

The Netherlands



According to statistical records, in Holland the Dutch don't work much. Or rather, they work relatively few hours. Three out of every four Dutch women only work part-time, the highest such figure in the European Union (EU). In 2013 the (female) Dutch minister of education, Jet Bussemaker, suggested that in the Netherlands female emancipation was not as extensive or advanced as might have been thought. Mrs Bussemaker's remarks gave rise to an animated debate on the causes of this apparent preference for part time work and on the overall position of women in Dutch society. The debates looked at possible causes (lack of kindergartens) and its consequences (economic dependence on male incomes, divorce prejudices, lower pensions – by as much as 40 per cent). The European

Commission (EC) had suggested to the Netherlands' government that the situation be corrected by improved child-minding facilities and by eliminating prejudicial tax structures.

Pensioners paradise – not

In the years following the Second World War Dutch governments had given some importance to the provision and protection of state and private pension funds. In the twenty-first century things began to change, to the extent that by the end of 2012 the Dutch government faced a €30 billion (US\$40 billion) deficit in pension provisions. This state of affairs came as something of a shock to many pensioners, who had bought into what the London *Financial Times* described as the second largest 'defined benefit' system in

KEY FACTS

Official name: Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (The Kingdom of The Netherlands)

Head of State: King Willem-Alexander (crowned 30 April 2013)

Head of government: Prime Minister Mark Rutte (VVD) (from 2010; re-elected 12 Sep 2012)

Ruling party: Coalition, led by Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD) (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) with Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA) (Labour Party) (from 2010; re-elected Sep 2012)

Area: 41,473 square km

Population: 16.75 million (2012)*

Capital: The Hague (seat of government); Amsterdam (legal and cultural)

Official language: Dutch and Frisian

Currency: Euro (€) = 100 cents (from 1 Jan 2002; previous currency guilder, locked at f2.20 per euro)

Exchange rate: €0.75 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$46,142 (2012)*

GDP real growth: -0.88% (2012)*

GDP: US\$773.12 billion (2012)*

Labour force: 7.91 million (2012)*

Unemployment: 5.31% (2012)*

Inflation: 2.82% (2012)*

Oil production: 62,217 bpd (2011)

Natural gas production: 63.90 billion cum (2012)

Balance of trade: US\$61.02 billion (2012)*

Annual FDI: US\$15.60 billion (2011)

* estimated figure

Europe. In this context, 'defined' meant assured to the extent that pensioners would always receive a fixed portion of their final salary for the rest of their lives. As all good things come to an end, so did this arrangement, as in April 2013 the Nederlandsche Bank (DNB), the Dutch central bank, ordered a substantial proportion of the country's pension funds to end the practice and begin lowering payments. The *Financial Times* reported that the average cut in pension payments was of the order of 2 per cent, adding 'that figure concealed a wide range'.

Workers paradise – still?

For most of the EU member countries, in 2013 an unemployment rate of 6.5 per cent would be considered a major achievement. Not so in the Netherlands, where the figure gave considerable cause for concern, not to mention serious cold shivers. While the actual rate was still relatively low, in the Netherlands it was growing with a worrying speed. In 2011 the unemployment rate was only 4.1 per cent according to Eurostat. However according to the more rigorous national calculations the rate was nudging 8 per cent as it included people employed for less than 12 hours per month although still seeking employment. The Netherlands' Centraal Planbureau (literally, 'Central Planning Office', but in fact the Dutch bureau for economic policy analysis) has forecast the 2014 unemployment number at 635,000, the highest since 1995. The sad conclusion was that the Netherlands'

flexible labour legislation had proved unable to create enough jobs. Comparisons with Germany gave little comfort. German unemployment appeared to have levelled off at 5.4 per cent in September 2012, a percentage point less than the rate in Holland, and stable to boot.

The Dutch labour market had held up well in the earlier stages of the financial crisis. Despite the sharp drop in gross domestic product (GDP) that had followed the fall of Lehman Brothers, for the most part Dutch companies retained their employment levels. The highest level of unemployment in 2009 and 2010 was 4.6 per cent. This contrasted sharply with the subsequent picture by 2013, when the ABN-AMRO Bank commented that 'The outlook suggests that unemployment will remain high for some time.' The reversal in economic fortunes meant that employment contracts, once drawn up for fixed periods, were now based on shorter periods, although fixed term contracts still accounted for 69 per cent of the total (in 2001 the figure had been 74 per cent).

The Dutch could only speculate why it was that in neighbouring Germany the unemployment rate was lower for the first time since German reunification in 1990. The Netherlands was certainly affected by the so-called euro-zone crisis, which had seen its once successful exporters struggling to maintain market share. In the Netherlands exports constitute an important economic element. But it was not only the fall in exports that was causing the problem. At home, the Netherlands

faced another problem: in early 2013 domestic demand slumped, reflecting the crash in real estate prices. These had fallen, on average, by 20 per cent since 2008. The situation had been severely aggravated by the fiscal changes made in the late 1990s when mortgage rates had fallen and interest-only mortgages had become common. As property prices fell, so house-owners discovered that real estate investments were less certain than they had anticipated.

Looking at the economy

In May 2013 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published its summary assessment of the Netherlands' economy. The IMF noted that the Netherlands was an AAA euro area (euro-zone) economy. Yet, despite its high credit rating, the Netherlands suffers – in the view of the IMF – from a number of private sector imbalances. The AAA credit rating and relatively robust public finances are shared with Germany, Finland and Luxembourg. The IMF also notes that the Netherlands' sovereign bonds enjoy safe haven status, and the country has enjoyed a growing net international asset position since 2008. However, says the IMF, it also has a highly indebted household sector, significant financial sector challenges, declining real estate prices, and weak domestic demand. As a result, in the view of the IMF, the Netherlands' GDP growth, unemployment, and public debt dynamics since the onset of the global financial crisis have diverged from other AAA economies.

The IMF could perhaps be forgiven for adopting a rosy picture. Other observers point out that the Dutch economy had, by mid-2013, been in recession for six consecutive quarters. More critical, *The Economist* also pointed out that in May 2013 output was 1.8 per cent lower than a year earlier and that every economic forecast produced by the government had proved to be too optimistic. In self defence, Mr Rutte's government could only point out that it had followed the EU directives to the point that by early 2013 it seemed to be reducing spending and raising taxes for the sake of Brussels directives and the future of the euro, and certainly not for the sake of its electors. Trades unions and business leaders had all called upon the government to ignore, or at least request an exemption from, further austerity measures.

And re-thinking the EU?

The Netherlands' unquestioning affiliation to both the spirit and the letter of the

KEY INDICATORS		The Netherlands				
	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*16.50	*16.57	*16.61	*16.69	*16.75
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	877.00	794.80	783.30	840.40	*773.12
GDP per capita	US\$	52,500	48,223	47,172	50,355	*46,142
GDP real growth	%	1.8	-4.0	1.6	1.3	*-0.9
Inflation	%	2.2	1.0	0.9	2.5	*2.8
Unemployment	%	2.8	4.8	5.5	5.3	*5.3
Natural gas output	bn cum	66.6	62.7	70.5	64.2	63.9
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	534,129	428,804	486,239	544,175	*533,189
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	476,897	373,738	428,949	480,578	*472,170
Balance of trade	US\$m	57,231.0	51,066.0	57,290.0	63,597.0	*61,019.0
Current account	US\$m	41,978.0	38,892.0	56,212.0	81,323.0	*64,550.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	11,476.0	17,871.0	18,471.0	20,707.0	*22,050.0
Foreign exchange	US\$m	9,369.0	8,613.0	8,902.0	9,654.0	*10,803.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	0.68	0.78	0.76	0.75	0.77
* estimated figure						

European Union has long been beyond doubt. Has been – or had been. In 2012 an unexpected trend began to manifest itself as some opinion polls suggested that, despite their position at the heart of the organisation, an increasing number of Dutch were wondering if membership was such a good thing. Reflecting this mood, in June 2013 the coalition government (of Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD) (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) and Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA) (Labour Party)), headed by liberal Prime Minister Mark Rutte, announced that 'the time of ever closer union' in all EU policy areas was over.

In a letter to Parliament, the Rutte government set out its position on EU powers. In short, the Netherlands wanted to keep control over social security, working conditions and media regulation. The government was at pains to point out that it was not calling for any EU treaty change, but none the less considered that there were various 'issues' which the Netherlands believed could be left more or less entirely to member states: halting the further harmonisation of social security systems; working conditions, which should only be regulated in broad outline; no EU regulation of media pluralism; flood risk management (a very Dutch issue) should only be harmonised at European level for truly trans-boundary water courses; and the EU programmes for school milk and school fruit should be phased out. As if hedging its bets, the Netherlands' communique reiterated that 'strong European co-operation was still vital in responding to the economic crisis and challenges such as energy, climate change, asylum and migration, the internal market and defence.'

Observers noted that the Dutch initiative was remarkably similar to that of the United Kingdom government's 'balance of competences' review, which was drawn up to assess where EU powers may extend too far. Mr Rutte's coalition was seen as generally pro-EU and as backing the EU's Angela Merkel inspired pro-austerity programme. For the time being, the Rutte administration did not foresee any referendum on EU membership. None the less, an opinion poll conducted by the Gallup organisation found that the vote between those in favour of continued EU membership and those in favour of leaving the EU was split evenly. The far-right Partij voor de Vrijheid (VVP) (Party for Freedom) – led by the outspoken anti-immigration nationalist Geert Wilders and roundly defeated in the 2012 vote, had, according to an article in the London

Economist, narrowed its wider xenophobia by embracing a euro-sceptic stance. It appeared that in one poll the VVP placed second, in another, first. Of the more traditional parties, the equally euro-sceptic left-wing Socialistische Partij (SP) (Socialist Party) were in the lead.

Risk assessment

Politics	Fair
Economy	Fair
Regional stability	Good

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1579 The Protestant majority in the Netherlands rebelled against the Catholic Habsburg Empire and declared independence, with William of Orange crowned Prince William I of Holland and Zeeland. In the seventeenth century, the Netherlands became a powerful trading nation with an empire in the East Indies (modern day Indonesia) and the Caribbean. In the 1650s, the Dutch fought several wars against the English, mainly due to colonial rivalry.

1688 William of Orange (the grandson of William I) acceded to the English throne as William III, ending conflict between the two countries.

1704–06 The English army under John Churchill helped to defeat attempts by the combined armies of Austria and France to invade the Netherlands.

1804 The Netherlands was occupied by the French under Napoleon.

1812 The Netherlands was liberated by British and Prussian armies.

1815 A renewed invasion attempt by Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo. Attempts to unify Catholic Belgium with the Netherlands at the Vienna Conference failed, and the two countries remained separate.

1914–18 The country remained neutral in the First World War.

1922 Women were given the vote.

1940–45 The Netherlands declared its neutrality but was occupied by Nazi Germany during the Second World War. The royal family was exiled in the UK.

1945 The Netherlands became a charter member of the United Nations.

1949 The policy of neutrality was abandoned and the Netherlands became a founder member of NATO. The Dutch East Indies became independent.

1958 The Netherlands was a founding member of the European Economic Community (EEC).

1980 Queen Juliana abdicated in favour of her eldest daughter Princess Beatrix. Prince Willem-Alexander became heir apparent.

1989 The Christen Democratisch Appel (CDA) (Christian Democratic Appeal) and Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD) (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) government fell when VVD refused to support proposals for a 20-year environmental protection programme. A centre-left cabinet was formed by CDA and the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA) (Labour Party), with Ruud Lubbers as prime minister.

1992–93 Ruud Lubbers' government was discredited by a serious economic recession.

1994 A three-party coalition, headed by Wim Kok (PvdA), and including VVD and Democraten 66 (D66) (Democrats 66) won elections. The CDA was frozen out of power for the first time since the First World War.

1999 The Netherlands was a founder member of European Economic and Monetary Union (Emu).

2000 Ruud Lubbers was chosen to head the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). After 25 years of debating, a bill to legalise euthanasia was approved.

2002 The euro currency replaced the guilder. Wim Kok resigned following a report that criticised Dutch troops in (former) Yugoslavia who had failed to stop the massacre of as many as 8,000 Muslims by Bosnian Serbs in Srebrenica in 1995.

Pim Fortuyn, leader of the far-right, anti-immigration, Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) (List Pim Fortuyn) party, was shot dead during election campaigning. CDA won elections and Jan Peter Balkenende became prime minister of a fragile coalition, which later collapsed and Balkenende resigned. Prince Claus von Amsberg, husband of Queen Beatrix, died.

2003 After early parliamentary elections, Jan Peter Balkenende was reinstated as prime minister to head a coalition government, led by the CDA, and including the VVD and the D66.

2004 Former Queen (1948–80) Juliana died. Prominent filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered by an Islamist radical; tit-for-tat attacks on Dutch mosques and churches ensued.

2005 The Netherlands rejected the proposed constitution of the EU. Parliament introduced a test of the Dutch language and culture for would-be immigrants.

2006 Prime Minister Balkenende resigned, following a row with D66 about immigration policies. Balkenende reformed the coalition government without the D66. In parliamentary elections, the ruling CDA won 41 seats (out of 150).

The Socialistische Partij, (SP) (Socialist Party) increased its seat numbers to 25. The new right-wing Partij voor de Vrijheid (PvdV) (Party for

Freedom) won nine seats, while the LPF failed to win any.

2007 Negotiations began between The Netherlands and Caribbean islands of Bonaire, Saba and St Eustatius (three of the five islands of the Netherlands Antilles) due to become city-states within the Kingdom of The Netherlands as the Netherlands Antilles ceases to exist as an entity. A coalition government was formed with the CDA, PvdV and Christen Unie (CU) (Christian Union), with Jan Peter Balkenende as prime minister. Relatives of victims of the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia in 1995 filed a case against the UN and the Netherlands state, claiming negligence in allowing the massacre to take place.

2008 A ban on tobacco smoking in public places was introduced; no ban was introduced for smoking marijuana in designated coffee shops.

2010 The coalition government collapsed, following a disagreement over extending troop deployment to Afghanistan as part of NATO's forces. In new parliamentary elections for the Tweede Kamer (second chamber), the centre-right VVD won 20.4 per cent of the vote and the right to form a coalition government. Dutch troops, who had been in Afghanistan since 2006, withdrew; although there had been less than 2,000 troops, they were praised for their effectiveness in Uruzgan province. A coalition government of VVD with CDA, and including the PvdV, was formed, led by Mark Rutte (VVD) as prime minister.

2011 In June, The Netherlands announced that it would veto the EU decision (taken in June), to admit Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen area for passport-free travel of citizens and goods. The Netherlands imposed a one-year delay in view of the turmoil in the Middle East and its potential for Arab migration to the EU in 2011–12, as well as the failure by Romania and Bulgaria to fight corruption and organised crime. Geert Wilders, of the far-right PvdV, who had been arrested in 2009 for inciting hatred against Muslims by making a film that linked radical Islamist actions to the Quran, was acquitted of all charges in June. Parliament voted to ban the killing of animals for halal meat.

2012 On 1 March, Prime Minister Rutte announced that The Netherlands' Schengen veto on Bulgaria and Romania would be reconsidered by September if the expected June EU report gave a 'reasonably positive' opinion of their progress. On 23 April the coalition government of Mark Rutte resigned following the withdrawal from talks by the PVV over budget cuts. On 26 April tough budget cuts were agreed between three opposition political

parties (D66, GL and CU) and the two ruling parties of the caretaker government, thereby allowing the government to implement measures to cut the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP in 2013. The vote came just before the EU deadline of 30 April. Early general elections (by two years) were scheduled for June; initially postponed, they finally took place on 12 September. The main focus of all parties was on the economy and austerity measures to reduce the national deficit. The VVD won a greater share of the vote than in 2010 and with more seats continued to lead a coalition government. Mark Rutte remained in post as prime minister. A meeting of the EU Justice and Home Affairs Council scheduled for 19–20 September, to discuss Bulgaria and Romania's admittance to the Schengen Area treaty, was postponed to 25–26 October.

2013 After announcing on 28 January in a live television broadcast that she was abdicating, Queen Beatrix signed the instrument of abdication in Amsterdam on 30 April, handing the throne to her son Prince Willem-Alexander. He is the country's first king since 1890. Queen Beatrix will in future be known as Princess Beatrix.

Political structure

Constitution

Under the constitution of 1983, The Netherlands is divided into 12 administrative provinces. Each province is run by a royal commissioner and an elected Provinciale Staten (regional parliamentary assembly). Each regional assembly elects its own governing executive (Gedeputeerde Staten) from among its members. Both council and executive are presided over by a royal commissioner, who is appointed by the crown.

The 672 municipalities, including the major cities, each have an elected council which in turn elects aldermen to sit on the municipal executive along with a mayor, who is appointed by the crown.

The constitution guarantees equality and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of religion, political opinion, race, or sex. The constitution is unique in placing upon the government a duty to promote environmental protection both domestically and internationally.

Where there is no adult successor to the throne or the serving monarch is unable to exercise royal prerogative, the national legislature has the power to appoint a temporary regent.

On 10 October 2010, the Caribbean islands of Curaçao and St Maarten joined Aruba (1986) as semi-autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands; at the same time the Caribbean islands of Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba

became *Bijzondere Gemeenten* (special municipalities) of the Netherlands.

Form of state

Parliamentary democratic monarchy

The executive

The monarch is the head of state but has few executive powers. However it does become actively involved in resolving political crises (for example, at times when no agreement could be reached on the formation of a cabinet). The monarch has the power to appoint the prime minister (on the recommendation of the national assembly), to dissolve the national assembly and call new elections.

The principle executive functions are carried out by the prime minister, who is selected by the national assembly and appoints a council of ministers from both inside and outside the assembly. State ministers are not allowed to continue to sit as members of parliament.

National legislature

Legislative power is vested in the Staten Generaal (States General), a bicameral national assembly.

The 150-member Tweede Kamer (Second Chamber or lower house), is directly elected by the *d'Hondt* system of proportional representation (a system invented in The Netherlands which takes account of the country's provincial units) for a four-year term. It is empowered to review the actions of the cabinet, debate bills and pass approved measures to the Eerste Kamer (First Chamber or upper house), for enactment.

The First Chamber has 75 members who are indirectly elected by the 12 provincial councils, for a period of four years. The First Chamber does not initiate legislation, but is responsible for approving or rejecting bills presented by the Second Chamber. The First Chamber cannot amend legislation directly, but acts which it rejects are likely to be amended in the Second Chamber and represented for approval.

Legal system

The Supreme Court is the highest legal body in the country and it hears appeals arising from cases previously heard in the lower courts. It also has the power of cassation over legislation deemed to conflict with the constitution.

There are five Appeal Courts at lower levels. Most cases are heard either at the 19 Provincial Courts of Justice or at the 62 Municipal Courts. Judges are nominated by the crown and serve for life.

Last elections

12 September 2012 (Tweede Kamer)

Results: Parliamentary (Tweede Kamer): Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD) (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) won 26.6 per cent of the vote (41 seats out of 150), Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA) (Labour Party) 24.8 per cent (38),

Partij voor de Vrijheid (PvdV) (Party for Freedom) 10.1 per cent (15), Socialistische Partij (SP) (Socialist Party) 9.7 per cent (15); Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA) (Christian Democratic Appeal) 8.5 per cent (13), Democraten 66 (D66) (Democrats 66) 8.0 per cent (12), Christen Unie (CU) (Christian Union) 3.1 per cent (five); Groen Links (GL) (Green Left) 2.3 per cent (four), Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP) (Reformed Political Party) 2.1 per cent (three), Partij voor de Dieren (PvdD) (Animal Rights Party) 1.9 per cent (two), 50Plus (50+) 1.9 per cent (two); 10 other political parties won less than 1 per cent each and failed to win any seats. Turnout was 75 per cent.

First Chamber (membership by appointment only): CDA (23 seats); PvdA (19 seats); VVD (15 seats); SP (four seats); LPF (one seat); GL (five seats); D66 (three seats); CU (two seats); SGP (two seats); Onafhankelijke Senaatsfractie-Fryske Nasjonale Partij (FNP) (Frisian National Party) (one seat).

Next elections

September 2016 (parliamentary)

Political parties

Ruling party

Coalition, led by Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD) (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) with Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA) (Labour Party) (from 2010; re-elected Sep 2012)

Main opposition party

With multiply parties in parliament no one party forms an official opposition.

Population

16.75 million (2012)*

The population is concentrated in the major conurbations around Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, which form the Randstad or Ring Cities. Population density is much lower in the north and east.

Last census: January 2002: 16,105,285

Population density: 469 inhabitants per square kilometre. Urban population 83 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 0.5 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

Dutch (96 per cent); others, predominantly Afro-Caribbean (Surinamese), Indonesian, Moroccan and Turkish (4 per cent).

Religions

Catholic (34 per cent), Protestant (28 per cent), Muslim (3 per cent), Jewish (1 per cent).

Education

Primary schooling may begin at aged four, and continue until aged 12. At aged 12, pupils are channelled into secondary

schools with courses designed for their aptitude. The length of time in these schools varies dependent on the courses undertaken; mixed general and vocational courses last for four years and pre-university courses last six years. Schools are either publicly maintained by government, state or municipal authorities, (attended by 28 per cent of children), or private schools, mostly denominational (attended by 72 per cent of children). Total public expenditure on education is equivalent to approximately 5 per cent of annual GNP.

Compulsory years: 5 to 16.

Enrolment rate: 109 per cent and 106 per cent, male and female gross enrolment rates respectively, of relevant age groups for primary schools, (including repeaters); 126 per cent and 122 per cent, male and female gross enrolment rates respectively, of relevant age groups for secondary schools, (including repeaters), 1997–2000 (Unicef 2004).

Pupils per teacher: 14 in primary schools.

Health

The private sector is important in the supply of healthcare in the Netherlands and private health insurance is compulsory for most wage earners.

HIV/Aids

HIV prevalence: 0.2 per cent aged 15–49 in 2003 (World Bank)

Life expectancy: 79 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 1.8 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef); maternal mortality 7 per 100,000 live births (World Bank).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 4 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012)

Head of population per physician: 3.15 physicians per 1,000 people, 2003 (WHO 2006)

Welfare

The Netherlands provides generous income support linked to the minimum wage. However, following a government drive to limit the growth of social security spending, the criteria for eligibility for benefits has been narrowed and earnings-related benefits have been reduced from 80 to 70 per cent of previous income.

As in many EU countries, the ageing population is threatening to make the funding of state pensions an unsustainable burden on public finances over the next 30 years. In 2000, expenditure on pensions was some 5.7 per cent of GDP, but this is projected to rise to the equivalent of 8.4 per cent by 2020 and 11.2 per cent by 2030.

Main cities

Amsterdam (cultural capital, estimated population 776,226 in 2012), Rotterdam (576,302), The Hague (seat of government, 490,282), Utrecht (311,171), Eindhoven (225,421), Almere (216,369), Tilburg (209,542), Groningen (183,147), Breda (181,887).

Languages spoken

English, German and French are widely spoken. About 2.9 per cent of the population speak Frisian, mostly in the province of Friesland in the north-east. Turkish and Arabic are also spoken.

Official language/s

Dutch and Frisian

Media

Press

A free press is guaranteed under the constitution

Dailies: There are around 50 daily newspapers. Leading national dailies include *De Telegraaf* (www.telegraaf.nl), *NRC Handelsblad* (www.nrc.nl), *Metro* (www.metronieuws.nl) (tabloid), *Nederlands Dagblad*, *Trouw* (www.trouw.nl), *Algemeen Dagblad* (www.ad.nl), *De Volkskrant* (www.volkskrant.nl), *Het Parool* (www.parool.nl) (tabloid).

Weeklies: A number of daily newspapers publish weekend editions including *De Telegraaf Weekeinde*, *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant*. Magazines include *Vrij Nederland* (www.vn.nl) for general news; in English a newsletter *Dutch News* (www.dutchnews.nl) is published online, with political and general news.

Business: In Dutch, (with some online English translations), publications include the daily *Het Financieele Dagblad* (www.fd.nl), periodicals include *Intermediair* (www.intermediair.nl), with the biggest circulation figure *Management Team* (www.mt.nl), (fortnightly) is a major publication, *Elseviers Weekblad* (www.elsevier.nl) (weekly), *Bizz* (www.bizz.nl) (monthly) and *De Zaak* (www.dezaak.nl) (fortnightly);

Ondernemen (www.mkb.nl) (monthly) for entrepreneurs and *Beleggers Belangen* (www.beleggersbelangen.nl) for investors.

Periodicals: Official government publications are provided by Overheid (www.overheid.nl) the state-owned press.

Broadcasting

Domestic, public broadcasting allocates broadcasting time by proportional representation. Programmes can be made by any group, political, religious or civil and airtime is allocated based on the number of member they have.

The Netherlands has the largest take-up of cable television and consequently viewers have access to an ample range of domestic and foreign channels. The

Netherlands Public Broadcasting (Omroep) operates three national TV channels and seven radio stations plus a website (<http://portal.omroep.nl>) with video access.

Radio: In addition to the seven national channels including an external service (Radio Netherlands, in several languages, www.radionetherlands.nl), and special interest radio, there are 10 regional stations and approximately 180 local channels. There are over 3,000 local and regional commercial radio stations catering for all styles of music and information, some of the largest include Sky Radio (www.skyradio.nl) with continuous music, Radio 538 (www.radio538.nl). BNR Nieuwsradio (www.bnr.nl) is a business radio station (in Dutch).

Television: All analogue TV broadcasting was discontinued in December 2006; broadcasts are now digital and by 2008 between 80–85 per cent of all transmissions will be in high definition (HD).

Omroep operates channels Netherlands 1, 2 and 3 (Ned 1, 2, 3) and the children's channel ZapTV; each province has at least one local channel. BVN (www.bvn.nl) broadcasts an external service worldwide.

TV programmes are broadcast in their original languages – often English – with Dutch subtitles.

Other news agencies: ANP (Netherlands National News Agency): www.anp.nl

Economy

Not only does the Netherlands have a mature history of hydrocarbon sales, particularly natural gas sold to the European Union, it is also a major European transport hub, with Rotterdam as the world's fourth largest port and Europe's largest, handling over twice as much as Europe's next largest port (Antwerp, Belgium); in 2011 it processed 435 million tonnes of freight and over 34,000 sea-going vessels and 133,000 inland vessels. Manufacturing of machinery and equipment, chemicals and foodstuffs all contribute to strong foreign trade, which is the backbone of the Dutch economy, accounting for 62 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010.

GDP growth in 2008 was 1.8 per cent and already showing signs of weakness in the face of the global economic crisis, which struck in 2008, when the economy fell into recession in the fourth quarter; in 2009 the rate was -4.0 per cent. The crisis prompted the government to launch three economic stimulation packages over 2008–10, totalling over US\$34.5 billion. The packages were needed to shore up the financial sector, including nationalising ABN Amro/Fortis Bank and aiding the ING insurance company, both of which

carried significant US mortgage-backed securities (toxic debt) as recorded assets. The economy returned to positive growth of 1.6 per cent, as world trade strengthened in 2010, and an estimated 1.3 per cent growth in 2011.

Reaction to the crisis caused private consumption to slow, along with foreign trade. Although the balance of trade fell from US\$57.2 billion in 2008 to US\$51 billion in 2009, it always remained in The Netherlands's favour. In 2010 the trade balance returned to its pre-crisis level of US\$57.2 billion. Foreign direct investment was US\$124.8 trillion in 2007, falling to a negative -US\$11 billion in 2010, before confidence in the economy returned FDI to a positive US\$15.6 billion in 2011. The Netherlands may only produce a small quantity of crude oil, but is a relatively large producer and supplier of natural gas. It is the European Union's largest natural gas producer (taking over from the UK in 2009), with pipelines to Germany, France, Italy, the UK and Belgium. Proven natural gas reserves were 1.1 trillion cubic metres at the end of 2011, with production of 64.2 billion, of which 50.4 billion was exported in 2011.

External trade

As a member of the European Union, The Netherlands operates within a community-wide free trade area, with tariffs set as a whole. Internationally, the EU has free trade agreements with a number of nations and trading blocs worldwide.

The economy is open to foreign trade with 60 per cent of agricultural produce exported, and the majority of foreign earnings provided by services including international transport and distribution, banking and insurance. Industrial production includes processed foods, petrochemicals and plastics, machinery and vehicle assembly.

Imports

Main imports include machinery and vehicles, chemicals, fuels, consumer goods, foodstuffs and clothing.

Main sources: Germany (13.6 per cent of total in 2012), China (11.9 per cent), Belgium (8.2 per cent).

Exports

Major exports include petroleum and natural gas, organic chemicals, agricultural products and foodstuffs, machinery, electronics and vehicles.

Main destinations: Germany (22.4 per cent of total in 2012), Belgium (13 per cent), France (8 per cent).

Agriculture

The agricultural sector employs 4 per cent of the workforce and contributes 3 per cent to annual GDP, accounting for 25 per cent of total exports.

Despite high population density in the Netherlands, approximately 70 per cent of all land area is under cultivation. Population growth and wider commercial land use, combined with rising water levels, are placing considerable pressure on land resources.

Overall, Dutch farms tend to be larger than those in other EU member states, with only 25 per cent of farms smaller than five hectares, compared to an EU norm of 50 per cent. Productivity rates are consequently higher than the EU average, and the Netherlands is a net contributor to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget.

Fundamental reform to the CAP was introduced throughout most of the EU in 2005. The subsidies paid on farm output, which tended to benefit large farms and encourage overproduction, were replaced by single farm payments not conditional on production. This is expected to reward farms that provide and maintain a healthy environment, food safety and animal welfare standards. The changes are also intended to encourage market conscious production and cut the cost of CAP to the EU taxpayer. Dutch farmers are one of the world's most prolific consumers of pesticides, using 19,000 tonnes of active chemical ingredients per annum (an average 10 kilograms per hectare), with potatoes and flower bulbs the most intensively sprayed crops.

Given the Netherlands' small surface area and high population density, farming is generally highly concentrated, specialised and efficient. Dairy farming is the most substantial activity, involving over a third of the country's farmers.

Traditional Dutch horticulture, in particular the production of flowers and bulbs, is the highest value-added sector. The Netherlands typically has over 24,000 hectares (ha) of land dedicated to open floriculture, and a further 7,000ha of floriculture under glass.

The typical Dutch fish catch is over 500,000 tonnes per annum, of which approximately 450,000mt is seafood.

Around 20 per cent of the fish catch is exported, generating annual revenues of approximately US\$250 million.

Total forest area is 339,000 hectares (ha) or approximately 10 per cent of total land area. Almost all timber needs are imported, but The Netherlands is a major re-exporter of forest products.

Industry and manufacturing

The Netherlands has a broad industrial base. In 2004, manufacturing contributed 36 per cent to GDP and employ over 20 per cent of the labour force. Due to the small home market, Dutch industry is heavily dependent on foreign trade. It is

also reliant upon imports of raw materials as industrial inputs.

As in most Western European countries, the industrial sector is increasingly focussed on high value-added manufacturing, where technological and skills advantages counteract the lower labour and production costs in emerging industrial economies. The Netherlands' lack of natural resources has increased its dependency on its manufacturing sector and imported materials.

Owing to rapid growth and the need for efficient land use, the construction industry is also significant and often pioneering in the field of space-saving design work.

Manufacturing accounts for 15.1 per cent of GDP and construction for a further 5.2 per cent.

Industrial production growth for the Netherlands was estimated at 0.8 per cent for 2004.

Tourism

Holland has a long tradition as a tourist destination, not only for its quaint historic windmills, with the rows of fields full of variously coloured tulips and long flat roads that lead from one town to the next, but also for the sophisticated city centres of adult entertainment. The major cities have museums to showcase Dutch artists such as Rembrandt and Van Gogh. There are nine sites included on Unesco's World Heritage.

Travel and tourism accounts for around 6 per cent of GDP, and was badly affected by the global economic crisis, so that in 2009 its contribution was cut to 5.6 per cent of GDP (down from 7 per cent in 2007). Employment in the industry fell to 10 per cent (749,100 jobs) in 2009, which by 2011 had increased marginally to 10.4 per cent (775,100 jobs). While visitor numbers are around 10 million and receipts account for an average US\$19 billion per year, domestic spending is over double this at US\$50 billion.

On 27 April 2012, a law was enacted whereby foreign visitors were banned from entering cannabis cafes. The law was enforced in three southern provinces in May and nationwide in December.

Hydrocarbons

Proven oil reserves were 310 million barrels in 2011. Onshore deposits of oil were first discovered in the late 1930s near The Hague, but attention shifted in the 1940s to better deposits in the Schoonebeek region. Offshore oil, by comparison, is a relatively recent discovery. Average oil production in has fallen over recent years as a result of diminishing reserves in a number of oil fields in the Dutch sector of the North Sea.

The hydrocarbons sector accounts for approximately 9 per cent of GDP and employs 4 per cent of the workforce.

Proven natural gas reserves were 1.1 trillion cubic metres (cum) at the end of 2011, with annual production of 64.2 billion cum in 2011. The largest onshore gas field is at Groningen, first discovered in the 1960s. This was the main source of gas until the discovery of offshore deposits. Although it is expected that gas reserves will be depleted by 2030, the rate of new discoveries is sufficiently high that Dutch gas production is expected to continue beyond that time. The Netherlands is a substantial net exporter of gas, importing only 8 per cent of total supplies and exporting approximately 48 per cent of domestic production. The first liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal, Gas Access to Europe (Gate), began operations in the port of Rotterdam in September 2011. Gate cost €800 million (US\$1.1 billion) and when fully operational will process 8.8 million tonnes of LNG per year. Plans for expansion, to be finalised in 2012, include a terminal for 16 billion cum LNG. With proven low quality coal reserves of 500 million tonnes coupled with high labour costs and falling demand the last coal pit was closed in 1970. Approximately 320 million tonnes of coal were imported in 2007, of which over 90 per cent was consumed by domestic thermal power stations.

Energy

The Netherlands had an electricity capacity of 22.6GW in 2008, producing 97.3 billion kilowatts hours (kWh). Natural gas provides around 50 per cent of all electricity generation, the remainder is supplied by coal, then oil. Nuclear power and renewable energy sources supply less than 10 per cent. The government has made a commitment to increase to 20 per cent by 2020 the share of renewables to the country's energy mix, through research and development of energy technologies. Essent is the Netherlands' market leader in provision of electricity and natural gas. It operates internationally through the integration of the Netherlands' national electricity grid with neighbouring countries.

There is one nuclear power station in operation which provides 3 per cent of generating capacity. Development of nuclear power has been slow owing to popular opposition. The attempt to force the reactor to close early was abandoned in 2006 following an agreement that the life of the plant would be limited to 2033.

Financial markets

Stock exchange

Euronext NV Amsterdam (AEX)

Commodity exchange

Liffe Connect

Banking and insurance

Banking supervision remains the responsibility of De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB). The oversight of currency transactions was in the hands of DNB until 2002, when it was assumed by the European Central Bank (ECB). Foreign banks operating in the Netherlands face no special restrictions.

The Dutch banking sector is dominated by three banking conglomerates, ABN Amro, ING Bank and Rabobank Nederland, which together control approximately 75 per cent of total domestic lending. Including Bank Nederlandse Gemeeten and the joint Belgian/Dutch banking group Fortis, these banks are estimated to hold almost 90 per cent of domestic banking assets, loans and deposits.

In 1995, ING bought Britain's Baring Bank for £1 when Baring was on the verge of collapse after the activities of employee and 'rogue trader' Nick Leeson. ING sold at a profit its remaining Baring division in November 2004.

Central bank

De Nederlandsche Bank (DNB); European Central Bank (ECB).

Main financial centre

Amsterdam

Time

GMT plus one hour (daylight saving, late March to late October, GMT plus two hours)

Geography

The Netherlands is situated in Western Europe, bordered to the east by Germany and to the south by Belgium. The North Sea lies to the north and west, giving the country a coastline of over 450km.

Except for small areas in the east of the country, the Netherlands' topography is dominated by river plains and flatlands which provide excellent growing conditions for agriculture. The major rivers are the Neder-Rijn and the Waal.

More than a third of the country is below sea level and made up of *polder*, land reclaimed from the sea by the construction of successive sea-walls over the years, but especially since the 1930s.

In the south-west of the country, the major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht form a heavily urbanised area known as the Randstad or ring city. The flat character of the land, population density and intensive land use have heightened awareness of environmental issues such as air, soil and water pollution and the threat of rising sea levels caused by global warming.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

The country has an equitable north European climate, with warm though often damp summers and occasionally severe winters. Average temperatures peak in July and August at around 17 degrees Celsius (C), but manage barely 2 degrees C in January and February before picking up sharply in April and May. Rainfall is heaviest in March and April, when on average 76mm and 81mm respectively are recorded. July and August, by comparison, are the driest months with 41mm and 43mm of rainfall respectively.

Dress codes

Formal dress is usual for business; otherwise, no special restrictions apply. Warm clothing is recommended in winter, especially in coastal regions.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all, except nationals of countries which are signatories of the Schengen Accords, which includes most EU/EEA member states, who may visit on national IDs.

Visa

Required by all, except nationals of EU and Schengen Accord signatory countries; North America, Australasia and Japan. For further exceptions contact the nearest consulate. Schengen visas cover all entry needs; for business trips, an original invitation from a business contact in The Netherlands is necessary when applying. A Schengen visa application (offered in several languages) can be downloaded from <http://europa.eu/abc/travel/> see 'documents you will need'.

Currency advice/regulations

There are no restrictions on the import or export of local and foreign currencies. Travellers' cheques are widely accepted.

Customs

Personal items are duty-free. There are no duties levied on alcohol and tobacco between EU member states, providing amounts imported are for personal consumption.

Prohibited imports

Illegal drugs and firearms

Health (for visitors)

Nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Switzerland can access reduced cost and sometimes free medical treatment using a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) while visiting the EEA. Exceptions include nationals of the 10 countries, which joined the EU in 2004, whose EHIC is not valid in Switzerland. Applications for the EHIC should be made before travelling.

Hotels

Classified from one- to five-star by Netherlands Board of Tourism, the Royal

Dutch Touring Club and the Royal Netherlands Automobile Club. Accommodation may be booked through the Netherlands Reservation Centre in Leidschendam (tel: (070) 202-500). It is advisable to book well in advance during spring and summer. Foreign nationals must present passports before booking in, and are automatically registered with local police.

Credit cards

All major credit cards are accepted.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 30 Apr (Queen's Day), 4 May (Remembrance Day), 5 May (Liberation Day), 25–26 Dec (Christmas). Holidays that fall on the weekend are not taken *in lieu*.

Variable dates

Easter Monday (Mar/Apr), Whitsun (May/Jun), Ascension Day (Aug).

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0900–1600, some open Sat and on late shopping evenings.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0830–1730.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0830–1700.

Shops

0830/0900–1730/1800 (half-day closing usually Mon or Wed). Main shops open Sat and Thu/Fri evening.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

There is comprehensive GSM coverage throughout the country

Electricity supply

220V AC.

Social customs/useful tips

Appointments are necessary and business cards are exchanged, although the business climate is less formal than in some Western European countries and cordiality and consensus at business meetings are highly valued. The best months for business visits are considered to be March to May and September to November. When invited to a meal in a Dutch home it is usual to bring flowers or a small gift. On 27 April 2012, a law was enacted whereby foreign visitors were banned from entering cannabis cafes. The law was enforced in three southern provinces in May and nationwide in December.

Security

There are no special problems with security in the Netherlands, although increased caution against petty theft is advised in the heavily populated areas of Rotterdam and Amsterdam.

Getting there

Air

National airline: KLM (Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij – Royal Dutch Airlines)

Air France acquired KLM in 2004.

International airport/s: Amsterdam Schiphol (AMS), 15km south-west of city; facilities include restaurants, duty-free shops, banks, showers, a business centre, conference rooms and car hire. There are regular, scheduled train and bus routes into the city, travel time 15–30 minutes. Taxis are numerous.

A direct, express train connects Schiphol with main cities in Holland, and some cities in Belgium.

A limited range of international flight destinations also originate from Eindhoven (EIN), 8km north of city; Maastricht (MST), 7km from city; Rotterdam (RTM), 8km north-west of city.

Airport tax: None

Surface

Road: Major routes from the rest of Europe are by a good network of motorways, well signposted with green 'E' symbols, indicating international highways.

Water: There are good connections between all major European ports. Boat trains operate to the Hook of Holland from many European countries.

The Netherlands is a leading international maritime shipper with extensive port facilities.

Main port/s: Ferries berth at Vlissingen, Rotterdam and Hook of Holland (Hoek van Holland).

Getting about

National transport

Air: Groningen (GRQ) in the north has connecting flights to the international airports. Den Helder (DHR), in the west is one of the largest heliports in Europe providing access to offshore oil and gas fields; charter planes are also available. Other internal services link Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Rotterdam and Maastricht.

Road: Roadways include high speed expressways, limited access motorways, dual highways and secondary roads. All roads are well signposted with red 'A's' indicating national highways, and smaller routes indicated by yellow 'N's'.

Buses: Most bus services run between 0600–2330. The Interliner is a service used for longer distances and has very few stops. The Connexion bus company serves the major part of Holland including the provinces of Noord and Zuid Holland, Gelderland, Overijssel and Zeeland.

Rail: There is an hourly service, running 24 hours, between Utrecht, Amsterdam, Schiphol, The Hague and Rotterdam. The Netherlands Railways operate an Intercity

(IC) network connecting large cities. IC trains only stop at the major stations. Local trains provide transportation to smaller cities. Tickets can be purchased from railway stations prior to travelling.

Water: There is an extensive network of inland waterways. Scheduled boat services operate from Enkhuizen to Urk and Staveren and between the mainland and the islands in the north.

City transport

The country is divided into zones with set tariffs. A *strippenkaart*, containing 15 strip tickets, is valid throughout the country for travel on buses, trams and subways, including trips within cities. To travel within one zone costs two strips. An extra strip is charged for each subsequent zone. A time limit, notated on the back of the card, allows interchange with other transport systems within the same zone.

Taxis: Taxis have blue licence plates with black letters and figures. Taxis can be booked in advance or, in some larger cities, hailed on the street. Prices may vary between regions and are sometimes open to negotiation.

A *treintaxi* (train-taxi) is a publicly shared taxi, offering shared costs.

Buses, trams & metro: Amsterdam has an integrated public transport service that runs between 0600–0030 daily throughout the city; night buses run between 0030–0730. Tickets (*strippenkaart*) can be purchased from a tobacconist, post office or railway station. They should be franked when boarding, for each trip. Elsewhere, city buses run within the boundaries of larger towns. A metro runs in Rotterdam, as well as trams, which also run in The Hague. They typically run between 0600–0000. The metro and trams are usually faster than city buses.

Trains: The train to the city centre from Schiphol is an efficient mode of transport. Inter-city train tickets are not interchangeable with local passenger services.

Ferry: There are ferries running on the canals of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, although these services are more for tourist purposes than for convenience.

Car hire

Car hire is widely available, the minimum age is dependent on insurance usually 21 years. An international driving license is necessary for all non-EU drivers. Traffic drives on the right. Speed limits: urban areas 50kph, normal roads 80kph, motorways 120kph. The wearing of seat belts is compulsory. It is illegal to use a handheld mobile phone while driving (including times when vehicle is stationary in traffic). Do not ignore parking fees as failure can result in a fine and if not paid within 24 hours, the car will be towed away when the cost of retrieval becomes very high.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling (IDD) code for The Netherlands is +31, followed by area code and subscriber's number:

Amersfoort	33	The Hague	70
Amsterdam	20	Leiden	71
Breda	76	Rotterdam	10
Eindhoven	40	Tiel	344
Haarlem	23	Utrecht	30

Useful telephone numbers

Directory enquiries: 068-008 (national), 060-418 (international)

Operator: 060-410

Police/fire: 0611

National public transport information service: 0900-9292

Chambers of Commerce

American Chamber of Commerce in The Netherlands, 58 Scheveningseweg, 2517 KW The Hague (tel: 365-9808; fax: 364-6992; email: office@amcham.nl).

Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce, 5 De Ruyterkade, 1013AA Amsterdam (tel: 531-4000; fax: 531-4799; email: post@amsterdam.kvk.nl).

Arnhem Chamber of Commerce, 525 Kronenburginsel, 6800 KZ Arnhem (tel: 353-8888; fax: 353-8999; email: info@arnhem.kvk.nl).

British-Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, Oxford House, 328L Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal, 1012 RW Amsterdam (tel: 421-7040; fax: 421-7003; email: info@nbcc.co.uk).

Maastricht Chamber of Commerce, 5 Pierre de Coubertinweg, 6225 XT Maastricht (tel: 350-6666; fax: 350-6660; email: info@maastricht.kvk.nl).

Netherlands Federation of Chambers of Commerce, 1 Watermolenlaan, 3440 AG Woerden (tel: 426-9111; fax: 426-216; email: site@vkv.kvk.nl).

Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce, 40 Blaak, 3000 AL Rotterdam (tel: 402-7777; fax: 414-5754; email: dvergeer@rotterdam.kvk.nl).

The Hague Chamber of Commerce, 30 Koningskade, 2502 LS The Hague (tel: 328-7100; fax: 326-2010; email: info@denhaag.kvk.nl).

Tilburg Chamber of Commerce, 1 Reitseplein, 5000 LG Tilburg, (tel:

594-4122; fax: 468-6215; email: info@tilburg.kvk.nl).

Utrecht Chamber of Commerce, 50 Kroonstraat, 3500 AA Utrecht (tel: 326-3211; fax: 231-2804; email: servicecenter@utrecht.kvk.nl).

Zwolle Chamber of Commerce, 1 Govert Flinkstrasse, 8021 ET Zwolle (tel: 455-3800; fax: 453-7424; email: info@zwolle.kvk.nl).

Banking

ABN Amro Bank, 10 Gustav Mahlerlaan, 1082 PP Amsterdam (tel: 628-9393; fax: 628-7637; e-mail: postbox@abnamro.com).

ASN Bank, 28 Alexanderstraat, 2514 JM The Hague (tel: 0800-0380; fax: 361-7948; e-mail: informatie@asnbank.nl).

NIB Capital Bank, 4 Carnegieplein, 2517 KJ The Hague (tel: 342-5425; fax: 363-5425).

ING Bank, De Amsterdamse Poort, 1102 MG Amsterdam (tel: 563-9111; fax: 563-5700; e-mail: info@ingbank.com).

Postbank NV, 506 Haarlemmerweg, 1014 BL Amsterdam (tel: 584-9111; fax: 584-6600; e-mail: postbank@postbank.nl).

Rabobank Nederland, 18 Croeselaan, 3521 CB Utrecht (tel: 216-0000; fax: 216-2672; e-mail: info@rabobank.nl).

Central bank

De Nederlandsche Bank, Head office, Postbus 98 1000 AB Amsterdam; 1 Westeinde, 1017 ZN Amsterdam (tel: 524-9111; fax: 524-2500; email: info@dnb.nl).

European Central Bank (ECB), Kaiserstrasse 29, D-60311 Frankfurt am Main, Germany (tel: (+49-69) 13-440; fax: (+49-69) 1344-6000; email: info@ecb.int).

Stock exchange

Euronext NV Amsterdam (AEX), www.euronext.com

Chi-X, www.chi-x.com

Commodity exchange

Liffe Connect, www.nyse.com/nyseeuronext

Climex, www.climex.com

Travel information

Algemene Nederlandse Vereniging van VV's (ANVV) (association of tourist information offices), 25 Hogeweg, 3814 CC Amersfoort (tel: 33-756-060; fax: 33-723-146; e-mail: anvv@euronet.nl). Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, 202 Evert van der Beekstraat, Schiphol-Centrum, Haarlemmermeer (tel: 601-9111; fax: 604-1475; e-mail: info@schiphol.nl).

Nations of the World: A Political, Economic and Business Handbook

Amsterdam Tourist Office (VVV), 10 Stationplein, 1012 AB Amsterdam (tel: 551-2512; fax: 625-2869; e-mail: info@amsterdamtourist.nl).

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, 55 Amsterdamseweg, Schiphol Airport, 1182 GP Amstelveen (tel: 20-649-9123; fax: 20-649-300; e-mail: info@klm.nl).

Netherlands Reservation Centre, 1 Nieuwe Gouw, 1442 LE Purmerend (tel: 299-689-144; fax: 299-689-154; e-mail: info@hotelres.nl).

National tourist organisation offices

Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions, (head office) Postbus 458; Vlietweg 15, Leidschendam (tel: 370-5705; fax: 320-1654; email: info@holland.com; internet: www.nbtc.nl and www.holland.com).

Ministries

Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, 73 Bezuidenhoutseweg, 2594 AC The Hague (tel: 378-6868; fax: 378-6100; email: info@minlnv.nl).

Ministry of Defence, 38 Kalvermarkt, 2511 CB The Hague (tel: 318-8802; fax: 318-8320; email: defensie.voorlichting@co.dnet.mindef.nl).

Ministry of Economic Affairs, 30 Bezuidenhoutseweg, 2594 AV The Hague (tel: 308-1986; fax: 347-4081; email: ezinfo@postbus51.nl).

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 4 Europaweg, 2711 AH Zoetermeer (tel: 323-2323; fax: 323-2320; email: info@minocw.nl).

Ministry of Finance, 7 Korte Voorhout, 2511 CW The Hague (tel: 342-7540; fax: 342-7900; internet: www.minfin.nl).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 67 Bezuidenhoutseweg, 2594 AC The Hague (tel: 348-6486; fax: 348-4848; email: dvl-info@minbuza.nl).

Ministry of General Affairs, 20 Binnenhof, 2513 AA The Hague (tel: 356-4100; fax: 356-4683).

Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 5 Parnassusplein, 2511 VX The Hague (tel: 340-7911; fax: 340-7890; email: info@minvws.nl).

Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, Rijnstraat 8, 2515 XP The Hague (tel: 339-3939; fax: 339-1352; email: info@minvrom.nl).

Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Schedeldoekshaven 200, 2511 EZ The Hague (tel: 426-6426; fax: 363-9153; email: info@minbzkl.nl).

Ministry of Justice, Schedeldoekshaven 100, 2511 EX The Hague 9 (tel: 370-6850; fax: 370-7594; email: voorlichting@minjus.nl).

Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 4 Anna van Hannoverstraat, 2595 BJ The Hague (tel: 333-4444; fax: 333-4033; email: info@minszw.nl).

Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, 1-6 Plesmanweg, 2597 JG The Hague (tel: 351-6171; fax: 351-7895; email: info@minvenw.nl).

Other useful addresses

Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau (national news agency), 49 Handelskade, 2288 BA Rijswijk (tel: 70-414-1414; fax: 70-414-1401; e-mail: nieuwsdienst@anp.nl).

American Embassy, 102 Lange Voorhout, 2514 EJ The Hague (tel: 310-9209; fax: 361-4688; email: usemb@usemb.nl).

British Embassy, 10 Lange Voorhout, 2514 ED The Hague (tel: 427-0427; fax: 427-0345).

Congrestolken (conference interpreters), 11 Jan van Goyenkade, 1075 HP Amsterdam (tel: 625-2535; fax: 626-5642; e-mail: interpreters@conferenceinterpreters.com).

Euronext Amsterdam (stock exchange), Beursplein 5, 1012 JW Amsterdam (tel: 550-4444; fax: 550-4900; email: info@euronext.nl).

Federation for Dutch Export (Fenedex), 14 Raamweg 2596 HL The Hague (tel: 330-5600; fax: 330-5656; email: info@fenedex.nl).

Netherlands Convention Bureau, 166 Amsteldijk, 1079 LH Amsterdam (tel: 646-2580; fax: 644-5935; email: info@nlcongress.nl).

Netherlands Council for Trade Promotions (NCH), 181 Bezuidenhoutseweg, 2594

AH The Hague (tel: 344-1544; fax: 385-3531; e-mail: info@nchnl.nl).

Netherlands Development Finance Company, Anna van Saksenlaan 71, 2593 HW The Hague (tel: 314-9696; fax: 324-6187).

Netherlands Embassy (USA), 4200 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington DC (tel: (+1-202) 244-5300; fax: (+1-202) 362-3430; email: webmaster@netherlands-embassy.org).

Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (CBIN), 2 Bezuidenhoutseweg, 2594 AV The Hague (tel: 379-8818; fax: 379-6322; email: info@nfia.nl; internet: www.nfia.com).

Netherlands Foreign Trade Agency (EVD), 181 Bezuidenhoutseweg, 2594 AG The Hague (tel: 778-8888; fax: 778-8889; email: eic@info.evd.nl; internet: www2.holland.com/trade/).

Statistics Netherlands (CBS), 428 Prinses Beatrixlaan, 2273 XZ Voorburg (tel: 70-337-3800; fax: 70-387-7429; email: infoserve@cbs.nl; internet: (in Dutch): www.cbs.nl/enindex.htm).

Other news agencies: ANP (Netherlands National News Agency): www.anp.nl

Internet sites

Dutch Tourist Board: www.visitholland.com

Dutch yellow pages: www.markt.nl/dyp/index-en.html

Netherlands web directory: www.nl-menu.nl

Tourist information: www.holland.com

Tourist information: www.nbt.nl

Hotel information: www.hotelsinholland.com

Statistics: www.cbs.nl:

Netherlands Embassy in the USA: www.netherlands-embassy.org

Dutch Railways: www.ns.nl

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: www.minbuza.nl

Dutch Parliament: www.parlement.nl

Ministry of Finance: www.minfin.nl