Voluntary Subnational Review

The SDGs and Decentralised Governments in the Netherlands

Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO), Union of Water Authorities (UvW)

July 2022

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Opening statement

The Netherlands embraces the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Local and regional governments are increasingly doing so as well. Often, this is done in depth on a single SDG, such as the guidelines developed by the provinces on sustainable procurement. But we also see increased reporting on the 17 SDGs, such as through VLRs by the Netherlands' largest cities.

As VNG, IPO, UvW, we observe a positive development in the application of SDGs as a framework, a monitor and a guide for sustainable development. More and more decentralised authorities are implementing them. More than one third of all Dutch municipalities have become Global Goals municipalities by 2022.

With regard to the progress made on the sustainable development goals, we are of mixed opinion. Although steps have been taken in many areas, the pace is insufficient in order to achieve the 2030 SDG agenda. For a great deal of the SDGs, the Netherlands − one of the richest countries in the world − is a natural leader. But not everyone experiences this progress in the same way. We see an increasing divide in the Netherlands, leading to an inequality in financial security, education, health and housing opportunities (see chapter 6). The COVID-19 pandemic has widened this gap. Not all citizens experience the broad prosperity. A second important observation in this report is that prosperity and well-being in the Netherlands are being achieved at the expense of nature in the broad sense. Both in the Netherlands and abroad, from where the raw materials for our economic sectors are imported.

Despite the positive developments, as local and regional government associations of local governments, we realise that this is not enough to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and also support the other countries in achieving them. It is a joint effort and we are well aware of that.

We make an important appeal to the national government to propagate the bigger story in unison with the decentralised authorities. Sustainable development for people, animals and nature, in the Netherlands − and the world.

Jan van Zanen (president Association of Netherlands Municipalities), **Rogier van der Sande** (president Union of Water Authorities) and **Jaap Smit** (president Association of Provincial Authorities).

1. Introduction

The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO) and the Union of Water Authorities (UvW) are the three local and regional government associations of the decentralised government in the Netherlands. One of the many topics in which the local and regional government associations support their members is in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in which local and regional authorities play an important role. The UvW and the VNG have noticed that the SDGs are starting to play an increasingly important role for their constituencies, through initiatives such as VNG's Gemeenten4GlobalGoals campaign (119 participating municipalities). The SDGs are also becoming increasingly known and relevant in the provinces. In order to chart the progress in achieving the goals, the local and regional government associations collectively report on the SDGs annually via a chapter in the National SDG Report.

In 2022, the Netherlands will submit a Voluntary National Review to the UN on the status of the implementation of the SDGs in the Netherlands. It is widely recognised (by the UN, by the State, by local governments in the Netherlands and worldwide) that the SDGs can only be achieved with the strong involvement and input of both national and decentralised governments. Municipalities, provinces, Water Authorities and national government are working together to achieve our sustainability goals by 2030. As decentralised governments, we have therefore also decided to draw up a Voluntary Subnational Review, i.e. a report on how the decentralised governments in the Netherlands are doing with regard to achieving the SDGs.

The VSR has the following objectives:
- Mapping the governance context for SDG implementation;
- Measuring progress in achieving the goals;
- Identifying obstacles and offering policy advice.

2. Methodology for the development of the report

The VSR is a product of the cooperation between VNG International, IPO and the UvW. Two external consultants were involved for the data analysis and the evaluation with local authorities and external stakeholders. The UCLG Guidelines for VSRs were used as a starting point for the evaluation and also served as a basis for the structure of the report.

The VSR was created in the following steps. First, an extensive desk study and data analysis were performed. The choice was made to evaluate the progress of all 17 SDGs and to use the indicators previously established by VNG. Data sets from Statistics Netherlands (CBS), planning agencies, Waarstaatjegemeente, the Water Authorities' Waves dashboard and the province's dashboard were used. Focus group reports and VNR documents were also used, with the participation of representatives of local governments. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to all municipalities, provinces and Water Authorities. The response from provinces and Water Authorities was sufficient, however, municipalities completed the survey at a minimum rate (5% of all municipalities). As the survey is not representative, the decision was made to use the results as supporting material.

The qualitative evaluation was scheduled to take place through focus groups with administrators and external stakeholders. Due to overfull agendas, this was not feasible. Six administrators of local governments were interviewed. A number of administrators are also SDG ambassadors. External stakeholders were asked to respond in writing to a number of evaluation questions, to which we received a handful of responses. The draft final report was discussed in a validation workshop with representatives of municipalities, provinces and Water Authorities.

The VSR covers all 17 SDGs. It is about the implementation of the SDG agenda in a 'direct' sense (to what extent do we steer on the SDGs?) and especially: substantive progress in important sub-areas, even if not explicitly linked to the SDGs. Within those goals, the focus is on the 'biggest challenges' for the Netherlands and on the international work of, for example, the Water Authorities. Attention is also paid to the interconnection and coherence between the different pillars. For a number of SDGs, distinctions have been made between regions where there was a clear picture of disadvantaged and underprivileged groups.

The necessary data for this VSR was mainly provided by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and the national planning agencies. The VNG has developed a standard set for SDG monitoring, which can also be viewed on Waarstaatjegemeente.nl (WSJG). The Water Authorities and provinces have extensive progress dashboards from which the target achievements can be drawn.

3. Policy and enabling environment for the localisation of the SDGs

3.1 Form of government and role of local and regional authorities

The Netherlands is a 'decentralised unitary state': the Constitution does not define the division of tasks between the levels of government. The distribution of tasks and authorities among the national government, the 12 provinces, 344 municipalities and 21 Water Authorities differ per sector. The national government establishes frameworks through national laws, policies and regulations. European regulations also influence local choices in policy and implementation. Within these frameworks, a considerable degree of decentralised decision-making takes place. With three major decentralisation operations in 2015, the municipalities have become the 'first government' in the social sphere. Municipalities became responsible for youth care services, social support for vulnerable groups such as the long-term sick and elderly with care needs, and the economic participation of people with poor employment prospects. Municipalities and provinces also have tasks in the broader social domain such as education and housing. Together with the private sector, they work to create the conditions for local and regional economic development and employment. The core tasks of the provinces also include the physical living environment, such as spatial development, nature management, energy and climate and regional accessibility. The main task of the 21 Water Authorities is to ensure clean and sufficient water and water safety. Traditionally, this involved draining excess water, also for agricultural purposes. Increasingly, the challenge is to

adapt both the urban and rural environment to more extreme weather, and to both too much and too little water.

The Dutch Environmental and Planning Act, which is expected to enter into force in 2023, represents a far-reaching decentralisation of the many and complex tasks in the area of spatial planning and the physical living environment. This will create new relationships between municipalities, the state, provinces and Water Authorities. In addition, solutions to a growing number of social issues are being sought at the regional level. There are numerous supra-municipal partnerships such as security regions and labour market regions. At the same time, the social environment is changing rapidly. Various developments give rise to this. Many social tasks such as energy transition, climate adaptation and the agricultural transition have far-reaching spatial consequences. Not everything can be done everywhere at the same time, and the call for options on how to deal with our scarce space is heard more often and more loudly. The struggles over the use of space are also translated into discussions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the state and the region in this matter. Are there reasons to supplement the decentralised philosophy of the past decades with a stronger directorial role for the state? Several recent recommendations from the government's advisory councils attempt to give direction to the strengthening of intergovernmental cooperation. The decentralised authorities strive to bring society and government closer together and to perform their tasks in cooperation with citizens, companies and social organisations. Given the scale of the tasks and the sometimes limited resources, this is also a necessity.

3.3 National coordination systems for SDG implementation and progress monitoring

Along with all the other UN member states, the Netherlands endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Unlike many other countries, the Dutch government has not drawn up a national SDG strategy or programme. The 17 global goals and sub-targets have also − for the most part − not been translated into tangible targets for 2030. The UN Agenda 2030 does call for this. Dutch society has repeatedly made an appeal for the SDGs to be given a central place in government policy (see, for example, here and here). In the coalition agreements of 2017 and 2021, however, the goals are only referred to in the development cooperation section. This shows that the goals are still mainly regarded as an international framework. The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation has a light coordinating role, both for domestic and international implementation. She is supported by a national SDG coordinator. A 'pragmatic' approach was chosen, based on existing responsibilities and structures. There is, however, an inter-ministerial SDG Focal Points working group, in which VNG also participates on behalf of the local authorities. With exceptions, the SDGs are not explicitly mentioned in the policy. An SDG test has been introduced for new government policies, but its application is still limited.

In the Netherlands, the SDGs have been proclaimed an agenda for the whole of society. The SDG Netherlands Foundation is a platform of over 1,250 social actors, including municipalities, who are actively working on the SDGs. VNG sits on the board of the foundation on behalf of the three local and regional government associations of local governments. There are also social SDG alliances

for each of the 17 targets. A slight degree of alignment exists. Different actors in society act on their own initiative and at their own discretion.

Two progress reports are offered to the House of Representatives every year. The first is a trend measurement by Statistics Netherlands (CBS): the *Monitor of Well-being & the SDGs.*
The concept of Well-being is closely related to the SDGs and stems from the recognition that gross national product is too narrow an indicator of development. The CBS and the planning bureaus have selected a broader set of indicators that − together − provide an overview of the social, ecological and economic development in the Netherlands. There are also indicators related to the expected effects of the Dutch development on people elsewhere and in the future. Since 2019, the annual SDG measurement and the measurement of well-being by CBS have been combined into one publication. The indicators of both frameworks partly overlap and complement each other. In addition to the trend measurement by Statistics Netherlands, there is the annual SDG report *Nederland Ontwikkelt Duurzaam* (the Netherlands Develops Sustainably). This is a joint product of the national government, decentralised authorities, social organisations, the business community, knowledge institutes and young people in which, in outline form, the efforts made are mapped out. An impediment to analysing progress in both reports is the lack of national SDG targets for 2030 with a related timeframe. For a number of important areas such as climate, circular economy and sustainable agriculture, such targets do exist. What is also missing is an overarching balancing framework and a funding framework such as an *INFF* (Integrated National Financing Framework) for the SDGs or sustainable development.

In 2021, the effectiveness of SDG implementation in the Netherlands was evaluated. The evaluation report states that society does feel the need for a national SDG strategy. It is recommended that Well-being and the SDGs are embedded in policy and the budget cycle. The evaluation offers a number of suggestions to increase steering effectiveness and strengthen policy coherence. A clear translation of the SDG sub-goals into departmental policy targets would not only enhance their measurability, but would also strengthen the commitment of local governments. Without national frameworks and accountability, it is less evident for local governments to focus on global goals in their own policy and planning and control cycle.

3.4 Intergovernmental cooperation on social challenges

There are national policies in almost all areas of the SDG agenda. The greatest social challenges in the Netherlands show strong overlaps with the SDGs. For example, the transitions initiated in the field of climate (adaptation) and energy (SDGs 6, 7 and 13), making agriculture more sustainable, reducing the nitrogen surplus, improving water quality and restoring nature (SDGs 2, 6 and 15) and the pursuit of a circular economy (SDGs 8, 9 and 12). But also issues regarding livelihood security and debt (SDGs 1 and 10), greater equality of opportunity on the labour market and within education (SDGs 4 and 8), sufficient and affordable housing combined with sustainable mobility and accessibility (SDGs 9 and 11), issues around asylum and migration (SDGs 10 and 8), and trust in institutions, digitalisation of government and security (SDG 16).

There is frequent administrative consultation between the national government and decentralised authorities. At the same time, 'collegial governance' at state level has not yet been developed, and sectoral interests therefore remain in the picture for a long time in joint decision-making processes.

At the national level, there is a desire to make integral choices more quickly, for example on the basis of the two or three dominant national interests in an area or region. The current challenges in the spatial domain are unique, precisely because of the combination of size, complexity and urgency. This requires a more integrated approach and justifies a strengthening of the various government parties. A stronger role for the state is also necessary in view of the international obligations that have been entered into and due to the complexity and cross-border nature of many tasks the individual municipalities and provinces are faced with.

In order to cope with the social challenges of our time, the aim is to strengthen cooperation between the levels of government. Many issues are at play at different governance scales and in several sectors at the same time. A solution that seems appropriate at one level or from one sector is often not appropriate at another level and from another perspective. Therefore, a joint and integral approach is needed in which municipalities, provinces, Water Authorities and the state work together with society as one.

In the current implementation structure, sectoral implementation paths and programmes generally dominate; relatively few programmes focus on area-specific integration of interests and sectors. Government programmes and objectives are increasingly based on specific funding (SPUK financing) to local governments: funds are converted from freely spendable (DUB, municipal funds) to SPUKs with national control and accountability, from generic to sectoral. This may be convenient for implementation practice, but is at odds with decentralisation and room for area-specific and integrated work.

Some new and more overarching programmes such as the 'Programma Verstedelijking & Wonen' (Urbanisation & Housing Programme), the 'Programma Energiesysteem' (Energy System Programme) and the 'Programma Landelijk Gebied' (Rural Area Programme) seem to be able to contribute to this, but it is still unclear to what extent they will actually fulfil this role. In programme implementation, multi-level governance seems generally better developed than multi-sector governance. In terms of content, there seems to be a lot of overlap between various implementation processes and programmes (for example, in the themes of housing/urbanisation versus mobility, rural areas and energy infrastructure). There also seems to be too little synergy in the implementation structure in some relationships, for example between the sectoral energy tasks and integrated spatial development, and between soil and subsoil in relation to above-ground tasks. And where we see overlap at programme level, for example between urbanisation/housing and mobility, there may also be insufficient synergy and cohesion in the phasing of investments (at the project level). There are also many differences in scale levels/areas that cannot always be explained by differences in the nature of the tasks. Think, for example, of the various divisions and related tasks in MIRT regions, environmental agendas, regional urbanisation strategies, NOVI areas and the 'Regio Deals' (Region Deals).

Tackling the major challenges together and taking responsibility for concrete results can only succeed under the right conditions and with clear agreements on everyone's role. The conditions for success are clear frameworks, a clear mandate, good democratic safeguards and sufficient financial resources and implementation capacity. Clear investment regulations are important; national funding is based on sectoral budgets that are partly linked to various programmes. Many implementation routes and programmes do not have their own 'investment resources'; only a few programmes have their own funding, and some investment schemes often feed into several

programmes. At the start of new projects and programmes, it is not always clear if and how resources will be provided, and at which table the decisions will be made.

For the decentralised authorities, the main desire is to work on the basis of an equal partnership with the State, in which each partner can discuss any financial or legal obstacles and opportunities. It is also important that the national policy takes sufficient account of the implementation practice: new laws and regulations must be tested and calculated on feasibility in a timely manner. Municipalities in particular are struggling with insufficient human resources, money and authority to perform the tasks delegated to them. In addition, municipalities have less and less control over the use of resources, which undermines their autonomy, such as setting tasks in the social but also the spatial domain, where the availability of resources remains a matter of concern. Another factor is the reduced municipal fund, which is redistributed among municipalities via the Wbi, among other things. Their difficult financial position is even forcing many municipalities to discard important local facilities. In the discussion regarding the role of decentralised authorities in the implementation of policy, it is important to distinguish between two levels of implementation: the level in which national and regional authorities make reciprocal agreements ('deals') about target coverage and the level that leads directly to the implementation of projects ('shovel in the ground'). The fact that both levels are still intermingled in many discussions creates confusion. The new coalition agreement cuts the main source of municipal funding even further. The intergovernmental relationships are still 'out of balance', VNG writes in its annual plan for 2022. Resources are urgently needed for municipalities to tackle backlogs and there is a need for structural certainty regarding their room to invest.

In the lead-up to the 2017 national elections, the three local and regional government associations of local and regional authorities made a collective offer to the new government for a joint investment agenda, focusing on sustainable infrastructure, the energy transition and adaptation to climate change. A common agenda ('Krachtig groen herstel van Nederland') was also drawn up for the 2021 elections. Three themes are central to this: housing and living environment (SDG 11), regional economy (SDG 8, 9, 12) and climate and energy (SDG 6, 7, 13). These tasks are inextricably linked to numerous other themes such as water, nature (SDG 6 and SDG 15), agriculture (SDG 2), liveability and accessibility, but also health (SDG 3), culture (SDG 4 and 11), digitisation and participation (SDG 16). The municipalities also used the proposition *De winst van het sociaal domein* (The benefit of the social domain) to draw the attention of the central government to three tasks in the social domain: restoring livelihood security (SDG 1), increasing equal opportunities (SDG 10) and making it easier to live a healthy life (SDG 3).

For the citizens, the living environment is a unified whole, physically, economically and socially. The decentralised authorities want to tackle the various tasks in a coherent manner and translate them into concrete results in an area-specific approach that is appropriate to the local and regional circumstances. They experience an area of tension between national regulations and area-oriented work. In area-oriented processes, all stakeholders and authorities sit around the table and work on possible solutions based on the issue and the provided frameworks. Frameworks that are too rigid frustrate this process. In the current situation, financial resources are still mostly made available to municipalities, Water Authorities and provinces on a sectoral and incidental basis for the individual tasks. These funds are not aligned and have their own procedures and accountability. In order to put an end to this compartmentalisation, the national government will also have to steer towards intersectoral solutions through interdepartmental approaches. This could be done by periodically putting the following management questions on the agenda: 1) Which tasks and goals do we want to achieve on the basis of which reciprocal agreements and with which means and instruments via

which of the three implementation tracks? 2) Who decides what, at which table, on the basis of which agreements on harmonising the preparation of those decisions? 3) Which assignments do we formulate for which 'implementing organisation(s)', and which frameworks, preconditions and resources do we provide?

In 2018, the state and local governments started a four-year intergovernmental programme (IBP) for nine major societal challenges, in the physical domain, the social domain and overarching questions in the area of good public administration and appropriate financial relationships. This involved regional, area-based development and so-called 'Regio Deals' (Region deals) between the state, the regions and civil society organisations and companies. The IBP's vision of combining tasks to offer added value to society was very much in the spirit of the SDGs. In the final phase of the IBP, it was evident that regional cooperation was increasing. Central government participates in area-specific processes more regularly, which are often organised by the province or water board . There was also good cooperation on specific themes such as human trafficking (SDG 16) and climate and energy (SDGs 13 and 7), although the programmes differ greatly in their degree of integration. However, despite the willingness to cooperate further, working as one government remains a challenge in several areas: conflicting views on roles, fragmented money flows (in general, most government-regional programmes do not have their own resources, but are financed through sectoral investment schemes such as the 'Mobiliteitsfonds' (Mobility Fund)) and accountability structures as well as compartmentalisation remain an issue.

Strengthening decentralised control of the current implementation structure could lead to a more task-oriented, and less institution-oriented, approach. The image of the implementation structure does not make it sufficiently clear at present how this arises from the nature of the challenges. A stronger role for local governments can contribute to more cohesion and strength between the state and the region if this steering is focused on:

- More conscious choices about which tasks should be tackled in which way (e.g. sectoral-general, sectoral-area-focused, or integral-area-focused) and at which level of scale/in which areas;
- More balance and strengthening of the relations between sectoral versus integral, area-oriented trajectories and programmes through agreements on who takes decisions about what and in what order;
- Further simplification of the implementation structure aimed at less overlap, more bundling, more synergy between themes.

4. Decentralised governments' actions to localise the SDGs

4.1 Local ownership and the role of local and regional government associations

The local and regional government associations (LRGAs) VNG, IPO and the UvW encourage awareness and implementation of the SDGs among their members. With the campaign Gemeenten4GlobalGoals (Municipalities4GlobalGoals), VNG International has been actively fulfilling the role of instigator since 2016. This is done on behalf of VNG. So far, 119 municipalities have joined the campaign; they call themselves Global Goals municipalities. VNG provides guidance and shares inspiring examples to support municipalities in implementing the goals or applying the SDGs as a policy framework. In early 2022, for example, VNG published an SDG guide to support coalition negotiations after the municipal elections. The VNG network *Gemeenten4GlobalGoals* also organises meetings, issues an informative newsletter and provides a chapter in the national progress report to parliament each year. In 2022, an online SDG dashboard was launched where municipalities can obtain information on their progress regarding the SDGs (see section 4.3).

The most important positive change in the past five years is that support for sustainable development has increased among governments, businesses, civil society organisations and citizens alike. This is also reflected in the results of the survey for this VSR, the discussions with administrators and external stakeholders. It is due to increased awareness of the SDGs, but also due to contemporary issues such as the nitrogen surplus and poor water quality, and the negative effects these have on both nature and on new development opportunities such as housing. In addition, the effects of climate change are visible and perceptible, and widely reported in the media. The third factor mentioned is the COVID-19 crisis and the increased inequality between residents. From the survey, it became apparent that the SDGs directed at energy and climate, sustainable urban development and health are receiving the most attention, see table:

Which SDGs influence policymaking and/or the establishment of policy frameworks?
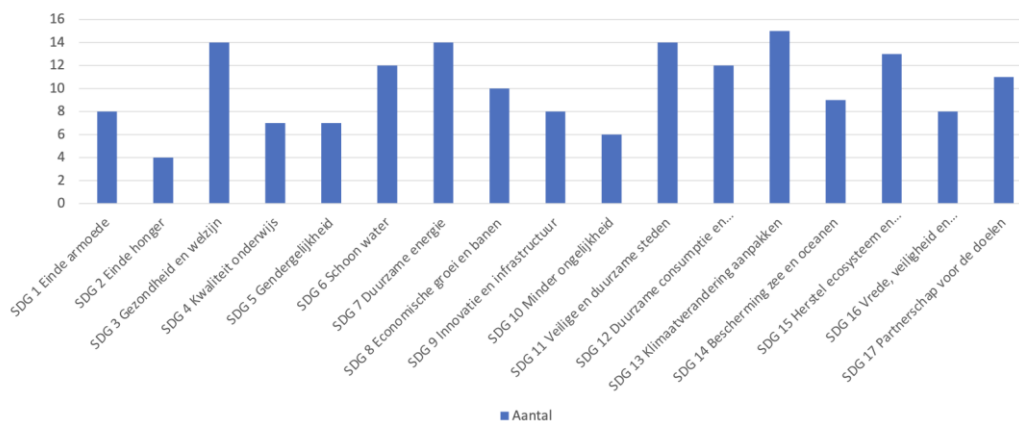
While increased awareness and publicity are identified as positive factors for increased attention to the SDGs, the opposite is also true. The lack of knowledge and political and managerial support in the organisation is an obstacle to letting the SDGs play a role in framing, accountability and as a guideline for sustainable development. This is also because there is no incentive to formally adopt the SDGs, as is often the case in developing countries (SDG implementation programmes with attached funding). Only one third of the municipalities have signed up as a Global Goals municipality and only 5% of municipalities completed the survey. The lack of human resources was also mentioned several times by respondents. Respondents mentioned the factor 'not enough embedded in the organisation' as the most important obstacle, followed by 'too little knowledge about SDGs in the organisation'. A recent study commissioned by a water board in Overijssel also identifies the tension in the Water Authorities between core tasks and social tasks and the lack of financial resources as an important factor. In addition, the terminology of the SDGs is not directly applicable in the work of the Water Authorities (Muiswinkel, 2021, p 7).

## Obstacles encountered
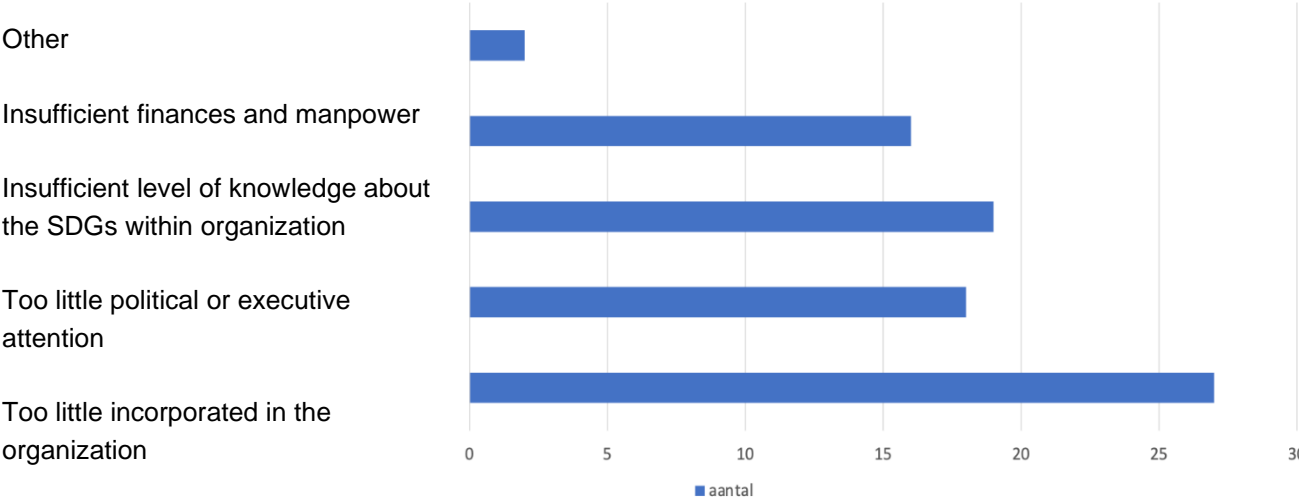
One third of the 25 most active municipalities involve external stakeholders when working on the SDGs. The intrinsic motivation of administrators (councillors, aldermen, mayor) is an important success factor.

We also asked local governments what would make working with and on the SDGs easier. The answer option 'A benchmark to measure progress' was mentioned most often:

What would make working on the SDGs easier?
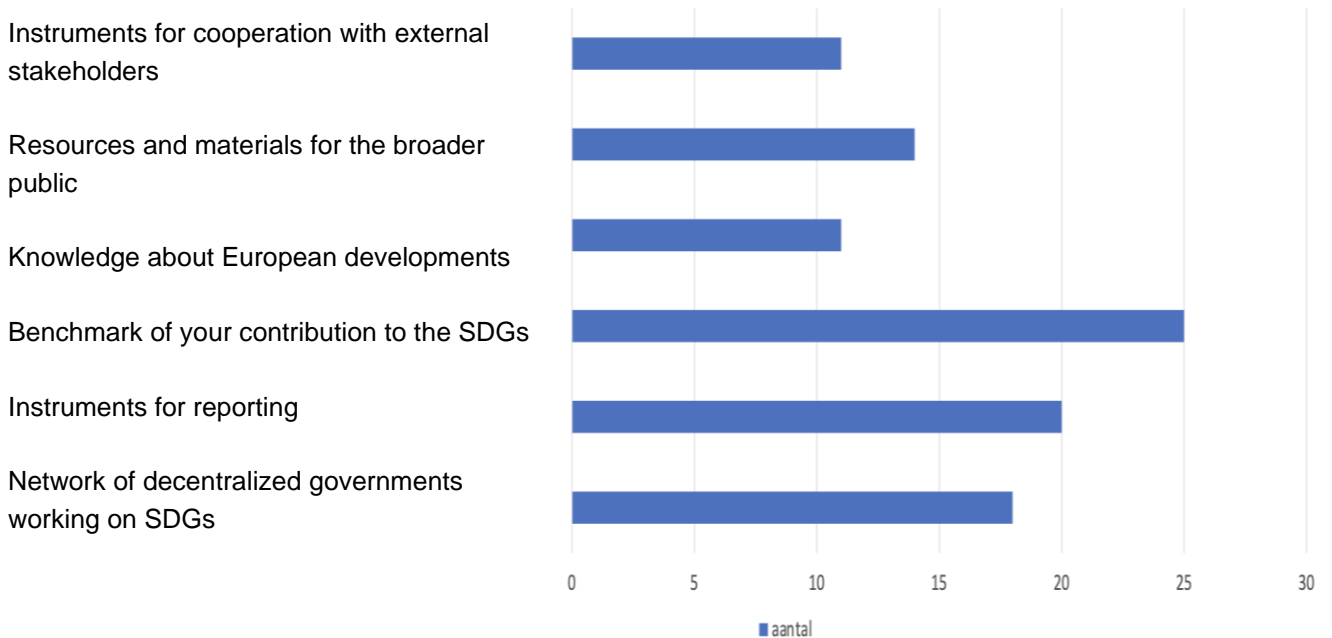
The municipality of Utrecht sets a good example for monitoring the progress of the SDGs. It has developed an Internet page where the progress per SDG and per indicator is made clear. The purpose of the monitoring is to raise awareness and exchange knowledge.

One point of criticism, also voiced in the interviews with administrators, is that the SDGs are still too often grouped under the policy theme 'International', as is the case in VNG's own organisation. Administrators consider it a missed opportunity that, in the governance structure of the VNG, the SDGs are only put on the agenda in the VNG International Committee. The individual SDG topics are of course discussed in the specialist committees, but are often not linked as such to the SDG agenda. It reinforces the impression that the SDGs relate to international affairs or development cooperation, rather than Dutch municipalities. This is reinforced by the English terminology used (Global Goals or SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals). Ownership of the SDG agenda is therefore not felt sufficiently. Whose SDGs are they?

The IPO does not have a central point for raising awareness and promoting the SDGs. Provinces are, however, important actors in a number of SDGs and address these sectorally. According to some respondents, there is room for improvement here, because the provinces have a pivotal role in spatial developments and nature, and play an important role in the energy transition and the transition to a circular economy.

The UvW promotes the SDGs both in the internal organisation, in its core tasks and social tasks, and through the international Blue Deal programme. Many examples exist of Water Authorities that have realised a circular working environment. In the interviews with water board administrators, it became clear that in addition to the functional tasks of the water board, embracing the social tasks and major transitions has become a part of daily practice.

VNG, IPO, UvW

The results of the survey are clear about the support of the central government. There is a need for this, as the table below shows. In the additional conversations, the commitment of VNG-International was considered sufficient. Examples given: the provision of tools to translate SDGs into policy and budget and the practical handouts.

The Water Authorities more frequently replied that they did not need support from the national government or that they felt the support from the UvW was sufficient.

Do you need support from the national government?
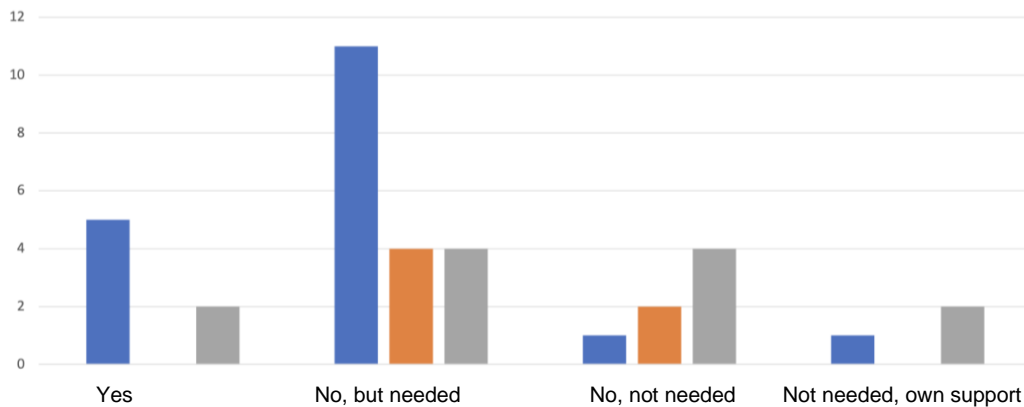
(blue = municipality, orange = province, grey = water board)

There are many practical examples of different governments, civil society partners and businesses working together on the SDGs. The association Circulair Friesland (Circular Friesland) is a good one, where a number of companies and the province of Friesland took the lead in 2016 to accelerate collectively in order to achieve a circular economy. It led to a broad network, activities, innovations and the ambition to become the most circular province in Europe by 2025.

In the Achterhoek, 7 municipalities work together in the 'Regio Achterhoek' (Achterhoek Region) and the 'Achterhoek Raad' (Achterhoek Council). In 2021, together with the Commissioner of the King in Gelderland, they declared to become an SDG region, with the intention to use the SDGs as a framework for policy and implementation. In the West-Friesland region, municipalities are working together on the social SDGs. The SDGs are also included in the strategy of the municipalities in the Food Valley region.

Municipalities also cooperate with social partners. The municipality of Leiden, for example, organised the Leiden 2030 festival together with 200 social partners: during a 31-day programme, nearly 25,000 people were introduced to the sustainable development goals and initiatives in their neighbourhood. The Municipality of Oss cooperates closely with society through its active Global Goals Platform Oss. Working with local platforms to involve residents is common practice in many active Global Goals municipalities.

In this special SDG reporting year to the United Nations, the municipalities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam report to the United Nations via a *Voluntary Local Review*, which zooms in on the SDG implementation in these municipalities in a specific-local way, making it an important supplement to this *Voluntary Subnational Review.*

4.2 Decentralised SDG implementation: integrating SDGs into policies and budgets

Municipalities have tasks and roles in all 17 goals. The primary responsibility for tasks in the area of SDG 2, 14 and 15 lies with the province and the state. The Water Authorities have direct responsibilities in relation to SDG 6 and 13, but are also committed to SDG 2, 7, 12, 15 and other goals, through both their core tasks and business operations.

The local authorities recognise themselves in the roles of policy-maker, implementer, supervisor and investor. But also of connector, pathfinder, facilitator and catalyst for sustainable behaviour in other parties. However, it takes a long time to determine how and to what extent the goals will be anchored locally. Not all political parties are equally enthusiastic either.

Research from [Everlast Consultancy](link) (2021) among 25 Global Goals municipalities shows that 92% of them are actively working on the SDGs. A much smaller proportion, 16% and 20% respectively, position the SDGs as an integral theme in the organisation or take it up on a programme basis. In a mere 8% of these municipalities, the SDG targets are mentioned in budgeting and a separate budget is available. In provinces and Water Authorities, the SDGs are occasionally used in policy and budgets, sometimes to make visible which SDGs belong to which policy sectors (as a reference), and sometimes as a check in procurement policy. In general, it can be concluded that the integration of the SDGs in policy and budget is minimal and the SDGs are thus not used as a steering framework.

4.3 Decentralised SDG monitoring and data availability

In the Netherlands, a great deal of statistics are collected at all levels. Rich sources of information are the databases and reports of the Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the three planning bureaus and more specialised organisations such as the RIVM, the Land Registry or the police. RVO is the main implementing organisation for the energy transition at the national level, responsible for granting subsidies, monitoring and sharing knowledge. The 'Bureau Energieprojecten' (Energy Projects Bureau), part of RVO, is responsible for the implementation of projects that fall under the Government Coordination Scheme. With the regional energy strategies, much of the implementation is decentralised in the region. The monitoring of the regional energy strategies (RES) lies with PBL, which is also responsible for monitoring the Climate Agreement.

The provinces, Water Authorities and larger municipalities also collect their own data, both qualitative and quantitative. As a service to all municipalities, VNG compiles a great deal of current data in an accessible way in thematic dashboards on the website *Waarstaatjegemeente* (WSJG). As an LRGA, IPO also has a website with statistical information, but more recent and comprehensive monitoring information is tracked by the twelve provinces themselves. In 2021 and

2022, IPO developed an indicator set for circular and sustainable procurement, which will be endorsed and applied by all 12 provinces.
The UvW has the *Waves dashboard*, for which the Water Authorities provide data annually. The three local and regional government associations also provide reports in various forms to clarify developments.

Active monitoring of progress on the 17 SDGs is still very limited at the decentralised level. For the national SDG trend measurement, CBS has data for about 50% of the official UN indicators; it also uses its own indicators. However, not all of these indicators are suitable for monitoring decentralised efforts and progress, either because they do not correspond to decentralised tasks or because data is not available for all regions. Some cities (e.g. Utrecht, Oss, Leeuwarden, Amstelveen/Aalsmeer) and the province of Friesland have developed their own monitoring systems for this purpose. The extensive SDG-dashboard of the municipality of Utrecht is an appealing example. However, developing and maintaining such a system requires a lot of capacity. At the request of several Global Goals municipalities, VNG has worked on a standard set for municipal SDG monitoring with centralised data collection. The selected indicators are in line with the priorities, tasks and roles of municipalities, as also indicated in the guide *De Global Goals in het gemeentelijk beleid* (The Global goals in municipal policy). A first group of indicators is currently made available in an SDG-dashboard on Waarstaatjegemeente.nl. Some are useful tools for comparison and benchmarking between municipalities, others are mainly relevant at a local level.

For themes in the social domain, work and income, and energy and climate, a great deal of local data is available and accessible. In areas where other authorities have a primary responsibility, such as sustainable agriculture, water quality, marine ecosystems and nature and biodiversity, there are still very few appropriate indicators and corresponding data available at the municipal level. This also applies to other important dimensions of the SDG agenda, such as the transition to a circular economy, socially responsible procurement, combating discrimination, (gender) inequality, civic participation, partnerships and international cooperation. Nevertheless, monitoring in these areas is essential for an integral approach; it is therefore important to fill existing gaps.

A valuable source is the Nationale Monitor Duurzame Gemeenten, NMDG (National Monitor Sustainable Municipalities) of the Tilburg research institute Telos-Pon. This monitor distinguishes the economic, socio-cultural and ecological pillars as three 'capitals', with a total of 22 sub-themes. There is a great deal of overlap in terms of content with the SDGs. Data is gathered for all Dutch municipalities, but are only available in exchange for payment.

The provinces, with the exception of Friesland, Drenthe and Zeeland, do not yet use the SDGs widely as a frame of reference. Some Water Authorities use the SDGs in policy frameworks or include them in their accountability, such as Waterschap Rijnland and Brabantse Delta. More attention is paid to the related concept of Well-being. Since 2020, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) publishes the Regional Monitor of Well-being (RMBW). This is in line with the 'Regio Deals' (Region Deals) in which the national government and regions tackle various challenges together. In this monitor, the well-being of municipalities and provinces is charted, as well as that of 40 regions, on the basis of 42 indicators. Several provinces have their own Well-being Monitor in place or under development.

VNG, IPO, UvW

5. Progress made in the implementation of the goals and targets

In this chapter, we will consider each of the 17 goals separately. For each SDG, we briefly describe the general trend in the Netherlands, the tasks and roles of the decentralised authorities and the relationship with national (and EU) policy.

For each goal, we have selected two or three indicators for which we visualise the progress made. These indicators and related data come from the VNG's WSJG dashboards, Statistics Netherlands' Regional Well-being Monitor, the Water Authorities' Waves dashboard and the Klimaatmonitor (Climate Monitor). They are linked to the most significant tasks for the decentralised authorities in the Netherlands. The period for which data is available varies, but it roughly covers the past five to seven years.

Most indicators relate to quantitative information at result level, such as the level of child poverty in the municipality (SDG 1), or the share of renewable energy in the energy mix (SDG 7). This type of information is well suited for comparison between municipalities or other authorities. In the visualisations, a selection of a few municipalities of different sizes and from different parts of the country was often made as an indication. For a limited number of goals, indicators are included at the level of input or output, for example the waiting times for mental health treatment (SDG 3) or the number of reintegration facilities in the labour market (SDG 8 and 10).

5.1 SDG 1 – No Poverty

SDG 1 aims to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions, and includes the explicit target of halving the proportion of people living in poverty according to national definitions by 2030 (SDG 1.2). Special attention is needed for social security (1.3), equal economic rights and access to basic services for all (1.4), and the resilience of poor and vulnerable groups to social and economic shocks and natural disasters (1.5). This goal therefore involves a broad definition of poverty and livelihood security.

Overall view and trend

In European comparison, the Netherlands scores well on SDG 1. The share of the population living below the European poverty line in 2020 was 13.6% (0.4% more than in 2019), and the share at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 16.3%. In 2019, 3% or 400,000 households were living in long-term poverty. The percentages vary greatly from one municipality to another. Although the level of prosperity is high on average, a growing group of citizens is struggling to make ends meet. These are mainly people with a lower education, a non-Western migration background, unstable income due to flexible work and high housing costs in relation to income. Debt and poverty, and thus the depth of inequality, are increasing (SDG 10). The number of homeless persons doubled in ten years, but has now stabilised. Vulnerability to shocks involves not only income but also individual resilience and social cohesion. Loneliness is high in the Netherlands with an average of 43%.

VSR indicators

Child poverty has received much attention in national and local policy. In the Netherlands, 1 in 12 children (aged zero to 18) grow up in families living below the 'not much but just enough' threshold. This number is considerably higher in the border regions of the Netherlands and in the large cities. The percentage has, however, been declining since 2015. Children living in poverty are often unable to participate in sports, culture and other activities, find it harder to keep up at school and are more likely to experience health problems. The government aims to reduce child poverty by half, from 9.2% in 2015 to 4.6% in 2030.

In 2018, 8.3% of households registered **problematic debts** with a disposable income insufficient to cover monthly expenses. This makes them extra vulnerable to shocks such as price increases. It also leads to stress and mental issues.

Role of local and regional governments

Municipalities are in charge of the care for various vulnerable groups and of guiding people with poor job prospects towards work. They implement the national poverty policy and also determine what is done locally for people who are having difficulty making ends meet. There are large differences between municipalities in terms of approach, but also in the number of people benefiting from social services. This varies between 5% and 20% of the population. Despite efforts to provide customised services, municipalities do not always succeed in reaching the most vulnerable groups. The approach to child poverty focuses partly on facilitating children from poor families to participate in society, by working together with partners in education, sport, culture and youth care. On the other hand, municipalities are working on a more structural approach to prevent and break through poverty, by guiding people to employment (SDG 8), providing appropriate care (SDG 3), affordable housing (SDG 11) and debt assistance. Municipalities and provinces are working to strengthen the local and regional economy and labour market (SDG 8).

Relation to national policies

Structural causes of poverty, including low wages and high house prices, cannot be solved by municipalities themselves. The national government determines the policy for the labour market and housing market, the amounts of the various benefits and the operation of the benefits system. For many households, the social assistance benefit and the minimum wage are below the subsistence level. The complex system of social security and the harsh penalties for people who commit minor offences aggravate the debt issue. Municipalities do not receive sufficient structural funds to reach all vulnerable groups and are often forced to cut back on crucial services, such as community centres, that are especially important for vulnerable

groups. The central government did allocate additional resources to combat child poverty in 2017. The Alliantie Kinderarmoede (Child Poverty Alliance) was also formed. Preventing and solving problematic debts was a key task of the state and municipalities in the Intergovernmental Programme (IBP) 2018-2022. The new coalition agreement provides for a broader approach to poverty and debt at district level. An integrated approach proves difficult in practice, due to institutional compartmentalisation and separate money flows.

1. Child Poverty (SDG 1.2)

Indicator: Percentage of children growing up in families living on welfare

Source: CBS Youth Monitor

For this CBS indicator, the average value in the Netherlands was 7% in 2015-2016 and 6% in 2020. There are considerable differences between municipalities. Large differences also exist between districts within the municipalities. The trend is expected to be negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is striking that in the North of the Netherlands, there is a greater concentration of municipalities where relatively many children grow up in families living on welfare. Municipalities in Limburg also show higher percentages. In other areas, the areas with high and low rates of child poverty are more spread out.
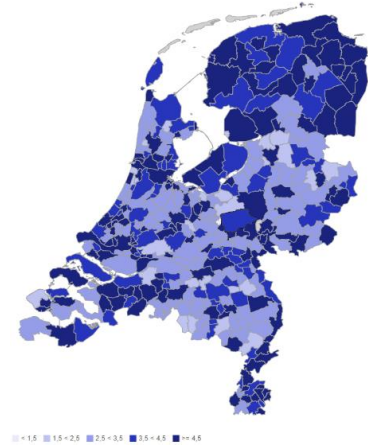
2. Problematic debts (SDG 1.2 and 1.5)

The average share of households with problematic debts in Dutch municipalities decreased by almost two percent between 2015 and 2020. It is striking that the less urban municipalities, which already had a lower share, also started to show a relatively stronger decline in this period. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the share of households in debt is expected to rise again.

20
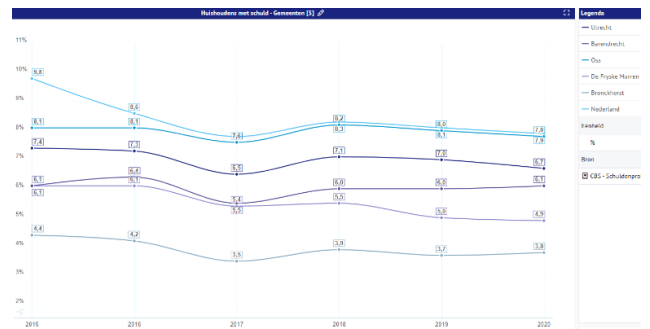
5.2 SDG 2 – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

SDG 2 (sub goals 2.1 and 2.2.) focuses on ending hunger and ensuring access to nutritious and sufficient food for all. Malnutrition is not only about too little food, but also about an insufficient intake of important nutrients (see SDG 3). Sub-targets 2.3 and 2.4 focus on food production: equal access to land and production opportunities for small-scale food producers and the promotion of sustainable agriculture, which contributes to healthy ecosystems and supports climate adaptation. There is a close link with SDG 3 (health), SDG 6 (water), SDG 13 (climate) and SDG 15 (ecosystems and biodiversity).

Overall view and trend

The Netherlands scores well on access to food and on agricultural productivity. There is a wide choice of food at relatively low prices. The decades-long emphasis on high production at low cost (efficiency) has put great pressure on biodiversity and the environment, and has made farmers vulnerable. In terms of the sustainability of food production (SDG 2.4), the Netherlands continues to lag behind in many respects, especially in terms of environmental pressure per hectare. The Netherlands has the highest livestock density in the EU. Ammonia emissions from manure lead to the highest nitrogen surplus in the EU. The Netherlands also uses the most chemical pesticides per hectare. There has been no substantial improvement in recent years. The quality of nature in the agricultural area (SDG 15) is still deteriorating, and alarmingly so. The Dutch intensive livestock sector also creates a high ecological footprint abroad due to, among other things, the import of soya as cattle feed.

VSR indicators (SDG 2.4 and a close link to SDG 15)

CBS measures the quality of the Dutch soil (SDG 15.3) by the phosphorus surplus and **Nitrogen surplus**. The high nitrogen surplus from agriculture causes great damage to surrounding nature such as heathland and forest. As a result, vulnerable plant species and associated insects are disappearing. In 2018, the critical nitrogen deposition value was exceeded in more than 71% of all protected terrestrial nature. Excess phosphorus and nitrate also affect the quality of (surface) water (SDG 6). The European Commission has a target of 25% **organic farming** in the total area by 2030; in the Netherlands, the current share amounts to a mere 3.8%.

Role of local and regional governments

The provinces are actively involved in national and EU policies for agriculture and horticulture. Through permits, supervision and enforcement, provinces and municipalities have a role in reducing emissions from livestock farming, arable farming and horticulture that are harmful to people and nature. In practice, environmental standards and permits are often exceeded. Local and regional authorities can also stimulate nature-intensive and climate-neutral circular agriculture through land and lease policy, information, positive incentives for agricultural businesses and support for social partnerships. The commitment to sustainable development of the agricultural sector varies greatly from one area to another. The water authorities manage the groundwater level and, in the interests of agriculture, dispose of excess rainwater. Here, an area of tension exists with nature goals; especially in periods of drought, more water will have to be retained. The Delta Plan for Agricultural Water Management works with farmers and market gardeners on tasks concerning the quality and quantity of water.
Provinces and municipalities can also implement local food policies and influence eating habits by facilitating the supply of fresh, healthy and sustainably produced food, from neighbourhood gardens, food cooperatives and food forests, for example. An example is the City Deal Food on the urban agenda.

Relation to national and EU policies

Since 2018, national targets have been set for the transition to circular agriculture, the sustainable management of all agricultural soils and the reduction of chemical substances by 2030. These are elaborated further in the National Rural Area Programme, but still with too little attention to food security (e.g. in relation to the war in Ukraine). There is still little

substantial support for farmers who want to convert or for sustainable start-ups. Most (EU) subsidy money goes to innovations within mainstream business models. The court ruling on nitrogen in 2019 led to *Nitrogen Reduction and Nature Improvement Act*, with a lot of extra funding for measures. Provinces, municipalities and Water Authorities are working with the state to implement this, among other things, on the basis of area plans. However, the current permit rules for expanding (agricultural) businesses do not guarantee that the nitrogen pollution of nature will be reduced. The provinces and Water Authorities are committed to an integrated approach in the rural area that links restoration of nitrogen-sensitive nature to objectives such as water quality and climate and a sustainable perspective for the agricultural sector. European policies and subsidies can be used to advance the goals, including those for water and soil quality, biodiversity and climate adaptation.

1. Nitrogen excretion from agriculture (SDG 2.4 and SDG 15.1, 15.3 and 15.5)

Indicator: Nitrogen excretion from agriculture in kg per hectare of fertilised farmland
(map, in kg per hectare of fertilized cultivated land, 2019)
Source: Regional Monitor Well-being

The total nitrogen excretion in livestock manure in kilograms per hectare of fertilised agricultural area, with deduction of the nitrogen volatilised during manure storage in the barn and during storage outside the barn. The nitrogen surplus varies greatly from province to province. The highest values (dark blue) are a multiple of the EU average.

Minder dan 52 kg   52 kg tot 90 kg   90 kg tot 161 kg   161 kg tot 255 kg   255 kg of meer

2. Biological farming (SDG 2.4)

Indicator: Share of organic farming including farms in transition
Source: CBS

In all provinces, the organic farming area has increased since 2011, but only gradually. With the exception of the province of Flevoland, the Netherlands remains far below the EU average.

Share of biological farming per province (incl. farms/businesses in transition) in percentages of the total agricultural area per province:

Biologische landbouw inclusief bedrijven in omschakeling

VNG, IPO, UvW
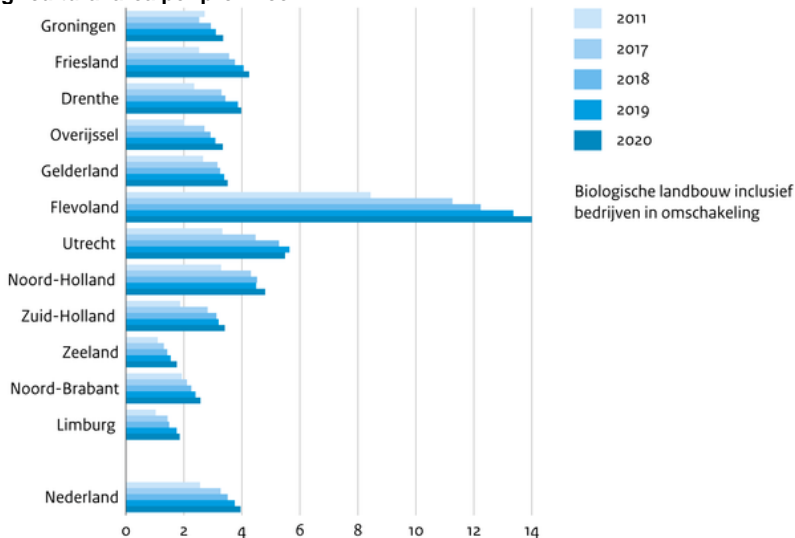
CASE STUDY – Global Goals Municipality of Schiermonnikoog – Recycled Agriculture

The municipality of Schiermonnikoog is home to seven dairy farmers. They are committed to developing circular agriculture on the island, thus reducing the pressure on nature to an acceptable level.

In 2016, a feasibility study was performed on reducing the nitrogen burden on nature, with sufficient economic perspective and resilience for agriculture on the island.

The farmers are united in the island's dairy cooperative. Together, they are willing to reduce the current livestock size from 650 to 420 dairy cows, with a milk reduction of 35%. In cooperation with the Dutch organisation for nature protection, Natuurmonumenten, they are working on a sustainable and biodiverse island. Less cows, less manure and less artificial fertiliser offers nature more space to thrive. The diversity of plants and animals is growing, befitting the island landscape. After all, nature will gain strength and the island will become even more of a paradise for meadow birds.

The economic perspective entails additional income to dairy production. The farmers have produced *Vanschier* cheese from local milk.

The third pillar is the residual flow: how does one handle manure, grass clippings, etc.? The farmers discuss this among themselves and with the municipality, province and nature monuments.

In the meantime, Schiermonnikoog has become a testing ground. The farmers share their knowledge with the many partners involved in the project, and vice versa. They are determined to grow into a fully circular agriculture that is good for the island, for nature and for themselves.

More info: https://boerenopschier.nl/

5.3 SDG 3 − Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all

SDG 3 aims at good health for people of all ages. Important elements for the Netherlands are universal access to good quality physical and mental healthcare and the reduction of mortality from non-communicable (chronic) diseases (3.4), the reduction of epidemics (3.3) and the prevention and treatment of substance abuse (3.5). There are also sub-targets for halving road casualties (3.6) and reducing death and disease from environmental pollution (3.9). See SDG 11 for air pollution. The context in which people live also has a major influence on how healthy they are and how healthy they feel: for example, poverty, debt, housing, loneliness, unemployment, disability, level of education and the quality and arrangement of the living environment. VNG therefore strives towards Health in All Policies (HiAP, WHO), an approach to public policy where public health is improved through factors that lie outside the health system, but which do greatly affect the general state of health, such as the physical environment.

Overall view and trend

In international comparison, the Dutch healthcare system is well organised. However, the trends are not all positive. In 2020, 51% of the Dutch population was overweight and this share is increasing. There are still relatively many people in the Netherlands who smoke and who do not exercise enough. However, the number of smokers (above the age of 12) dropped from 23% in 2013 to 19% in 2020. The decline in alcohol consumption has stagnated. In terms of mental health, the Netherlands is in the mid-range in Europe. Of the population aged 12 and over, just over 88% were considered mentally healthy in 2020. The trend is negative. Young people experience many psychological problems as a result of, among other things, high performance pressure. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of suicides among young people increased, possibly due to isolation. The pandemic has put a high pressure on the healthcare system. The trend for traffic safety is neutral.

VSR indicators

About a quarter to 35% of the inhabitants experience their **own health** as not too good or poor. Between 30 and 40% of people are living with one or more long-term conditions. The proportion of people with **obesity** is increasing. There is a big difference in lifestyle and health (perspective) between higher and lower educated people. Obesity is particularly prevalent in deprived neighbourhoods. In these neighbourhoods, the supply of unhealthy fast food is considerably higher than in richer districts. Despite the agreements in the national 'Preventieakkoord' (Prevention Programme), the food environment − also in supermarkets − is not getting any healthier.

Municipalities are in charge of youth care. The demand for youth mental healthcare has increased significantly; one in seven young people rely on it. In the purchase of care, the supply of 'light' care is crowding out the more complex care, with **long waiting lists for specialist youth mental healthcare** as a result. The lengthy wait for appropriate help, which sometimes lasts for years, is a pressing problem in the social sphere.

Role of local and regional governments

Since 2015, the municipalities have been in charge of implementing youth care, including psychiatry, and social support for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and people with disabilities. Despite a large number of provisions granted, the intended benefits of the decentralisations have not yet all been realised. A major cause concerns inadequate financial resources. The challenges in procuring youth care sometimes lead to a depletion in the supply. Municipalities have a role in encouraging exercise, including through sports facilities. More exercise opportunities have been created for young people and vulnerable groups. Together with the provinces, they are also responsible for creating safe traffic and road situations and for a healthy and safe living environment, among other things by reducing nuisances and harmful substances in the environment (see also SDG 2, 11, 12 and 15).

Municipalities make choices about the design of public space, and can therefore directly intervene in the physical living environment to improve health: for example, through school buildings, a park, a cycle path, more greenery in the

neighbourhood. In this way, one can work on a healthy living environment by means of an area-oriented and therefore integrated approach.

The Water Authorities contribute to public health through sewage treatment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they took daily samples of the sewage. The analysis of these samples by the RIVM made it possible to identify elevated concentrations of the virus before people became ill. Since 2021, daily monitoring has been performed at all sewage treatment plants and the system is being equipped to extract more health-related data from sewage in the future.

Relation to national policies

Medical care is primarily the responsibility of the national government. The increased market forces in healthcare and the high deductible in health insurance have caused some households to avoid care or to be unable to receive the care they need. Municipalities do not have enough resources and room to choose to fulfil the tasks delegated to them satisfactorily. Additional resources have been provided for the elimination of backlogs in (youth) care in the short term, but more money is needed structurally. Another bottleneck is that it is not entirely clear who is responsible for 'Health in All Policies' (or positive health), the broader approach to health that contributes to people's ability to cope with the physical, emotional and social challenges in life and to exercise as much control as possible in this process. The policy pays attention to prevention, but the regulations and financial incentives, also for health insurers, do not support this. The commitment to a healthy food environment is based on voluntary action by market players. The legislation provides municipalities with few legal instruments to steer towards a healthy food environment.

1. Perceived health of residents (SDG 3.3 and 3.4)

Indicator: Share of population that considers its own health as (very) good *(map: perceived health in 2020, in % of the population of over 18 years old)*
Source: Gezondheidsmonitor (Health Monitor)
At the municipal level, there are strong differences in the perceived health of adult inhabitants. These differences are visible in regional clusters of high and low percentages of inhabitants who experience their health as (very) good. In the regions of South Limburg and East Groningen, this share is visibly lower than in other regions.
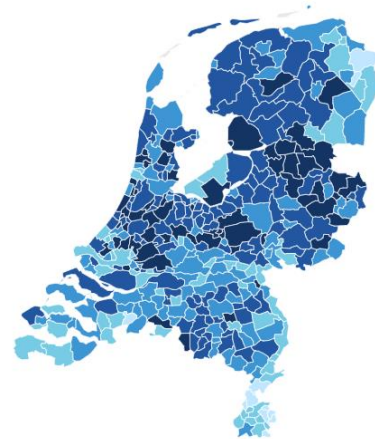
Minder dan 72,8% | 72,8% tot 76,9% | 76,9% tot 79,8% | 79,8% tot 82,5% | 82,5% of meer | Onbekend

2. Healthy lifestyle/Obesity (SDG 3.4, 2.1 and 2.2)

Indicator: Percentage of population aged 19 years and over that is overweight.
Source: WSJG

The map shows similar regional differences. The regions of South Limburg and East Groningen show a higher concentration of overweight people. There is a clearly perceptible health difference between the Randstad and the other regions of the country.
In addition to regional differences, there are also strong health differences at neighbourhood level. The percentage of overweight adults in the municipality of Utrecht, for example, shows differences of up to more than 20 percentage points between neighbouring districts.

25

Eenheid: %

< 44 | 44 < 48 | 48 < 52 | 52 < 56 | >= 56 | Nederland: 50,8

< 28 | 28 < 32 | 32 < 36 | 36 < 40 | >= 40 | Nederland: 50,8

Bron: Gezondheidsmonitor volwassenen (en ouderen), GGD'en, CBS en RIVM
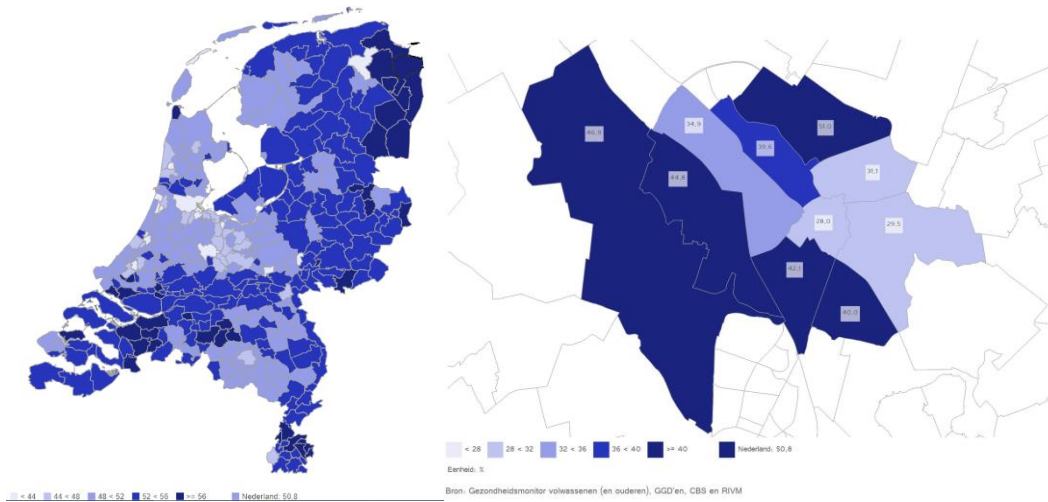
3. Provision of mental healthcare (SDG 3.4)

Indicator: Average waiting times in mental healthcare and youth mental healthcare for the diagnosis of an eating disorder (*diagram: waiting time in weeks per health care office region, December 2021*)

Source: WSJG

The diagram shows that the length of the waiting lists in mental healthcare can vary greatly by care office region. Waiting times for patients with eating disorders can be more than 30 weeks in some regions, while elsewhere waiting lists are much shorter.

VNG, IPO, UvW
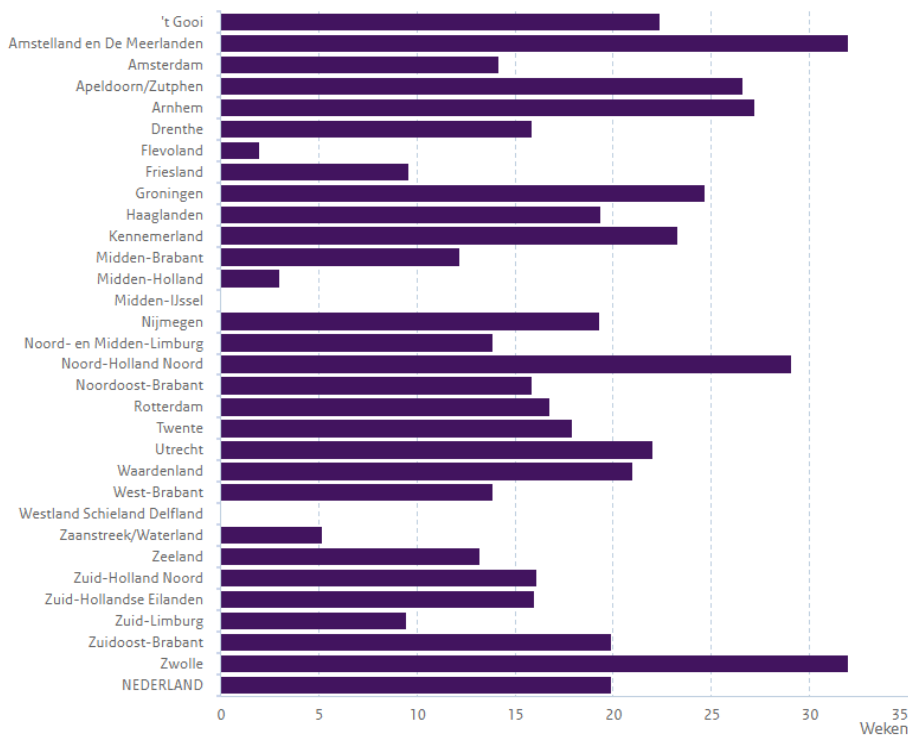
5.4 SDG 4 − Ensure quality education for all

SDG 4 is about good and accessible education for people at all stages of their lives, from early childhood education and basic education to vocational and higher education, and after that, in the form of lifelong learning (SDGs 4.1 to 4.3). It also calls for the provision of knowledge and skills appropriate to the labour market (4.4). SDG 4.7 calls for attention in education to sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights and gender equality. Sub-goal 4a is about inclusive educational facilities and a safe learning environment.

Overall view and trend

Good education is crucial for people's opportunities. In an international perspective, the Netherlands scores well on many educational goals. Within the Netherlands, however, there are concerns about the quality of education. For numeracy and literacy skills, the Netherlands ranks second and thirteenth in the EU respectively. The inequality of opportunity, which has been rising sharply since 2009, has now been brought to a halt by targeted policy efforts. Almost 97% of children from the age of 4 participate in pre-school education. The policy goal of reducing school drop-out rates to less than 8% by 2020 has been achieved for the Netherlands as a whole, but not in each municipality. In 2020, 7% of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 left school early, without a degree for senior general secondary education (HAVO), pre-university education (VWO) or vocational education. The share of highly educated people in the total labour force is 34.2%, and among young people it is more than half, thus meeting the policy target for 2020. In the field of digital competence and lifelong learning and development, the Netherlands is doing well, but there are groups that are lagging far behind.

VSR indicators

Inequality of opportunity between different groups is a current concern in education. Municipalities must provide accessible pre-school facilities for every child. The indicator **Risk of educational disadvantage** in pre-school and primary education is based on a model that predicts risk on the basis of some (environmental) factors. Nationally, 17% of young children are in the risk group. The share of **young people without work and education** (**NEET)** is the UN indicator at SDG 8.6, but is also relevant to SDG 4.4. Especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the quality of education is often insufficient and there is a shortage of teachers. Children of parents with a non-Western migration background and low-educated parents, regardless of their skills, have less chance of completing an education. The school closures during the COVID-19 lockdowns meant that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in particular suffered learning disadvantages, further deepening the divide.

Role of local and regional governments

A primary task for municipalities is to provide educational facilities and ensure healthy, sustainable and safe school locations, both for early childhood education and primary, secondary and vocational education. With the choices they make, they can increase the opportunities for disadvantaged groups and combat segregation, for example, by investing in broad school communities and sufficient geographical distribution of the supply. In order to increase the development opportunities for children, some municipalities have taken the initiative to bring together all basic services for children in integral child centres for children aged 0-12. Municipalities and provinces are also working on a better connection between education and the labour market. *Human Capital* is a priority in the VNG's post-COVID recovery agenda (see SDG 8). A good local supply of education for sustainable development is part of this. Neighbourhood libraries and community centres play an important role in language courses, computer skills, social contacts and lifelong learning. They are of great importance to people with low literacy levels and those who do not master the Dutch language well. However, due to financial constraints in many municipalities, a lot of these facilities have been closed down.

Relation to national policies

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of the GDP is showing a downward trend. There are too few structural resources to solve the shortage of teachers. The increasing use of private tutoring and out-of-school care facilities fosters inequality of opportunity. The intention to make childcare free for working parents is a step in the right direction. The coalition

agreement pays attention to equality of opportunity based on free choice of school, but in practice, this freedom of choice is often limited by, for example, the supply in the district. The national 'Aanpak 16-27' (Approach 16-27) aims to guide young people in vulnerable positions towards independence in the best possible way. More than a hundred municipalities are involved in the 'Gelijke Kansenalliantie' (Equal Opportunities Alliance) of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The alliance does not only focus on education, but also on the family situation and opportunities for development in the neighbourhood.

1. Risk of educational disadvantage (SDG 4.1, 4.4, 4.5 and SDG 10.2)
Indicator: Percentage of pupils at risk of educational disadvantage in pre-school (2.5-4 years), primary school and total.
Source: WSJG

This map shows in which areas young children and pupils are at lower or higher risk of educational disadvantage. Striking exceptions where the concentration of municipalities with a higher risk of educational disadvantage is high include Oost-Groningen, the Rotterdam region, the west of North Brabant and Zeeland.
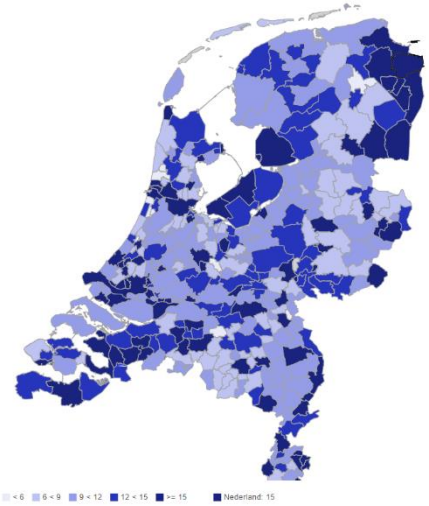
2. Number of young people not in employment and education (SDG 8.6. and SDG 4.4)
Indicator: Number of young people without work and education per 10,000 inhabitants
Source: WSJG

The map shows the proportion of young people without work and education in the Dutch municipalities. It is noteworthy that the Frisian and Groningen municipalities show a high proportion more often than municipalities in other areas.
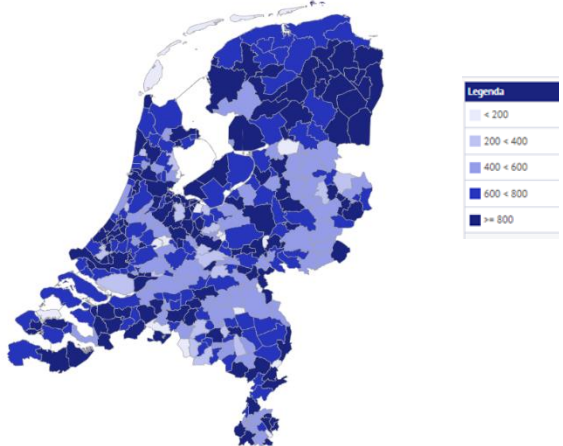
3. Youth without employment or education (NEET), UN indicator
Indicator: Percentage of young people (15-29 years old) unemployed and not in education or training, 2019-2021.
Source: Waarstaatjegemeente

This graph shows, among other things, that during the corona period there was a peak in the percentage of young people without work and education.

NEET-jongeren (15-29 jaar) - Nederland, %

VNG, IPO, UvW
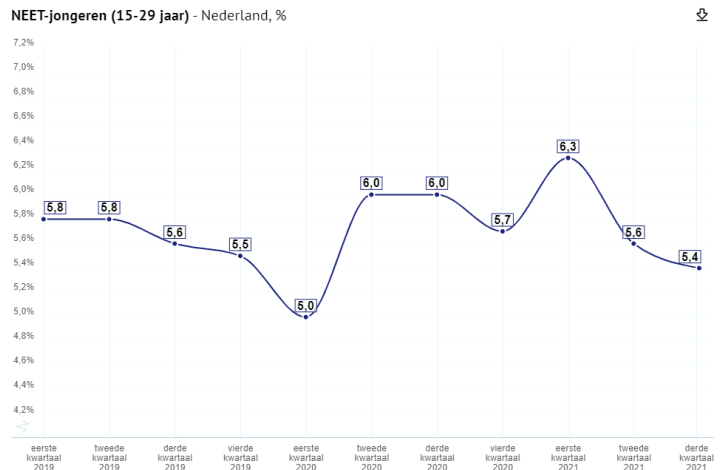
4. Number of young people not in employment and education (SDG 8.6. and SDG 4.4)

Indicator: Percentage of young people aged 18-30 without a basic qualification (differentiated by migration background) in Utrecht, 2015-2020

Source: KIS-monitor

The graph below shows how this indicator developed for the municipality of Utrecht. This shows that, apart from refugees, it is mainly young people with a Turkish or Moroccan background who enter the labour market without a basic qualification. However, for all groups, the share of young people without a starting qualification decreased between 2015 and 2020.

Percentage 18 t/m 30 jarigen zonder startkwalificatie - Utrecht, %
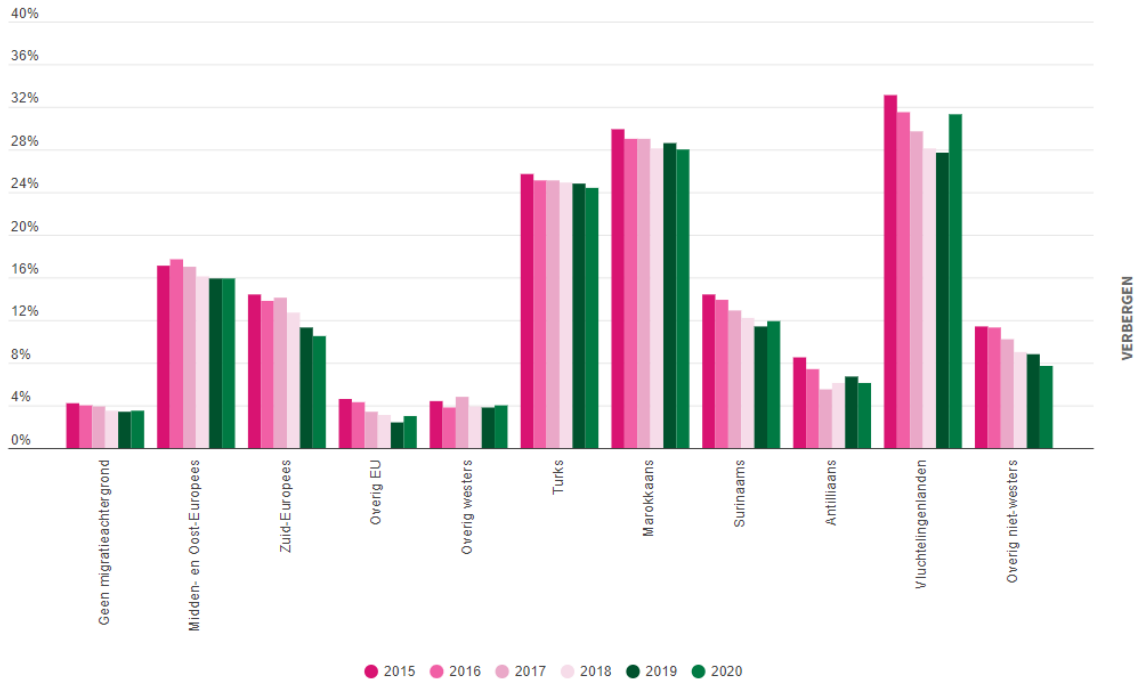
BRP & DUO - Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (bewerking ABF) | **2015 - 2020**

VNG, IPO, UvW

5.5 SDG 5 − Achieve gender equality

SDG 5 aims to end discrimination against women and girls (5.1) and to eliminate (sexual) violence and exploitation (5.2). SDG 5.4. calls for recognition and appreciation of unpaid care and domestic work and shared responsibility for family tasks. It also addresses women's equal opportunities in leadership positions and decision-making in political, economic and public life (5.5) and equal rights to education, care and work (SDG 5.a).

Overall view and trend

The trend for the indicators in SDG 5 is mostly positive. Nevertheless, a gap remains between women and men when it comes to work. At 63.8%, the economic independence of women is much lower than that of men (81.1%), although the percentage is rising for both groups. At 72.5%, the employment rate of men in 2020 was still more than 8% above that of women (64.2%). However, the difference has narrowed since 2013. The Netherlands has a culture of part-time work for women. The fact that many women are not economically independent may be their own choice, but other factors often play a role, such as the unequal distribution of household tasks and the high cost of childcare.

The hourly wage gap between men and women has decreased by 3% since 2013 to 13.7% in 2020. In 2020, women occupied just over a quarter of senior and middle management positions. In an EU context, the Netherlands scores low (place 22), but the trend is positive. The proportion of women in the national parliament has increased to 40% after the 2021 elections. When it comes to safety, not all data is broken down by gender. 22% of 18-24 years old women have experienced physical sexual violence or unwanted touching. Importantly, more gender disaggregated data is needed to establish where the Netherlands stands today.

VSR indicators

Research shows that between 2013 and 2018, 6.2% of women were victims of at least one domestic violence incident. In 20% of the cases, the violence was structural, occurring monthly, weekly or daily. The majority of domestic violence – 56% – concerns **(ex-)partner violence**. This can entail physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic violence between adult (ex-)partners. The number of official reports of violence by the current or ex-partner fell from 2 in 1,000 women over the age of 15 in 2013 to 1.3 in 1,000 in 2019. Domestic violence increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Dutch municipal councils, women are structurally less represented than men. The **number of female municipal councillors** did increase in the last two elections, partly due to many preferential votes for women. In the 2022 municipal elections, the increase was almost 6%; 37% of councillors are now women. In the largest 70 cities, the proportion of women in the municipal council is 41%. The number of women working as top civil servants (municipal secretaries and administrators) in large Dutch municipalities is now 44%.

Role of local and regional governments

Gender policy is not high on the policy agenda in the Netherlands and local governments have few specific tasks in this area. Many policies do not distinguish specifically between men and women. Social safety is a task for municipalities. In the fight against domestic violence, municipalities are responsible for the advice centre and hotline Veilig thuis (formerly Steunpunten Huiselijk Geweld) and for women's shelter.

Many women provide informal care to family members and neighbours (SDG 5.4). It is unpaid work that, if highly demanding, can lead to reduced participation in the (paid) labour market. Municipalities can take measures to support informal carers and to promote the employment of women, for example through childcare. It is important for local and regional authorities to promote the participation of women − including low-educated women, women with disabilities and women from immigrant backgrounds − in local activities and social and public positions. As employers, they have a duty to guarantee equal pay for equal work within their own organisations and to promote equal opportunities for women in managerial positions. There is still a way to go in this area. There are few women in leadership positions (for example, of the 21 Water Board Chairs, only 3 are women). Some Water Authorities do strive to employ more women.

Relation to national policies

Nationally, the policy is given shape through the *Emancipatienota* (Emancipation Policy Document), the approach to domestic violence and measures to distribute care tasks more evenly within the family. This policy document focuses on equality in the labour market, social safety, equal treatment and gender diversity as main themes. The central government has committed itself to a target of at least 45% women in top positions. Unpaid care and work at home are obstacles to women's emancipation. The government policy of 'self-reliance', reliance on one's own network and severe cuts in municipal budgets has led to many care tasks previously supported by the public sector now being passed on to residents.

1. Partner violence (SDG 5.2 and 16.1)

Indicator: 'Veilig Thuis' (Safe Home) reports of (former) partner violence per 100,000 inhabitants in 5 municipalities, in semesters 2019-2021
Source: WSJG

The number of reports of (ex-)partner violence increased after 2019, although a slight decrease seems to have set in by 2021. The COVID-19 lockdown may have been a cause of the observed increase. The more urban municipalities of Utrecht, Barendrecht and Oss show considerably more (reports of) domestic violence. In the rural municipalities of Bronckhorst and Fryske Marren, there are four to five times fewer reports than the national average.
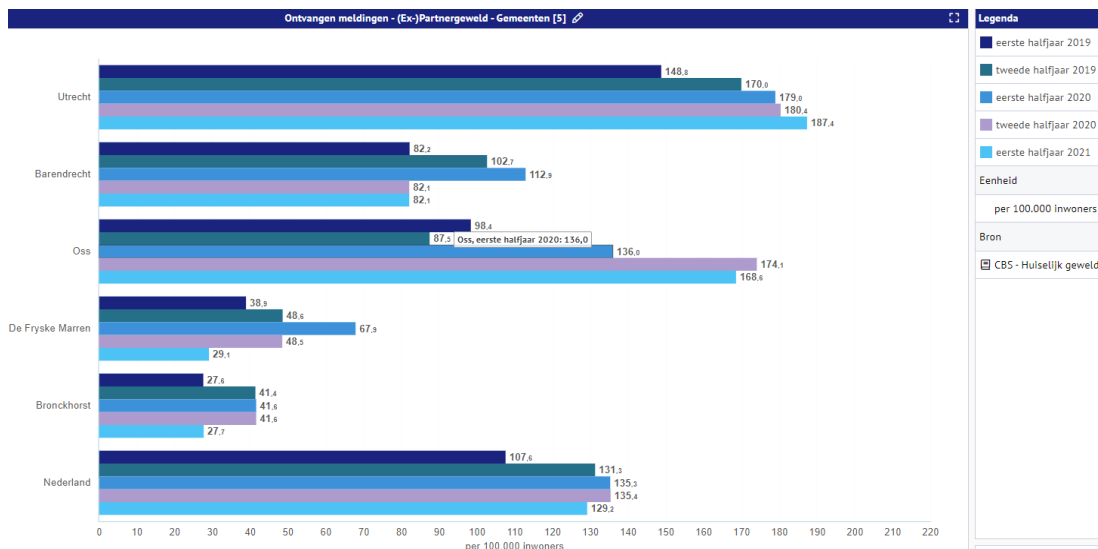
2. Women in the municipal council (SDG 5.5)

Indicator: Share of women in the municipal council in percentages
Source: Foundation Vote for a Woman

After the municipal elections in 2022, the proportion of female councillors increased from 32% to 37%, according to research by the Vote for a Woman Foundation. However, the map below shows that large differences exist. The large cities have a relatively higher number of women in the municipal council, and are raising the national average. The higher proportion of women in some large cities is related to the higher scores of political parties that have more women on their candidate lists.

Aandeel vrouwen in gemeenteraad
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%

VNG, IPO, UvW
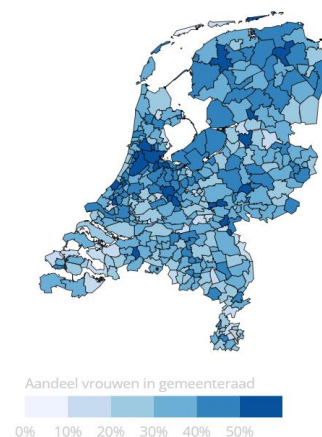
5.6 SDG 6 − Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

SDG 6 is about access to drinking water (6.1), sustainable water management (6.5) and access to sanitation (6.2). Less wastewater and pollution, reuse of water, and lower water consumption (6.4) should improve water quality (6.3) and combat water scarcity.

Overall view and trend

The Netherlands scores well on access to sanitation and clean drinking water (although security is under pressure). Water management, entrusted to the 21 Water Authorities, also scores high, according to the CBS Monitor 2021. The Netherlands scores less well on the water quality indicators. The fresh water supply is also an indicator that requires attention as the summers become increasingly dry and hot. Climate adaptation and mitigation (SDG13) is an important issue for the wider water sector. The state of the fauna in Dutch waters is under pressure and is showing a decline. In the Netherlands, many international partnerships are aimed at capacity building and supporting the water sector in developing countries.

VSR indicators

The **water quality** has improved in recent years, but is not yet sufficient to comply with the European Water Framework Directive (WFD) by 2027. The pressure from the agricultural sector and industry is great: due to the discharge of crop protection agents, fertilisers, heavy metals and other (chemical) substances, the Water Authorities are unable to meet the WFD standard. The Water Authorities are working in a project-based way to structurally improve water quality. For example, the medicine residue remover in Leiden, an installation near Botshol that removes phosphate from the water and the reduction of toxic discharges into ditches and streams in cooperation with farmers. The amount of PFAS particles in water and in nature is a current issue. These non-degradable plastics accumulate in organisms and can be a risk to human and animal health.The recent hot summers have revealed that the fresh water supply in parts of the Netherlands cannot be guaranteed. Measures were needed to prevent lasting damage to infrastructure, such as dykes, in water-scarce areas. Compared to other EU countries, the Netherlands extracts quite a lot of fresh surface water per capita. According to the Drinkwaterrapportage 2022 (Drink water report) of Vewin, industry and energy supply together extract almost 85% of fresh surface water. On the higher sandy soils, this leads to the dehydration of nature and a ban on irrigation for the agricultural sector.

Role of local and regional governments

Rijkswaterstaat and the Water Authorities are the water managers in the Netherlands. The water board is the main decentralised authority responsible for clean and sufficient water and for water safety. It manages 239,000 kilometres of regional watercourses. It works on the chemical quality of water by focusing on prevention and purification. In terms of prevention, it cooperates with the organisations and parties responsible for the pollution, such as a hospital when preventing discharge of medicine residues via patients' urine. The biological quality of the water, the flora and fauna, is improved by, among other things, ecological maintenance, the construction of fish passages and nature friendly banks.
Municipalities have three obligations with regard to water: Collection and transport of urban waste water; Effective collection and processing of rainwater runoff, preferably by disconnecting rainwater from the sewage system; and effective water level management to limit structural damage to the groundwater level. The decentralised authorities work together to involve citizens in the improvement of water management. Subsidies and initiatives are aimed at behavioural change, for example by exchanging tiles in the garden for plants, collecting rainwater and joint animal-friendly management of green spaces. In the municipality of Utrecht, there is even a fish passage where residents can order the sluice to be opened when they see a fish 'on hold'.

Relation to national policies

VNG, IPO, UvW

Together, the central government and decentralised authorities worked on the implementation of the National Water Plan 2016 - 2021. In new river basin management plans for the period 2016-2021, the Netherlands has laid down the steps it intends to take to achieve the final ecological goals in relation to the WFD. However: with the current plans, the water quality in many waters will improve, but not sufficiently so. The Delta Plan Water is a joint effort to improve water quality. For water, the European and global level is also important. The pollution of large rivers can only be reduced with European regulations. The national government and the regions are also working on the Delta Plan Freshwater (2022-2027) with the main objective of securing sufficient freshwater.

1. Water quality (SDG 6.3, 6.6, SDG 2.4, SDG 14.1 and SDG 15.1)

Indicator: Percentage of water bodies whose biological and physico-chemical quality complies with the Water Framework Directive

Source: WAVES Dashboard

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) prescribes the minimum quality objectives for Dutch waters. The directive has been in force in Europe since 2000 and includes agreements to ensure that, by 2027, the water in all member states is sufficiently clean and healthy. Despite the efforts made and the improved water quality in many Dutch waters, the Netherlands does not yet comply with the WFD in many cases. The main indicators to measure water quality are fish, macrofauna, aquatic plants, chemistry and phytoplankton.
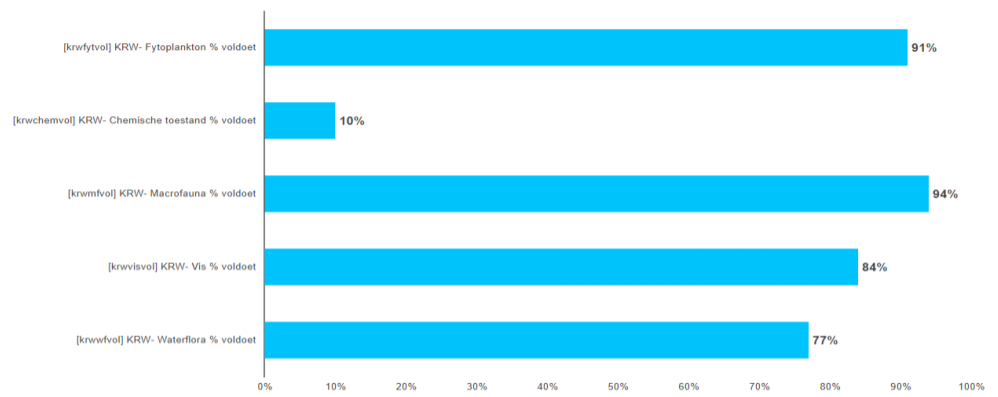
2. Fresh water and surface water abstraction in m3 per capita (SDG 6.4, 6.b).

Indicator: Percentage of management area with the possibility to supply extra water in case of shortage (2020)

Source: WAVES Dashboard

The map shows in which part of the management area of the Water Authorities the possibility exists to supply additional water in case of shortages. The values show considerable differences between Water Authorities. In the Randstad, the values run up to one hundred percent, while in Water Authorities such as Rijn and IJssel and Vallei and Veluwe, there are very few possibilities to supply additional fresh water.

VNG, IPO, UvW
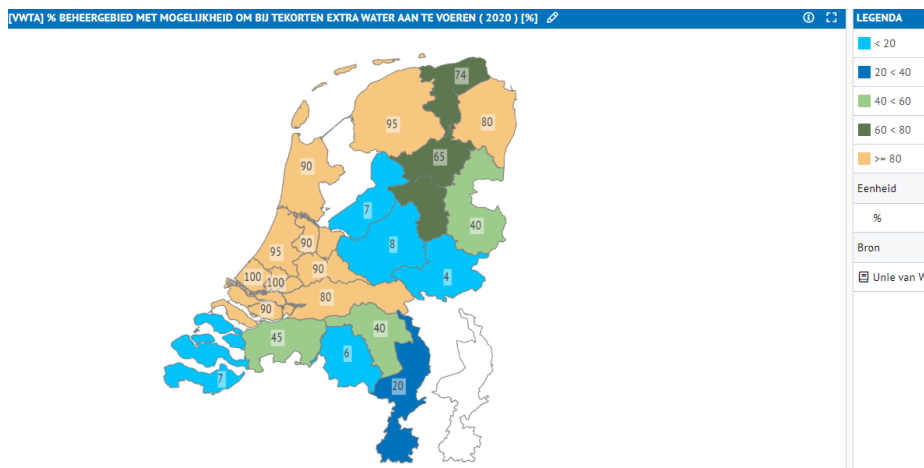
5.7 SDG 7 − Ensure access to affordable and sustainable energy for all

SDG 7 is divided into three key aspects: access to affordable, reliable and modern energy for all (7.1), increasing the share of renewable energy (7.2) and improving energy efficiency (7.3). There is a direct link with SDG 13 (climate). In this report, SDG 7 focuses on households and the built environment, which account for 30% of CO_2 emissions. With SDG 9, we look at industry and infrastructure, and with SDG 13 at the property owned by municipalities, provinces and Water Authorities.

Overall view and trend

The trend for SDG 7 between 2013 and 2020 was predominantly positive. The security of energy supply in the Netherlands is high. However, the affordability of energy is under pressure for an increasing number of households due to the sharp increase in energy prices. The use of renewable energy is increasing and the energy intensity of the economy is decreasing. There is an increase in investments in the renewable energy sector. Compared to the other EU countries, however, the Netherlands lags far behind on some of these indicators. Greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, industry and agriculture, built environment and traffic are still very high. In the recent period, the energy-saving ambitions of the climate agreement have not been met. In some parts of the country, initiatives for sustainable generation, also on private roofs and yards, encounter insufficient (transport) capacity of the existing electricity grid. The Netherlands continues to import many of the energy sources for its own energy consumption from abroad (64% in 2019). There is a severe shortage on the energy grid.

VSR indicators

A fair transition constitutes a major challenge. In addition to the technical aspects of the energy transition, the social aspect has received more attention in recent years. According to a recent study by TNO, just over half a million households in the Netherlands (7% of the population) are living in **energy poverty**. These concern households with low incomes combined with high energy costs and/or a home of insufficient energy quality. Often, these households do not have the means to insulate their own homes and make them more sustainable, or they are dependent on their property manager to do so. The highest concentration of energy poverty occurs at the country borders. Investing in energy saving is of great importance both from a social point of view (affordability) and in light of the climate and energy dependency reduction. The **average electricity and gas consumption of residential buildings** is a good indicator for this. In various ways, provinces and municipalities play a leading role in increasing **the share of renewable energy** in the energy mix. The actual status as of summer 2021: the ambitions of the 30 RES's 1.0 add up to 55.1 TWh. PBL estimates that ultimately, between 35.4 TWh and 46.4 TWh will be realised, with a midpoint of 40.8 TWh.

Role of local and regional governments

The energy transition is high on the decentralised agendas. Municipalities can support households in insulating their homes and making them more sustainable by providing information, subsidies and 'worry-free' services. The private rental sector poses a major challenge. In 2021, municipalities will start with heat transition visions; some have already gained experience with 'living labs' for Natural Gas Free Neighbourhoods. It is important to link the heat transition to other tasks that are important to residents, such as making homes lifetime-compatible and comfortable and making neighbourhoods more liveable. After identifying opportunities for large-scale renewable energy generation from wind and solar power in recent years, the time has come to implement these plans. Its urgent nature often clashes with strong resistance from residents. Therefore, considerable attention needs to be paid to the correct granting of permits, the fair distribution of costs and benefits, the participation of residents and local energy cooperatives in projects, and the maximum utilisation of roofs, facades and other hard surfaces for solar energy. The Water Authorities generate their own renewable energy and are increasingly making their sites available so that others can also benefit from these energy opportunities. The local and regional government associations of the decentralised authorities help to solve structural bottlenecks in laws and regulations for the spatial integration of projects.

VNG, IPO, UvW

Relation to national policies

The national energy agreement, climate agreement and climate act form the basis for joint efforts. It is very important that the national government and the decentralised authorities act as one in the energy transition on the basis of a solid long-term vision, the right legal and judicial frameworks and sufficient, predictable financing. This is still lacking, despite the substantial budgets allocated by the new government. Adapting the energy infrastructure of 8 million residential addresses is progressing too slowly due to a lack of measures and funds. The tax imposed by central government on housing corporations also limits the scope for making social housing more sustainable. Strengthening the national electricity grid capacity is also a major joint task.

1. Energy poverty (SDG 7.1, SDG 1.1 and SDG 11.1)

Indicator: 'High energy quote'. Ratio of income to energy bill (energy bill of 8% or more of income in 2018, per municipality)

Source: WSJG /CBS

Energy poverty occurs when a household's energy bill exceeds 8% of the household's total income. In the Netherlands, there is a clear split between the Randstad and the less urban regions. In the northern provinces, Limburg and the border areas with Germany, households are structurally more likely to suffer from energy poverty. This is due to the larger size and poor insulation of homes in the area. Energy poverty is least common in the Randstad, with the exception of the large cities such as Rotterdam, The Hague and Amsterdam.
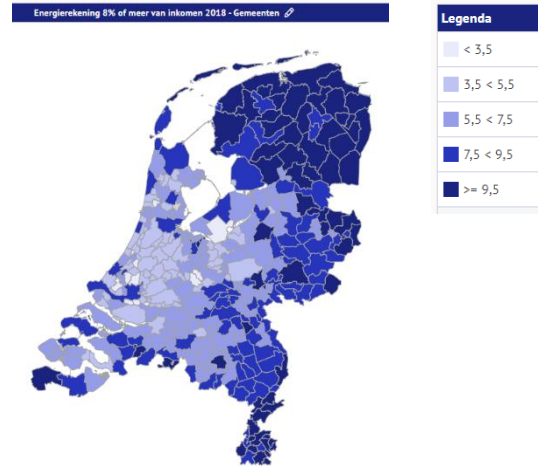
2. The share of renewable energy in the energy mix (SDG 7.1, 7.2, SDG 11.1 and SDG 13)

Source: WSJG/Klimaatmonitor

The percentage of renewable energy is calculated by dividing the amount of self-generated renewable energy by the total energy consumption. Throughout the country, this percentage is steadily increasing. However, it has become clear that in many municipalities only about 5% of the energy used consists of renewable energy. There is also an imbalance in the production of renewable energy. Some municipalities produce large amounts of energy in proportion to their energy consumption, while many others produce below average.
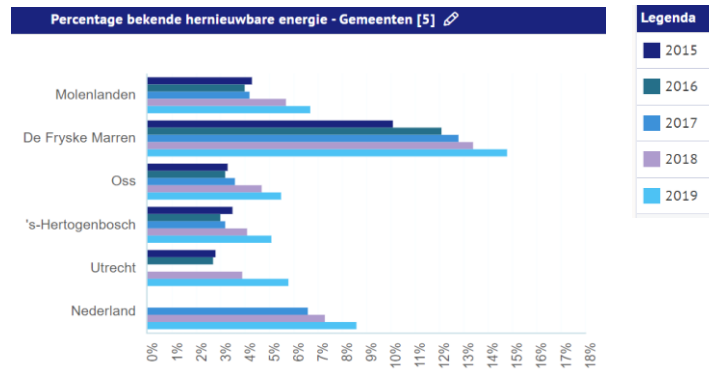
3. Average electricity consumption and average gas consumption of households (SDG 7.1, 7.2, SDG 11.1 and 13)

Indicator: Energy use of houses per inhabitant in 5 municipalities, in GJ/citizen, 2015-2020

Source: Klimaatmonitor

The average electricity and gas consumption of residential buildings shows a slight decrease in the period from 2015 to 2020. The graph shows that energy consumption is lowest in the most urban municipalities and highest in the least urban municipalities. There is no significant difference in the development of energy consumption between urban and rural areas.

VNG, IPO, UvW

Energieverbruik Woningen per inwoner

VNG, IPO, UvW
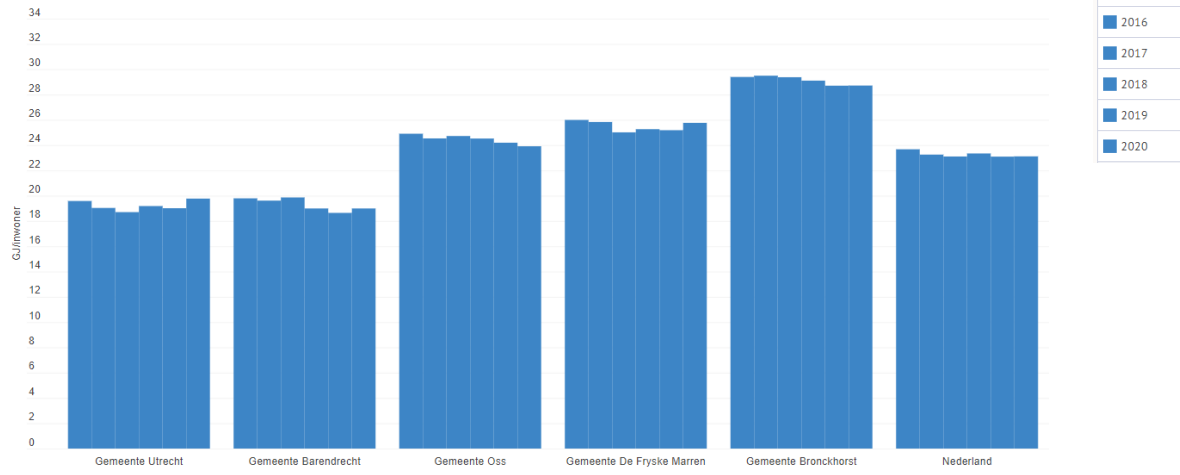
5.8 SDG 8 − Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all

SDG 8 is about full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and people with disabilities (8.5 and 8.6). Partial aspects are the elimination of all forms of forced labour (8.7), equal pay for equal work (8.5), protection of labour rights and a safe, healthy working environment, also for migrant workers (8.8). On the other hand, SDG 8 is about economic productivity, diversification and promoting the growth of SMEs, labour-intensive sectors, creativity and innovation (8.2 and 8.3). Sub-goal 8.4 concerns the environmental sustainability of the economy; see SDG 9 and SDG 12.

Overall view and trend

The Netherlands scores well on economic productivity and jobs. There is a strong and knowledge-intensive manufacturing industry. The Gross Regional Product has increased almost everywhere. The employment rate is rising and was 68.4% on average in 2020. When compared to the rest of the EU, the average number of hours worked is low. The share of unused labour potential fell from over 18% in 2013 to 11.5% in 2020. Unemployment in 2020 was relatively low at 3.8% of the labour force. In terms of remuneration level, the Netherlands comes fifth in the EU. Employees are generally satisfied with their jobs, but almost a fifth have concerns about job retention. There is considerable inequality of opportunity in the labour market. While 81.6% of the higher educated have paid work, this is only the case for 47.9% of the lower educated (CBS 2021) and 61% of people with a non-Western migration background. Young people and migrant workers are over-represented in flex contracts, women in part-time jobs of lower status. They were especially vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic.

VSR indicators

In terms of the labour market, the challenges are greatest in the north and south-east of the country and in the large cities. The Dutch Participation Act assumes that as many people as possible should have regular jobs. The indicator **reintegration of vulnerable persons** and people with disabilities on the labour market shows that municipalities are increasingly adopting new provisions. Although the inflow of vulnerable groups into the labour market has increased, reintegration remains difficult. For example, the proportion of employers who hire people with disabilities is low. For the indicator **unemployment**, the visualisation shows the development over time, with (regional) differences between municipalities being clearly visible. (see also SDG 10)

The role of local and regional governments

Stimulating the economy and employment by, among other things, an attractive business climate, a *human capital* agenda and innovation policy is high on the agenda of provinces and municipalities. They want to work on sustainable economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on the regional scale. An important point of attention is linking the economy, education and the labour market, and a location policy that is linked to the supply of labour. The transition to a circular economy and digitalisation also require a good connection between education and the labour market and the continued personal development of workers and jobseekers, at all levels of education and in all sectors. In addition, municipalities have the task of guiding citizens with poor labour prospects to suitable regular work and to provide sheltered workplaces. As employers, governments themselves can set a good example.

SDG 8 also has an international dimension. Decentralised authorities can set requirements for compliance with human rights and decent working conditions in the international production chain when making purchasing decisions. In the Netherlands, there are many labour migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. They are highly vulnerable to exploitation through poor working conditions and sub-standard accommodation, which often lapses as soon as their contract is terminated. As a result, many migrant workers become homeless. Municipalities are asked to take more control of this.

Relation to national policies

VNG, IPO, UvW

The liberalisation of the labour market and the choice to keep labour wages low because of international competitiveness have led to an increase in the number of working poor and people with insecure positions on the labour market. The latter group mainly includes people with flexible contracts, forced self-employed and migrant workers. Meanwhile, the consensus has grown that measures are needed to improve the position of vulnerable groups, including a higher minimum wage and more contractual security. Within the framework of the Participation Act, the national and local governments have made agreements in the so-called 'Banenplan' (Jobs Programme) to help more people with poor job prospects find work. These agreements have not been met.

In the Netherlands, there is no legislation that compels governments to apply principles of socially responsible procurement, including consideration of working conditions elsewhere in the chain.

1. Reintegration provisions Participation Act (SDG 8.5 and 10.4)
Indicator: Use of provisions under the Dutch Participation Act in number per 1000 citizens of 15-74 years old in 5 municipalities, per semester, 2015-2020.
Source: WSJG

The re-integration provisions of the Participation Act are intended to reduce the distance of job-seekers to the labour market. These are facilities such as work placements, social activation, secondment jobs, training, participation places, sheltered employment, personal support. Since the introduction of the Participation Act in 2015, large fluctuations have been visible. There is a strong increase until 2018, after which the number decreases again. It is striking that in a large city like Utrecht, relatively little use is made of reintegration facilities.
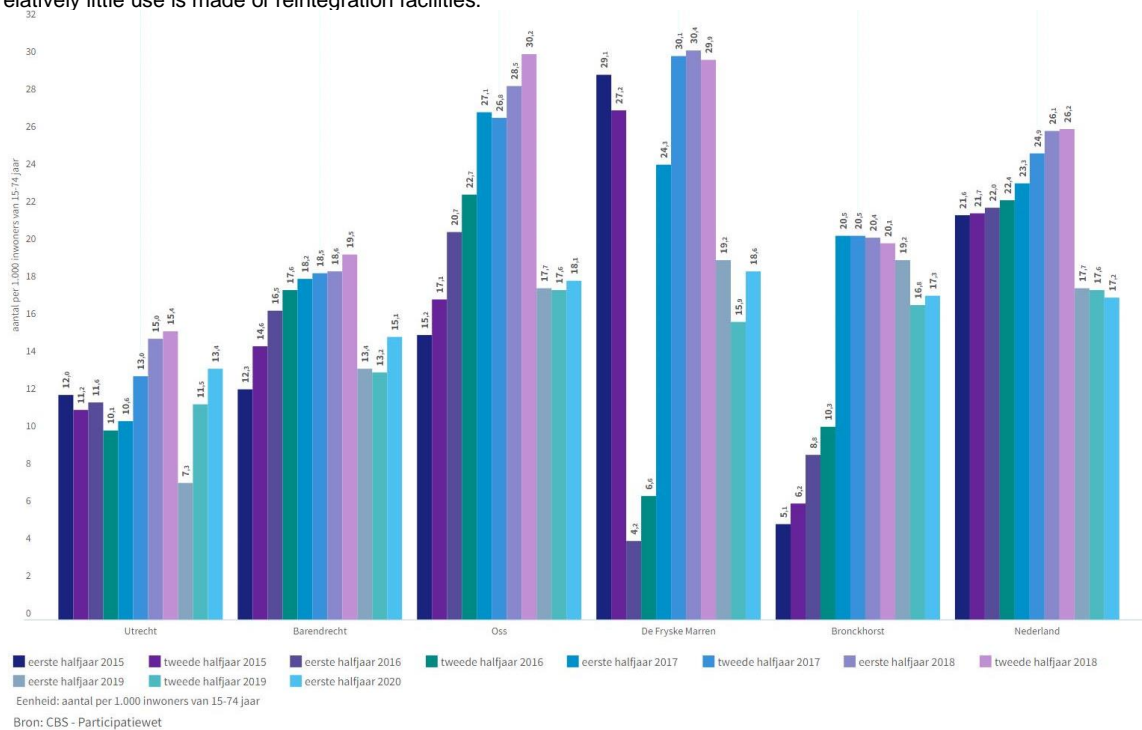
2. Unemployment (SDG 8.5, SDG 1 and SDG 10)
Indicator: Unemployment as a percentage of the labour force, 15-75 years, in 5 municipalities 2015-2020.
Source: WSJG

Unemployment is represented here as the percentage of the labour force aged 15 to 75. We observe a similar trend in all municipalities, which reflects the national average. Unemployment rates fall sharply between 2015 and 2019, before rising again in 2020. We can also see that the unemployment rate in the city of Utrecht is structurally higher than in the less urban municipalities.

38

VNG, IPO, UvW

7,5%
7,0%
6,5%
6,0%
5,5%
5,0%
4,5%
4,0%
3,5%
3,0%
2,5%
2,0%
1,5%

2015   2016   2017   2018   2019   2020

— Utrecht   — Barendrecht   — Oss   — De Fryske Marren   — Bronckhorst   — Nederland
Eenheid: %
Bron: CBS - Arbeidsdeelname
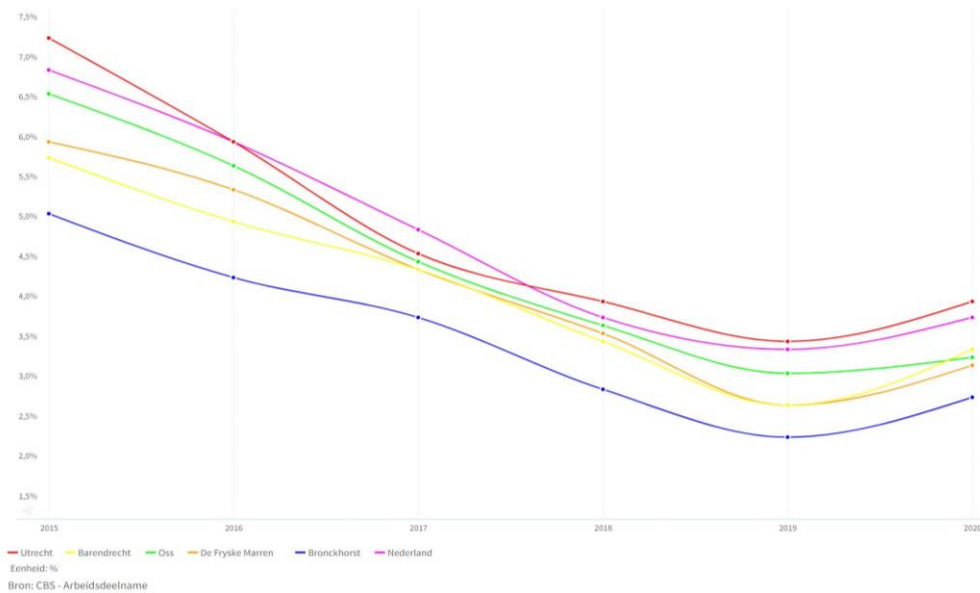
CASE STUDY - Socially Responsible Procurement Plan – Province of Zeeland

In November 2021, the province of Zeeland won the European innovation prize for procurement, the Procura+ Award. This was preceded by an extensive process, in which support was created within the organisation and external stakeholders, as well as administrative ambitions which were drawn up.

As early as 2017, the province of Zeeland made an inventory of the impact public procurement could have on achieving the SDGs and used this input for its Socially Responsible Procurement action plan. The province increased its ambition by working on sustainable procurement to achieve results.

Zeeland has entered into dialogues with stakeholders based on the SDGs. The province brought together policymakers from various authorities, purchasers, suppliers, project leaders and people from knowledge institutions, as well as citizens. Together they looked at how the greatest impact can be made with sustainable procurement. This was subsequently made concrete and tangible in the 2021-2024 action plan. These so-called SDG dialogues link the knowledge of various parties. This led to internal awareness among the Province of Zeeland, adjustment of the purchasing process and better cooperation between the departments. In the plan, seven SDGs have been selected on the basis of urgency, policy ambitions and dialogues, on which every procurement must make an impact in the coming years.

The province emphasizes that coordination with other purchasers from local authorities is essential to be a good partner for the market. The more unambiguously different local authorities apply the SDG ambitions in purchasing, the more interesting it is for market parties to participate.

An effect of the broad process is that there is more and more integrated cooperation between departments. The goal is always to make progress on the SDGs and with that goal as a starting point, every renovation, construction or project is approached. For example, various departments are involved in purchasing and win-win situations are created, i.e. by identifying opportunities at an early stage to give substance to the SDGs. For example, the renovation of a road also leads to an integrated plan to better protect wild animals on that route.

The province of Zeeland has worked closely with the MVI platform. On this platform you can read information about the SDG dialogues, the approach and the Socially Responsible Procurement plan 2021-2024.

More information: https://mviplatform.nl/3600-2/ and the video: What impact does socially responsible procurement have? - Province of Zeeland - YouTube

VNG, IPO, UvW

5.9 SDG 9 − Sustainable infrastructure, mobility and industry

SDG 9 focuses on sustainable, inclusive and resilient public infrastructure to support the economy and human well-being. An important part of this is the (infrastructure for) sustainable mobility (9.1). It also addresses industrial development (9.2), with a focus on SME access to services and markets (9.3). As far as sustainability is concerned, the emphasis is on resource efficiency and the use of clean technology (9.4). Properly functioning Internet and adequate ICT are also components of SDG (9.c).

Overall view and trend

The Netherlands has good spatial establishment conditions for businesses when it comes to the availability, segmentation and quality of business parks and office buildings. The total area of sites for companies and distribution centres has increased significantly in recent years. The deterioration of the landscape by large-scale distribution centres is a matter of concern. Sustainability of business activities and business locations, and landscape integration do not always have sufficient priority in the considerations made. As far as sustainable mobility is concerned, there is a lot of work in progress, but the targets have not yet been met. The energy and greenhouse gas intensity of the economy is gradually decreasing, but the total industrial CO_2 emissions have not decreased in the last six years. In the European context, the Netherlands has a low score. The environmental sector has a share of only 2.3% of employment. The scores for knowledge and innovation, investment in ICT and access to the Internet are, nonetheless, positive.

VSR indicators

Combinations of walking, cycling, public transport and reducing car use contribute to a healthy environment and lifestyle. However, the car is still the dominant **mode of transport** almost everywhere and there is little change in that. The accessibility of jobs by public transport or bicycle is lower than by car, especially outside the city. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for public transport has decreased. In the province of Friesland, tender agreements for zero-emission buses were postponed as a result. Although the number of clean vehicles and **charging stations** is increasing, the desired level is still a long way off, and a broader commitment to *real* sustainable transport will be necessary. The **CO_2 emissions from industry and the energy, waste and water sectors** show significant differences between provinces. A physical bottleneck in the process of becoming sustainable is the limited capacity of the national and regional electricity grid.

Role of local and regional governments

Provinces and municipalities have an important task in the area of accessibility of living and working places and of sustainable mobility (see also SDG 11.2). Many municipalities and regions are now fully committed to sustainable shared mobility and improving bicycle infrastructure, whereby car mobility is reduced, especially in urban areas. In the economic agenda and the transition to a sustainable, digital and inclusive economy,
innovation and investment in the regional business community and labour market are seen as crucial, with a strong focus on SMEs. They promote sustainable economic activity through subsidies, entrepreneurial help desks and support for pilots and sustainable start-ups. In the rural area, proper Internet is being rolled-out to all inhabitants and companies. On the other hand, the local authorities must ensure compliance with legal requirements regarding the environment and climate through environmental policy and licensing. This is not sufficiently followed through, partly due to lack of capacity. In the construction and remodelling of business sites and in civil engineering (earth, road and waterworks), more emphasis could be placed on efficient and sustainable use of space and materials (also underground), climate aspects and nature-inclusive construction. The Aanpak Duurzaam GWW (Sustainable Earth, Road and Waterworks Approach) is often already applied by the Water Authorities. They are always looking for new ways to make water management better, cheaper and more sustainable. Winnovatie.nl is a national platform for the water sector where the Water Authorities and drinking water companies demonstrate which innovations and pilots they are working on together.

Relation to national policies

VNG, IPO, UvW

The national outline on mobility *Mobiliteit naar 2040* calls for a safe, robust and sustainable mobility system with a smaller negative impact on the living environment, such as noise and air pollution. At the same time, the national government is focusing mainly on road traffic and aviation, and less on the sustainability and expansion of an affordable public transport network. Nationwide, sustainability ambitions have been set and commitments made in agreements between government, businesses and social actors regarding the climate and raw materials. These have not yet been adequately supported by long-term investments and policies, such as a green industry policy. Projects and subsidies are too short-lived for the major change that is necessary. IPO and VNG are pushing for structural funding and investments to support all regions, not just the so-called mainports or top sectors. It is also important for the state to invest in the national energy infrastructure, so that companies that are further away from the grid can switch more quickly to sustainably generated electricity. In addition, there must be better links to public transport hubs. The national government has launched the 'Mooi Nederland' (Beautiful Netherlands) programme in order draw attention to spatial quality.

1 Sustainable and accessible infrastructure for mobility (SDG 9.1)

Indicator: Total transport volume of persons aged 6 or over

Source: Onderweg in Nederland (ODiN) 2020 Plausibility report

In the Netherlands, people still travel predominantly by car. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced car use in 2020, the use of public transport has dropped even more. Because of the pandemic, its use has been reduced by more than half.

Total transport performance of persons aged 6 or older in billions of passenger kilometers by means of transport per year

	2018 (1)	2019	2020	difference 2020 compared to 2019 (%)
Total	211,3	211,9	147,6*	-30
Passenger car as driver	106,0	105,9	77,9*	-26
Passenger car as passenger	38,7	39,0	25,8*	-34
Train	22,6	23,9	9,5*	-60
Bus/tram/metro	6,3	6,2	2,8*	-54
Bicycle	18,4	17,6*	15,4*	-13
Walking	5,2	5,2	6,6*	+29
Other	13,9	14,1	9,5*	-32

* Figure differs significantly from the previous year's figure.

1) The figures for 2018 come from the ODiN 2018 final report of December 2019.

2. Coverage of charging requirements for electric cars (SDG 9.1 and SDG 11.2)

Indicator: Share of electric cars that can make use of a public charging station.

Source: WSJG

The coverage ratio of the charging demand indicates which part of the electric car users has a public charging station at their disposal within 250 metres. The map shows that the charging demand is met in many suburban municipalities. Outside the Randstad area, electric car drivers have considerably less access to public charging facilities. The use of electric cars there is more dependent on private charging facilities.
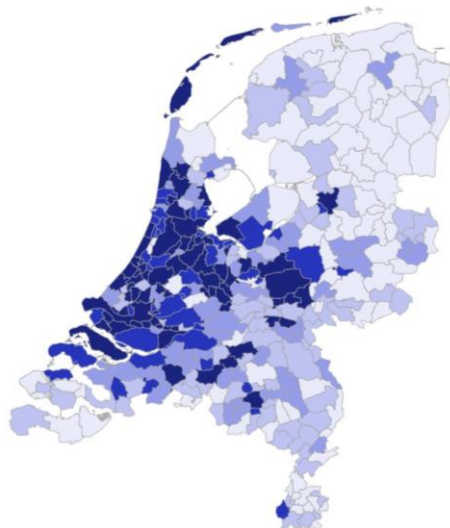
3. CO$_2$ emissions from the Industry, Energy, Waste and Water sectors (SDG 9.4 and SDG 8.4) per province, 2015-2020

Source: Klimaatmonitor

Total CO$_2$ emissions from industry and the energy, waste and water sectors show significant differences between provinces. Zuid-Holland emits almost twice as much CO$_2$ as the other most polluting provinces. The Klimaatmonitor (Climate Monitor) data also shows that all provinces recorded a decrease between 2015 and 2020, but the extent differs. In industry, total emissions did not decline.

CO2-uitstoot industrie, energie, afval en watersector

Bron: Berekening CO₂-uitstoot o.b.v. emissiefactoren

VNG, IPO, UvW
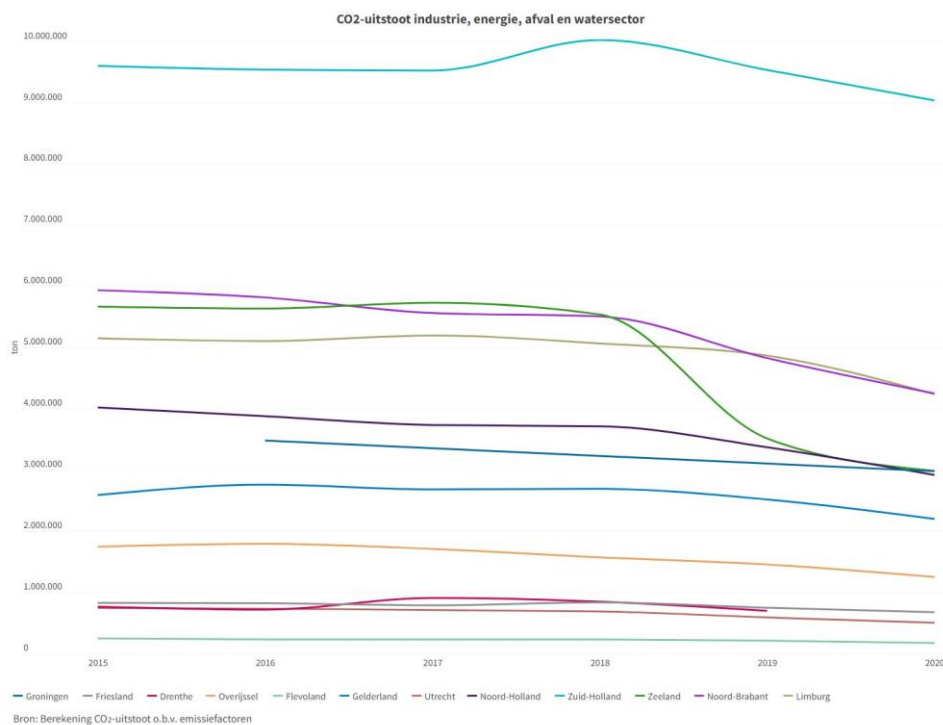
5.10 SDG 10 − Reduce inequality within and among countries

SDG 10 is about ensuring an inclusive society. This SDG focuses on combating socio-economic and income inequality (10.1), as well as non-discrimination and equal opportunities (10.3). The objective is obtaining social, economic and political inclusion for all by 2040 (10.2), with the help of targeted fiscal, wage and social security policies (10.4). SDG 10 is the only SDG to have a separate sub-target (10.7) on migration. Migration from poorer to richer countries is an important means for households to increase their income.

Overall view and trend

In European comparison, the Netherlands scores reasonably well on the indicators for SDG 10. Income inequality is moderate (Gini coefficient 0.26). Wealth inequality is, however, extremely high (Gini coefficient of 0.76 in 2019). Disparities in opportunities and happiness, especially on the labour market, in the housing market and in education, are increasing. Education level and non-western migration background (14% of the population) are the most important determinants of inequality of opportunity, but income, gender, age and health impairments also play a role. Half of those living below the poverty line and more than half of all homeless people have a migrant background. The COVID-19 pandemic has made socio-economic inequalities more visible and reinforced them. Approximately a quarter of people indicate that they experience discrimination (source: SCP). This is especially related to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age and disability. The Netherlands scores well on social cohesion and social involvement of citizens.

VSR indicators

Sub-target SDG 10.1 aims to reduce inequality by a rapid and structural increase in the income of the 40% lowest-income households. The differences between municipalities and also between districts are large. In the visualisation, we look at the geographical **distribution of the lowest and highest incomes** using the municipality of Utrecht as an example. Some neighbourhoods have many households with a considerable accumulation of issues. This particularly concerns neighbourhoods in large cities where many people with a migration background live, as can be seen by showing low-income **households broken down by migration background**. It is important for municipalities to understand what is going on at the individual level in order to avoid inappropriate standard solutions.

Role of local and regional governments

Over the past few years, awareness of inequality of opportunity – including the factors that contribute to it – has grown. In addition to work and income, affordable housing, education and inclusive provision of services, aspects such as inclusive public spaces, social cohesion in neighbourhoods, sports and culture and facilities such as community centres and libraries also play an essential role. Municipalities are in charge of taking care of the most vulnerable groups and guiding people to suitable and long-term employment. There are many good examples of increased commitment, including through interdisciplinary district teams, but more is needed. In 2016, the UN Convention on Disability entered into force. In policy plans, municipalities are obliged to indicate how they promote the participation of people with disabilities. Local authorities can also help combat discrimination and racism: as employers, in the performance of their own core tasks, but also through local diversity policies and community dialogue. From 2022 onwards, the municipalities will again be responsible for the integration of status holders (refugees who have been granted a temporary residence permit on the basis of an asylum application). There are still major bottlenecks in finding accommodation for status holders and in facilitating their access to paid employment, as well as considerable differences in commitment between municipalities. The new Civic Integration Act does give municipalities more room to offer learning and working paths at an earlier stage.

Relation to national policies

Action is needed on many levels to combat exclusion. Municipalities are dealing with severely inadequate resources and are facing difficult choices in the provision of services and facilities. There is a lack of structural means to apply a humane approach. A coherent approach to inequality of opportunity is also hampered by separate legal frameworks and the lack of a

national integrated policy. Improvements are called for in the regulatory frameworks for work, income, debts and poverty; also in particularly strict municipalities, or municipalities that have a negative attitude, for example, towards joining forces to provide housing for status holders. The social assistance benefit and related allowances are below subsistence level for many households. In the new coalition agreement, more political attention is given to securing livelihoods and combating discrimination. The existence of institutional racism and discrimination has been recognised more broadly since 2020. Government action towards people who depend on public support is often based on mistrust. The increased political and social harshness has also led to strict – and sometimes unenforceable – asylum and migration policies. Municipalities are bound by these frameworks, but occasionally try to find room for customisation.

1 Distribution of income at district level in Utrecht (SDG 10.1, 10.2, 10.4 and SDG 1)
Source: CBS

In the municipality of Utrecht, a considerable difference in income distribution is observed at neighbourhood level, as can be seen in the figure below. The proportion of households belonging to the highest 20% income or the lowest 40% income of the national average is visible for each neighbourhood. Households in the low-income group are overrepresented in some neighbourhoods, while in other neighbourhoods a majority of households belong to the high-income group.

Bron: CBS Kerncijfers Wijken en Buurten
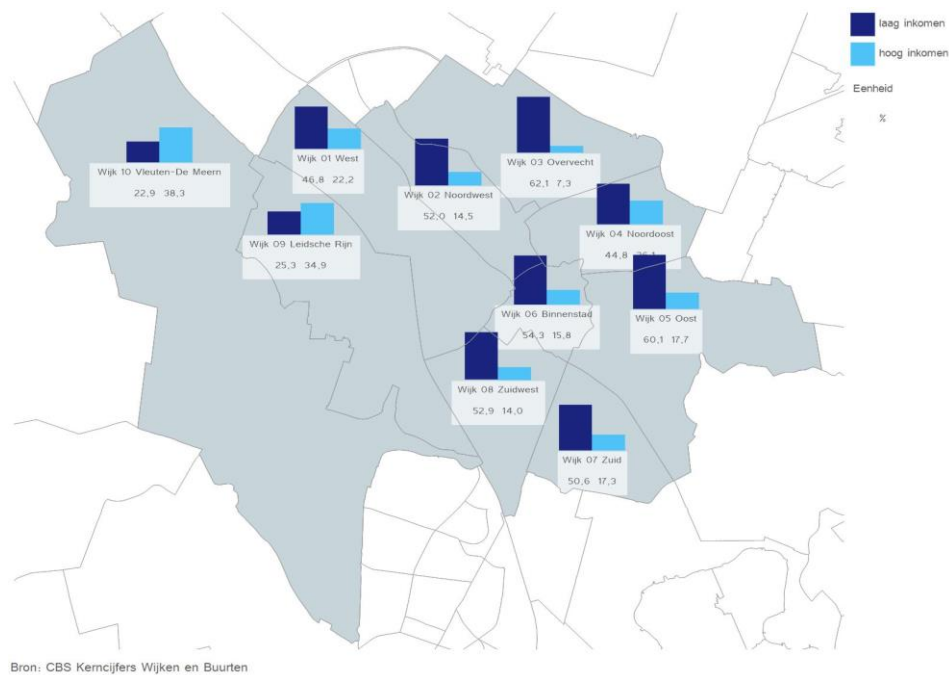
2. Households with low income by migration background (SDG 10.1, 10.2, 10.4)
Source:

However, income inequality does not only exist at district level. If this data is broken down by migration background in the same municipality, strong differences can also be observed. For example, people with a refugee background from Arab countries are more likely to have a low income than other households with a migration background.

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Percentage huishoudens met laag inkomen - Utrecht, %

Land	Percentage
Polen	
Roemenië	
Bulgarije	
Overig Midden en Oost-EU	
Zuid-EU	
Overig EU	
Overig westers	
Turkije	
Marokko	
Suriname	
Antillen	
Syrië	
Irak	
Afghanistan	
Somalië	
Eritrea	
Overige vluchtelingenlanden	
Overig niet-westers	
Geen migratieachtergrond	
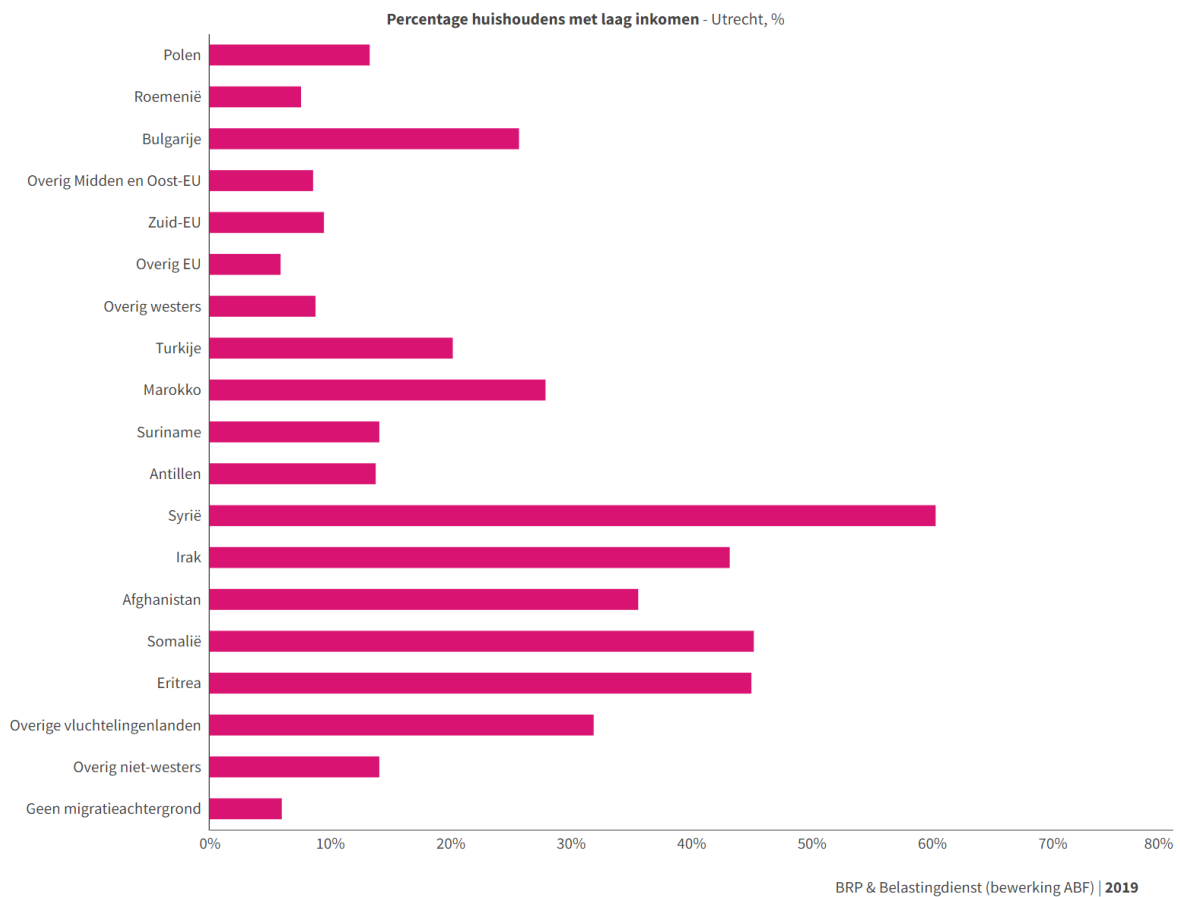
CASE STUDY – Global Goals Municipality of Noordenveld – Local Inclusion Agenda

The municipality of Noordenveld linked the local inclusion agenda to the Global Goals and is working towards an inclusive society in various ways and for various target groups.

'We believe that in Noordenveld, everyone should be able to participate on an equal footing. Young or old, whoever you are and wherever you're from. This also applies to people with a disability or illness. Inclusion is also about reducing inequality.'

In order to realise the United Nations convention on accessibility, the municipality has provided funding to create a network: 'Toegankelijk Noordenveld voor iedereen' (Accessible Noordenveld for all). In the network, experts by experience work together with the municipality, companies and organisations. They set the agenda, offer advice and conduct monitoring.

When buildings and organisations are physically accessible to people in wheelchairs, it also makes it easier for parents with pushchairs. The municipality has also expressed its commitment to clear information, writing at understandable levels and providing information through easily accessible websites. The local inclusion agenda has also set ambitions in the areas of housing and work. There must be enough suitable houses for people with disabilities and a maximum effort must be made towards participation.

Noordenveld is also an ageing municipality. It has therefore adopted a dementia friendly approach and focuses on awareness and knowledge about dementia.

More info: https://toegankelijknoordenveld.nl/

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5.11 SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

SDG 11.1 is about good quality, adequate, safe and affordable housing: a basic requirement for human well-being. Furthermore, SDG 11 covers access to sustainable, affordable transport systems (11.2), sustainable, participatory and inclusive urban development (11.3), protecting cultural and natural heritage (11.4), resilience to (water-related) disasters (11.5), reducing the negative environmental impact of cities (11.6), access to safe, inclusive, green public spaces, especially for women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities (11.7), and good urban-rural connectivity (11.a).

Overall view and trend

In general, the Netherlands scores well on the quality and size of housing and also on satisfaction with the living environment (almost 86%). The availability and affordability of housing is under severe pressure and the trend is negative (RMBW). In 2020, more than 22% of disposable household income was spent on housing costs. This is less than in 2016 (24.7%) but nevertheless results in a low score internationally: place 23 in the EU. Traffic safety shows no improvement, the trend is flat. Air quality varies per region but does not meet international standards in many places. Emissions of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter are particularly high around heavy industry, arterial roads and in regions where intensive livestock farming takes place. The steady decrease in the urban background concentration of particulate matter is favourable. A positive trend is observed in the number of people who feel safe in their own neighbourhood (see SDG 16). Compared to other EU countries, a relatively large number of households suffer from noise pollution, vandalism and littering in the residential environment. In 2020, this was 18.5%. The trend for the quality of nature in the urban environment (indicator: urban birds) is negative. For waste management, see SDG 12.

VSR indicators

There is a **pressing shortage of affordable housing**, especially for the lowest-income households but also for the middle-income population. Groups that have a hard time finding housing are students and starters, the elderly with care needs, the homeless, status holders and migrant workers. The average waiting time for a (social) rental home is extremely high. In the Netherlands as a whole, 34% of the residential properties fell into the 'social rent' category (under 760 Euro) at the end of 2019. In two-thirds of the municipalities, however, this share is below 30%. **Access to public green spaces** and a nature-rich environment strongly contribute to the physical and mental health of residents, as well as to clean air and resilience against climate change. There are large differences between municipalities, but urban petrification continues in many places. Despite its great added value, urban green space is still often seen as a large expense. More than 10,000 people die prematurely in the Netherlands each year due to inadequate **air quality**. Some municipalities are working on traffic-free inner cities. However, it is precisely the deprived neighbourhoods that are often close to the polluting major traffic intersections. All provinces and 86 municipalities have joined the Schone Luchtakkoord (Clean Air Agreement) to achieve a level of air quality that meets the 2005 WHO standard.

The role of local and regional governments

Goal 11 is the 'own' goal for municipalities, in which many SDGs come together. Cities, but also smaller municipalities, can be driving forces for sustainable development. New approaches are being experimented with in many areas. A key task in SDG 11 is inclusive housing policies with a varied and spread supply of affordable housing. In the current situation, the housing supply does not match the demand. New housing construction has slowed down, partly due to the nitrogen problem. Many municipalities do not have enough suitable housing for vulnerable target groups. In the joint agenda Krachtig Groen Herstel (Powerful green recovery of the Netherlands) of the local governments, the theme living & living environments is one of the three focal points. Municipalities and provinces are also responsible for local and regional public transport, including target group transport. Good facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are also important, as is accessibility of public spaces for

people with disabilities (see also SDG 10). In addition, local governments must ensure the accessibility of day-to-day services; this poses many challenges, especially in shrinking border regions of the Netherlands. A residential area and a public space that is liveable, healthy and safe remains an important spearhead of regional policy. Environmental policy is the central instrument in addressing issues in the physical living environment in a coherent manner. SDG 11 also emphasises participatory planning. The extent to which citizens are actively involved in developments in their neighbourhood or village, and the timeliness of that involvement, is crucial. This has attracted a lot of attention in local councils.

Relation to national policies

National policy choices have led to a significant decline in the availability of mid-range (rental) housing and social housing (from 230,000 per year in 2015 to less than 180,000 per year in 2021). Examples of these policies are the liberalisation of the housing market; the taxation of rental properties of housing corporations and the restriction of target groups eligible for social housing. In large cities in particular, the driven-up prices by investors – who buy up homes and rent them out for large sums – are pushing lower income groups out of the inner city.

The new Environment and Planning Act brings together 26 existing laws and leads to further decentralisation and deregulation of environmental policy. Preparing for its introduction costs local authorities a lot of time and money. The law offers space to work in an integrated way on a high-quality living environment. However, there are also public concerns that initiators will be bound by fewer rules, which may be at the expense of societal interests. In practice, attractive integrated environmental perspectives of local authorities clash with legal and financial frameworks that leave little room for extra social and environmental preferences.

1. Access to adequate, safe and affordable housing (SDG 11.1)

Indicator: % of private households satisfied with their home.

Source: CBS Regional Monitor of Well-being (and/or with the living environment!)

Tevredenheid met woning, 2018
% van de particuliere huishoudens is (zeer) tevreden

Minder dan 78,7% | 78,7% tot 81,3% | 81,3% tot 85,3% | 85,3% tot 87,3% | 87,3% of meer
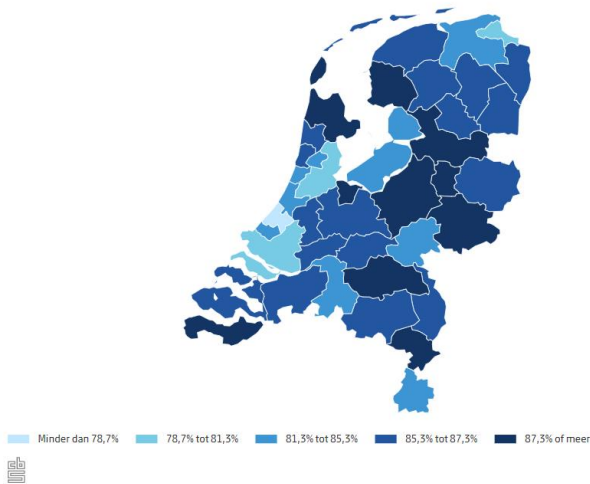
CBS reports on the **Total housing ratio (rental and owner-occupied).** WSJG has a whole set of indicators on housing.

2. Access to green public spaces for all (SDG 11.3, 11.7, 11a)

Indicator: Average distance of inhabitants to public green spaces.

Source: CBS Monitor of Well-being

The map shows the average distance inhabitants live from public green spaces in Dutch municipalities. Public green spaces include forests, day recreation areas and parks or public gardens. The data shows that in most municipalities, inhabitants generally live within a few hundred metres of public green spaces.

VNG, IPO, UvW

Afstand tot openbaar groen, 2015
km

| Minder dan 0,8 km | 0,8 tot 1,5 km | 1,5 tot 2,2 km | 2,2 tot 2,9 km | 2,9 km of meer |
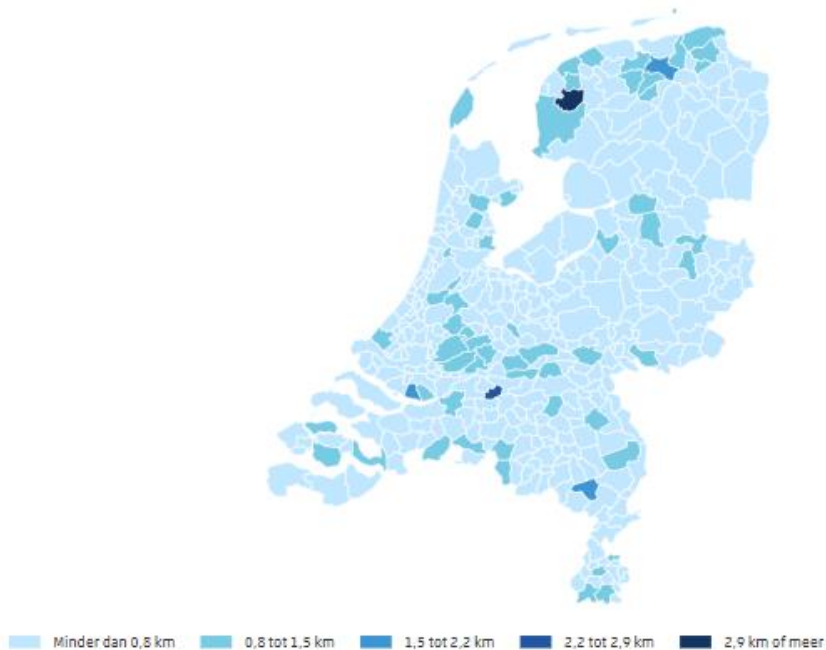
4. Improving air quality (SDG 11.6 and SDG 3.9)

Indicator: Population exposure to PM 10 and PM 2.5 (particulate matter) and NO2 (nitrogen dioxide) in relation to the WHO Standard

Source: WSJG Dashboards Sustainable Environment and Health.

The graph shows how the amount of particulate matter and nitrogen in the air has developed in various Dutch municipalities. Nitrogen is related to harmful emissions from road traffic. It is also responsible for the formation of ozone, the main component of summer smog. The PM indicators are about particulate matter, which causes heart and respiratory issues. The data shows that air quality has improved steadily since 2015. Both in the national average and in the different municipalities, the amount of particulate matter and nitrogen in the air has decreased.

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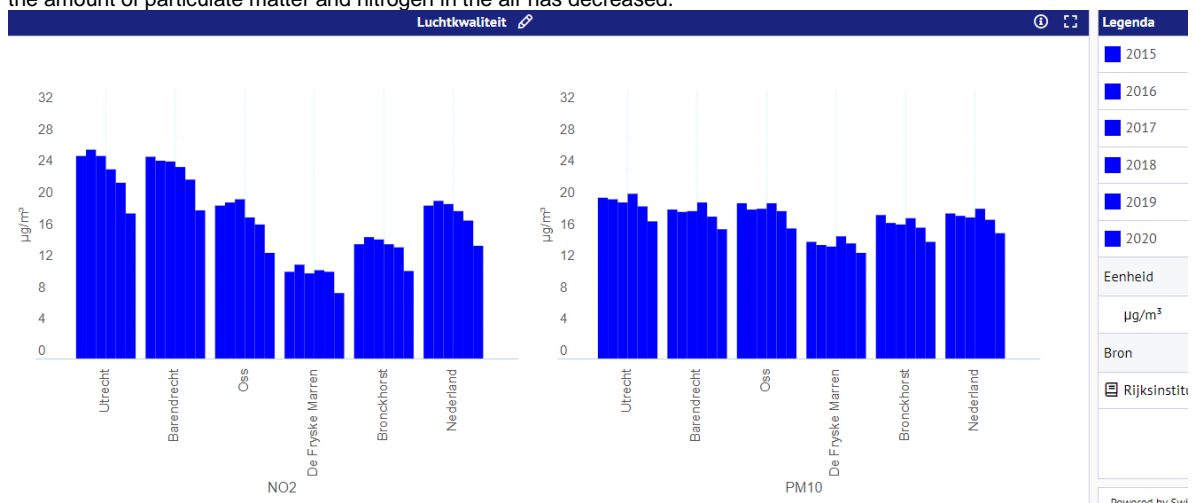
5.12 SDG 12 − Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns and efficient raw material usage

SDG 12 focuses on the transition to a circular economy with sustainable management and use of raw materials and natural resources (SDG 12.2 and 8.4). Industrialised countries are asked to take the lead in this. The aim is also to cut food waste in half (12.3).

SDG 12 is also about reducing emissions to air, water and soil and environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste throughout the life cycle (12.4) and significantly reducing waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse (12.5). SDG 12.7 calls for sustainable practices in public procurement, taking into account international production chains.

Overall view and trend

The Netherlands scores first place in the EU for efficient use of raw materials and materials per unit of product. However, the total use of raw materials is not decreasing. The raw material footprint of the Dutch consumption abroad is the highest of 31 European countries (see Sustainable Development Report). In the Netherlands, 'Earth overshoot day' came early − on the 12th of April − this year. There is still little awareness among consumers and companies alike regarding the negative footprint abroad due to the large-scale import of raw materials. On average, however, waste is increasingly collected separately. The percentage of the total municipal waste that is processed nationally is 56.9% (CBS) and is also increasing. For decentralised sustainability monitoring, it is more difficult to collect unambiguous data on chemical and environmental pollution from industry and smaller companies. Hundreds of thousands of different chemicals are used in production processes. Approximately 1500 of them have been identified as substances of very high concern, including PFAS.

VSR indicators

The commitment to waste separation is a necessary intermediate step towards recycling. The volume of household residual waste is decreasing. Municipalities use different methods to achieve this; in the eastern part of the country, for example, the payment system used for waste collection scores well. In some municipalities, the average amount of residual waste per household per year has been reduced by 150% in a short time. The **total amount of household waste**, which is an important indicator of resource efficiency in the production chain, remains more or less the same or is even increasing.

The role of local and regional governments

Municipalities are responsible for the collection of household waste, but have little influence on the total volume. The local authorities are, however, involved in the national Economy Circular Implementation Programme. In 2020, the provinces presented a 'Krachtenkaart' (Circular Economy Power Map) that examines the opportunities per region for the circular transition. In Groningen, for example, the strength lies in the greenification of chemistry, while Drenthe excels in circular housing concepts. The Water Authorities' ambition is to use 50% less primary raw materials with a negative environmental impact by 2030. They also extract raw materials from sewage sludge to produce, for example, biodegradable plastic. Through socially responsible procurement and tendering, local authorities can achieve a great deal of impact by setting conditions for the use of materials and responsible practices, also on an international level. However, sustainable procurement is not an obligation and requires a great deal of knowledge, which is often lacking. Municipalities and provinces can also raise awareness among residents and businesses through campaigns, fair shopping routes, or participation in covenants and agreements. By means of their environmental policy, local authorities influence emissions and discharges into the air, water and soil. The EU environmental principles (the precautionary principle, prevention, tackling pollution at the source, and the polluter pays principle) must be applied and enforced. In practice, the necessary prioritisation, knowledge and capacity for this are often lacking. An example is the monitoring of toxins in the soil for which municipalities are now being made responsible.

Relation to national policies

VNG, IPO, UvW

The Netherlands' ambition is to have a fully circular economy by 2050, with an intermediate target of 50% less use of primary (abiotic) raw materials by 2030. Policy is based on voluntary commitment from market players. With the National Raw Materials Agreement and the Economy Circular Implementation Programme, the issue was put on the agenda. In practice, however, much public money still goes to linear goods and activities. Substantially reducing the waste stream and food wastage demands a restriction of unsustainable production and consumption through legislation and financial incentives at EU and national levels. The government must also remove the regulatory obstacles that prevent the large-scale application of circular innovations.

As far as the environment is concerned, the national government does not set requirements that exceed the applicable EU standard. Decentralised authorities are allowed to deviate in some areas. In 2020, a new national environmental policy framework ('Nationaal Milieubeleidskader') was issued, which places health in a central position. This will have to be supported by adequate implementation instruments.

1. Household waste

Indicator: Total household waste, kg per capita

Source: WSJG

The graph shows how many kilograms of household waste the average resident produces. These numbers vary considerably from one municipality to another. The development also differs. There are municipalities where the production of household waste is increasing and municipalities where it is stable.

Bron: CBS statistiek Huishoudelijk afval

VNG, IPO, UvW
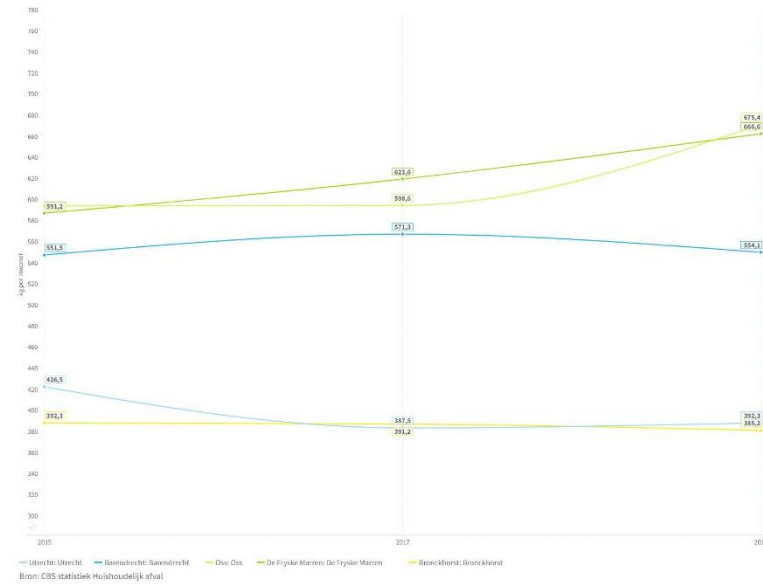
2. Volume of residual household waste

Indicator: Residual household waste, kg per capita

Source: WSJG

The graph shows how much household residual waste is produced on average per inhabitant. It is striking that although the total amount of household waste is increasing, the production of unsorted residual waste is decreasing or stable. Here, too, there are strong differences between municipalities. Some municipalities produce much less unsorted residual waste per inhabitant than others.

Bron: CBS statistiek Huishoudelijk afval
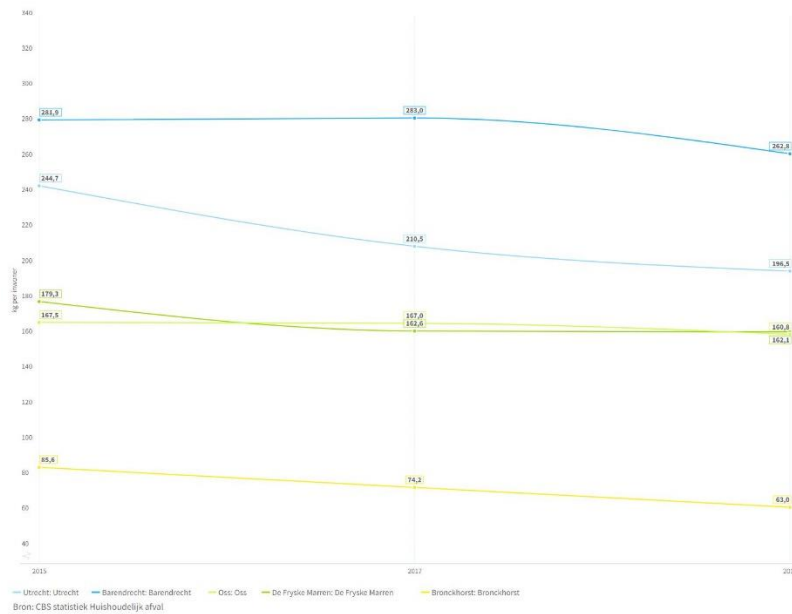
CASE STUDY – Global Goals Region Achterhoek – Reusing ICT Waste

Six municipalities in the Achterhoek region are working together to reuse ICT waste and, consequently, reduce the Dutch footprint. Social ICT entrepreneur Copiatek, which processes ICT waste, is happy with the written-off equipment.

The municipalities of Doetinchem, Aalten, Oude IJsselstreek, Bronckhorst and Doesburg are working together in this project. They collect all written-off ICT equipment and have entered into a contract with Copiatek. Copiatek gives the equipment a second life where possible, by refurbishing it and removing the data.

Many different local organisations buy these *refurbished devices* at a good price.

Copiatek offers work to people with poor job prospects. This contributes not only to responsible consumption and production (Global Goal 12), but also to an inclusive society with opportunities for all (Global Goal 10).

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5.13 SDG 13 − Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

SDG 13 focuses on addressing human-induced climate change. It is about climate adaptation and increasing resilience to shocks (13.1), such as the urgent threat of flooding in the Netherlands while municipalities are still building in lower areas, and also about 'mitigation': countering climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Sub-goal 13.2 deals with integrating climate action into policies, strategies and planning; SDG 13.3 deals with awareness-raising and (institutional) capacity for climate action. There is a direct link to many other goals including SDG 2 (agriculture), 6 (water management), 7 (energy transition), 9 (industry and infrastructure), 12 (resource use and environment), and 14 and 15 (healthy ecosystems).

Overall view and trend

Compared to the rest of Europe, the Netherlands has a low ranking when it comes to SDG 13. Greenhouse gas emissions per inhabitant show a downward trend, but remain very high: the Netherlands is ranked 23rd out of 27 EU countries. The built environment is responsible for 38% of all CO_2 emissions in the Netherlands. Through the import of goods and services, our economic activities also affect emissions elsewhere in the world. The alternative energy sources used to reduce CO_2 emissions also lead to imports – of wood-based materials, biomass and earth metals – which can cause negative externalities in other countries. Meanwhile, climate change is confronting the Dutch delta with major challenges such as rising sea levels, flooding, drought and pressure on the water supply. Traditionally, water safety has been well organised; the downside of this success is low public awareness of water-related risks. In this respect, area-specific customisation is crucial: each area has its own challenges, for example with regard to subsidence, drought, flooding and heat stress.

VSR indicators

The structure and design of our physical environment must be adapted to a changing climate and extreme weather conditions, both in urban and rural areas. The warming effect of **petrification** in the urban environment has negative physical and social consequences. Municipalities can combat heat stress by working with residents to create more greenery such as urban and façade gardens, green roofs and schoolyards and tiny forests, also in socially vulnerable neighbourhoods. Trees, greenery and water provide cooling and water buffering. As far as the reduction of **CO_2 emissions** is concerned, the local and regional authorities have an exemplary role to play when it comes to their own buildings and **social property**. The VNG, IPO and the UvW are working on CO_2 shadow pricing as an instrument for their own business operations, attaching financial value to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Role of local and regional governments

Important tasks in the area of CO_2 reduction were addressed in SDG 7 (built environment) and SDG 9 (industry). Ambitious climate goals were set and partnerships were forged at a decentralised level even before this happened nationally. Examples are the Klimaatverbond (Climate Alliance) and the Gelderse Energieakkoord (Gelderland Energy Agreement). The Water Authorities were already 43.2 percent self-sufficient by 2020 and they aim to be energy-neutral by 2025. They produce biogas and green gas and generate wind and solar energy on their own sites.

Via the Delta Plan for Spatial Adaptation, the joint authorities are working on climate adaptation. Adaptation plans have been enhanced in recent years in close connection with policies for integrated water management and coastal protection. Municipalities perform stress tests and conduct risk dialogues. In the years to come, the Water Authorities will invest over EUR 1.7 billion a year in projects aimed at strengthening dykes, improving water management and ensuring clean water. In doing so, they are also boosting hydraulic engineering after the COVID-19 pandemic. The availability of sufficient water in dry years is a new challenge; the system is not designed for this. The adaptation challenge demands that the soil and water system are given a central place in the design of the physical living environment. Increasingly, this requires trade-offs between the short and long term. In high-risk areas for sea level rise or flooding, housing construction and other tasks that are currently urgent may eventually lead to a 'lock-in': measures taken now reduce future resilience. A major challenge for

VNG, IPO, UvW

municipalities is the resistance to changes in the physical environment. Transparency regarding the urgency and compensation of those affected are important.

The Netherlands has the legal target of reducing emissions by at least 49% in 2030 compared to 1990. Agreements have been made to this effect in the climate agreement, but more is needed, especially now that the ambition has been raised to 55% reduction. The commitments made in the climate agreement and their implementation are sometimes less ambitious than necessary due to sectoral interests. In addition, billions in subsidies as part of the energy transition have sometimes led to initiatives that have become controversial, such as the dozens of new biomass power plants.

Decentralised governments have now completed the phase of systematic preparation for large-scale sustainable generation of (especially) wind and solar energy. The implementation phase depends on considerable financial support from the state for the appropriate priorities.

In the Administrative Agreement and the Delta Plan for Spatial Adaptation, the governments have made agreements on climate-proofing the physical living environment. The Delta Plan is a positive example of a programme with an inclusive approach. The connection of water safety with other transitions and challenges, such as improved nature quality, the agricultural transition and the housing challenge, does require a broadening of the mandate. Area-based cooperation is needed on a regional scale to make future-proof choices in water, land and soil use. A good example of linking tasks is the existing programme Room for the River.

1. Heat stress/soil sealing (SDG 13.1, 13.2, 13.3 and SDG 1.5)

Indicator: Paved surfaces in gardens (petrification).
Source: WSGJ Dashboard Sustainable Environment/Cobra Groeninzicht.

Heat stress can be reduced if there is more room for green in the neighbourhoods. In some districts, this is easier to achieve than in others. The map of the municipality of Oss shows that great differences can occur within a municipality. Some neighbourhoods have considerably greener gardens than others. In addition, heat stress has a greater impact on vulnerable people such as the lonely elderly. When the figures for green private space and loneliness are compared at district level, it becomes clear where the risks of heat stress are greatest.

VNG, IPO, UvW
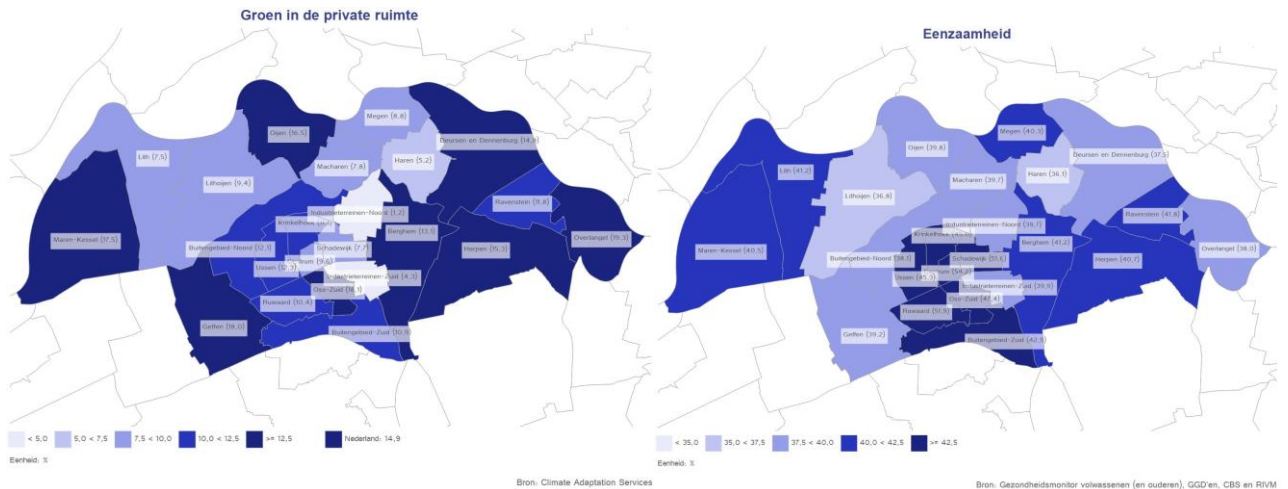
2. Climate mitigation by local and regional governments themselves (SDG 13.2, SDG 7.2, SDG 9, SDG 15)

Indicator: CO_2 emissions (kg per m2) per sector of municipal real estate.

Source: WSJG, Dashboard Energy Transition

In terms of CO_2 savings, municipalities have an exemplary role in making municipal real estate sustainable. Between 2019 and 2021, CO_2 emissions from municipal real estate decreased, with the decrease most noticeable in sports facilities and official housing. The lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic may have played a major role in this.

Eenheid: kg

Bron: Republiq

VNG, IPO, UvW
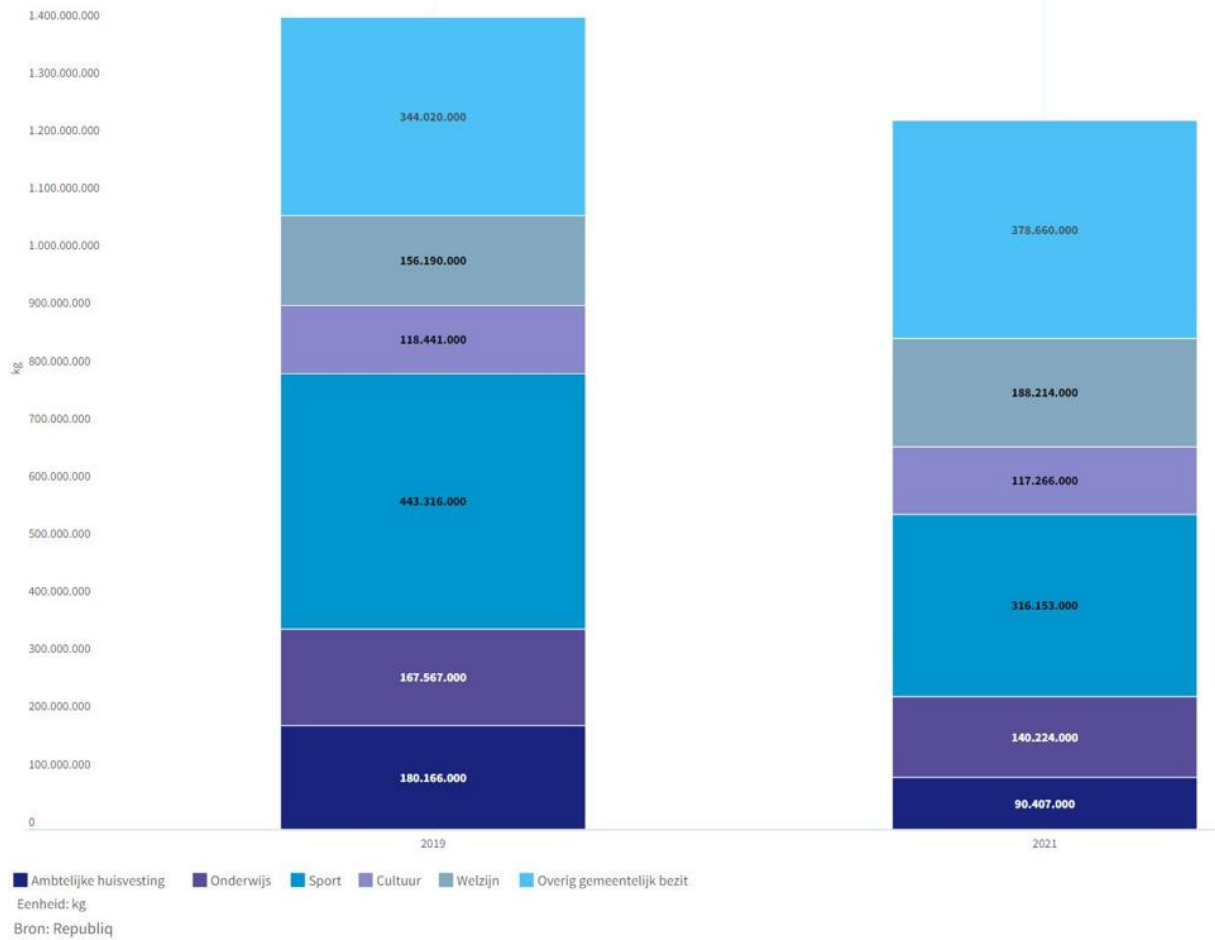
CASE STUDY – Global Goals Municipality of Schiedam – A World to Win

In Schiedam, sustainability is part of each and every portfolio and is embedded in the entire organisation. Every policy document in each field has a sustainability paragraph and describes how the policy contributes to or impacts the 17 sustainable development goals.

In fact, the commitment to climate also improves health and well-being. The municipal executive is committed to the Paris Agreement and the National Climate Agreement and the obligations, responsibilities and targets arising from them. Schiedam is also actively committed to the Sustainable Development Goals through the campaign Schiedam4GlobalGoals.

1. 49% Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990.
2. Schiedam will be CO_2-neutral in 2050.
3. Everyone can participate in the energy transition.
4. Schiedam is prepared for extreme weather conditions.
5. Increasing biodiversity and strengthening the ecological value in and around Schiedam.

Schiedam monitors progress and makes adjustments. For example, the city had the ambition to have solar panels on 15% of Schiedam's roofs. When it became clear that this would not be met, collaboration with schools was initiated to install solar panels on all roofs, and alternative locations were pursued, such as the tunnel roof of the A4 motorway between Schiedam and Delft. At the same time, Schiedam has adjusted its ambition to be carbon-neutral by 2050. The municipality did not buy CO_2 certificates to achieve the 2040 ambition, because it wants to reduce its own CO_2 emissions.

Schiedam is committed to setting a good example and has implemented a CO_2 performance ladder for this purpose. It provides insight into the CO_2 emissions of all organisational units, with the ultimate goal of zero emissions by 2050.

5.14 SDG 14 − Conserve and sustainably use the oceans and seas

SDG 14 addresses the protection of seas and oceans, and the sustainable use of marine resources. The increasing negative effects of climate change, overfishing and pollution are threatening the intrinsic value of the marine ecosystem and its use. Emissions from agriculture and industry as well as litter from inland areas flow into the sea via the rivers. Approximately one third of the CO_2 that we emit is absorbed by the oceans. This is making the oceans more acidic (SDG 14.3).

General view and trend

Few indicators have been established internationally for SDG 14, and few useful indicators have been developed for the Netherlands so far. The CBS Dashboard devotes attention to, among other things, preventing and reducing pollution and to the sustainability of the North Sea fisheries. Biodiversity in the sea is declining. In reducing marine pollution from excessive inputs of nutrients, the surplus of phosphorus and nitrate in surface waters, largely caused by agriculture, is an element to be reckoned with (SDG 14.1). Since 2009, the improvement of the nutrient status has stagnated in the majority of Dutch waters.

The role of local and regional governments

Decentralised authorities can influence harmful emissions to surface water through environmental policy: see SDG 2, 6 and 12. Through sewage treatment plants, Water Authorities ensure that waste water can be discharged cleanly, removing harmful substances such as nitrogen and phosphorus to protect water flora and fauna. Recently, Water Authorities have been working on adjustments to water purification in order to remove microplastics and medicine residues from sewage water. In order to intercept plastic and litter throughout the entire water column before it is discharged into the sea, the Rijnland Water Board and 10 municipalities examined whether an air bubble screen could be placed in the mouth of the Old Rhine. The results are promising and the bubble screen will be installed in 2022. A nice example of an initiative launched by concerned citizens that evolved into a broad cooperation (see here). In many Dutch municipalities, the awareness campaign 'Hier begint de Zee' (The Sea begins here) draws attention to plastic pollution. In the international KIMO network, coastal municipalities work together to combat pollution, among other things. By taking measures to reduce CO_2 emissions, local authorities also contribute to reducing ocean acidification.

Relation to national policies

A clear translation of SDG 14 into national targets and indicators is lacking.

Many challenges coincide in the North Sea. Large amounts of windmills are placed at sea, which requires space. Reducing pollution, restoring biodiversity and sustainable fishing are also policy objectives. Examples of a coherent approach exist: the partnership De Rijke Noordzee (The Rich North Sea), for example, combines the construction of wind farms with biodiversity restoration on the seabed around the wind turbines.

More is needed, however. National policies have so far failed to achieve the goals of the EU Water Framework Directive (see SDG 6). The Dutch manure policy is mainly aimed at reducing the nitrate pollution of groundwater, not surface water. Permits are still being issued for extensive discharges of microplastics, for example, into the Maas. Measures to reduce litter have long been left to the voluntary efforts of companies and the packaging industry. After many years of insistence by, among others, municipalities, it was only recently decided to introduce a return deposit on small plastic bottles.

5.15   SDG 15 − Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems

SDG 15 focuses on the protection and restoration of all forms of life on land. Key elements are the sustainable management and revitalisation of forests (15.2), restoration of degraded land and soil (15.3), urgent action to halt the loss of habitats and biodiversity (15.5) and reducing the impact of invasive species (15.8). SDG 15 urges governments to mobilise resources and integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning.

Overall view and trend

SDG 15 poses a major challenge for the Netherlands. The biodiversity level in the Netherlands is down to 15% of the original situation. The scores for the quantity and quality of nature place the Netherlands in the European rearguard; showing a predominantly downward or stagnating trend. Only 12% of protected ecosystems and a quarter of protected species have a good conservation status. Fragmentation, pollution, eutrophication and acidification are the main causes, with intensive agricultural practice being a major factor. Soil biodiversity is also under severe pressure. The critical value for the nitrogen surplus was exceeded in more than 70% of all terrestrial nature and in 95% of the forests in 2018; vulnerable plant species and associated insects are disappearing as a result. In the last ten years, the ecological conditions in nature areas have not improved. For their survival, flora and fauna also depend on the agricultural area, which covers more than 60% of our land surface. Here, the quality of nature is still deteriorating. Internationally, the Netherlands also has a large ecological footprint. The import of raw materials contributes to deforestation.

VSR indicators

In 2015, the **proportion of forest and open natural terrain** in the Netherlands was only 14.8% and highly scattered. Between 2013 and 2017, a net 5,400 hectares of forest disappeared. This resulted in annual emissions of 1.5 million tonnes of CO_2. Between 2017 and 2021, another 1900 hectares of forest disappeared in net terms (see WUR). Most of the forest has been cleared for conversion to heathland and dune landscape. In addition, many trees are being felled for new buildings and infrastructure. The VNG has committed itself to the goal of an annual net 1% increase of the **number of trees** in all municipalities. **Diversity of species** on land is an important indicator of biodiversity. Some species are recovering well or have returned to the Netherlands, such as the white-tailed eagle and the wolf, but others show a flat or negative trend.

Role of local and regional governments

The provincial authorities are responsible for the National Ecological Network (NEN). In recent years, efforts have been made to strengthen existing nature and to gain and establish new nature. The efforts and results vary greatly from province to province. All local authorities are required to safeguard nature in their spatial policies and plans. This applies not only to protected habitats and species; the basic quality of nature must be in order everywhere. This requires both nature policy and environmental policy. The new Environment and Planning Act gives local authorities plenty of room to make their own choices. It is now up to them to set explicit goals with regard to natural, environmental and landscape values, and to protect these from further degradation by means of planning. In practice, there has been a lack of capacity or willingness to enforce nature conservation goals and compensation obligations in recent years. More efforts are needed to integrate nature in new economic development and residential and infrastructure construction. Decentralised authorities can also strengthen biodiversity with ecological management of road verges, banks, dykes and public green spaces. Despite increased awareness, there is still much to be gained here. It is encouraging that in recent years, social partners have joined forces more often for integrated area processes around nature and agriculture, for example in the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Restoration.

Relation to national policies

The ambitious goals for nature restoration and development that were set in the 1990s were significantly reduced after 2010, as were the budgets, knowledge and capacity available for nature management. In the Nature Pact of 2013, the national and

provincial governments agreed on a reduced target for expansion of the National Nature Network by 80,000 hectares by 2027. Of this, just over half has been realised, but the target seems unlikely to be met, partly because the state did not make sufficient funds available for land acquisition. The recent advisory report *Natuurinclusief Nederland* (Nature-inclusive Netherlands) by the Council for the Environment identifies four main areas where nature policy is failing: nature is too narrowly defined; nature policy is insufficiently linked to other policies; nature is given an insufficient place in economic and political considerations; and governments do not cooperate enough. Specific regulations to promote the nature inclusiveness of key sectors such as construction, agriculture and infrastructure are lacking. We endorse the recommendations of this report. An urgent problem in the Netherlands is the deposition of nitrogen in nature, particularly from agriculture, which has been excessive for decades (see SDG 2). A new Nature and Biodiversity Programme was adopted in 2020 and a lot of extra funding is available in the coming period. The 2020 Forest Strategy aims to increase the area of forest with 10% by 2030. All local and regional authorities will contribute to this. The Water Authorities should also investigate how more forest can be created in stream valleys and water catchment areas. (see here).

1. Surface of nature and forest areas

Indicator: Area of forest and open natural terrain as a percentage of the total area (of the municipality)

Source: Regional Monitor Well-being

The data is from 2015, but do give an idea of the regional differences. In this context, forest means 'land planted with trees intended for wood production and/or nature management, including unpaved and semi-paved roads'. Natural terrain is understood to mean 'terrain in a dry and wet natural state'. Note: it is not an actual protected nature reserve. In this respect, the Netherlands scores far below the international agreement.

Natuur- en bosgebieden, 2015
% van het totale oppervlakte land

Minder dan 9,2% 9,2% tot 22,0% 22,0% tot 39,6% 39,6% tot 66,4% 66,4% of meer
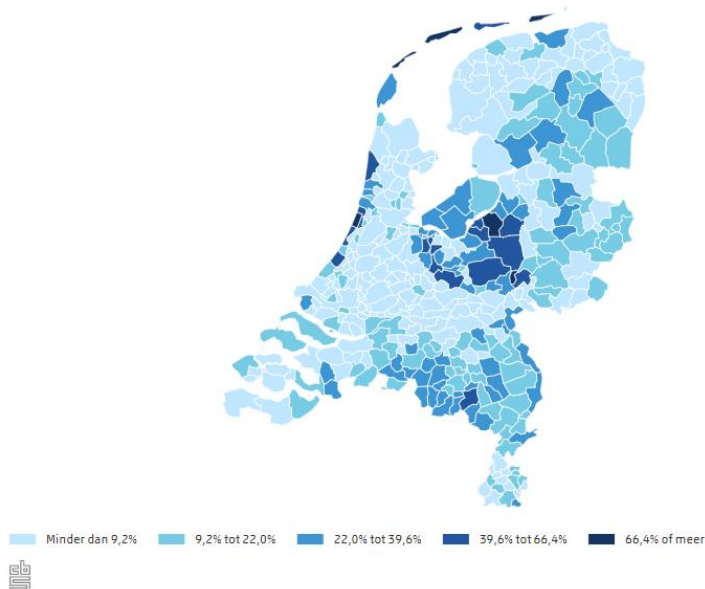
2. Surface area of trees in the municipality

Indicator: Area of trees per neighbourhood (excluding agricultural), as a percentage of the total area.

Source: WSJG

The map shows the percentage of trees per neighbourhood in Dutch municipalities. A clear dividing line is visible on the map. In the eastern half of the country, the landscape is considerably more filled with trees than in the Randstad, Zeeland and Friesland.

VNG, IPO, UvW

Oppervlakte boom per buurt (exclusief agrarisch) 2021

Legenda

	< 10
	10 < 15
	15 < 20
	20 < 25
	>= 25
	Nederland: 25,0

Eenheid

%
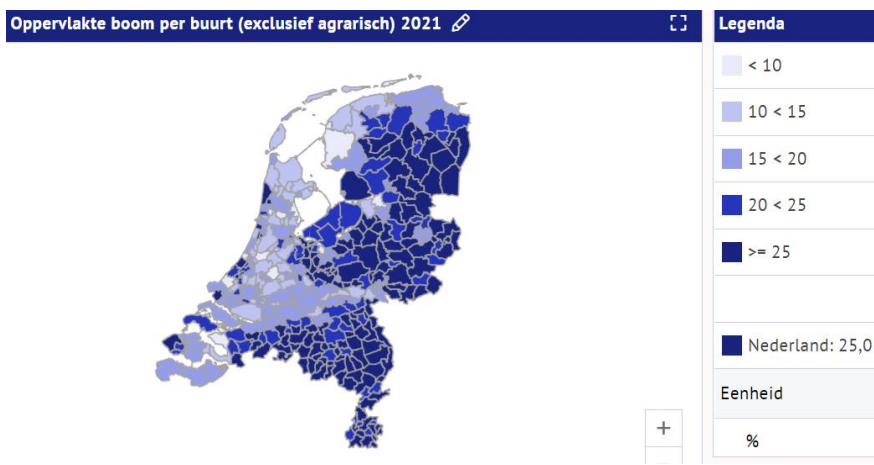
3. Biodiversity

Indicator: Trends in Red List species by province

Source: Environmental Data Compendium (CLO)

Biodiversity in the Netherlands is under extreme pressure, as can be seen from the overview of species on the Red List. Some species are recovering well or have returned to the Netherlands, such as the white-tailed eagle and the wolf, but others show a flat or negative trend. However, there are more provinces where there is a stable or increasing population than a decreasing one. https://www.clo.nl/en/indicators/en1521-red-list-indicator

Trends van Rode Lijstsoorten per provincie
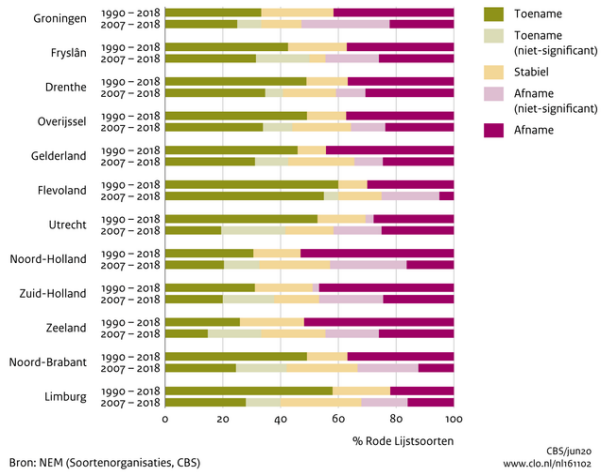
Bron: NEM (Soortenorganisaties, CBS)

CBS/jun20
www.clo.nl/nl61102

VNG, IPO, UvW

5.16 SDG 16 − Promote peaceful and inclusive societies

SDG 16 is about ensuring a strong and honest rule of law, where everyone can participate in decision-making, everyone has access to justice (16.3), and capable public institutions are transparent, accountable, representative and accessible (16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10). Combating all forms of violence and crime (16.1, 16.2 and 16.4) is part of this.

Overall view and trend

The trend developments are positive for safety and the prevention of violence. There is a clear decline in the percentage of people who frequently feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood. The number of juvenile suspects (10 % of all suspects) is high compared to other EU countries (21st out of 24 in 2018). Increasingly less Dutch people state to have been the victim of traditional forms of crime such as violence, burglary, theft and vandalism (13.7% in 2019 compared to almost 20% in 2013). The Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings estimates that there are between 5,000 and 7,500 human trafficking victims in the Netherlands each year.
An indicator to measure the participation of citizens is the turnout during elections; in municipalities this is around 55%, which is substantially less than in national elections. For provinces and Water Authorities, the turnout in 2019 was 56.1% and 51.2%.
Less time is needed to start a new business. The Dutch ranking is also high for participation and accountability, and trust in the rule of law.

VSR indicators

There are fewer victims of crime and violent crime, and the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood has also decreased (16.1). In terms of the percentage of people who sometimes feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood, the Netherlands ranked fourth out of 16 EU countries in 2018. The trend for homicide and cybercrime victimisation is stable. CBS states that the effectiveness of public administration and the quality of government regulation continue to increase, as does confidence in institutions. However, the trust in the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer) is declining and criticism and distrust of the government's actions is also growing. The water authorities enjoy great trust when it comes to their historical reputation in the battle against water. For current issues, such as drought and water quality, the score is lower, according to research by Wageningen University.

Role of local and regional authorities

In recent years, a lot of attention has been paid to making public administration more resilient (16.6). Undermining, which occurs when the criminal underground infiltrates the systems above ground, is an issue that also occurs through infiltration of political parties and thus the municipal or provincial councils. CBS observes that, based on the Corruption Perception Index, corruption appears to occur less in the Netherlands than in other EU countries: in 2019, the Netherlands ranked fourth within the EU. However, the issue of corruption in our country is on the rise, with a negative effect on the achievement of the goal.

Ensuring receptive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (16.7) has developed strongly. Decentralised authorities pay more attention to various forms of participation procedures, often tailored to the subject and target group. In the past five years, the Right to Challenge has gained a foothold. Active residents' groups are given the right to shape and implement local services.
Also, citizenship education is being enhanced. It teaches students about the rules of society, their own rights and the rights of others. Participation of young people in political decision-making is promoted.
The Ministry of the Interior, the VNG and the professional and interest groups are jointly committed to strengthening local democracy and accelerating the ongoing trend in municipalities. They have done so in recent years, for example through the programme Democratie in Actie (Democracy in Action, DiA). A good balance of f/m in governance strengthens recognisability, the quality of decision-making and our democracy (see SDG 5).

Relation to national policies

In 2017, the legal aid system was adjusted by the state. The emphasis is now on providing information and keeping costs manageable by applying an income and assets test when granting legal aid. The social justice system has been severely dismantled, leaving many people without proper access to justice.

In 2018, the state evaluated the Law on the Financing of Political Parties In 2022, a revision of the law reinforced more transparency and restrictions on donations to political parties, as well as donations from outside the European Union. The government has also invested in a resilient government network that draws attention to integrity, undermining and collective norms for the work of political office holders and shapes them together with political leaders.

1. Criminality

Indicator: Index feelings of unsafety
Source: WSJG, safety monitor
The graph shows how feelings of insecurity developed between 2015 and 2021 using an index score. This demonstrates that in the individual municipalities and in a general sense in the Netherlands, feelings of unsafety have decreased following a similar trend.

Bron: Veiligheidsmonitor, eigen bewerking

VNG, IPO, UvW
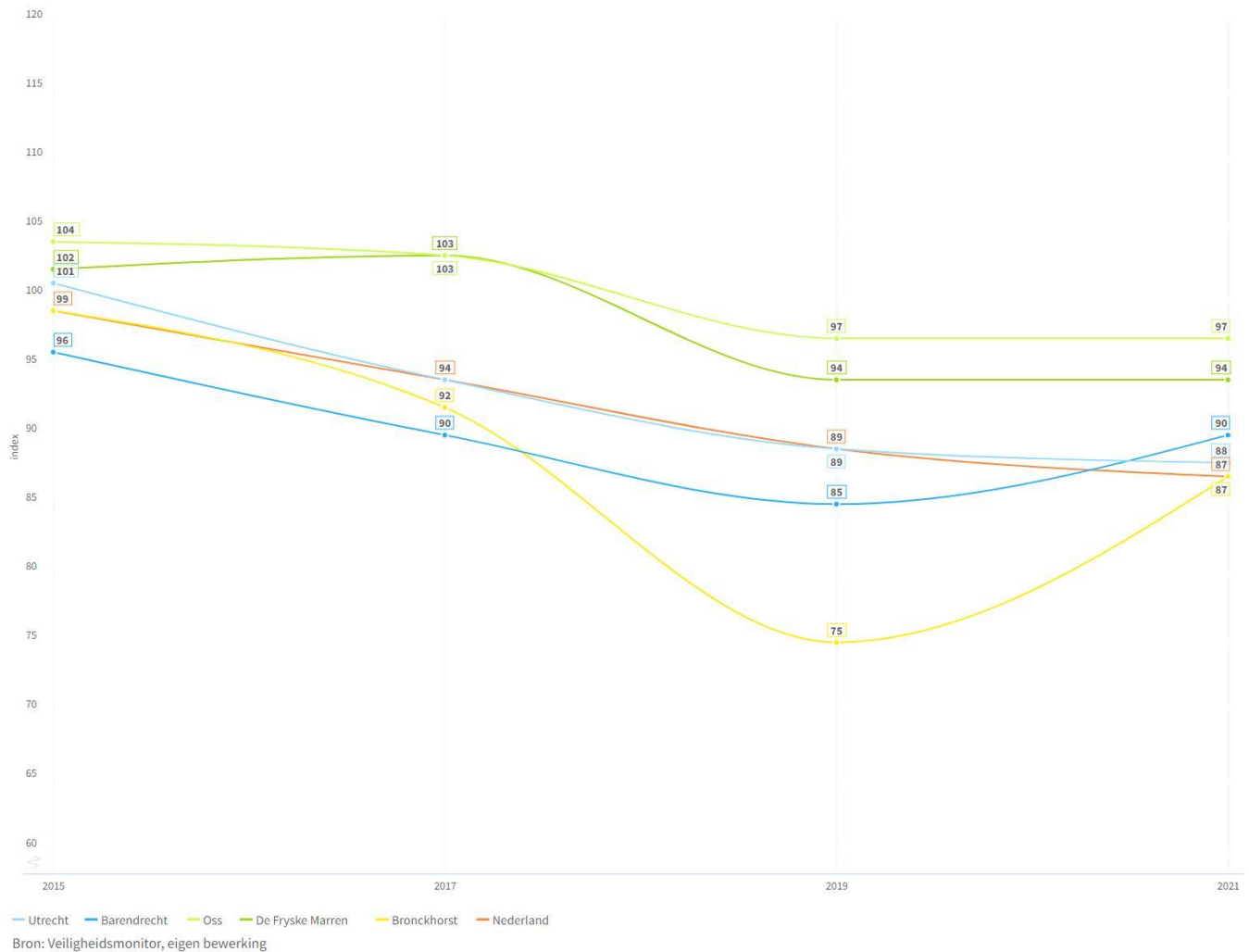
2. Trust in institutions

Indicator: Percentage of the population aged 15 years and over that has confidence in House of Representatives, the police or judges

Source: CBS, Regional Monitor Well-being

The map shows how much confidence the population has in institutions such as the House of Representatives, the police or judges. The northern provinces and Limburg and Zeeland show lower percentages than the provinces in the Randstad.

Vertrouwen in instituties
• Zuid-Holland: 69,7%

Minder dan 64,0%   64,0% tot 67,2%   67,2% tot 68,5%   68,5% tot 69,7%   69,7% of meer

VNG, IPO, UvW
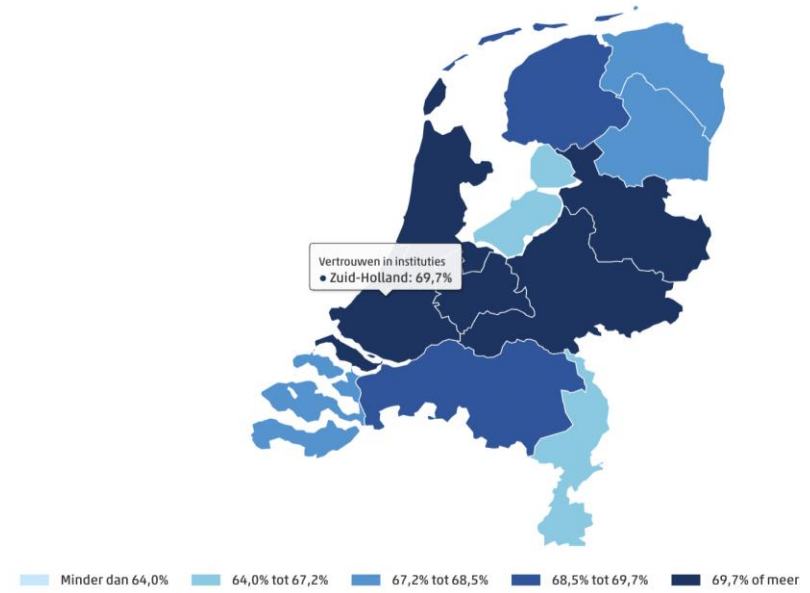
5.17 SDG 17 − Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

SDG 17 concerns a diverse list of preconditions that are necessary to achieve the 17 goals. Achieving the goals requires adequate financial resources, coherent policies, a cooperative environment and the establishment of new global partnerships. International cooperation is needed to strengthen the knowledge, creativity, capacity and resources to implement the sustainable development agenda. Monitoring progress is also addressed in SDG 17.

Broader trend

For several years now, the Netherlands has not met the international agreement to spend 0.7% of GDP on development cooperation. In 2018, the Netherlands ranked 6th in Europe with an expenditure of 0.6% of GDP. In 2021, the budget was 0.55% of GDP. The transfer of migrants in the Netherlands to relatives in the country of origin has increased.
The Netherlands trades quite a lot with the least developed countries (LDCs). In 2018, the Netherlands ranked 2nd in the European Union in this regard. In the Well-Being Monitor (CBS), trade is seen as beneficial for developing countries, but not when it comes to primary commodities. The Netherlands imports raw materials (e.g. wood, palm oil, metal) and food crops (e.g. soya) from developing countries on a massive scale. On 14 December 2021, the influential European Sustainable Development Report was published, ranking European countries on their progress with the SDGs. For most European countries, the relatively national high scores go hand in hand with a high footprint in other parts of the world. According to the researchers, the Netherlands ranks 13th in terms of domestic performance, but has the highest amount of negative 'spill-over' effects' of the 31 European countries. This mainly concerns the (environmental) footprint of trade, and negative economic effects of, for example, tax avoidance and illicit financial flows.

Two central themes

Important for SDG 17 is policy coherence for sustainable development among local governments, not only abroad, but also within the Netherlands (see chapter 4). With regard to global cooperation, the Water Authorities and VNG are committed to supporting developing countries and sharing expertise. They also view cooperation as a means to work on solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation. International water challenges require international solutions.
The Water Authorities have the Blue Deal programme and the municipalities give shape to this through VNG International. Furthermore, 119 municipalities have become Global Goals municipalities and three quarters of them also have 'town twins', one third of them with a developing country.

Water Authorities – programme Blue Deal – SDG 6.3, 6.6 and 17

The Netherlands has a great deal of expertise in the field of water and makes this available through, for example, the Blue Deal. A collaborative project of the 21 Water Authorities and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Infrastructure and Water Management. The Blue Deal started in 2018 and will run until 2030. The programme consists of 17 long-term partnerships in 14 countries. The goal is to provide 20 million people with clean drinking water. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 2300 people were trained in 2020. Also, 150 stakeholder meetings and 800 activities were organised and 100 plans approved.

Municipalities – programmes VNG International

Since the early 1990s, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) has managed capacity-building programs for municipalities in developing countries with financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, using, amongst others, Dutch municipal expertise. Since 2022, this has taken the form of a five-year strategic partnership between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the VNG. Its core is the Sustainable Development through improved Local Governance (SDLG) programme with a budget of a total of 50 million euros for 5 years. The main goal of the program is "To empower local governments and their representative bodies to shape a more sustainable future for their communities." It is built around 4 thematic priorities: Security & Rule of Law; Migration; Local Revenue Mobilization; and Integrated Water Management. In addition to the support for municipalities and associations of municipalities in currently 10 target countries, the strategic partnership is also aimed at

synergy in the efforts of the Dutch national government and municipalities for international agendas aimed at the SDGs, COP, etc.

The objective of the SDLG programme

	Sustainable Development through Improved Local Governance Programme (SDLG)			
Overall Objective	**Local governments and their representative bodies are able to shape more sustainable futures for their communities**			
Themes	Security & Rule of Law	Migration	Local Revenue Mobilisation	Integrated Water Management
Objective per Theme	Local authorities and groups in society are able to address drivers of conflict in a non-violent and inclusive manner	Local authorities are able to shape better futures for host and displaced communities within their territories	LA's in (lower) middle income countries are able to catalyse local economic development by generating revenue for public investment	LA's and their representative bodies are able to deliver on their agreements and execute policies to manage healthy, safe and social equal lives for all on lands with climate and water-related risks

64

VNG, IPO, UvW

6. Conclusions

The information in chapter 5 reveals mixed progress, both between and within the 17 goals and between different municipalities and regions. In this chapter, we will discuss the positive developments and − more specifically − which goals, population groups and regions are underperforming or showing great promise. We will consider the causes and bottlenecks and formulate recommendations on that basis.

6.1 Lack of balance between the three pillars of sustainable development

The basic principle of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development is a good balance between developments in the pillars People, Planet and Prosperity. The aim is to leave no one behind and to ensure that the way societies meet their needs here and now does not harm people elsewhere on the planet or in the future. In a general sense, socio-economic prosperity in the Netherlands is high, while there are major challenges in the ecological pillar ('planetary goals') and in inequality of opportunity. The NMDG shows that the sustainable development of Dutch municipalities has cautiously moved in the right direction in recent years. This is mainly due to strong economic growth since 2015 and a strengthening of the economic pillar. In the ecological and socio-cultural pillars, the increase was not as strong and, in recent years, positive trends have levelled off.

In the Regional Monitor of Well-being (RMBW), most indicators of well-being 'here and now' show a flat or increasing trend. Gross Regional Product has increased almost everywhere in the Netherlands. Unemployment fell significantly (SDG 8). Decentralised authorities have invested a lot in the regional economy. Almost all Dutch municipalities score well on spatial location conditions. This includes the availability, diversity and quality of industrial estates and office buildings (SDG 9). With regard to labour – the quality (knowledge, experience, creativity) and (quantitative) availability of people who can and want to work (SDG 8 and 4) – Dutch municipalities score average, but the trend is positive. In 2021, the results in the socio-cultural pillar stagnated. For the issue of housing (SDG 11), most regions show a declining trend for one or more indicators (RMBW and NMDG). The distance to amenities (such as primary schools and sports grounds) is increasing and home and living environment satisfaction is decreasing.

Education (SDG 4) and health (SDG 3) score well on many indicators in international comparison (NMDG). This also applies to housing, livelihood and security. However, there is a significant group of vulnerable people who are deprived in many areas. The highest accumulation of negative outcomes is among people with lower education and low income and those with a non-Western migration background. Inequality (SDG 10) is most visible in the labour market, the housing market and in education, but can be found in other areas as well. During COVID-19 pandemic, the Netherlands managed to cope with many of the immediate effects on the economy and jobs. However, the consequences for healthcare, education, young people, small entrepreneurs, the self-employed and people with flexible contracts were considerable and the long-term effects will only become fully visible at a later stage. The crisis has made existing inequalities more visible and has intensified them.

In international comparison, the greatest challenges for the Netherlands lie in the ecological pillar, with climate, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, reducing the use of raw materials and the transition to circular production and consumption (SDGs 2, 12, 13, 14 and 15). In terms of energy (transition) (SDG 7), we are still a long way from the 2030 targets, but the trend is positive. Looking

at raw materials, we see that more and more waste is collected separately, but the total amount of (household) waste remains roughly the same (SDG 11 and 12). In the case of water (SDG 6), positive scores are found for access to safe drinking water and sanitation, water management and efficiency of water treatment, but not for the quality of ground and surface water. The Netherlands is lagging behind in Europe when it comes to the values and trends for biodiversity in water and on land (SDG 14 and 15). There is a direct link between the high level of production and consumption and the low scores for nature and environmental quality (in addition to the small land area and high population density). Dutch consumption and production also has a high ecological and climate footprint outside the Netherlands. Even the sustainability measures that the Netherlands is taking in nationally sometimes have negative spill-over effects in other parts of the world. One example is the increased import of metals and biomass for alternative energy sources.

The conclusion is that a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development has yet to be established. Our well-being here and now is achieved at the expense of people elsewhere and of future generations. Furthermore, a substantial and growing number of citizens are affected by inequality of opportunity.

One concern is that the trust citizens have in politics, and thus in the government, is declining. The government is no longer naturally seen as the driving force behind sustainability and emancipation, nor as a dependable partner of its citizens. The grievances in the childcare benefits scandal ('toeslagenaffaire') that went on for years have revealed a shocking image of the national government and the tax authorities.

6.2 Differences between regions and types of municipalities

Whereas the national SDG monitor and Voluntary National Review show progress for the Netherlands as a whole, this VSR reveals considerable differences between regions and between different types of municipalities. These differences can partly be explained by policy and administrative choices, but are also strongly related to environmental characteristics, economic structure and population composition. As a result, the challenges faced by local governments differ greatly.

As can be seen from the maps and graphs in chapter 5, municipalities located in the border regions of the Netherlands generally score lower on sustainable development indicators and the SDGs than the Netherlands as a whole. This particularly concerns parts of the provinces of Groningen, Limburg, Drenthe, Zeeland and North Brabant. The province of Groningen is home to four of the ten municipalities with the lowest scores on the national index. These areas at the borders of the country are experiencing an ageing and shrinking population. This is associated with a decline in employment and in facilities such as schools, hospitals and police stations. Highly educated young people and people with higher incomes are moving away. This results in lower scores for socio-economic indicators such as a low disposable income, health issues, lower employment rate and relatively high levels of unemployment. In the northern provinces, relatively more people have flexible jobs. Energy poverty is high because many people do not have the money to have their homes insulated. The social participation of citizens is also less, as is the trust in institutions and in other people. In general, the northeast of the Netherlands does score higher than the southwest on a pleasant living environment and lower on experienced nuisance, with the exception of the far northeast where the influence of earthquakes as a result of gas extraction is strongly felt.

The highest sustainability scores are found in the middle and east of the country. Social and political participation is higher there than in the densely populated west (the 'Randstad') and the north and south. The provinces of Gelderland, Flevoland and Overijssel score well on most of the 'planet goals', including energy transition. Nature and landscape are under pressure throughout the country. There are narrow stretches of areas with decent scores along the coast, eastern border and along the moraines near the Veluwe and Utrechtse Heuvelrug. But the Veluwe, the largest interconnected nature reserve, also suffers greatly from dehydration and nitrogen deposition. Water quality is low in areas of intensive livestock farming. In low-lying polder areas and on sandy soils, issues with the water level occur. The risk of pollution, nuisance and calamities is high in the densely populated areas of the Randstad and industrial regions.

A striking difference in the level of well-being can be seen between the big cities and the countryside. In general, sustainability scores are higher in smaller and medium-sized municipalities. Larger municipalities face more challenges with social and environmental goals. The opposite is often true for economic goals: the larger municipalities do better in that area. The big cities are at the bottom of the rankings for many indicators in all three pillars. On average, the inhabitants of the largest cities have poorer health, lower disposable income, a less safe and clean living environment and less social cohesion. The employment rate in cities is also lagging behind. The accumulation of inequalities is greatest in the deprived neighbourhoods of 16 urban areas, which are associated with a lack of safety and less trust in institutions and the government. There is less chance of quality education, considerable energy poverty and during the COVID-19 pandemic, it had the highest mortality rate. People living in these neighbourhoods, of whom a high proportion are from non-Western migration backgrounds, tend to live closer together with several generations. They often have essential jobs that cannot be done from home. Compared to smaller municipalities, large cities do score higher on educational attainment, knowledge and competitiveness, and shorter distance to facilities. This gives the cities development prospects. The research institute Pon & Telos, which studies regional differences in Well-being, advises the national government to pay more attention to the shrinking areas at the borders of the country.

6.3 Policy efforts, bottlenecks and relationship to national policy

Since 2015, when the UN Agenda 2030 with its 17 SDGs was adopted, decentralised governments have made efforts to contribute to the transition to a climate-neutral, circular economy, sustainable agriculture, mobility and energy systems, and improved opportunities for vulnerable groups in healthcare, education and the labour market. They give substance to national ambitions, programmes and agreements that are related to the SDGs, and sometimes are several steps ahead of the state. In chapter 4, we discussed the specific commitment to the SDGs – although many local governments do not explicitly establish the link with the SDGs. Nevertheless, in practice, we are not yet seeing the tangible change in society on the scale and at the speed required to build a future-proof society and economy. It will require considerable additional effort to accelerate the energy transition, prevent the loss of biodiversity, reduce the use of raw materials and our footprint, improve the quality of nature and the environment, reduce inequality of opportunity, provide sufficient affordable housing, strengthen the link between the labour market and the transition challenges, and restore confidence in the government. In this process, the SDGs are not yet, or only sparsely, used as a framework by local governments.

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In chapter 3, we already discussed the precarious financial position of many municipalities and the administrative relations. In the following paragraphs, we will address the various causes of the lagging results in more detail.

Physical domain, planetary goals and the transition to a sustainable economy

In the ecological pillar, various ambitions and measurable goals have been set at the national level for 2030. For example, in the Climate Agreement, the policy for circular economy and agriculture and the Nitrogen Act. At the current rate, we will not achieve these goals. A major cause is that policy is insufficiently supported by tangible instruments and long-term funding, also in respect of the additional tasks and roles of local and regional authorities. Another problem is that many of the existing laws, regulations, financial and market incentives do not support the desired change. Unsustainable production is easier and cheaper than clean and sustainable production. Secondary raw materials recovered from water by the Water Authorities, for example, are difficult to sell on the market due to prohibitive regulations and because primary raw materials are cheaper. As governments, we support the frontrunners in business and agriculture, but measures are also needed to bring the rest of the pack and the laggards on board. During the national consultations for the Voluntary National Review, representatives from all segments of society argued for a strong framework and normative role for central government. In the construction sector, for example, the absence of clear policy guidelines means that greening in new buildings and renovations is not being accomplished sufficiently. Efficient reuse of raw materials and reduction of waste requires incentives at the start of the chain, such as legislation on packaging and regulations on the repairability and durability of appliances.

There is still a lot of public money flowing towards fossil and linear activities, both in the form of subsidies and tax breaks and through procurement and tendering. As local and regional authorities, we, too, have a great deal of work to do here. Sustainable and circular procurement is an ambition, but not an obligation. We must strengthen the use of sustainability requirements as an award criterion, and consider the total operating life of goods and services and the social costs and benefits more in procurement and tendering. The Province of Zeeland, for example, has developed an SDG guide for socially responsible procurement. For a real change, we need to cherish social values, such as environmental quality, healthy nature and the numerous ecosystem services, and to price negative (environmental) effects. The Water Authorities and some municipalities and provinces already apply CO_2 pricing in their own operations.

In the recent report *Natuurinclusief Nederland* (Nature-inclusive Netherlands), the Council for the Environment (RLI) states that, despite widespread public concern about the state of nature in the Netherlands, the interests of nature still have a weak position in economic and political considerations. Nature, also by local governments, is often regarded as a large expense and 'partial interest' that hinders economic growth. This applies to both the city and the countryside. Green and nature are still too often seen as an 'add-on' to existing and new built environments; the significance of nature as a prerequisite for human existence − which contributes to many policy goals, including social and economic ones − is insufficiently recognised and anchored in policy and regulations. A fundamental reassessment of priorities and strategies is urgently required, whereby the existing situation is seen as unsustainable and whereby minor adjustments on the margins are no longer appropriate: for example, in order to solve flooding issues, it will be necessary to give up plots of farmland for water storage, and municipalities should no longer be building in low-lying areas. It is also important that stretches of green space are seen as a complete ecosystem and are developed

throughout the city with connections to the outlying areas: the city as part of the region's ecosystem, with attention to species connectivity and movement, which makes green spaces less vulnerable and results in higher levels of biodiversity.

Existing regulations on nature and the environment are insufficiently observed and enforced even at the decentralised level, which is partly due to a lack of human resources and knowledge. As local and regional government associations, we endorse the RLI report's recommendations to give nature more priority. Our goal is to have 70% of the necessary conditions for a favourable state of protected nature (Natura 2000) in place by 2030.

This requires not only the restoration of protected nature, but also the nature-inclusive design of other functions in the rural area. The UvW and Vewin, the organisation of the drinking water companies, have jointly formulated an appeal under the title *'Water verbindt'* (Water Connects), in which they promote a water transition. In the areas of water and climate adaptation, natural solutions are also chosen wherever possible.

The ambition to intertwine nature tasks with other social tasks often does not run smoothly in practice. Tensions arise between different tasks as a result of a sectoral approach that is too compartmentalised. That is why, in the joint agenda *Krachtig groen herstel van Nederland* (Powerful green recovery of the Netherlands), we, as decentralised authorities, advocate integral area development in order to coherently tackle the major challenges in the areas of food production, climate, water, circular economy, biodiversity and energy. To achieve a sound balance between food and raw material production, nature and the environment, landscape and quality of life, interventions must be assessed beforehand, with the aim of maintaining or improving general well-being. In doing so, we explicitly align with the broad sustainability agenda of the SDGs. In a regional dialogue, goals can be brought together by means of customisation. We want to make firm agreements on the approach and the intended results. A requirement for such an integrated, area-focused approach is that the national government supports it and that national budgets can be combined, with long-term commitment. There must also be extra leeway in rules and frameworks where necessary.

In the joint agenda for a powerful green recovery, we connect the challenges for living and the living environment with those for energy and climate and a powerful regional economy. Living is not just about realising a large number of new, future-proof homes for all target groups, but also about liveable and healthy neighbourhoods and towns and sustainable and attractive living and working locations with good (recreational) facilities and healthy nature. For the sake of better accessibility and sustainable mobility, we want to develop residential properties within cities as much as possible and always close to public transport hubs and existing infrastructure.
We follow the Provinces' 2020 regional economy recovery plan ('Herstel Regionale Economie'). We are aiming for a sustainable, circular and inclusive economy that will be increasingly digital, and a labour market that can deliver the people for this. For innovation based on regional strengths, appropriate national policies and structural funding are important conditions.

Social domain: towards an inclusive society
The SDGs call for ensuring equal opportunities for all (*Leave no one behind*) and equal access to facilities, services and public spaces. SDG 1 has the explicit goal of reducing poverty by half by

2030. SDG 10 aims to ensure that the 40% of the lowest income groups benefit more than other income groups and seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination. This requires a lot of extra attention for the most vulnerable groups, including people with a migration background. The Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP) reaches a clear conclusion in its reports: our society is not yet inclusive.

With the decentralisation of the social domain, the choice was made to tackle social problems more locally, in close proximity to the citizens. Since 2015, municipalities have made great progress in getting support for vulnerable groups on track. Many people in the Netherlands make use of welfare support, partly because incomes in the lowest pay scales often fall below the minimum subsistence level. The use of facilities within the Social Support Act (Wmo) and within youth care has increased significantly after 2015. In 2019, over 1.1 million people used a Wmo provision and over 400,000 used a Youth Act provision. In addition, about 600,000 people used a provision from the Participation Act. Evaluations show that many people feel that getting support helps them. However, an unknown number of people are not being reached. It is expected that the increase will continue towards 2030 due to a sharp rise in the number of people aged 75 and over, and an increasing number of chronically ill people and people suffering from dementia. The proportion of people with a non-Western migration background is also expected to rise from 14% to 17%. This group is facing great inequality of opportunity, and relies most heavily on social assistance and labour reintegration support.

Municipalities are struggling with the disparity between the demand coming their way and the lack of resources. The expectations underlying the decentralisations have turned out to be unrealistic. One of them was that costs could be saved by focusing more on 'self-reliance' and the 'strength of the local community', so that people would be less likely to turn to the government. Indeed, there are many informal carers, volunteers and citizens' initiatives, such as care cooperatives and neighbourhood networks. However, receiving help from one's own network is not possible or sufficient for everyone. Many informal carers are overburdened. Another expectation was that municipalities would adapt their policies to local conditions and thus be able to implement the laws more effectively and cheaply than either the state or the province. However, the room for own policy choices is strongly limited by the national frameworks. Municipalities themselves cannot always influence who has access to which facilities.

The shortage is particularly evident in youth care, where unacceptably long waiting lists have arisen for young people with complex problems. Municipalities can make improvements in how procurement is organised and thus also reduce the high administrative burden for providers. However, the financial shortages force municipalities to make a choice between reaching as many people as possible or focusing on the most vulnerable groups. Evaluations show that people with complex care needs and people with reduced work capacity are not receiving the support they need. Municipalities tend to give priority to minor requests for help that are cheaper and easier to solve. The existing financial incentives and the developments in the 'care market' – a large supply of light care and limited supply of complex care – encourage this trend. The greatest obstacles occur when people are faced with challenges at the intersection of several domains. Integrated work within and between policy domains often remains difficult, especially where support involves different legal frameworks. Actors with whom municipalities cooperate a lot, such as health insurers, employers and educational institutions, also have their own goals, rules and working methods. It is not always clear who is responsible. This applies, for example, to investing in prevention.

National laws and regulations are sometimes at odds with the SDG principle of 'leaving no one behind'. The minimum wage has been stagnating for decades and benefits for the most vulnerable are being cut. Many systems in the social domain are designed on the basis of mistrust. When there is a conflict, the government quickly resorts to procedures; the vulnerable citizen then gets the short end of the stick. The childcare benefit scandal has made the consequences of this strict implementation of the rigid laws and regulations painfully visible, as well as demonstrating institutional racism. We can now draw lessons from this. It has become widely recognised that we need to apply more of a human element in service provision: empathy and attention to the individual. This cannot be achieved with a one-sided focus on digitalisation and efficiency. Better assistance to vulnerable groups requires a one-on-one conversation, listening to their needs and taking into account their personal situation; otherwise the relationship between government and citizens will be damaged even further. But this way of working requires intensive deployment of human resources, active outreach, customised and integrated work. Do professionals have enough leeway to be able to bend the rules? How do we prevent arbitrariness? And how do we reconcile this time-consuming effort with the desire to help as many people as possible?

It is positive that the government's attention to equal opportunities and treatment has increased, as has its awareness that equal opportunities sometimes require unequal efforts. There is a new minister for poverty and a national coordinator for discrimination and racism. In order to benefit from the momentum, it is important that municipal processes, services and information provision are designed from the perspective of citizens, so as to reduce the gap between practice (life world) and guidelines/procedures (system world). In its proposition [De winst van het sociaal domein](#) (The benefit of the social domain), VNG and the municipalities, draw attention to three tasks: restoring livelihood security, increasing equality of opportunity and making it easier to live healthily. Preconditions are sufficient financial resources, a logical and predictable system that works in practice and good administrative relations, so that we take on the task of a strong social domain as a unified government.

Trust between government and citizens and social participation

A number of studies show that trust in the government is declining. Citizens no longer always believe that the government has their best interests at heart and acts with transparency and integrity. Long-running incidents such as the handling of damage resulting from the earthquakes in Groningen and the government's handling of the childcare benefits scandal ('toeslagenaffaire') have damaged the image of a reliable government. Institutional racism and discrimination occurs at all levels of government.

Trust in municipalities is still higher than in the national government. In the case of the Water Authorities, trust is based on their historical reputation for good water management. For current tasks such as water quality and drought prevention, public trust is much lower.

All local and regional authorities have paid great attention to receptive, inclusive, participative and representative decision-making. Decentralised authorities pay more attention to various forms of participation procedures, often tailored to the subject and target group. However, this also creates tension between system thinking by the government on the one hand, and result and solution-oriented work by citizens on the other. It is not uncommon for active citizens, who develop their own initiatives with others, to become disappointed and to withdraw their efforts. Despite increasing investment in citizenship education, youth participation is minimal.

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6.4 Well-being and SDGs as a framework for policy and monitoring

A growing number of municipalities and provinces are looking for ways to implement the Well-being and SDGs in policy agendas, beyond a non-binding inventory. In a recent appeal *Aan de slag met Brede Welvaart als gemeente*(Working on Well-being as a Municipality), VNG, Platform 31 and Pon-Telos state: Well-being deserves a central role in municipal administration, it should be part of the regular policy and budget cycle. They list ten practical steps, including a baseline measurement as a qualitative test and starting point for a broad social discussion, and determining goals and making choices together with society, with a focus on translating the SDGs. Visualise the Well-being Effects of the municipal policy and explain the municipal impact. Enrich Waarstaatgemeente.nl and the RBMW with subjective data and citizen science for your municipality.

The formulation of a coherent vision and strategy at the decentralised level would be much helped if ministries and planning agencies also placed the SDGs much more centrally, and positioned all policies within them. The SDGs lend themselves perfectly to making integral, transparent considerations with inclusiveness as an important guiding principle, at every level of scale.
Note: possibly as an example the practical test with the SDG Compass for the Living Environment (https://vng.nl/publicaties/praktijkproef-afwegingskader-omgevingsvisie) and the application that Súd-West Fryslân has created from it! (was also a case study at the Liveable Planet meeting)

The SDGs call for ambitious aspirations, with which the government stimulates all parties, including civil society, to enter into new collaborations and intensify efforts. Setting specific (intermediate) goals with targets and clear indicators, as well as having solid baseline data, is important to monitor progress and intensify efforts where necessary.

For monitoring purposes, it is important to work with progress indicators which cover the real key questions. This is not always the case in the national CBS monitor. Existing 'blind spots' also need to be addressed (see section on monitoring in chapter 4). This could be done in collaboration with social parties and citizens' initiatives.

It is also of great importance that an Integral Financing Framework (*INFF)* is created, which includes incentives for local governments making it transparent where and in what way efforts are being made to implement the SDGs.

Finally, in data collection, we should not merely focus on averages, but differentiate for distinct groups such as youth and women, as SDG 17.19 explicitly calls for. Trends and averages tend to conceal the situation of vulnerable groups.

7. Annex: additional data sources per SDG

SDGs 1 and 10

In order to help guarantee livelihoods for all, municipalities must have an overview of which groups are most in need. The Municipal Social Domain Monitor on WSJG has a Neighbourhood Profile that provides insight into, among other things, the composition of households, income distribution and the level of municipal facilities.

The WSJG Health dashboard has a Map with the socio-economic status per neighbourhood in the municipality (Source: SCP, socio-cultural planning agency). The KIS-neighbourhood monitor of the Knowledge Platform Integration and Society shows differences in living conditions based on migration background, such as the percentage of low-income households. In various dashboards of this monitor, new citizens with a refugee origin are indicated separately with a yellow colour or line. This group is the most vulnerable on all fronts.

SDG 2

The Atlas for the living environment and websites of CBS and PBL (central office for statistics, planning office for the living environment), among others, offer a lot of information in relation to agricultural production and environmental impact, but this information is not easily usable for decentralized sustainability monitoring. There are few appropriate indicators and data available for food security and the incomes of small agricultural (family) businesses.

SDG 3

Insight into health differences is essential to arrive at an effective approach. The GGD (municipal health service) Health Monitor provides a great deal of health information at municipal level, broken down into youth and adults. The monitor contains data on, among other things, psychosocial health, chronic disorders and a healthy lifestyle. 'Background characteristics' are also mapped out, such as gender, age, migration background, education, work situation, income and geographical location. RIVM (National Institute for Health and Environment) has 'estimated' the situation for a number of indicators from the Health Monitor down to district and neighbourhood level. The dashboard of the Municipal Monitor Social Domain on www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl (municipal statistics) provides insight into the facilities offered and the WMO (social support law) client experience and MWO Youth Care.

SDG 4

The www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl Education Dashboard, the Municipal Monitor Social Domain and the KIS monitor contain statistics at municipal level about, amongst others, the number of pupils in primary/special and secondary education and the number of locations of primary, secondary and special education. The KIS monitor clearly shows the differences between young people aged 18 to 30 from different countries of origin, for example the proportion of young people with a basic qualification, average cito test score, the percentage of early school leavers and the percentage of highly educated people. The WSJG Health Dashboard has an indicator on the proportion of low literacy. This is measured only once every 10 years.

SDG 5

Few suitable indicators and data are available for SDG 5. Many statistics are not broken down by gender.

The [Waves dashboard](#) of the Union of Water Authorities (UvW) contains information about the implementation of water tasks by the 21 water authorities in the Netherlands. [The e-magazine Dehydration in the Netherlands](#), published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (2019), charts the effects of dehydration on nature and agriculture. Desiccation is expected to have a major impact on the agricultural sector and the state of nature in the future. The [publications of Vewin](#), the drinking water companies, provide insight into the quality of drinking water.

The quality of fish stocks in water bodies is monitored by the Water Information House in the context of the EU Water Framework Directive. This is relevant for SDG 6, 14 and 15.

For the efforts of water authorities, see https://unievanwaterschappen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Waterschapslevel-2020.pdf

SDG 7

The Climate Monitor contains a great deal of information about CO2 emissions, electricity and gas consumption by various actors and the use of renewable energy in all sectors. The monitor has an informative map with [district and neighbourhood data](#): including average gas and electricity consumption of homes, installed solar energy installations, average income per household and monthly energy costs of the average home. See also *[Map energy label of buildings from the national Energy Atlas](#)* and the *[Map with energy saving potential](#)*. In its recent research, TNO has mapped out energy poverty in even more detail, which can help municipalities take a targeted approach in the areas with the greatest problems. The www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl Energy Transition Dashboard also provides relevant information, such as the number of homes with an Energy Saving Own Home subsidy, divided over 8 types of saving measures.

SDG 8

The www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl Dashboards Work and Income and Business and Economy provide additional information. There are few indicators in existing monitors for diversification, creativity and innovation. PBL's Compendium for the Living Environment has a [Map Net labor participation](#). The KIS neighbourhood monitor provides a breakdown for unemployment by neighbourhood and also by migration background. Unemployment is highest among people who have come to the Netherlands as refugees.

SDG 9

The map in the Compendium for the Living Environment with [accessibility of workplaces](#) (commuting) shows a large difference in accessibility of workplaces by car and by public transport/bicycle in the Netherlands. The [CROW](#) website shows the sustainability score for regional mobility programmes. The national Climate Monitor contains a lot of relevant data about the energy intensity and greenhouse gas intensity of the economy, consumption and emissions by companies. The monitor also has a mobility dashboard with, amongst others, the share of registered electric and natural gas cars, companies and passenger cars per 1000 households.

SDG 11

The Local Housing Monitor (www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl) has reports on Private Housing and Housing Associations with a lot of relevant partial data. The associated Neighborhood Profile provides more details at the neighborhood level, for example the percentage of owner-occupied homes, social rental homes and other homes. The [KIS neighborhood monitor](#) provides insight into the share of households living in social housing, whereby a distinction is made on the basis of, among other things, migration background. With regard to (public) transport and road safety, the WSJG Mobility Dashboard provides information on various aspects. The WSJG dashboard has

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information about municipal monuments and spending on culture. The WSJG Citizens Survey, which is periodically conducted in approximately 90 municipalities on the basis of surveys, contains a lot of relevant information for SDG 11 and other goals, such as satisfaction with facilities in the neighborhood, appreciation of the Living Environment and appreciation for cooperation with residents.

SDG 12

As yet, there is little directly accessible information about emissions, environmental aspects, the circular economy and sustainable procurement for decentralized SDG monitoring. The IPO (Association of Provinces) is working on an indicator set for the transition to a circular economy.

SDG 13

The national Climate Monitor provides a great deal of relevant information about progress in reducing greenhouse gases, including the CO2 emissions of various sectors, expressed in tons per municipality. There are also indicators for 'Avoided CO2 emissions, through renewable electricity and heat' based on various techniques and alternatives. There is also a lot of information about installed thermal capacity and various heat sources, including waste incineration plant, biomass CHP, (manure) fermenters, geothermal energy, co-firing power plant, WWTP fermentation and combustion of biofuels. There are major differences between municipalities and regions. There are not yet many useful indicators available for climate adaptation. However, useful information and visualisations can be found in the Climate Impact Atlas and the Spatial Adaptation Knowledge Portal. The Water Boards Climate Monitor provides specific information about the water authorities' CO2 emissions.

SDG 15

The Netherlands planning office for the living environment (PBL) provides detailed information about Dutch nature in the online Compendium for the Living Environment, see here, for example. There are various indicators for trends in plant and animal species (see PBL). The IUCN establishes Red Lists of the most endangered species. The Red List indicator expresses the development in the degree of threat of seven species groups on which nature policy mainly focuses. The Living Planet Index is another indicator that shows the average trend in population size of all species of these seven species groups. In the Netherlands, tens of thousands of volunteers collect data that ends up in the National Database of Flora and Fauna. For map material, see also: Atlas of the living environment: Species richness Red List And Map: Species diversity in general. BIJ12 is the organization that supports the provinces with knowledge and data about the physical living environment, see for example the index nature and landscape. Some municipalities have a municipal species atlas.

SDG 16

The Central Office for Statistics (CBS) has extensive information about Dutch citizens' trust in institutions and people. The Network for Resilient Governance is committed to allowing political office holders to do their work safely and with integrity. Among other things, it developed the Guidance on Safe Governance. The website of the Electoral Council offers a lot of information for figures on the composition of municipal councils, Provincial Councils and general management of water authorities.