decide in the end. But because ATR's advice is public and departures must be reasoned, discipline follows without paralysis. The OECD's most recent outlook places the Netherlands among systems with well-developed oversight, structured impact assessment and open publication – exactly the architecture we observed in Amsterdam.³¹

At the centre of this culture is a habit of clear problem definition. Dutch officials start with a precise statement of the burden they are trying to reduce, expressed in measurable terms. That clarity prevents later drift into political slogans. In New Zealand, by contrast,

regulatory debates often become arguments about principles without agreement on the concrete problem at hand. Without a shared definition of the problem, reforms quickly lose focus.

Two Dutch choices deserve emphasis. First, method. The national handbook standardises how costs are measured and adds guidance on experienced burden and practical feasibility. It keeps the craft live rather than box ticking.³²

Second, timing. The 2025 statute locks ATR into earlier stages and adds a role in shaping the Dutch position on EU proposals – a practical response to where many burdens originate.³³

The comparison with New Zealand is instructive. New Zealand has a regulatory impact analysis regime, a new Ministry for Regulation and a refreshed Cabinet circular that took effect on 1 January 2025.

New Zealand's Regulatory Standards Bill (RSB) aims to lift legislative quality by testing proposals against general principles and by creating a board to review existing rules. When we discussed the RSB with ATR officials, they could not see why it would be controversial. This disconnect is revealing: what the Dutch treat as routine technical governance has become politically weaponised in New Zealand.

The ATR succeeds precisely because it is narrow, quantitative and technical – using simple measures that are hard to dispute. Unlike New Zealand's more qualitative regulatory frameworks, which may be sophisticated in theory but leave room for political interpretation, the Dutch approach makes compliance easy to assess and harder to ignore. When the numbers are clear, ministers find it difficult to dismiss them for political convenience.

The lesson for New Zealand is sobering. What the Dutch treat as uncontroversial technical governance – the simple idea that regulations should meet quality standards – has become politically weaponised here.

The RSB's politicisation, meanwhile, demonstrates precisely why we need the culture of technical governance it was meant to foster. Future regulatory reform efforts, whatever their scope, must find ways to remain technical rather than partisan. The Dutch show this is possible when institutions earn trust through transparency, narrow mandates and consistent delivery.

The Dutch model suits the Initiative's preference for transparency, accountability and economic freedom. It removes pointless constraints while preserving the right of Parliament to choose. The plumbing of government, as one official put it. When the pipes work, fewer bad rules leak into law.

We believe New Zealand could learn from the Dutch deregulation experience:

- **Put scrutiny in statute.**
Create a small, arm's-length reviewer with a mandate to test significant proposals at the consultation stage. Publish short, plain English opinions with a simple dictum, and require a ministerial reply in the explanatory note to any bill or instrument.³⁴
- **Make the method routine.**
Adopt one handbook for measuring burdens and keep it current, including guidance on experienced burden and feasibility.³⁵
- **Normalise early engagement.**
Encourage informal checks before drafting and report on how early advice changes designs. Dutch practice shows it shortens cycles and avoids failure later.³⁶
- **Publish the whole trail.**
Proposal, external opinion, departmental response and impact analysis should sit together in one place. Transparency improves quality over time.³⁷

Seen up close, ATR is not a grand new theory of regulation. Rather, it is good housekeeping. Independent scrutiny reduces unnecessary burden. And it leaves citizens and businesses freer to get on with their lives.

CHAPTER 4

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

We went to the Netherlands to see why a small country can produce so much applied innovation. What we found was not a single model but a habit and a mentality. People and institutions work at close range. They share space, problems and timelines. They form coalitions that move from idea to pilot to market. And they do so with a light regulatory touch that gives innovators room to experiment.

We first visited Wageningen University, which sits on a large campus, shared with dozens of companies it collaborates with.

The university's global standing in agri-food is not an accident. Wageningen University & Research sits at the top of the QS

agriculture and forestry ranking, which makes it a magnet for talent and for industry.³⁸ On the edge of the campus, Unilever has placed its Foods Innovation Centre, Hive, with an €85 million investment. It opened in 2019 and houses kitchens, labs and a pilot plant devoted to plant-based foods, nutrition and packaging. The company built it next to the university on purpose – to be close to researchers, start-ups and customers.³⁹ FrieslandCampina chose the same logic. Its Innovation Centre sits on the campus as well, connecting researchers with pilot facilities and market teams.⁴⁰

Critically, these industry partners value not just the research outputs but the opportunity to identify and

recruit talent directly from these programmes. This recruitment dimension creates additional incentives for industry investment and helps universities maintain practical relevance.

The research we saw combined boldness with measurement. Wageningen's teams run controlled environment and vertical farming trials that promise precise control, low pesticide use and much better water efficiency.⁴¹ They also publish on the trade-offs. Energy demand can be high, and in some cases, a high-tech greenhouse may beat a vertical farm on footprint.⁴²

New Zealand should not copy the more interventionist edges of European cluster policy.



The Dutch public-private allowance works because it is simple, neutral and contingent on genuine private co-investment. It does not try to replace the market, and it sits inside a high-trust system that delivers.

One might consider whether New Zealand could adopt Dutch-style 'safe failure' mechanisms for innovation, where government shares risk in genuinely uncertain ventures. However, such schemes require precisely the kind of institutional quality and technical rigour we saw at the ATR. Without these safeguards, they quickly degenerate into conventional subsidies.

Given the challenges New Zealand faces in maintaining disciplined evaluation of existing programmes, attempting such mechanisms without first building stronger assessment capabilities would likely result in corporate welfare rather than genuine innovation support.

In our own settings in New Zealand, the focus should be on sandboxes, testbeds and research excellence connected to firms, not on subsidies or "cluster" branding. If the state does co-fund, matching should be transparent, competitive and time-limited.

Public policy reinforces this practical bent. The government's Top Sector approach directs support to areas where the Netherlands already competes – agri-food, horticulture, water, high tech and more – and does so through alliances of business,

universities and research institutes.⁴³ A signature tool is the public-private partnership allowance. For every euro that companies contribute to research at a public institute in a TKI consortium, the state adds 30 cents, which must be spent on R&D. It is simple, transparent and leverages private money rather than replacing it.⁴⁴

After learning about food at Wageningen, we later learned about engineering at TU Delft.

Delft shows what scale looks like when a university concentrates on practice. TU Delft ranks among the very best worldwide in civil and structural engineering, and its Faculty of Architecture sits in the global top three for its field.⁴⁵ That reputation is lived, not just listed. Student "Dream Teams" get space, mentoring and shop floor capabilities to build tangible things – cars that run on a teaspoon of fuel, solar boats, hydrogen racers and hyperloop pods.⁴⁶

Delft Hyperloop began as such a team and went on to win the inaugural SpaceX Hyperloop Pod Competition in 2017, which set off years of further development and competition.⁴⁷ The team we visited were in the final preparations for this year's competition of European hyperloops team, which they won a month later.

TU Delft's philosophy is clear. It treats its students as engineers-in-training – and it is already letting them be engineers. That same spirit

continues just across campus at The Green Village. It is an open-air field lab where people live, and where experimenters can trial energy, water and building innovations at full scale. Crucially, it operates with exemptions from standard building rules to allow rapid, safe experimentation under controlled conditions.⁴⁸ This is not deregulation for its own sake. It is a sandbox with rules and accountability designed to turn ideas into field-tested solutions.

We could see yet another great example of the link between research and practical application in The Hague. Security Delta HSD is the national security cluster. It convenes companies, ministries and universities around three themes: cyber security and resilience, data and AI intelligence, and smart secure societies.⁴⁹ The network is large – more than 275 partners by one civic count, and over 300 according to HSD itself, but what matters is how it works. It treats security as both a public good and a growth opportunity, with regular events that pull practitioners into the same room to solve current problems.⁵⁰

We saw this in OT security discussions that ranged from anomaly detection rooted in physics to homomorphic encryption for industrial networks, all grounded in real utility and water network cases.⁵¹ The port of Rotterdam work makes this concrete. Partners are testing new sensors above, on and under water and using AI to analyse vast drone imagery for operations and safety. The aim is a smart, secure



and increasingly autonomous port ecosystem, with rapid scale up when pilots prove their worth.⁵²

The cluster also invests in people. Its Security Talent platform aggregates jobs, internships and courses to keep the talent pipeline full.⁵³ Local government tells the same story – The Hague markets the campus as the national innovation centre for cybersecurity and a jobs engine for the region.⁵⁴

Across these places, the same habits recur. Keep research excellence close to industry. Use public money to match private risk rather than to replace it. Build spaces where it

is normal for ideas to leave the lab and face the mess of the real world. Allow carefully designed regulatory sandboxes so innovators can try, fail and improve without waiting years. Share what works. Stop what does not.

There are lessons here for New Zealand. We have strengths in agri-food, engineering and digital security. The Dutch example says that the fastest gains come when we bring our universities, firms and regulators into the same physical places with the same deadlines. Public-private co funding should be simple, neutral and contingent on private skin in the game.⁵⁵

Our regulators can create more testbeds where innovators can prove safety and performance in the field without being trapped by rules designed for yesterday's technology.⁵⁶ Above all, we should back excellence and openness. The most productive innovation cultures are plural, contestable and free. They grow because people are allowed to question assumptions, form associations and try new things at speed.



CHAPTER 5

INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION

Rotterdam does not need to grandstand. It impresses, and it delivers.

At Rotterdam's Maasvlakte terminal, you watch container stacks glide like chess pieces while driverless vehicles hum along set paths. None of it looks theatrical. All of it works because scale is matched with systems, governance and a bias for execution.

A world port that keeps reinventing itself, Rotterdam remains Europe's largest seaport. In 2023 it handled 438.8 million tonnes of cargo and 13.4 million TEU, despite a soft global cycle. Investment decisions kept flowing – from terminal expansions to the Container Exchange Route and inland shipping coordination that cut port time by over 20 percent. The port's own update tells the story in figures rather than slogans.⁵⁷

The culture of automation here is not new. ECT's Delta Dedicated North Terminal opened in 1993 as the world's first automated container terminal. That was a generational bet which has since become ordinary Rotterdam practice.⁵⁸

Today's flagship is APM Terminals Maasvlakte II, a fully automated,

CO₂ emission-free terminal where battery electric AGVs swap packs charged from green wind power. The buildings are sustainable, and the yard is built for the largest vessels. It is a clean, quiet proof that productivity and decarbonisation can reinforce one another.⁵⁹

Much of this sits on Maasvlakte II, new land in the North Sea built on time and, crucially, below the original budget. The Port Authority's own half-year report in 2013 records that construction finished €150 million cheaper than first estimated, at €1.55 billion instead of €1.7 billion. That saving helped fund a higher dividend and an early €290 million repayment of the State's contribution. It is a lesson in disciplined project governance and commercial accountability.⁶⁰

The delivery was not a lucky break. The Authority realised Maasvlakte II at its own expense and risk and ran it as a business case under close shareholder oversight. That institutional design matters more than any hype about technology.⁶¹ The engineering programme itself was handled through an innovative design, construction maintenance contract, and a systems engineering approach that kept quality risks in hand.⁶²

Even popular accounts have caught up with the port's digital backbone – from sensors to a working digital twin – but the intent is practical, not glossy. Technology serves throughput and reliability.⁶³

Heat as an industrial strategy

In Utrecht, energy company Eneco has built the country's largest wastewater heat pump system. It uses the residual warmth of around 65 million litres of treated water each day and delivers roughly 25–27 MW of heat to the local district network. Eneco estimates that is about 15 percent of Utrecht and Nieuwegein's demand or around 20,000 households, and it avoids about 30,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year. The figures come from the engineering partners and have been carried in the trade press since commissioning.⁶⁴

Brewing at scale – innovation next to Europe's largest brewery

Heineken has just opened a €45 million Global R&D Centre in Zoeterwoude, next to what the company describes as the largest brewery in Europe. The King cut the ribbon. We visited it a couple of weeks later, in fact, as their first-ever international visitor group.

Heineken's centre will accelerate brewing innovation, new beverages and process improvements, including sustainability.⁶⁵

The company's climate pathway is also clear. Heineken aims for net zero across the value chain by 2040, with net zero in scopes 1 and 2 by 2030. By 2024 it had cut scopes 1 and 2 emissions by 34 percent from a 2022 baseline and reached 84 percent renewable electricity. These numbers are on the record.⁶⁶

Circularity is not a slogan. Heineken has moved to use wastewater biogas, invested in electric boilers at Zoeterwoude, and is piloting "Project Circle" to upcycle brewers' spent grain into higher-value products and renewable heat.⁶⁷

The broader point is institutional. Dutch firms tend to match ambition with engineering detail: what will be built, who will run it, and how the numbers stack up.

A comparison

New Zealand's ports have seen their own experiments. In 2022, Ports of Auckland abandoned its container terminal automation after years of delay and wrote off about NZ\$65 million, with an independent review later pointing to governance and management failures. There is no shame in stopping a project that does not work, but the lesson is about institutions and procurement rather than technology.⁶⁸

Rotterdam shows a different pattern. It corporatises risk inside a competent owner, uses proven delivery models, and then scales what works. It invests in assets the market will use – deeper water, faster inter-terminal moves, digital coordination – and holds managers to measurable outcomes.⁶⁹

Here are the findings we would like to take home to New Zealand:

- **Institutions beat slogans:** Rotterdam's governance is commercial and accountable. Projects are run as business cases with disciplined procurement and clear risk ownership. That is not ideology. It is how you deliver big things.⁷⁰
- **Automate the right things:** The Dutch automated early but only kept what worked. Today's terminals are cleaner and safer. They are also embedded in a wider system that includes road, rail and barges.⁷¹

- **Treat energy as a system:** Wastewater heat pumps, electrified process heat and thermal storage are practical tools that can decarbonise without halting production. They need solid engineering, contracting and grid integration.⁷²
- **Back scale with discipline:** Maasvlakte 2 was delivered under budget with savings returned to the shareholder. That is what allows a port to keep investing through cycles.⁷³

The lesson is institutional, not industrial policy. The Netherlands delivers large, complex assets because roles, risks and incentives are clear.

That does not require subsidy cheques or sector deals. It requires competent owners, disciplined procurement and the courage to stop what does not work.

New Zealand should adopt that discipline and resist the temptation to badge interventions as "clusters" or "strategic" when a neutral, enabling framework would achieve more.



LIJN 7
ONE WAY BOTTLE



HEINEKEN
The Flagship Brewery

CHAPTER 6

A CULTURE OF FOLLOW-THROUGH AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

One pattern stood out in the Netherlands. When the Dutch decide that something matters, they deliver. They manage visible risks with calm competence, and they avoid turning the trivial into theatre.

That contrast helps explain our own frustrations. New Zealand often manages the trivial with elaborate process yet underprepares for serious risks that could derail growth or safety. We have built a system that rewards caution where boldness is needed and demands performative compliance where simple competence would do. New Zealand overmanages the trivial and underprepares for the serious.



The Dutch inversion runs the other way. Everyday life is designed for responsible use, from cycling networks to shared worksites, while big programmes are planned and executed over decades. Delivery earns trust. Trust then reduces the need for micromanagement. The loop reinforces itself.

Cycling made the same ethic visible. From our first morning in Amsterdam, we were in the thick of it – parents with two children in their carrier bike, students on city bikes, older riders upright and unhurried. Helmets were rare. Yet the Netherlands records one of the highest cycling shares in the world. In 2022, 28 percent of all journeys were by bicycle.⁷⁴ Observed helmet use in everyday cycling remains low: roughly 5 percent for men and 3 percent for women – and there is no general legal requirement to wear a helmet on a standard bicycle⁷⁵. Safety comes first from design and behaviour (protected lanes, legible junctions, consistent speeds), not from equipment.

This did not happen by accident. In the early 1970s, parents and campaigners protested rising child road deaths under the banner *Stop de Kindermoord*. That movement helped trigger lower urban speeds, protected lanes and a planning

mindset that treats everyday cycling as normal transport. The policy arc is well documented and long lived.⁷⁶

Swimming culture underlines the mix of personal responsibility and systemic competence. The national Swim ABC framework sets staged competencies for children in the kinds of open water common to Dutch life.⁷⁷ Coverage is high but not universal. Recent survey work reports that about 13 percent of children lacked any diploma in 2022, with variation across places – a prompt to keep closing access gaps.⁷⁸ Even so, accidental drowning among residents remains comparatively low for a water-rich country – 73 in 2022 and 98 in 2023 – with most incidents in open water and among older people.⁷⁹ International comparisons point in the same direction – skills matter, and equity in access matters too.⁸⁰

Behind the visible choices sit institutions that reward follow-through. The regional water authorities – the *waterschappen* – are among the country's oldest democratic bodies. They levy ring-fenced water charges and hold elections every four years, often alongside provincial polls.⁸¹ The principle is simple: those who benefit from water management

have a say in it and pay for it. That clarity of mandate and funding supports delivery over decades.

Perhaps most striking was how the Netherlands maintains consensus on long-term national priorities despite constant political turbulence. While coalition governments form and fall, investment in critical infrastructure, universities, defence and energy transition continues largely uninterrupted.

The Dutch have managed to elevate certain issues above partisan politics, creating predictability for business and continuity in policy implementation. They focus on the national good while letting political games play out separately. This ability to divorce essential policy from political theatre may be their most important lesson for New Zealand.

The pattern of good institutions combined with good policy development shows up in the big programmes. Room for the River is a good example. After near disasters in the 1990s, the Netherlands opted not only to raise dikes but to give rivers more space by relocating embankments, lowering floodplains and opening side channels. Policy work identified 39 locations, engagement was done early, and delivery followed. The programme reached completion in 2019 and is often cited for combining safety, spatial quality and ecological gains within a disciplined budget of about €2.3 billion.⁸²

The loop is self-reinforcing. Visible delivery earns trust. Trust allows authorities to plan ambitiously and to design for ordinary behaviour rather than for rule breaking. Citizens, in turn, accept modest inconvenience – a diverted path, a slower street, a plaza that occasionally floods – when they believe that institutions keep their word.

New Zealand's defaults are different. In cycling we rely on helmets, signage and enforcement more than on protected networks. Helmets are mandatory for on-road cycling for all ages under the Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004.⁸³ In water safety, we fence and warn, sometimes at the cost of access. In governance, major projects can remain open to relitigation long after decisions are taken. Lower trust invites more prescriptive rules, which can undermine trust further.

None of this implies Dutch perfection. Debates continue about helmets for older riders on e-bikes, who pays for future flood adaptation, and equity in swim access. The point is consistency. Disputes surface early, compromises are struck, and execution proceeds.

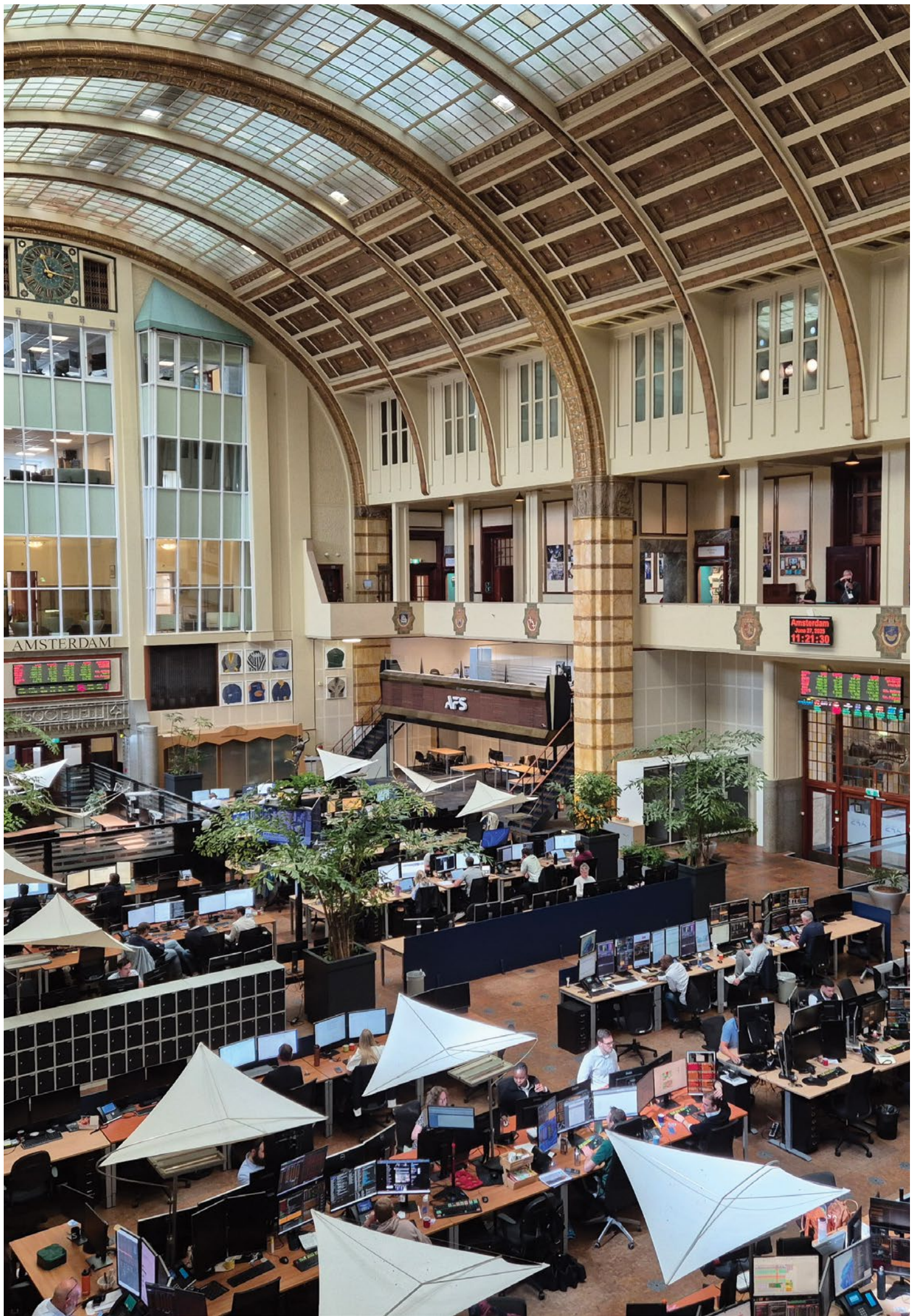
What this suggests for New Zealand:

- **Build safety into the street, not around the cyclist:** Separate bikes from fast traffic where volumes are high, design intersections clearly and make short trips by bike the easy choice.⁸⁴

- **Use multipurpose public spaces to solve practical problems:** Water squares show how drainage assets can double as beloved places.⁸⁵
- **Teach for the context you live in:** Swim ABC links skills to local risk; access matters if the goal is universal competence.⁸⁶
- **Agree early, then deliver steadily:** Room for the River shows how upfront settlement of trade-offs reduces surprises later.⁸⁷
- **Keep some decisions close to the ground:** *Waterschappen* illustrate how specialised bodies with clear mandates and their own source revenue build trust through visible delivery.⁸⁸

This is not a plea for laxity. It is an argument for proportion. Keep rules tight where stakes are high – critical infrastructure, defence readiness, cyber resilience – and keep them light where citizens can exercise judgment. Dutch institutions have earned that balance over time. That is why they can do more with fewer cones, fewer fences and fewer stalled projects.

The Dutch do not replace responsibility with rules. They design systems that make responsible behaviour natural and then implement decisions. That culture delivers. It is also, in the long run, cheaper than trying to substitute trust with ever more control.



CHAPTER 7

ENERGY, SECURITY AND GEOSTRATEGY: THE DUTCH PIVOT

Europe has shifted from a peacedividend mindset to a preparedness mindset. In the Netherlands, that pivot is visible in finance, regulation and logistics. Euronext, Europe's largest exchange operator, has even reframed ESG as energy, security and geostrategy to steer capital toward defence-relevant activity.⁸⁹

NATO's Hague summit in June 2025, which happened during our visit, codified the direction of travel. NATO allies committed to investing 5% of GDP annually in defence-related outlays by 2035, including at least 3.5% for core defence and 1.5% for resilience and critical enablers.⁹⁰

European capital markets are already moving to meet strategic needs. Euronext has launched measures to ease defence listings, speed up "defence bonds" and adjust index methodologies that had excluded conventional defence.⁹¹

Brussels has also clarified that the EU's sustainable finance framework does not ban financing of conventional defence. That guidance reduces reputational risk for banks and asset managers who wish to fund dual-use technologies and critical infrastructure.⁹²

The European Investment Bank has moved in parallel. It doubled security and defence financing to €1 billion in 2024, signalled another doubling in 2025, and raised its 2025 financing ceiling to step up investment in security, defence and grids.⁹³

The broader envelope is the EU's Readiness 2030 or "ReArm Europe" plan, under which member states aim to mobilise up to €800 billion for defence and resilience through fiscal flexibility, a new loan facility and regulatory simplification.⁹⁴

The Netherlands has matched this European context with its own delivery at scale. In 2024 it spent €19.9 billion on defence, 2.05% of GDP, ranking seventh in NATO by share of GDP.⁹⁵

Industrial policy has been retuned to resilience and production security. The Defence Strategy for Industry and Innovation 2025–2029 prioritises sovereign capacity, supplychain robustness and cooperation with European partners.⁹⁶

Delivery capacity is visible on the waterfront. The Port of Rotterdam has agreed planning steps with the Defence Ministry to reserve terminal capacity at Maasvlakte 2

for multiple ships carrying military cargo – notably containerised ammunition – several times a year, with no longterm storage on site.⁹⁷

For the Dutch, security extends beyond kit to cyber and institutional resilience. The Security Delta (HSD) cluster connects more than 300 firms, public bodies and research institutions around cyber, data and smart secure societies, building trusted pathways from research to deployment.⁹⁸

Threat assessments are frank. The government's *Cybersecurity Assessment Netherlands 2024* highlights intensified activity by state actors and the exploitation of edge devices, alongside criminal ransomware. It tracks progress against the Netherlands Cybersecurity Strategy 2022–2028, which shifts responsibility for baseline security toward government and system operators and tightens statutory requirements.⁹⁹

Confidence in institutions underpins this whole approach. OECD data show 44% of Dutch respondents reported high or moderately high trust in national government in 2023, above the OECD average of 39%, and 78% were satisfied with administrative services.¹⁰⁰

Energy security has become part of the equation. In April 2024, the Dutch Senate passed a law permanently closing the Groningen gas field because of seismic risk, accelerating the need for diversified supply and electrification.¹⁰¹

Policy has flexed accordingly. The incoming coalition in 2024 pledged to expand North Sea gas production, keep the Borssele nuclear reactor open, and proceed with two new reactors while continuing the major offshore wind buildout.¹⁰²

Delivery is practical as well as strategic. Utrecht now heats roughly 20,000 homes with Eneco's 25-27 MW industrial heat pump (see Chapter 5), drawing warmth from treated wastewater, a replicable urban resilience asset.¹⁰³

For New Zealand, several lessons stand out. First, strategic diagnosis matters. NATO's 5% framework and the EU's €800 billion ambition are not performative signals. They are procurement-ready pipelines tied to credible institutions. New Zealand has begun to move in that direction. The Defence Capability Plan 2025 outlines a path to lift defence expenditure to around 2% of GDP within eight years and sets a capital programme to match.¹⁰⁴

Second, follow through. In August 2025, Wellington confirmed an aircraft and helicopter package via US Foreign Military Sales, consistent with the DCP's direction to rebuild readiness at pace.¹⁰⁵

Third, protect finance from mixed signals. The Dutch lesson is that capital will fund defence if the rules are clear, the screens are principled, and the institutions are trusted. The EU's notice that defence is not excluded from sustainable finance rules, plus the EIB's expansion of eligible dual-use projects, show how to do this.¹⁰⁶

Fourth, build the enablers. Rotterdam's Maasvlakte 2 illustrates how host-nation logistics can be planned in peacetime to handle allied flows, including ammunition, without turning into permanent storage. New Zealand should designate and exercise a small number of multi-use terminals for allied throughput, including customs, biosecurity and safety protocols tested at scale.¹⁰⁷

Finally, trust your delivery institutions. The Dutch mix of high administrative satisfaction and reasonable levels of political trust reduces the urge to micromanage processes and enables agencies to execute. That is a comparative advantage when the task is to move quickly on serious risks.¹⁰⁸

In sum, the Netherlands has treated security as a whole-nation production challenge. Finance has been refocused on strategic sectors. Defence strategy now foregrounds industrial capacity, logistics, and cyber. Energy policy has been rebalanced toward resilience.

The common thread is confidence in trusted institutions to deliver without over-managing the trivial. New Zealand can adapt that model by locking in its 2% path, clarifying sustainable finance rules around defence, designating logistics gateways, and letting capable agencies execute.

CHAPTER 8

INVESTING WITHOUT FEAR: FDI AS AN OPPORTUNITY

In the Netherlands, foreign direct investment is not something to apologise for. It is welcomed and cultivated as a source of jobs, innovation and export strength. The NFIA acts as a genuine one-stop partner for investors, helping with locations, permits and networks, then providing structured aftercare once firms are on the ground.¹⁰⁹

This openness has deep roots. Amsterdam's stock exchange and joint stock companies shaped global finance centuries ago. The instinct has endured in modern form. On regulatory restrictiveness, the OECD places the Netherlands among the world's more open regimes, with low statutory barriers by international standards.¹¹⁰ Rule of law institutions are strong and predictable, which matters for capital that must commit for years rather than months.¹¹¹ What makes the Dutch approach distinct is how FDI is woven into clusters, not just counted in headlines.

None of this is naïve. The Netherlands screens sensitive investments under a national security regime and manages competition issues through clear merger control processes. The point is balance – openness where possible, proportionate safeguards

where needed.¹¹² For investors, the result is predictability. For citizens, it is confidence that the rules are set and enforced in the public interest. Legal practitioners read the same signals. Comparative reviews describe the Dutch framework as clear in scope and process, with developments flagged early and explained publicly.¹¹³

Policy coherence helps. Targeted R&D incentives lower the cost of innovating in the country and anchor foreign labs within Dutch supply chains. The WBSO R&D tax credit is the workhorse instrument, widely used and well understood.¹¹⁴ Profits from qualifying intangibles can be taxed in the Innovation Box, a mainstream feature of the corporate tax system communicated in plain language to firms of all sizes.¹¹⁵

Context matters too. Global FDI has been volatile in recent years, with swings in European flows driven by multinational restructuring. The OECD's FDI in Figures and UNCTAD's World Investment Report show how quickly the tide can turn, which puts a premium on jurisdictions that pair openness with stability.¹¹⁶

New Zealand should learn a few lessons from this approach.

First, that FDI policy works best when it is boring. Investors need a concierge, not a labyrinth. That means a clearly branded front door, early coordination with local agencies, and real aftercare once companies are here.

Second, that clusters matter more than slogans. If foreign firms plug into deep domestic ecosystems, spillovers follow in skills, exports and resilience.

Third, that safeguards and openness can coexist if rules are crisp, proportionate and public.

Above all, the Dutch show that confidence beats caution when the institutions are sound. Business without fear does not mean business without rules. It means setting the rules well, applying them consistently, and backing strategic sectors with the infrastructure and people they require. That is how a small country turns foreign capital into long-term national strength.

CHAPTER 9

NATIONAL NARRATIVE AND IDENTITY

By mid-week, a pattern was plain. In boardrooms, laboratories and ministries we heard the same story told in different accents. The Netherlands is small, outward-looking and serious about delivery. It trades. It innovates. It cooperates. The language shifted with the audience, yet the themes did not. That consistency is the point.

The story is taught rather than improvised. In schools and museums, the Canon van Nederland sets out fifty “windows” on national history. One of its seven cross-cutting outlines is “Living in a vulnerable delta” – a reminder that collective action against water shaped the country’s character.¹¹⁷

Abroad, the same narrative appears with a single visual voice. Since January 2020, the government’s international positioning has used the orange NL monogram and the line “Solving global challenges together,” with a central toolkit for missions, ministries and partners.¹¹⁸ The platform confirms Foreign Affairs coordination and the system’s purpose as a shared identity rather than a slogan.¹¹⁹

What impressed us most was how the narrative and behaviour lined up. Rotterdam calls itself Europe’s largest port and acts like it. The

gateway claim is not marketing fluff but an operating reality of scale, reliability and 24/7 access.¹²⁰ In agri-food, Wageningen University & Research anchors a full chain ecosystem and ranks first in the world for agriculture and forestry, which makes “help feed the world” more than a phrase.¹²¹ In security and resilience, the The Hague-based cluster now called Security Delta brings together over 300 companies, government bodies and knowledge institutions to ship solutions at home and abroad.¹²²

The identity is legalistic as well as commercial. The Hague brands itself as an international city of peace and justice for good reason. The International Court of Justice sits in the Peace Palace. The International Criminal Court is across town. Both institutions broadcast Dutch reliability and rules-based cooperation to every visitor and investor who passes through.

For investors, the message comes with service. The Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency operates as a one-stop partner within the Invest in Holland network, from scoping to landing to aftercare. Its offer is free, public and predictable – an operational arm of the Ministry of Economic Affairs

with a clear brief to plug firms into clusters rather than leave them on their own.

Why does this coherence matter? Because it reduces friction. A shared story lowers search costs for partners. It clarifies what the country stands for. It helps public agencies, universities and firms move in step. When messages match reality – a port that performs, a university that leads, a cluster that actually collaborates, a legal city that hosts the world’s courts – trust is built.

Another striking feature of Dutch culture was its openness. Compared with many other European countries, we found the Dutch unusually comfortable in English, confident in their international outlook and ambitious without being arrogant. They were curious about the world and about us, while also secure in their own identity.

This openness extended to conversation. Difficult topics could be raised directly without discussions becoming hostile or passive aggressive. People could ask “why” without being seen as insubordinate. It was a cultural confidence rooted in clarity of purpose and a willingness to hear challenges in good faith.



That combination of confidence and curiosity helps explain why Dutch institutions can maintain consensus across divisions. It supports innovation, attracts investment and sustains their outward-facing national story.

New Zealand's story is strong on nature and values, yet less consistent on innovation, competitiveness and delivery. The Dutch example suggests a practical path. Decide what we want to be known for. Codify it in education and cultural touchstones

as the Dutch canon does. Project it abroad with one identity rather than many. Then prove it at home through institutions that deliver – in ports, research clusters and investment services. The models exist and they are open for inspection.



CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION: WHAT THE NETHERLANDS TAUGHT US

We came to the Netherlands after earlier study tours to Switzerland, Denmark, and Ireland. Those trips sharpened our sense of what small, confident countries can do when they align their stories, institutions and delivery. The Dutch visit pulled those threads together.

What impressed us most was not a single reform. It was the everyday discipline of a country that knows what it is for. The national story – inventive, outwardlooking, resilient, cooperative – is the story its institutions live.

We saw that most clearly in water. Dutch safety is not an annual budget choice but a permanent duty, embedded in law, funding and practice. The Room for the River programme captures the instinct well – make space where it improves safety and places, then build patiently for decades.¹²³

Regulation showed the same spirit. The Dutch have made a calm, independent check on the cost and workability of rules part of how government works. ATR's statutory footing matters because it makes scrutiny routine and public rather than partisan and hidden.¹²⁴

At Rotterdam we were reminded that technology is a tool, not a creed.

Automation can lift safety and reliability, but results are contextdependent and hinge on governance and skills. The international evidence bears that out – the gains are real, but there are tradeoffs to manage.¹²⁵

The same maturity appears in how the Netherlands meets investors. There is a clear front door, a human being at the end of the phone, and aftercare that helps firms plug into clusters and talent. It is not fanfare. It is service – and predictability.

Across the week, a pattern emerged. Focus on institutions that endure. Measure what you are doing. Begin by defining the problem clearly, as the Dutch do. Progress only follows when there is shared agreement on what must be fixed. Prefer partnerships over silos. Treat innovation as routine. Keep the country's story honest by matching words to results.

For New Zealand, five simple lessons are:

1. **Make long horizons normal:** Flood protection, major projects and research cannot live handtomouth. Secure mandates and ring-fenced funding build confidence to deliver.

2. **Keep counting the cost of rules:** Independence and transparency raise policy quality without paralysing ministers. Asking hard questions early saves pain later.
3. **Adopt technology with purpose:** Aim at safety, productivity and reliability. Be wary of silver bullets. Learn your way forward.
4. **Be easy to invest in:** A one-stop service and clear rules signal seriousness. Aftercare matters as much as attraction.
5. **Align story and system:** Say what you stand for, then build institutions that make it true.

None of this asks us to copy Dutch history. But it asks us to copy their habits: the patience to plan, the discipline to deliver, the confidence to welcome partners, the humility to measure results.

That is an agenda fit for a free, open and modern New Zealand.

That is what New Zealand should do.

That is what New Zealand could be.

APPENDIX 1

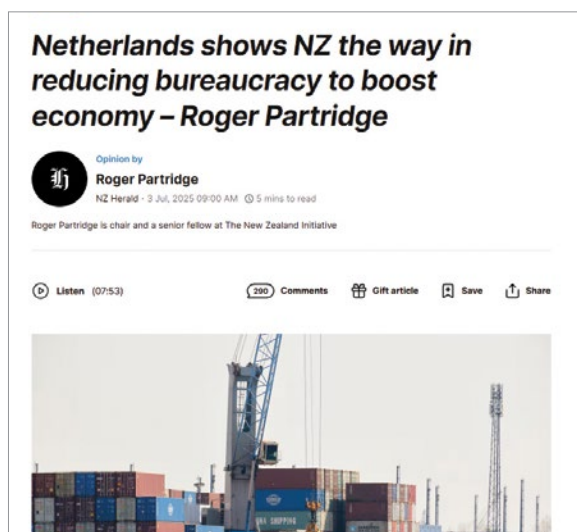
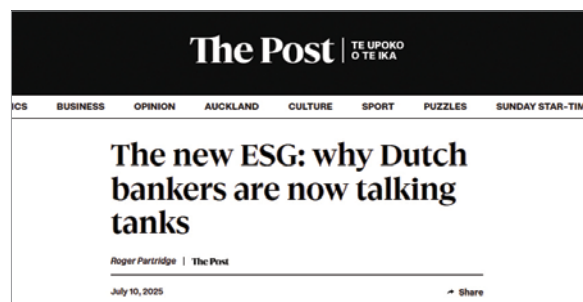
MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION TO THE NETHERLANDS

NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
Simon Bennett	Chair	Accordant
Chris Blenkiron	Chief Executive and General Manager	New Zealand Aluminium Smelter
Rob Buchanan	Chief Executive	Channel Infrastructure
Barbara Chapman CNZM	Chair	Genesis Energy
Tim Clarke	Partner	Russell McVeagh
Matthew Cockram	Chief Executive	Cooper and Company
Peter Cooper	Executive Chairman	Cooper and Company
Alistair Davis ONZM	Chancellor	Massey University
Alan Duff MBE	Co-Founder	Duffy Books in Homes
Ross George	Executive Director	Direct Capital
Damien Grant	Director	Waterstone
Dr Oliver Hartwich	Executive Director	The New Zealand Initiative
Jimmy Higgins	Chief Executive	Suncorp
Andrew Holmes	Chief Executive and Senior Partner	PwC
Carrie Hurihanganui	Chief Executive	Auckland Airport
Miles Hurrell	Chief Executive	Fonterra
Desleigh Jameson	Chair	CDL Investments
Malcolm Johns	Chief Executive	Genesis Energy
Adelle Keely	Chief Executive	Acumen
Peter Kiely ONZM	Partner	Kiely Thompson Caisley
Chelsy Killick	Deputy Director	The New Zealand Initiative
Sir Chris Mace KNZM	Director	Mace Capital
Robert McDonald	Chair	Contact Energy
Doug McKay ONZM	Chair	Vector
Linda Meade	Director	Kalimena Advisory
Paul Nickels	Partner	PwC
Simon O'Connor	Managing Partner	EY
Fran O'Sullivan	Director	NZ INC
Roger Partridge	Chair	The New Zealand Initiative
Neil Paviour-Smith	Chief Executive	Forsyth Barr
Bruce Plested	Executive Chairman/Founder	Mainfreight
Chris Quin	Chief Executive	Foodstuffs North Island
Mike Roan	Chief Financial Officer	Meridian Energy
Mark Rushworth	Group Chief Executive	UP Education
Craig Stobo	Managing Director	Stobo Group
Mark Synnott	Executive Chairman	Colliers
Ben Teusse	Chief Executive	Habit Health
Mark Verbiest	Chair	Meridian Energy/Summerset Group
Bruce Wallace	Chair	Deloitte
Rachel Walsh	Director	NZX
Fraser Whineray	Director	Port of Tauranga
Kelvin Wickham	Chief Executive	Ballance Agri-Nutrients

APPENDIX 2

MEDIA MENTIONS OF OUR DELEGATION

- Podcast: Going Dutch: Lessons from the Netherlands, *The New Zealand Initiative*, 7 August 2025
- Mainfreight chairman urges New Zealand to think bigger, *TransportTalk*, 4 August 2025
- Mugged by reality: energy orthodoxy meets realpolitik, *The Australian*, 31 July 2025
- Bridging divides through shared purpose, *The New Zealand Initiative*, 25 July 2025
- Getting things done without the double Dutch, *Newsroom*, 22 July 2025
- The new ESG: why Dutch bankers are now talking tanks, *The Post*, 10 July 2025
- Why climate change reporting is achieving nothing, *Stuff*, 6 July 2025
- Netherlands shows NZ the way in reducing bureaucracy to boost economy, *NZ Herald*, 3 July 2025
- Learning from the Dutch, *The New Zealand Initiative*, 19 June 2025
- When populists cannot be tamed, *Newsroom*, 10 June 2025
- Tall poppy syndrome leaves Kiwis working harder not smarter, *The Australian*, June 2025





Getting things done without the double Dutch

Dr Oliver Hartwich | Newsroom | 22 July, 2025

Before our Netherlands delegation in June, I wrote in this publication about the political chaos we might encounter (*When populists cannot be tamed*, Newsroom 10 June 2024). Geert Wilders had just brought down the government he helped create. I wondered whether the Dutch “polder model” of consensus democracy could survive 21st-century populism.

But Dutch politics was the least interesting thing about the Netherlands.

The New Zealand Initiative has been running these study tours since 2017. The format is straightforward: take about forty business leaders to a successful small country, meet politicians, officials and executives and identify transferable policies. Our previous destinations were Switzerland, Denmark and Ireland.

This time was different. Not because Dutch policies were better, but because we saw a bigger picture.

Yes, the Dutch showed us their regulatory burden reduction programme. By systematically eliminating compliance requirements, they have cut regulatory costs by 25 percent – about four billion Euros annually. Their Advisory Board on Regulatory Burden advised against 60 percent of proposed regulations last year.

Crucially, the Board never questions whether a policy makes sense – they

are emphatically apolitical. They simply check whether the policy’s goals can be achieved with fewer administrative costs – a great policy.

And yes, we saw the Port of Rotterdam’s automated terminals handling 460 million tonnes of cargo annually. The infrastructure to protect it is remarkable, too. The Maeslantkering storm surge barrier can seal off the city from the North Sea when needed.

And yes, we visited Wageningen University’s “Food Valley”, where agricultural innovation happens at scale. The Dutch produce extraordinary amounts of food from a country smaller than Canterbury.

However, focusing on all these achievements misses the point. The real difference is not what the Dutch do but how they think.

Edwin van de Haar, an independent scholar who spoke to our group, traces this Dutch pragmatism back centuries. The medieval drainage boards that still exist today emerged from necessity. When your land is below sea level, you cannot afford lengthy consultation processes. You must act, cooperate and deliver results. This created what van de Haar calls the “Frisian Freedom” – a tradition of self-governing farmers who balanced individual liberty with collective survival.

This tradition has shaped modern Dutch governance and created a

pervasive pragmatic mentality. For example, when the Advisory Board on Regulatory Burden issues negative advice, ministries rarely proceed. They technically can override it, but they must publicly justify why. When we asked how often negative advice gets overridden, the answer was rarely, because why create an independent board if you are going to ignore it?

Or consider risk. The Netherlands plans for extreme climate scenarios – up to five-metre sea level rises – because failure to deal with it could mean catastrophe for their country. Yet they do not require lifejackets on canal boats or bicycle helmets and leave both to individual responsibility – because it makes sense.

The contrast with New Zealand is clear. We have become a country obsessed with risk, no matter how small or manageable. And we believe that risk, any risk, always needs a collective response.

What I took away from our visit to the Netherlands was that culture and outcomes are linked. It is a country’s culture that creates institutions. These institutions then lead to policies. And ultimately, these policies create outcomes.

In New Zealand, we may sometimes struggle with policy implementation not because the policies are bad or we lack good ideas, but because our culture is not conducive to them.

Meanwhile, the Dutch did not become efficient because they adopted smart policies. They adopted smart policies because efficiency was a cultural necessity when the sea is your permanent enemy.

New Zealand's political culture is different. Our roads are cluttered with cones, not because we care more about safety but because we care more about being seen to care about safety. Incidentally, we hardly saw any road cones in the Netherlands over a week, and certainly not because there was no construction.

This cultural divergence shows in productivity statistics. Dutch workers produce 51 percent more output per hour than New Zealanders. That is not because they work harder or have better policies. Their entire system is geared towards getting things done rather than talking about getting things done.

It may also have something to do with Dutch directness, which is not afraid to address problems even at the risk of making some people uncomfortable.

What does all this mean for policy transfer? It suggests we need to examine not just which policies work elsewhere, but what cultural factors enable their success.

You cannot implement Dutch efficiency in a New Zealand cultural context any more than you can make water flow uphill. The policies would be rejected, diluted or overwhelmed by process.

Cultural change is possible but rare. It typically requires an existential crisis, exceptional leadership or a gradual generational shift – or possibly all three.

The Dutch have a saying: "God made the world, but the Dutch made the Netherlands." It captures something essential: that they take responsibility for outcomes, not just intentions.

In his day job, Edwin van de Haar, the scholar we met earlier, also works for a Dutch energy company. He later showed us his company's wastewater plant in Utrecht, where they extract heat from sewage and use it to bring clean energy to 20,000 households. A few years ago, a similar plant was discussed for Christchurch. It never happened.

The real lesson from the Netherlands for New Zealand is not which policies to copy. Instead, it is a harder truth: we get precisely the government, regulations, and policies that our culture demands. Until we want different outcomes more than we want process, consultation, and consensus, nothing will change.

Thus, the question is not what we can learn from the Dutch. It is whether we ask ourselves why our culture might prevent us from learning those Dutch lessons.



Netherlands shows NZ the way in reducing bureaucracy to boost economy

Roger Partridge | NZ Herald | 3 July, 2025

Rotterdam's port moves 460 million tonnes of cargo each year. That is roughly equivalent to shifting the entire population of Earth sixty times over. With barely a human hand involved.

This staggering fact was brought home during The New Zealand Initiative's recent expedition to the Netherlands. The delegation of 42 top business leaders witnessed firsthand how one of the world's most flood-prone nations became one of its most prosperous societies.

Dutch prosperity is no accident. A quarter of the Netherlands lies below sea level. This simple geographic fact has shaped a national mindset. Adaptation is not optional. It demands foresight, cooperation, and resilience. When your future depends on keeping the sea at bay, you do not waste time on ideological distractions. You focus on what works.

The stark numbers tell the story. Dutch workers produce 51% more output per unit of input than Kiwis. They achieve this while working 300 fewer hours annually than us. We are not losing because we lack effort. We are losing because we lack systems.

But which systems matter most? Twenty years ago, the Netherlands faced a familiar problem: death by a thousand regulatory cuts. But unlike most nations that merely

complain about red tape, they decided to weigh it.

Their Standard Cost Model turned regulatory burden from abstract irritation into hard mathematics. Hours spent on compliance, multiplied by wages, multiplied by affected businesses. Every form had a price tag. The result? A 25% reduction in administrative burden within four years. Four billion euros liberated annually for productive use.

The Dutch then created an independent Advisory Board on Regulatory Burden with genuine authority. Last year, it advised against 60% of proposed regulations. No diplomatic niceties. Just ruthless defence of economic efficiency.

This mindset extends well beyond spreadsheets. The Dutch regulate for real risks, not imagined ones. Canal boats come without compulsory lifejackets. Cyclists are not encumbered by mandatory helmets, yet Dutch cities remain among the safest in the world for riders. Officials open meetings with substance, not toilet directions. Infrastructure and norms do the work, not compulsion.

It is a society built on trust in personal responsibility, not bureaucratic liability management. In a country where we barely saw a road cone, it was hard not to reflect on New Zealand's orange cone epidemic – symbols of a safety-is-

everything culture that often puts theatre ahead of real risk.

Meanwhile, New Zealand has tumbled from 2nd to 20th in the OECD's regulatory quality rankings since 1998. We now rank dead last for administrative burdens. Yet some still query the need for the regulatory hygiene-checks proposed in the Regulatory Standards Bill.

The contrast extends beyond regulatory discipline. At Wageningen University & Research, we witnessed "Food Valley" – a world-leading hub where science and industry collaborate to commercialise agricultural innovation. The origins of this cluster lie in a pragmatic merger, initiated in the early 2000s, between the university and public research institutes in response to revive agri-science amid falling enrolments.

While government supported the consolidation, what followed was not bureaucratic central planning but a thriving, industry-facing ecosystem. Secure property rights, stable regulations, and institutional independence enabled private investment and collaboration to flourish.

At Wageningen, the delegation also witnessed what rational agricultural policy actually looks like. While Auckland Council sanctifies "highly productive soils" on urban fringes

– blocking houses where families might live, Dutch horticulture builds upwards. Multi-storey greenhouses produce more tomatoes per square metre than our protected paddocks could dream of achieving.

This is not ideology masquerading as environmental protection. It is technology solving real problems in a place where land is scarce. The Dutch feed Europe from a country smaller than Canterbury.

The Maeslantkering storm surge barrier embodies Dutch thinking perfectly. Two curved gates, each the length of the Eiffel Tower, capable of sealing Rotterdam from the North Sea. It has closed twice since 1997.

Some might question the economics. The Dutch remember the 1953 floods that killed 2,551 people. When you live below sea level, you do not gamble with the North Sea. This is rational risk management, not monument building.

That distinction matters. The Dutch invest in infrastructure that generates measurable returns. They do not build cycleways where nobody cycles or rail lines where buses would suffice. The Dutch learned in the 1970s that protected infrastructure could transform habits – but they have always built for use, not virtue. Every euro must justify itself.

The foundations matter. In 2013, 47 parties – government, business, unions – signed an Energy Agreement. Twelve years later, those commitments still guide infrastructure investment. This was consensus, not coercion.

This created something powerful: predictability. Dutch firms invest knowing the rules will not change with the political winds. Workers train knowing their industries will not be regulated into oblivion. Infrastructure gets built based on cost-benefit analysis, not electoral calculations.

Compare that with us. We have perfected the art of delay and indecision. Where the Dutch say yes unless there is good reason to refuse, we wrap opportunity in precaution – and then shift the rules halfway through.

Investors in New Zealand face not just red tape, but policy whiplash: reversals, overcorrections, and reviews that never end. What began as caution has become unpredictability. The result? Higher capital costs, fewer investments, and an economy working harder each year to fall further behind.

The Dutch built their prosperity not through grand government schemes, but through stable institutions. Not through heavy-handed intervention, but by enabling business to thrive. Not by doing more, but by doing less – competently.

Time we learned how.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Statistics Netherlands. "Population of the Netherlands Reaches 18 Million." CBS. 15 August 2024. <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2024/33/population-of-the-netherlands-reaches-18-million>; Statistics Netherlands. "Lower Population Growth in 2024." CBS. 30 January 2025. <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2025/05/lower-population-growth-in-2024>.
- 2 World Bank. "Surface Area (sq. km) – Netherlands." World Bank Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.SRF.TOTL.K2?locations=NL>; Canterbury Mayoral Forum. "Mayoral Forum Agenda 14 February 2025." Canterbury Mayors. 14 February 2025. <https://www.canterburymayors.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Mayoral-Forum-agenda-14-February-2025.pdf>.
- 3 Statistics Netherlands. "Dutch Agricultural Exports Worth Nearly 124 Billion Euros in 2023." CBS. 4 March 2024. <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2024/10/dutch-agricultural-exports-worth-nearly-124-billion-euros-in-2023>; Wageningen Economic Research. "Lower Export Volume and Higher Prices Lead to Limited Agricultural Export Growth." Wageningen University & Research. 4 March 2024. <https://www.wur.nl/en/research-results/research-institutes/social-economic-research/show-ser/lower-export-volume-and-higher-prices-lead-to-limited-agricultural-export-growth.htm>.
- 4 Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Port of Rotterdam in Full Transition in 2023." Port of Rotterdam. 20 February 2024. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/news-and-press-releases/port-of-rotterdam-in-full-transition-in-2023>; Port of Rotterdam. "Home Page." Port of Rotterdam. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en>.
- 5 Royal Schiphol Group. "Annual Traffic Reviews." Schiphol. 2024. <https://www.schiphol.nl/en/schiphol-group/traffic-review/>.
- 6 World Bank. "GDP per Capita, PPP (Current International \$) – Netherlands." World Bank Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=NL>.
- 7 International Court of Justice. "The Court." ICJ. <https://www.icj-cij.org/court>; International Criminal Court. "About the Court." ICC. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/about/the-court>.
- 8 Government of the Netherlands. "Delta Programme." Government.nl. <https://www.government.nl/topics/delta-programme>; Rijkswaterstaat. "Room for the River." Rijkswaterstaat. <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/en/projects/iconic-structures/room-for-the-river>.
- 9 Netherlands Water Partnership. "Home Page." NWP. <https://www.netherlandswaterpartnership.com/>.
- 10 Canon van Nederland. "Outlines." Canon van Nederland. <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/en/hoofdpijnen>; Dutch Open Air Museum. "The Canon of Dutch History." Openluchtmuseum. <https://www.openluchtmuseum.nl/en/canon-van-nederland>.
- 11 Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "New NL Branding." RVO. 1 January 2020. <https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/01/01/nl-branding>; Government of the Netherlands. "New NL Branding." Agroberichten Buitenland. 2 January 2020. <https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/actueel/nieuws/2020/01/02/new-nl-brand-in-force>.
- 12 OECD. "FDI Regulatory Restrictiveness Index – Key Findings and Trends." OECD. 2024. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/12/oecd-fdi-regulatory-restrictiveness-index_3b446fc8/c56f8a14-en.pdf; U.S. Department of State. "2023 Investment Climate Statements: Netherlands." State Department. 2023. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-investment-climate-statements/the-netherlands>.

-
- 13 Rijkswaterstaat. "Maeslant Barrier." Rijkswaterstaat. Last updated 2023. <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/en/projects/iconic-structures/maeslant-barrier>.
 - 14 International Monetary Fund. "Kingdom of the Netherlands – The Netherlands: Financial System Stability Assessment." IMF. 2024. <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/CR/2024/English/1NLDEA2024008.ashx>; International Monetary Fund. "Kingdom of the Netherlands – The Netherlands: Financial System Stability Assessment." IMF eLibrary. 18 June 2024. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2024/169/article-A001-en.xml>.
 - 15 Zeeuws Archief. "The North Sea Flood: Facts, Numbers and Links." Zeeuws Archief. <https://www.zeeuwsarchief.nl/en/zeeland-stories/de-ramp-feiten-cijfers-en-links/>; Watersnoodmuseum. "The History of the Delta Works." Watersnoodmuseum. <https://www.watersnoodmuseum.nl/en/water-knowledge/learn-about-water-safety/articles/the-history-the-delta-works>.
 - 16 Government of the Netherlands. "Voting in Water Authority Elections." Government.nl. Last updated 18 April 2023. <https://www.government.nl/topics/elections/voting-in-water-authority-elections>; Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "Water Authority Tax." Business.gov.nl. 29 August 2024. <https://business.gov.nl/regulation/water-authority-tax/>; Government of the Netherlands. "Water Management in the Netherlands." Government.nl. <https://www.government.nl/topics/water-management/water-management-in-the-netherlands>.
 - 17 Rijkswaterstaat. "Maeslant Barrier." Rijkswaterstaat. <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/en/projects/iconic-structures/maeslant-barrier>; Netherlands Water Partnership. "The Maeslant Storm Surge Barrier, the Largest Moveable Object in the World, Was Closed Last Night for the First Time Automatically." NWP. 22 December 2023. <https://www.netherlandswaterpartnership.com/news/maeslant-storm-surge-barrier-largest-moveable-object-world-was-closed-last-night-first-time>.
 - 18 Rijkswaterstaat. "Room for the River." Rijkswaterstaat. <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/en/projects/iconic-structures/room-for-the-river>; European Environment Agency. "Room for the River Waal – Protecting the City of Nijmegen." Climate-ADAPT. <https://www.climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/metadata/case-studies/room-for-the-river-waal-2013-protecting-the-city-of-nijmegen>.
 - 19 World Water Atlas. "Urban Resilience in Rotterdam." World Water Atlas. <https://www.worldwateratlas.org/narratives/water-cities/urban-resilience-in-rotterdam/>; De Urbanisten. "Watersquare Benthemplein." De Urbanisten. <https://www.urbanisten.nl/work/benthemplein>.
 - 20 Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "New Offshore Wind Farms." RVO. Updated 26 April 2024. <https://english.rvo.nl/topics/offshore-wind-energy/new-offshore-wind-farms>; Government of the Netherlands. "North Sea Programme 2022-2027." Noordzeeloket. <https://noordzeeloket.nl/en/policy/north-sea-programme-2022-2027/>.
 - 21 Netherlands Water Partnership. "Dutch Government Prioritises Water Management in Development and Trade Policies." NWP. 6 March 2025. <https://www.netherlandswaterpartnership.com/news/dutch-government-prioritises-water-management-development-and-trade-policies>; IHE Delft. "International Knowledge Exchange Crucial for Dutch Water Expertise." UN-IHE. 4 October 2024. <https://www.un-ihe.org/news/international-knowledge-exchange-crucial-dutch-water-expertise>.
 - 22 Huygens Institute. "The Polder Model. Political Culture in Water Boards (c.1200–c.1800)." KNAW. <https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/en/projecten/het-poldermodel-politieke-cultuur-in-de-waterschappen-ca-1200-ca-1800/>; OECD. "Water Governance in the Netherlands: Fit for the Future?" OECD. 2014. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2014/03/water-governance-in-the-netherlands_g1g3f7ab/9789264102637-en.pdf.
 - 23 New Zealand Treasury. "Impacts from the North Island Weather Events." Treasury. 27 April 2023. <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2023-04/impacts-from-the-north-island-weather-events.pdf>; NIWA. "Cyclone Gabrielle Was Intensified by Human Induced Global Warming." NIWA. 9 September 2024. <https://niwa.co.nz/news/cyclone-gabrielle-was-intensified-human-induced-global-warming>.
 - 24 Rijkswaterstaat. "The Story of Rijkswaterstaat." Rijkswaterstaat. <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/en/about-us/the-story-of-rijkswaterstaat>.
-

-
- 25 Government of the Netherlands. "Besluit Houdende Instelling van het Adviescollege Toetsing Regeldruk." Staatscourant. 2017, no. 29814. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2017-29814.html>; Wetten.nl. "Instellingsbesluit Adviescollege Toetsing Regeldruk (BWBROO47795)." Overheid.nl. Consolidated 26 November 2024. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBROO47795/>; Eerste Kamer. "Instellingswet Adviescollege Toetsing Regeldruk (36.450)." Eerste Kamer. 17 June 2025. https://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/36450_instellingswet_adviescollege
 - 26 OECD. "Better Regulation in Europe: Netherlands." OECD. 2010. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2010/03/better-regulation-in-europe-netherlands-2010_g1ghcaa5/9789264084568-en.pdf; European Commission. "The Standard Cost Model." European Commission. 2004. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4374310/11-STANDARD-COST-MODEL-DK-SE-NO-BE-UK-NL-2004-EN-1.pdf/e703a6d8-42b8-48c8-bdd9-572ab4484dd3>; European Commission. "Measuring Administrative Costs and Reducing Administrative Burdens in the European Union." COM(2006) 691 final. 14 November 2006. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM%3A2006%3A0691%3AFIN%3AEN%3APDF>; OECD. "Case Studies of RegWatchEurope Regulatory Oversight Bodies and of the European Union Regulatory Scrutiny Board." OECD. 2018. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2018/06/case-studies-of-regwatcheurope-regulatory-oversight-bodies-and-of-the-european-union-regulatory-scrutiny-board_23836d07/6fc6749a-en.pdf
 - 27 Kenniscentrum Wetgeving en Juridische Zaken. "Handboek Meting Regeldrukkosten." KCBR. 4 December 2023. <https://www.kcbr.nl/sites/default/files/2023-12/Handboek%20Meting%20Regeldrukkosten%202023%20-%20DEF%20-%204-12-2023%20toegankelijk.pdf>; ATR. "Handboek Meting Regeldrukkosten." ATR. 29 November 2023. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/documenten/2023/11/29/handboek-meting-regeldrukkosten>; ATR. "Werkprogramma 2024." ATR. 1 February 2024. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/documenten/2024/02/01/atr-werkprogramma-2024>; Wetten.nl. "Instellingsbesluit ATR Art. 2." Overheid.nl. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBROO47795/>
 - 28 Kenniscentrum Wetgeving. "Infographic – ATR Advisering bij Voorgenomen Wet- en Regelgeving." ATR. 12 August 2024. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/site/binaries/site-content/collections/documents/2024/08/12/atr-regeldrukanalyse-infographic/Infographic%2B-%2BATR-advisering%2Bbij%2Bvoorgenomen%2Bwet-%2Ben%2Bregelgeving%2B-%2B2024.pdf>; Zoek Officiële Bekendmakingen. "Kamerstuk 36 450, Nr. 6." Officiële Bekendmakingen. 27 March 2024. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-36450-6.html>; ATR. "Adviezen." ATR. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/adviezen>
 - 29 ATR. "Jaarverslag 2023." ATR. 13 May 2024. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/documenten/2024/05/13/atr-jaarverslag-2023>; Accountant.nl. "Regeldruk voor Bedrijven in 2023 Verder Verslechterd." Accountant.nl. 15 May 2024. <https://www.accountant.nl/nieuws/2024/5/regeldruk-voor-bedrijven-in-2023-verder-verslechterd/>
 - 30 ATR. "Jaarverslag 2022." ATR. 30 May 2023. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/documenten/2023/05/30/atr-jaarverslag-2022>; ATR. "Voortgangsrapportage 1e Halfjaar 2023." ATR. 1 September 2023. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/documenten/2023/09/01/voortgangsrapportage-1e-halfjaar-2023>
 - 31 OECD. "Regulatory Policy Outlook 2025 – Netherlands Country Note." OECD. 9 April 2025. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-regulatory-policy-outlook-2025_56b60e39-en/full-report/netherlands_f5f1799c.html
 - 32 Kenniscentrum Wetgeving en Juridische Zaken. "Handboek Meting Regeldrukkosten." KCBR. 4 December 2023. <https://www.kcbr.nl/sites/default/files/2023-12/Handboek%20Meting%20Regeldrukkosten%202023%20-%20DEF%20-%204-12-2023%20toegankelijk.pdf>; Kenniscentrum Wetgeving. "Bijlagen bij Handboek Meting Regeldrukkosten." KCBR. 4 December 2023. <https://www.kcbr.nl/sites/default/files/2023-12/Bijlagen%20bij%20Handboek%20Meting%20Regeldrukkosten%202023%20-%20DEF%20-%204-12-2023%20toegankelijk.pdf>
 - 33 Eerste Kamer. "Instellingswet Adviescollege Toetsing Regeldruk (36.450)." Eerste Kamer. 17 June 2025. https://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/36450_instellingswet_adviescollege; Tweede Kamer. "Memorie van Toelichting (36450 3)." Tweede Kamer. 2023. <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/downloads/document?id=2023D42708>
-

-
- 34 Eerste Kamer. "Instellingswet Adviescollege Toetsing Regeldruk (36.450)." Eerste Kamer. 17 June 2025. https://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/36450_instellingswet_adviescollege; Kenniscentrum Wetgeving. "Infographic – ATR Advisering." ATR. 12 August 2024. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/site/binaries/site-content/collections/documents/2024/08/12/atr-regeldrukanalyse-infographic/Infographic%2B-%2BATR-advisering%2Bbij%2Bvoorgenomen%2Bwet-%2Ben%2Bregelgeving%2B-%2B2024.pdf>
- 35 Kenniscentrum Wetgeving en Juridische Zaken. "Handboek Meting Regeldrukkosten." KCBR. 4 December 2023. <https://www.kcbr.nl/sites/default/files/2023-12/Handboek%20Meting%20Regeldrukkosten%202023%20-%20DEF%20-%204-12-2023%20toegankelijk.pdf>; European Commission. "The Standard Cost Model." European Commission. 2004. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4374310/11-STANDARD-COST-MODEL-DK-SE-NO-BE-UK-NL-2004-EN-1.pdf/e703a6d8-42b8-48c8-bdd9-572ab4484dd3>
- 36 ATR. "Werkprogramma 2024." ATR. 1 February 2024. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/documenten/2024/02/01/atr-werkprogramma-2024>; ATR. "Voortgangsrapportage 1e Halfjaar 2023." ATR. 1 September 2023. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/documenten/2023/09/01/voortgangsrapportage-1e-halfjaar-2023>
- 37 ATR. "Adviezen." ATR. <https://www.adviescollegeregeldruk.nl/adviezen>; OECD. "Regulatory Policy Outlook 2025 – Netherlands Country Note." OECD. 9 April 2025. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-regulatory-policy-outlook-2025_56b60e39-en/full-report/netherlands_f5f1799c.html
- 38 QS. "QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025: Agriculture & Forestry." QS Top Universities. 2025. <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-subject-rankings/agriculture-forestry>
- 39 Unilever. "Unilever Opens New Global Foods Innovation Centre on Wageningen Campus." Unilever. Press release. 6 December 2019. <https://www.unilever.com/news/press-and-media/press-releases/2019/unilever-opens-new-global-foods-innovation-centre-on-wageningen-campus/>
- 40 FrieslandCampina. "Innovation Centre Wageningen." FrieslandCampina. <https://www.frieslandcampina.com/about-us/innovation/innovation-centre-wageningen/>
- 41 Wageningen University & Research. "Vertical Farming." WUR. <https://www.wur.nl/en/research-results/dossiers/file/vertical-farming.htm>
- 42 Wageningen University & Research. "A Fair Comparison Between High Tech Greenhouses and Vertical Farming." WUR. 19 March 2024. <https://www.wur.nl/en/research-results/research-institutes/plant-research/business-units/greenhouse-horticulture/show-greenhouse/a-fair-comparison-between-high-tech-greenhouses-and-vertical-farming.htm>
- 43 Government of the Netherlands. "Encouraging Innovation." Government.nl. <https://www.government.nl/topics/enterprise-and-innovation/encouraging-innovation>
- 44 Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "Private–Public Partnerships Surcharge." RVO. Updated 26 September 2023. <https://english.rvo.nl/subsidies-financing/ppp-surcharge>
- 45 QS. "QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025: Civil & Structural Engineering." QS Top Universities. 2025. <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-subject-rankings/civil-structural-engineering>; TU Delft. "Bouwkunde TU Delft Maintains Top 3 Position in QS Subject Ranking." TU Delft. 17 April 2025. <https://www.tudelft.nl/en/2025/bk/bouwkunde-tu-delft-maintains-top-3-position-in-qv-subject-ranking>
- 46 TU Delft. "TU Delft | Dream Teams." TU Delft. <https://www.tudelft.nl/en/dreamhall/projects/tu-delft-dream-teams>
- 47 TU Delft News. "Congratulations! Delft Hyperloop Wins SpaceX Hyperloop Pod Competition." TU Delft. 30 January 2017. <https://tunews.weblog.tudelft.nl/2017/01/30/congratulations-delft-hyperloop-wins-spacex-hyperloop-pod-competition/>
- 48 Leiden–Delft–Erasmus Universities. "The Green Village, Field Lab for the Climate Adaptive City." LDE. 8 February 2021. <https://www.leiden-delft-erasmus.nl/en/news/the-green-village-field-lab-for-the-climate-adaptive-city>; TU Delft. "The Green Village." TU Delft Campus Tours. <https://www.tudelft.nl/en/community/alumni/xperience-day/campus-tours/the-green-village>
-

-
- 49 The Hague International Centre. "The Hague Security Delta." THIC. <https://www.thehagueinternationalcentre.nl/partners/innovation-hubs/the-hague-security-delta>; The HSD Campus functions as the physical hub, with living labs, training spaces and flexible offices where partners meet and build; Security Delta. "HSD Campus." HSD. <https://securitydelta.nl/about/hsd-campus>
- 50 The Hague International Centre. "The Hague Security Delta." THIC. <https://www.thehagueinternationalcentre.nl/partners/innovation-hubs/the-hague-security-delta>; Security Delta. "About HSD." HSD. <https://securitydelta.nl/about/about-hsd>
- 51 Security Delta. "Experts Discuss Advancements and Challenges in OT Security at HSD Café." HSD. 18 May 2024. <https://securitydelta.nl/nl/nieuws/overzicht/recap-hsd-cafe-future-of-ot-security>
- 52 Security Delta. "DronePort Rotterdam: Building a Smart, Secure and Autonomous Port." HSD. 4 August 2025. <https://securitydelta.nl/nl/nieuws/overzicht/droneport-rotterdam-building-a-smart-secure-and-autonomous-port>
- 53 Security Delta. "Security Talent." HSD. <https://securitydelta.nl/services/talent/hsd-st>
- 54 Municipality of The Hague. "Unique Cybersecurity Network in The Hague." Den Haag. 18 July 2024. <https://www.denhaag.nl/cybersecurity/cybersecurity-network/>
- 55 Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "Private-Public Partnerships Surcharge." RVO. Updated 26 September 2023. <https://english.rvo.nl/subsidies-financing/ppp-surcharge>
- 56 Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Universities. "The Green Village, Field Lab for the Climate Adaptive City." LDE. 8 February 2021. <https://www.leiden-delft-erasmus.nl/en/news/the-green-village-field-lab-for-the-climate-adaptive-city>
- 57 Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Port of Rotterdam in Full Transition in 2023." Port of Rotterdam. News release. 20 February 2024. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/news-and-press-releases/port-of-rotterdam-in-full-transition-in-2023>.
- 58 Hutchison Ports ECT Rotterdam. "30 Years Ago ECT Opened the Very First Automated Terminal in the World." ECT. 22 June 2023. <https://www.ect.nl/en/news/fast-forward/30-years-ago-ect-opened-very-first-automated-terminal-world>.
- 59 APM Terminals. "Our Terminal." Maasvlakte II. <https://www.apmterminals.com/en/maasvlakte/about/our-terminal>.
- 60 Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Half Yearly Report 2013." Port of Rotterdam. 2013. Pages 1-5. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/sites/default/files/2021-06/half-yearly-report-2013.pdf>.
- 61 Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Rotterdam Mainport Development Project." Port of Rotterdam. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/building-port/ongoing-projects/rotterdam-mainport-development-project>.
- 62 Dirk G. Hamer and Goos M. de Boer. "Maasvlakte 2: An Innovative Contractual and Systems Engineering Approach." Terra et Aqua. 2013. <https://www.iadc-dredging.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/article-maasvlakte-2-an-innovative-contractual-and-systems-engineering-approach-121-1.pdf>.
- 63 Matt Reynolds. "Rotterdam Is Building the Most Automated Port in the World." Wired. 7 October 2019. <https://www.wired.com/story/rotterdam-port-ships-automation/>.
- 64 Innomotics. "Press Release: Eneco Heat Pump System Utrecht." Innomotics. 3 February 2025. https://assets.innomotics.com/image/upload/v1738590264/ENECO_Press_Release_DRAFT_hqa6ta.pdf; pv magazine. "Netherlands' Largest Wastewater Heat Pump Goes Online in Utrecht." pv magazine. 11 September 2024. <https://www.pv-magazine.com/2024/09/11/netherlands-largest-heat-pump-comes-online/>; pv magazine. "Utrecht Wastewater Plant Launches Largest Heat Pump in Netherlands." pv magazine. 28 February 2025. <https://www.pv-magazine.com/2025/02/28/utrecht-wastewater-plant-launches-largest-heat-pump-in-netherlands/>; Innomotics. "ENECO – References." Innomotics. <https://www.innomotics.com/hub/it/portfolio/references/eneco>.
-

-
- 65 The HEINEKEN Company. "HEINEKEN Opens Global R&D Centre in the Netherlands to Lead Brewing Innovation and Next Generation Product Development." HEINEKEN Newsroom. 11 June 2025. <https://www.theheinekencompany.com/newsroom/heineken-opens-global-rd-centre-in-the-netherlands-to-lead-brewing-innovation-and-next-generation-product-development/>; GlobeNewswire. "HEINEKEN Opens Global R&D Centre in the Netherlands." GlobeNewswire. 11 June 2025. <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2025/06/11/3097561/0/en/HEINEKEN-opens-global-R-D-Centre-in-the-Netherlands-to-lead-brewing-innovation-and-next-generation-product-development.html>; Just Drinks. "Heineken to Open Global R&D Centre in Netherlands." Just Drinks. 12 November 2024. <https://www.just-drinks.com/news/heineken-netherlands-research-development/>.
- 66 The HEINEKEN Company. "Path to Net Zero." HEINEKEN. <https://www.theheinekencompany.com/sustainability-and-responsibility/environmental/path-net-zero>; Heineken N.V. "Annual Report 2024." HEINEKEN. 20 February 2025. Page 52 and Sustainability section. https://www.theheinekencompany.com/sites/heineken-corp/files/2025-02/heineken_n_v_annual_report_2024_final_20feb2025.pdf; ESG News. "Heineken Reaches 84% Renewable Electricity in 2024, Cuts Scope 1 & 2 Emissions by 34%." ESG News. 21 February 2025. <https://esgnews.com/heineken-reaches-84-renewable-electricity-in-2024-cuts-scope-1-2-emissions-by-34/>.
- 67 The HEINEKEN Company. "Heineken Beer Has Been Brewed Using 100% Green Energy for the Dutch Market." HEINEKEN Newsroom. 31 August 2020. <https://www.theheinekencompany.com/newsroom/heineken-beer-has-been-brewed-using-100-green-energy/>; Eneco. "Heineken Netherlands Adds E Boiler to Beer Production Process." Eneco News. 26 March 2025. <https://news.eneco.com/heineken-netherlands-adds-e-boiler-to-beer-production-process/>; The HEINEKEN Company. "Heineken's Approach to Project Circle." HEINEKEN Newsroom. 21 April 2023. <https://www.theheinekencompany.com/newsroom/heinekens-approach-to-project-circle/>.
- 68 RNZ. "Ports of Auckland Scraps \$65m Automation Project." RNZ. 8 June 2022. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/468780/ports-of-auckland-scraps-65m-automation-project>; Ports of Auckland. "Ports of Auckland Ends Automation Project." POAL. 8 June 2022. <https://www.poal.co.nz/news-media/ports-of-auckland-ends-automation-project>; RNZ. "Ports of Auckland Automation Project Review Finds Poor Management." RNZ. 21 September 2022. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/business/475198/ports-of-auckland-automation-project-review-finds-poor-management>; Maritime Executive. "Review Finds Missteps in Failed Auckland Terminal Automation Project." Maritime Executive. 23 September 2022. <https://maritime-executive.com/article/review-finds-missteps-in-failed-auckland-terminal-automation-project>.
- 69 Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Half Yearly Report 2013." Port of Rotterdam. 2013. Pages 1-5. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/sites/default/files/2021-06/half-yearly-report-2013.pdf>; Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Port of Rotterdam in Full Transition in 2023." Port of Rotterdam. 20 February 2024. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/news-and-press-releases/port-of-rotterdam-in-full-transition-in-2023>.
- 70 Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Rotterdam Mainport Development Project." Port of Rotterdam. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/building-port/ongoing-projects/rotterdam-mainport-development-project>.
- 71 Hutchison Ports ECT Rotterdam. "30 Years Ago ECT Opened the Very First Automated Terminal in the World." ECT. 22 June 2023. <https://www.ect.nl/en/news/fast-forward/30-years-ago-ect-opened-very-first-automated-terminal-world>; APM Terminals. "Our Terminal." Maasvlakte II. <https://www.apmterminals.com/en/maasvlakte/about/our-terminal>.
- 72 Innomotics. "Press Release: Eneco Heat Pump System Utrecht." Innomotics. 3 February 2025. https://assets.innomotics.com/image/upload/v1738590264/ENECO_Press_Release_DRAFT_hqa6ta.pdf; Kraftblock. "Volt - with Eneco and PepsiCo." Kraftblock. <https://www.kraftblock.com/projects/volt>; PepsiCo Northern Europe. "Eneco and PepsiCo Start Electrifying a Snacks Plant." PepsiCo. 6 October 2022. <https://northerneurope.pepsico.com/our-stories/press-release/eneco-and-pepsico-start-electrifying-a-snacks-plant>.
- 73 Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Half Yearly Report 2013." Port of Rotterdam. 2013. Pages 1-5. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/sites/default/files/2021-06/half-yearly-report-2013.pdf>.
-

-
- 74 KiM Netherlands Institute for Transport Policy Analysis. "Cycling Facts 2023." KiM. 10 January 2024. <https://english.kimnet.nl/documents/2024/01/10/cycling-facts-2023>
- 75 SWOV Institute for Road Safety Research. "Bicycle Helmets." SWOV. Factsheet updated 16 April 2025. <https://swov.nl/en/fact-sheet/bicycle-helmets>; European Commission. "European Road Safety Observatory, Country Profile: Netherlands." European Commission. 2024. https://road-safety.ec.europa.eu/system/files/document/file_import/2024-06/2024_factsheet_nl_en_0.pdf
- 76 John Pucher and Ralph Buehler. "Making Cycling Irresistible: Lessons from the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany." *Transport Reviews* 28, no. 4 (2008): 495–528. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01441640701806612>. Open access PDF: <https://wordpress-courses2425.wolfware.ncsu.edu/sts-320-001-fall-2024/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2022/07/Pucher-et-al.-2008-Making-Cycling-Irresistible-Lessons-from-The-Neth.pdf>; H. J. Dekker et al. "Between Protest and Counter Expertise: User Knowledge in Dutch Traffic Safety (1972–1992)." *Centaurus* 64, no. 4 (2022). <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9388429/>
- 77 Nationale Raad Zwemveiligheid. "Zwem ABC en Andere Nationale Zwemdiploma's." NRZ. <https://www.nrz-nl.nl/licentie-nationale-zwemdiplomas/zwem-abc-en-andere-nationale-zwemdiplomas/>
- 78 Mulier Instituut. "Percentage Kinderen Zonder Zwemdiploma Verdubbeld." Mulier Instituut. News release. 28 November 2023. <https://www.mulierinstituut.nl/nieuws/percentage-kinderen-zonder-zwemdiploma-verdubbeld/>; NL Times. "Number of Kids Without a Swimming Diploma Doubled Since 2018." NL Times. 28 November 2023. <https://nltimes.nl/2023/11/28/number-kids-without-swimming-diploma-doubled-since-2018>
- 79 Statistics Netherlands. "73 Inhabitants Drowned in 2022." CBS. 25 July 2023. <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2023/30/73-inhabitants-drowned-in-2022>; Statistics Netherlands. "98 Cases of Drowning in 2023." CBS. 25 July 2024. <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2024/30/98-cases-of-drowning-in-2023>
- 80 Francesca Borgonovi, Hannah Seitz and Ildikó Vogel. "Swimming Skills Around the World." OECD Working Paper No. 281. OECD. 2022. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/swimming-skills-around-the-world_Oc2c8862-en.html
- 81 Government of the Netherlands. "Voting in Water Authority Elections." Government.nl. Last updated 18 April 2023. <https://www.government.nl/topics/elections/voting-in-water-authority-elections>; Electoral Council. "Elections of the Water Authority." Kiesraad. <https://english.kiesraad.nl/elections/elections-of-the-water-authority>; Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "Regional Water Authority Tax." Business.gov.nl. 29 August 2024. <https://business.gov.nl/regulation/water-authority-tax/>; Dutch Water Authorities. "About Us." DWA. <https://dutchwaterauthorities.com/>
- 82 C. Zevenbergen et al. "Room for the River: International Relevance." *Water Governance* 2 (2013): 25–30. Wageningen University & Research. <https://edepot.wur.nl/431674>; Rijkswaterstaat. "Room for the River." Rijkswaterstaat. <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/en/projects/iconic-structures/room-for-the-river>; Rijkswaterstaat. "Leren van Ruimte voor de Rivier." Zakelijk & Innovatie Magazine. 2019. <https://www.magazinesrijkswaterstaat.nl/zakelijkeninnovatie/2019/02/leren-van-ruimte-voor-de-rivier>; STOWA. "Room for the River." Deltafacts. <https://www.stowa.nl/deltafacts/waterveiligheid/waterveiligheidsbeleid-en-regelgeving/room-river>
- 83 New Zealand Government. "Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004." Legislation.govt.nz. Clause 11.8. <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2004/0427/latest/DLM303675.html>
- 84 KiM Netherlands Institute for Transport Policy Analysis. "Cycling Facts 2023." KiM. 2024. <https://english.kimnet.nl/documents/2024/01/10/cycling-facts-2023>; John Pucher and Ralph Buehler. "Making Cycling Irresistible: Lessons from the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany." *Transport Reviews* 28, no. 4 (2008). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01441640701806612>
- 85 Water Environment Federation. "First Full Scale Water Square Opens in Rotterdam." Stormwater Report. 2014. <https://stormwater.wef.org/2014/03/first-full-scale-water-square-opens-rotterdam/>
-

-
- 86 Nationale Raad Zwemveiligheid. "Zwem ABC en Andere Nationale Zwemdiploma's." NRZ. <https://www.nrz-nl.nl/licentie-nationale-zwemdiplomas/zwem-abc-en-andere-nationale-zwemdiplomas/>; Mulier Instituut. "Percentage Kinderen Zonder Zwemdiploma Verdubbeld." Mulier Instituut. 2023. <https://www.mulierinstituut.nl/nieuws/percentage-kinderen-zonder-zwemdiploma-verdubbeld/>
- 87 C. Zevenbergen et al. "Room for the River: International Relevance." *Water Governance* 2 (2013). <https://edepot.wur.nl/431674>; Rijkswaterstaat. "Leren van Ruimte voor de Rivier." *Zakelijk & Innovatie Magazine*. 2019. <https://www.magazinesrijkswaterstaat.nl/zakelijkeninnovatie/2019/02/leren-van-ruimte-voor-de-rivier>
- 88 Government of the Netherlands. "Voting in Water Authority Elections." *Government.nl*. 2023. <https://www.government.nl/topics/elections/voting-in-water-authority-elections>; Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "Regional Water Authority Tax." *Business.gov.nl*. 2024. <https://business.gov.nl/regulation/water-authority-tax/>
- 89 Alban Kacher, "Euronext rebrands ESG in drive to help European defence firms," *Reuters*, 6 May 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/euronext-unveils-plans-back-european-defence-sectors-financing-needs-2025-05-06/>.
- 90 NATO, "Defence expenditures and NATO's 5% commitment," *Topics page*, 27 June 2025, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49198.htm.
- 91 Euronext, "Euronext strengthens its support for European strategic autonomy with New ESGfocused initiatives – Energy, Security and Geostrategy," *press release*, 6 May 2025, <https://live.euronext.com/en/about/media/euronext-press-releases/euronext-strengthens-its-support-european-strategic-autonomy-new-esg-focused-initiatives>; Alban Kacher, "Euronext rebrands ESG...", *Reuters*, 6 May 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/euronext-unveils-plans-back-european-defence-sectors-financing-needs-2025-05-06/>.
- 92 European Commission, "Notice on the application of the sustainable finance framework and the Corporate Sustainability due diligence to the defence sector," June 2025, https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ac79ebc7-d2f1-4e7a-a79c-71a06a5fdbf8_en.
- 93 European Investment Bank, "EIB Group achieves record results in 2024, targets €95 billion in investments for 2025," 30 January 2025, <https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2025-030-eib-group-achieves-record-results-in-2024-targets-eur95-billion-in-investments-for-2025>; European Investment Bank, "EIB Group increases 2025 financing ceiling to record €100 billion...", 20 June 2025, <https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2025-247-eib-group-increases-2025-financing-ceiling-to-record-eur100-billion-to-step-up-investments-in-security-and-defence-energy-grids-and-europe-s-tech-leadership>.
- 94 European Commission, "Press statement by the President on the defence package," 3 March 2025, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/et/statement_25_673; European Commission, "Future of European defence," *page banner on Readiness 2030*, accessed 26 August 2025, https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/future-european-defence_en; European Parliamentary Research Service, "ReArm Europe Plan/ Readiness 2030," April 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769566/EPRS_BRI\(2025\)769566_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/769566/EPRS_BRI(2025)769566_EN.pdf); *Reuters*, "EU defence plans could mobilise 800 billion euros, von der Leyen says," 5 March 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-defence-plans-could-mobilise-800-billion-euros-von-der-leyen-says-2025-03-04/>.
- 95 Statistics Netherlands (CBS), "The Netherlands ranks 7th on defence expenditure among NATO members," 17 June 2025, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2025/24/the-netherlands-ranks-7th-on-defence-expenditure-among-nato-members>.
- 96 Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands, *Defence Strategy for Industry and Innovation (DSII) 2025-2029*, 4 April 2025, <https://english.defensie.nl/binaries/defence/documenten/policy-notes/2025/04/04/defence-strategy-for-industry-and-innovation-2025-2029/Defence%2BStrategy%2Bfor%2BIndustry%2Band%2BInnovation%2B%28D-SII%29%2B2025-2029%2BEN.pdf>.
-

-
- 97 Port of Rotterdam Authority, "Defence wants to use Maasvlakte 2," 26 May 2025, <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/news-and-press-releases/defence-wants-use-maasvlakte-2>.
- 98 Security Delta (HSD), "About HSD," accessed 26 August 2025, <https://securitydelta.nl/about/about-hsd>.
- 99 National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV), *Cybersecurity Assessment Netherlands 2024*, 28 October 2024, https://english.nctv.nl/binaries/nctv-en/documenten/publications/2024/10/28/cybersecurity-assessment-netherlands-2024/CSBN%2B2024_EN%2BWebversie%2B-%2Bkopie.pdf; National Cyber Security Centre, "The Netherlands Cybersecurity Strategy 2022-2028," 31 January 2023, <https://english.ncsc.nl/publications/publications/2022/december/06/the-netherlands-cybersecurity-strategy-2022-2028>.
- 100 OECD, *Government at a Glance 2025 – Netherlands country note*, 19 June 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/government-at-a-glance-2025-country-notes_da3361e1-en/netherlands_656a7fd9-en.html.
- 101 Bart Meijer, "Dutch Senate approves law to permanently close Groningen gas field," Reuters, 16 April 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/dutch-senate-approves-law-permanently-close-groningen-gas-field-2024-04-16/>.
- 102 Bart Meijer, "New Dutch coalition aims for more offshore gas extraction, nuclear energy," Reuters, 16 May 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/new-dutch-coalition-aims-more-offshore-gas-extraction-nuclear-energy-2024-05-16/>.
- 103 Eneco, "Largest heat pump in the Netherlands taken into operation," 6 September 2024, <https://news.eneco.com/largest-heat-pump-in-the-netherlands-taken-into-operation/>; Emiliano Bellini, "Utrecht wastewater plant launches largest heat pump in Netherlands," *PV Magazine*, 28 February 2025, <https://www.pv-magazine.com/2025/02/28/utrecht-wastewater-plant-launches-largest-heat-pump-in-netherlands/>.
- 104 New Zealand Ministry of Defence, *Defence Capability Plan 2025* (public version), April 2025, <https://www.defence.govt.nz/assets/publications/Defence-Capability-Plan-25.pdf>; Lucy Craymer, "New Zealand aims to nearly double defence spending to 2% of GDP," Reuters, 7 April 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/new-zealand-nearly-double-defence-spending-2-gdp-2025-04-07/>.
- 105 Praveen Menon, "New Zealand to spend \$1.6 billion for US maritime helicopters and Airbus jets," Reuters, 21 August 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/new-zealand-spend-16-billion-us-maritime-helicopters-airbus-jets-2025-08-21/>.
- 106 European Commission, "Notice on the application... to the defence sector," June 2025, https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ac79ebc7-d2f1-4e7a-a79c-71a06a5fdbf8_en; European Investment Bank, "EIB Board of Directors steps up support for Europe's security and defence industry...", 8 May 2024, <https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2024-174-eib-board-of-directors-steps-up-support-for-europe-s-security-and-defence-industry-and-approves-eur-4-5-billion-in-other-financing>.
- 107 Port of Rotterdam Authority, "Defence wants to use Maasvlakte 2," 26 May 2025, <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/news-and-press-releases/defence-wants-use-maasvlakte-2>.
- 108 OECD, *Government at a Glance 2025 – Netherlands country note*, 19 June 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/government-at-a-glance-2025-country-notes_da3361e1-en/netherlands_656a7fd9-en.html.
- 109 Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency. "About NFIA." Invest in Holland. <https://investinholland.com/how-we-help/netherlands-foreign-investment-agency/>; Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency. "Investor Relations." Invest in Holland. <https://investinholland.com/how-we-help/investor-relations/>
- 110 OECD. "FDI Regulatory Restrictiveness Index." OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/sustainable-investment/fdi-regulatory-restrictiveness-index.html>
-

-
- 111 World Justice Project. "Rule of Law Index 2024: Netherlands." WJP. <https://www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2024/Netherlands>; U.S. Department of State. "2024 Investment Climate Statements: Netherlands." State Department. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-investment-climate-statements/netherlands>
- 112 UNCTAD. "Netherlands – Introduces FDI Screening Regime." Investment Policy Monitor. <https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/investment-policy-monitor/measures/4328/netherlands-introduces-fdi-screening-regime>; Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "Getting a Merger, Acquisition, or Joint Venture Approved." Business.gov.nl. <https://business.gov.nl/regulation/mergers-takeovers/>
- 113 White & Case. "Foreign Direct Investment Reviews 2024: Netherlands." White & Case. <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-our-thinking/foreign-direct-investment-reviews-2024-netherlands>
- 114 Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "WBSO: Tax Credit for Research and Development." RVO. <https://english.rvo.nl/subsidies-financing/wbso>
- 115 Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "Innovation Box." Business.gov.nl. <https://business.gov.nl/subsidy/innovation-box/>; Government of the Netherlands. "Corporate Income Tax." Government.nl. <https://www.government.nl/topics/taxation-and-businesses/corporation-tax>
- 116 OECD. "FDI in Figures – April 2024." OECD. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/fdi/FDI-in-Figures-April-2024.pdf/_jcr_content/renditions/original/FDI-in-Figures-April-2024.pdf; UNCTAD. "World Investment Report 2024." UNCTAD. <https://unctad.org/publication/world-investment-report-2024>
- 117 Canon van Nederland. "Outlines." Canon van Nederland. <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/en/hoofdlijnen>; Committee for the Development of the Dutch Canon. "A Key to Dutch History." Canon van Nederland. English translation. March 2007. <https://www.canonvannederland.nl/en/downloads>.
- 118 Netherlands Enterprise Agency. "About the Netherlands' Visual Identity." NL Platform. January 2020. <https://nlplatform.com/visual-identity>.
- 119 NL Platform. "Netherlands Compared 2020." NL Platform. <https://nlplatform.com/articles/netherlands-compared-2020>.
- 120 Port of Rotterdam Authority. "Port of Rotterdam." Port of Rotterdam. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en>; Port of Rotterdam Authority. "The Port That Will Take You Ahead." Port of Rotterdam. <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/en/why-rotterdam/port-will-take-you-ahead>.
- 121 Wageningen University & Research. "Rankings." WUR. <https://www.wur.nl/en/education-programmes/wageningen-university/rankings.htm>; QS. "World University Rankings by Subject 2025: Agriculture & Forestry." QS Top Universities. <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-subject-rankings/agriculture-forestry>.
- 122 Security Delta. "About HSD." HSD. <https://securitydelta.nl/about/about-hsd>.
- 123 Rijkswaterstaat. "Room for the River." Rijkswaterstaat. <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/en/projects/iconic-structures/room-for-the-river>.
- 124 Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal. "Instellingswet Adviescollege Toetsing Regeldruk (36.450)." Eerste Kamer. https://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/36450_instellingswet_adviescollege.
- 125 International Transport Forum. "Container Port Automation: Impacts and Implications." OECD Publishing. 2021. <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/container-port-automation.pdf>
-



Go Dutch explores what New Zealand can learn from one of the world's most pragmatic, innovative nations. From flood management to regulatory reform, the Dutch show how trust, competence and consistency can turn small countries into global leaders.

This report distils lessons from The New Zealand Initiative's 2025 delegation visit – lessons in how to align culture, institutions and delivery for lasting success.

"The Dutch example asks us to copy their habits: the patience to plan, the discipline to deliver, the confidence to welcome partners, the humility to measure results."

ISSN

2624-0092 (print)

2624-0106 (online)

**THE
NEW ZEALAND
INITIATIVE**

www.nzinitiative.org.nz

The New Zealand Initiative

PO Box 10147

Wellington 6143