

# ***The Netherlands***



**Motto:** "Je maintiendrai" (French) "Ik zal handhaven" (Dutch) "I will uphold" (English)

**Anthem:** "Wilhelmus" (Dutch) ("William")

**Capital:** Amsterdam

**Official languages:** Dutch, West Frisian, Limburgish, Low German, English and Papiamentu

**Ethnic groups:** Dutch, Europeans, Indonesians, Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Caribbeans

**Demonym:** Dutch

**Government:** Parliamentary Democracy and Constitutional Monarchy.

-Monarch: William Alexander

-Prime Minister: Mark Rutte

**Legislature:** States-General

-Upper House: Senate

-Lower House: House of Representatives

**Independence from the Spanish Empire:**

-Declared: 26 July 1581

-Recognised: 30 January 1648

-Kingdom of the Netherlands: 16 March 1815

-Formation of constituent country: 15 December 1954

-Founded the EEC (now the EU): 1 January 1958

**Area:** 41,543 sq.km

**Population:** 16,819,595

**Currency:** Euro

## 1. Geography

The **Netherlands** is a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, consisting of twelve provinces in western Europe and three islands in the Caribbean. The Netherlands borders the North Sea to the north and west, Belgium to the south, and Germany to the east; and shares maritime borders with Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The capital city of the Netherlands is Amsterdam. The seat of government is located in The Hague. The Netherlands is often referred to as "Holland", which refers only to North and South Holland, two of its provinces.

The Netherlands is a geographically low-lying country, with about 20% of its area and 21% of its population located below sea level, and 50% of its land lying less than one metre above sea level.



This distinct feature contributes to the country's Dutch name: **Nederland**. Its name literally means "Low Land" or "Low Countries" in English and in many other European languages. Most of the areas below sea level are man-made, caused by centuries of extensive and poorly controlled peat extraction that lowered the surface by several metres.

The country is divided into two main parts by three large rivers, the Rhine (Rijn), the Waal, and the Meuse (Maas).

## 2. Floods

Over the centuries, the Dutch coastline has changed considerably as a result of human intervention and natural disasters. In 1134 a storm created the archipelago of Zeeland in the south-west. In February 1953, the huge North Sea floods caused the collapse of several dikes of the Netherlands.

The Dutch government instituted a large-scale program, The "Delta Works" to protect the country against future flooding. It took 30 years to complete it. A series of defences against the water have been created. Villages and farmhouses were built on man-made hills called **terps** in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. As the ground level dropped, the dikes grew and merged into an integrated system. By the 13th century windmills had come into use to pump up water out of areas below sea level.

The windmills were later used to drain lakes, creating the famous polders, which are at 5.53 metres below sea level.

### **3. Delta Works**

The famous Delta Works are located in the provinces of South Holland and Zeeland. In 1953 the Delta Works, a huge set of civil works, were built along the Dutch coast. The project started in 1958 and was completed in 1997.

The Delta project is considered by the American Society of Civil Engineers as one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World.

The Netherlands has taken lots of measures to control floods. The country has set up a plan to cope with the sea level rise which will be caused by global warming in the future.



### **4. Climate**

In the Netherlands the predominant wind-direction is south-west. It causes a maritime climate, with cool summers and mild winters. Ice days (maximum temperature below 0°C) usually occur from December until February. Freezing days occur from mid-November to late March. Snow can occur from November to April. Summer days (maximum temperature above 25°C) occur from May until September. Tropical days (maximum temperature above 30°C) may occur from June to August.

### **5. Environment**

The Netherlands has 20 national parks and hundreds of other nature reserves. They include lakes, heathland, woods and dunes.



## **6. Government**

William-Alexander became King of the Netherlands on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

The Netherlands has been a constitutional monarchy since 1815 and a parliamentary democracy since 1848. The Netherlands is described as a constitutional state.

In 2010, The Economist ranked the Netherlands as the 10<sup>th</sup> most democratic country in the world. The monarch is the Head of State.

The King has the right to be consulted, but he has limited powers. The Cabinet consists of 13/16 ministers and a few state secretaries. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister. He is the leader of the largest party of the coalition. Mark Rutte has been Prime Minister since October 2010.

The Lower and Upper Houses of the States-General meet in the Binnenhof. The bicameral Parliament, “the States-General”, has legislative powers. The 150 members of the House of the Representatives, the Lower House, are elected at general elections, which are held every four years. The States-Provincial are directly elected every four years, as well. The members of the Provincial Assemblies elect the 75 members of the Senate, the Upper House, which has the power to reject laws, but it cannot propose or amend them.

Both Trade Unions and Employers’ Organizations are consulted. They meet regularly with the government in the Social-Economic Council.



## **7. Political Parties**

Mark Rutte has been the Prime Minister of the Netherlands since October 2010.

No single party has held a majority in Parliament since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so Coalition Cabinets have usually been formed in recent years. The main political parties are Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals.





## 8. Administrative Divisions

The Netherlands is divided into 12 provinces. Each of them has a Commissioner of the King. All provinces are divided into municipalities.

The country is also subdivided into 24 water districts, Water Boards, each having authority in matters concerning water management.



The main provinces are: Drenthe, Flevoland, Friesland, Gelderland, Groningen, Limburg, North Brabant, North Holland, Overijssel, Utrecht, Zeeland and South Holland.

## 9. Foreign relations

The history of Dutch foreign policy has been characterized by its neutrality.

Since the Second World War, the Netherlands has become a member of a large number of international organizations, such as the UNO, the NATO and the EU.

The Dutch economy relies on international trade.

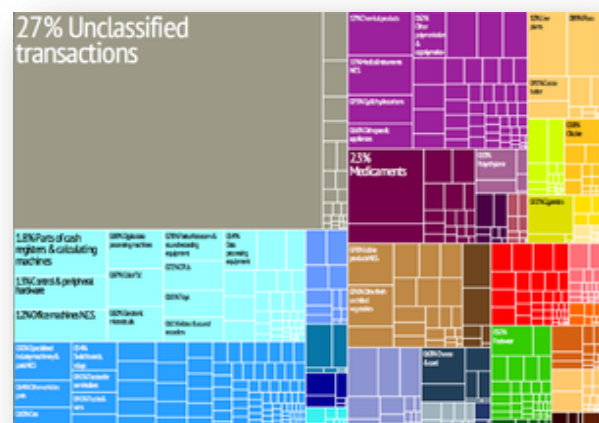
## 10. Military

The Netherlands has one of the oldest armies in Europe.

The Netherlands became a founding member of the NATO in 1949. In the 1990s the Dutch Army was involved in the Bosnian War, the Kosovo War and the Iraq War. It was also involved in the Afghanistan War in 2001.

## 11. Economy

The Netherlands has a developed economy and has been playing a special role in the European economy for many centuries. Since the 16th century, shipping, fishing, trade and banking have been leading sectors of the Dutch economy. It is one of the 10 leading exporting countries in the world.



Foodstuffs are the largest industrial sector. Other major industries include chemicals, metallurgy, machinery, electrical goods and tourism. Shell Heineken, petroleum refining and Philips (electronic machinery) are the main examples.



The Netherlands has the 18<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world.

Amsterdam is the financial and business capital of the Netherlands. The Amsterdam Stock Exchange, part of the Euronext, is the oldest Stock Exchange in Europe and it is

situated near Dam Square in the city centre.

Its former currency, the "guilder" was replaced by the euro on 1 January 1999. Euro coins and banknotes came into circulation on 1 January 2002. One Euro is equivalent to 2.20371 Dutch guilders. Other important parts of the economy are international trade, banking and transport.

## **12. Agriculture**

The Netherlands ranks third worldwide for agricultural exports. They produce fresh-cut plants, flowers and bulbs, with the Netherlands exporting two-thirds of the world's total. The Netherlands exports a quarter of the world's tomatoes, chilis, cucumbers and apples.



## **13. Transport**

Rotterdam is the largest port in Europe. Goods are transported by ship, river barrage, train or road.

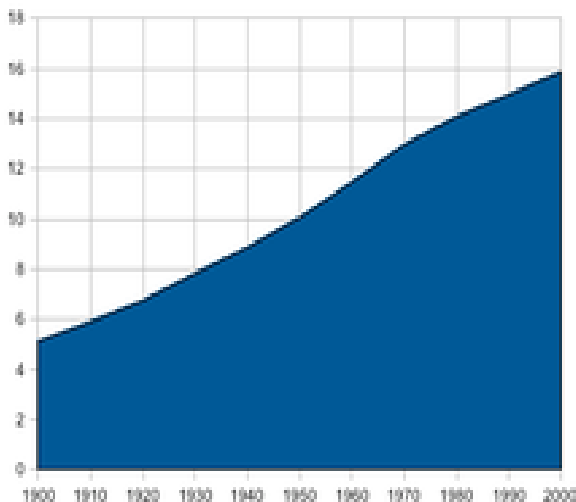


## 14. Demographics

The Netherlands had an estimated population of 16,785,403 in 2013. The country has a lot of immigrants. The majority of the population of the Netherlands is ethnically Dutch:

- 80.9% Dutch
- 2.4% Indonesian
- 2.4% German
- 2.2% Turkish
- 2.0% Surinamese
- 1.9% Moroccan
- 0.8% Antillean and Aruban
- 7.4% others

Dutch people or their descendants live in Canada, Australia, Brazil, South Africa and the United States.



The Randstad is the country's largest conurbation and it is located in the west of the country and contains the four largest cities: Amsterdam in the province of North Holland, Rotterdam and The Hague in the province of South Holland, and Utrecht in the province of Utrecht. The Randstad has a population of 7 million inhabitants and is the 6th largest metropolitan area in Europe. The largest cities in the Netherlands are: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Eindhoven and Breda.

## 15. Language

The official language is Dutch, which is spoken by the vast majority of the inhabitants. Other languages are Frisian, which is spoken in the northern province of Friesland, called Fryslan in that language, Low Saxon, which consists of several dialects spoken in the north and in the east, and Limburgish, which is the third recognized regional language and is spoken in the south-eastern province of Limburg.

70% of the total population can speak English and 55-59% of the population can speak German. Foreign languages are very important in the Netherlands. The



children start English courses at primary school. Two additional modern foreign languages are compulsory in secondary schools during the first three years. The standard modern languages are French and German, although schools can change one of these modern languages with Spanish, Turkish, Arabic, or Russian. In the Frisia region students have exams in Frisian.

## **16. Religion**

The main religions are Roman Catholic (24.6%), Protestant (14.8%), Muslims, Buddhist, Hindus, Sikhs and Orthodox. The Protestant Church of the Netherlands is a merger of the two major strands of Calvinism: the Dutch Reformed Church, The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and a smaller Lutheran Church.



## **17. Education**

In the Netherlands education is compulsory between the ages of 4 and 16 and partially compulsory between the ages of 16 and 18. All children usually attend elementary school between the ages 4 to 12. The VMBO has 4 grades and is subdivided into several levels. The HAVO has 5 grades and allows for admission to the HBO, which are universities of professional education. The VWO has 6 grades and prepares for university. The university consists of a three-year bachelor degree, followed by a one, two or three-year master degree, and a four-year doctoral degree.

## **18. Culture**

The Netherlands has had many famous painters. The main painters of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were Rembrandt, Vermeer and Steen. The main painter of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was Vincent van Gogh. The main Dutch philosophers were Erasmus from Rotterdam and Spinoza.



In the Dutch Golden Age literature flourished and the main writer was Joost Van der Vardel. Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl is very famous.

Windmills, tulips, clogs (wooden shoes), cheese, delftware pottery are the symbols of the Netherlands.

### **19.Sport**

Football is the most popular sport in the Netherlands. Other sports are field hockey and volleyball.



### **20.Cuisine**

The Dutch cuisine is simple and cosmopolitan. The main dishes are meat, fish, cheese, potatoes and vegetables. Breakfast and lunch consist of bread with toppings while dinner consists of meat and potatoes, with seasonal vegetables.



## 21. Historical timeline of the Netherlands

- 1<sup>st</sup> century BC The Frisians and the Batavians were the first inhabitants of the area.
- 4<sup>th</sup> century BC The Barbarians invaded the area.
  
- 1300s-1400s The French Dukes of Burgundy united the Low Countries
- 1477 Mary of Burgundy married Maximilian of the House of Hasburg thus joining the Low Countries with the Hasburg Empire
- 1516 The Catholic King Charles I of Spain ruled the Netherlands
- 1519 King Charles I of Spain became the Holy Roman Emperor, ( Charles V)r
- 1500s The Protestant Reformation swept through Europe and the Dutch Protestant were persecuted by the Roman Catholics
- 1556 The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, gave the control of the Low Countries to his son, King Philip II of Spain
- 1568 William I, the Prince of Orange, led a revolt against the Spanish government
- 1573-1574 there was the siege of Leiden between the rebels and the Spanish.
- 1574 The dikes were opened allowing a Dutch fleet to sail over the flood waters and rescue Leiden
- 1579 The Union of Utrecht united the northern Low Countries. The southern provinces of the Low Countries (Belgium) wanted to return to the Spanish control but the Dutch rebels continued with the revolt
- 26 July 1581 The Dutch declared their independence from Spain
- 1602 The Dutch East India Company was formed in Jakarta, Indonesia
- 1600s The expansion of the Dutch East India colonies, including Sri Lanka, continued due to the Dutch sea power. Dutch traders were the only Europeans allowed to trade with Japan
- 1621 The Dutch West India Company was founded and the colonies of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Delaware were founded





- 1630-1654 The Dutch conquered Brazil
- 1648 Spain recognized the Dutch independence
- 1689 William III married Mary, the daughter of King James II of England
- 1689-1702 William and Mary ruled England
- 1689-1714 France fought against the Netherlands
- 1700s the Dutch helped the Americans during the American Revolution and were drawn into a war against the British. They were defeated
- 1795-1813 France and Napoleon conquered the Netherlands
- 1813 The Dutch defeated the French
- 1814 William VI, Prince of Orange, became King William I of the Netherlands
- 1800s Belgium and Luxemburg became independent
- 1914-1918 The Netherlands remained neutral during the First World War
- 1922 Dutch women got the right to vote
- 1949 German troops invaded the Netherlands and the country was occupied until the end of the Second World war in 1945
- August 1945 The United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki bringing the Second World war to an end and the country was liberated in May 1945.
- 1948 Queen Wilhelmina was succeeded by Queen Juliana, her daughter.
- 1949 The Netherlands joined the NATO
- 1958 The Netherlands joined the EEC
- 1980 Queen Juliana was succeeded by her daughter Beatrix
- 1999 The Netherland adopted the euro
- 2002 The euro came into circulation
- 2010 Mark Rutte became Prime Minister
- 2012 A coalition government of the Liberal Party and the Labour Party was formed
- 2013 Queen Beatrix was succeeded by her son, William Alexander



## **22.Amsterdam**

Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands. It is located in the province of North Holland in the west of the country.

Its name derives from Amstelredamme. The city was a dam of the river Amstel, which is the river flowing through the city.

Amsterdam is the cultural and commercial capital of the Netherlands and one of the main financial centres in Europe.

The main attractions are its historical canals, the Van Gogh Museum, the Rijksmuseum, Anne Frank House, the Hermitage Amsterdam and the Amsterdam Museum.

The medieval and colonial age canals, known as GRACHTEN are very famous.

The oldest building is the Oude Kerk (old Church) (1306). Many buildings are in the Dutch Renaissance style.

The Royal Palace is in Dam Square and is in the Baroque Style (17<sup>th</sup> century). The Canal Houses were built during the Dutch Golden Age and are famous for their architectural style.

There are a lots of buildings in Art Nouveau style and Art Deco style. The main museums are in Museum Plein (museum square) and they contain paintings by Van Gogh and Rembrandt.

In Amsterdam there are many music and concert halls, cafès, restaurants, discos and parks.











