

Why is a new foreign trade and development cooperation policy document necessary?

In a new policy document for foreign trade and development cooperation, due to be published in spring 2018, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Sigrid Kaag will set out the main policy points for the years ahead. The policy document is being developed and assessed through targeted consultations and dialogue with Dutch and international experts, including in this internet consultation.

The policy document elaborates the undertakings on foreign trade and development cooperation laid down in the coalition agreement.

From the introduction to the coalition agreement:

'An international orientation is also part of the Dutch identity. We have long known that prosperity, well-being and security for everyone in our country are intimately connected to what is happening in the world around us. We earn a large part of our income abroad. International trade generates many jobs in the Netherlands. Melting polar icecaps have consequences for our coasts and ports, and instability on Europe's borders can lead to migration and terrorism in this country.'

'In this spirit we will contribute to the prosperity and welfare of other countries, thus combating the root causes of migration. We will implement the climate agreements made in Paris, and we will continue to work actively for peace and security elsewhere in the world. We will also help innovative Dutch ideas and companies to find their way into the wider world.'

['Confidence in the future': 2017-2021 coalition agreement | Publication | Government.nl](#)

Global developments

Fast-paced and far-reaching changes in the world around us compel us to adapt our policy and set new priorities. The Netherlands is not immune from these major global developments, which will be addressed in the policy document. They include:

- The impact of rapid technological changes and digitalisation on trade and investment flows, on the Netherlands' international earning potential and on economic opportunities for the various categories of developing country.
- Shifting patterns of economic growth in the world and the Netherlands' economic position within it.
- Changes in poverty, prosperity and demographics in the various categories of developing country, including in relation to migration (both regular and irregular).
- Increased conflict and instability in multiple regions and the associated refugee and migration flows.
- Climate change and the move towards more sustainable growth patterns, including in regard to trade policy and opportunities for Dutch businesses.

International context

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed in 2015, form a single framework for an international approach to tackling the most prominent global economic, social and environmental challenges. The ultimate goal is to eliminate extreme poverty worldwide. The central principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are human rights, peace, security and the rule of law (SDG 16) and international cooperation (SDG 17). That is why the Netherlands is using the SDGs as a roadmap for policy in the areas of development cooperation, trade and investment, focusing in particular on areas which are important for the Netherlands and areas where the Netherlands can offer added value.

Read more about the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

What are the government's plans?

The government will make adjustments to the development cooperation budget in order to tackle the root causes of poverty, migration, terrorism and climate change. Additional resources will be made available for migration issues, including reception in the region and education for refugee children there.

The Netherlands wants to step up its contribution to international climate action, sustainable supply chains and inclusive economic development. Free trade must be fair trade, and our trade system must become more sustainable. With the right adjustments, our economic system will be able to respond more effectively to rapid changes that arise through digitalisation.

The government will invest in improved market access for Dutch businesses and strategic positioning on existing markets and growth markets. Dutch businesses and knowledge institutions will receive support so that they can take advantage of the international opportunities created by the SDGs.