

Towards a stronger NL

An agenda to build renewed confidence in the future and create a resilient Netherlands

Summary

- In early 2021, we set out a new course for 2030, based around *broad welfare* as the guiding principle. This followed an extensive survey of members, entrepreneurs and experts (Bridge Project). We developed this along three lines: 1) towards a productive Netherlands, 2) towards an inclusive Netherlands and 3) towards a sustainable Netherlands.

- Alongside this roadmap, we also introduced a new understanding of the role of business (*Rhineland Model 2.0*). This involves companies taking responsibility for the external effects of their operations. We noted, furthermore, that the government was overburdened. That is why we also said that we were actively looking at what entrepreneurs themselves could do to address social issues.

- Three years on, it is time to take stock and update our course where necessary. In the box below we list just a few of the

steps we have taken over the past three years to put our new course into practice. You will find more examples in the sections that follow.

- In this update we can conclude that our earlier analysis from 2020 remains as relevant as ever and that the challenges facing the Netherlands are still the same. In fact, tensions in society have increased rather than decreased, the business climate has worsened and the government's inability to resolve major challenges has become even more visible.

- One fundamental change compared to 2020, however, is that the Netherlands' international security context has deteriorated dramatically. A large-scale war is being waged on Europe's eastern border, for example, and we can rely less and less on the US for our security. Cybercriminals and less friendly nations are threatening our critical infrastructure and democracy.

A brief selection of steps we have taken over the past period

- Based on the new course we set out, we have drawn up climate plans, bringing the 2030 targets into focus for the first time. We have worked with a broad alliance of parties to find solutions to the nitrogen problem.
- Together with trade unions, we have drawn up a recommendation for the government (Social and Economic Council Medium- and Long-Term Recommendation), aimed at giving workers greater security and companies greater agility, for example by bringing an end to endless chains of temporary contracts. This is now being put into law.
- To implement the new Rhineland Model 2.0, we have also drawn up a Tax Governance Code, which requires companies to provide an insight into where they pay what tax, and the Corporate Governance Code has been amended.
- We have strengthened the link to society at various social levels (national and regional) and in relation to all manner of themes. We have achieved this by setting up a 'bridge infrastructure' and a community of 'bridge builders'. This has allowed all kinds of initiatives to be discovered/developed and encouraged companies to participate in them, from the 'Warme huiskamers' initiative through to the 'NL werkt aan werk' programme.

That means our security is no longer a given. The same goes for our economic security too. When it comes to new technology, an international race is raging in which Europe is lagging well behind. The US trade war with China is persisting and threatening to turn Europe into a pawn. For critical raw materials we are highly dependent on a small number of countries who will not hesitate to use this position of power against us.

- After taking stock we are therefore giving a number of new emphases to the three pillars of our course from 2021. Above all, however, we are adding a fourth pillar: *the security and economic resilience of the Netherlands*.

- When it comes to the economy pillar (*Productive NL*), we need to step up the pace significantly to ensure that our productivity and business climate improve again. With regard to a *social Netherlands*, the next step to help people regain control over their lives means focusing on social innovation. For the *sustainability* pillar we need to focus as much as possible over the coming years on implementing all existing climate plans and start building circular production chains (also with our independence in mind!).

- The new fourth pillar, our *resilience*, calls for steps including building up a robust military capacity, increasing our independence where critical raw materials and key technologies are concerned, and focusing more attention on countering cybercrime and crime that undermines society.

- In 2021 we also included an *investment agenda* in our new course. In this update we explain that the Netherlands needs to continue with this, especially now that the public finances are the subject of much debate. After all, we will improve our public finances by investing.

- But however good our agenda is for the Netherlands, everything hinges on our country's ability to get things done. Our government is overburdened and lacks implementation capacity. It will not be able to resolve the issues facing the Netherlands on its own. Entrepreneurs are problem-solvers. Getting things done is very much their strength. That is why they are keen to be part of the solution to the Netherlands' problems in the years to come.

