

**Date and Time:** Saturday 16 January 2021 09:35:00 CET

**Job Number:** 134237307

**Documents (42)**

[*Paris' requires double efforts from companies*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10VV-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

**Search Terms:** european union OREUOReuro\*OR European\*

**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors

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| **Content Type** | **Narrowed by** |
| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

2. [*Trump plan 3D printed weapons is big risk*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D431-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| **Content Type** | **Narrowed by** |
| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

3. [*Blok fears failure of Brexit talks*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D43W-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| **Content Type** | **Narrowed by** |
| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

4. [*'The world is watching while we are being slaughtered'; Idlib 'The humanitarian horror story of the 21st century'.*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10S0-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| **Content Type** | **Narrowed by** |
| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

5. [*Russian 'diplomat' is prosecuted for attempted murder ;Bellingcat Spies from Russia active throughout Europe*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10S5-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

6. [*Letters*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D478-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| **Content Type** | **Narrowed by** |
| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

7. [*In short*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D43X-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

8. [*Nature forces us to close borders*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D42K-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| **Content Type** | **Narrowed by** |
| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

9. [*Battle for Merkel's place erupts*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D432-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

10. [*Quarter without growth for German economy*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D43G-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

11. [*Statistics Office German economy does not grow in fourth quarter*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10VW-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

12. [*Newspapers despite 'Yes/Yes*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D45T-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Sources: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Time sequence: Feb 26, 2020 Until Feb 26, 2020 |

13. [*US closes borders to travellers from Europe*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDF-2XV1-DYMH-R35V-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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14. [*Erdogan blackmails EU with flow of migrants*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2B3-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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15. [*Accusation of racism makes Baudet outlawed'.*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDF-2XV1-DYMH-R372-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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16. [*A Europe of nation states only*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2GP-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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17. [*European companies need to recycle more*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2C1-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: mar 12, 2020 Fino a mar 12, 2020 |

18. [*'Softer rules bank for dealing with corona'.*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2BM-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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[*Character assassination of Baudet'*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D29J-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831).

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20. [*ECB wants to coordinate corona approach*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2BW-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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21. [*Tillmans is a reporter of his time*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDF-2XV1-DYMH-R374-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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[*Dutch approach is risky'; Is Dutch approach to Covid-19 too lax?*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YDF-2XV1-DYMH-R35T-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: mar 12, 2020 Fino a mar 12, 2020 |

23. [*The respirator has become a mass-produced item; health care respirators are hard to come by. Nationalising production is counterproductive*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4HP-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| **Content Type** | **Narrowed by** |
| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: mar 27, 2020 Fino a mar 27, 2020 |

24. [*Criminal emerges from corona crisis*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2HP-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: mar 27, 2020 Fino a mar 27, 2020 |

25. [*CDA, do not engage withForum*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4G3-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: mar 27, 2020 Fino a mar 27, 2020 |

26. [*A new crisis with old reproaches ; European summit Solidarity in corona fails for the time being*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4F0-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: mar 27, 2020 Fino a mar 27, 2020 |

27. [*Let us help the Russians; European solidarity*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4FM-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: mar 27, 2020 Fino a mar 27, 2020 |

28. [*Letters*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2PJ-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: mar 27, 2020 Fino a mar 27, 2020 |

29. [*Rutte says no to bonds, Italy angry*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2JF-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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30. [*Parasitising fear*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2HS-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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31. [*Elections soon to be dominated by the economy*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2J1-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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32. [*Dutch stubbornness in particular lingers*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13TD-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: Apr 11, 2020 Fino a Apr 11, 2020 |

33. [*Compromise on corona aid shows strength of European project;Commentary*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13VV-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: Apr 11, 2020 Fino a Apr 11, 2020 |

34. [*Should Europe issue joint Eurobonds?*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13VP-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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35. [*This is only the beginning;In Europe*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13TY-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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36. [*Ultimate compromise*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1NK-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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| News | Fonti: NRC Handelsblad,De Telegraaf; Sequenza temporale: Apr 11, 2020 Fino a Apr 11, 2020 |

37. [*DEAR READER*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1TX-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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38. [*Financial support*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1MS-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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39. [*LETTERS*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1V0-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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40. [*"The Dutch went all the way*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:601Y-CT91-DYMH-R0KW-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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41. [*Editor's inbox*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13VK-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

**Client/Matter:** -None

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42. [*The Netherlands has long been a guarantor for Italy*](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1P6-00000-00&idtype=PID&context=1516831)

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[***Paris' requires double efforts of companies***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10VV-00000-00&context=)

NRC Handelsblad

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1st Edition

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 2

**Length:** 724 words

**Byline:** Erik van der Walle

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Climate damage

Companies are investing heavily to reduce their CO2 emissions. But a doubling is needed to comply with 'Paris'.

**FULL TEXT:**

First the good news for the climate. Nearly 900 large ***European*** companies have invested ***EUR*** 124 billion in measures to reduce CO2 emissions last year.

And then the less good news: these companies, including energy, steel and car producers, would actually have had to invest twice as much to gradually make it possible for industry to be emission-free by 2050.

These are the conclusions of a study published on Tuesday by the British Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), which for the first time mapped out the climate policies of companies on a large scale. Last year, their 'green' investments made up more than 12 percent of total investments, and that share should really be a quarter.

Many investments related to electric transport (***EUR*** 43 billion), renewable energy (EUR 16 billion) and energy networks (EUR 15 billion). Companies in Germany lead the way with over 44 billion in *low carbon investments*, followed by Spain (38 billion) and Italy (24). British companies are at the back of the pack with a total of 4 billion in investments.

**Steel and cement**

According to CDP, the 882 companies surveyed play a vital role in achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The aim is to limit global warming as much as possible. The goal is a maximum of 1.5 degrees and, in order to achieve this, CO2 emissions must be halved by 2030 (compared to 1990) and reduced to almost zero by 2050. These goals are also central to the ***European Union***'s Green Deal that is to take shape in the coming months.

According to CDP, companies active in the manufacture of steel, chemical products and cement need to come up with new solutions, but they have yet to make a breakthrough. According to the British NGO, this sector accounts for 38 percent of emissions, but only 5 percent of green investments. In particular, investments in carbon capture and storage (CCUS) and in hydrogen are modest. They represent 0.2 and 0.1 percent of all investments.

The companies surveyed are all listed on stock exchanges and collectively account for three quarters of the stock market value of businesses in the ***European Union***. They are also responsible for around 75% of emissions in ***Europe***.

Apart from the consequences for people and nature, CDP concludes, the financial consequences are enormous. A warmer world causes an incredible amount of damage to the economy and society", says Steven Tebbe, who is responsible for the ***European*** branch of CDP. The difference in damage between a 1.5 degree and a 2 degree warming is estimated at ***€15***,000 billion, slightly more than the GDP of the ***European Union***.

Apart from the damage, the climate problem also creates commercial opportunities, according to CDP. Goods and services that lead to lower emissions would have a market potential of 1,200 billion ***euros***. And the cost of realising that potential is only ***€192*** billion," says Tebbe.

CDP obtains its data from surveys of the companies involved, this time in collaboration with consultant Oliver Wyman. The companies were assessed in the areas of climate policy, water use and the management of forests. The latter refers, for example, to the use of palm oil and soya. France saw 27 companies awarded the highest score (A) in one of the areas, while the Netherlands had six well-performing companies. These include BAM, ING, KPN, Philips, Signify and the half-Dutch company Unilever.

The nearly nine hundred ***European*** companies reported that last year they invested 24 billion ***euros*** in initiatives that will directly result in less CO2 emissions. This is expected to save 2,400 megatons of emissions. The costs, 10 ***euros*** per tonne of CO2, are in practice even lower, according to CDP, because the investments also lead to lower costs, which has not been taken into account.

Companies must invest twice as much to meet 'Paris' targets

Six Dutch companies receive highest ratings, including Philips and BAM

**Graphic**

Palm oil factory in Malaysia. The companies were investigated by CDP, among others, on their handling of forests.

Photo Pascal Maitre/Panos Pictures

Steel and energy companies emit the most

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Emissions (94%); Pollution + Environmental Impacts (75%); Energy + Environment (70%); ***European*** Union (67%); Geology + Geophysics (62%)

**Industry:** Alternative + Renewable Energy (73%)

**Load-Date:** February 26, 2020

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[***Trump plan 3D printed weapons is big risk***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D431-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 21

**Length:** 634 words

**Body**

OPINION Liesje Schreinemacher, ***Member of the European Parliament*** (VVD)

If the plans of the Americans go through, it will be a little easier to print 3D firearms in our country too after 9 March. President Trump wants to relax the supervision on the online sharing of printing blueprints. Liesje Schreinemacher is in Washington in an attempt to turn the tide.

A printer, a plastic spool and a blueprint. That's all you need to get started with your own 3D printer, which you can now buy at all major online shops. The possibilities of 3D printing are endless, from medical dentures to printing an entire house. But there are also serious risks associated with these countless possibilities. This became painfully clear last October in Halle, Germany, when a synagogue was attacked and two people were killed with a partially 3D-printed weapon.

With 3D printing becoming ever easier and cheaper, it is only a matter of time before we are confronted with more of these types of homemade weapons. Especially now that US President Donald Trump is about to relax controls on the online publication of blueprints for 3D printed weapons, it won't be long before they find their way to ***Europe***. This is worrying, because a 3D printed weapon has no serial number, is not registered anywhere and is therefore untraceable by law enforcement agencies. Plastic weapons also go undetected by metal detection gates. This week I am in Washington to discuss the risks to international security and my concerns.

At the moment, the availability of those blueprints is still relatively limited. You have to be a real tech nerd to be able to get them from the dark web. The US President's plans will now change this. This is a very undesirable development for ***Europe***. Once published legally on the internet in the US, the number of blueprint downloads will be impossible to control, and so the end is in sight. Precisely because we in the ***European Union*** have very strict rules on the possession of and trade in arms, it will be tempting for criminals and terrorists to use a 3D printer. Especially when the blueprints for this are easily available on the Internet.

In short, Trump's plan is to transfer blueprints for the production of 3D printed weapons from the US ammunition list, which is under strict control of the State Department, to the so-called 'control list' of the State Department as of 9 March. The export of the blueprints will then be much easier, because the supervision on that list is much less strict. Also, Congress will no longer have any say in the matter.

I am not the only one with concerns about this development. Meanwhile, 21 states have started legal proceedings to stop Trump's plans. In anticipation of this ruling, this week I and a delegation of ***MEPs*** are raising this issue with colleagues in Congress in Washington and at the Department of Commerce. The United States is, of course, in charge of its own internal arms policy, but when this policy threatens our security, it is important to be alert.

I have also raised the issue of the risks of 3D printed weapons with the ***European Commission*** in Brussels. As far as I am concerned, the online publication of instructions for the production of weapons, the downloading and use of those instructions will be illegal and punishable. I will continue to put this issue on the agenda in the Netherlands, Brussels and the US. For however wonderful new technological developments may be, we must never lose sight of our safety!

Liesje Schreinemacher is

VVD MEP

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Weapons + Arms (94%); Chemical + Biological Weapons (78%)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2020

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[***Blok fears failure of Brexit talks***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D43W-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 25

**Length:** 498 words

**Byline:** Ruud Mikkers

**Body**

Tougher and tougher stance on Johnson government

by Ruud Mikkers

Brussels - The chance is 'very real' that the negotiations with the United Kingdom about the future trade relationship will come to nothing. This is what Foreign Affairs Minister Blok warns on the eve of the start of phase two of the difficult Brexit negotiations.

Blok and his ***EU colleagues*** gave Tuesday in Brussels a formal blow to the negotiating mandate that the member states give to Michel Barnier, chief negotiator on behalf of the ***EU***. From next month, an ambitious trade agreement between the Union and the UK will be negotiated alternately in Brussels and London, but agreements must also be made, for example, on cooperation in the field of security.

No deal

Time is pressing, a comprehensive agreement must be reached before the end of the year. Otherwise a no deal will follow, a scenario that is very realistic according to Blok as there are many bears on the road.

Since the divorce became formal on 1 February, positions on a UK trade deal have hardened. In Brussels, it is noted with some concern that the British appear to be entrenched.

The UK wants the freedom to deviate from ***European*** standards, while the ***EU*** will only allow zero tariffs and quota-free access to the single market if the British abide by the same rules on environmental, social and state aid standards.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his ministers want a free trade agreement like the one the ***EU*** concluded with Canada a few years ago.

London has repeatedly said that it does not want to comply with EU standards. The British certainly do not accept the demand that they should automatically follow (tightened) ***EU standards*** in some areas in the future. "We want a Canada-style deal, but our ultimate goal is to take back control," said a government source in London.

The ***EU*** does not want to give the British such a Canada deal because the country is far too close to the ***European*** market and the trade volumes of Canada and the UK are not comparable.

If the UK is allowed to trade below ***European*** standards, it is feared that business on the continent will be outcompeted on unfair terms. France, in particular, has been up in arms.

Transition period

The Johnson Government may decide that it wants to extend the transition period, which in principle ends at the end of this year, by one or, at most, two years. A decision would have to be taken by 1 July, but the Prime Minister has repeatedly said that he absolutely does not want this. If the talks break down, trade will revert to the rules of the World Trade Organisation. That means high tariffs and quotas for all parties. Blok: 'Our full commitment is to prevent a no deal. But there is a real chance that it will not succeed."

We want a Canada-style deal'

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (62%)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2020

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[***The world is watching while we are being slaughtered'; Idlib***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10S0-00000-00&context=) [***The humanitarian horror story of the 21st century' ; Idlib***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10S0-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 1767 words

**Byline:** Toon Beemsterboer

**Dateline:** Gaziantep

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*Report on*  Idlib

In the Syrian province of Idlib, almost a million people are trapped between the Russian-Syrian offensive and the closed Turkish border. The aid workers are themselves displaced. Who can help whom here?

**FULL TEXT:**

In the children's hospital in Sarmada, a town in the northern Syrian province of Idlib, dozens of newborn babies lie in the incubator with a tube in their nose. They are too weak to breathe for themselves and are on life support. Some of them are in a very bad state," Nasser Al-Khalaf, the director of the hospital, said over the phone. Without medical care they would die. But they are also in danger of dying because they are in the hospital.

Since the Syrian regime, with Russian support, launched an offensive to retake Idlib province last year, at least 83 hospitals and medical posts have been bombed or shelled. This happened despite the fact that their coordinates were passed on to the warring parties as part of the de-escalation process. Many Syrians are therefore convinced that the Assad regime and Russia are deliberately bombarding hospitals - a war crime.

The coordinates of the children's hospital in Sarmada have not been given. Perhaps that is why it has been spared so far. But the Syrian army is advancing rapidly to the north and the front line is getting closer. We live in constant fear that the hospital will be bombed," says Al-Khalaf. "Last week there were airstrikes and shelling in the area. Fortunately we were not hit."

The children's hospital has 85 beds, and about 150 patients are examined there every day. This is the central hospital in the area, where patients are referred to other places," says Al-Khalaf. So we cover a large area. Due to the government offensive and the huge influx of refugees, the number of patients has risen sharply in recent months, as has the severity of their complaints. My people are completely overworked."

After last week's bombing and shelling, Al-Khalaf decided to make preparations for a possible evacuation. He called hospitals closer to the Turkish border, but none of them had enough capacity. The problem is that many children need respiratory support. But the other hospitals don't have equipment for that. I see it very bleak."

Although the UN is coordinating the aid operation in Idlib, because of the insecurity they are dependent on Syrian organisations, which together have over 10,000 staff and volunteers in Idlib. Most are based in the southern Turkish city of Gaziantep, a sister city of Aleppo, where a third of the population is Syrian. But aid workers feel frustrated and powerless as a humanitarian drama unfolds just across the border.

I have asked the United Nations: when do I evacuate the hospital?", says Mohannad Othman in a Starbucks in Gaziantep. He is director of the Sham Humanitarian Foundation, a Syrian aid organisation that supports the children's hospital. ,,But the UN had no answer to that. That is why I want to visit the hospital myself. That is not without risk, but I want to see with my own eyes what the situation is before I decide to evacuate. The lives of children are at stake."

**Miles and miles of traffic jams**

Many Syrian aid workers in Idlib have been displaced themselves, which complicates the aid operation enormously. Warehouses with food and medicine have been bombed. Traffic jams stretch for kilometres on the roads, making it difficult to transport relief supplies. The humanitarian crisis is growing by the day. According to the UN, almost a million civilians have fled Idlib since December, half of them children.

Mark Lowcock, who is responsible for all emergency aid coordinated by the UN, spoke in the Security Council last week of "the greatest humanitarian horror story of the 21st century". There is a huge aid operation going on at the border with Turkey. But it is completely overwhelmed. The equipment and facilities used by aid workers have been damaged. Aid workers themselves are being displaced and killed."

Most of the displaced people have fled to the Turkish border, but it is shut tight. There is a high concrete security wall reinforced with barbed wire and watchtowers. The Turkish border police shoot at anyone who tries to cross. Turkey already takes in 3.6 million refugees, and is under great ***European*** pressure to prevent a new influx. The Turkish government therefore tries to provide as much help as possible in Syria itself. On the muddy hills south of the border with Turkey extensive tent camps have arisen, where the Turkish aid organisations IHH and the Red Crescent distribute food, clothing and blankets.

However, the biggest problem at the moment is a lack of shelter and security. According to the UN, 174,000 displaced people live with host families, 140,000 in official camps and 128,000 in rented accommodation. This means that hundreds of thousands of people are living in empty buildings or 'wild camps' without any infrastructure. Many have not yet received aid and have to share tents with other families because there is not enough space.

IDPs have no clear idea where they are going," says Amani Kanjo, project coordinator of the aid organisation Syria Relief and Development, which has a thousand staff in Idlib and Northern Aleppo. They have put up tents on every piece of unused land. Some have even stretched carpets between the olive trees they shelter under. Farmers have also pitched tents and are asking one hundred to two hundred dollars rent per month."

However, most Syrians cannot afford that. The average income of a family is fifty dollars a month. After nine years of war, Syria is one of the poorest countries in the world. No less than 82% of the population live below the poverty line. Prices have doubled since the beginning of this year. If Syrian refugees abroad did not transfer money every month, many families would not survive.

Fortunately, last week's snow has melted. But due to the unusual cold, several children have frozen to death in the camps. Photos of dead babies looking blue are shared on social media. To keep warm, people burn rubbish, clothes and plastic in a *soba*, a kind of portable all-purpose burner," says Kanjo. But that is a very bad idea. Several people have already died from carbon monoxide poisoning."

**Child marriages**

In the camps, women are at risk of being raped or sexually exploited. Kanjo keeps a list of incidents. Rebels and aid workers abuse the fact that families have no money and offer women money in exchange for sex. If women dare to report abuse, they are expelled from the camp. There are also many child marriages. Syrians have many children and a married-off daughter is one less mouth to feed."

Kanjo has many relatives and friends in the north of Idlib. They are extremely depressed," she says in a café in Gaziantep. My uncle doesn't want to leave his house anymore, because the streets are full of people begging for money or food. And he can't do anything anyway, he has to think of his own family. People are running out of money, there is a lot of bartering going on. Medicine is a luxury that many can no longer afford."

Despite the appalling conditions, Syrian aid organisations believe that Turkey will not under any circumstances open the border to the displaced people. They can even understand this. Some believe that Turkey has secretly promised ***Europe*** to keep the border closed. But people are still being smuggled into Turkey on a piecemeal basis via mountains and rivers.

**Kurdish province**

Other displaced people move on to northern Syria. But most have no money to do so. Some 300,000 people have travelled on to the regions of Afrin and Northern Aleppo, which are under Turkish control and safer than Idlib. Their arrival there is controversial, as Afrin was a predominantly Kurdish province before the invasion by the Turkish army and allied Syrian rebels last year. Half the population fled, leading to accusations of ethnic cleansing.

That is why western aid organisations are shying away from launching an aid operation in Afrin. The Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA), an umbrella organisation of 22 aid organisations, however, calls on them to put aside political differences with Turkey and let humanitarian considerations prevail. For Afrin and Northern Aleppo are the only areas that are still relatively safe. And time is running out: Assad's troops are advancing from western Aleppo. When they reach the Turkish border, Idlib is surrounded and displaced people are trapped like rats.

Protecting civilians is the most important thing now," says Othman of the Sham Humanitarian Foundation, one of the members of the SNA. We cannot continue to react to the failure of every new peace attempt. We hope that the Turkish troops in Idlib will be able to stop a further advance of the regime, so that we have time to get organised and launch a new aid operation. But Turkey cannot carry this burden alone, ***Europe*** should help."

Some Syrian aid organisations are already active in Afrin and Northern Aleppo, but the area lacks the proper infrastructure for an aid operation of any size. It is a rural area, without proper buildings, roads, schools and hospitals. Moreover, aid organisations are not allowed to build tent camps there. The Turkish army keeps everything strictly under control," says project coordinator Kanjo. Not the best conditions for us to work in.

Kanjo tells us that she went to the cardiologist the day before because she had problems with her heart. It turned out to be heart cramp from the stress. I don't want to work in this sector any more. I have been hearing heart-rending stories for five years. My mental health has been destroyed. I have lost my last shred of hope and motivation. We are completely abandoned, the world looks on in silence while we are being slaughtered. We are waiting for an intervention of Allah, for a miracle."

When do I evacuate the children's hospital?

This is the biggest humanitarian horror story of the 21st century

Mark Lowrock UN Emergency Relief Coordinator

**Graphic**

Above: Syrians on the run in Idlib. Hundreds of thousands of refugees end up in makeshift camps on the border with Turkey. Below: a camp this month near the city of Azazin the snow.

Photos Muhammed Said/Getty, Khalil Ashawi/Reuters

Nearly one million Syrians on the run since early December

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Chemical + Biological Weapons (94%); Weapons + Arms (94%); Refugees (80%); International Relations (78%); Terrorist Organizations (74%); Disaster + Emergency Relief (73%); Human Rights (73%); Civil War (68%); War + Conflict (68%); ***European*** Union (65%); Human Rights Organizations (63%); Human Rights Violations (63%)

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[***Russian 'diplomat' is prosecuted for attempted murder ; Bellingcat***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10S5-00000-00&context=) [***Spies from Russia all over Europe active***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10S5-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

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**Byline:** Steven Derix

**Dateline:** Moscow

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

GRoe intelligence service

Research collective Bellingcat revealed on Tuesday the name of the Russian who carried out an attack on an arms supplier in Bulgaria in 2015. Russian secret agents appear to be active across ***Europe***.

**FULL TEXT:**

He posed as the 'third secretary' at the Russian representation at the World Trade Organisation in Geneva. In reality, Yegor Gordienko was an officer of the military intelligence agency GROe - a *killer* wanted by Bulgarian prosecutors for the failed attack on an arms manufacturer in Sofia in 2015.

Gordienko's name was revealed on Tuesday in new research by Bellingcat, in cooperation with the Swiss newspaper *Tages-Anzeig and* the Russian news site *The Insider*. Bulgaria previously said only that three Russians were being prosecuted, without naming names. It is the first time in recent history that a (former) Russian diplomat has been prosecuted for involvement in an attack. The Gordienko case thus sheds new light on Putin's secret espionage and assassination campaign in ***Europe***.

That Russian spies are posing as diplomats is well known. For example, *NRC* discovered in 2018 that the then second secretary of the Russian embassy in The Hague had a role in the failed hacking attempt of the OPCW headquarters in April 2018. But hacking and espionage is one thing, attempted murder is quite another. Yet that is exactly what the third secretary of the Russian mission at the WTO is suspected of doing. Yegor Gordienko (1979) was part of a secret department of the GROe called 'unit 29155'. Western intelligence services hold the unit responsible for, among other things, political sabotage in Moldova (2014), for a coup attempt in Montenegro (2016) and for the failed attack with the nerve agent novichok on former spy Sergei Skripal in Salisbury (2018). According to Bellingcat, 'unit 29155' was also involved in two attempted murders of Bulgarian arms manufacturer Emilian Gebrev, in April and May 2015.

**Underground car park**

Yegor Gordienko flew from Moscow to the Bulgarian resort of Bulgarias on 24 April 2015 with a false passport in the name of 'Georgi Gorshkov'. Together with two GROe colleagues, he stayed in a hotel in the capital Sofia, opposite an underground car park used by the company of their target, Bulgarian arms manufacturer Gebrev.

Surveillance cameras show one of the three men wearing a hat, sunglasses and gloves scurrying around the car park on 28 April. The GROe officer may have smeared the door of Gebrev's car with poison.

Later that day, businessman Gebrev fell ill during a reception. The three Russian agents had already left on a flight to Istanbul.

What Gebrev was poisoned with has never been established. The businessman recovered, but was hospitalised again on 28 May with the same symptoms. Gordienko was in Bulgaria on that date too. Gebrev survived this time too. He can only guess at the motive of the attacks on his life. To Bellingcat, Gebrev suggested that arms deliveries to Ukraine might have been the motive. Striking detail: the man in the parking garage in Sofia was identified by Bellingcat as GROe officer Denis Sergeev. He was one of the Russian agents in the UK at the time of the attack on Skripal.

In 2017, Yegor Gordienko joined the Russian representation at the WTO in Geneva as a diplomat - not under his pseudonym Gorshkov, but under his real name. Both the Swiss Foreign Ministry and the WTO confirmed that Gordienko was accredited to the World Trade Organisation as of 2017. The Russian delegation to the WTO did not want to comment.

What Gordienko was doing in Switzerland is still unknown. Social media data suggests that the GROe officer was hanging around the headquarters of the World Anti-Doping Agency Wada in Lausanne, according to Bellingcat. Not surprising, given the huge Russian doping scandal that continues to rage.

It is possible that the GROe officer also played a role in the preparations for the attack on Skripal in Salisbury. Travel records show that the two executors of the attack, GROe officers Anatoli Chepiga and Aleksandr Mishkin, travelled to Geneva several times between December 2017 and February 2018. So did the 'third man' on British soil, Denis Sergeev. Bellingcat suspects that he directed the Salisbury operation. In any case, 'hit teams' of three men seem to be the modus operandi of the GROe.

Gordienko's accreditation with the WTO ran until 2020, but in October 2018 he unexpectedly left for Moscow for good. This happened shortly after Bellingcat revealed the true identity of the GROe officers involved in the Salibury attack. Agent Gordienko arrived in Moscow at a quarter to three. Before eight o'clock the next day, according to the call records Bellingcat was able to get hold of, he reported to the GROe head office at Choroshevskoje Chaussée.

Russia's underground espionage and liquidation campaign in ***Europe***

Businessman Gebrev was hospitalised twice with the same symptoms

Boergas, 24 April 2015

GROe officer Yegor Gordienko arrives by plane from Moscow and, together with two other Russian officers, arrives at a hotel in Sofia.

Sofia, 28 April 2015

Surveillance footage shows one of the GROe agents scurrying around the car park of Emilian Gebrev's company. Later that day, the Bulgarian arms manufacturer becomes unwell. Again later, it is revealed that he was poisoned.

Sofia, 28 May 2015

Yegor Gordienko arrives from Moscow. The same night, Gebrev was hospitalised again.

Geneva, 2017

Yegor Gordienko is appointed third secretary in the Russian delegation to the World Trade Organisation.

Geneva, December 2017-February 2018

The GROe officers involved in the Salisbury attack on Skripal travel to Geneva several times.

Salisbury 4 March 2018

The Russian former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia are poisoned with 'novichok'.

Geneva, 25 October 2018

After Bellingcat reveals the true identity of the GROe officers behind the attack on Skripal, Yegor Gordienko leaves for Moscow, not to return to his post.

*Sofia, 28 April 2015*: surveillance footage shows one of the GROe agents scurrying around the car park of Emilian Gebrev's company. Later in the day, the Bulgarian arms manufacturer becomes unwell. He will later be found to have been poisoned.

Sofia, 28 May 2015: Yegor Gordienko arrives from Moscow. The same night, Gebrev is hospitalised again.

Geneva, 2017. Yegor Gordienko is appointed as third secretary to the Russian delegation to the World Trade Organization WTO.

Geneva, December 2017-February 2018. GROe officers involved in the Salisbury attack travel to Geneva several times.

Geneva, 25 October 2018: after Bellingcat reveals the true identity of the GROe officers behind the Skripal attack, Yegor Gordiev leaves for Moscow, not to return to his post.

Salisbury 4 March 2018: Russian former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia are poisoned with 'novichok'.

**Graphic**

The poisoned Bulgarian arms dealer Emilian Gebrev(l) during a press conference in 2017 with Bulgarian Prime Minister Bojko Borisov (r). A Russian secret agent was allegedly behind the attack.

Photo Nikolay Doychinov/AFP

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[***Letters***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D478-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** WATU-SAY; Page 18

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**Body**

Advice

I read that the government had advised you to go straight to the doctor if you think you are infected with the coronavirus. What a strange advice. Go to the waiting room and infect even more people, so they are actually saying. The government should make a central telephone number available and send a special team.

Hans Kastelein

Food

How fortunate that our farmers have not yet been halved, something D66 wants. The food would then have to come from Canada after the Ceta Treaty. If the prices of products from China are already skyrocketing, what will happen to our food? It is not difficult to predict: It will become scarce and unaffordable.

Jos Huisman

Profession

Another negative message about the policy in Amsterdam (Tel. 25/2). A permit has been granted to start a mini-supermarket in the Nieuwe Doelenstraat. The posh hotel De L'***Europe*** thinks the supermarket does not fit in the street and does not comply with the zoning plan, and went to court. Successfully, it seems, and now it appears that the two hard-working supermarket owners have appealed to the Council of State as a last resort. Amsterdam did not do its job properly and should have taken a better look at the situation with the zoning plan and the location.

Mrs Brugman,

Lelystad

Ten Hag

After Ajax's poor results in recent weeks, the pressure is on coach Erik ten Hag. He has by far the best players in the Netherlands, but the pressing question is whether he can still touch them and motivate them now that heads have started to droop and there are even annoyances between players. He will also have to apply and demonstrate all his tactical knowledge, especially tomorrow against Spanish 'lice team' Getafe. It is hour U for Ten Hag!

Bas Overmars,

Amsterdam

Pont

Now that there are extensive building plans for the Almere Pampus district (25,000 homes), the metro tunnel connection, costing billions, is the big bottleneck, seriously delaying construction. What would be wrong with a ferry connection similar to the IJveren, which sails from the station to Amsterdam Noord? Perhaps this service could be expanded. Even if this were to be introduced as a temporary measure, the construction of the Pampus district could be started immediately and, if necessary, the underground tunnel could be built later.

R. van der Waarden,

Amsterdam

Waste

It is always good to show the multiple sides of a choice. We want to leave a healthy environment for our descendants. A nuclear power station leaves behind waste that is dangerous to our health for 100 years and more. It is not the quantity but the effect that counts. In Chernobyl it was only 500 kg. And even if the power plant is safe, man is the weak link. They make mistakes. Or someone becomes a dictator and another war ensues, the consequences of which are incalculable. The effect of radioactivity released by, for example, a war, is incalculable. Do we want to burden our descendants with it? We must take responsibility for the distant future.

Willem Jonkmans

Waste

Once a Marine, always a Marine. The motto Qua Patet Orbis, 'as far as the world reaches', is written on the marines' blood. It is therefore strange that the top echelons of Defence, the members of the Cabinet Ank Bijleveld and Barbara Visser, were afraid that the marines would leave the elite corps because of the move of the marines' barracks from Doorn to Vlissingen. Despite their seriously flawed policy with the squandering of many hundreds of millions of taxpayers' money, the ladies remain in their seats. Unbelievable!

Jan van Meurs

Prepare

It is not unlikely that eventually 50 per cent of the world's population will contract the coronavirus. Most people do not notice it. But with a mortality rate of about 2 percent, that means 180,000 deaths in the Netherlands and 70,000,000 in the world. That is not insignificant. It also affects the economy. Panic is also on the cards. Let us hope that when the weather gets warmer, the virus will subside.

Diederik Brand

Malta

I hope that the committee investigating the flow of money to mosques does not allow itself to be lulled into a false sense of security by flows of money from so-called non-free countries. It is easy for someone from the Gulf States to buy an ***EU passport*** in Malta and then transfer money from Malta.

B. Butcher, Rotterdam

Schiphol at sea

Schiphol cannot grow. Residents rightly complain about noise pollution. For that reason, people in the Flevopolder are not waiting for the expansion of Lelystad Airport. Because of the nitrogen and PFAS crisis, it will not be possible to build in order to compensate for the lack of available housing and the expansion of the population in the coming decades. All of this is clear and points to one solution: move Schiphol to the sea and the freed up area in the Haarlemmermeer will become available for large-scale housing construction. With the disappearance of the planes to sea, nitrogen emissions will be released for building, residents will be relieved of the noise pollution and people in the Flevopolder will breathe a sigh of relief.

R.F.J. van der Kaa,

Zeewolde

Rutte

To the chagrin of other countries (except those that have their budgets in order), Prime Minister Rutte has put his foot down. Not a penny more! Merkel shows her communist upbringing and thinks the rich should share with the poor. Spain goes even further by saying they have more inhabitants than the four thrifty countries put together. Whether that could be a reason for not having your budget in order for decades. French President Macron, like a second Napoleon, is simply striving for the leadership of ***Europe***. Perhaps my admiration for Prime Minister Rutte will increase a little if he now sticks to the Stability Pact of 1997.

Andries F. Bongers

Symbol politics

In the coming destruction of the scarce landscape in our densely populated country, stakeholders are overlooking a small thing. Wind turbines stand idle 75 per cent of the time and are parasitic on fossil fuelled power stations. Wind energy cannot exist without fossil. Those are coal or gas-fired power stations. And they run 100 per cent in the background so that the energy companies can easily switch them on when the wind fails. So there is never any question of CO2-neutral generation. Look at the emission figures for France and Germany. In Germany, 35% of electricity comes from renewable energy, but the CO2 emissions are 10 times higher than in France. Germany has, apart from Poland, the most lignite power stations as a back-up for wind energy, and France has nuclear power stations, which generate truly CO2 -neutral electricity.

Dr. Brigitte Bloem,

Harmelen

Economic

Would Trump, with his focus on the US with America First, be right after all? The coronavirus and its economic consequences only now show how dependent we have become on China.

J.C. Rosmolen, Bleiswijk

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** COVID-19 Coronavirus (94%); Epidemics (82%); Infectious Disease (82%); Viruses (69%)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2020

**End of Document**

[***In short***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D43X-00000-00&context=)

De Telegraaf

26 February 2020 Wednesday

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 25

**Length:** 67 words

**Body**

***EU*** and UK to negotiate trade deal and cooperation after Brexit

EU leaders agree on mandate for negotiator Michel Barnier

Britain wants a trade deal like the ***EU*** has with Canada and wants the freedom to deviate from various EU standards now and in the future

***EU*** finds free trade without standards totally unacceptable

No deal is a very real scenario

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Nature forces us to close borders***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D42K-00000-00&context=)

De Telegraaf

26 February 2020 Wednesday

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 11

**Length:** 858 words

**Body**

In November 1347, twelve ships docked in Messina, the port city on the north-eastern tip of Sicily. In the fourteenth century, transport ships were also propelled by rowers, but these slow-moving vessels only arrived by wind power. There was hardly any activity on the ships, as the dockers could see. A terrible stench was drifting towards the quay. Nevertheless, there were curious people who dared to enter the ships. The ships' crews showed huge growths, black in colour, they were dying or had already died.

Messina wanted to get rid of the ships immediately, but the curious ones were already infected and within a few days the disease became visible and the great dying began. The 'Black Death' had arrived in ***Europe***. One third of the continent's total population would perish.

It was a disease-causing bacterium spread by fleas, the Yersinia Pestis. Like the current coronavirus, Patient Zero came from China.

From Italy, the disease spread throughout ***Europe***. And since there were no virologists yet who could explain it, there could only be a supernatural cause. There were scholars who pointed out that a few years earlier Saturn, Jupiter and Mars had been wrongly placed in the firmament. Prayers were offered by every religious group, but nothing helped.

As often happens when people cannot get a grip on reality, the Jews were pointed at. They were responsible. Huge massacres of Jews were the result. All the Jews in Frankfurt were killed. That did not help either.

Oil spill

Like an oil slick, a fierce form of penance spread across the continent, raising expectations that the plague would be contained: people scourged themselves to atone for their sinful human existence. Many joined these 'flagellants'.

After a few years, the pandemic subsided, presumably due to the extinction of the black rat, which was the most notorious carrier of the flea. It was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century that the population had returned to the size it had prior to the plague outbreak.

We do not have to struggle to feel the fears of those times. This is nature at its most cruel: elusive, all-powerful, ruthless and, above all, unscrupulous. There are rumours that the coronavirus escaped from a Chinese lab, but it is more likely that the virus took the same natural course as the Yersinia pestis bacterium, i.e. it jumped from animal to human. I have no idea why the Yersinia Pestis or coronaviruses exist, or how in the course of evolution they acquired their fatal character. They exist and even if you beat yourself to a pulp like the flagellants once did, nothing helps except the ingenuity of the human mind. Thousands of virologists and other scientists are now hunting for a drug that can paralyse the coronavirus.

In the fourteenth century, the first remedy was quarantine. The sick were separated from the healthy. But the rats were overlooked and so people continued to fall ill and die.

One would expect that in our time our authorities would have immediately recognised the nature of this virus, for we humans carry in the oldest layers of our minds the deep fear of this kind of pandemic. Yet, for too long, the air lines to China remained open and our leaders initially acted laconically about the dangers and accepted the disease figures of the Chinese Government, which had no interest whatsoever in disclosing the real figures.

As with the Yersinia pestis , the coronavirus is spreading from Italy to the rest of ***Europe***. We must close the borders to travellers from China and northern Italy, but which leader dares take that decision? "Open borders' has been the motto of the political and cultural elites in recent decades - and now harsh nature is forcing us to close our borders and set aside modern values of borderlessness.

We see the virus approaching in real time. Even the specialists do not know how contagious the virus is, whether you can transmit it without getting sick yourself, which people in which age group (old and sick?) have a high chance of succumbing to it. How can you protect your loved ones?

Uncertainties

This is the world as it has always manifested itself throughout human history. So many fears, so many uncertainties. Fortunately, we can now look into the eyes of virologists who do their best almost every night on talk shows to remain calm and confident.

Until the moment of liberation arrives, we read the Decamerone by the Italian writer Boccaccio, who in the fourteenth century experienced the plague in 'real time' and survived hell. In the Decamerone, he isolates ten figures in a Tuscan villa who, over the course of ten days, tell each other a hundred stories. Maybe we are watching series now, but it comes down to the same thing: as long as we tell each other stories of love and desire, and listen to each other, we remain human.

Parallels corona

and 'Black Death

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Epidemics (94%); Viruses (93%); Infectious Disease (82%); COVID-19 Coronavirus (75%)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Battle for Merkel's seat erupts***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D432-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 16

**Length:** 460 words

**Byline:** Rob Savelberg

**Body**

Fight for power opened in CDU

by Rob Savelberg

BERLIN - Yesterday, the struggle for the succession of Angela Merkel began. Two ruffians openly opened the fight for power on the Spree, with a view on the Federal Chancellery.

Yesterday morning, both the good-humoured carnival-goer Armin Laschet (59) from Aachen and the West German multi-millionaire Friedrich Merz (64) officially announced their intention to become party leaders of the conservative CDU in exactly two months. The person who will preside over the governing party will probably succeed Merkel next year, who has been in power for 16 years.

Blushing, grinning like a bad boy who knows more than he is telling, Armin Laschet, Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), presented himself to the capital's press in Berlin. Seated next to him was the considerably younger Jens Spahn (39), the taller health minister who has the same ambitions, but who has realised that he is not yet able to compete with the much smaller but more powerful Laschet.

First, Spahn listed Germany's problems:

No fast internet, waiting times in healthcare, control over who enters ***Europe***, and protecting the borders, and the climate."

His recipe: Patriotism with a sense of tradition, Heimat and family, plus openness to the world."

Then the word went to neighbour Armin Laschet. He spelled out his strengths: "Behind us is the largest CDU branch in the largest state."

This indicates his powerful constituency, for NRW has eighteen million inhabitants, just a bit more than the Netherlands. At the same time, Laschet took a swipe at chief competitor Merz - for a long time the right-wing archenemy of Chancellor Merkel, who deprived him of all political functions almost twenty years ago. Because Merz is known as a hot-tempered, impatient 'Einzelgänger', a 'Macher', who does not tolerate any equals next to him.

On the other hand, Laschet is showing that he is a team-player. Behind the scenes, the Prime Minister intended to place all competitors in his star team. Merz was to get a super-ministry, Spahn was to become party leader in the Bundestag.

But a man like Merz is not going to let himself be bowled over: When I play, I go for the win, not for a draw," he later asserted self-confidently in front of the cameras.

Both Laschet and Merz believe that Germany and ***Europe*** are in a great crisis. Laschet emphasised the danger of the extreme right. Especially after the tenfold racist murder in Hanau last week, the earlier murders in front of the crowded synagogue in Halle and the recent triumph of neo-Nazi Björn Höcke in the East German state of Thuringia.

I want to halve the 'Alternative für Deutschland'", he said boldly. With conservative positions, he hopes to lure a million disappointed AfD voters back to the CDU.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Heads Of State + Government (94%); Taxes + Taxation (83%); Economic Crisis (82%); International Relations (73%); Public Finance (63%); Rule Of Law (63%); Politics (62%)

**Industry:** Nuclear Energy (67%)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Zero growth quarter for German economy***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D43G-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 22

**Length:** 79 words

**Body**

Final figures

Wiesbaden - The German economy in the last quarter of last year remained at the same level as a quarter earlier. This is confirmed by final figures from the German Federal Statistical Office after preliminary figures had pointed in the same direction. Economists were already counting on a result of 0%. In the third quarter, the gross domestic product of the largest economy in the ***eurozone*** still increased by 0.2% compared to the previous three months.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Economic Growth (94%); Gross Domestic Product (94%); Recession (74%); Company Revenues (73%); Population + Demographics (73%); Public Finance (70%); Economic Conditions (69%); National Debt (63%)

**Industry:** Oil + Gas Industry (63%)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Statistics Office***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10VW-00000-00&context=) [***German economy fails to grow in fourth quarter***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y97-H0X1-JC5G-10VW-00000-00&context=)

NRC Handelsblad

26 February 2020 Wednesday

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 7

**Length:** 102 words

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

The German economy did not grow in the last quarter of last year compared to the previous quarter. On an annual basis, however, there was growth of 0.4 percent. This is what the Federal Statistical Office reported based on final figures. Economists generally expected a result of 0 percent. In the third quarter, the gross domestic product of the largest economy in the ***eurozone*** increased by a revised 0.2 percent compared to the previous three months. ING analysts point out that consumer spending did not increase in the last quarter. (ANP)

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Economic Growth (94%); Gross Domestic Product (93%); Population + Demographics (83%); Public Finance (75%); Recession (75%); Consumption (71%); Economic Conditions (71%); Company Revenues (69%); National Debt (62%)

**Load-Date:** February 26, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Still newspapers despite 'Yes/Yes***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5Y96-20W1-DYTV-D45T-00000-00&context=)

De Telegraaf

26 February 2020 Wednesday

Utrecht

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**Section:** REGION; Page 14

**Length:** 271 words

**Byline:** Eric Roeske

**Body**

Sticker system cracked

by Eric Roeske

Utrecht - The Yes/Yes sticker system introduced in Utrecht on 1 January will not apply to door-to-door newspapers for the time being. The system violates the ***European*** Convention on Human Rights, according to the Court of Appeal in Arnhem.

The publisher of the Stadsblad had lodged an appeal against the municipal decision, whereby both advertising material and door-to-door papers could only be delivered if a Yes/No sticker had been placed on the letterbox. Until recently, the weekly newspaper could still be delivered to all addresses, unless a No/No sticker was placed on the letterbox.

The Press Council had also previously indicated that the freedom of the press was at stake when the Yes/Yes sticker was introduced. The alderman responsible, Klaas Verschuure (D66), has meanwhile announced that the door-to-door papers can be delivered again from today onwards, until a decision is made in the case on the merits between the municipality of Utrecht and the publisher. He said that he would study the ruling and the proceedings on the merits more closely.

The Utrecht VVD and Stadsbelang Utrecht council parties, which from the outset were opposed to the introduction of the Yes/Yes sticker, have asked Verschuure to indicate what action he plans to take and whether the council can be informed of the financial risk of compensation. ,,We are very concerned about these liability risks", says Cees Bos of Stadsbelang Utrecht. An industry was in danger of being wiped out and costs have been incurred by them to scale down."

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Law Courts + Tribunals (94%); Judges (92%); Civil Procedure (81%); Trial + Procedure (74%); Consumer Protection (63%)

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2020

**End of Document**

[***US closes borders to travellers Europe***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDF-2XV1-DYMH-R35V-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 632 words

**Byline:** Bas Blokker

**Dateline:** Washington

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Coronavirus

US borders close to ***Europeans***. The ***EU*** has failed', Trump referred to the virus approach.

**FULL TEXT:**

The United States will close its borders to travellers from ***Europe***, with the exception of Great Britain, from midnight on Friday (6 a.m. on Saturday morning). The entry ban will be in place for 30 days. The ***European Union*** rejected the entry ban on Thursday morning. According to ***EU-president*** Charles Michel, the decision was "taken unilaterally and without consultation".

The entry ban is the most draconian measure announced by President Trump in a speech to the American people from the Oval Office on Wednesday evening. In addition, the President announced a package of stimulus measures to protect citizens and businesses from the economic and financial consequences of the epidemic.

The announcement caused much confusion. In his short speech, Trump said that also "the enormous amount of trade and goods was affected". He later corrected this via Twitter: "The restrictions only affect people, not goods." Furthermore, Trump said that insurance companies are covering tests and treatments for the virus. According to the insurers, they will only cover the costs of tests.

Trump, who pointed out that the World Health Organisation is talking about a pandemic, put the responsibility for spreading "the foreign virus" on "travellers from ***Europe***". The borders were already closed to travellers from China.

The "broad measures" his administration immediately took to restrict entry from infected areas have resulted in "dramatically lower numbers" of infections in the US than elsewhere, according to Trump. "The ***European Union*** has failed, it has not imposed restrictions on movement from China", Trump said. "I will never hesitate to take drastic measures."

According to Anthony Fauci, the head of the team of medical experts advising Trump, "the worst is yet to come". Speaking to a House of Representatives committee earlier on Wednesday, he said that further spread in the US could be contained by limiting the influx of people from outside the country and by slowing the spread among Americans themselves.

The government will provide loans and suspend tax collection for companies that have run into trouble because of the epidemic. Trump asked Congress to urgently adopt a proposal to cut income taxes.

On the same day, for the first time in eleven years, the stock exchanges fell so sharply that it was a *bear market* - a loss of 20 per cent or more in a short space of time. This is not a financial crisis", Trump nevertheless stressed. He assured viewers that "the virus has no chance against us" thanks to the "best economy ever".

According to Foreign Minister Stef Blok, on a state visit to Indonesia, the travel ban has "potentially major consequences" for a trading nation like the Netherlands. There is a lot of personal and commercial traffic. The minister wants to map out the consequences in case a counter-reaction follows. He is in contact with other ***EU member states*** about this. Adjusting the travel advice to the US, for example, is a Dutch matter. The government is advised by the RIVM.

*Six airlines fly from Schiphol to the US, together making more than 200 flights a week.* They are KLM, TUI Fly, Norwegian, Delta (a KLM partner), American and United. America is KLM's most important market. KLM will be flying to 12 US destinations this summer, including 21 flights a week to New York and 13 flights a week to LA. Schiphol and KLM are taking stock of the consequences.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** COVID-19 Coronavirus (94%); Epidemics (88%); Infectious Disease (78%); Viruses (76%); Aircraft (75%)

**Industry:** Air Transportation (70%)

**Load-Date:** March 12, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Erdogan blackmails EU with stream of migrants***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2B3-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 16

**Length:** 168 words

**Body**

ANKARA - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey will keep its borders with the ***European Union*** open until the ***EU*** meets all requirements. Since Turkey opened its borders, thousands of people have flocked to its borders with the ***EU***.

"Until the ***EU*** meets all our demands for free movement of goods and people and offers better financial assistance, we will keep the borders open," Erdogan said in a speech.

He said he had also opened the borders to increase pressure on ***Europe*** to help in the fight in Syria. Turkey has invaded that country and is currently fighting rebels and the Syrian government army.

In the speech, the Turkish president lashed out at the Greeks for their treatment of refugees at the border. "There is no difference between what the Nazis did and how the Greeks act at the border," he said.

Next week, Turkey will hold a summit with the leaders of France, Germany and possibly Britain on the migrant crisis.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); International Relations (93%); Refugees (61%)

**Load-Date:** March 11, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Accusation of racism makes Baudet outlawed'.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDF-2XV1-DYMH-R372-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CULTURE; Page 2

**Length:** 594 words

**Byline:** Wilfred Takken

**Dateline:** Lelystad

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Summary proceedings

In summary proceedings, Thierry Baudet demanded rectification of statements about him in *Buitenhof on* Wednesday. The politician is actually profiting from the fuss, argues the other party.

**FULL TEXT:**

By putting "words in Thierry Baudet's mouth" that he did not say, *Buitenhof* has declared him "outlawed". The political TV programme used "the poison" of "character assassination", by portraying the MP as a racist. That is why Baudet and his party, Forum voor Democratie, demand a rectification from the responsible broadcasting company VPRO. This is how lawyer Dirk Vermaat put the grievances of Baudet Wednesday in Lelystad in summary proceedings of the politician and his party against the VPRO. A lie has been told. The lawyer said: "There has been a rock-hard lie. The VPRO is not allowed to spread lies.

According to the counsel, Buitenhof wrongly accused the politician of spreading racist ideas and conspiracy theories. That would be harmful for the leader and the party. Moreover, because of the remarks, the programme would be partly responsible for the threats that Baudet has since received. It makes some people's heads spin.

On 18 February, Baudet spoke out in the Lower House against the ***European*** long-term budget. The ***European Union*** is a state in the making. All that money goes to the creation of that state. So [...] to setting up ferry services to ferry immigrants from Africa to ***Europe*** in order to weaken the national identity so that there will be no more national states."

In Buitenhof of 23 February, presenter Natalie Righton came back to this. She said to Upper House member Henk Otten (ex-Forum, now Group Otten): "Your former party colleague Thierry Baudet [...] caused quite a stir [...] by saying that he thinks the ***EU*** has a preconceived plan to replace the white ***European*** race with African immigrants."

Baudet thinks this is not a correct representation. According to the VPRO, Baudet had offered himself as a guest for that broadcast, but the editors chose Otten.

**Muzzle**

Lawyer Jens van den Brink, who defended the VPRO, argued that Buitenhof did not call the opponent a racist and that Righton had given an adequate representation of Baudet's ideas. The lawyer substantiates this with a bouquet of quotes from the parliamentary debate and earlier statements by the politician, in which he says he fights for a dominant white ***Europe***.

According to Van den Brink, earlier statements also show that Baudet considers race, religion and culture to be separate issues in theory, but in practice they are inextricably linked. And no, it was not a literal quote, but a paraphrase: It is the task of the journalist to interpret the statements of a politician.

According to lawyer Van den Brink, Baudet wants to "muzzle" the press. The politician and his party would not be able to tolerate the press making unwelcome statements about them. The counsel argues that Baudet has ample access to the media to tell his side of the story, and that he should not abuse summary proceedings to do so.

Furthermore, he thinks that the politician is applying double standards because he himself is sloppy with facts and quotes. Van den Brink doubts that the matter would damage the Forum leader. According to him, the Forum leader actually benefits from it: He is comfortable with the fuss he is creating himself. You mustn't pretend that it harms you, while you are profiting.

Ruling: Wednesday, 25 March.

**Graphic**

Thierry Baudetin the court for summary proceedings against the VPRO.

Photo Bart Maat/ANP

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Lawyers (94%); Justice Departments (63%); Law Courts + Tribunals (61%)

**Load-Date:** March 12, 2020

**End of Document**

[***A Europe of nation states only***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2GP-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** WATU-SAY; Page 19

**Length:** 190 words

**Body**

The bigger the problems, the bigger the call from the ***Europhiles*** for a 'US of ***Europe***'.

This project is the greatest wish of the ***Europhiles***, a federal ***European*** state. Guy Verhofstadt and his entourage dream of it, ***Eurosceptics*** denounce it. Do we really want to become part of a larger ***European*** entity?

Whereas we Dutch are perhaps losing our nationalistic feeling bit by bit, it is different in Southern Europe. The Italians and the French will never renounce their own culture and language, so how do you want to create a common state? Far-reaching immigration is weakening the ***European*** nation states. The dominance of original nations is increasingly fading and we are ending up in a state where there is no longer a dominant nation.

If we want to save our sovereignty and our nationhood, we must leave the ***EU***. Far-reaching ***European*** unification has got us into trouble, neglected our culture, weakened the dominant nation and limited our sovereignty. I dream of a ***Europe*** of nation states, which is the great enemy of Brussels.

Leon Baten

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (64%)

**Load-Date:** March 11, 2020

**End of Document**

[***European companies must recycle more***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2C1-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 26

**Length:** 122 words

**Body**

BRUSSELS - ***European*** companies will be banned from destroying surplus goods, such as unsold clothes. Products will have to be made from as much recycled material as possible, be easier to repair and be reusable. The use of (micro) plastic in shampoo bottles, for example, will be restricted and there will be sustainability requirements for electronics such as smartphones and laptops. These are the words of an action plan for the circular economy presented in Brussels by ***European Commissioner for*** the Environment, Virginijus Sinkeviius. The ***European*** Commission wants to impose conditions on manufacturers, such as mobile phone batteries being sustainably produced and easier to replace.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Environment + Natural Resources (94%); ***European*** Union (74%); Associations + Organizations (63%)

**Industry:** Mobile Devices (76%); Chemicals (75%); Computer Equipment (63%); Paper + Packaging (63%); Waste Management + Remediation Services (63%); Energy Consumption (62%)

**Load-Date:** March 11, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Softer rules for bank to deal with corona'.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2BM-00000-00&context=)

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12 March 2020 Thursday

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 22

**Length:** 105 words

**Body**

Lenders

FRANKFURT - ***European*** banks seem to be urging regulators to relax the measures imposed on lenders after the financial crisis. This would allow lenders to cope with the economic impact of the new coronavirus. This is according to a draft letter from the ***European*** Banking Federation, which was viewed by Bloomberg. The requests vary from lowering the required capital buffers to easing the rules on bad loans. According to the banks, this is necessary to guide the ***European*** economy through these difficult times.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Central Banks (94%); Economic Crisis (75%)

**Load-Date:** March 11, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Character assassination of Baudet'.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D29J-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 08

**Length:** 347 words

**Byline:** Saskia Belleman

**Body**

Lawyer of Buitenhof: he applies double standards

by Saskia Belleman

LELYSTAD - "A rock-hard lie with the aim of committing character assassination against Thierry Baudet." According to lawyer Dirk Vermaat, that is what presenter Natalie Righton of the Buitenhof programme did in the broadcast of three weeks ago.

Her paraphrasing of the Forum leader's words led to a summary proceedings that took place on Wednesday in a packed courtroom of the Lelystad district court. The court was clearly taken by surprise by the great interest.

The question that Righton posed to guest and former FvD-coryfinalist Henk Otten was a stumbling block. During a debate, Baudet would have shocked the Lower House "by saying that the ***EU*** has a preconceived plan to replace the white ***European*** race with African immigrants," Righton said. Righton did not claim that Baudet literally mouthed the words 'white', 'race' and 'replace' during the debate, says Jens van den Brink, the lawyer of the VPRO. She paraphrased his words, which are exactly in line with what Baudet has said countless times before in different words. Words that he has never retracted, according to the lawyer. Also not during the preliminary relief proceedings.

Van den Brink substantiated his argument with fragments of earlier statements in which Baudet talks about "the homeopathic dilution of the Dutch people", his opposition to "the Africanisation of ***Europe***", and his preference for a "dominant white ***Europe***".

Outside the court Baudet said that those statements were from years ago, before he entered politics. They were "philosophical reflections" that he made in a different context. According to Van den Brink, the statements were made recently. The counselor also pointed out that Baudet has double standards. If he himself is caught out by mistakes, he is not exactly the first to rectify them. He pointed to the infamous 'train tweet' in which Baudet wrote that girlfriends had been harassed by Moroccans on the train. They turned out to be inspectors. Sentence on 25 March.

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**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Lawyers (94%); Law Courts + Tribunals (88%); Judges (71%)

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[***ECB wants to coordinate corona approach***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDC-KPN1-DYTV-D2BW-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 24

**Length:** 361 words

**Byline:** Dorinde Meuzelaar

**Body**

Hope for support from Frankfurt rises further after stock market crash

by Dorinde Meuzelaar

Amsterdam - "If we don't intervene, there could be an economic shock like in 2008." So warned ***European*** Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde on the eve of an already crucial interest rate meeting.

Expectations of the outcome of Thursday's meeting have been raised even higher by Lagarde's words and a substantial cut in interest rates by the Bank of England. After Wednesday's new huge loss on Wall Street, all eyes are on Frankfurt.

Lagarde made her statement on Tuesday night during a meeting with EU leaders. She stressed that the central bank cannot take sole action to keep the economy afloat, and that governments must also take action. "The hope is that this will lead to cooperation," said analyst Bas van Geffen of Rabobank.

Support

In the UK, the Bank of England cut interest rates by 0.5 percentage points on Wednesday, the same day that the new budget containing stimulus measures was presented. The ***EU*** announced an investment fund of EUR 25 billion on Tuesday evening.

A week earlier, the Federal Reserve, the system of American central banks, also cut interest rates by 0.5 percentage points. It is very unusual for central banks to cut interest rates outside their meetings.

"We first thought that the ECB was only going to cut interest rates and take some more time to set up other support measures. But after Lagarde's words and the steps of other central banks, that is no longer enough," Van Geffen said. His expectation is that the ECB will also come up with a credit facility on Wednesday, aimed at helping SMEs.

Analysts expect central banks to cut interest rates further in the coming months, especially as stock markets fall hard again. Economist Tiffany Wilding of bond investor Pimco even thinks the Fed will not wait until next Wednesday's rate meeting to announce another 50 basis point cut.

ECB seems to come to the rescue of SMEs with credit facility

**Classification**

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**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Central Banks (94%); Economic Conditions (62%); Monetary Policy (62%)

**Load-Date:** March 11, 2020

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[***Tillmans is a reporter of his time***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDF-2XV1-DYMH-R374-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CULTURAL SUPPLEMENT; Page 6

**Length:** 1114 words

**Byline:** Janneke Wesseling

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Exhibition The Brussels art centre Wiels is showing a big solo by artist Wolfgang Tillmans, with photos and video work from the past thirty years.

**FULL TEXT:**

Hedonism and political engagement are not contradictory, says Wolfgang Tillmans (Remscheid, 1968, lives in London and Berlin). This immediately articulates his artistic programme. Tillmans' oeuvre, which in addition to photographs also includes installations, video works and electronic music performances, has a strongly sensual quality. The digital photographs are printed with great attention to colour effects and depth in the black. They often show a detailed texture: micro shots of drops of sweat on skin, grains of sand, the bloody substance of a skinned pig's head, veins in a tree leaf. Or macro patterns of a starry night, the regular grid of sand hills in the Sahara, the waves of the sea.

The theme can also be called hedonistic, at least in part. From the very beginning of his artistic career, Tillmans set out to give visual expression to 'queer joy'. His first photo series is a series of portraits of himself, taken by others on the London underground in 1984. The 26-year-old Tillmans' eyes were heavily made up and his lips painted bright red, in imitation of Boy George, and he wore a futuristic headdress made of pink Perspex. A major source of inspiration was acid house parties, nightclubs, and the gay scenes of Berlin and London. Equally, queer joy can be found in friendship, eroticism and domesticity: hanging out in the living room, swimming in the sea, having a picnic in the park.

Tillmans asks himself how he can make meaningful images in a time in which we are overwhelmed by images: "What ideals of beauty, what sexual identity, do I show? What political power, what submission?"

In 2016, he launched an anti-Brexit campaign and became actively involved in the ***European*** elections. Tillmans considers Brexit a frontal assault on his life. He designed T-shirts and posters that could be downloaded for free from the internet, with slogans such as: 'What is lost is lost forever', 'Protect the ***European*** Union' and quotes from the English poet John Donne from 1624: 'No man is an island' and 'No country by itself'.

**Liquid world**

It is not easy to discover a stylistic coherence or a common thread in Tillmans' exhibitions. At first sight, they are random mishmashings of diverse subjects and formats, from A4 to four metres high. A core, a focus, seems to be missing. This is also how Tillmans means it: he shows a world that is fluid and always in motion.

What does come across clearly is that this world is seen through the lens of a camera. The works always raise the question of who is behind the camera and how these images were created. It is also clear that Tillmans' work is never about a single image, nor about individual people. The photographs acquire their meaning in relation to each other, within the whole directed by Tillmans. The people portrayed are shown in their connection with the surrounding reality.

This gives an exhibition by Tillmans the character of a story. Tillmans is a reporter of his time, who shows people, objects and spaces in a meaningful connection and thus sketches a picture of our globalised world. The strength of his exhibitions lies in the ensembles he creates.

He also did this convincingly in the Brussels art centre Wiels. The retrospective exhibition is not arranged chronologically but by theme, with rooms dedicated to, for example, portraits, to political-social subjects such as a Chinese leather factory in the Ethiopian desert, to still lifes and to abstract photographs of monochrome paper colour areas that have been folded or crumpled and then photographed again. Tillmans lures the visitor closer by the precise way in which the photos are hung and wall surfaces are used. A highlight is a room with a triple video projection of image fragments. These include a naked man's leg and two thick, tightly stretched cables that rub against each other to the rhythm of a soundtrack created by Tillmans. It is a meditative space, in which film images move while the camera work is completely static.

In fact, every exhibition is a mega-installation. The disadvantage of this working method is that when Tillmans' exhibition is not arranged by himself, little remains of the work. There is then no magic, no interaction between the individual pictures. An example is the presentation of Thomas Borgmann's collection at the Stedelijk Museum in 2017, where a large room was dedicated to Tillmans' work. Here, nothing happened, it was nothing more than a soulless presentation of gadgets of a collector. The question is, therefore, what will remain of Tillmans' work at all if he is not there (any more) to show it, if he cannot shape his view of reality. Presumably, only individual fragments will remain of what was once a coherent whole in the artist's imagination - which in itself is a fine metaphor for the fleetingness of the world as Tillmans shows it.

This does not alter the fact that Tillmans' 'queer gaze' is a convincing alternative to the 'male gaze' that dominated Western art for centuries. This was the gaze of the male as possessor that turned women into objects of lust, a gaze that saw the world in terms of an opposition of subject and object, a gaze that created distance between observer and what is observed. The art critic John Berger analysed the male gaze in 1972 in his famous BBC television series and book: *Ways of Seeing*.

Tillmans' queer gaze is the exact opposite of this. In his work, there is no outside view, no distinction between subject and object, no exclusion, no fixed or unambiguous identity. The roles change. Tillmans shows how we are part of the things we observe, and how we ourselves change through them. His work is a call to take responsibility for the other and for our environment, and with that it is deeply utopian.

In fact, every exhibition is a mega-installation

Photography

*Wolfgang Tillmans: Today is the First Day.* T/m 24/5 at Wiels, Centre for Contemporary Art, Van Volxemlaan 354, Brussels. Inl: wiels. org

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**Graphic**

Wolfgang Tillmans, 6407-35, 2007

Wolfgang Tillmans, Shaker Tree, 1995

Photographs Galerie Buchholz, Berlin/Cologne, Maureen Paley, London, David Zwirner, New York, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Wolfgang Tillmans, Kammerspiele, 2016

Wolfgang Tillmans, Freischwimmer 231, 2012

Wolfgang Tillmans, Adam bleached out, 1991

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Artists + Performers (75%)

**Industry:** Destinations + Attractions (94%); Museums + Galleries (69%); Entertainment + Arts (67%)

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[***Dutch approach is risky'; Is Dutch approach to Covid-19 too lax?***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YDF-2XV1-DYMH-R35T-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 928 words

**Byline:** Pim van den Dool

**Dateline:** The Hague

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Covid-19

Compared to other countries, the Dutch approach seems restrained. There is still a great deal of concern about possible economic damage.

**FULL TEXT:**

Is the Netherlands too lax? While other countries are taking "firm measures" against the coronavirus, the Netherlands "lags far behind", said PVV leader Geert Wilders Tuesday in the House of Representatives against Minister Bruno Bruins (Medical Care, VVD). A call to stop shaking hands - that's all the cabinet can do, said Wilders.

It is indeed striking: in Italy, Japan, Greece, Denmark and Poland, schools are closed. In many Asian countries, the temperature of air and train passengers is measured. Italy's neighbouring countries are closing their borders. Israel has asked all tourists to leave the country. The Netherlands does none of this, although it has more infections than many of those countries that have decided to take severe measures.

On Wednesday, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) reported that 503 patients have now tested positive. World Health Organisation WHO declared the outbreak a pandemic on Wednesday. It raises the question: why is the Netherlands so much more cautious, and is that wise? Bruins must answer that question on Thursday during a new parliamentary debate. Prime Minister Rutte called the Netherlands "a sober little country" this week. He warned for "symbolic measures" that will not stop the outbreak, but could harm the economy.

On Tuesday, it was decided to take harsher measures in North Brabant, but without locking up the province. "We also have to keep the economy going, let people do their shopping", Jack Mikkers, mayor of Den Bosch, explained on TV.

As far as virus control is concerned, the cabinet leans on RIVM recommendations. A lot of emphasis is put on the personal responsibility of the population: no handshaking, working at home if possible. And where the crisis approach in other countries - France, Italy, Poland - is highly centralised, in the Netherlands much of the responsibility lies with local authorities; the measures for North Brabant were presented on Tuesday not in The Hague, but in Den Bosch. How effective is the Dutch 'horizontal' consultation culture in times of crisis?

**Black scenario**

The risk of the Dutch approach is "that you lag behind with the policy", says professor of medical microbiology Louis Kroes of Leiden University Medical Centre. He has "no overstrained expectations" of the appeal that is made to the population of Brabant to adjust their behaviour. We are constantly trying to control an epidemic that is already one step ahead.

The RIVM policy so far also assumes that people are only infectious and can pass on the coronavirus if they have complaints such as coughing and fever. We have relied on recognising complaints and isolating patients," says Kroes. But according to him, indications are growing that people can sometimes be infectious even without complaints. That would require a different approach. According to Kroes, it shows how incredibly difficult this situation is for policymakers. How can you make good policy if you don't have a clear picture of the characteristics of the virus?

All of ***Europe*** is looking at Italy with alarm, where hospitals are collapsing under the sudden surge in patients - exactly the black scenario everyone wants to avoid. Italian virologist Robert Burioni warns in an interview with *NRC* against underestimating Covid-19. ,,Politicians were sometimes wrong to reassure and trivialise. It is important to make it clear immediately that we are facing a very serious threat. This is an extremely dangerous enemy."

Despite the course of the outbreak in Italy, Burioni says that "strict measures are helping". From the development of the virus in his country, he deduces that sealing off small areas in the north "has proved very effective". For example, in Codogno, the epicentre of the 'red zone' around Milan, no new people tested positive on Tuesday.

**A 'small sacrifice': stay at home**

Professor Louis Kroes thinks that sealing off North Brabant can help. It's drastic, but if you don't let people come into contact with each other, you can be sure that you limit the spread. In Wuhan, peace returned as a result."

Yet he also understands that administrators do not go for this just like that. Such a measure is an enormous burden and does damage to many people and companies. Yet, if possible, you can prevent more damage. Where that tipping point lies is very difficult."

His Italian colleague Burioni has a piece of advice for the Netherlands: "I recommend that everyone makes a small sacrifice and stays at home for a few weeks. That will help to control this epidemic."

With the assistance of Marc Leijendekker.

*The outbreak of the coronavirus causing Covid-19 is a pandemic. That is what Director-General of the World Health Organisation* Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus announced on Wednesday. Tedros said that the WHO is not only seriously concerned about the spread of the virus, but also about the way in which various countries are dealing with it. He spoke of "alarming levels of passivity". Michael Ryan, head of the health crisis team at WHO, said that Iran and Italy are currently in the front line of the virus. He emphasised that other countries will very soon be facing outbreaks of a similar magnitude.

**Notes**

With the assistance of Marc Leijendekker.

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[***The respirator has become a mass product; Healthcare***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4HP-00000-00&context=) [***Breathing machines are in short supply. Nationalising production is counterproductive***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4HP-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 1

**Length:** 1098 words

**Byline:** Marc Hijink

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Healthcare

Because of the pandemic, respirators are in short supply. The United States and some ***European*** countries considered nationalising the production of this medical equipment, but export restrictions are counterproductive.

**FULL TEXT:**

They are life-savers, the breathing machines that give weakened patients with Covid-19 some extra time to fight the virus on their own. But respirators are in short supply: the outbreak of the coronavirus has made such machines suddenly necessary all over the world.

In a crisis situation like this, an old reflex of governments surfaces: nationalise production. The United States reintroduced the Defense Production Act. This war law from 1950, from the time of the Korea war, gives the option to force companies to produce only or mainly for their own country.

In ***Europe,*** too, there have been calls for the production of respirators for national use to be promoted. However, it seems to have dawned on them that restrictions on the export of these complex devices are in fact hampering their production. Nationalisation creates bad blood in other countries, and that is dangerous in the case of respirators: the devices rely on a global network of suppliers. Production was already disrupted by the coronavirus in Asia and is under high stress.

In ***Europe***, ventilation equipment for intensive care units is a replacement market - about a thousand machines are delivered to hospitals every year. In Russia and China, where healthcare is growing faster, tens of thousands of machines are sold each year.

These are modest numbers compared to the hundreds of thousands of patients worldwide infected with the coronavirus, some of whom may end up in hospital at short notice. The respirator suddenly turns from a niche product into a mass product. The price remains steep: ICU-grade respirators cost between ***EUR*** 15,000 and 20,000, while 'mainstream' devices cost between ***EUR*** 10,000 and 15,000.

**Philips is no longer concerned**

Despite cries for help from the governor of New York, who is desperate for respirators, the US does not seem to be planning to apply the law of war to Philips. The Dutch company produces respiration equipment in two factories, in Pennsylvania and California, and was still afraid of requisitioning at the beginning of this week. Meanwhile, that fear has been dispelled, says a spokesman. How exactly, he does not want to say.

For the time being, the American government is convinced that an easy supply of goods is necessary; 60 per cent of the components - chips, screens, sensors and wiring, for example - come from outside the US. The most advanced respiratory systems are not made in America - in that area, the US remains dependent on imports anyway.

Philips wants to quadruple its production capacity and is looking for extra staff for its American locations. The biggest bottleneck is the supply of parts. The biggest bottleneck is the supply of components. That factory would have to cease production due to a lockdown, until Philips alerted the local government.

The tech group is one of the top three manufacturers of respiratory equipment. Other manufacturers include Dräger, a German family business, Medtronic, GE and Mindray from China. They are all trying to increase production.

Alternatives are being sought in a hurry: in Italy, the army is helping with the production of respirators and the UK is bringing in Dyson (of the hoovers). Car manufacturers GM, Ford and Fiat offer to make medical equipment, including respirators. However, it is expected that they too will face a shortage of parts.

In Italy, mouth masks are produced from snorkels with an oxygen hose and a component from a 3D printer. Well-intentioned, but this solution is not suitable for very weak patients.

**Inundated with requests**

Everyone has to improvise. In normal times, the Dutch company Demcon-macawi makes 'core modules', the technical heart of respiratory equipment. Since last week, this company has been inundated with requests from all over the world.

Demcon-Macawi is now trying to set up a production line for fully-fledged breathing machines. It concerns 'primitive' devices, which work well but still have an improvised housing," says technical director Geert van Dijk: "A pump with a laptop on top." This weekend, the first prototypes will be tested at Erasmus MC, because the intention is to deliver 500 of the 2,000 machines that the Ministry of Health urgently needs.

If production can be scaled up from a few dozen to several hundred units per week, Demcon-macawi hopes to supply foreign customers as well. The company is careful with forecasts, to avoid disappointment.

It is difficult to scale up all parts of the production chain at the same time, says Van Dijk. Suppliers are located in Rotterdam and Dordrecht, but they are dependent on products from abroad: for example, magnets for the motor in the pump are made in China. Plastic hoses also come from China. These seemed to be scarce for a while, but fortunately a Dutch producer has now been found.

According to Van Dijk, suppliers are not yet charging exorbitant prices. Demcon-Macawi did start producing one specific valve itself, because a Taiwanese supplier was unable to deliver for several weeks. You can't wait for that if the demand is that urgent.

**Mouthguards 600 per cent more expensive**

The pandemic has dramatically increased the prices of medical goods, writes a US Congressional committee of enquiry. Mouth masks have become 600 per cent more expensive, protective clothing has doubled in price.

Congress wants to be able to temporarily suspend import tariffs instituted by Trump in order not to push up prices even further.

Last week, the Netherlands already abandoned a plan to requisition protective equipment on the basis of a Requisition Act: sellers and suppliers are deterred by this". Germany did impose such an export restriction on protective equipment, but has abolished it.

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the ***European*** Commission, urged the continued sharing of medical supplies within the ***European Union***. In the meantime, a new law has been enacted restricting exports of protective equipment - mouthguards and goggles - to countries outside the ***EU***.

**Graphic**

A breathing machine from Philips. Philips is one of the top three manufacturers of respiratory equipment and wants to quadruple its production capacity.

Photo Robin van Lonkhuijsen/ANP

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** COVID-19 Coronavirus (94%); Epidemics (80%); Infectious Disease (73%); Supply Chain Management (70%)

**Industry:** Manufacturing (83%)

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[***Criminal surfaces on corona crisis***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2HP-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 01

**Length:** 162 words

**Byline:** Mick van Wely

**Body**

Disturbing ***Europol report*** sounds alarm bell for police and judiciary

by Mick van Wely

AMSTERDAM - The corona crisis is having an enormous impact on crime and organised crime. Criminal groups are adapting their methods at lightning speed and are taking advantage of the crisis. The 'corona crime' is mainly seen in cybercrime, trade in counterfeit goods and fraud.

This disturbing conclusion is contained in a confidential report by the ***European*** Police ***Office, Europol***, in which experts examine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on organised crime. ***Europol*** speaks of the biggest crisis in the history of the ***European Union***.

The alarming report is a downright alarm bell for the police, the judiciary and governments not to be lulled into a false sense of security by an apparent decrease in crime due to so-called 'lockdowns' and slowed-down societies. Jan Struijs, chairman of the Dutch Police Federation, endorses the concerns.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Crime, Law Enforcement + Corrections (94%); Organized Crime (88%); Justice Departments (83%); Police Forces (76%); Law Enforcement (71%); Criminal Offenses (64%); Cybercrime (62%)

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[***CDA, do not engage withForum***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4G3-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION; Page 18

**Length:** 991 words

**Byline:** Jack Biskop  
  
Guus Mulders  
  
Frits Horvers  
  
Dave Ensberg-Kleijkers

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Via video chats, the finishing touches are being put on a provincial government with CDA and FVD in Brabant. But their party should block this on a national level, four CDA members think.

**FULL TEXT:**

In June 2019, VVD, CDA, D66, GroenLinks and PvdA proudly presented in Den Bosch the provincial administrative agreement 2019-2023 Kiezen voor kwaliteit: voor de Brabanders van nu en van de toekomst. One month later, these five parties made additional agreements with each other about cattle farming. Part of this is the approach to nitrogen emissions. Less than half a year later, the Brabant CDA party withdrew from the coalition, because it "could no longer support the Brabant Nitrogen Action Plan and the accompanying cattle farming policy". Precisely, the policy that the party itself had signed up to earlier. In the intervening months, angry farmers from Brabant have successfully put the CDA under pressure.

In fact, politicians experienced intimidation and felt threatened by the Farmers Defence Force (FDF). The two CDA deputies wanted to stick to the administrative agreement and the additional agreements on livestock farming and resigned. The ties between the militant FDF and Forum for Democracy (FVD) are well known. It is precisely with this party that the CDA Brabant now wants to form a provincial council. A bizarre political phenomenon seems to be taking place. We therefore say: don't do it!

While CDA Brabant is still 99 per cent behind the 2019 administrative agreement in terms of content, it only wants to cooperate with the party that intimidated CDA politicians via FDF because of the nitrogen policy. Brabant must be governed' and 'We cannot let our farmers' supporters down' are the most common arguments.

But even without forming a coalition with Forum for Democracy, Brabant can be governed and farmers can be well served. And that is also possible without causing an unwanted internal discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of that cooperation. After all, which Brabant CDA member opposed cooperation with, for example, D66 or GroenLinks in 2019? Exactly: none.

For weeks now, party members have been discussing, both before and behind the scenes, how to cooperate with Forum for Democracy. The constant stream of debatable and rabid statements by Forum leader Thierry Baudet are not helping. Certainly not by constantly attacking the cabinet, including the CDA, for its approach to the coronavirus.

Brabant is corona-hotspot number 1 in the Netherlands and the government is working very hard for the safety and health of all Brabanders. However, this is openly doubted by the Forum leader and it is precisely with this troublemaking club that CDA Brabant now wants to form a coalition. While CDA Brabant cannot get its own unrest under control, the national CDA keeps remarkably quiet. So-called because of the idea of 'subsidiarity': CDA Brabant must decide for itself with whom it will form a coalition.

But the concept of subsidiarity can also be interpreted differently. For example, the ***European Union*** as a community of values is also built on the principle of subsidiarity. At the same time, it is unthinkable that the ***European*** Commission and the ***European*** Parliament should look away when a Member State rides roughshod over these shared values. The current impasse and lack of leadership are harming the CDA.

We think that it is not necessary for CDA Brabant to form a coalition with Forum voor Democratie; let Brabant be governed by a coalition without Forum voor Democratie, with the mediation of prominent party members.

And let's make it clear at the national level that cooperation with Forum for Democracy is undesirable. Undesirable because of its ties with a militant group that threatens our own politicians. Undesirable because Forum repeatedly tears down the foundations of our democratic constitutional state. It is undesirable because Forum for Democracy repeatedly and openly flirts with ideas and theories that we consider to be extreme right-wing and poisonous and diametrically opposed to our Christian-Democratic principles. We do not bow to the left, we do not bow to the right and we certainly do not bow to the extreme right and militant groups that damage the good image of our farmers.

We are a broad popular party in the centre of society and in the middle of the political spectrum. A party that connects left and right on the basis of vision and conviction. A party that wants to actively support farmers in the inevitable transition of the agricultural sector based on our view of 'stewardship' and in the interest of a sustainable world for our children and grandchildren.

We take our responsibility for this transition in a balanced way with respect for farmers and their interests. But continuing to postpone what is inevitable is an insult to farmers and unworthy of the CDA.

In short, against this background, we call on the national party leadership to take its responsibility. Brabant is part of the Netherlands and a crucial province for the CDA. Watching passively while an unnecessary political drama unfolds should be a thing of the past. We don't want any unnecessary fuss within the party about cooperation with Forum for Democracy. Certainly not after our experiences with the PVV in 2010. We could do without that like a toothache. We want the CDA to use its own strengths to contribute to powerful government at provincial and national level. And we see plenty of opportunities to win the national elections in 2021. But then we must dare to intervene now in Brabant and be crystal clear from a national point of view about cooperation with Forum for Democracy: we will not do that.

Jack Biskop, former Member of the Lower House (CDA)

Guus Mulders, political group chairman CDA Oisterwijk and former member of the provincial executive CDA Brabant

Frits Horvers, former alderman CDA Tilburg

Dave Ensberg-Kleijkers, former member of the CDA Brabant Executive Committee

**Graphic**

Photo Istock

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**Subject:** Political Parties (82%); Politics (75%); Agricultural Commodities Markets (63%); Communities + Neighborhoods (62%); Verdicts (61%)

**Industry:** Agriculture (94%); Farmers + Ranchers (78%); Animal Farming + Breeding (64%); Cattle Ranching + Farming (64%)

**Load-Date:** March 27, 2020

**End of Document**

[***A new crisis with old reproaches ; European summit***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4F0-00000-00&context=) [***Solidarity in corona stranded for the time being***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4F0-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 928 words

**Byline:** Clara van de Wiel

**Dateline from** Brussels

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

***European*** Summit

All the ugly traits of ***European*** politics are coming to the surface again because of the corona crisis. Traumas from the ***euro crisis*** are resurfacing.

**FULL TEXT:**

The health crisis is not only putting the health sector under severe pressure; ***European*** solidarity is also showing cracks. All the ugly traits that ***European*** politics has displayed in recent years have painfully surfaced again in recent weeks: blocking joint decisions, refusing aid and making moral reproaches. Just like during the credit crisis and the subsequent ***euro crisis***. On Thursday, the heads of government discussed a joint response in a video conference. But the fact that the most difficult point, the possible use of the ***EU emergency fund***, was pushed forward, shows mainly dissension.

The debate is about whether a stronger ***European*** support policy is necessary. Many economists argue that a crisis of this magnitude can only be fought with ***European*** instruments. Most member states want to quickly deploy the ***European*** Stability Mechanism (ESM), which was created during the crisis, in order to have more financial leeway.

But the Netherlands thinks it is too soon for that - and does not hesitate to lecture countries about their financial policies in the meantime. Familiar arguments about rewarding profligate governments and the importance of "prudent fiscal policy" resound.

It brings to mind the crisis that began in 2008 and also exposed deep fault lines between the 'budget hawks' in the north and the 'fiscally flexible' in southern Europe. These parallels are not self-evident. If there is one characteristic of the corona crisis, it is that the virus crosses borders and flattens the economies of all member states in a similar way. Whereas the debt crisis was an asymmetric shock that mainly affected southern Europe, the corona blow is relatively evenly distributed across the continent. Moreover, it is a crisis that is likely to outstrip the previous one in terms of impact. Moreover, the more hostile geopolitical context makes ***Europe***'s failure even more dangerous.

A symmetrical, external shock

Precisely for that reason, a group of member states argues, this is the moment to speed up new ***European*** instruments. This is a "symmetrical, external shock, for which no country is to blame, but whose negative consequences are felt by all", government leaders of nine member states, including French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, wrote on Wednesday in a plea for the issuance of joint ***European*** debt securities. It is precisely now that the stronger arms must lift up their weaker brothers. If ***Europe*** cannot do it now, when will it be able to?

But the parallel way in which the corona crisis affects all Member States is, according to the Netherlands, a reason to let the response be national first and foremost. Let us all do what is necessary for our own economy, emphasises The Hague. And: let everyone empty their own pockets first, always noting that their own pockets are 'very deep'.

It leads to growing irritation, resistance and disbelief among other Member States. Especially the request by the Netherlands this week to first have another look at why certain countries have less in their war chests, has created bad blood. All the more so because, in doing so, it implicitly points the finger at the countries that are now claiming the most victims: Spain and Italy. The Netherlands is not alone in its reticence: Germany and Austria are no fans either. But the Dutch harsh tone arouses fierce emotions in other countries.

If a country wants to claim emergency funds, as Minister Wopke Hoekstra (Finance, CDA) emphasised several times this week, the obligation to carry out economic reforms will be attached. It works like a red rag on a bull for countries that fear being forced to make cuts. Traumas from the ***euro crisis*** are back in play. After the video conference on Thursday, Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa called the Netherlands' attitude "disgusting".

Thus, the strong, united reaction that economists now believe is needed to deal with an economic crisis is hampered by old sores and new reproaches. Meanwhile, in Italy in particular, the feeling of being abandoned by the rest of ***Europe*** has grown in recent weeks. That feeling was already reinforced by the decision of Germany and France to stop the export of mouthguards. The ***European*** Commission had to exert pressure to get the flow of goods going again.

**Propaganda war**

In a speech in the ***European*** Parliament on Thursday, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen strongly criticised the "me first" reaction of member states. At a time when ***Europe*** really needed to prove it was not a 'fair-weather union', too many refused to share their umbrella."

Meanwhile, fears about the geopolitical consequences of the crisis seem to be growing, especially in Germany. The fact that China, Russia and Cuba came to Italy's aid last week with much fanfare caused discomfort in Berlin, and a communication offensive was launched to make it clear that Germany really does support Italy: by sending mouth masks and taking in patients. For the time being, however, it is mainly the propaganda war that Germany does not want to lose. It seems unlikely that Germany will change its mind and allow more financial solidarity.

If the strong brothers do not lift up the weak now, when will they?

**Classification**

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[***Then let us get help from the Russians; European solidarity***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHM-MGD1-DYMH-R4FM-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** IN THE NEWS; Page 8

**Length:** 1016 words

**Byline:** Marc Leijendekker

**Dateline:** Rome

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Italy

Rome demands more solidarity from ***Europe***. Former Prime Minister Monti: If Covid-19 increases the deficit, it is not our fault.

**FULL TEXT:**

From Russia with love, says the Russian army truck driving through the streets of Bergamo in northern Italy, carrying eight medical teams. Forty kilometres south, in Crema, the leader of a group of 37 Cuban doctors says: "We will stay as long as necessary, we have come to help Italy."

In Italy's state of emergency due to the coronavirus, all help is welcome. A group of doctors from China (who have since left again) and Cuba, fifteen Russian aircraft with 150 people and a lot of equipment: it is all widely reported in the Italian media. With the undertone: in times of need, you get to know your friends.

And ***Europe***? There are reports of German hospitals taking over a dozen corona patients from northern Italy. Austria also joins in, with five Covid-19 patients from the German-speaking Italian province of Alto Adige in South Tyrol going to hospitals in Linz and Innsbruck.

The telephone call from French President Macron and the handwritten letter from German President Steinmeier are also welcome signs of sympathy. But that verbal empathy in Berlin and Paris is completely overshadowed by the feeling that ***Europe*** is letting Italy down now that it matters. Where Italy asked for unity and speed, Thursday's video summit brought division and delay. Ugly ***Europe***', headlines La Repubblica.

**Netherlands v Spaghetti Boys**

Mario Draghi's call in the Financial Times on Thursday for "a different mindset" in the face of "a human tragedy of possibly biblical proportions" has not changed Berlin and The Hague's minds, is the analysis in Italy. On Wednesday night, Repubblica commentator Massimo Giannini, centre-left and pro-European, said on TV that the Netherlands is the leader in a campaign against Italy, just like in the 1990s when Italy wanted to join the ***eurozone***. "Do we still think we can act with the rules from normal times, from before the pandemic explosion?", Giannini wondered. "If ***Europe*** wants to continue to exist, these rules have to be thrown out." The lesson of the Greek crisis, he said, is that sticking to strict conditions for financial aid leads to social disaster. But, he wrote Friday morning, "the guardians of Lutheran rigour will not give up the idea of teaching the 'Spaghetti Boys' a lesson."

Prime Minister Conte said in the Chamber on Wednesday that an exceptional emergency situation calls for "exceptional measures and actions that assure ***European*** citizens and also the financial markets that a united ***Europe intends to*** do everything that is necessary." Should the deployment of ***eurobonds*** and use of the ***European*** Stability Mechanism (ESM) wait until the situation is clearer? "Even joint responses that come too late will be completely useless."

The right-wing opposition, in polls at almost half the votes, is tambouring against ***Europe***. Giorgia Meloni, leader of the growing right-wing nationalist party Fratelli d'Italia, said Wednesday: ,,Let's tell each other the truth. The ***Europe*** we dreamed of does not exist, that of civilisation, of solidarity [...] What we have seen is the ***Europe*** of selfishness, of the interests of the few at the expense of the rights of the many, the ***Europe*** that is waiting for the earthquake to hit us to dig into our ruins and make off with the silver." By the silver, she means well-run businesses.

Brussels will only take action if Germany and France have problems, Meloni outlined. Matteo Salvini, with his right-wing nationalist party Lega the largest in the polls with over 30 per cent, is going even harder. Putting conditions on the use of the ESM means borrowing money, paying interest before we have to pay it back, and also raising our retirement age and closing hospitals, he said on Facebook on Wednesday. And Thursday morning for Radio Anch'io: ,,Remain a member of ***Europe***, yes, but really, and not to get slaps and ear slaps. What has ***Europe*** done for Italy in this state of emergency? Staying in it like this doesn't seem useful to me."

**Morally culpable**

An implicit argument for agreeing to ***Eurobonds*** is that otherwise the populist and ***Eurosceptic*** Salvini would have an even better chance of becoming prime minister in the near future. Former prime minister and former euro commissioner Mario Monti rejects the 'moral hazard' argument that Italy is responsible for the risk of a huge budget deficit that limits room for manoeuvre. Italy "is now in a position of moral high ground and not moral hazard", he wrote in the Corriere della Sera. ,,The coronavirus has arrived in Italy much faster and more severely than in other ***European*** countries. We do not know why, but it is certainly not Italy's fault. [...] This time it is not a morally culpable shortcoming, as is usually the case in the sky-blue eyes of the people of the North."

The ***Europe*** we dreamed of does not exist

Giorgia Meloni, right-wing politician

**Spain sends tests back to China**

In Spain, a great deal of commotion has been caused after 340 000 Chinese test devices that are supposed to detect Covid-19 infection within 15 minutes were found to be substandard. They are said to have a reliability of 30 per cent, whereas it should be more than 80 per cent. According to the Spanish newspaper El País, the Chinese embassy in Spain has stated that the devices were made by a company without an official licence.

According to the Spanish authorities, 9 000 test devices have arrived so far, and they have allegedly been returned as unusable. The amount of money involved was not disclosed. Earlier, Spain announced that it had bought ***EUR*** 432 million worth of medical supplies from Chinese companies.

**Graphic**

Russian soldiers load medical equipment onto a cargo plane bound for Italy.

Photo Russian Defence Ministry / Alexey Ereshko/Reuters

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**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** COVID-19 Coronavirus (94%); Disaster + Emergency Relief (80%); Epidemics (76%); Infectious Disease (76%); ***European*** Union (70%); Economic Crisis (69%); Monetary Unions (69%); Viruses (69%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (63%); International Relations (61%)

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[***Letters***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2PJ-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** WATU-SAY; Page 16

**Length:** 1112 words

**Body**

RIVM

My compliments to Mr Jaap van Dissel of the RIVM for the way he discusses the corona crisis. Good and honest answers!

Renske van Reeken

Hacking

As far as I am concerned, the lunatics who hack into the ICT departments of hospitals in Spain deserve sentences that fit the profile of attempted murder. If you risk the lives of others, you must also be able to take the punishment yourself.

Hage Postema, Nunspeet

Dilemmas

When the full capacity of the ICU wards in hospitals is used, not every patient with the coronavirus can be treated. Doctors will then have to choose who is eligible for treatment and who is not. These are diabolical dilemmas, and I wish doctors all the wisdom they need.

Lex Dobber

***EU***

The ***European*** Commission is finally making its voice heard in the corona crisis, proposing to share ***Europeans***' telephone data so that it can be seen how the virus is spreading. I do not think it is a good idea to share data because then Brussels will have even more influence. Let the ***EU*** rather invest money in health care, which is desperately needed now.

E. Strobos

Double isolation

People with severe hearing loss cannot telephone their families and are isolated. Unfortunately, regional TV news has not provided subtitles for years. In Purmerend, Mayor Don Bijl gave a speech via TV Noord-Holland about the situation in Purmerend. No idea what he had to say. Next time, please with subtitles.

I. Valk, Purmerend

Work at home

Working from home has one big advantage - there are fewer accidents on the road. Insurance premiums could therefore be reduced. But I suppose that's oversimplifying things.

Rien Bos,

Velserbroek

Cyclists

I am 68 years old and together with my wife I cycled 25 kilometres in the Alblasserwaard. We kept 150 cm of distance and rode one behind the other when necessary. Then it turned out that cyclists kept coming between us and oncoming traffic. If I had kept a 150 cm stick next to me, I would have knocked off at least 15 cyclists on the 25 km distance who came too close to me. Can't the KNWU do something to make clear to cyclists that we, the elderly, also have the right to a bike ride without violating the 150 cm distance?

Jan de Vos,

Hardinxveld-Giessendam

Asparagus

Given the circumstances, it is a bad idea to employ Polish workers en masse to harvest asparagus and other crops. Schoolchildren will soon be sitting at home, not having to sit their final exams, and will then be hanging out on the sofa or in the park. The young people could make an important contribution to various harvesting activities and earn a decent buck this way.

J. Werkhoven

Diploma

No central written final examination for secondary school students. All those graduates may be judged on this later, as their curriculum vitae states that they obtained their diploma in 2020. The future employer will then think that the diploma was a 'gift'.

Emmy Pos

Support

Strong intervention in a crisis may be necessary. This may mean that some entrepreneurs will need financial support at some point. However, if a somewhat longer-established company with a well-functioning economy says it cannot do without support within a week, then something seems wrong with the business model. The usefulness of the support must then be questioned.

R.M. Duijne,

Almere

Roche

Too much dependence of Dutch laboratories on the Swiss pharmaceutical company Roche is the reason why the Netherlands cannot test for the coronavirus on a large scale. Only money matters to the pharmaceutical company. This is literally being abused at the expense of human lives.

C. Maertzdorf

Penalty

You should already be ashamed of yourself if you had the idea in 'peacetime' of insulting and threatening policemen and other emergency workers, in this period of corona such behaviour is absolutely ridiculous. You stay away from policemen, especially now. They keep society running along with other vital professions and deserve respect. It is understandable that suspects who threaten officers with the coronavirus can expect a higher penalty.

Richard van der Weide

Young people

Beautiful weather, no school, out with friends, chilling out at the local skate park. Young people on top of each other without realising that there is a deadly virus circulating for their parents and grandparents. When the neighbourhood policemen speak to them about it, they react with surprise and start a discussion. Admonished by local residents, they reluctantly and grumpily move to another spot. Nowadays, they live in their own digital world, they don't watch TV, listen to the radio or read newspapers, and as a result they don't realise that they could be one of the biggest spreaders of the coronavirus.

Piet Vesseur, Wassenaar

Markets

Markets remain open as part of the food chain. What nonsense, all supermarkets are open. Close all the markets in the Netherlands. Surely it is appalling that visitors to markets who do not keep enough distance can contaminate each other and thereby infect others. Anything we can do now to prevent this must be done as quickly as possible.

W. Jans, Utrecht

Polluters

Because a large part of the economy is now at a standstill during the corona crisis, air quality increases significantly and we can see who the real polluters are! And they are not the citizens, because they just keep on cooking and heating.

Suzanne Hakse

Public

One of the options of the KNVB to finish the premier league season after all is to play football without an audience. A bizarre option, because a match in front of empty stands has something very sinister. Every scream echoes in an infinite void and after a goal, the beautiful release between fans and players is absent. Football is emotion and it only thrives in matches with an audience, so the interaction between all those present is expressed: shouting, cheering, cursing, weakly chatting and above all having fun. For a football player and supporter, there is no worse punishment than a match without an audience.

Bas Overmars,

Amsterdam

Miss-harvest

As a famine survivor, I am apprehensive about the risk of crop failure. And my fears surfaced in recent weeks when farmers could not go into the fields because it was too soggy as a result of months of rain. But luckily, just in time, the wind turned to the east, so the seed potatoes can be planted again and the wheat can be sown. The cows can go out to pasture again. Yet a ray of hope in these gloomy times.

Piet Kremer

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[***Rutte says no to bonds, Italy angry***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2JF-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 06

**Length:** 103 words

**Byline:** Ruud Mikkers

**Body**

Two weeks reflection period

by Ruud Mikkers

BRUSSELS - The Netherlands says no to coronabonds. Despite heavy pressure, Prime Minister Rutte did not agree at an ***EU summit*** Thursday night to a package of far-reaching support measures for southern European countries hit by the corona crisis.

The ***EU*** has set aside an extra two weeks to come up with measures. But joint debt paper (***eurobonds***) will not do. "Prime Minister Rutte said: "We have realised that this is not possible. The Netherlands is certainly not alone in its resistance, said the Prime Minister.

Italian Prime Minister Conte was furious.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Disaster + Emergency Relief (94%); ***European*** Union (92%); Monetary Unions (88%); COVID-19 Coronavirus (82%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (82%); International Relations (76%); Economic Policy (74%); Economic Conditions (71%); Economic Crisis (71%)

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[***Parasitising fear***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2HS-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 02

**Length:** 782 words

**Body**

The focus on public order and safety and extra support for care institutions will come at the expense of investigative capacity, according to ***Europol***. Although criminal groups are now also facing logistical problems and disrupted business models due to an increase in border controls and a more limited market, they are adapting quickly and seeing new opportunities.

***Europol*** describes current developments leading to an increase in organised crime and terrorism or extremism. There is a huge need for specific goods, protective clothing and medicines. People's mobility is significantly reduced and they rely on digital solutions; and because people are less visible, so is crime. Fear from the pandemic is a breeding ground for terrorist and extremist movements.

Although the effect of corona will only manifest itself in the longer term, ***Europol is already*** seeing all kinds of new forms of crime. One example is this week's Mouthguard scam. A duo from Dordrecht is suspected of trying to swindle hospitals out of tens of millions of euros. They offered a batch of mouth caps and asked for a deposit, but would never deliver.

Cyber attacks

Cybercriminals are taking advantage of mass homeworking and increased online activity. They exploit people's need for information and goods. The number of cyber attacks on individuals and institutions such as hospitals is rising rapidly and will only increase. If they do not pay a ransom, systems are crippled. This could cost the lives of already vulnerable institutions.

On the "dark web", a kind of half-hidden marketplace, especially for weapons and drugs, the prices of prohibited goods can be seen to be rising rapidly. Cybercriminals set up websites or send e-mails pretending to provide information about the crisis. Readers unsuspectingly install "spyware" that, for example, steals bank information.

***Europol*** also warns against fraud. For example, people are phoned up and told that they have to undergo compulsory medical tests, for which they have to pay. Here, too, criminals ruthlessly parasitise society's fears.

In just a few weeks, crime groups have already succeeded in producing fake goods related to corona. It has become a real industry. For example, the 'corona home test kit' is a hit. One hundred types of non-certified mouthguards and respirators have been offered on Amazon alone. Use can be life-threatening.

***Europol*** and Interpol operations against coronas have already taken place. Thirty-seven groups involved in the sale of fake goods and illegal drugs have been dismantled. Almost five million products have been seized worldwide.

As far as drug trafficking is concerned, there seems to be good news. ***Europol*** has signals that due to a shrinking market as a result of the lockdown and logistical problems, drug organisations are having difficulty gathering raw materials for the production of drugs. The limited sales have resulted in large stocks of, for example, cocaine.

Human trafficking

Human traffickers also profit from the crisis. All kinds of government measures, such as border controls, make human smuggling much more difficult and therefore much more lucrative. ***Europol*** fears that the mass closure of brothels will cause illegal prostitution to flourish. Prostitution is hidden from public view and sex workers are therefore easy prey for traffickers and exploitation. President Jan Struijs of the Dutch Police Federation (NPB) endorses ***Europol***'s concerns. It is precisely the tackling of organised crime that has been neglected over the past decade. The focus was on tackling 'quick crime', such as burglaries, thefts and street robberies.

"It is fascinating to see how criminal groups have adapted at lightning speed, for example in the production of fake medicines and the trade in these products," says Struijs. "Although I don't feel that the approach to regular organised crime is flat, the crisis does have its effect. The work is a little more complex for the criminal investigation teams because of all the measures that have been taken to prevent the spread of the virus. We have to stay alert to organised crime, because it does not stop. ***Europol*** advises police forces in the Netherlands and the rest of ***Europe*** to exchange information and experience with each other and to keep the public well informed.

***Europol*** sees

all kinds of new forms of

crime

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Crime, Law Enforcement + Corrections (94%); Organized Crime (94%); Justice Departments (75%); Human Rights Violations (69%); Drug Trafficking (64%); Law Enforcement (63%); Criminal Offenses (62%); Illegal Drugs (62%)

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[***Elections soon to be dominated by the economy***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YHK-5FH1-JCBS-P2J1-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 04

**Length:** 611 words

**Byline:** Wouter de Winther

**Body**

Corona crisis also turns agenda of political parties completely upside down

by Wouter de Winther

The Hague - The pitch-black economic forecast caused by the corona crisis is turning everything upside down for politicians in The Hague as well. Not only must an emergency package be put in place as a matter of urgency to alleviate the worst of the suffering, but parties must also change their agenda. After all, elections are coming up in a year. The economic tailwind has suddenly disappeared. Will the spectre of austerity return?

Prime Minister Mark Rutte knew it for sure. On 21 December, he posed on the front page of this newspaper with an important message: 2020 would be about migration. "The countries at the external borders must make a distinction between genuine asylum seekers and economic migrants who have no business in ***Europe***," the prime minister warned. "If that doesn't happen, you can't continue with Schengen. ”

Meanwhile, many Schengen borders have been closed, not to keep out economic migrants, but to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The migration issue is not completely out of the picture. The Cabinet is already very concerned about what is happening in countries that do not have the care that we are used to. A catastrophe awaits the Third World, which will have repercussions on ***Europe*** one way or another.

Recession

At the moment, of course, most political attention is focused on the health and well-being of the Dutch. At the same time, the cabinet is considering the economic consequences of the coronary crisis; a recession is inevitable.

Because of the trend-based budget policy agreed by the coalition at the start of Rutte-III, there is no need to make immediate cuts to save the treasury in the event of an economic downturn. In addition, a number of support measures fall outside the budget rules, although the national debt will, of course, increase as a result of the money spent.

Enquiries in government circles and in the House of Representatives indicate that The Hague is not currently engaged in a possible austerity offensive to compensate for the massive amount of money spent. It is pointed out that in three of its four recession scenarios, the Central Planning Bureau expects growth to resume next year. Some hope can be drawn from this.

If the crisis lasts longer or gets worse, this may change. In any case, it will have repercussions on the 2021 elections. In the coming months, the election programmes will be written, in which parties will set out their agendas for the next four years.

Arms

Remarkably, a whole package of measures that could arm the Netherlands against a new crisis has just come off this week. D66 asked for these official reconsiderations in the autumn of 2018, just in case things went wrong again.

"I want to keep an open mind as to exactly when to publish them," Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra told the House of Representatives on Wednesday. Because not only were the options mapped out before the corona crisis erupted, some of the proposals may well appear extremely undesirable at this point in time.

For example, The Hague has known for years that social security and care take up an enormous amount of the national budget. Most parties see that this is not tenable, for example, because enough money must also be left over for teachers, police officers and defence.

But in a coronary crisis, to propose cuts in social security or health care is political suicide. Under the present circumstances, parties will want to stay away from that for as long as possible.

Topic

migration

not yet

out of the picture

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**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

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[***Especially the Dutch stubbornness lingers***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13TD-00000-00&context=)

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**Byline:** Stéphane Alonso  
  
Clara van de Wiel

**Dateline:** BRUSSELS/ THE HAGUE

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

EU agreement

After difficult negotiations, the ***EU*** agreed on an emergency fund. Without losing face, but with loose ends. The message: ***Europe*** is there for its citizens too.

**FULL TEXT:**

There were exactly two minutes between the tweets on Thursday evening - and a world of difference.

At 22:14 Roberto Gualtieri reported with satisfaction that Rome had won the loot in the negotiations on ***European*** emergency aid that had been dragging on for days. The strict conditions for which the Netherlands pleaded "are off the table", according to the Italian Minister of Finance. At 22:16, Wopke Hoekstra claims exactly the opposite. The emergency aid will be provided, but "conditions will have to be met", according to the Dutch Minister of Finance.

A hard-won agreement that is open to many interpretations. Everyone wins, no one loses face. It could hardly be ***more European***.

Nevertheless, The Hague will also look back with concern on a couple of weeks in which the Netherlands came under unusually fierce fire. A ***eurozone agreement*** is always preceded by struggle, but the fact that the Netherlands alienated everyone this time - it even lost its traditional ally Berlin for a while - is remarkable; Germany did grow closer to France. Major ***European*** newspapers detailed the Dutch political context that had led to such an uncompromising stance. In the major negotiations still to come, on climate, the ***EU budget*** and Brexit, the Netherlands needs allies. And as it sweeps the shards together, it will often ask itself: was it worth it?

The ***European*** Stability Mechanism (ESM) was the main bone of contention during the three-day EU meeting. Anyone who wants loans from this emergency fund, which was established after the ***euro crisis***, normally has to agree to strict reforms. The Dutch demand to stick to this principle in the coronas crisis proved to be untenable after three days of haggling. Hoekstra had to give way, but also gained something: ESM loans are in principle only available to finance 'care, cure and prevention', which is directly or indirectly related to the virus.

**Open ends**

There are more open ends in the agreement. For example, a 'recovery fund' has been announced to help the ***European*** economy get back on its feet as soon as possible. But apart from that, not much is known: what will that support look like? Where will the money come from? Now that the ministers have finished talking, the text goes to the heads of government. They have to create clarity. To begin with, on 23 April. Friday it became known that a new ***EU summit*** will be held then. The battle is not over yet.

The announced size of the package - some ***EUR*** 500 billion - sounds hefty, but pales in comparison to the EUR 1,173 billion that Germany is setting aside for itself. Economists from various ***European*** think tanks are critical: the package comes too late, is too limited and does not come close to the kind of support that, for example, the US federal government can mobilise.

At the same time, the agreement reached on Thursday evening is special because it immediately focuses on the threat of social damage. During the financial crisis of 2008, which would lead to the ***euro crisis***, the emphasis in ***Europe was*** on limiting budget deficits and national debts, and less on the social carnage in southern Europe in particular, with more suicides and spectacular mass unemployment among the youth. This time, there seems to be a realisation that the ***EU*** cannot afford more lost generations. So there will be a temporary EU scheme of ***EUR*** 100 billion to prevent mass redundancies, for example through shorter working hours.

The message: ***Europe*** is not only there for the banks, but also for the citizens. The idea behind this: richer ***euro countries*** do not stand to gain either if other countries fall further behind as a result of the corona crisis than is already the case. If you allow the differences in prosperity to widen, the internal market and the common currency will eventually break up as well.

We must ensure that we grow together, and not apart," said Mário Centeno, president of the ***Eurogroup***, the body of finance ministers, on Thursday night. The Netherlands is concerned: Hoekstra stipulated on Thursday that the arrangement may not be a prelude to a permanent ***European*** unemployment fund.

**Faster action**

Also remarkable: the speed with which ***Europe*** acts. In this crisis, Europe is already acting many times faster than ten years ago, although the bickering of the past few days may give a different impression. Normally, financial-economic rules are sacrosanct in the ***European Union***, but it is precisely these rules that have been suspended at breakneck speed over the past one and a half months. Member States have already agreed that, for the time being, they do not need to adhere to the budget rules and do not need to worry about giving State aid. Export rules were tightened in order to prevent crucial protective equipment from disappearing from ***Europe***. The ***EU budget*** was squeezed to make emergency funds available.

Even more impressive was the offensive of the ***European*** Central Bank. During the credit crisis, the ECB also took action, but it took a long time before former President Mario Draghi, with his famous *"whatever it takes",* calmed the unrest on the capital markets. This time, the ECB acted swiftly: on 12 March, it made an unprecedented injection of money into the banks, which, for the time being, had calmed the worst of the turmoil.

**Cumbersome tanker**

The ***EU*** has often been described as an unwieldy tanker that is very slow to adjust. However, less than six weeks after the scale of the coronapandemic began to filter through to ***Europe***, steps have been taken that were previously unthinkable and even impossible to discuss. What is to follow, now that economists are predicting that we may face the greatest economic crisis in a century?

On Thursday, ***euro countries*** agreed to keep the possibility of "new financial instruments" open. As far as southern Europe and France are concerned, this includes '***eurobonds***', the joint assumption of debt to spread risks. Germany and the Netherlands remain opposed to it, but the discussion on it will not be silenced, especially if the crisis turns out to be deeper than expected.

The agreement was preceded by fierce discussions. The Netherlands and Italy, in particular, came face to face. In both countries, the government feels the hot breath of populist, ***euro-critical*** parties on its neck. Hoekstra and Prime Minister Rutte fear the old reproach, known from the ***euro crisis***, that they are giving away Dutch tax money. In Italy, opposition leader Matteo Salvini has been campaigning for months with the spectre that the country will have to submit to ***European*** requirements in exchange for ESM support.

The ministers of both countries therefore had a great interest in presenting the agreement as a 'victory'. But the Dutch stubbornness is what will stick in the mind. On Tuesday, a nocturnal video consultation dragged on for sixteen hours and Hoekstra in particular was obstructive. A missed opportunity, it is said in Brussels, all the more so because in the final agreement hardly anything has been changed.

This time there seems to be a realisation that the ***EU*** cannot afford to lose any more generations

**Graphic**

***Eurogroup President*** Mário Centeno (top right) holds a press conference in Lisbon after video consultations on ***European*** emergency aid.

Photo Patricia de Melo Moreira /EPA

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**Load-Date:** April 10, 2020

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[***Compromise on corona aid shows strength of European project; Comment***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13VV-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION & DEBATE; Page 10

**Length:** 829 words

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

***European*** rescue

**FULL TEXT:**

What failed at the beginning of the week after a sixteen-hour video conference marathon was done in an hour on Thursday evening. Just before 11 p.m., the finance ministers of the 19 ***eurozone*** countries presented a ***€540*** billion rescue package for the acute coronary problems plaguing ***Europe***.

The package has three components. One: credit lines from the ***European*** Stability Mechanism to fight the pandemic. Two: a strengthening of the lending capacity by 200 billion euros of the ***European*** Investment Bank (for this the member states jointly contribute 25 billion ***euros*** to the EIB). And three: on the recommendation of the ***European*** Commission, a new unemployment insurance of 100 billion ***euro***.

The conditions under which this aid may be provided were the subject of constant debate. The North of ***Europe*** wanted to prevent unconditional access to ***European*** aid funds. The south, on the other hand, demanded unconditional mutual solidarity. A debate along the lines of the divisions that have been known since the beginning of the currency union, and which only come to light in full in times of need.

Classic shuttle diplomacy but by video link laid the foundations for the agreement. In particular, Dutch Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra used a good part of the afternoon and evening to iron out, with his colleagues, the problems he had caused himself with his clumsy diplomatic behaviour the week before. The Frenchman Bruno Le Maire and the German Olaf Scholtz also did important work: they mediated between North and South.

All the ***Eurogroup ministers*** expressed their satisfaction at the end of the discussion. The south received its contribution without additional conditions for the costs of combating corona, and the north did not have to make too many concessions to the standard conditions for support from the ***euro funds***.

After the euphoria comes the analysis. And as so often with Brussels agreements, surprisingly little concrete remains on the sieve. The emergency aid from the ESM is indeed without additional conditions, but it is limited to the direct and indirect costs of the Covid-19 fight (and thus does not extend to general economic measures). There is nothing on paper about ***eurobonds***, which were the subject of much debate beforehand, except for a general remark about new financial instruments that will be used later.

The absence of ***eurobonds*** (or coronabonds) is a justified choice. It has long been the wish of some member states to share (part of) their national debt with all nineteen ***euro countries***. The northern countries, which are now borrowing money very cheaply on the money markets because of their sound budgetary policy, are not in favour of this. The southern countries, which pay a little more in interest and are in a weaker position from a budgetary point of view, want it. That debate must be held, but preferably not under the pressure of an enormous health crisis.

***Eurogroup President*** Mário Centeno stressed that unlike the ***euro crisis*** eight years ago, this time ***Europe*** had not come "too late with too little". This is important, because if ***Europe*** would not have been able to present a package for the southern countries, there would have been a high risk that investors would have broken up the ***euro***. That happened with Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland.

It is to be hoped that the political signal that has now been given will be enough to keep the vultures of the financial markets at bay. Many southern ***European*** countries are now in significantly worse shape than they were at the start of the ***euro crisis***. Italy's public debt, at 130 percent of GDP, stands out in this regard. A new debt crisis is just around the corner.

This is ***Europe*** all over. The deliberately vague passages in the declaration leave much-needed room for further political interpretation at a later date. The agreed text thus contains many loose ends which government leaders will have to address later this month. Apparently, this was the maximum that could be achieved at the moment.

The great gain of the package is therefore not so much the gain for the Netherlands or Italy, although both countries have the opportunity to claim it. No, the gain is that ***Europe*** has stayed together in this crisis and together has proved capable of forcing through a solution for all. The fact that this solution is not pretty, is vague and leaves an infinite amount of room for individual interpretation is inherent in the structure of the partnership and should be seen as a strength rather than a weakness of ***Europe***.

The debate on ***Eurobonds*** should certainly be held, but preferably not under the pressure of a massive health crisis

In the Commentary, NRC gives its opinion on important news facts. The commentators write these articles in consultation with the editors-in-chief.

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[***Must Europe common euroShould Europe issue common Eurobonds; Mapping the issue***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13VP-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION & DEBATE; Page 7

**Length:** 517 words

**Byline:** Arnold de Groot

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

A visual representation of different arguments around a current issue. On paper and online.

***Eurobonds***

A 540 billion ***euro*** economic rescue package was agreed by ***Europe's*** finance ministers on Thursday. The agreement does not include ***eurobonds*** or ***eurobonds***, about which different countries are diametrically opposed. Will ***Europe*** opt for common bonds in the announced recovery fund?

By Arnold de Groot

**FULL TEXT:**

**No, *Eurobonds* take away incentive for responsible fiscal policy**

Northern Europe, too, must take public opinion into consideration. They do not want to stand guarantor for debts of southern countries. Pushing this through now would be "putting a time bomb under the ***EU***". Prevent Northern Europeans from "feeling abused by the South".

Gideon Rachman, foreign commentator, in the Financial Times

**No, they are putting pressure on the *EU*'s credibility in northern countries**

***Eurobonds*** are an expression of solidarity, a "key principle" of the ***EU***. And you have to show it in these times. Without solidarity there is no cohesion, without cohesion there is discontent and the credibility of the ***European*** project is seriously damaged. There are millions of ***Europeans*** who believe in the ***European*** project. Let us not abandon them."

Pedro Sánchez, Prime Minister of Spain, in NRC

**Yes, partly out of self-interest: if Italy has economic problems, that affects the Netherlands**

***Eurobonds***, whereby all ***eurozone countries*** guarantee each other's national debts, do not fit in with a union in which the member states are all responsible for their own budgets. ***Euro countries*** decide for themselves how much debt they incur and what they spend their money on."

Wopke Hoekstra, Minister of Finance, in the Volkskrant

**Yes, if *Europe* does not show solidarity now, it will undermine its credibility**

Weaker countries need to make less effort to reduce their own public debt if countries with greater creditworthiness are their backstop. Guaranteeing each other's financial behaviour is tantamount to economic-financial suicide."

Edin Mujagic, chief economist of asset manager OHV, in FD

**No, each country in the *EU* is in charge of its own budget and public debt**

A further crisis will arise if weak countries like Italy and Spain are unable to repay their national debt. Let us consider this debt as a joint responsibility. We are no longer a rich North if the South falls over. "

Nout Wellink, former president of De Nederlandse Bank, on NPO Radio 1

**Yes, joint bonds lower interest costs for countries like Italy and Spain**

For fear of a debt crisis, financial markets could push some countries that now have to finance crisis measures "towards high interest rates. That is why we advocate that ***European*** countries collect this money together", this can then be done for "a minimum price".

Bart Snels, Bas Eickhout (GroenLinks); Henk Nijboer, Paul Tang (PvdA) in NRC

The sources mentioned can be consulted online at www.nrc.nl/ kwestieinkaart

**Notes**

Gideon Rachman, foreign affairs commentator, in the Financial Times; Pedro Sánchez, prime minister of Spain, in NRC; Wopke Hoekstra, minister of Finance, in de Volkskrant; Edin Mujagic, chief economist of asset manager OHV, in the FD; Nout Wellink, former president of De Nederlandse Bank, on NPO Radio 1; Bart Snels, Bas Eickhout (GroenLinks); Henk Nijboer, Paul Tang (PvdA) in NRC

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[***This is only the beginning; In Europe***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13TY-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** WEEKEND; Page 22

**Length:** 648 words

**Byline:** Caroline de Gruyter

**Body**

The mayor of Breisach, a small town in southern Germany on the French border, has had signs made with the words 'Medical staff - I work in Breisach for your health'. French doctors and nurses can put these signs on their dashboard when they drive to work in Germany. Some Germans have a sudden tendency to curse when they see a French number plate. They see Alsatians as virus carriers.

Fortunately, German hospitals have also accepted dozens of patients for whom there was no room in overcrowded French hospitals. Switzerland, which was hit hard but has free beds, is doing the same. This was arranged spontaneously, after one e-mail from a French hospital director who could no longer cope. Hours later, the first transports of patients started.

So those swearing Germans in Breisach are not the whole story. Yet incidents like this show how quickly people fall into stereotypes in times of crisis. And hide behind national walls. It is deeply ingrained.

Imagine that the Netherlands and Italy bordered each other. You shouldn't think about it, now. Italians are united behind Prime Minister Conte, who will not receive ***Eurobonds*** from the Netherlands. And if you criticise the Dutch position in the Netherlands, you are accused of 'damaging the country'. One crisis, and Italians are all 'lazy' again and the Dutch are all 'greedy' again.

This is only the beginning. Unemployment is exploding everywhere. World trade has plummeted by 32%. In 2009, the previous low, it was 'only' 12 per cent. France and Germany are in recession, with the worst economic contraction since 1945.

In anxious times, politicians who act in the ***European*** interest are not immediately popular. Citizens want to hear that their interests are safeguarded in their country. Let those lazy Italians or miserly Dutchmen go to hell. For politicians, it is therefore easier to go for the national short-term interest. This is also why ***European*** negotiations have been so difficult in recent weeks. The whole nation is watching the prime minister or minister closely. If he stands firm, he is a hero. This is scoring points for the Contes, the Ruttes and the Hoekstra. The ***more European*** politics becomes, and this is one of those moments, the more national politicians behave.

But in the long run, no country is served by this. On the contrary, these times call for ***European*** compromises. We need ***European*** structures now more than ever. If we put out the fire together with others, we will come out better than if everyone does it for themselves. Especially the Netherlands, which, as a small export country in the middle of ***Europe***, benefits enormously from the internal market. It guarantees our food supply, gives Dutch products a huge market and ensures that the Dutch take home more dividends from Eastern Europe than anyone else.

If there is one time when politicians should tell this bigger story, it is now. We need politicians who will calm things down, not stir them up. Politicians who convert the national adrenaline surge, which drives fear, into dopamine, a substance that helps us look to the future and make plans.

This crisis is going to change things. Economically, socially, ecologically. Clear thinking is needed: what needs to change, how do we steer it in the right direction? In 1944, British civil servant William Beveridge wrote a report that formed the basis for what was then a social revolution: the post-war welfare state. It provided direction, hope and justice. It sold 500,000 copies. In other Western European countries too, the Beveridge report paved the way for the post-war welfare state.

Politicians: you make the newspapers by insulting Italy, but you make the history books with a good plan for the future.

*Caroline de Gruyter* writes weekly about politics and ***Europe***.

**Notes**

Caroline de Gruyter writes weekly about politics and ***Europe***.

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**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); COVID-19 Coronavirus (82%); Economic Crisis (81%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (71%); Monetary Unions (70%); Immigration (69%); Economic Conditions (67%); Disaster + Emergency Relief (63%); Public Finance (62%)

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[***Ultimate compromise***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1NK-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 14

**Length:** 507 words

**Byline:** Ruud Mikkers

**Body**

But calls for ***eurobonds*** will certainly come back

by Ruud Mikkers

Brussels - The Netherlands may have hit the nail on the head as an outspoken opponent of ***eurobonds***, but proponents of the common debt paper are refusing to lay their heads in the sand. It is only a matter of time before they are discussed again, announced Italian Finance Minister Gualtieri combatively.

Finance Minister Hoekstra was more confident than ever after the deal in the ***Eurogroup*** Thursday night when he declared that he was "opposed to ***eurobonds***, is opposed to them and will continue to be opposed to them." He was very pleased with the agreed text. It states that EU leaders will explore "innovative financial instruments" that could be used in a future post-coronary crisis recovery fund.

It was the ultimate compromise, necessary to stop the wrangling for a while, but at the same time clearly congealed Brussels vagueness, intended to cover up major differences of opinion. Hoekstra is not at all worried that the chosen wording will make ***eurobonds*** a serious topic of discussion again. After all, explicit formulations about ***eurobonds***, but also formulations about joint debt sharing were all shot down by the Germans, Dutch and other opponents.

It is now up to EU leaders to take the discussion to the next level. That will happen soon, as ***European*** Council President Michel has called a video summit for 23 April on the Union's economic recovery plan.

Since EU leaders have to decide unanimously and opposition to ***eurobonds*** goes beyond Germany and the Netherlands, they will almost certainly not come. But what then? The discussion on the financing of the repair fund will irrevocably coincide with the new ***European*** multiannual budget. Everyone in Brussels is clear that the homework for the ***EU budget*** will have to be done all over again.

The ***European*** Commission is already working on a revised proposal and the Dutch have also realised that the earlier discussion about a maximum contribution of 1% of the economic volume is completely out of date.

It is not only on ***Eurobonds*** that Italy is dragging its heels. The deal on the ***European*** emergency fund ESM could also count on little appreciation. The countries have agreed that loans from the fund for the costs as a result of the corona crisis can be provided without preconditions, a concession from the Netherlands but according to Hoekstra very much justified by the crisis situation in Spain and Italy. Loans that are necessary for the economy go hand in hand with strict conditions that always apply, a requirement of the Netherlands.

The Italian Prime Minister Conte made it explicitly clear on Friday that his country will not apply to the ESM. Going to the emergency fund is seen as a humiliation. It is clear what he does want: ***Eurobonds***.

Corridor to emergency fund humiliation

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**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (90%); Monetary Unions (88%); Economic Crisis (82%); COVID-19 Coronavirus (78%); Disaster + Emergency Relief (76%); Economic Conditions (75%); Central Banks (63%)

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[***DEAR READER***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1TX-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** WATU-SAY; Page 18

**Length:** 175 words

**Body**

No ***eurobonds*** and strict conditions for countries that want to make use of the ***European*** emergency fund ESM. The Netherlands wins the ***European*** battle and many readers are happy with this outcome. Praise for Finance Minister Hoekstra is pouring in. Betty Gosschalk writes: "Minister Hoekstra deserves compliments and thanks for his actions in the Italy issue. I have been to Italy many times and wonder why people call themselves poor there? I think they handle money differently, but the consequences cannot be passed on to the Netherlands." Ad Langeraar also admires the CDA minister: "Homage to our minister Hoekstra. He can forget about a ***European*** political career now, but he has kept his back straight." And C. Boeziek concurs: "Fortunately we escaped the ***Eurobonds*** thanks to Hoekstra's tenacity." Only H. Deugd makes a comment: "Wonder if Hoekstra would have stood his ground too if there were no elections in the Netherlands in 2021."

René van Zwieten

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**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (82%); Economic Crisis (80%); Monetary Unions (73%); COVID-19 Coronavirus (69%); Disaster + Emergency Relief (69%); Economic Conditions (69%)

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[***Financial support***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1MS-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 02

**Length:** 216 words

**Body**

Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra has won his first battle, but the battle is far from over. Together with Germany, among others, he succeeded in preventing Southern European countries from passing on their debt burden to the rich North. Those so-called ***eurobonds***, joint government loans, will not come. At least not for the time being.

He did, however, have to concede on more flexible access to the ***European*** emergency fund. The finance ministers are making as much as ***EUR*** 240 billion available for healthcare costs and preventive measures. Italy can make use of this for tens of billions without any conditions worth mentioning beforehand or afterwards.

It is good that the Netherlands shows solidarity with countries that have been hit even harder by the corona crisis than ours. Therefore it was helpful that Hoekstra moderated his tone. Hopefully the Southern Europeans will now do the same.

However, support due to the economic crisis must remain based on the principle of strict conditionality for the reduction of public debt and the implementation of economic reforms. The ***Eurogroup*** is passing on this discussion. That is why it is important that the Netherlands continues to work closely with Germany to prevent the southern countries from driving a wedge in this alliance.

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**Subject:** Economic Crisis (94%); ***European*** Union (87%); Monetary Unions (84%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (83%); Economic Conditions (80%); COVID-19 Coronavirus (74%); Disaster + Emergency Relief (73%); Public Finance (69%)

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[***LETTERS***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1V0-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** WATU-SAY; Page 18

**Length:** 883 words

**Body**

Corona transmitter

My sincere condolences to all those who have lost, or are in danger of losing, a loved one because of the coronavirus. But I am increasingly annoyed by the fact that there is hardly any other subject left on TV. Why is the corona news, with all its experts, not limited to a fixed channel?

C. van der Wal

Bench set-up

In response to the article 'Smart listen' (Tel. 9/4), I suggest rearranging restaurants. Make benches as seats (instead of chairs) with plexiglass partitions, possibly with lighting. Let local artists paint the plexiglass. A bench arrangement can create more seats per square metre. There is no need to touch the chairs.

W. Hommes,

Vessem

Pre-fun

In these dark times, the Dutch are advised to keep their spirits up and put off their holiday plans for a while. We wanted to postpone our holiday in June to Greece until September. In a way, that was all well and good, until we stumbled across the airline Transavia. Would we like to pay an extra 600 ***euros*** for the tickets to Athens, for which we paid less than 400 ***euros*** in June? Our anticipation for the holiday to Greece is gone now.

Ine van Heck,

Roermond

Stockkeepers

An advertisement in De Telegraaf rightly honours supermarket staff. However, I would like to make a stand for the shelf stackers, because it strikes me that they often have to do their work without protection. They are often girls and boys of under 20 years of age, who work without gloves and mouth caps. Cashiers, on the other hand, sit behind splash screens and wear gloves. Can the government not make it compulsory for shop assistants to be protected?

P. van Neck,

Rotterdam

Checks

The fact that the coronavirus has spread from China to almost the whole world is due to international air travel. In future, medical checks should be carried out at airports on the entry of travellers from certain risk countries in order to safeguard our health.

H. Haak, Winschoten

Toga

Now that Bram Moszkowicz definitely cannot return to the legal profession, he wants to return to TV (Tel.nl 6/4). Earlier he wanted to throw away his toga. I would say: donate that robe to a museum that collects special objects with special stories. His robe is certainly 'museum worthy'.

Danny Lim, Wassenaar

Fuel

Nice and clear overview of the current low fuel prices in the Netherlands (Tel. 10/04). Yet I am surprised that the prices along motorways are particularly high compared to the pumps outside them: for example 1.599 ***euro*** ( A28) versus 1.399 ***euro*** (prov. roads). A difference of 0.20 ***eurocents*** per litre? Cheers then I think. On a full tank that makes a difference of 10 ***euros***. And then every 20 km there is a pump to find along the highways. Despite the high rents, it is apparently still lucrative.

Bert de Jong, Ermelo

More important

In these coronation times, underpaid shelf stackers are much more important than overpaid football players.

P. van de Logt,

Dedemsvaart

Alternatives

The 1.5-metre economy is a well-conceived plan in theory, but impracticable in practice. In that case, let us not stubbornly cling to this idea, but above all be open to alternatives.

R. den Hartog, Utrecht

Leather

So it is possible: Defending the Netherlands and standing firm despite great pressure. Couldn't Minister Hoekstra go to work as a ***Eurocommissioner*** in Brussels? Frans Timmermans could learn a lot from this.

F. Son,

Deer (L)

Support fund

Italy and other southern European countries can now receive financial aid from the ***EUR*** 500 billion support fund to combat the coronavirus, on the one hand, and to mitigate its economic and financial consequences, on the other. The question is to what extent the money lent will be repaid, since Italy's budget and financial position were already extremely poor before the outbreak of the coronavirus. There is a good chance that this huge pot of money will disappear like snow in the sun and will not be repaid.

M. Loermans

Block frieze

Minister Wopke Hoekstra is my hero. He can consider 'Blokkeerfries' as a nickname.

Henny Dubbelman

Cash

A reader advocates paying with cash (Tel. 9/4), but apparently does not realise that, although the risk is small, infection with the coronavirus can also occur via cash. That is why contactless payments are now used as much as possible.

D. Docters

Mask

In the future, it will be impossible to have seats at a distance of 1.5 metres in an aeroplane. That is not economically justifiable; the tickets would have to be five times as expensive. One solution would be for everyone boarding a plane to buy a face mask at their own expense, like those used in hospital operating theatres.

Ton van Breugel,

Breda

Restriction

In the news, we often hear about elderly people in care and nursing homes who are not allowed visitors. I would also like to draw attention to all people with disabilities for whom this also applies. They often do not understand why their daily activities cannot continue and their families cannot come. For them, too, I would like to see, for example, a barrel organ or a singer perform.

Poula Peltenburg

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[***The Dutch went all the way***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:601Y-CT91-DYMH-R0KW-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 12

**Length:** 1809 words

**Byline:** Caroline de Gruyter Photo Eythor Arnason

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Interview Svein Harald Øygard former President of the Icelandic Central Bank

He headed the Central Bank of Iceland for six months in 2009. Now there is a book. That Iceland was wrong and the rest of ***Europe*** was right is a myth. But at the time, the Dutch went to great lengths to get their money back.

**FULL TEXT:**

M

he sports bag over his shoulder, Svein Harald Øygard walks into an Italian luncheonette. This is normally a busy suburb of Oslo, home to many businesses. Now there is hardly anyone. Norway is largely locked down because of the coronavirus.

Øygard, a former Norwegian state secretary for finance, was president of the Central Bank of Iceland for six months in 2009. He was at the heart of one of the biggest financial crashes ever, with Icelandic banks going bust and dragging down the entire economy. Various banks, hedge funds and governments from other countries also played a role - including Dutch banks, and citizens and municipalities who had deposited their savings in Icelandic banks at high interest rates and gone under. The 59-year-old Norwegian has just written a book about it. The English translation, In the Combat Zone of Finance, appeared in January 2020.

This book is partly an account of his time in "the most stubborn little country in ***Europe***". He describes how the three big Icelandic banks - Kaupthing, Glitnir and Landsbanki - operated: with ridiculously high interest rates, they sucked in billions from all over the world and lent it on at random to companies and citizens. And to each other. When one bank got into trouble, the rest automatically followed. Øygard arrived in Reykjavik after the crash, in February 2009. Two-thirds of Iceland's businesses had already gone bust. A third of households were in trouble. The Icelandic krona had fallen 50 per cent. Inflation was 20 per cent.

Øygard tried to draw lessons. For his book, he talked to more than a hundred people, from an Icelandic whaler who was once a banker to the then US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and the honorary consul of Kiribati, a Pacific island state that put 20% of its GDP into Icelandic banks. Kiribati was the largest non-Icelandic investor - later creditor - in Icelandic banks.

In the Combat Zone of Finance is a book with a strange charm. Øygard is not a literary talent. But he has an eye for bizarre things and writes them down economically and understatedly. All tralala has been left out. What remains are concentrated observations with impact. His paragraphs often consist of a sentence or short quotation. The rest you have to think about. Take this quote from an Icelander in the fishing industry, who describes how the banks tried to extort loans from him before the crash: The Scotch they gave me for Christmas was getting older and older, while the bankers I dealt with were getting younger and younger.

Was it really such a madhouse?

It was fascinating, but I also had sleepless nights. I thought: are we going to save this? There was no stone left on the other one."

How did you end up in Iceland?

,,The crash in 2008 killed the government, but the governor of the central bank had stayed on. The new government demanded his resignation in early 2009. He had been there since 2005. There were demonstrations every day. Citizens banged on the steel doors of the bank. But the man refused. He invoked the independence of the bank. Finally, the government changed the law. The governor, they decided, had to be an economist. The incumbent governor was a lawyer. On the day the law was passed, he left. Then they needed someone quickly. Iceland has many economists. But everybody blamed everybody else. This was a political crisis. To appoint someone quickly to such a key post was unwise. So they went for an interim governor."

Was it someone from the north?

Perhaps. In the north we understand each other a little. Besides, we all had experience of banking crises here: Sweden, Norway, Denmark. The Norwegian Ministry of Finance approached me. I had never worked for a central bank. But during the banking crisis in the early 1990s, I had been on the crisis team at the ministry. Meanwhile, I was at McKinsey. That was convenient: if things went wrong with me in Iceland, the Norwegian Ministry of Finance could stay out of harm's way. Icelandic and Norwegian newspapers wrote that I was a bag of shit. A man from the mountains, who didn't know a thing about it. Expectations were low. It could only turn out better than expected."

They had to change the law for you too.

Yes, the Gamli sáttmáli, the peace treaty between Norway and Iceland of 1262. It stated that all senior officials had to be Icelanders. At the time, this mainly meant no Norwegians. In Oslo, some people said to me: don't do it, Icelandic clan chiefs will chop your head off, just like in the Old Norse sagas.

And?

My head is still on it.

And those clans, did you come across them?

,,A modern version of it. Iceland is small. 360,000 people. Everybody knows everybody. One of the reasons for the crisis was that politics and economics were intertwined. Everyone went along with the Icelandic success story. Nobody said stop. Bank owners gave loans to their own offshore companies. Eight of the ten largest bank loans went to companies or individuals related to the bank owners. Bank A sold bonds to bank B, which sold bonds to C, which sold them to A. This allowed them to borrow more, with little collateral. The regulator wanted to intervene one day, but politicians put a stop to it."

What a mess.

You can say that again. It made me physically uncomfortable at times."

Who do you blame?

The bankers, of course. They had no moral sense at all."

Can you expect that from bankers? Isn't it society that should act ethically, by regulating banks?

Yes, but if you have ten thousand savers as a bank, you make sure you can pay them back, right? That is your moral responsibility as a banker. In Iceland, this money was gambled away. It took me weeks to understand what financial constructions had been used. Some traders did not understand it at all. Their only credo was: growth, growth, growth."

Can't you contain it, regulate it?

Laws never go deep enough. You cannot expect that from parliamentarians. That is not their role. I don't want to live in such a society. I think: bankers have moral responsibility and should take it."

Is that possible in a globalised world?

Total self-regulation is an illusion. At the same time, I believe in the markets. No investor will put money into a bank without risk management. Look at Volkswagen with their dodgy diesels, at the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. They did not regulate themselves and harmed themselves. The business community must get ahead of politics."

You write with some surprise about the claims of savers from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom against Iceland. Why?

First of all: that Iceland was wrong and the rest of ***Europe*** was right is a myth. German, British and Dutch banks profited from the sky-high interest rates at Icelandic banks. Elsewhere, interest rates were low. Deutsche, KfW, Rabobank and others sold glacier bonds to citizens, municipalities and even British police forces who wanted high interest rates on their savings. Pure financial alchemy. No bank issued as many glacier bonds as Rabobank. When Iceland collapsed, those investors were left with mountains of worthless Icelandic kroner. Icelandic banks were wrong, but so were Deutsche and Rabo. They played the risky game."

Were the savers wrong in their claim?

When Icelandic banks collapsed, they took Iceland with them. The Dutch government compensated duped Dutch account holders and wanted Iceland to pay them back. They didn't get it: Icelandic banks owed them the money, not the state. The state itself had been duped. That's why the judge agreed with Iceland.

You call the Dutch and the British in your book "a pack of wolves". Why?

They went far, to get their money back. The UK blacklisted Iceland as a terrorist country to block accounts. The British and Dutch blocked emergency loans to Iceland from the IMF until they got their way. Later, the British became milder. They wanted a deal. But the Dutch went all the way."

Iceland solved the banking crisis differently from EU countries. Which method is better?

In the ***EU,*** the state kept banks afloat. In Iceland they went bankrupt. The latter is better in the long run. The first few years will be more painful. But after that you have a clean slate. The mess in Iceland was cleaned up faster than in the ***EU***. After a few years, the Icelandic economy grew like a bomb. Faster than ***euro countries***. British and Dutch victims eventually got their money back.

With your Icelandic experience, how do you view the ***euro***?

The ***euro*** is a geopolitical tool for the ***EU***. ***It*** brought peace to ***Europe***, brought down dictatorships in southern Europe and prevented total chaos in eastern Europe after the fall of the Wall by welcoming so many new countries. In 10 years' time, there will be four economic giants in the world: the US, China, the ***EU*** and India. The British pound will be a joke."

What a positive judgment. Most Norwegians and Icelanders do not want to become members.

I am a fan. When you are small, like Iceland, you are alone in everything. I saw that too in 2009. The ***EU*** stood as one for the Dutch and the British."

Can the corona crisis lead to a new ***euro crisis***?

That is possible. There are similarities with the previous ***euro crisis***. It starts with a huge shock. Then comes liquidity problems and bankruptcies. Trust is playing a big role again: who do you trust, who don't? Is the state doing enough to stimulate the economy? Hopefully, ***EU politicians*** will see the urgency."

Would you do such a job as in Iceland again?

I would have to think about that. I now have an oil and gas company in Brazil. I spend one week a month there. I have learned Portuguese and Spanish. A whole new life. But I like it very much."

No bank issued as many glacier bonds as Rabobank at the time - it was pure financial alchemy

**CV**

Norwegian Svein Harald Øygard (Frogn, 29 June 1960) was interim president of the Central Bank of Iceland during the Icelandic banking crisis in 2009.

In the period 1990-1994, he was Norwegian Deputy Minister of Finance in the Brundlandt government.

After that, he worked for 21 years for the consulting firm McKinsey. Now he is in oil and gas.

His book In the Combat Zone of Finance is a bestseller in Norway and Iceland. The English translation appeared in January.

Øygard is married and has two sons.

**Graphic**

In his book, Svein Harald Øygard reports on the financial crisis in "***Europe'***s most stubborn country" - Iceland.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Central Banks (94%); Economic Crisis (75%)

**Load-Date:** June 2, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Editor's inbox***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-M0S1-JC5G-13VK-00000-00&context=)

NRC Handelsblad

11 April 2020 Saturday

1st Edition

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**Section:** OPINION & DEBATE; Page 2

**Length:** 356 words

**Byline:** Peter Vermaas

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

What did readers write to the editorial staff this week? An impression.

**FULL TEXT:**

The keywords this week: solidarity, climate and economy - in no particular order, but often all three in the same letter.

In our mailbox we found piles of mails about the ***EU talks*** on support for southern member states. Sinterklaas exists, and he's sitting there", Frans Smelt wrote, free to follow Wiegel, about a reader who advocated ***Eurobonds*** in a printed letter. The Netherlands had to stand firm, Bert Pots thought: Medical aid yes, economic aid no." Alberto Mondragon made a link with the environment: What prevents us from showing solidarity with each other and with ecosystems?

That brings me to climate. Since the beginning of the corona crisis, it has been a subject that has received a lot of letters and articles. Many readers see the pandemic as confirmation that the world has gone mad. According to Aad Breed, governments can now see "that nature recovers when the economy collapses". Rocus van Oosten points to "overpopulation [...] our treatment of animals, the unrestricted desire to travel, consumerism and globalisation" as causes of the pandemic. Henk Marquart Scholtz, however, thinks that the advancing 'climate train' in times of economic distress is 'pure madness'. The Netherlands will "suffer a severe economic downturn".

Evert-Jan van Leeuwen was annoyed that in a column on the environmental movement, 'Controversy', we spoke of have actually been making for years. In this supplement, you should also read Bas Heijne on what he calls in this context "parsimonious obsession". But the discussion remains open, of course. For everyone and for all subjects. Also non-corona-related, by the way.

Peter Vermaas Chief of Opinion

Editor's inbox

349

*letters*

placed 37

238

*articles*

placed 14

587

*entries*

placed 51

**Notes**

placed 37; placed 14; placed 51

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** COVID-19 Coronavirus (94%); Climate Change (84%); Epidemics (82%); Environment + Natural Resources (75%); Infectious Disease (64%); Public Health (63%); Nongovernmental Organizations (62%)

**Industry:** Agriculture (69%); Forestry + Logging (61%); Forestry Regulation + Policy (61%)

**Load-Date:** April 10, 2020

**End of Document**

[***The Netherlands has long been a guarantor for Italy***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5YMS-JXG1-DYTV-D1P6-00000-00&context=)

De Telegraaf

11 April 2020 Saturday

Entire circulation

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 32

**Length:** 94 words

**Body**

podcast

Amsterdam - The ***euro countries*** have an agreement on a large corona package. But who got his way? Did ***eurobonds*** not come about via a roundabout route, against the wishes of Minister Hoekstra? Martin Visser and Herman Stam discuss this in the podcast Kwestie van Centen. They also discuss the 'new normal' that premium Rutte is preparing us for. How can the economy slowly start up again in shops, offices and public transport? The weekly podcast of De Financiële Telegraaf can be listened to on www.DFT.nl, Spotify or iTunes.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Economic Crisis (94%); Disaster + Emergency Relief (75%); Recession (67%); Economic Conditions (65%); Social Security (61%)

**Industry:** Food + Beverage Stores (75%); Retail + Wholesale Trade (65%); Public Transportation (63%)

**Load-Date:** April 10, 2020

**End of Document**

[***Timmermans in race until the last moment***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WG2-B7K1-JC5G-11XR-00000-00&context=)

NRC Handelsblad

1 July 2019 Monday

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**Section:** IN THE NEWS; Page 2

**Length:** 575 words

**Byline:** Stéphane Alonso  
  
Tijn Sadée

**Dateline from** Brussels

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

***EU summit***

On Monday morning, Frans Timmermans was the leading candidate to lead the ***European*** Commission. There was resistance from the Christian Democrats.

**FULL TEXT:**

Will Frans Timmermans be the new President of the ***European*** Commission? The latest developments in Brussels, where EU leaders have been meeting since Sunday afternoon, pointed strongly in that direction on Monday morning.

After a night of perseverance, EU leaders had not yet reached a decision early Monday morning. One of the stumbling blocks was the ***European*** People's Party (EPP). The Christian Democrats would be prepared to support the candidacy of Social Democrat Timmermans, but demanded a high price for it. They wanted to be compensated handsomely for giving up their claim on the ***European*** Commission.

When this newspaper went to press, the contours of a compromise were emerging. The EPP would be given that other powerful ***EU institution***: the ***European*** Council, the body of ***European*** heads of government. Previously, this seemed to go to the ***European*** Liberals, but they now seem to be content with the less prestigious post of foreign coordinator, in other words, with the leadership of ***European*** diplomacy.

The EPP could also look forward to the presidency of the ***European*** Parliament if this deal actually makes it through. If that happens, the Netherlands would, with Timmermans, for the first time actually provide the President of the Commission. Sicco Mansholt did lead the Commission for six months in 1972, but that was as acting president, because there was a gap in that period.

The ***EU summit*** got off to a nervous start on Sunday. On Saturday morning, German Chancellor Angela Merkel had hinted from the G20 in Japan that a compromise was on the cards, after talks with French President Macron and Prime Minister Rutte, among others. But when she put this proposal to the other heads of government belonging to the EPP family in Brussels the following day, they reacted negatively. Merkel had given away the presidency of the ***European*** Commission too easily in Osaka, said an "overwhelming majority of the EPP prime ministers", according to Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar. "As the EPP, we did not agree to the package agreed in Osaka."

When the summit did begin later that day, Merkel agreed that it would not be "easy negotiations", "to say the least". Timmermans' chances, which had seemed very favourable earlier in the day, suddenly seemed a lot less. Nevertheless, ***European*** 'President' Donald Tusk, who speaks on behalf of the heads of government and has to put the jobs puzzle together, suggested at the start of the summit to give Timmermans a chance. He did so at the request of France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands, whose leaders had all met with Merkel in Osaka.

Last week, it appeared that the German Manfred Weber, candidate on behalf of the Christian Democrats, had failed to find the necessary majorities, even though his political family came out on top in the recent ***European*** elections.

A previous summit, ten days ago, ended in deadlock, with Merkel and Macron in particular at odds. According to the latest circulating compromise, Weber would become president of the ***European*** Parliament as a consolation prize.

The EPP demanded hefty compensation for the abandonment of the Commission

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (81%); International Relations (70%)

**Load-Date:** July 1, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Autocrats at ease in Osaka; G20***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WG2-B7K1-JC5G-11XW-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** IN THE NEWS; Page 6

**Length:** 990 words

**Byline:** Michel Kerres

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*analysis*  top in Osaka

Outrage over Máxima's meeting with 'MBS' and flirtations between Trump and autocratic leaders. At the G20 summit, democratically elected leaders from ***Europe*** played a supporting role.

**FULL TEXT:**

The group photo is a must at every summit and proof beyond doubt that men rule the world.

The *tableau de la troupe of the* G20 in Osaka stood out for yet another reason. In the middle, dressed in contrasting white, the representative of a dictatorial regime, Mohammad bin Salman (MBS), Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, stands beaming. The standard-bearer of ***Europe***'s liberal, multicultural democracy, Chancellor Angela Merkel, stands at the edge.

MBS has made incredible progress in six months. At the last G20, in Buenos Aires at the end of November, democratic government leaders avoided him as much as possible. The gruesome murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul was still fresh in the memory. Now he is on *centre stage*, even though the UN underlined just last week that MBS was personally involved in the murder.

The prominent position of the crown prince has to do with the curious dynamics of the G20, which is organised by a different country every year. The incoming host country always gets a prominent role. Saudi Arabia is the host country for 2020.

The forthcoming presidency also provided the crown prince with a meeting with Queen Máxima, who has been active as the special envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for years. The meeting came in for heavy criticism from the Queen, and thus also from the Cabinet. Who approved this conversation between Queen Máxima and the Saudi crown prince, understands nothing of diplomacy and even less of image building", tweeted Sjoerd Sjoerdsma of D66. The UN rapporteur who investigated the role of MBS also reacted strongly. She found it incomprehensible that Máxima had not brought up the murder case.

The main event of the summit was of course the meeting between US President Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping. The question of whether they would resume talks on trade disputes was of great importance to the global economy. From the looks of it, the summit was a success - at a press conference on Saturday morning, Trump announced that talks would resume, that the US would for the time being refrain from imposing additional tariffs and that China would increase its purchases of agricultural products during the negotiations.

De-escalation of the trade dispute is important for international relations in the short term. The group photo underlined what is important for the long term: the new self-confidence of autocrats.

**Putin declares liberalism dead**

Russian President Vladimir Putin had very slyly provided the frame for the G20. Late on Wednesday night, in the Kremlin, he gave, as always smiling affably, an interview to the *Financial Times in which* he simply declared liberalism dead. Now *liberalism* has *various* meanings. It can mean the primacy of the individual, an economic arrangement with a small role for the state and/or an open society in which the rights of minorities are protected. Putin was mainly talking about the latter. Liberal ideas on refugees, migration and LGBT rights are today "rejected by an overwhelming part of the population", Putin said. Even some Western democracies have now admitted that multiculturalism is not a good idea, the Russian president said.

The President of the ***European*** Council, Donald Tusk, read the piece and immediately replied in Osaka. As ***Europeans, we*** are here to unequivocally defend liberalism. Those who claim that liberal democracy is superfluous are also claiming that freedom is superfluous, that the rule of law is superfluous and that human rights are superfluous [...] What I find really superfluous is autocracy, the cult of personality, the power of oligarchs."

Not so long ago, the American President was the most powerful guest at gatherings like this, or at least behaved as such. He then defended, implicitly or explicitly, Western democracy. The democrats present lived in the assumption that sooner or later the rest of the world would also find the path of Enlightenment.

President Trump may not want to abolish American democracy, but he is not a great advocate of the liberal values belittled by Putin. His relationship with Putin has been puzzling for two years and it was once again uncomfortably cosy in Osaka. When asked if he would ask Putin not to interfere in the 2020 US elections, he nonchalantly turned to the Russian president and asked if he would not interfere in the US elections. On the same occasion, the two made some jokes about the free press. Putin invited Trump to Moscow next May to commemorate the end of WWII.

Although Trump is no longer a newcomer, he continues to cause surprises on occasions like this. Just before the summit, he laid it on the line with host country Japan, which has been living under an American security guarantee for decades. Trump thinks it is unfair that Americans should rescue Japan in a WWIII, but that Japanese in turn have no duty to defend the US. In Osaka, he informed Prime Minister Abe that this defence treaty must be changed, Trump reported at his press conference.

He also announced that he would try to have a brief chat with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea on Sunday. The meeting would not be a real summit, Trump warned. He would only say 'hello'.

Between Trump and Putin it was again uncomfortably cozy

**Graphic**

World leaders meet at the G20 in Japan. In the middle, President Trump and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia.

Photo Brendan Smialowski/AFP

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** International Relations (94%); Protests + Demonstrations (76%); Embargoes + Sanctions (70%); Election Fraud (67%)

**Load-Date:** July 1, 2019

**End of Document**

[***In the Netherlands we always go around the pain'; Climate agreement***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WG2-B7K1-JC5G-11XF-00000-00&context=) [***Polder is not the most suitable route for a transition'; Climate Agreement***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WG2-B7K1-JC5G-11XF-00000-00&context=)

NRC Handelsblad

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 1196 words

**Byline:** Camil Driessen

**Dateline:** Rotterdam

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*Interview*  Jan Rotmans *Professor of Transition Studies*

Professor Jan Rotmans sees 'good intentions' in the climate agreement. But 'poldering' is not the most appropriate approach in times of transition.

**FULL TEXT:**

After the outlines last summer and a draft climate agreement in December, Friday was the hour of U. The Cabinet presented the climate agreement: the blueprint for energy transition in the Netherlands. More than 100 parties" have been working at the climate tables on "a coherent package of measures" that will reduce CO2 emissions by 49 per cent by 2030. Having studied the voluminous agreement, climate expert and professor of transition studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam Jan Rotmans is sceptical. "A transition is not a technocratic and bureaucratically guided process."

How many transitions do you know that came out of hard-to-read 239-page agreements?

I don't know any of them and that's logical because it doesn't work like that. The climate agreement was concluded because of the energy transition. But its implementation has always been about energy and hardly about transition. Unfortunately, there were no transition experts at the climate tables. A transition is a radical change process. The fact that it is translated into such a package of measures with so many parties shows that you want to save face. Even though there are some good intentions visible, such as the plans to make buildings more sustainable. Every transition hurts, and afterwards it delivers a lot, but in the Netherlands we keep avoiding the pain.

What is lacking from a transition perspective?

The government says two things: we want to achieve our targets in 2030 and 2050 and we want to take things slowly. In this decisive phase of the energy transition, however, you have to make sharp choices. You can't take it easy, because we are already way behind. A kind of cheese slicer method is now being used. It works to cut costs, but not to realise a transition.

And the most tricky things are put off to a later date. Take road pricing, for example: now - for the umpteenth time - research is going to be carried out into this and it might be introduced in 2026. And only for electric cars, too. That doesn't make sense. It's actually meant to reduce mobility.

You tweeted critically that the climate agreement is "a typical Dutch polder product". What is wrong with that?

I have nothing against poldering *in itself*, it has brought us much good. But research we have done shows that in times of transition, it is not the most appropriate form of participation.

Support for a transition develops gradually; you can't take everyone with you at once. We started with the front runners. Now, the next group of a few million Dutch people is joining in. Only then will the large middle group follow and finally the opponents. Don't try to convince them now, that will only increase resistance. Once you have passed the crucial breakthrough phase, you can start poldering again. You are now sitting around the table with all sorts of parties, such as the energy-intensive industry. Then you ask a turkey to put itself on the Christmas menu. You can never achieve radical breakthroughs with such a broad participation model."

Where do you see a more radical approach?

We are in second-to-last place ***in Europe*** and now generate only 6.5 per cent of our energy sustainably. Countries in the top ten have shown political leadership. In Germany, they said 15 years ago: 'We are going to subsidise solar and wind energy, including a feed-in tariff. Companies, farmers and citizens must participate'. That really has become a new economy and has created 500,000 jobs. There was huge resistance, but the more resistance, the more radical the transition.

In the Netherlands we have a typically liberal attitude and have long thought that the market would sort it out. We are not a country of revolutions either, but we cannot avoid it now."

How do you think it should be done?

From a transitional point of view, you could say that twenty per cent of the population is resisting and does not want to participate. Seventy per cent are waiting. And about ten per cent is really engaged with the issue and ready to take action. It is best to start with this group in order to take drastic measures. Start with twenty neighbourhoods in twenty municipalities to do things radically differently: no gas, full solar panels, charging stations for cars and so on. These districts will then serve as an example for the rest. The same applies to industry and agriculture.

So you have to do it largely from the bottom up, but you can set the preconditions from the top down."

Name an inspiring example of a successful transition.

The transition from smoking to non-smoking. Some 60 years ago, 90 per cent of adult men smoked. Then a small group of 5 to 10 per cent stopped because they read about it and saw the harmful effects. Then, when the health cult and fitness craze arose, a much larger group stopped. And only then - after 30 years - did the government come up with harsh measures such as banning smoking in office buildings and in the hospitality industry. This accelerated the process, but was not the core of the cultural change. If you smoke now, you're a *loser* anyway. You have to create the atmosphere that if you're still smoking in twenty years you're a loser."

You are convinced that the Netherlands will not achieve the goals of the climate agreement. What do you base that on?

I have been betting on the environmental, sustainability and energy targets set by the Netherlands with bottles of whisky for a long time. I have now won seventy of them because they are never met."

,,It transpired on Friday that the Netherlands will not comply with the court ruling in the Urgenda case to emit substantially less CO2 in 2020 compared to 1990. We will not even get close. Nor will we achieve the 49 per cent CO2 reduction set out in the climate agreement for 2030. We have reduced other greenhouse gases over the past 25 years, but zero C02 emissions. And then, with this agreement, with so many open ends, we have to reduce half of the CO2 emissions in the next ten years?

It is typical of the Netherlands to raise the bar after missing a target and say: 'we'll make it'. In December Prime Minister Rutte argued in Katowice for stricter ***European*** climate targets while he knew that he would not achieve his own 2020 objective. You just have to have the guts.

I have won 70 bets because the climate targets will never be met

Polder is not the most appropriate form of participation in times of transition

**CV Jan Rotmans**

*Jan Rotmans (58) is Professor of Transition Studies* at Erasmus University. He studied mathematics and was the first person in the Netherlands to obtain a PhD in climate change.

He worked for the Commission on Sustainable Development at the UN and is (co)founder of transition research agency DRIFT and sustainability foundation Urgenda.

**Graphic**

Concerns about the climate or not: the Dutch enjoy themselves in the heat in Amsterdam, on the beach in Zandvoort, at Concert at Sea and in the water in the centre of Utrecht.

Photos Levin den Boer, Paul Bergen/ ANP and Amber Beckers, Paulien van de Loo/ Hollandse Hoogte

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Climate Change (88%); Pollution + Environmental Impacts (84%); Energy + Utility Law (65%); Economic Development (63%)

**Industry:** Alternative + Renewable Energy (94%); Coal Industry (94%); Manufacturing (65%)

**Load-Date:** July 1, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Climate agreement is another success for the Dutch polder ; Comment***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WG2-B7K1-JC5G-11YB-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION; page 17

**Length:** 625 words

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Climate

**FULL TEXT:**

Seduce, reassure and take your time. Those are the three key words that linger after the presentation of the final climate agreement, last Friday. After more than a year of negotiations, a package has been agreed with the aim of almost halving greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. If the government manages to implement the agreement, the Netherlands will no longer be a laggard in the area of climate change in ***Europe***, but a front runner.

A few things stand out about the agreement. The first is the tone, which is diametrically different from a few months ago, when the climate debate was completely polarised and talked about 'climate wranglers' and 'prosecco slurping Tesla drivers'.

It is a wise choice to bring a subject that affects everyone into somewhat calmer waters. The task for the coming years is huge and, for many citizens, totally confusing. What should I do with my house, my gas cooker, my car? Not surprising that last Friday, on the very day of the agreement, the SCP presented new, alarming figures on waning support for climate measures. That was the price of political scaremongering and indecision.

With the final agreement, which was presented by four ministers on Friday, the tone of the debate has turned 180 degrees. Nobody is being chased out of their fossil car, or forced to invest a lot of money in a heat pump. We have the time and we will make the money available. That was the central message. A good choice, then.

Secondly, it is striking that 'the polder', after the recent successful consultation on a new pension system, seems to have achieved another success. Virtually endless consultations at climate tables have finally resulted in a package that, broadly speaking, can count on the support of the social players who actually have to make the implementation a success. Think: farmers, industry, the energy sector.

In addition, compared to the draft climate agreement, the bill is also being pushed much more in the direction of the business community, and less in the direction of the citizen. That too is sensible. Most of the total task that the Netherlands has set itself must also come from industry, agriculture and the energy sector. Double glazing, radiator foil and floor insulation only help a little in proportion to this.

Concerns also remain. Unfortunately, the government has a bad reputation when it comes to translating ambitious environmental plans into concrete measures. Take the long-running issue of the Urgenda case, which once again has not been clarified. Or take the proposals of the Balkenende-IV cabinet, which in 2007 set itself the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2020. It was not possible to implement these in concrete terms, so that the counter got stuck at roughly half.

Even now, many of the plans still need to be made concrete. Think of the CO2 levy for businesses or a new type of road pricing. These are politically complex subjects that also carry electoral risks.

The agreement must be understood by the next cabinet, of whatever colour, as an assignment to actually implement this serious package of measures. Because although the cabinet is right to take all the room there is until 2030, at the same time there is no time to lose when it comes to the climate.

The change from climate talkers to seducers is a wise choice: it is difficult enough for citizens as it is.

In the Commentary, NRC gives its opinion on important news facts. The commentators write these articles in consultation with the editors-in-chief.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Government Departments + Authorities (94%)

**Load-Date:** July 1, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Turkey punished for drilling near Cyprus***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK7-X091-DYMH-R3WG-00000-00&context=)

NRC Handelsblad

16 July 2019 Tuesday

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 2

**Length:** 51 words

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

The ***European Union*** is punishing Turkey for illegal gas drilling in the waters of ***EU member*** Cyprus. Talks on a ***European*** aviation agreement with Turkey are suspended. In addition, Ankara gets less financial support from the ***EU*** next year. More measures may follow. (NRC)

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (71%); International Relations (68%)

**Load-Date:** July 16, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Tension in Strasbourg***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK6-F291-DYTV-D0MY-00000-00&context=)

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16 July 2019 Tuesday

Entire circulation

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 12

**Length:** 490 words

**Byline:** Ruud Mikkers

**Body**

Decision on the appointment of Ursula von der Leyen is made today

by Ruud Mikkers

STRASBOURG - Today is D-Day for Ursula von der Leyen. The President-designate of the ***European*** Commission has to fish for support in the ***European*** Parliament, which votes on her nomination by ***Europe's*** Heads of Government and Presidents, right up to the last minute.

It will really depend on whether Von der Leyen will make it. The German CDU politician needs 376 votes for a majority. First, she has to get down to business on Tuesday in a debate with Parliament. After that, the political groups will withdraw for consultation. The vote is scheduled for 6 pm. If she is voted out, it is a crisis. The ***European*** Council, Prime Minister Rutte and his colleagues, must then come up with a new nomination within a month.

The fact that the Council, with Von der Leyen, pushed through a candidate who was in no way connected to the Spitzens system has caused a great deal of bad blood, but at the same time it has also been noted that Parliament does not offer a workable alternative.

Von der Leyen can count on the support of her own Christian Democratic EPP and the Liberals of Renew ***Europe***. With the S&D, the social democrats, it is already a lot more difficult, because of the shooting down of their candidate Frans Timmermans. The Greens are against VdL. It is dependent on the conservative ECR Group, among others, in which the Poles of the PiS play an important role.

The PvdA members in the ***European*** Parliament said they would vote against the appointment of Von der Leyen, who steps down as Defence Minister in Germany on Wednesday. Resentment over Timmermans' passing for the absolute top ***European*** job runs deep. But even Timmermans himself knows that he could forfeit his no small consolation prize, first vice president, if Von der Leyen falls.

The chances of his name resurfacing in place of Von der Leyen are nil. The problem is that the top ***European*** jobs outside the ***European*** Commission have already been given away. Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel will become President of the Council and Frenchwoman Christine Lagarde will become President of the ***European*** Central Bank.

After the hard-fought deal in which Von der Leyen was pulled out of the hat at the very last moment, Prime Minister Rutte is not waiting for a new drama either. He has several irons in the fire. Now that Lagarde is going to the ECB, her old post at the IMF will become vacant. The Netherlands would like to put forward former Eurogroup chairman Dijsselbloem for that post.

But if the tombola (partly) starts up again, Rutte will have a problem. The chances of both Timmermans and Dijsselbloem getting a high position then are slim.

"I think Von der Leyen will make it, but really by a hair's breadth", predicts an ***EU source***. At best, the Union will today have a Commission President who stumbles out of the starting blocks.

It's going to be a slam dunk for EC candidate

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (68%); International Relations (65%); Legislation (63%)

**Load-Date:** July 15, 2019

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[***Ryanair owes low price to subsidies'***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK7-X091-DYMH-R3WF-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 2

**Length:** 632 words

**Byline:** Steven Musch

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Aviation

Many airline tickets are so cheap because of state support for small airports. This must stop, says a green lobby club.

**FULL TEXT:**

The taxpayer indirectly pays for cheap flights by Ryanair. About a quarter of all airports used by the Irish airline are loss-making and receive government subsidies. This emerges from a study by the ***European*** lobby group Transport & Environment (T&E), which was published on Tuesday morning. Maastricht Airport, too, receives government support, despite the Dutch objectives to reduce CO2 emissions from the aviation sector, according to the study.

The Irish budget airline usually chooses secondary airports where less port fees (service charges) have to be paid. According to T&E, 52 of the 214 airports served by Ryanair are dependent on government support. More than half of the ailing airports are located in France (16) and Italy (7).

Ryanair benefits from government support. Subsidised airports charge lower port fees to airlines. This means that Ryanair, but also other companies, can offer cheaper tickets from these airports. In this way the taxpayer helps to pay for cheap flights.

T&E believes the ***European*** Commission should ban subsidies to loss-making airports, as it has previously done for the coal industry. "As governments struggle to contain the sector's climate impact, subsidies that only add fuel to the fire must be stopped," said Andrew Murphy, aviation manager at T&E, in a statement. The ***European*** Commission is currently examining the rules on state aid to airports.

The current ***European*** rules only allow government support if an airport is located in an underdeveloped area. If there is sufficient capacity in the area, state support is actually prohibited," says state support expert Melvin Könings of Lysias Consulting Group.

Könings expects the Commission to "only become stricter" for the aviation industry. Cheap holiday flights are a thorn in the side of the Commission. The number of flight movements has increased alarmingly. CO2 emissions per passenger per kilometre are decreasing, airlines say. But the number of flights is increasing. Read also: Netherlands seeks ***European*** support for paraffin tax According to T&E, Ryanair is the biggest polluter within the ***European*** aviation industry in absolute numbers. Ryanair, which with 132.9 million passengers is one of the largest ***European*** airlines, advertises itself as the greenest airline in ***Europe***, with an emission of 66 grams of CO2 per passenger per kilometre.

CO2 emissions from the aviation sector grew by 4% in ***Europe*** last year. Emissions from all other industries in the Emissions Trading System (ETS) fell by 4%. Over the past five years, CO2 emissions from ***European*** aviation have increased by 26%.

Governments often want to prop up airports to keep certain parts of the country accessible. France's Châlons Vatry Airport served just 108,000 passengers in 2017 and received over three million ***euros*** in subsidies - just under 30 ***euros*** per passenger. Ryanair offers flights from that airport for less than 30 ***euros***.

The Netherlands wants to take the lead in tackling CO2 emissions from aviation, but subsidises airports. The cabinet aims for a levy on paraffin for flights within ***Europe***. At the moment, this is the only fossil fuel without an excise duty. The cabinet is also working on a ticket tax.

Ryanair could *not be* reached for comment by *NRC* on Monday.

**Graphic**

A Ryanair employee at Dublin Airport.

Photo Chris Ratcliffe / Bloomberg

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Government Grants + Subsidies (71%)

**Industry:** Air Transportation (94%); Airports (82%)

**Load-Date:** July 16, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Big tech is powerful, but there is something to be done about it; Technology giants***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK7-X091-DYMH-R3W6-00000-00&context=) [***Resistance to the dominance of Google and Facebook also rises in the US; How to fix capitalism***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK7-X091-DYMH-R3W6-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 1

**Length:** 2500 words

**Byline:** Mark Beunderman

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

New monopolists

Resistance against the dominance of technology giants like Google and Facebook is spreading from ***Europe*** to the United States. Break it up, it is said. Difficult, experts say. Three options for intervention in a row.

**FULL TEXT:**

Apple Music no longer exists. It is called Muzyka and is separate from Apple. You can still shop online at Amazon, but Amazon's streaming service has been split off and is now called Horizon. You can still do your Instagrams as usual on Instagram - but that is a separate company from Facebook. Android no longer belongs to Google, the Xbox games shop no longer belongs to Microsoft.

This is what the future of Big Tech looks like, if it is up to the proponents of breaking up the big American tech firms (the names Muzyka and Horizon are inventions). With the increasing dominance of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and Microsoft, resistance to the technology giants is also growing. In ***Europe***, but recently also in the United States. There, the call to smash the mega-corporations into pieces is becoming more frequent.

The growth of the companies is staggering. Last year, the five giants together turned over a total of 715 billion ***euros***, nearly six times as much as ten years ago and about the same as the national income of the Netherlands. Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google and Microsoft are the five largest companies in the world in terms of market capitalisation. Together they are worth about 3,800 billion ***euros***.

It is not so much the growth itself that leads to resistance, but mainly the way in which the companies grow. With their products - platforms, clouds, services, proprietary software, often proprietary hardware - tied together, they eliminate the competition and thus harm the consumer, is the core of the criticism from consumer groups, politicians, academics and activists.

Discontent with Big Tech has so far been more prevalent in ***Europe***, partly driven by outrage at the violation of users' privacy through *tracking* software, for example. On top of this comes a mountain of complaints, ranging from tax evasion to the spread of disinformation and hatred.

In the US, a plea by the Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren received a lot of attention this spring. The senator wants to break up Amazon, Google and Facebook. The platform functions (such as Google's search engine and Amazon's marketplace) should be split off and regulated as 'platform utilities'. The rest should continue as separate companies. Warren also wants to reverse recent takeovers by the tech giants. For example, WhatsApp and Instagram should be separated from Facebook again.

On the other side of the political spectrum, too, the mood seems to be changing. President Donald Trump recently said that there is "clearly something going on in terms of monopolies" at tech companies. Stream of takeovers

In the US, we were very focused on the benefits these companies brought", says Charlotte Slaiman on the phone. She is a competition lawyer at Public Knowledge, an organisation that promotes an open internet. "Now it's more about the concerns that are out there."

Also president Diana Moss of the American Antitrust Institute, an organisation that advocates stricter competition policy, sees a "growing awareness" that Big Tech does not always benefit the economy and society. Slaiman and Moss point to the flood of acquisitions of smaller competitors and start-ups by the five tech firms. Potential market entrants and competitors are eliminated", says Moss. This nips innovation in the bud, says Slaiman - and ultimately the consumer suffers.

Meanwhile, American competition authorities seem to be on edge. A group of Apple users is preparing a case against the company for allegedly foreclosing the application market through its own App Store. According to media reports, Google is being investigated by the Department of Justice for suspected anti-competitive practices on its search engine, which, in combination with Google's own services such as YouTube, generates billions in advertising revenue. Another regulator, the FTC, has Amazon and Facebook in its sights. Amazon is strongly suspected of favouring its own products on its shopping platform.

Competition cases in the US against tech firms are not new. In 2001, the US judiciary reached a settlement with Microsoft for blocking competitors' programs on its Windows operating system. In recent years, however, it was mainly the ***European*** Commission that punished American tech companies. Google was fined by Brussels for giving preference to its own search engine on phones that run on Google's Android, among other things.

Complaints about Big Tech abound. But what is the best answer? Three options.

**Option 1 Breaking up**

The proposal by Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren appeals to the imagination: the axe to the wall, as happened at the beginning of the last century with the monopolists of the time. Standard Oil was declared a monopoly by the American authorities and was divided into more than thirty oil, refining and transport companies.

The question is whether such a solution would work for Big Tech. Warren wants to subject the companies to new legislation. Tech companies with an annual turnover in excess of 25 billion dollars (which the big five all achieve by a wide margin) would no longer be allowed to be platforms and service providers at the same time. Anyone searching for something on Google's search engine (a platform) would no longer always be redirected to Google Maps (a service). Because those would be separate companies.

Such a split is a horse of which experts are sceptical. The French economist Béatrice Dumont, professor at the Sorbonne in Paris and at the ***College of Europe*** in Bruges, foresees negative effects on innovation. A company that runs the risk of being classified as a platform might then refrain from investing."

Ariel Ezrachi, professor of competition law at Oxford, also predicts that the break-up of companies like Google will be a blow to investment and innovation in the tech sector, he emails. There is no magic solution. Users may return to the largest company after the break-up, which will then become dominant again."

In "extreme cases" the companies could be broken up - for political reasons only in the US, he thinks. It's one thing for the ***European*** Commission to fine a big American company like Google, it's another thing to force a US company to break up."

And even in the US, this is extremely difficult in practice, say US experts Moss and Slaiman, who both previously worked for competition authorities. Moss says that the government, as regulator of the remaining platforms (Google's search engine, Amazon's marketplace, Apple's App Store), runs the risk of becoming entangled in commercial interests. After all, who should decide how high the price of access to these platforms should be?

It is also possible to break up the groups with a competition case, brought by a competitor of a tech giant for example. Break-up would then be the answer to monopolistic behaviour by a company. But then breaking up would have to be demonstrably the solution to a specific crime. That is a high barrier for the courts", says Slaiman. Competition issues in the US often involve endless litigation.

**Option 2 Tighter on mergers**

There is a less drastic way to intervene with the tech giants. There are regular calls to apply the current competition rules more consistently - and to be more critical of mergers and acquisitions. In the space of six years, Google and Facebook alone have bought up a total of 150 companies without competition authorities raising any objections. Start-ups with smart ideas or popular services that (potentially) pose a threat to the tech giants enter what is called the *kill zone*: they are bought and neutralised.

Two examples. In 2007, Google bought DoubleClick, which specialised in the sale of online advertisements. Thus, Google's search engine became an advertising goldmine. And in 2012, Facebook paid a billion dollars for Instagram, which then only had 30 million users (now more than a billion).

According to Moss, it is the lax attitude of the competition watchdogs that has allowed "whole ecosystems" to emerge with "great market power". And the buying spree has no end: Google is now buying Looker, a data analysis company, for 2.6 billion dollars. This strengthens Googles own position in this field, but can also ensure that Googles competitors get less access to Looker's services, says Moss. Regulators should thoroughly scrutinise this deal, Moss believes. And they absolutely must also reassess past acquisitions."

For example, Facebook's purchase of Instagram would have to be reconsidered. Moss wants authorities to question whether Facebook's "market power" has degraded the quality of Instagram and thus "harmed consumers". There are quite a few complaints among users about the multitude of ads and about algorithms that determine which photos you see at the top of the app.

If necessary, Moss thinks the deal should be undone - a conclusion that Senator Warren has already drawn. But that will be very difficult, says Slaiman of Public Knowledge. It is a bit like reducing an omelette to two eggs. Meanwhile, Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg has fully integrated Instagram into his business.

**Option 3 Better regulation**

Not everyone is eager to use competition law to crush Big Tech. The size of the companies in itself is not a problem, says economist Béatrice Dumont. Companies look threatening, with turnover figures like that, and now they are planning to launch their own currencies. But in fact, they are vulnerable," she says, pointing to the rapid pace of innovation - including in China, where tech giants like Alibaba are emerging. Nobody guarantees that the big five will hold their positions.

It is important, however, that harmful effects for consumers are tackled and competition is promoted, Dumont believes. Regulation in other areas, such as privacy, copyright and data, would be more effective, she says. In the US, the introduction of a broad privacy law, like the ***EU'***s General Data Protection Regulation, is now being debated. California has already adopted a version of the AVG.

In ***Europe,*** the effects of the AVG are beginning to be felt. At the beginning of this year, Google was fined ***€50*** million by the French privacy regulator for failing to adequately inform users about privacy. Also on the basis of the AVG, the German competition watchdog Facebook prohibited the lumping together of user data from Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Incidentally, not everyone is equally positive about the effect of the AVG on Big Tech. The costs of complying with the regulations are so enormous that only mega-tech companies can bear them. This will ultimately strengthen their position, tech expert Cory Doctorow recently wrote in *The Economist*.

Regulation works better than splitting up the companies, believes Oxford professor Ezrachi. He co-wrote a report by the University of Chicago that proposes a Digital Authority in the US that would take on all regulation of the tech sector and that would stop companies from monopolistic behaviour. For example, this authority would have to enforce 'data portability' - the right to transfer your own data from one company to another.

This principle (also included in the AVG) is very important, because it takes away companies' monopoly on data, says Slaiman of Public Knowledge. "You should be able to take your friends from Facebook to another network."

What else could regulation do? Technical barriers can be broken down, so that anyone can 'break into' the big five with their own service ('interoperability'). Then Apple's competitors could start an app shop on the iPhone, for example. And there could be rules against discrimination against services of a competitor on their own platform ('non-discrimination'). Slaiman: "Tech companies can continue to offer the same products, but they have to compete all the time. We also regulated the telecom sector in this way. It took many years, but it worked."

Splitting the big tech companies is a horsepower that experts are sceptical about

**Series How to fix capitalism?**

Unrest is growing, due to growing income inequality, anger about tax avoidance, concerns about the future of the planet, dissatisfaction with the concentration of power in large tech companies and opposition to excessive market forces.

After 30 years of neo-liberalism, the question arises as to whether capitalism has broken down and society is losing faith in this economic system.

For this series, *NRC editors* went in search of the causes of the crisis in capitalism and possibilities for fixing it.

*Episodes:*

*1*

Capitalism is broken. Long live capitalism

2

Lessons from the 19th century

3

Four millennial socialists

4

The villains of capitalism

5

*How do you keep the tech monopolists in check?*

6

Experimenting with the Bristol Pound

7

Breaking away from neoliberal thinking

8

This allows companies to calculate fair prices

9

Who are the new economic thinkers?

**Photo series Markets First stock exchange**

*The world's first real stock exchange was established in Amsterdam in 1611 to facilitate trade in shares of the VOC.* On the Damrak. In 1911, the stock exchange moved to Beursplein 5, a little further down the road.

*It is now home to* ***Euronext****, formed in 2000 by the exchanges of Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris.* Where once shouting corner men stood, screens now dominate trading on the trading floor.

*For this series on capitalism, photographer Merlin Daleman visited a series of markets.* They have penetrated every facet of our lives. Markets have existed since ancient times and are an essential part of our capitalist society. Whether it is flowers, energy traded on screens or second-hand goods offered on digital marketplaces.

**Privacy Penalty for Facebook**

*The American Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the consumer protection regulator, wants to impose a fine of 5 billion dollars (4.4 billion* ***euros****) on Facebook* for the violation of users' privacy. This was reported by American media last weekend.

*The fine is the highest ever levied by the FTC on a tech company.* Facebook had already counted on the fine, which the company, with revenues of $56 billion in 2018, is well placed to pay. The US Department of Justice has yet to confirm the penalty.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Internet Social Networking (94%)

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[***Maternity room***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK6-F291-DYTV-D0MP-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 09

**Length:** 188 words

**Body**

NOORDWIJK - Noordwijk is working on a 'space campus' to bring business and education together with the ***European*** Space Agency, which has a technological research centre there. "The incubator of ***European*** space travel.

This was said by Roberto ter Hark, Noordwijk's alderman for space, during the celebration of fifty years of the moon landing in the permanent public exhibition Space Expo. The ***European*** Space Research & Technology Centre (ESTEC) of the ***European*** Space Agency (ESA) is located in Noordwijk.

"We want to give it more hands and feet. To create extra jobs, but also to interest more young people in space travel. Developments are moving fast, now that ***Europe*** wants to participate fully in the battle for prestige in space. We already have a lot of knowledge," said Ter Hark.

A feasibility study is nearing completion, he says. "We are also going to cooperate better with TU Delft and Leiden University.

According to Ter Hark, the national, provincial and municipal governments have made tens of millions in investment funds available to realise the campus near ESA ESTEC and Space Expo as quickly as possible.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Spacecraft (86%)

**Industry:** Space Industry (95%)

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[***Salvini struggles with Russia scandal***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK7-X091-DYMH-R3V0-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 14

**Length:** 684 words

**Byline:** Marc Leijendekker

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*Five questions on*  Salvini and Russia

Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini downplays the matter, but the scandal in Italy surrounding a plan to finance the Lega with Russian money is growing.

**FULL TEXT:**

The public prosecutor in Milan has launched an investigation into an attempt by Italy's ruling party, the Lega, to use a shady oil deal with Russia to obtain money for, among other things, its ***European*** election campaign. Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, the strong man of the cabinet in Rome, is seriously embarrassed by this. Is he cooperating with Russian influence on the political system of an ***EU Member State***?

1 What is the reason for the investigation?

Last week, the American news site *BuzzFeed* confirmed earlier reports of a meeting in October last year in the Moscow hotel Metropol. During that meeting, three Italians and three Russians discussed the possibility of an agreement. BuzzFeed published an audio recording of the conversation. After this, the earlier reports could no longer be denied. On Monday, the prosecution questioned Gianluca Savoini, chairman of the Lombardy-Russia Friendship Commission and involved in many contacts between the Lega and Russia, but he remained silent. The prosecution also wants to talk to Gianluca Meranda, a lawyer who supervises oil deals and who revealed himself last weekend that he was also at the meeting.

2 How does Salvini react?

He suggested at the end of last week that he hardly knew Savoini. The man is said to have acted on his own initiative and would also have talked his way into the dinner offered to Russian President Putin on 4 July during a short visit to Rome. A series of photos and media reports quickly revealed that Savoini had organised visits to and contacts with Russia in close cooperation with Salvini from at least 2014. It also emerged that he had been seated at the dinner with Putin through the intermediary of a direct adviser to Salvini. Salvini then tried to distract attention with pleas for the chemical castration of paedophiles and rapists and fierce criticism of the aid organisation Sea-Watch. While others occupy themselves with fantasies, we work on concrete problems', he tweeted on Sunday evening. He also underlined: "The Lega members do not get money from Russia, the US, Africa, Greenland: nothing." The revelations would be intended to discredit a "troublesome" party like the Lega.

3 What does this mean for the Italian cabinet?

Both Salvini's coalition partner Di Maio of the Five Star Movement and Prime Minister Conte, who mainly mediates between the two coalition parties, have distanced themselves from Salvini. Di Maio said that the legal leader should come and explain himself in parliament, something that Salvini has so far refused to do. The Democratic Party, which opposes the populist cabinet, is calling for a parliamentary committee of enquiry.

4 What exactly was discussed in that hotel in Moscow?

On the table was a plan to sell around three million tonnes of oil. Through intermediaries, it was to be sold from the Russian oil company Rosneft to the Italian oil giant ENI - who denied knowing anything about it this weekend. The oil would have to be sold for at least 4 percent below the official price; that money would go to the Lega. According to BuzzFeed, that would amount to 65 million dollars, about 58 million ***euros***. The suggestion was that the Russian side could negotiate an additional 2 percent discount, as a bribe to the Russian side. There are no indications that this plan has been implemented.

5 Who else was at the meeting?

The third Italian is so far known only as Francesco. One Russian has been identified, he is a close associate of the politically influential lawyer Vladimir Pligin. Pligin is vice-chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the ruling United Russia party, with whom the Lega signed a political cooperation agreement in March 2017.

**Graphic**

Salvini (left) and Savoini in Red Square, Moscow, on 18 November 2016.

Photo Stefano Cavicchi/LaPresse

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** International Relations (94%); COVID-19 Coronavirus (63%); Epidemics (63%); Infectious Disease (63%); Viruses (63%)

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[***Adieu excellence***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK6-F291-DYTV-D0NT-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** JOURNAL; Page 23

**Length:** 284 words

**Body**

The French ambassador Philippe Lalliot made a big splash at his residence to celebrate the French bank holidays of 14 July. It was his fourth and last time as ambassador, as the diplomat is moving with his family to Senegal this month to become ambassador.

No fewer than a thousand guests were served an abundance of snacks and drinks. It was without doubt the best diplomatic reception in The Hague. Lalliot praised the relations between the Netherlands and France. "Our ties have never been so good. King Willem-Alexander attended the women's football final in Lyon and Prime Minister Mark Rutte the 14 July celebrations in Paris. Rutte has visited President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysée six times in the past two years. That is a record! In ***Europe,*** we guard ***European*** values together and we promote them together. France is the second investor in the Netherlands and vice versa the Netherlands is in France", said the ambassador.

Among the many guests were chairman Ted Janssen of the 140-member restaurant association ***Euro-Toques***, which had admitted the capital's Johannes restaurant on the Herengracht as its latest member, and Commander Sabre Daam Scharloo. "We recently inaugurated the ambassador as an honorary member."

Except for the brand new State Secretary Ankie Broekers-Knol of Justice, there were again no members of government at the reception. However, Kadija Arib, the Speaker of the Lower House, and Jan Anthonie Bruijn, the new Speaker of the Upper House, were there. Former diplomat Hans Slingerland van Bemmelen was, like many others, angry that the name Haags Gemeentemuseum might become Kunstmuseum. "It's absurd."

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** International Relations (94%); Drug Policy (62%)

**Load-Date:** July 15, 2019

**End of Document**

[***We are going again soon".***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WK6-F291-DYTV-D0MM-00000-00&context=)

De Telegraaf

16 July 2019 Tuesday

Entire circulation

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 08

**Length:** 931 words

**Body**

Apollo 11 flight half a century ago inspired André Kuipers to become an astronaut

As a boy, the future astronaut André Kuipers (60) sat in front of the television with open mouths, just like millions of others, to see how the Americans Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin took the very first human steps on the moon on 21 July 1969. Exactly fifty years ago today, Apollo 11 was launched with thundering noise from Kennedy Space Center in Florida for a 'giant leap for mankind', as Armstrong said. Kuipers was sold ever since.

As a child, I watched the moon landing breathlessly. All the images of Apollo space travel fascinated me beyond belief," says André Kuipers. "In my youth, broadcasts and stories about people and vehicles on the moon and life in a space station definitely inspired me to become an astronaut. Just that floating in space and jumping and driving on our moon. Stepping outside the earth. That cosmic feeling has always stayed with me."

When he also received 'Perry Rhodan' science fiction books with cosmic adventures from his grandmother, Kuipers knew for sure: this is what I want to do when I grow up. He devoured popular science magazines like Kijk, watched all sorts of space series on TV and became engrossed in robots and aliens. Little André let his imagination run wild.

The boyhood dream came true much later, when Kuipers deliberately chose to study medicine in order to learn a profession that would be useful to him in space. He also got his pilot's licence for the same reason. Kuipers carefully chose each step of his career with the aim of eventually becoming an astronaut.

He first became a medical examiner for the Royal Netherlands Air Force, where he also dealt with disorientation in pilots and, expressly at his own request, space sickness. He then worked for a long time as a scientific researcher at the ***European*** Space Agency.

In 1998, Kuipers was selected as a would-be astronaut. After years of training, he was allowed to go into space. The first time, in 2004, he circled the earth for eleven days and in 2011 he stayed in the ISS for 193 days. "I clearly remember receiving the phone call in 2002. It was going to happen, my first flight. What a joy," he says.

Highlight

Kuipers sees the first moon landing as the high point in the history of mankind.

"It was the first time we went outside our biotope, similar to the transition from life in the sea to life on land. It's the first steps to spreading earthly life through the universe."

It was US President Kennedy who, in the space race with the Russians in 1961, took the decision to land a man on the moon before the 1970s and bring him safely back to earth. The Eagle has landed' were the historic words that brought a storm of cheers from all over the world.

Ten years earlier, on 7 November 1959, De Telegraaf had headlined "Man on the Moon, nonsense or real chance? There were also many sceptics among scientists who believed that it was technically impossible and that we had no business going there.

"How wrong they were", says Kuipers. "The moon is very important for new energy and mineral extraction, because you can travel there in a few days. And there is water. We have to solve the problems on earth in our environment. Mars is not an option to move to en masse because of the extreme distance and hostile conditions."

Kuipers keeps the best memories of the first time he saw the Earth from space. "And the green curtains of northern and southern light below me. What has always stayed with me from images on the moon is the emergence of our blue Earth in that inky black, cold void. Fantastic. But I also saw the wafer-thin atmosphere, the air and light pollution, the deforestation. I quickly realised that we have to be much more careful with the fragile earth."

In addition to the development of mining and clean (nuclear) energy, Kuipers believes that we will return to the moon, possibly as early as 2024, for further research, as a springboard for trips to Mars, for example, and to build giant telescopes.

"In addition, space tourism will also start there in the coming decades. First a trip around the earth, then the moon, including a space hotel. The business sector is showing great interest. Various commercial projects are in the pipeline," said Kuipers.

He believes that the world's energy and food production must change. "We have to get more in balance with nature, so that our resources are not depleted. Since 1969, the world population has almost doubled. This is a burden on our planet. The moon can serve as a source of energy and storage. We are going to rediscover the earth there."

Industry

According to Kuipers, superpowers such as China and India, as well as America and Russia, will intensively move into space, together with commercial companies. Industry will get involved. "We are going deeper and deeper into the universe to discover our own solar system and possibly find life."

Kuipers notes that the Netherlands has a strong, recognised space sector. "That position has been achieved by stimulating science and technology. We are good at making components and sensors for rockets and satellites. Dutch measuring instruments in space provide insights into the state of the earth. ***Europe*** must continue to invest in research in order not to fall behind."

It was the first time we went outside our biotope'.

Earthrise fantastic

Moon important for minerals

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Spacecraft (94%)

**Industry:** Space Industry (84%); Aerospace Industry (71%); Telecommunications (65%)

**Load-Date:** July 15, 2019

**End of Document**

[***After the Brexit, make English finally official lingua franca***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WPF-FVK1-JC5G-143V-00000-00&context=)

NRC Handelsblad

31 July 2019 Wednesday

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**Section:** OPINION; Page 18

**Length:** 764 words

**Byline:** Gaston Dorren  
  
Gaston Dorren

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

With the departure of the British from the ***EU***, English has become a neutral language. That offers a solution, writes Gaston Dorren.

**FULL TEXT:**

The departure of the British from the ***European Union*** is a great opportunity for language: it removes the last obstacle to embracing English as the ***European*** lingua franca.

When a divided United Kingdom voted for the Brexit in 2016, many fans of German and especially French saw their chance: the English language had to be turned down a notch in ***Europe***. ***MEP*** Johannes Singhammer (CSU), for example, thought that discrimination against the German and French languages had to end. Jean-Claude Juncker *himself* demonstratively switched from English to French halfway through a speech. And in the daily newspaper *Le Figaro*, the French officer Thomas Miailhes was allowed to plead for the French language as a 'recapture instrument'.

On the face of it, they have a point. At present, 13% of the ***EU population*** speak English as their mother tongue, 18% German and 12% French. These three are also the official working languages of the ***European*** Commission; in practice, however, English predominates. But after the Brexit, the proportion of English speakers among the ***EU population*** will drop to 1 to 2 percent, most of whom are Irish or expatriates. That is less than Dutch or Hungarian. The German share rises to 21 percent, the French to 14 percent.

It seems logical that the biggest languages should have the biggest role in government. But this logic is more a testimony to a lust for power than to wisdom or historical awareness. Experience shows that when the population speaks many languages, it is risky to give a special role to one of the 'most powerful' languages.

India tried this in the 1960s. Bloody riots ensued, and eventually the government gave in to the minorities: alongside Hindi, neutral English remained an official language. In the Soviet Union, Russian ruled the roost and has left Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine with a legacy of linguistic resentment and strife. Choosing an administrative language is, in short, a precarious matter. Majorities, especially large minorities, play with fire when they impose their mother tongue.

Fortunately, there are also hopeful examples. A multilingual country like Mozambique made Portuguese the state language: no one's mother tongue, but neutral. Tanzania did the same with a widespread trade language: Swahili. And the best example comes from Indonesia. Almost half the population speaks Javanese, but at the time of independence in 1945 the leaders allowed wisdom to prevail over linguistic chauvinism: as the administrative language they chose Malay, which they renamed 'Indonesian'. It was the mother tongue of a small minority, but by a historical coincidence it was also spoken by traders and officials throughout the country. Now, three quarters of a century later, a large majority of the population has mastered Indonesian as a second language. Indonesia has seen many conflicts, but no language wars.

What do we learn from this? If the population is multilingual, it is best to choose a neutral administrative language, one with few (domestic) native speakers. If it is also reasonably widespread as a second language, such as Swahili or Malay, that is a huge advantage.

Thanks to the Brexit, the ***EU*** will soon be in the same privileged position as Tanzania and Indonesia. A language that is practically nobody's mother tongue is spoken by a large minority - English. And since 86 per cent of ***European*** secondary school pupils learn this language (more than double the rate of French and German combined), English will even be a majority language among young people. The fact that Mr Juncker (64) and Mr Singhammer (66) are opposed to English will also be a generational issue.

As an ***EU member***, the British were irritating blockheads for 46 years, but their legacy may have been worth it: finally, the ***EU*** has a neutral means of communication, a 'nobody's language' in which everyone can express themselves more or less equally well (and equally imperfectly), a language in which ***Europeans*** can negotiate and debate on an equal footing.

Now we just have to hope that ***Europe'***s leaders do not take their inspiration from the Soviet Union, but from Indonesia.

Hopefully , ***European*** leaders will take a leaf out of Indonesia's book, not the Soviet Union's.

Gaston Dorren is the author of *Babel. The 20 Giant Languages of the World*. This article is a condensed version of a lecture he recently gave at the Full Circle House in Brussels.

**Graphic**

Illustration Jet Peters

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (88%); Teaching + Teachers (83%); Primary + Secondary Education (82%); Foreign Language Education (62%)

**Industry:** Educational Services (63%)

**Load-Date:** July 31, 2019

**End of Document**

[***French politicians under fire***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WPD-0TG1-JCBS-P33V-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 12

**Length:** 380 words

**Byline:** Eveline Bijlsma

**Body**

Yellow Rashes and angry farmers attack their homes

by Eveline Bijlsma

PARIS - MPs of the ruling party La République en Marche are being given police protection. Their homes and party offices are under extra surveillance after a dozen buildings were attacked and daubed by angry peasants and Yellow Berets.

Earlier, the gilets jaunes came to the homes and party offices of members of the ruling party to seek redress. The latest upsurge in violence has to do with the vote on the CETA trade agreement with Canada. The French parliament, the Assemblée Nationale, ratified the agreement last Tuesday with 266 votes in favour and 213 against.

In the night from Sunday to Monday, the permanence, the office of a representative of the people in the district where he or she was elected, of Carole Bureau-Bonnard in the north was attacked. The facade was smeared with eggs, bales of hay were dumped in front of the door. Farmers admit that they caused the havoc, to make themselves heard.

Bureau-Bonnard is one of the members of the governing party La Républiqe en Marche that voted in favour of the trade agreement with Canada. The agreements should make trade between the country and the ***European Union*** easier. Farmers speak of unfair competition, because their Canadian colleagues have to comply with less strict regulations.

"People often come to express their displeasure at the permanence. It's fine if people meet here or put up a few posters. But when there is violence, vandalism and hatred, it is no longer democratic dialogue for me. This is unacceptable," says Bureau-Bonnard. She says she also received serious threats during the parliamentary debates on the pesticide glyphosate.

Last Saturday, Romain Grau, also from the government party, was visited by Yellow Berets. At a demonstration that got out of hand, they tried to set the office on fire. Catherine Orsson from the north of France experienced that threats can come from all sides. At the end of last year, she voted against an amendment to set aside 20 million for research into children's cancer.

Thereupon, the deputy received letters in which the sender wished her daughter to die of the disease. Her house is already guarded.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Trade Treaties + Agreements (94%); ***European*** Union (73%); Genetically Modified Food (69%); Developing Countries (68%)

**Industry:** Farmers + Ranchers (77%)

**Load-Date:** July 30, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Torture is 'systematic' and 'endemic'.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WPF-FVK1-JC5G-1438-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** IN THE NEWS; Page 6

**Length:** 849 words

**Byline:** Christiaan Paauwe

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*Four questions about*  Azerbaijan

The largest country in the Caucasus is characterised by corruption and harsh repression of its people.

**FULL TEXT:**

The Aliyev dynasty has been in power in Azerbaijan for almost half a century. The regime is characterised by corruption and harsh repression of opponents. Journalists, activists and members of the opposition are intimidated and, if they remain too vocal, persecuted or even tortured.

The Netherlands decided to deport an activist asylum seeker from Azerbaijan this month. Immediately after his return, he was arrested. It is a clear signal to political dissidents: Azerbaijan does not tolerate criticism across the border either.

1 What characterises the Aliyev regime?

President Ilham Aliyev succeeded his father in 2003 and has since used various tricks to hold on to power, including putting an end to the maximum number of presidential terms. According to the Institute for Peace and Democracy, run by Azerbaijani human rights activist Leyla Yunus, there are around 120 political prisoners in the country, which has a population of just under 10 million. Compared to these figures, even Russia is doing relatively well: according to a count by the human rights organisation Memorial, over 230 political prisoners are in prison there this year, out of a population of about 145 million.

In 2014 and 2015, there was a wave of arrests, including of Yunus and her husband. The couple was suspected of spying for Armenia, among other things. After international pressure, also because the couple had medical problems, they were finally allowed to go to ***Europe***. Journalist Khadija Ismayilova revealed in 2010 that the then 12-year-old son of the president owned real estate in the United Arab Emirates worth some 40 million ***euros***. Cameras were hung in her bedroom and there were threats that the images would be made public if she did not stop.

After she raised the issue of attempted blackmail with the Council of ***Europe***, she was prosecuted and eventually sentenced to 7.5 years in prison for, among other things, tax evasion. In 2017, a critical journalist who fled to Georgia was allegedly kidnapped. He later emerged in a court in Azerbaijan where he was convicted, among other things, of illegally entering the country.

2 What are the conditions like in prisons in Azerbaijan?

A committee of the Council of ***Europe***, which Azerbaijan has also been a member of since 2001, concluded in a 2018 report that authorities are "systematically and endemically" guilty of torture. This regularly occurs during interrogations, for example by blows with truncheons or even electric shocks. Inspectors also found the medical assistance in prisons to be inadequate. According to Yunus, critics who are arrested have to choose: cooperate with the authorities by, for example, signing a false bill of indictment or be tortured. Her husband was also beaten in prison when he refused to sign a confession.

3 Has the situation in Azerbaijan deteriorated?

According to Rachel Denber of Human Rights Watch, the situation in the country has been bad for years, sometimes alternating with "dramatic moments, where the situation escalates". This was the case, for example, with dozens of arrests in 2014 and 2015. "Then the government retreats again." Both Ismayilova and Yunus were eventually released after pressure from the international community.

Yunus concludes that repression in Azerbaijan has become "more brutal". Arrests, torture. Every month people die in prison from their injuries." In 2018, nearly 3,200 Azerbaijanis applied for asylum in the ***EU***, a thousand fewer than the previous year. A total of 240 applications were received in the Netherlands, more than doubling compared to 2017. Asylum was granted in ten of the sixty cases processed.

4 What is ***Europe*** doing?

The Council of ***Europe*** came under scrutiny in 2017 when earlier suspicions were confirmed: ***European*** politicians had accepted bribes or gifts from Azerbaijan to report less critically on human rights abuses in the country. This so-called 'caviar diplomacy' led to a blind eye being turned.

The ***EU*** is faced with a choice: cooperate for the oil and gas of the Caucasian country or stand up for human rights. Brussels is currently working on a new agreement to strengthen political and economic cooperation. The ***EU*** and Azerbaijan are growing closer every year," ***European*** Council President Donald Tusk said after a meeting with Aliyev earlier this month.

Among other things, the ***EU*** is building a gas pipeline from Azerbaijan through Turkey to ***Europe*** to reduce dependence on Russian gas. However, a year ago, the ***European*** Parliament adopted a resolution demanding that a new economic agreement with Baku only go ahead if human rights are respected in Azerbaijan.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Human Rights (94%); Prisons (88%); Civil Rights (74%); Human Rights Violations (69%); Human Rights Organizations (65%)

**Load-Date:** July 31, 2019

**End of Document**

[***French are obstructive***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WPD-0TG1-JCBS-P339-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 08

**Length:** 702 words

**Byline:** Inge Lengton and Ruud Mikkers

**Body**

Dijsselbloem faced with 'dirty game' in IMF race

by Inge Lengton and Ruud Mikkers

The Hague - Former Minister of Finance Jeroen Dijsselbloem (PvdA) is still in the race to become Managing Director of the IMF. Meanwhile, the Brussels rumour mill is working overtime. The French, who are in charge of the ***EU nomination***, are said to be playing a 'dirty game'.

It is summer recess in political The Hague. Most politicians are baking somewhere on a beach. Except, of course, for Forum for Democracy. There they have been making each other's lives miserable for days.

Stick game

But not everyone is off the hook. In the background, for example, there is a joust going on for the coveted International Monetary Fund (IMF) managing director position, which has been engineered by international politics. France's Christine Lagarde is stepping down as IMF Managing Director and there are about five candidates in the race for her place.

The Netherlands has put forward PvdA member and former ***Eurogroup chairman*** Jeroen Dijsselbloem. He has to compete with the Portuguese Mário Centeno, the Finnish Olli Rehn, the Spanish Nadia Calviño, but most of all with the Bulgarian Kristalina Georgieva.

Actually, Georgieva (66) does not meet the IMF rules at all, as they state that the new Managing Director should not be older than 65. But France, currently the linchpin in the IMF game, sees her as its favourite candidate, sources say.

What plays into Georgieva's hands is that Eastern Europe is actually up for a major international role. The Bulgarian has also been working hard in recent years. She works at the World Bank and makes an impression there. She was also a ***European Commissioner*** for years. Her country had already put her forward to become Secretary-General at the UN, but that did not work out.

France is leading the process behind the scenes for a new Managing Director of the IMF. The country supplied the incumbent chair, Christine Lagarde. French Minister Bruno Le Maire is the spider in the web. It is said that the French are 'pushing' Georgieva. But she is just a year too old. To have a chance of getting the top job, the IMF rules must first be thrown overboard. France is willing, but that will take some doing. A qualified majority of IMF members is needed.

Another remarkable story is rattling around in the Brussels rumour mill. A shortlist has allegedly been leaked to both the southern and northern ***European*** Member States, containing only three names of candidates. But on the list the southern countries received other names than those of the northern ones, it is whispered. A well-informed source calls this "a dirty game".

Gossip

The Spanish Calviño and Portuguese Centeno were suddenly missing from the northern list, while those in the south would still be on it. They had one thing in common: Kristalina Georgieva's name was on both lists. Vicious gossip or truth? France has not released any information, except that officially there are still five candidates in the race. Moreover, the appointment is expected to take some time. White smoke is not expected until the end of August.

The Netherlands, meanwhile, is aiming for the favour of EU countries that are thought to be likely to go for Dijsselbloem. Northern Europe was already warming up to him, but he is not so comfortable in the southern member states, where the former ***Eurogroup chairman*** tightened the thumbscrews on countries that did not have their finances in order.

Opportunities

Yet, according to Dutch negotiators, there are still opportunities in Southern Europe. Cyprus and Greece are seen as options, but also Spain and Portugal, for example.

The latter two, with Calviño and Centeno, do have their own candidates for the IMF job, but their chances are allegedly dwindling. The Netherlands is already taking advantage of this. Should their own candidates be dropped, then the two Iberian countries, where socialists are in power, might be willing to go for social democrat Dijsselbloem? "He has a pretty good chance", says one of the people involved.

Rumour mill

running in Brussels

at full speed

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (87%); Central Banks (76%); Monetary Unions (70%); Economic Crisis (68%); Economic Development (64%)

**Load-Date:** July 30, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Johnson vague in Question Time***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WTK-JMG1-DYTV-D3NP-00000-00&context=)

De Telegraaf

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 13

**Length:** 349 words

**Body**

Prime Minister speaks 'live' to British public

From our correspondent

London - Members of the House of Commons, together with 'our ***European*** friends', are plotting a sinister plot to prevent Brexit. But Britain's fearless new Prime Minister Boris Johnson is on to them. He will ensure that the 'democratic wish' of the British people is fulfilled. On 31 October, the British will leave the ***European Union***.

Preferably with an agreement, of course. But if 'our ***European*** friends' do not want to 'compromise', then necessarily without a deal. Because the British have had enough of procrastination in recent years, Johnson knows.

Johnson has been Prime Minister for almost a month now. But due to the recess of the House of Commons, he has still not been able to make an appearance at the weekly Prime Minister's Question Time. But not to worry. Johnson introduced Wednesday the "Question Hour for the people". Britons could ask questions to the Prime Minister via Facebook. Johnson would answer them 'live'.

It was the old-fashioned Johnson again who came to mind. In order to become Prime Minister, he combed his hair neatly for a few months, but now that he has achieved his life's dream, his hair is just tousled again.

Whereas the questions in the House of Commons, if they come from the opposition, are often veiled insults, the Facebook questions were surprisingly open. Luther from Cheshire, for example, wanted to know how the Prime Minister intended to achieve his departure on 31 October. By wanting it, was Johnson's answer, only to lash out at party colleague and former finance minister Philip Hammond, accusing him of a 'Remain' conspiracy with his ***European*** friends. Questions about the possibility of a snap election were characteristically vague.

During the hour (of a total of 11 minutes), the Prime Minister was very sweet to the questioners. Trump is more interesting' was the scathing verdict of one twitter user. Maybe he needs some more practice, but based on the first episode, the ten-minute question is not here to stay.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (62%)

**Load-Date:** August 14, 2019

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[***EU and Indonesia clash over palm oil***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WTN-1KB1-DYMH-R2T0-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 4

**Length:** 1148 words

**Byline:** Annemarie Kas

**Dateline:** Jakarta

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Trade dispute

The ***EU*** is cracking down on subsidised biodiesel from Indonesia to stop deforestation. But does the new policy help?

**FULL TEXT:**

If you raise import tariffs on our biodiesel, we will raise tariffs on your dairy. The Indonesian Trade Minister had taken a good look at the United States and China when he recently threatened this revenge action. Indonesian dairy importers had better start looking for suppliers for their butter, milk and cheese in Australia, India or the US, the minister said. Because he would increase the import tariffs for ***European*** dairy by 20 to 25 per cent.

The threat did not have the intended effect in the ***EU***. Last Tuesday, new ***European*** import tariffs for biodiesel came into force. According to the ***European*** Commission, Indonesia has given government support to producers of palm oil and of biodiesel, for which raw palm oil is the main raw material.

The ***EU*** is raising import duties on biodiesel by 8 to 18 per cent. The percentages vary because Indonesian companies have not all benefited equally from the subsidies. The Indonesian government has not yet responded.

The levies come at a bad time. The trade in palm oil and biodiesel was already so sensitive between Indonesia and the ***EU***. Last March, the ***European*** Commission decided that palm oil would no longer be considered as a raw material for biofuel as of 2030. Much earlier, as of 2023, the use of palm oil for biodiesel must be reduced. In this way, the ***EU*** wants to combat deforestation, among other things.

The decision is known in Indonesian media as the *ban* on biodiesel - although that is not actually true. EU countries would still be able to import fuel made from palm oil, only it would no longer count as 'green' fuel. And the ***EU*** will continue to allow palm oil for other goods (ice cream, chocolate, cosmetics).

**Discrimination**

In any case, Indonesia and Malaysia - together producing 85% of the world's palm oil - are reacting defensively. Last week, the Malaysian Prime Minister and the Indonesian President said they would act together against the ***EU***. They are threatening to go to the World Trade Organisation. They call it 'discriminatory' to restrict palm oil and not other oils such as soy or rapeseed.

Palm oil is a completely polarised subject, says scientist Erik Meijaard. For years, he has been involved in deforestation in Indonesia and conducted research for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) into the loss of biodiversity through the production of palm oil. Yes, he says, if you zoom in on the production of palm oil, biodiversity will inevitably be lost. Only: ,,At the moment we know little about the bigger picture. We don't really know what the consequences would be if you were to phase out palm oil and replace it with other crops."

Four to ten times less land area is needed to produce palm oil than is needed to grow soya beans or rapeseed. Meijaard has considered what would happen if palm oil were to be 'taken out of the mix' of global vegetable oil production. In 2050 you would need about 145 million hectares more land to meet demand than if you continued to use palm oil. So I am surprised that the ***EU*** is announcing such a tough policy, while we are not sure from the science whether it makes sense."

Meijaard therefore understands why the Indonesian and Malaysian governments react so violently. They defend the palm oil industry because millions of farmers depend on it for their income. Their main argument is that palm oil production contributes to reducing poverty. But even that is not entirely true: In Sumatra, palm oil has contributed positively to poverty reduction. But in other areas of Indonesia, on Kalimantan and in Papua, small farmers benefit much less."

It is very difficult for supporters and opponents of palm oil to find each other, says Meijaard, because the values they hold so different. You cannot compare one hectare of deforestation with the prevention of malnutrition. One thinks sustainability is most important and that the orang-utan survives. The other puts the income of its inhabitants first."

**Sustainability**

Another problem with the ***EU measure*** is that in practice it is likely to be bad for the sustainability of production in Indonesia, says Herry Purnomo. He is a scientist at the Indonesian Center for International Forestry Research. Purnomo predicts that Indonesia will focus more on markets where sustainability is not so important: India, China, Pakistan. Then the incentive for sustainable entrepreneurship will completely disappear. And if they sell it there for a low price, deforestation is likely to increase.

The Indonesian government is also going to boost domestic demand. President Joko Widodo said on Monday that he wants to raise the percentage of palm oil in diesel from 20 to 30 percent as of January. By the end of 2020, the percentage should even reach 50 percent.

Is this, alongside the trade conflict between China and the USA, the start of a second trade war, between the ***EU*** and Indonesia and possibly Malaysia?

The wrangling over palm oil is less wide-ranging than US President Donald Trump's complaint that China treats the US unfairly and deprives Americans of their jobs. But there is a real chance that these sorts of arguments about palm oil will make the negotiations on a broader trade agreement between the ***EU*** and Indonesia, which have been going on for years, more difficult. Especially if Indonesia indeed decides to retaliate with higher import duties on EU products.

Whether that will actually happen is still unclear. The extra taxes on biodiesel are temporary and the parties involved - that is both the Indonesian government and companies - have until early October to react to this decision. If the dairy tariffs do go up, it will mainly affect producers of milk powder. Indonesia is the third largest importer of milk powder outside the ***EU***. When it comes to butter and cheese, Indonesia is a small player.

**Populist era**

In any case, the tensions surrounding palm oil fit perfectly into "this populist era", says Purnomo. In ***Europe,*** the fanatics against palm oil shout the loudest. And they provoke the *hardliners* in Indonesia. In his opinion, it would be best if "the wise policymakers of Indonesia and the ***EU***" together draw up criteria for a sustainability standard. This standard could easily be stricter than the labels that are already in place, he says: "It is the only way to encourage sustainable production."

I am surprised that the ***EU*** is announcing such harsh policies

Erik Meijaard scientist

**Graphic**

Indonesia and Malaysia are major palm oil producers

A forest fire near a palm oil plantation in Sumatra at the end of July. According to scientists, biodiversity is lost with the production of palm oil.

Photo Wahdi Septiawan/Reuters

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Deforestation (94%); Forests + Woodlands (94%); Rain Forests (89%); Emissions (62%); Government Grants + Subsidies (61%)

**Industry:** Agriculture (67%); Forestry + Logging (67%); Forestry Regulation + Policy (67%)

**Load-Date:** August 15, 2019

**End of Document**

[***The man who is keeping Johnson on a collision course; Dominic Cummings***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WTN-1KB1-DYMH-R2PG-00000-00&context=) [***The political strategist who is setting Boris Johnson on a collision course***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WTN-1KB1-DYMH-R2PG-00000-00&context=)

NRC Handelsblad

15 August 2019 Thursday

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 1050 words

**Byline:** John Hoogerwaard

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*Profile*  Dominic Cummings Advisor British Prime Minister

Boris Johnson refuses to rule out a No Deal on 31 October. The architect of that gravelly message? Dominic Cummings.

**FULL TEXT:**

Control. If anything typifies the working method of political strategist Dominic Cummings (47), it is that word. At the turn of the century, he coined the slogan '*Keep the pound, keep control*', when he worked on the campaign to keep the British out of the ***euro***. As director of the Leave campaign, '*Take back control*' was such a powerful slogan that, according to political commentators, it was decisive in the 2016 Brexit vote.

Not surprisingly, Prime Minister Boris Johnson appointed Cummings as his most important advisor after his election at the end of July. Cummings in particular has shown that he is capable of getting things moving in the right direction with a consistent message. Cummings is not in the foreground, but his presence is a sure sign for insiders. Philip Hammond, Chancellor of the Exchequer under May and still a Conservative MP in the House of Commons, was quoted in *The Times* on Wednesday as calling the Johnson government "the unelected people" who are "pulling the strings", a clear sneer at Cummings and his considerable influence.

**Crashing the place**

In recent weeks, the message from Downing Street 10 has been consistent: we are leaving the ***EU*** on 31 October, at all costs. If necessary, with a No Deal. That message and the loyalty it requires are hammered into everyone's head in Cummings style.

Some commentators say the hammering on this message is negotiating tactics aimed at Brussels, in the hope of getting a better deal after all. But many Remainers fear that Johnson, under the influence of Cummings, is now prepared to really crash the boat on 31 October. Thus, the scenario is circulating that the Prime Minister dissolves the House of Commons, for example by calling new elections to be held just after the Brexit date.

House of Commons Speaker John Bercow said in Edinburgh on Tuesday that he would block such scenarios with all his might. But the discussion in London in recent weeks has focused on the question: how? The House of Commons, back from recess at the beginning of September, has hardly any tried and tested means at its disposal. The government has a majority of only one seat, but even if Johnson loses a possible confidence vote, there is a chance that he could still remain prime minister as long as others in the House of Commons fail to form an alternative majority government within 14 days with a leader acceptable to all participating groups.

The bond that the 2016 Leave victory forged between Cummings and then-leaders Boris Johnson and Michael Gove cannot be underestimated. With Gove, now the 'No Deal' minister in Johnson's team, the strategist already worked closely between 2007 and 2014.

**Clenched fist**

According to an anecdote by Cummings himself, the day after the Brexit vote, on 24 June 2016, Johnson entered the Leave office with clenched fist and promised him he would get the Brexit done.

According to Cummings , the slogan 'Take back control', with which the Brexit camp managed to win the referendum against all the polls, had a great advantage: it could be used to capture everything that went wrong in 2015 and 2016. The migration flow at the time, the aftermath of the financial crisis, the dislike of bankers and highly paid CEOs: everything was dragged in to play on the anger and fear among voters, the strategist explained in 2017 during a rare extended public appearance. Most voters are simultaneously much more left-wing and much more right-wing than everyone thinks. The frame that people are on one side of the spectrum with another group in the middle is fundamentally wrong," Cummings said in his speech.

He and his small team of mainly *tech savvy* youngsters did the most important work in the last ten days of the Leave campaign. By using data to map out where the doubters lived and what their dreams and especially fears were, 7 million people could be targeted with no less than 1.5 billion online messages in the final days before the ballot, mainly via Facebook. These were advertisements about migration, the danger of Turkey as a future ***EU member*** or, for example, greedy bankers.

**Stand in the way**

After the 2016 victory, Cummings had to watch from the sidelines as the Brexit debate led to political chaos in the UK. Ex-Prime Minister Theresa May failed to get her Conservative party behind the Brexit deal with Brussels, further tearing apart the already divided Conservatives.

Now it is up to Johnson and Cummings. The desire to make short work of the lingering situation that has arisen under May is in line with the reproaches that Cummings has made in recent years to her, to members of the House of Commons and especially to departmental officials, whose group-think, he says, is the biggest obstacle to change and progress.

Cummings shares many of those frustrations on his weblog dominiccummings.com, with rags of speeches. There, he allows the reader a peek inside his head, where an eclectic mix of admiration for NASA (control!), the German statesman Otto von Bismarck, mathematics and education resides.

And although his principals and political bosses are mainly Tory, Cummings is not afraid to take a swipe at Conservative politicians too. In March, he called the ***European*** Research Group, the Brexit hardliners within the Tory group, a collection of narcissists. And he once expressed the view that many poorer voters are right when they argue that Tory MPs probably don't care about them. That does not sound like a man who is flown in when there is a need for support and harmony.

He is not in the game to save the Conservative Party, Cummings once wrote. I have never been a party man. I am not a Tory, a libertarian, a populist or anything else. I do projects because I think they are worth it."

Cummings is not the man who is flown in for support and harmony

**Graphic**

Dominic Cummings, the silent force behind British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Photo Peter Nicholls/REUTERS

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (62%)

**Load-Date:** August 15, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Ban***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WTN-1KB1-DYMH-R2SX-00000-00&context=) [***France already bans pulse fishing***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WTN-1KB1-DYMH-R2SX-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 4

**Length:** 210 words

**Dateline:** Paris

**Body**

France has already banned pulse fishing in its territorial waters. This was announced by the French Ministry of Agriculture on Wednesday.

With this measure, the French authorities are anticipating a ***European*** total ban on pulse fishing. This will come into effect on 1 July 2021. The measure, which became final in April, is seen as a blow to Dutch fishermen, who have invested heavily in the technology.

With pulse fishing, fish are startled with electric shocks and driven into the net. This technique is banned in several places in the world, but according to proponents it has many advantages. They point to lower fuel consumption on fishing boats, less bycatch and less strain on the seabed.

French fishermen have been complaining about pulse fishing for some time. They think there is unfair competition from the Dutch who use the technique. The French environmental organisation Bloom fought fiercely and successfully against what it called the 'electrocuting' of fish. According to opponents, pulse fishing would also lead to overfishing.

Pulse fishermen who are forced to stop are expected to return to beam trawling, where they drag heavy chains across the seabed to catch fish. (ANP/AFP)

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Fishing, Hunting + Trapping (76%); Associations + Organizations (65%)

**Industry:** Fishing Regulation + Policy (94%); Commercial Fishing (68%)

**Load-Date:** August 15, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Despot in Downing Street or finally Brexit progress?***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WXV-KD11-JC5G-11P1-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION; Page 18

**Length:** 965 words

**Byline:** Hans Steketee

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

In British and ***European*** newspapers, the suspension of parliament in London in the run-up to the Brexit was big news. Hans Steketee read the comments.

**FULL TEXT:**

Who is the boss, the people or the people's representatives? Following the decision to suspend parliament, there has been loud anger and acclaim in the British press. But the commentators do agree on one thing: Prime Minister Boris Johnson has now turned the Brexit debate into a duel between *The People and The Parliament*.

In doing so, he is putting "a bomb under the UK's constitutional arrangements", writes the *Financial Times(FT)* in a highly critical editorial. It is an unacceptable attempt to silence parliament until it can no longer prevent the UK's catastrophic exit from the ***EU*** on 31 October.

On the contrary, writes the pro-government *Daily Telegraph*: "After three years of decline, compromise and humiliating loss under Theresa May, the country has a prime minister who is clearly prepared to go to extremes to carry out the will of the people."

The 'will of the people' then is the result of the 2016 referendum, in which a small majority of voters voted to leave the ***EU***. But parliament has so far failed to find a majority for any form of Brexit. It has only spoken out against a no-deal exit, the No Deal, which Johnson is precisely not ruling out.

The *FT* calls Johnson's suspension proposal "constitutional vandalism" by a potential "despot in Downing Street". But few other newspapers support the idea that it would be unconstitutional. The Prime Minister "is perfectly within his rights", says *The Sun*, the biggest tabloid, "it doesn't make him a dictator". *The Times*, also owned by Rupert Murdoch, but unlike The Sun not a Brexit advocate, calls Johnson's plan a "rational use of executive power", saying "those who complain about the mistreatment of parliament should realise how little that itself has managed since 2016."

Even *The Guardian* writes: It is true that Mr Johnson is plunging the country into a constitutional crisis, but it helps to keep things in perspective. It is a cynical and deliberate attack on the principle of parliamentary democracy, but it is not a total overthrow of the constitutional order, comparable to a military putsch. The Prime Minister is once again demonstrating his irresponsible arrogance, but he is operating within the parameters that the archaic British political system allows him."

That is precisely what makes a suspension so dangerous, adds the newspaper. Like any illusionist, Johnson knows how to lard deception with bits of truth. (...) He is hijacking the powers of the crown in order to damage his parliamentary opponents."

How that fight will end is the question. It is clear that Johnson is taking a huge gamble. In the end, elections can and must be the deciding factor, according to many commentators. If Johnson is really so convinced of the support of the people, he should dare to put it to the test in an election', according to the FT. *The Times* also takes that line: "There is only one way for someone who wants to govern the country even after a Brexit - '*deal or no-deal*' - to do so: he will have to make it clear in a general election that the country will benefit and remain united."

Elections thus become a second Brexit referendum, although the *Daily Mail* does not believe so: at those elections, if they come, Johnson can "remind voters of his impressive agenda on security, infrastructure, education and care".

Abroad, the suspension is front-page news everywhere and many newspapers immediately devote a commentary to it. *Die Welt* labels Johnson's manoeuvre in good German as *der finale Showdown* in a long-running conflict, and notes that it is "ironic" that Johnson is now suspending democracy while "Brexit proponents have often used the ***European Union***'s lack of democracy as an argument in favour of a Brexit".

The French newspaper *Libération* also writes about what it calls Johnson's "sovereignist scam": "You invoke the popular will when it suits you and you ignore it when the people disagree with you."

*De Standaard* (Belgium) echoes Johnson's description of the Brexit as a *do or die* affair ('all or nothing') back to the Prime Minister, who is now putting everything on the line: "In the coming weeks it should become clear [which of the two] it will be for him."

The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* says Johnson is "ruthlessly using his power" to "survive politically", but the Swiss newspaper perhaps best captures what many Britons also feel: a sense of relief that the end of the three-year paralysis may now be in sight: "The prospect of an endlessly continuing Brexit row is not an appealing alternative either."

In Ireland, an island away, Johnson's manoeuvre is causing predictable anger. "No matter how many times Johnson and his minions claim they are carrying out the will of the people, that cannot change the fact that no one voted for this," writes *The Irish Times*. "No British citizen has ever been asked to approve a hard Brexit, let alone a No Deal." Like no other ***EU member state,*** Ireland is aware of its vulnerability in the event of a hard Brexit. In the eyes of the *Irish Independent,* Johnson has chosen "the nuclear option". The Irish government's position of "staying out of the UK's internal turmoil" is unsustainable, according to the newspaper. "Everything has changed, and our country is right under the clouds of radioactive fallout."

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (62%)

**Load-Date:** March 9, 2020

**End of Document**

[***European Central Bank***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WXV-KD11-JC5G-11RD-00000-00&context=) [***Knot: ECB should not buy new debt***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WXV-KD11-JC5G-11RD-00000-00&context=)

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30 August 2019 Friday

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**Section:** ECONOMICS; Page 2

**Length:** 173 words

**Dateline:** Amsterdam

**Body**

The ***European*** Central Bank (ECB) must refrain for the time being from buying up government and corporate loans again. This has Klaas Knot, the president of the Dutch Central Bank, said Thursday in a conversation with Bloomberg.

Knot sees no risk of deflation at present, despite the economic slowdown in the ***euro area,*** he said. If that risk returns, debt buybacks "are the appropriate instrument to activate", Knot said. "But in my reading of the inflation outlook, that is not necessary."

In doing so, Knot distanced himself from ECB President Draghi, who announced after the previous meeting of the ECB board in July that experts were going to investigate "options" for a restart of the bond purchase. At the next meeting, 12 September, the board must take a decision on this. Knot told Bloomberg that he "doesn't see any added value" of the measure. The fact that he spoke out so clearly against the bond purchase shortly before this meeting indicates disagreement in the ECB board. (NRC)

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Central Banks (94%)

**Load-Date:** March 9, 2020

**End of Document**

[***EU Extends duties on Chinese bicycles***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WXT-4DT1-DYTV-D3HB-00000-00&context=)

De Telegraaf

30 August 2019 Friday

Entire circulation

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 22

**Length:** 182 words

**Body**

Bicycle industry

Brussels

The ***European*** levies on Chinese bicycles will be extended by five years. The ***European*** Commission decided on Thursday. The import tariffs, first imposed in 1993, amount to 48.5 percent. They also apply to bicycles imported from Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Cambodia, Pakistan and the Philippines, as it has been found that Chinese bicycles are imported into the ***EU*** from these countries.

According to the ***EU***, Chinese producers benefit from unfair state aid. For example, they receive tax breaks, favourable financing and can benefit from controlled aluminium prices. This enables the Chinese to sell their bicycles at below cost price.

Abolition of the levies would cause considerable damage to the ***European*** bicycle industry, according to research by the ***European*** Commission. In 22 ***EU*** member states, more than 11 million bicycles are produced annually. That accounts for 100,000 jobs.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Nontariff Barriers (94%); Cycling (80%); ***European*** Union (78%); Trade Regulation + Policy (73%); Clothing + Accessories (63%)

**Load-Date:** August 29, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Letters***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WXT-4DT1-DYTV-D3MC-00000-00&context=)

De Telegraaf

30 August 2019 Friday

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**Section:** WATU-SAY; Page 18

**Length:** 1112 words

**Body**

Mirror

What a strange remark by Minister Grapperhaus: 'The drug user should take a good look in the mirror about his use' (Tel. 29/8) I think Grapperhaus meant to say: 'Politics and especially GroenLinks and D66 should take a good look in the mirror about their policy'. But yes, seriously look at yourself in politics, they don't do that. And so our country is sliding further downhill.

Rienk Halma

Previously

The moving of NPO programmes like Pauw and Jinek to an earlier time - as of January - has in my opinion nothing to do with the viewer's 'bedtime' that they are worried about, but everything to do with fear of competition from RTL and Talpa. Politically correct hypocrisy in Hilversum...

Fred Slobbe, Zwaag

Cancellation

If this continues, savers will withdraw their money from the banks. If interest rates were negative, I would also withdraw my savings, but what will happen to current accounts? They will probably cost us a lot of money. Can we also cancel our regular account and, for example, collect the AOW payment at the counter? The government should take measures now.

W.H. van Ottele,

Berg en Dal

Lijntje

Grapperhaus wants to hold a mirror up to cocaine users. There must be a line!

Peter van der Laarse,

Badhoevedorp

Brexit

It is unbelievable how many jobs we will get within our borders with a 'hard' Brexit. But the question arises: where do we house all these companies in view of the ***European*** nitrogen standards in the PAS law and the Council of State, which is completely out of touch with reality? Presumably France will be the one to get them... The French do not care about any EU rules as long as they are not in their favour.

J. Prins, Sliedrecht

Sparrows

Summer had super heat wave, tornado and frost (Tel. 29/8) Yes, that does happen sometimes, but you have to take the average and judging by the geological scale, it is of little significance for the time being. August was a beautiful month, a little dry, it is true, but in September it starts raining again. My grandparents in Amsterdam told me about the 1920s, when it was so hot that the sparrows fell from the trees and you could fry fried eggs on the road surface of the Koninginneweg. I now live in France, but was it the same this summer in Amsterdam? I didn't hear anything about that.

Henri F. Kleyn

Criminals

Who are the criminals? Those who earn money with drugs etc., or banks that facilitate money laundering, enforcers who do not enforce the law or the tax authorities who also do not check. If a small earner buys a fat BMW and pays for it with cash, they are the first to notice. But known criminals with the most beautiful cars and yachts can go on for years. It gives you pause for thought.

G. Pakvis, Monster

Knife

Supermarket chain Albert Heijn is reportedly cutting back on its management layer. The new arrangement comes out of the top hat of top woman Marit van Egmond. She has been at the helm of AH since 1 February. Women like that should be in politics, then they would be able to get rid of the nitpickers there too. The majority have their own 'hobby'.

C. Maertzdorf

Euthanasia

A suffering person who wants euthanasia must be able to say 'yes' clearly at the moment of euthanasia. If I am demented or mentally incapacitated, a living will is not legally valid. Then you should be free to use the hypothetical Drion's pill. But who then? The mentally incompetent? That cannot be, only the greedy family can get hold of it ...

Herman Marsman

Advertising

A letter writer (WUZ, 28/8) was very much looking forward to Man bijt hond. However, she detests the commercial of no less than 12 minutes. Usually, I think it is 'only' 8 minutes. Advice to the fan of Man bijt hond: watch it one day later in a delayed format on your laptop, you will not be bothered at all by the commercials.

Krijn Schoonderwoerd,

Leiden

Report

After a serious report on the quality of life in Amsterdam, Mayor Halsema reacts very resignedly that she wants Amsterdam to remain tolerant towards the use of drugs. This is a slap in the face for all concerned parents, victims of drug-related violence and the entrepreneurs who work by the book.

J. van der Meeren,

Eindhoven

Tourists

The economy in, for example, Haarlem, Amsterdam, Giethoorn and many other places worth seeing, which for years did everything to attract tourists, now want to get rid of the influx of (foreign) visitors. It has become too busy. Soon, they will notice that they are missing out on millions in income, local taxes will have to be raised and then they will start recruiting tourists again, because they will notice it in their pockets. I myself would not even go to those places anymore, because as a tourist you are not really welcome there. Get out and spend your money elsewhere, where they are still happy with you (***euros***).

J. v. Reenen

Cycle

Thanks to Mario Draghi, the President of the ***European*** Central Bank, the economics books will have to be rewritten. Borrowing money no longer costs money, in fact, you get money. Recessions (quite normal in the economic cycle) must be avoided at all costs.

Jan Paul Steer,

Deventer

ArenA

Whoever decided to leave the roof of the ArenA closed during Ajax-APOEL should perhaps think about what it would be like to be there yourself, high up on the second ring. It's so hot you can't stand it! I checked the rain app: 0.1 mm precipitation during the whole evening!

Marcel van Leeuwen,

Barsingerhorn

Press

These will be busy times in 2020: 27 April, Queen's Day, 1 May, Labour Day, 3 May, Grand Prix Zandvoort, 4 May, Remembrance Day with extra attention and Liberation Day on 5 May, which is a bank holiday this time round... If only that goes well.

A. Bulten, Warnsveld

Artis

Council member Johnas van Lammeren of the Party of the Animals pleads for the closure of Artis. (Tel. 29/8). The animals are kept in cages and have a bad life, according to him. Now I have lived in Africa for six years, experienced dozens of safaris and collected money for wildlife parks. I know what it is like there: poachers, predators, food shortage, water shortage, suffering from diseases or a broken leg. The animals in Artis are pampered like in a five-star hotel. Animals living in the wild would love to exchange places with them.

Robert van Meerendonk,

Amsterdam

Disrupt

The threats to cut pensions continue. Pension funds and politicians seem to take great pleasure in ruining the old age of the elderly and pensioners with uncertainties about our incomes.

B. Daniel

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Animals (94%); Central Banks (71%); Death + Dying (62%)

**Industry:** Tourism (69%)

**Load-Date:** August 29, 2019

**End of Document**

[***AfD wants to complete revolution 1989***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WXV-KD11-JC5G-11N9-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** IN THE NEWS; Page 6

**Length:** 913 words

**Byline:** Juurd Eijsvoogel

**Dateline:** Bernau/Cottbus

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

German state elections

Right-wing protest party may become largest party in two East German states on Sunday. It would be a new breakthrough.

**FULL TEXT:**

'I used to box,' explains AfD candidate Hans Link, 'and I like a joke.'" He looks with satisfaction at his election poster, on which he - a man clearly in his sixties - sits sweaty, wearing a white shirt and bandages on his wrists in the corner of a boxing ring. For you in the ring', he says.

On Sunday, Link hopes to be elected to the Brandenburg state parliament in his district north of Berlin. He is not a professional politician, but a former construction worker, now self-employed in the security business - someone who is close to his voters. And he has good chances. In the ***European*** elections in May, the AfD became the largest party here, in the area around the town of Bernau, with over 19 per cent of the votes.

The elections in Brandenburg and Saxony, both federal states of what used to be the GDR, are eagerly awaited throughout Germany. On Sunday, the AfD could become the largest party in one or even two state parliaments for the first time. It would be a new breakthrough, after the protest party already became the largest opposition party in the Bundestag in 2017.

According to the polls, the AfD in Brandenburg is engaged in a neck-and-neck race with the SPD, which has been governing there since 1990. In Saxony, the AfD is only a few points behind the dominant party there for almost thirty years, the CDU.

To reinforce the boxing theme, Hans Link set up a real boxing ring in the auditorium of a school in Bernau, where he was holding an election rally. Standing in the ring, now in a white shirt and long trousers, Link spoke passionately about his plans for two hours. About traffic, education, public transport and other local issues that play a role in this fast growing suburb. The AfD does not just want to be a protest party.

**As long as they adapt**

The topic that made the party great, criticism of Chancellor Merkel's refugee policy, is discussed in a roundabout way: sports halls should be accessible free of charge, "especially for women, who no longer dare to jog alone in the street for fear of being attacked". The AfD is seen as a "party of right-wing radical Nazis", Link knows, but "I have nothing against refugees, as long as they adapt". People nod in agreement.

The AfD is the only party that says what it says", said one woman afterwards. If you don't agree with Merkel's refugee policy, you are already a Nazi nowadays. There is no freedom of speech any more. As if we were back in the GDR. The more politicians and media warn about the AfD, the more I believe in it."

In its campaign, the AfD presents itself as the successor to those who brought down the GDR regime 30 years ago with persistent and courageous protest. The peaceful revolution of that time, the 'Wende', must now be completed. *Vollende die Wende!"* and "Wir sind das Volk!", read AfD posters. To the anger of many activists of the time, who accuse the AfD of misusing history.

The established parties have difficulty reaching voters, says independent communications consultant Ben Seidemann. Look at the SPD's slogan: "One Brandenburg". What does that say? Compare that with 'Complete the Wende'. You can agree with it or not, but there is a clear call to action in there."

**Freedom of opinion**

In the city of Cottbus, in south-eastern Brandenburg, large signs are erected along the road, bearing only the word "Freedom of Opinion" and the AfD logo, a red arrow on a blue background. The party, which gained 30.9 per cent here in the ***European*** elections, likes to feed the feeling that you can't say anything anymore these days. Discontent is particularly strong in this region, Lusatia, which has traditionally been heavily dependent on brown coal mining. As part of its climate policy, the government has decided that all coal-fired power stations must close by 2038. The only party that does not want to know about this is the AfD.

Industry federation IGBCE has agreed to the government's decision with gritted teeth, says Ute Liebsch, who heads the federation in Cottbus. And only because the government has promised billions in investment to help the coalmining areas improve their infrastructure and develop new business. Train and road connections, internet and mobile phone coverage still leave much to be desired. On Wednesday, four days before the elections, the cabinet decided: there will be forty billion for coal regions in East and West Germany.

Unemployment in Brandenburg is at an all-time low of just six per cent. But people are afraid to fall back on meagre benefits when mining stops and coal-fired power stations close", says Liebsch. After German unification, there was a dramatic exodus from the region: many people moved west. The depleted population fears another exodus if the best jobs disappear with the coal.

Liebsch is holding her breath for a victory for the AfD. We also need investment from abroad. We can forget that if people from other countries, who may look different to what we are used to, do not feel welcome and safe here."

If you don't agree with Merkel's policy for refugees, you are already a nazi nowadays

AfD voter

**Graphic**

Supporters of the Alternative für Deutschland at an election rally last weekend in Dresden, Saxony.

Photo Hannibal Hanschke/Reuters

Campaign poster of Hans Link, AfD candidate for the Brandenburg state parliament. For you in the ring", it reads.

**Classification**

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**Subject:** Political Parties (94%); Politics (75%)

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[***four questions on the conduct of Brexit***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WXT-4DT1-DYTV-D3HJ-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 24

**Length:** 408 words

**Body**

With Prime Minister Boris Johnson sidelining the British Parliament, it has become even more unclear what the Brexit will look like. This is particularly unfavourable for Dutch companies. Four questions on how to proceed.

1 Is a hard Brexit now inevitable?

A hard Brexit means that the British will leave the ***EU*** without any agreements on what that departure will look like. From one day to the next, they will not be part of the common market and the customs union.

A majority in Parliament is against this. But with Johnson suspending them until mid-October, they have much less time to counteract a possible hard Brexit. However, it is still possible to submit a motion of no confidence. If Johnson loses that, there will be new elections. It is then possible that a postponement of the Brexit deadline, now on 31 October, will be requested.

2What does this mean for Dutch companies?

For them, a hard Brexit would not be good news. A study by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), published yesterday, shows that Dutch companies would suffer more from a hard Brexit than companies in other ***European*** countries.

According to the PBL, much depends on the details of the departure. This is very important for the agriculture and food industry, for example, where many rules apply to food safety. Or they may face higher costs because tariffs will apply. Since it is not yet clear what Brexit will look like, it is difficult for companies to prepare.

3 Are there any sectors that will benefit from a hard Brexit?

According to the PBL, the financial, telecom and travel sectors would actually benefit from a Brexit. For example, many banks are relocating activities from London to continental ***Europe***. But economists believe that the negative effect as a whole is greater than the positive effect of Brexit.

4 How do investors and the markets react?

Quite calm, actually. When Johnson's plan was announced on Tuesday, the pound dropped 1 cent to EUR 1.09, but partly recovered. The British stock market even closed higher. According to analysts, this is because much of the uncertainty surrounding Brexit is already incorporated in the prices. According to currency specialist Monex ***Europe***, the price of the pound may fall further if Boris Johnson survives a vote of no confidence, and a hard Brexit is one step closer.

Dorinde Meuzelaar

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%)

**Industry:** Fishing Regulation + Policy (67%)

**Load-Date:** August 29, 2019

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[***Opposition to Johnson 'coup' grows***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5WXT-4DT1-DYTV-D3GX-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 16

**Length:** 675 words

**Byline:** Joost van Mierlo

**Body**

Extra days off to thwart parliament'

by Joost van Mierlo

LONDON - Opposition to Boris Johnson's proposal to temporarily sideline the British Parliament is taking on unprecedented proportions.

Courts in Scotland, Northern Ireland and London are reviewing the legality of the proposal. The popular Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson announced her departure. Lord Young, the Conservative leader of the House of Lords, resigned, the first resignation in the barely a month old Johnson government.

The 'coup' to sideline the British House of Commons appears to have been prepared months in advance. Only a handful of ministers were informed. The rest were only informed when the Conservative leader was already on a plane to Scotland to ask the Queen's permission to temporarily suspend Parliament.

Meanwhile, it is becoming clear that the government is considering alternatives to further prevent parliament from thwarting plans for its desired Brexit, with or without a deal on 31 October. These could include declaring extra days off (bank holidays) on which the House of Commons cannot meet.

The plans come from the mind of Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson's political advisor. He was previously the architect of the Brexit campaign. In an inventive way, critics call it devious, he managed to maximise support for leaving the ***EU***.

Perhaps his most important contribution was in coining the catchy slogan 'Take back control'. For many Britons, it was intolerable that the House of Commons could be bypassed by ***EU legislation***. With the unusual length of time the House of Commons is broken up, many feel that the power of parliament is actually curtailed.

The anger over what political opponents are calling a coup is great. Nearly one and a half million Britons have signed a petition demanding that parliament be sidelined. It means that this petition will almost certainly have to be discussed when parliament returns from its summer recess next week. A week later, MPs will be sent home again, only to meet again from 14 October.

Several courts have been asked to review the proposals. In Edinburgh, 75 Scottish MPs have asked for the government's proposal to be lifted. In London, Gina Miller made a similar request. She was the one who single-handedly ensured that the government had to seek parliamentary approval for the Brexit deal it negotiated. The fact that the highest British court agreed to this creates the current stalemate.

Whether a lawsuit makes much sense is doubted by experts. A former Supreme Court judge, Jonathan Sumption, believes: "It is a political shock in a parliamentary democracy, but whether it is illegal or against the law is a different matter. That will be a tough one."

Most attention is focused on the dismay and anger over the government's plans. But many British Brexiteers are more than tired of the procrastination of the House of Commons. The British newspaper The Daily Mail devoted two pages to expressions of support. The social media are teeming with curses towards the whining of the 'Remoaners'. It is a good illustration of the division in the country, where the camps have in fact, since the referendum on the Brexit, continued to believe in their own right. Hardly anyone steps into the other camp.

According to the Conservative leader Jacob Rees-Mogg, there is no problem. Opponents of leaving the ***EU*** have more than enough opportunity to change the current law, which stipulates that the British leave the ***EU*** on 31 October.

Besides, there is always the possibility of sending the government home and forming an alternative government. He added fuel to the fire by saying that the protesting MPs "lacked the guts" to do so.

Plan in

deepest

secret

estimated

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); Arms Control + Disarmament (67%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (64%); International Relations (62%)

**Load-Date:** August 29, 2019

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[***TeamVon der Leyen:A colourful knit; Von der Leyen***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-RDR1-JC5G-10JC-00000-00&context=) [***Profile of a 'geopolitical' Commission***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-RDR1-JC5G-10JC-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION & DEBATE; Page 1

**Length:** 1491 words

**Byline:** Rem Korteweg

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*Opinion*

***European*** Commission

The envisaged ***European*** Commission does not only include high-flyers, writes Rem Korteweg. And what are democracy and demography doing together in one portfolio?

**FULL TEXT:**

A "geopolitical Commission" is what Ursula von der Leyen herself calls her team. This week, the President of the new ***European*** Commission introduced the new ***Euro Commissioners***. Her goal is clear: Von der Leyen wants a ***Europe*** that dares to play an assertive role on the world stage, that is not afraid of Trump's muscular trade policy, dares to be tough on China and is serious about greening.

The standard-bearer of such a self-confident ***Europe*** must be the liberal Margrethe Vestager, intended first vice-president. French President Emmanuel Macron, in particular, can therefore be satisfied with the past few months. Vestager is a political family member, his compatriot Christine Lagarde will be head of the ***European*** Central Bank, Von der Leyen's candidacy came from his pen, and his former defence minister Sylvie Goulard has been nominated as commissioner for, among other things, the internal market.

Yet not all Commissioners are high-flyers, and there is something to be said about their portfolios. So the question arises: what do we actually see when we look at Von der Leyen's 'dream team'?

The new Commission, like the previous one, is organised in clusters. It is a layered system in which vice-presidents bring together the work of other Commissioners on different topics. Now *executive* vice-presidents are being added, including Margrethe Vestager and Frans Timmermans.

In the distribution of the top positions after the ***European*** Parliament elections, Vestager and Timmermans, as so-called *'Spitzenkandidaten',* missed the boat: Von der Leyen was nominated as president, not Vestager. The vice-presidency was seen as a consolation prize. Now that we have an overview of the portfolios, we have to conclude that this was unjustified. In particular, *Margrethe Vestager* can rightly be called a super-commissioner. In addition to competition, the heavy portfolio she already had in the last five years, she will have the important technology agenda.

Vestager has to develop a strategy to compete with countries like China and the United States in the field of artificial intelligence and digitalisation. In addition, she can impose billions in fines on foreign companies that misbehave in the ***European*** market and can block mergers. Vestager's proposed candidacy, and the link between technology and competition, will therefore have been received with some concern in Silicon Valley.

Whereas Vestager is being given a mandate to take decisive action, *Frans Timmermans* is being given a mandate to polder. He will be responsible for the ***European*** energy transition, for a '***European*** Green Deal', one of Von der Leyen's spearheads. That is good news for the Dutch cabinet which, with the climate agreement, the nitrogen decree and the intention to reduce gas production in Groningen more quickly, benefits from a ***European Union*** that also achieves results in this area. But it is an enormous task.

The energy transition touches on many dossiers, including energy, trade, internal market, industrial policy, environment, economy, agriculture, transport and the ***EU budget***. In addition, Von der Leyen wants the ***EU to*** be carbon neutral by 2050. Timmermans has to get individual countries to agree to painful measures to achieve this.

There is a 'but': in the past five years, Timmermans has had a difficult relationship with countries like Poland and Hungary. That could also be a problem for him now. To what extent will Warsaw listen if Timmermans pleads for a drastic reduction of Polish coal consumption? With a finger in the pie but no instruments to enforce things, Timmermans will need a great deal of persuasion and patience.

France's *Sylvie Goulard* is the next gun. She will be responsible for the internal market, the digital market, cyber security and the development of a ***European*** defence market. The former MEP and former, briefly, Defence Minister under President Macron will also deal with 'technological sovereignty' and the 5G issue. She is to develop digital standards and make the ***EU*** resilient in the technological battle between China and the United States.

The new Trade Commissioner, Irish *Phil Hogan*, is also a heavyweight. As a former Agriculture Commissioner, he knows that agriculture and trade are inextricably linked. Should President Trump decide to impose trade barriers on the ***European*** car sector, Hogan will have to respond. He will also be in charge of trade negotiations with London if the British leave the ***EU*** - with or without a deal. Dublin can rest assured; with this choice, Irish interests will be well served after a Brexit.

Vestager and Hogan form an important tandem in the area of trade, including with regard to China. One is in charge of agreeing on new international trade rules to prevent unfair competition from China; the other is in charge of protecting the ***European*** market until then - or if agreeing on new rules fails.

Italy's former prime minister *Paolo Gentiloni* is a striking choice. Von der Leyen entrusted him with ***European*** financial policy. His candidacy may underline the pro-European course of the new Conte government in Rome, but it remains to be seen whether it will be sustained. Gentiloni will have to supervise the Stability Pact and the budgetary discipline of member states - starting with his home country. Von der Leyen chooses to keep Italian problems primarily Italian.

The Spaniard *Josep Borrell* will become High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy. This choice was made as part of the ***European*** deal on all the top positions. It is the second time that the post goes to a Spaniard; only once did it not go to a Southern European. Despite his record as Spain's foreign minister, it remains to be seen whether the subdued Borrell will come into his own on the foreign dossier. Former Defence Minister Von der Leyen and a confident President Macron could well outstrip him.

There are also some strange birds in the team. Former Hungarian Justice Minister *László Trócsányi* is criticised for violating democratic values in his own country. It is remarkable that he is asked, as Commissioner for Enlargement Policy, to determine whether the Western Balkan countries meet ***European*** accession criteria. Given the ***European*** Parliament's criticism of Prime Minister Órban's Hungarian government, it is highly questionable whether Trócsányi's candidacy will pass through the ***European Parliament*** in early October.

The rule of law, Frans Timmermans' old dossier, is divided between two Commissioners: the Belgian *Didier Reynders* and the Croatian *Dubravka Suica*. One from the West, the other from the East, in order to find a balance on this politically sensitive subject. Suica's portfolio is called 'democracy and demography', but it is not obvious why the two are brought together. Yes, in Central and Eastern Europe there are concerns about the rule of law and about demographic decline, but how they relate to each other remains unclear. Is it not simply an Eastern Europe Commissioner?

Finally, the Greek former spokesman of the ***European*** Commission *Margaritis Schinas* must oversee the newly created portfolio 'Protecting our ***European*** way of life'. In this post, the Greek must link up the dossiers of migration, security, employment and education. Now, identity, migration and integration were not only major themes of the ***European*** People's Party (EPP) during the ***European*** election campaign, but also those of the ***Eurosceptics*** and the populists. Von der Leyen's presidency was supported by several ***Eurosceptic MEPs***. Is this portfolio change? In any case, the title is extremely unfortunate.

Von der Leyen also took the professional background of the candidates into account when distributing the posts. A Cypriot medical psychologist is in charge of health care. A former Finnish envoy to Ethiopia will deal with development cooperation. A former minister of employment from Luxembourg will deal with employment.

So far. Or is it? There is a list of twenty-six Commissioners; one Briton is missing. But if the United Kingdom is still a member of the ***European Union*** after 31 October, London is expected to provide a Commissioner. But what remains, a Commissioner for ***European*** Unity?

*Rem Korteweg* is a senior researcher at the Clingendael Institute.

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**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

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[***EUcrypto money legislation***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-P1H1-JCBS-P25R-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 39

**Length:** 128 words

**Body**

HELSINKI - EU countries need common legislation to regulate use of crypto money such as bitcoin. According to ***European*** Central Bank top executive Benoît Cœuré, the ***EU*** must set the bar high to allow and supervise virtual means of payment, he said after a ***Eurogroup*** meeting.

The ***EU*** Finance ***Ministers of the Eurozone*** (***Eurogroup***) but also the ***European*** Commission and the ECB are concerned about the financial stability in ***Europe*** without a legal ***EU framework*** on digital payment systems. Any regulation is now done only at the national level.

The ***European*** Commission is, however, working on an evaluation. According to Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis, he has also asked Facebook for an explanation of the introduction of the libra.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Central Banks (94%)

**Load-Date:** September 13, 2019

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[***Negative interest***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-P1H1-JCBS-P25F-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 37

**Length:** 264 words

**Body**

The ***European*** Central Bank (ECB) lowered the interest rate again on Thursday. And with that, the "negative savings rate" comes ever closer: instead of receiving interest on your savings, you pay the bank for depositing the savings.

Millionaires already do that. At Van Lanschot, clients with a balance of more than EUR 2.5 million pay 0.2% on their balance. You can also say that these people receive an interest of -0.2%, but that is a play on words.

For the time being, the large banks seem reluctant to start charging their small customers negative interest, certainly as the first ones. However, they complain increasingly loudly about the costs and the loss they already claim to be making on the savings of private individuals.

Friends and foes agree on the cause: the ***European Union'***s monetary policy, with the ECB as the main culprit.

In the meantime, savers are at a loss: they can switch to another bank, which offers slightly higher interest, or they can put their money elsewhere, but this does not apply to smaller reserves. Putting the money in an old sock, as 20% of savers are considering, according to our last poll. Risky and unsafe.

Can the government do nothing? Yes, there is. Belgium has a legal minimum savings interest rate for private individuals of 0.11%, so negative interest is prohibited there. Germany is examining a legal ban on negative interest on savings up to EUR 100,000. I think that is not a bad idea for us either.

Sandra Molenaar is general

Director of the Consumer Association

Money in old sock is risky and unsafe

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Central Banks (94%); Banking, Lending + Credit Services (61%)

**Industry:** Checking + Savings Accounts (75%)

**Load-Date:** September 13, 2019

**End of Document**

[***Hey! Europe is doing abroad; in Europe***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-RDR1-JC5G-10J0-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** WEEKEND; Page 30

**Length:** 616 words

**Byline:** Caroline de Gruyter

**Body**

Have you noticed anything about the new ***European*** Commission? There will be a ***European Commissioner*** for Defence and Industrial Policy. Until recently, ***European*** defence and ***European*** industrial policy were taboo. And the combination of the two at all.

There will be a ***European Commissioner*** to enforce ***European*** digital sovereignty against American and Chinese high-tech companies. This is now one of ***Europe***'s top priorities. When Neelie Kroes got the digital job, in 2010, The Hague was still disappointed. They thought this was a bit of a hobby post.

There will also be ***European Commissioners*** for Crisis Management outside ***Europe***, and 'International Partnerships'. And a High Representative for Foreign Affairs, who will have to establish "a stronger and more autonomous ***Europe*** in the world".

This Commission, in short, is the Commission of geopolitics. Of the powerful ***European*** voice on the world stage. Interesting, because up to now, Member States have not wanted ***Europe there***. At most as a coordinator.

And now ***Europe*** is stepping onto that stage. Five years ago, this would have been incredibly controversial. Now not a single word, from any capital city. The only scandal this week was about the mission of the Greek ***Eurocommissioner***: "Protecting the ***European*** way of life." A storm in a glass of water.

Last time, the key posts in the Commission focused on internal affairs. Economics, finance. We had had severe crises. Banking crisis, ***euro crisis***, economic crisis. We had to get out of it as quickly as possible. Everything revolved around 'jobs, jobs, jobs'. If the economy picked up, the populists would lower their voices. The Juncker Commission called itself 'the Commission of the last chance'.

*That was in the past.*

***Europe*** has smothered or kicked out those internal fires. The ***euro*** is alive and well, no one has any more emergency loans, unemployment is super low. Even the migration crisis has subsided: 95 per cent fewer arrivals than in 2015.

Meanwhile, the world has changed. The new problems no longer come only from within, but mainly from outside. The climate. A trade war between America and China that could crush us. Cyber attacks on ***European*** public networks. No more (nuclear) arms agreements. NATO, which is dangling. The British, who want to undermine our market. All these things make ***Europeans*** feel unsafe. And want to do something.

It is a classic: external threats forge domestic unity. National leaders go to war to stay in power. But ***Europe*** must prevent war. To stay relevant, it is now going to promote this 'model' on the world stage.

Some have been shouting for years: ***Europeans*** must speak globally with one voice! But it never came to pass. Now it does. There are acute threats. Something has to be done. That is why the argument '***European*** sovereignty' is hitting a chord now. With politicians, and with citizens. The think tank ECFR polled 60,000 ***Europeans*** and discovered: ***Europeans***' trust in America is completely gone, even in the Netherlands. We want to remain neutral and multilateral. Because of the muscle-flexing of America, Russia and China, our trust in the ***EU*** as a geopolitical actor is growing: we have a reason to transfer national competences - defence, security, climate - to Brussels.

Public opinion is no longer an obstacle to a more coherent ***European*** foreign policy', says the ECFR report. In the past, our politicians blocked a ***European*** foreign policy because "there is no support base". Now that support is forthcoming, politicians have to live up to the trust. So let's get to work.

*Caroline de Gruyter* writes weekly about politics and ***Europe***.

***Europeans***' faith in America is completely gone

**Notes**

Caroline de Gruyter writes weekly about politics and ***Europe***.

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**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (68%); Defense Departments (61%)

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[***Nothing wrong with that***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-P1H1-JCBS-P24Y-00000-00&context=)

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**Length:** 485 words

**Byline:** Frank van Vliet

**Body**

I do not understand the fuss about the new Commissioner post that has been invented in Brussels. What is wrong with a ***European Commissioner*** 'to protect our ***European*** way of life'? Do we not live comfortably here in ***Europe***? Aren't our values under threat? I think so, close to home. Just look at the fuss about mosque schools, where children in Salafist Islam schools are taught that people with a different faith or philosophy of life deserve the death penalty. They also learn to turn away from Dutch society and the principles of equality and freedom. It seems to me that a lesson in ***European*** values - the capital W was chosen intentionally - would not hurt.

What makes me angry is that the plan to protect ***European*** values is immediately interpreted as a genuflection to the extreme right. The British newspaper The Guardian even speaks of a 'sinister plan' and a 'gift to the extreme right' from the future president of the ***European*** Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. The link is made with the Greek Margaritis Schinas, who, in addition to ***European*** values, will also have the migration dossier in his portfolio. And so The Guardian states that the ***European*** Values are mainly intended to stop those migrants.

Even if that is true - and I think it is to some extent - there is no shame in it. Let us be honest: migration can lead to an erosion of ***European*** values. Look at the long arm of Erdogan here, look at the sharia law flourishing in some areas of major ***European*** cities, look at the Mocro mafia, look at the no-go zones on the outskirts of Paris, look at the tipsy Moroccan boys in Amsterdam-West calling any girl in a short skirt a 'whore'.

I am aware that immigrants from Muslim countries are mainly mentioned here. I have lived in England and know that there they are more fierce about the Eastern European migrants who took the jobs of the white working class. And I say this in the knowledge that Rotterdam's Mayor Aboutaleb and his college, like Khan in London, are outstanding administrators. And what a pity Ziyech did not choose to play for Orange. And yet there is a Muslim problem.

Does this make me right-wing extremist? Get the fuck out of here! I abhor brown shirts and their prominent followers in France, Germany, Austria and elsewhere. I don't like Viktor Orbán robbing 'his' Hungary either, or all those other rogue leaders in the former Eastern Europe. They, too, need a lesson in ***European*** values.

Let them copy Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty ten times (look it up), which talks about peace, welfare, freedom, security, the fight against social exclusion and discrimination, social justice, gender equality, solidarity between generations and human rights. Nothing wrong with that.

***European*** values worth protecting

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); Labor Force (75%); Immigration (63%); Refugees (62%)

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[***Pinning down interest rates by Draghi Europe; Terra incognita; Negative interest rates***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-RDR1-JC5G-10H7-00000-00&context=)[***What are the consequences of interest rates below the zero line? Negative interest rates: that is what it looks like Europe But nobody can foresee the consequences yet.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-RDR1-JC5G-10H7-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 1688 words

**Byline:** Mark Beunderman  
  
Egbert Kalse Illustration Sjoerd van Leeuwen

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Monetary policy

ECB President Mario Draghi caused an open row within his Executive Board with his interest rate decision this week. It is up to his successor Christine Lagarde to restore confidence in the central bank.

**FULL TEXT:**

*To infinity and beyond*: to the stars and beyond. This winged statement by toy astronaut Buzz Lightyear from the film *Toy Story* seems to guide the mind of ***European*** Central Bank President Mario Draghi.

The measures announced by the 72-year-old Italian on Thursday actually know no limits: they have the potential to last forever. Draghi, who will step down at the end of next month after eight years at the ECB, is thus giving new meaning to the concept of 'governing beyond your grave'.

Draghi's stance, in particular the decision to turn on the money printing press again by buying up government and corporate loans, has caused unprecedented dissension in the ECB's usually technocratic governing council.

It includes all national central bankers of the ***eurozone***. Klaas Knot, president of the Dutch central bank, sharply distanced himself from the 'joint' decision of the ECB. According to him, it is "disproportionate to the current economic conditions" and there are "good reasons to doubt its effectiveness". The Austrian central banker Robert Holzmann also publicly criticised the course of events in the ECB tower in Frankfurt. He speculated that Draghi's decisions might be challenged by the arrival of his successor Christine Lagarde on 1 November. Not to the stars and beyond, then, but at most to the moon and back.

In his final days, the ECB chief, who has never raised interest rates in eight years, is causing an open row within ***Europe***'s most important monetary institution. Just when the economy is cooling and governments, banks, businesses and citizens need clear, verifiable and above all trustworthy policies.

**Negative interest rates for years**

The series of far-reaching decisions taken by the ECB on Thursday was intended precisely to create more certainty by nailing down monetary policy until well into Lagarde's term. The picture for the coming years is that, barring any big surprises, interest rates under the watchful eye of the Frankfurt central bank will remain negative.

In the statement approved by the majority of the ECB board, Draghi did not give a target date for ending the ultra-low interest rates, which have been even lower since Thursday, unlike usual. The rate at which the ECB steers the interest banks charge each other, the ECB deposit rate, went down from minus 0.4 to minus 0.5 percent.

And the new round of purchases of sovereign and corporate debt announced by the ECB - ***EUR*** 20 billion per month - has no expiry date either. With these purchases, the Frankfurt money techies are mainly pushing down long-term interest rates. Since 2015, more than EUR 2,600 billion worth of such loans have already been bought up and added to the ECB's balance sheet.

Instead of end dates, new, more demanding criteria for raising interest rates have been introduced. From now on, the ECB will only consider higher interest rates if inflation expectations "converge strongly" towards the ECB inflation target of just below 2 per cent, looking two years ahead.

The expected 'core inflation' - which does not include the volatile energy and food prices - should also point in the direction of 2%. That is a big hurdle, after years of stubbornly low inflation. It is stuck at 1% - despite negative interest rates and despite all the debt the ECB has already bought up.

Will the ***European*** Central Bank ever get anywhere near the 2% inflation rate? The ECB has been raising expectations of this for years, but the inflation target has always proved to be too ambitious. No wonder that scepticism can be heard not only within the ECB management, but also in the financial sector.

A Reuters poll of dozens of economists in the financial sector early this month found that three quarters thought it was time for an ECB stimulus programme, and 80 per cent had no confidence in Frankfurt's ability to control inflation.

**Lagarde inherits division**

This creates a heavy agenda for Lagarde. She inherits both a gap between inflation expectations and actual inflation and a gap in governance. The Frenchwoman, outgoing chief of the International Monetary Fund and former finance minister, is known for her leadership qualities. These will be tested in Frankfurt.

Since the early days of the ECB, which was established in 1998, the 25-member Board has sought consensus. In principle, it can also take decisions by majority. Each ***euro country*** has one vote, and the six ECB Executive Board members each have one. For Draghi, majority decisions became almost the norm: he took little notice of dissidents. But if dissidents, before and after meetings, openly distance themselves from the chosen line, the image for the outside world is that of a central bank that does not know what is going on.

This week, the unprecedented number of nine board members opposed the decision to resume debt buy-outs. These were not the least of them: two dissenting voices came from Germany, two from France (of which one was a board member), and one from the Netherlands. Together, these three countries make up more than half of the ***eurozone*** economy, as Bloomberg news agency noted. The question is whether Lagarde will allow such a deep schism again.

**The ball is now in the governments' court**

There is a little hope for the new French ECB President: the central bank may be relieved of some of its burden in the coming years as governments do more to stimulate the economy and inflation. In that case, the ECB would automatically have to take fewer controversial measures.

As future ECB chief, Lagarde recently urged the ***European*** Parliament to ensure that countries with fiscal room for manoeuvre use it. Draghi adopted this message loud and clear on Thursday. And the ECB in its turn helps governments a little by buying up government bonds. This reduces the borrowing costs for governments. Interest rates on many government bonds are already negative, which makes investing extremely cheap.

Complicating matters, however, is that the ECB is allowed to buy up to 33 per cent of a country's government bonds - a rule that was not changed on Thursday. That limit has, for example, already been reached for Dutch and German loans (respectively ***EUR*** 110 and 520 billion of government bonds deposited with the ECB). For those countries, the added value of the new buy-back programme is therefore small. Economists expect that the key for buying up sovereign debt will have to be adjusted in order to open the money tap at all. Countries that are far from the 33 per cent limit will therefore benefit more from the buy-back policy than countries that are close to it.

Despite fine words about expansionary budgets - German Finance Minister Scholz says he has "billions" ready - and plans for investment cots - the Dutch government is expected to unveil these on Budget Day - governments have so far failed to deliver. If they do not really pull their purse strings, the ECB will remain under pressure to keep the money tap open. And then the policy under Lagarde will inevitably look very much like Draghi's. Then the painful side effects of that policy will also persist.

**Banks and insurers suffer**

Because it does hurt, this unconventional policy. Especially for banks, the falling deposit rate is a growing problem. Together, they deposit an average of ***EUR*** 600 billion every day at the ECB deposit facility. The negative interest rate, thus lowered this week to minus 0.5 percent, works like a fine. The tenth of a percentage point more they pay means an extra burden of ***EUR*** 600 million for the banks.

Dutch banks, which have relatively large deposits with the ECB, have an average daily outstanding balance of ***EUR*** 138 billion (ING and Rabo each about 50 billion, ABN over 30 billion). Until Wednesday, they paid about 550 million euros in penalty interest on an annual basis. Since Thursday, that amount has risen to just under 700 million annually. This puts margins under pressure and further fuels the debate on passing on penalty interest to customers.

However, analysts do not expect the reduction in deposit rates to translate directly into negative savings rates for citizens. Thanks to the compensatory measures announced by the ECB, the cost of depositing money will be lower rather than higher than in the current situation. For the Dutch banks, the penalty interest would decrease by 160 million on balance.

Insurers have no access to these compensatory measures. Pension funds are therefore completely stuck. On the basis of their articles of association, they are obliged to invest part of their deposits in safe bonds. Partly due to the ECB policy, the returns on these bonds are already so low that they have to keep extra money in cash in order to be able to pay out pensions in the future. Threatened cuts to the pensions of an increasing number of funds are therefore no longer unthinkable. That too is Draghi's legacy to Lagarde.

This week, the unprecedented high number of nine board members turned against Draghi's decision to resume debt buybacks

Threatened cuts to the pensions of an increasing number of funds are therefore no longer unthinkable. That too is Draghi's legacy to Lagarde

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[***Savers suffer***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-P1H1-JCBS-P23B-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 02

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**Body**

The ***European*** Central Bank is pulling out all the stops to stimulate the economy. That sounds sympathetic, but it is anything but. The central bank is doing this by lowering the interest rate to well below zero percent.

Southern European governments can be satisfied because they are being helped by Italian bank president Mario Draghi. He rewards the creation of debts. For countries like the Netherlands and Germany the grapes are sour. Savers are the losers.

Both those saving in a bank account and those saving through a pension fund are severely affected by this policy from Frankfurt. Director Klaas Knot of the Dutch Central Bank, who also sits on the ECB board, feels so uncomfortable that he has gone public with a critical statement. The savers don't buy much for that.

The only thing that politicians can do now is to increase the pressure on lagging countries like Italy to reduce their public debt and put their economies in order. If the government in Rome does that itself, the central bank cannot be tempted to do the dirty work via interest.

Now industrious savers in the Netherlands are paying for the Italian's mess. That is highly undesirable and undermines support for the ***euro***.

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[***#Exit; Where to go with Germany's holy cow?***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-RDR1-JC5G-10JB-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION & DEBATE; Page 1

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**Byline:** Pieter Pauw

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*Opinion*

Automotive industry

The garden stinks of exhaust fumes, the pavements are full of badly parked cars. No, it's not nice to live in Germany. So Pieter Pauw, along with thousands of others, took action at the biggest car fair in Frankfurt. The government must thoroughly revise its policy.

**FULL TEXT:**

Last summer, my wife and I moved with our baby to Frankfurt am Main, a city the size of Amsterdam. We moved to a good, nice neighbourhood, our flat even had a little garden. Our apartment even had a little garden. Our son would be able to play there and I was looking forward to having dinner in the garden in the summer after work. Frankfurt would be the ideal next step in our young family life.

Never before have I been so disappointed. A fortnight ago we moved out of the city, driven out by the car. The dominance of the car is disastrous for the quality of life in German cities, German public health, the environment and the climate. Our little garden? We can't sit there because it stinks of exhaust fumes. That beautiful neighbourhood? It is full of parked cars from beginning to end. Drinking a cup of coffee? Almost all the terraces are on a busy road. A bit of cycling? We are lucky if we survive.

Taking my son to day-care was a disaster. To avoid dangerous overtaking manoeuvres by cars, I started cycling in the middle of the road in residential streets. This resulted in a lot of honking and venom, mostly from ageing men in fat SUVs whose sense of freedom I apparently disturbed. I had to brake at almost every intersection because wrongly parked cars blocked my view.

I came to love parking attendants, the brave soldiers who try in vain to defend traffic safety in the city. My wife once asked a parking attendant if he could 'take a look' at a blue SUV parked three times a week on the entrance to a cycle path. The officer replied that he knew the car well. He even regularly issued a fine, but the owner apparently did not care about the fifteen ***euros*** and the safety of the cyclists.

Sometimes I woke up feeling cheerful. On those days, I thought of myself as a poser. But during a walk to the park - there is no place for children to play in the street - my good mood soon disappeared. There were often cars on the pavement - so I had to go out in the street with the pram. At the only zebra crossing, drivers drove on up to my ankles. At the traffic lights, they would start honking if the first car *took* too long to get to the green light. Accelerating is always fast here - braking for the next traffic light also. And all that early in the morning, when it already smells of exhaust fumes. Or still, on windless days.

This is life for pedestrians and cyclists in a city where people even take the car to eat an ice cream or buy a loaf of bread.

Perhaps, I thought, as a Dutchman I have a different image of a 'liveable city'. Maybe I am the only one who finds the situation unacceptable. But nothing could be further from the truth. This week, the annual IAA - *Internationale Automobil-Ausstellung -* opened in Frankfurt, but many Germans are fed up with the dictatorship of the car.

This can be seen in the lawsuits for *Dieselfahrverbote* in inner cities, the recent sharp increase in fines for wrongful parking, the growth of car-free streets throughout Germany and the new app *Wegeheld*, which allows you to report wrongdoers yourself. Small steps perhaps, but the pressure from below is enormous. More and more action groups are appearing and they are achieving significant successes.

Frankfurt, for example, has *Radentscheid*, a group of citizens who work to improve the bicycle infrastructure and thus the quality of life for all Frankfurters. Because my wife wouldn't let me complain without doing something myself, I too am a member of Radentscheid. After we collected more than 40,000 signatures last year for a comprehensive cycling plan for the city, politicians had to respond.

At first, the city council did not take our plan seriously and the negotiations were difficult. Then came the ***European*** elections in May. In Germany, they became climate elections - again due to pressure from below. The major German parties, which were doing too little to combat climate change, suffered major defeats. Then, suddenly, an agreement was reached very quickly. Frankfurt will invest 21 million ***Euro*** over the next three years to make the city more bicycle-friendly. In Berlin and Bamberg similar first steps have been taken.

The campaign groups are supported by facts. While German greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 28% since 1990, those from road traffic have risen by 5%. The average concentration of nitrogen dioxide in dozens of German cities is above the ***EU limit***. As a result of poor air quality, 124,000 people die prematurely each year in Germany and the average lifespan is shortened by 2.2 years. The latter is an average, by the way; in cities like Frankfurt the life span is even shorter.

I am pleased but also surprised by these developments. I thought that the power of the proud German car industry was unbreakable. Because it is important for the economy and employment, the car industry is supported by politicians.

For example, Chancellor Merkel, once called *the Klimaqueen*, prevented the introduction of stricter ***EU standards*** for CO2 emissions from cars in 2013, and there is no purchase tax on cars, so Germans are buying bigger, heavier and more luxurious cars than the Dutch.

For decades, the policy of cities has focused on more asphalt and more parking spaces. A property developer in Frankfurt, for example, must provide 1.6 parking spaces per new home - even in the city centre. Parking is free almost everywhere and every resident can get a parking permit for a pittance.

The car industry in Germany also got away with the diesel scandal. It was able to turn a punishment for the 'tampering software' into years of extra high emission limits for diesel cars and did not allow itself to be forced into converting cars.

At the IAA, the powerful car industry and the growing protest movement are now diametrically opposed. No longer do the German car managers talk among themselves about the latest gadgets or fine design, no, it is about the planned large-scale protests and their fear of them.

Several large demonstrations are planned for Saturday, 14 September. Tens of thousands of participants are expected. The motto is #aussteigen (#get out). The demonstrators call for more playgrounds ('*Spielplätze statt Parkplätze*'), safe cycling, improved public transport and the use of renewable energy instead of climate-damaging petrol and diesel.

I am taking part in the *Sternfahrt*, a concept that originated in Berlin; thousands of people are cycling to the IAA from 13 cities. We will cycle partly over main traffic arteries to eventually block part of the centre of Frankfurt. On Sunday, the action group *Sand im Getriebe* (*sand in the gearbox*) will organise sit-down blockades and other 'creative actions of civil disobedience'. This will also make it difficult for people to visit the car fair.

For a few weeks now, luxury cars have occasionally been set on fire at night, but I hope that no radical demonstrators are behind it.

The car industry is watching with dismay. The IAA is putting extra security in place; visitors will have to stand in line for a long time because their bags will be checked. In addition, the car industry is forced to seek 'social dialogue'. Whereas the environmental movement was laughed at or ignored a few years ago, now the automotive industry's CEOs are inviting them to debates. These CEOs may make all sorts of promises, but the diesel scandal has destroyed the boundless confidence in the German car industry.

The reputation of the German car industry has been damaged yet again by the protests at the IAA. Now politicians have to choose and get to work. Will they choose for the climate, clean air and liveability in cities - and thus for the prosperity of the population - or will they choose for profit for the car industry? Let the IAA 2019 be the turning point for car dominance in Germany.

Whereas a few years ago the environmental movement was laughed at or ignored, today it is at the table

*Pieter Pauw* is a researcher at the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management.

**Graphic**

Istock illustration

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[***Knot's heavy artillery against Draghi's bazooka***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-P1H1-JCBS-P25Y-00000-00&context=)

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**Byline:** Dorinde Meuzelaar

**Body**

Hawks on ECB Board settle scores with President

by Dorinde Meuzelaar and Martin Visser

Amsterdam - Klaas Knot and two other central bankers protest publicly against the decision of the ***European*** Central Bank (ECB) to switch on the money press again. This protest illustrates the division in ***Europe*** about Frankfurt's stimulus policy.

ECB President Mario Draghi on Thursday pulled out his bazooka to boost the weakening economy. The central bank restarted the bond-buying programme, lowered the deposit rate for banks and extended the current bank support.

Knot, president of De Nederlandsche Bank, published a statement on Friday on the DNB site. He believes that the ECB, of which he is a member of the board, is using resources that are too heavy, because the economy in the ***eurozone*** is not in recession. Knot is particularly opposed to the repurchase of government paper. "There are well-founded reasons to question the effectiveness".

Excessive

Besides Knot, Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann and Robert Holzmann of the Austrian central bank chose to express their displeasure the day after the interest rate decision. According to Weidmann, the ECB's action is 'excessive', he told the German newspaper Bild.

It is well known that these so-called hawks on the ECB board are critical. But that they openly criticise the decisions so soon after the board meeting is unusual. Knot has never before dismissed an ECB decision with an official press statement.

Draghi stated on Thursday that there was no need to vote in the board because there was a clear majority in favour of the stimulus measures. According to Bloomberg, however, there was strong opposition, at least from Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Estonia, France and two independent board members.

Politics also angry

There is also strong criticism from Dutch politicians. Lowering the interest rate penalises savers and pensions. "This has dramatic consequences for a funded pension system," said CDA MP Pieter Omtzigt.

Investment strategist Lukas Daalder of asset manager Blackrock is also critical: "Buying up bonds can have a stimulating effect in southern countries with a lot of debt, but in a country like the Netherlands with a lot of savings, a low government debt and a large pension pot, the negative aspects dominate."

ECB policy is not effective'

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[***Trade down for the first time since the crisis'.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-P1H1-JCBS-P263-00000-00&context=)

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**Byline:** Dorinde Meuzelaar

**Body**

Weak industry, US-China row and Brexit

by Dorinde Meuzelaar

Amsterdam - For the first time since the collapse of Lehman Brothers, world trade is shrinking. This is due to the trade war between the US and China and weak industry.

This is what ING writes in a report. This year, world trade will shrink by 0.2%. Next year, ING expects a recovery to a growth of 0.9%, but that scenario is surrounded by ifs and buts.

Difficult corner

For this recovery, the US and China must reach an agreement to calm the trade war that has been going on for more than a year. Head of international trade research Raoul Leering: "After all the rounds of negotiations, this has not become any easier. Trump has manoeuvred himself into a difficult corner."

According to the ING researchers, this is because the US has started to make increasing demands on China. Leering: "During his campaign, Trump insisted on reducing the trade deficit. But now the US also wants China to stop stealing and transferring technology. In addition, the pressure has risen sharply by the imposition of import tariffs on China. Beijing feels insulted."

ING therefore expects that the US will have to be conciliatory before an agreement can be reached. Leering: "Trump will also have to meet some of the demands of the Chinese, for example in terms of maintaining sanctions."

Industry

In addition to the trade war, the weakness in industry is also affecting world trade. In the first half of the year, it grew only moderately, while industrial production in Japan and ***the eurozone*** even contracted. The reasons for this are again the trade war, Brexit and the fear of new US tariffs.

***Europe***

The US is also wrangling with the ***EU*** on trade issues. President Trump has threatened to impose an import duty on foreign cars, claiming that they pose a threat to domestic security. This would be a nightmare scenario, especially for Germany, with its large car industry.

The decision on this follows in November, but Leering expects Trump to choose to postpone it. "Trump is sinking in the polls. The solid economy is starting to falter, American voters are afraid that the economy is sinking into recession." Against this backdrop, it is not a good idea to stir up the trade dispute with the ***EU***, Leering estimates.

ING does, however, consider it not inconceivable that Trump will actually seek a confrontation with the ***EU***. Leering: "Especially if he has a deal with China. Then he can tell his voters that he has negotiated a better agreement and that he is now holding Brussels to ransom.

China feels insulted by US'.

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[***Greeks pay back***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-P1H1-JCBS-P264-00000-00&context=)

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**Body**

Emergency loans IMF

HELSINKI - The new Greek Finance Minister Christos Staikouras wants to repay a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) early. He announced this at the ***Eurogroup***, the meeting of ***Eurozone*** finance ministers. According to Greek media, it concerns an amount of EUR 2.9 billion. The Greek government wants to get rid of the relatively expensive IMF emergency loans from the international support programme, which has now ended. Since one year the country is financially independent again. The Greek debt to the IMF amounts to EUR 9.3 billion and must be repaid by 2024. The step is seen as a sign of growing Greek self-confidence.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Economic Crisis (94%); ***European*** Union (92%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (92%); Banking Institutions + Systems (75%); Economic Growth (75%); Gross Domestic Product (75%); International Relations (75%); Central Banks (71%); Economic Conditions (67%); Property Tax (64%); Public Finance (64%); Government Departments + Authorities (63%); Social Security (63%); Fuel Markets (61%)

**Industry:** Automotive Fuels (69%); Oil + Gas Industry (61%); Retail + Wholesale Trade (61%)

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[***Far from finished with them***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X20-P1H1-JCBS-P23C-00000-00&context=)

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**Body**

PVV leader Wilders predicts heavy weather for cabinet and for Grapperhaus in particular

This week, everything was turned upside down around the trial against Geert Wilders' 'less Moroccans' statement. Exploded mails show that officials of the Ministry of Justice interfered with the content of the prosecution of the PVV leader. The coalition held back a debate on the issue with Denk until after the verdict in October. In an exclusive interview with De Telegraaf, Wilders predicts heavy weather for the cabinet.

Geert Wilders leads the country's second largest party and is leader of the opposition. However, the PVV leader hardly gets around to politics, because he has to defend himself in court for statements made during the 2014 municipal elections. When he is brought home after another gruelling day in the 'bunker' at Schiphol Airport under heavy security, he is heartbroken. "On the one hand, it gives me energy, because it makes me combative. But I also often fall down on my bed, in front of Pampus," says Wilders.

The past week has been spectacular, with mails showing that officials from the Justice Department have made all kinds of suggestions and attached value judgements to your statements. How did you experience this week?

"It's a roller coaster. When I read the emails... I became very angry. But it also made me really sick. On the one hand, it was a confirmation of what I always thought: that this is a political process. But on the other hand, I also wondered what on earth country we are living in here. It's just almost corruption."

Was that the moment you thought: now we have them?

"Well, apparently not. The court has not ruled in our favour. I think this alone is enough to declare the OM inadmissible ten times and stop the trial. All sorts of legal scholars, really not my friends, indicated that too. Hopefully the court will still decide to do that."

But that is done on the basis of mistakes in the run-up to the trial, not on the basis of weighing up whether your statements about fewer Moroccans are acceptable?

"These are not just mistakes; they go to the heart of the rule of law, of our democracy. That the executive, ministers, civil servants or officials on behalf of the minister should not interfere with anyone's process. And certainly not with that of the opposition leader. That is what happens in Russia. In Poland and Hungary, a ***European Commissioner*** goes there to complain and the Dutch minister also speaks out. Here at home, we move on to the order of the day. We now have black and white evidence that a minister is trying to silence an opposition leader through the judiciary."

The mails also showed that officials indicated that former Minister Opstelten wanted to stay as far away from the process as possible. What do you think shows that the Minister gave the order to interfere?

"Officials do everything on behalf of the minister. And the minister also approved a press release, in which a comparison between my statements and those of PvdA members Samsom and Spekman was removed.''

But based on what we have here, can you prove that the Minister really gave the order? He has certainly been responsible for what the officials did, but that is still something else than giving the order?

"I don't know. I know that we have a notarial statement in which it says that a civil servant heard Opstelten say that 'Wilders is getting in our way'. I know that Opstelten, which was denied earlier, has spoken about the case with the Public Prosecution Service. I know that he has spoken more untruths than truths. But yes, during the witness examinations there was collective amnesia and Opstelten said to nine out of ten questions that he could not remember. Not strong and not credible."

You helped Opstelten into the saddle as a partner in Rutte I, didn't you?

"I could veto ministers. If I had wanted to stop it, I could have. With today's knowledge, I would have made him a parking attendant. At best."

The reason I ask is that during Rutte I it became clear that a kind of counter-power was beginning to emerge in the civil service. A fourth power of civil servants that turned against the support and political wishes of the PVV.

"At the time, there were also people who said that if the PVV were really to gain power, they would not implement some decisions, would go on strike or resign. There was antipathy towards the PVV among some civil servants and you can see that in the documents now as well. They call me evil, racist, that I should be dealt with harshly. The documents show that there is hatred and aversion. Official involvement is obvious. We know a lot now and we don't know a lot.

What do we not know yet?

"The District Court of Midden-Nederland is still considering a number of WOB requests from RTL. Through earlier WOB requests, we now know that Minister Grapperhaus of Justice has also made a big fraud. If you see what is written in three documents now, it is only the tip of the iceberg.

On what do you base this assumption?

"We have compared here in the group where the ministry first varnished things and called them 'personal policy opinions of officials' or 'leads to disproportionate damage for my predecessor'. So now we know what has been varnished away. Texts like: 'We have informed the Public Prosecutor about this'. No personal policy statements! It gives you goose bumps. It is pure political haggling."

You just said that Grapperhaus has also made a big fool of himself. From circles around the Minister, it sounds like civil servants have made that selection and that the Minister did not personally assess hundreds of mails on what was and what wasn't allowed to be published. Can you imagine that?

"His signature is underneath it. But it is good that you point this out. He sent a note to the Chamber last week in which he concealed what we now know, about the interference of Justice officials. He misled the House and actually misinformed it. That could cost him his head."

The documents also show that at the time an advice was sent to Grapperhaus' predecessor Opstelten to inform Prime Minister Rutte. Do you think he is involved as well?

"I don't know. I have suspicions."

What are they?

"I think it is unthinkable that the Prime Minister did not know more about this, but I have no proof. That's why I want a debate with Rutte! I know him, Rutte thought this was important, he's a control freak. But what did he know? What has been going on within the VVD? I will decimate that little party of yours', Rutte said to me in 2011 after the split in the Catshuis. His friend Opstelten heard it too, of course. I don't like conspiracy theories, but..."

It is a serious accusation to label the Prime Minister as an accomplice.

"That's why. And I won't do it until I have proof. I am not ruling out that it is so. I now know what they are capable of. But the coalition wants the debate only after the verdict."

Can the judge still make a fair judgement after the Chamber has given its verdict?

"If the Chamber concludes that this is wrong: of course. The judge is also a citizen, he listens to that. That helps me."

Can't the court do it without interference from the Chamber?

"Maybe not. Would you risk it if you were a suspect?"

I would pull out all the stops.

"That's what I mean. I am far from finished with them."

After the verdict in October, the Chamber will discuss it. What do you expect to happen then?

"This has without exaggeration the potential of the cabinet falling on this. One hundred percent. This touches the core of our constitutional state. It is not only about Geert Wilders anymore. It is about the separation of powers, about the fourth power of the civil service that interferes, whether or not at the behest of politicians, with members of parliament from the opposition. There is already enough to stop the process. If that indeed happens, the whole cabinet will be in very dire straits."

Are you planning something else?

"Even when my case is over, I will do everything to get to the bottom of it and punish those responsible. If we allow this to happen now and there is an SP-GroenLinks government tomorrow, it could just be Mr Jetten of D66 who is the victim. Or Mr Dijkhoff of the VVD. If I have to win my case through civil proceedings after all: I'm going to drive them completely crazy. Not out of revenge, but to get the truth on the table.

This goes to the heart

of the rule of law'.

Pure political haggling'

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[***Not a fist, but a limp hand***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X5F-P1W1-DYMH-R00R-00000-00&context=)

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**Dateline:** The Hague

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Criticism of China note

The House will debate the China note on Monday. We have to start sending out clear signals.

**FULL TEXT:**

Would the new Dutch strategy on China have woken up in Beijing already? The Lower House fears not.

Monday's debate on the memorandum published in May will be attended by VVD Foreign Minister Stef Blok and D66 Trade Minister Sigrid Kaag, who can expect a great deal of criticism. According to many MPs, what the cabinet has put on paper is not yet the beginning of a fist to the emerging superpower, which is rapidly gaining a foothold in the ***European Union*** with smart investments, technological supremacy and the arrival of Chinese students, including at top Dutch universities.

On Monday, Kaag's party colleagues Sjoerd Sjoerdsma and Kees Verhoeven will come up with twelve pages of reaction in which they call the strategy "an empty shell" in which "the major problems" are named, but not addressed. First it was called a strategy and now it is a memorandum - that says it all", says Bram van Ojik of GreenLeft. PvdA MP and Kaag's predecessor Lilianne Ploumen puts it this way: "It's a bit of this and a bit of that - and therefore nothing."

Major annoyance: the scant attention paid to human rights. Three weeks ago, during a round-table discussion in the House of Representatives with civil society organisations and think tanks, Amnesty International pointed out that the many violations by China, such as those involving the Uighurs, are barely mentioned in the paper. Tsering Jampa, director of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), told the House that the word 'Tibet' was completely absent from the 50-page document.

According to Stijn Deklerck, who heads Amnesty's China programme, China has been telling the world for years that a different culture leads to a different way of dealing with international human rights treaties. "Reading this strategy, I regret to say that they have been successful in doing so," says Deklerck. "The memorandum consistently confuses human rights with values and this is a telling nuance."

**Self-censorship**

According to Ploumen, the cabinet is "legitimising" the Chinese narrative. As far as D66 is concerned, it is clear why this is happening. The dependence on Chinese investments seems to create self-censorship", according to Sjoerdsma and Verhoeven, who argue that from now on trade talks should "always" be linked to human rights, in order to prevent the "Chinese view" of this from "dominating worldwide".

Unfair trade practices, industrial espionage, knowledge theft at universities: discomfort is growing about the way China is trying to secure its own interests in the world. US President Trump even unleashed a trade war because of it. The ***EU*** is still a long way from that, but here too, doubts are growing: how sensible is it to join forces with Huawei for modern 5G networks? Why are Chinese companies allowed to make strategic acquisitions in the ***EU, while European companies*** are not allowed to do so in China? Why is ***Europe*** not (or no longer) in the top global tech companies?

The government responded in May with 'Netherlands-China: a new balance'. The memorandum focuses strongly on 'awareness'. Diplomatic and administrative policy on China must be "raised to a higher level", money will be provided for a "knowledge network" of experts, and companies must be made more aware of the risks of doing business with China, without negating the opportunities that this also offers.

According to defence and security expert Rob de Wijk, too little reliance is placed on one's own strengths. Of course it is important, he told the House, to reduce strategic dependence on China, but it is at least as important to increase Chinese dependence. This is already partly happening, such as with Dutch chip manufacturer ASML, but where, De Wijk exclaimed, has agriculture gone in the whole paper? China has 20 per cent of the world's population and only 9 per cent of its cultivable land. It is precisely in this area that the ***EU***, with its surplus of agricultural land, wields political power, the expert said.

The Cabinet argues in the paper that the Netherlands alone will not make the difference and therefore desperately needs the ***EU***. The only thing is that unity is sometimes hard to find. One example is the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a worldwide system of shipping, rail and telecom connections. Within ***Europe***, and outside the ***EU,*** China has its own consultation club to help realise this 'New Silk Road'. This '17+1' mainly includes smaller Eastern European countries, but earlier this year Italy joined in.

Van Ojik thinks that the cabinet is waiting too much for ***Europe***. The preference for ***European*** solutions is justified, but should not become a licence for doing nothing ourselves", he says. On Monday, GroenLinks will submit a motion to make the export of Dutch surveillance technology, which could be used to suppress Chinese citizens, subject to licensing in the same way as weapons, even though it has not yet been possible to reach ***European*** agreements on this.

Ploumen also thinks that the Netherlands "should not be too shy". After the planned British departure from the ***EU***, the Netherlands will be "the largest of the small countries, and the smallest of the large ones" and according to the PvdA MP this means that it will have to take the lead more often. D66 also thinks it is time for difficult choices, such as the adaptation of ***European*** competition law, so that large, ***European*** 'top companies' can still emerge. Give, says the party, a country like Albania the prospect of ***EU membership*** and thus prevent it from ending up in the Chinese sphere of influence. We should not get into the groove of confrontation", says Van Ojik. But we should start sending out clear signals.

Major annoyance: the lack of attention paid to human rights

**Graphic**

A shop in Rotterdam owned by the Chinese telecom giant Huawei. Doubts are growing in the ***EU*** about trade with China: how sensible is it, for example, to join forces with Huawei for modern 5G networks?

Photo Peter Hilz/HH

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject: *European*** Union (93%); Nontariff Barriers (88%); Human Rights (80%); Civil Rights (76%); International Trade (75%); Intellectual Property (71%); Embargoes + Sanctions (64%); International Relations (62%); Developing Countries (61%)

**Load-Date:** September 30, 2019

**End of Document**

[***The European Parliament is firing up the grill***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X5F-P1W1-DYMH-R003-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 1683 words

**Byline:** Tijn Sadée  
  
Clara van de Wiel

**Dateline from** Brussels

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Hearings of Commissioners-designate

From Monday onwards, the candidate Commissioners will be heard one by one by the ***European Parliament***. In the past, candidates sometimes died. There is already an uproar.

**FULL TEXT:**

Is there anything else you need to tell us?" The Commissioner-designate replied in a bitterness: "All the accusations against me and my husband are totally unfounded."

"Then why did you not declare your interest in the firm Global Consult?"

The candidate now begins to stammer in poor English. I have really reported everything, I have prepared a *big folder* with all the documents.

What you say, madam, is simply not true."

The painful scene is from the hearing by ***MEPs*** of the Bulgarian Roemjana Zheleva, who was nominated by her country in 2009 as a ***European Commissioner***. She was found to have concealed some financial interests. Exit Zjeleva. She did not survive the hearing at the time.

The Zheleva drama is a lesson for the current Commissioners-designate, who will be heard one by one by the specialist committees in the ***European*** Parliament from this Monday to 8 October. Only when two-thirds of the parliamentary committee considers the candidate suitable will the light go on.

The ***European Parliament***, whose powers have increased under amended EU treaties, sees the hearings as an important opportunity to influence the direction of the ***EU***.

The new ***European*** Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ('VDL') promises much: a 'Green Deal' for ***Europe***, a more social ***EU*** and an ***EU*** that positions itself more assertively on the world political stage.

We have seen her show now, we know the promises", says Philippe Lamberts, chairman of the ***European*** Greens. During the hearings, we will scratch the surface: is it *window dressing* or are her green ambitions serious?"

Von der Leyen is the president from the back rooms of the ***European*** leaders", says D66 MEP Sophie in 't Veld. According to her, VDL must now prove that it is also the ally of the parliament. The high turnout in the ***European*** elections in May means that ***Europeans*** take ***European*** parliamentary democracy seriously.

Thus, the five-yearly hearings have become an important achievement of Parliament. It is the time to send out the signal: we matter. This time, perhaps, it is even more so. Frustration about the way in which ***European*** heads of government by-passed the spitzenkandidaten (candidates for the Commission presidency on behalf of the Parliament), and crowned Von der Leyen as president, has not subsided. VDL won the parliamentary vote in July with an extremely narrow majority. With some tough questioning, the ***Euro MPs*** can show that they are being taken into account. The temperature of the grill is raised", says Greens leader Lamberts.

**Condescending tone**

In the past, candidates have already been eliminated - one because of his condescending tone towards ***MEPs***, another because of his views. In 2004, Italian Rocco Buttiglione was sent packing when he called homosexuality "a sin".

The Dutch Neelie Kroes had to retake her exam in 2009. She drove her team of diplomats and civil servants to madness by not allowing them to see any of the files they had carefully prepared for her. And every time, Kroes remembered 'another forgotten financial interest' that she still had in a company somewhere on the other side of the world.

During the second hearing, Kroes had pinned a question mark symbol to her lapel: with this modesty, played or not, she got the ***MEPs*** on her side after all.

Once again, there are plenty of candidates with blemishes, sufficiently vague or questionable job descriptions that raise questions. Von der Leyen's lack of ***European*** experience and advisers who know the sensitivities of Brussels is a problem. Already in the weeks before the start of the hearings, controversy arose over her choice to call the migration portfolio 'Protecting our ***European*** Way of Life'. Her critics fear that she, like Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, wants to shield the ***EU*** from migrants with harsh policies.

And then there was the disastrous performance last week of her Romanian and Hungarian candidates: the Parliament's Legal Committee deemed them "lacking in integrity" in advance. This Monday, Von der Leyen will decide whether to ask Romania and Hungary to send replacement candidates. The "blockade" of the two "proves that the ***European Parliament*** takes its role seriously", a spokesperson for the Group of ***the*** Greens immediately jubilated.

But it remains to be seen how this will play out in the coming hearings. An above-average number of parliamentarians are new and inexperienced - 63 per cent compared to 48 per cent last term. Can they compete with the candidates, most of whom are political veterans?

And then there are the party political interests that always come into play during the hearings. The unwritten rule is: you don't give a candidate from your own party a hard time. Moreover, the large coalition that Christian Democrats (EPP) and Social Democrats (S&D) invariably formed meant that they also spared each other.

This time, the political playing field has widened. Because the traditional 'coalition' no longer has a majority in Parliament, the Liberals are now also a factor to be reckoned with. The ***European*** liberal family RenewEurope is represented in the new Commission with six Commissioners. And they too have their candidates with 'a spot'. Like the French Sylvie Goulard, who is being investigated by the French justice department for possible fictitious appointments of employees. Or the Belgian Didier Reynders, who is accused of corruption.

So there is no party without vulnerable commissioners. It could be a reason to take a milder approach to other candidates: a tripartite handshake where everyone - in a 'non-aggression pact' - crosses the finishing line unscathed.

But things can also go very differently. Five years ago, the Social Democrats lashed out unexpectedly hard at the Spanish EPP candidate. The Christian Democrats swore revenge. A crisis was only narrowly averted by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

Whether an interrogation leads to drama and spectacle depends above all on the individual critical ***MEPs*** who, exceptionally, do not care about party strategy. And tight leadership and direction are lacking in all parties. Chairmen of the large groups have just started (with the Social Democrats and Liberals) or have been weakened in the mud fight for the Commission presidency (with the Christian Democrats). And if one party openly seeks the attack, "there is no stopping it", according to D66's In 't Veld. That is the only certainty", says Greens leader Lamberts. If one of them is shot, a candidate in the other camp will die as well.

With this article, Clara van de Wiel begins her Brussels correspondentship for NRC.

High turnout means ***Europeans*** take ***European*** democracy seriously

Sophie in 't Veld (D66)

If one is shot, a candidate in the other camp is also killed.

Philippe Lamberts leader of the ***European*** Greens

*Make an Italian responsible for budgetary discipline in the new committee.* This is the best way to avoid the impression that it is Northern Europe that is forcing Italy into a budgetary straitjacket. The politically experienced Paolo Gentiloni, a Social Democrat, was prime minister from late 2016 to June 2018 and before that foreign minister in the Renzi cabinet. But during his interrogation, Gentiloni will undoubtedly be asked whether, as an Italian, he is the right person to strictly oversee the Stability and Growth Pact. He has little economic experience and during his premiership Gentiloni failed to reduce Italy's public debt.

*A British Commissioner is already out of the picture. But the person the British will have to deal with most in the coming years is very close.* There are those who see it as a stab in the dark that it is an Irishman of all people who will have to negotiate a trade agreement with the UK post-Brexit. Phil Hogan was responsible for agriculture in the last committee and talks without a flourish. He recently announced that he would teach Donald Trump a lesson on trade policy and uncharacteristically lashed out at Boris Johnson's stance in the Brexit negotiations. From 2011 to 2014, Hogan was Minister for the Environment, and Local Government.

*French Internal Market candidate Sylvie Goulard is considered a confidante of President Macron.* She was an advisor to former Commission President Romano Prodi and sat in the ***European*** Parliament for eight years. Her intended portfolio includes defence industry: important to Macron because of his ambitions to further develop the French defence industry. But Goulard, top candidate of the Liberals, is also a sneaky candidate: in France, an investigation is underway into fictitious appointments during her time as ***an MEP***. Although Goulard has paid back all the money, parliamentarians will certainly grill her about it. If the Liberals have to make a sacrifice, Goulard is a painful one.

*There is concern in Brussels about the* ***European Commissioner*** *who is partly responsible for ensuring the independence of the judiciary and democracy: the Czech Vera Jourová.* She has been nominated by her party colleague, Prime Minister Andrej Babis, who is the subject of a corruption investigation by the ***European*** Anti-Fraud Office. Former GreenLeft MEP Judith Sargentini: "You never know what she had to promise back home." But the appointment could also be strategic. If a Czech presents herself as the patron saint of the rule of law, Central European leaders (such as Hungarian Orbán) cannot so easily dismiss this as meddling by Western member states. (with the cooperation of Emilie van Outeren)

**Notes**

With this article, Clara van de Wiel begins her Brussels correspondentship for NRC.

**Graphic**

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen with the President of the ***European*** Parliament, David Sassoli, in Strasbourg.

Photo Patrick Seeger/EPA

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[***Budget EU is stuck***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X5D-7201-DYTV-D0MY-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 12

**Length:** 377 words

**Byline:** Ruud Mikkers

**Body**

Netherlands threatens to pay more

by Ruud Mikkers

Brussels - Negotiations on a new ***European*** multiannual budget in Brussels are at a standstill. Behind the scenes, a fierce battle is raging about how many billions the ***EU*** can spend from 2021 on. An ***EU diplomat*** speaks of "intense and sometimes heated" negotiations. Net contributors, including the Netherlands, are at risk of becoming the victims.

In May last year, the ***European*** Commission proposed to fill the gap created by the Brexit partly by making cuts and partly by asking for a higher contribution from net contributors like the Netherlands. The contribution would go from 1 to 1.11 percent of ***European*** GDP, a total of 1135 billion ***euros***. In addition, the Commission wants to abolish the rebate system, something that would put the Dutch payment position out of kilter.

But net contributors like Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark do not want to pay more than 1% of ***European*** GDP, the combined wealth of 27 EU countries. It means the ***EU*** will have less money to spend because a major sponsor of the ***European*** project, the United Kingdom, which pays some 12 billion ***euros*** net annually, is dropping out. But the big question is when? The Brexit hangs like a shadow over the already difficult negotiations.

Minefield

For Prime Minister Rutte it is a minefield. He repeats his mantra that a smaller ***EU*** must lead to a smaller budget, but also that money must go to new priorities such as ***European*** climate policy and security. The Netherlands would not be able to get their act together in Brussels simply because of the drastic cuts in regional development and agriculture. At the moment the Netherlands pays a net amount of about 6 billion a year.

Positive

Diplomats do not expect a deal before spring. For the Netherlands it is positive that Germany has taken a stand and chooses an economical line, while it seemed earlier that Berlin would not play it so hard. The current multiannual budget amounts to 1087 billion ***euros***, to be spread over seven years, which corresponds to 1% of the GDP of 28 EU countries (because including the UK).

Next year is the last year of that. So, a new deal is needed.

**Classification**

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**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

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[***Oh those Spaniards, those French ... and us***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X5F-P1W1-DYMH-R01H-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** LIFE; Page 4

**Length:** 483 words

**Byline:** Marjoleine de Vos

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

What do we eat?

**FULL TEXT:**

Oh, France is still a meat-eating country, we sighed pityingly. Paris is not at all teeming with hip salad shops, healthy soup points, vegan snacks and places where you can eat as many 'veggies' as you like, like ours or Berlin. The few supermarkets we went to had the usual French offerings (delicious, that's for sure), the restaurants tried to limit the amount of vegetables, again as usual, to a few lettuce leaves and a potato dish, and you could get as many sandwiches with *saucisson* or *jambon*, or cheese and ham as you wanted. Although one must admit that somewhere on a menu there was something with quinoa, both in the capital and in the countryside people clearly found a salad more attractive if it was accompanied by something like bacon, pieces of chicken, Parma ham or even plain *foie gras*. The ratatouille had bacon bits in it, scallops had dried ham crumbled over them and in the modern La Villette joint that offered salads and falafel, they also had their own *rôtisserie* where most people got huge pieces of shiny, juicy pork.

The French. So little concerned about the climate and their health. The world will never be the same - and finally, self-congratulatory thoughts were expressed without hesitation.

Until the meat figures from our own country came out. So we are not seriously cutting back either. Last summer, we filled up the barbecue again with scary pieces of maltreated pork or plump chicken and we didn't keep eating little willies from the vegetarian butcher or airy salads because of the heat. Well, I did, of course, and so did you, but not 'they'. The people.

The figures are a real shock. That so little has changed, despite all those vegetable packets everywhere and especially that we eat so much meat.

According to figures from Our World in Data, a research group based at Oxford University, in 2014 (this is as far as their figures go) we ate more meat than the French. Who in turn ate more meat than the Germans - the Germans, no less, with their sausage culture, their *Aufschnitt*, their *Sauerbraten* and *Eisbein*! The Germans invented meat-eating! But, equally, they lag behind us and the French. The worst, in ***Europe,*** are the Spanish. Our world in data uses different figures than Wageningen, depending on what is included in the offal, bones and so on, but they say that in 2014 we ate 89.49 kilos of meat per person and the Spanish 94.04, followed by the Austrians with 90.87 kilos per person.

Perhaps it is the same as with many diets: that those who think about eating less automatically feel that they are actually eating less. Even if the scale doesn't think so.

Marjoleine de Vos

**Graphic**

Photo iStock

**Classification**

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**Industry:** Meats (94%); Poultry (70%)

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[***See Truth with a capital letter; Column***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X5F-P1W1-DYMH-R014-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION; Page 18

**Length:** 590 words

**Byline:** Marjoleine de Vos

**Body**

As conversations sometimes go: someone declares himself ***European***, someone believes that countries have lost their identity through immigration, someone is afraid of clouds of heavy metals, someone else believes that vaccines are intended to make all people infertile and yet someone else says: "Everyone has their own truth."

It is always difficult to keep quiet when someone says something like that and at the same time you don't know what you want to say. Something like: *No, there are* not a thousand truths!

But there are, that is, there are very different kinds of truths and they tend to get mixed up. Truths of faith, autobiographical truths and factual truths are carelessly mixed up, a one-off experience is elevated to the rule, the near to the general, a half-understood theory to scientific unquestioned fact.

How can you disentangle all that? With the certainty that you yourself do not have much of an overview either, and that you even assume that you are better informed than the others, without being able to substantiate your own views very precisely.

Because what exactly is the truth about vaccines? Do you actually have a viewpoint, other than something like: better to vaccinate anyway; dangerous if you don't. But those who are adamantly against vaccines are not susceptible to that greater good. But those who are fiercely against it are not susceptible to this greater good; surely they don't have to expose their children to poison in the national interest? And so the discussion flies away at lightning speed until everyone sighs and gives their opinion on the beauty of Brittany, the sunny weather (not the climate, for God's sake) and Barbara's chansons.

Areas where the truth does not matter. So that we can all keep our own truth. (*No!* )

What is remarkable is that truth often seems to appear precisely where no truth is to be found. Truth with a capital letter, metaphysical Truth. I don't know if I believe in it, but I do hope to see something of it often. That truth has to do with how we live and with how it *is*.

How it is, is not certain, but sometimes you see something in a painting of which you think: yes, that. The truth of a light falling through a window, of a view or a morning mood, even of a descent from the cross. I saw one in the Louvre, a medieval one, on which the man on top was busy with his ladder and ropes to lower the body carefully - a craftsman, doing his job. The man one step lower, holding the Saviour's legs, was working but at the same time looking very absent-minded, like someone who is staring into himself at his grief, but who also wants others to see it.

And even lower, tenderly caressing a foot, stood a tearful Mary Magdalene, and on the other side, a chalk-white Mother Mary next to a grief-stricken John. Yes, that's how it is, I thought. As if I had ever been present at a descent from the cross. But it is about every body of every dead person, about the treatment of it as an object and the love for it as if it were still alive, and about the care given to it and about the abyss of how a human being can change into a body, after having suffered, and that this thingy that was hoisted down there so carefully has to pass for the one who would direct your life. But there is no one left in there. That is the truth.

*Marjoleine de Vos* is editor of NRC.

Yes, that's how it is, I thought. As if I had ever attended a deposition of the cross

**Notes**

Marjoleine de Vos is editor of NRC.

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**Subject:** Religion + Spirituality (94%); Educational Institution Employees (86%); Sex + Gender Issues (83%); Children (74%); Parents (74%); Biology (62%)

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[***Action needed against apathy European Union***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8C-TP41-JCBS-P0H9-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 07

**Length:** 439 words

**Byline:** Ruud Mikkers

**Body**

by Ruud Mikkers

and Niels Rigter

Brussels - The ***European Union*** must show in the coming days whether it can take a stand against Turkey. Will there be sanctions for the attack on the Kurdish north of Syria? Joint action to catch runaway IS fighters? An arms embargo? A warning at the very least? Like the Dutch cabinet, the ***EU*** could use a push to get out of its slumber.

The demands are modest: condemnation of the Turkish incursion into Northern Syria, a 'dialogue' with Ankara, the suspension of arms exports to Turkey and personal punishments against the combatants of the incursion. Still, the letter from two hundred ***Euro MPs*** led by VVD member Azmani to ***EU foreign chief*** Mogherini is a unique action. And necessary too, says Azmani, given the ***EU***'s apathy.

Arms embargo

"The message that the ***EU*** disapproves of the invasion has not even been conveyed yet," says Azmani. Also the cabinet, which was the first EU country to summon the Turkish ambassador, needed a poke from the House of Representatives to wake up from its slumber. An arms embargo did not seem so likely last week, Minister Kaag (Foreign Trade) said. Today and tomorrow Blok (Foreign Affairs) will argue for it anyway when he meets his ***EU colleagues*** in Luxembourg. It remains to be seen whether an ***EU-wide*** arms export ban has a chance. But now that the Netherlands, Germany and France have announced that they will independently impose such an arms embargo, a start has been made.

Blok initially did not even intend to attend this meeting where Turkey and Brexit dictate the agenda. Only after demands from the House and a discussion in the Council of Ministers did he decide to skip the mini-Turkey summit and join the state visit to India later.

The minister will also call for sanctions in Luxembourg. Whether Turkey really needs to fear that remains to be seen. Sanctions will only be taken if not one of the 28 EU-countries stands against it. Hungary, for instance, seems to shy away after President Erdogan's threat to let 3.6 million Syrian refugees through to ***Europe***.

The Netherlands pleads, not for the first time, for a stop of the 'pre-accession aid' that Turkey still receives as a candidate member of the ***EU***. Last year it was still 255 million ***euro***. Possibly all 28 member states together now say: scrap it completely.

Actually, it is a bad time for the ***EU*** to show its muscle, with the change of administration at the ***European*** Commission, the Brexit that demands all the attention and an unpredictable White House, says GL MP Van Ojik. "Now it comes right down to it."

**Classification**

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**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject: *European*** Union (94%); International Relations (89%); ***European*** Union Regulation + Policy (68%)

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[***I guarantee you that it will be war in Syria for many years to come.***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8F-8NX1-DYMH-R4FW-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 14

**Length:** 639 words

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

With Erdogan's invasion, the war in Syria has flared up again, observes *Carolien Roelants*. ***Europe*** is angry, but only because IS'ers can be released.

**FULL TEXT:**

A few months ago, you heard it said here that the war in Syria was over - after all, Assad's regime had won. That was not actually true, because there was plenty of war and other misery going on, including Assad himself. But now it is not true at all given the Turkish invasion of northern Syria. And I guarantee you, it won't get any better in Syria for a while.

I could point to Idlib province, where an al-Qaeda group is still in power and is under heavy siege by Assad and his Russian friends. Or to long since 'liberated' Deraa in the south, where violence is still the order of the day. But let's concentrate for a moment on the Turkish attack on the Syrian-Kurdish forces in the Syrian border area with Turkey. Suppose that at some point the Syrian-Kurdish fighters (= terrorists, according to Erdogan and a lot of Turks) have been driven away enough kilometres from the border, according to the Turkish view. Will there be peace then?

Take a look at Afrin, a western district, which was occupied in January 2018 by the Turkish army together with the Arab mercenary rebels who are present again. Why do I mention Afrin? Because Afrin is still occupied today, and not to the satisfaction of the civilians, if they have not fled. Turkish media call it liberated territory. But according to non-Turkish media, this predominantly Kurdish district is being actively Turkified, including by the construction of Turkish mosques, and 'decocted', including by the importation of Turkmen and Arab Syrians. Last week Ankara announced that three faculties of the University of Gaziantep will be established in Afrin, for Turkish language and literature, economics and theology. Education is one of the most important tools in the transformation of the region", wrote the Turkish newspaper *Sabah*.

Erdogan has made no secret of the fact that he wants to accommodate a million Syrian-Arab refugees in the area along the border where his troops are currently operating. A win-win for Erdogan, because in this way he can get rid of his Syrian refugees and at the same time decouple the Syrian border area. This is twice prohibited by international law: 1) because you are not allowed to move refugees as you please, and 2) because you are not allowed to carry out ethnic cleansing, which is clearly the intention here. To start with, he was not allowed to invade Syria on a fake excuse without Assad's permission, no matter what you think of his regime. Iran and Russia are there with Assad's permission.

But hey, can Erdogan just do that? Yes, he can just like that because nobody is going to stop him. Trump has removed the last obstacles to the Turkish invasion by removing US military personnel on the ground. His supporters are fine with it. Frenzied on Turkey', I read at Reuters news agency, the ***European Union*** is going to talk about sanctions. But this rage is not so much about the invasion as about Erdogan's threat to ship millions of refugees to ***Europe*** as well, and ***European*** extremists of Islamic State will be released. As has apparently already happened. If only you had repatriated them, ***European*** governments, instead of loading Iraq and Syria with them, you would have had them under your control now!

But I do not believe that anyone here is concerned about the 25 million Syrian citizens, inside and outside Syria. Put yourself in their place, just for a moment: eight years of war behind you, and no prospect of peace.

Carolien Roelants is an expert on the Middle East and every week she separates the facts from the hypes.

Can Erdogan just do that? Yes, he can

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** International Relations (94%); Weapons + Arms (83%); Chemical + Biological Weapons (81%)

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[***Battle of public opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8C-TP41-JCBS-P0H8-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 07

**Length:** 515 words

**Byline:** Ralph Dekkers

**Body**

Besides ground warfare, fighting parties try to influence West

by Ralph Dekkers

Damascus - Alongside the war on the ground in Syria, a bitter battle for public opinion is raging. Both Turks and Kurds are constantly trying to influence the West with half-truths and whole lies.

The Kurdish militia YPG is keen to increase the threat posed by Islamic State. It knows that the escape of extremists frightens ***Europe in particular***.

The Kurds announced yesterday that, after Turkish shelling, almost 800 foreign IS members have escaped from a reception camp, but the relatively objective Syrian Observatory for Human Rights keeps it at 100. Who to believe? Reports of a series of IS attacks earlier this week in Raqqa later turned out to be false.

Bars

The Kurds also keep repeating that they will not be able to continue guarding the 12,000 jihadists (and tens of thousands of their relatives) because all their fighters have to go to the front. There will undoubtedly be some truth in this, but they are also increasing the pressure on the West.

It is first and foremost the Kurds themselves who benefit from keeping the IS behind bars. After all, the released terrorists will probably target their former jailers first. Moreover, the road to ***Europe*** is long.

This also applies to the 3.6 million Syrian refugees that President Erdogan threatens to send to the ***European Union*** if Brussels does not temper its criticism of the Turkish invasion. Apart from the feasibility of such a gigantic deportation, Erdogan would be shooting himself in the foot: the ***EU*** pays billions for the reception of the refugees in Turkey.

Besides spreading fear, both sides are also trying to convince the West of their noble character. Turkey presents itself as the country that must protect its territory from 'terrorists' and, in the process, also gives the Syrian refugees within its borders the opportunity to return 'home'.

Heroes

But how many of those millions are waiting to leave the safety of Turkey for an uncertain existence in a region that has been shot to pieces and where Kurdish militias are expected to wage guerrilla warfare for a long time to come? And are the Kurds really 'terrorists' or are they heroes who fought IS for 'us' and on top of that respect women's rights and adhere to a secular way of thinking?

The truth, as so often, lies somewhere in the middle. There are inextricable links between the YPG and the PKK, which is also considered a terrorist organisation in the West. But it was also the only group the West could rely on for the war against IS. The Turks are leaning on Arab militias in Syria for the war against the YPG, but they are already being accused of summary executions and other war crimes. This means horrendous losses for the Kurdish side, but on the other hand a big win in the battle for the sympathy of the West.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Terrorist Organizations (94%); Refugees (88%); International Relations (84%); Weapons + Arms (84%); Peace Process (73%); Military Weapons (71%); Chemical + Biological Weapons (63%); ***European*** Union (62%)

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[***With new supporters PiS grows; Poland***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8F-8NX1-DYMH-R4FR-00000-00&context=) [***PiS wins elections again with conviction***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8F-8NX1-DYMH-R4FR-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 12

**Length:** 1057 words

**Byline:** Emilie van Outeren

**Dateline:** Warsaw

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

*Analysis*  Elections Poland

Internationally, Poland is associated with undermining the rule of law. But voters got exactly what they voted for.

**FULL TEXT:**

The internationally controversial but nationally popular governing party Law and Justice (PiS) won Poland's elections convincingly on Sunday. Based on the preliminary results, the party obtained almost 45% of the votes. Due to a complicated system of residual seats, this is probably enough to continue governing with an absolute majority in parliament.

The continued success of PiS rests on the money that its government has put directly into the pockets of voters. And the sense of trust and dignity that comes with it for many Poles. Since coming to power in 2015, the party has lowered the retirement age in the ageing country. And introduced a child benefit that, at 500 zloty (117 ***euros***) a month, is even definitely higher than in the Netherlands.

This "Polish version of a welfare state", as party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski calls it, is supported by sustained economic growth and historically low unemployment. The fears expressed by political opponents that PiS's ideas would be unaffordable and impracticable have proved false. In fact, by governing alone, the party was able to implement them quickly. Politicians who keep their promises are something we haven't been used to", was the response at campaign meetings organised by PiS all over the country.

Four years ago, the gains came from ideological support from a small hard core, general dissatisfaction with the government of the day and fear of the migration crisis. Since then, thanks to its populist-leftist measures, PiS has broadened its constituency to include younger and better-educated voters. Like last month in southern Wadowice, where 32-year-old engineer Wojciech Wegrzyn praised the "direct distribution of wealth" of "a government that is finally doing something for ordinary people". And Anna Bak (35), a mother of three, expressed her joy that she "gets to decide what we spend the money on: whether my children need extra homework help, or whether we use it to go to the swimming pool".

**Reaganesque hypercapitalism**

The confidence of their government that Poles can decide for themselves what is good for them creates self-awareness in a country with a collective inferiority complex. Not everyone, especially in rural areas, has come along well in the Reagan hyperkapitalism that Poland introduced after the fall of communism. Or feel at home in a greening and culturally progressive ***Europe***. PiS offers protection against that too.

For example, the party promises to keep coal mines open and to stop the Western 'LGBT ideology'. The attack on our values must be stopped", said party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski in Wadowice, the birthplace of the Polish Pope, John Paul II (1978-2005). The traditional Catholic family must be protected, "and cannot consist of two dads or two mums."

**Victim of the Deep State**

This identity theme characterises how PiS conducts politics. Although the party has ruled with absolute power for four years, it continues to present itself as the underdog. PiS manages to present itself as the victim of a *deep state*, a "post-communist elite" of judges, journalists, museum directors, gay activists and "Brussels". In this narrative, it is not the vulnerable minority that is oppressed, but the ruling party's supporters.

The opposition has not been able to do much about this in the past four years and has conducted a reactive, negative campaign. The Civic Platform, the right-liberal party that governed from 2007 to 2015, received over a quarter of the votes. The rest was split between a coalition of left-wing parties - which failed to reach the electoral threshold last time - the agrarian party and the far-right Konfederacja.

The opposition, along with the ***European*** Commission, has been particularly agitated by the erosion of the rule of law. Judges were forced into retirement and harassed with disciplinary cases and slander. But among voters this theme is hardly alive.

Yet support among the new, more pragmatic PiS supporters is far from unconditional. Voters express dissatisfaction with the conflict with the ***EU***, worry about the climate, or think the hatred of LGBT people goes too far. They vote for this party as long as it makes them richer. Whether this remains the case in the coming term of office will depend mainly on a possible German recession, which will drag Poland down with it.

In the run-up to Sunday's elections, PiS again made material promises. To catch up with the rest of ***Europe*** in terms of prosperity, the minimum wage must rise from 2,250 zloty to 4,000 (930 instead of 525 ***euros***) within four years. Poland can no longer be a low-wage country for neo-colonial exploitation", Kaczynski said in Wadowice.

This puts companies - which have had to pay for the expansion of social security in recent years - in a tight spot. "It sounds nice", says engineer and PiS voter Wegrzyn. "But higher wages are only realistic if we also increase our productivity." Otherwise, the international car factory he works for may leave for a more competitive country.

**Hungary Orbán 's Fidesz party suffers significant loss**

*Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party suffered a significant defeat in Hungary's local elections.* Gergely Karacsony, candidate of the joint opposition, won the Budapest mayoral election on Sunday. A sitting Fidesz mayor was also defeated in seven other cities. The party has won almost all elections since 2006.

*Karacsony (44) had the support of opposition parties from left to right,* who on their own never managed to stand up to Fidesz. During his campaign, in which he had all the pro-government media against him and was physically hindered, Karacsony cited Istanbul and Warsaw as examples. The main cities of Turkey and Poland are in the hands of opposition politicians. And they form a buffer against absolute power.

*Orbán has congratulated his opponents.* He holds on to power in 13 major cities and the countryside.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

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**Industry:** Public Broadcasting (76%)

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[***Moscow determines Erdogan's room for manoeuvre***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8F-8NX1-DYMH-R4G1-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OPINION; Page 18

**Length:** 867 words

**Byline:** Marcel Kurpershoek  
  
Marcel Kurpershoek

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Russia uses the Kurds just as much as the Americans, but Turkey and Syria count more, Marcel Kurpershoek writes. Again, Moscow remains the game-changer.

**FULL TEXT:**

The Turkish incursion into Syria has been met with a shower of criticism. The American Congress is threatening sanctions. President Juncker of the ***European*** Commission says in advance that the ***EU*** will not pay for a 'safe zone' where Turkey can park its Syrian refugees. Iranian President Rohani warned his 'friend and brother' Turkey to be careful: guarding the Syrian border is a matter for Damascus. For the sake of clarity, Iran immediately started army exercises on the Turkish border. Russian minister Lavrov blamed the United States with its preference for its own vassals over Assad's government.

Rohani and Lavrov find Trump on their side. He tweeted that it was high time to withdraw from "ridiculous, endless, mostly tribal wars" and "let Turkey, ***Europe***, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Russia and the Kurds sort it out themselves."

Trump shares this rationale with his predecessor Obama. Reluctantly, he allowed himself to be pulled along by liberal interventionists. Until he discovered in Libya (2011) that America could not work as a 'pusher from behind' with allies like the ***Europeans***. He fought tooth and nail against pressure to become militarily involved in Syria. Until Islamic State (IS) appeared on the scene and turned the situation around. Not taking action against IS would damage Obama politically. The IS attack on the Kurdish city of Kobani, while Turkey watched, provided Obama with the non-jihadist Syrian party he needed: the Kurdish PYD and its militias. Since then, things have gone downhill between Turkey and the US.

The PYD is a branch of the PKK, also regarded by the West as a terrorist organisation. Turkey sees the PKK, and therefore the PYD, as a threat to its territorial integrity. The PYD seeks autonomy in Rojava, which stretches from the Syrian border with Iraq to the Mediterranean Sea. Turkey sees Rojava as a springboard for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey. To prevent this, Turkey occupied the western Kurdish enclave of Afrin in 2018. The capture of the IS capital Raqqa by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF, two-thirds Kurds, one-third Arab troops) gave the PYD wings.

In the West, the Kurds are popular because of their secularism, the proud freedom with which their women fighters move, and their ties to Christian minorities. This romantic view is not necessarily false. But there is also the PYD ideology of PKK leader Öcalan: a variant of the Chinese Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. The Christians in Rojava are the only group that is still allowed to teach in Arabic: Arab Muslims are not. Except in Afrin, the Kurds are barely a majority in the area. Many Kurds, especially the better-off, do not like the PYD philosophy.

Assad rejects the autonomy model for the Kurds just as firmly as the Turkish President Erdogan. So does Iran, with its own Kurdish liberation movement. The Kurds in Iraq do not give a damn about the PYD. No fraternal Kurdish help is to be expected. Many Kurds in Turkey again do not want anything from the PKK. Where is salvation for the PYD: in Brussels or The Hague where emotions against Turkey are running high?

Moscow and Tehran are the game-changers in the Turkish invasion of Syria. Under the auspices of Moscow, Iran and Turkey are sitting down together to discuss Syria. The Russian-Iranian restraint on Turkey does not come without conditions. A cordon sanitaire along the border is allowed, occupation of the whole area is not. That is also Trump's position. Erdogan can live with that.

For Erdogan, it will probably remain a trade-off between Washington and Moscow. Between F-35s and Russian S-400 missiles. Between NATO and its big northern neighbour. Trump and Putin, each for his own reasons, seem to give Erdogan the space. For Assad, the rule is: over you, with you, without you. Assad's army is now on the move to assist the Kurds against the Turks. That is a new trump card in Putin's deck.

Putin wants to go back to the Syrian-Turkish agreement by which the PKK could no longer carry out operations across the Syrian-Turkish border. Moscow uses the Kurds just as much as the Americans, but Turkey and Syria count more. The same applies to Trump. The IS spectre remains, but there are other ways to keep that genie in the bottle. If the US remains militarily in eastern Syria, it is because of Iran's tentacles and Israel's security. The bigger question then is: can Trump and Putin find a way that confirms Russia in its role as a game-changer in Syria and at the same time puts Iran at a sufficient distance? Perhaps as a first step towards an arrangement that also allows for the safe return of refugees? Then ***Europe will*** have to pay the price.

A cordon sanitaire along the border is allowed, occupation of the whole area is not.

Marcel Kurpershoek is an Arabist and diplomat. He was special envoy for Syria.

**Graphic**

A Syrian-Kurdish woman with the flag of the Kurdish PYD, at a demonstration in the town of Ras al-Ain near the border with Turkey last Sunday. The town was taken by Turkey this weekend.

Photo Delil Souleiman/AFP

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** International Relations (94%); Weapons + Arms (88%); Terrorist Organizations (82%); Chemical + Biological Weapons (78%); Peace Process (69%); Military Weapons (67%); Civil War (65%); War + Conflict (65%)

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[***Separatists receive years of imprisonment; Catalonia***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8F-8NX1-DYMH-R4F6-00000-00&context=) [***Separatists receive years of imprisonment***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8F-8NX1-DYMH-R4F6-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** CONTENTS; Page 1

**Length:** 1680 words

**Byline:** Koen Greven

**Dateline:** Madrid

**Body**

**ABSTRACT**

Criminal proceedings in Catalonia The judge found that there was no rebellion, but imposed long sentences for sedition, malfeasance and civil disobedience.

**FULL TEXT:**

The Supreme Court in Madrid handed down years of prison sentences to nine Catalan separatists on Monday morning, in a verdict that further exacerbates the Catalan crisis.

Former Vice-President Oriol Junqueras received the heaviest punishment. He got thirteen years. With sentences for sedition, malfeasance and civil disobedience, the court in Madrid chose a middle way in a criminal process in which no compromise was possible for the defendants. Eight other separatists received nine to twelve years in prison.

The Catalan regional president Quim Torra had called for civil disobedience for anything but a total acquittal. In the regional capital Barcelona, spontaneous protests against the verdict erupted immediately on Monday morning. Separatists took to the streets with independence flags and blocked a number of major roads in Barcelona. More actions have been announced for the coming period.

In an initial reaction, the Spanish government in Madrid believes that the ruling should be respected and once again threatens to partially dismantle autonomy.

The political conflict - in which the separatists suspected of rebellion, as were the president of the regional parliament and two leaders of separatist movements. A serious offence punishable by a maximum prison sentence of thirty years.

Puigdemont fled with four 'ministers', avoided prosecution and watched from Belgium as twelve other separatists were punished.

It is obvious that Spain will now ask for Puigdemont's extradition again with a judgment in hand.

**Trial of the century**

On 12 February, under the leadership of Judge Manuel Marchena Gómez, "the trial of the century" began. For the first time in 41 years of democracy, elected politicians stood trial claiming that they had carried out a political decision with a mandate from the people. They see themselves as 'political prisoners' in a politicised constitutional state. The Spanish examining magistrate saw things completely differently and regarded the actions of 'the imprisoned politicians' as the orchestration of a violent uprising. A comparison was even made with the coup attempt of 23 February 1981, for which lieutenant-colonel Antonio Tejero was sentenced to 40 years in prison. The prosecutor demanded prison sentences of seven to 25 years.

After a four-month public criminal trial, during which hundreds of witnesses were heard live in front of television cameras, the court took another four months to reach a unanimous verdict. The prosecutor found evidence of 'rebellion by force', while the state attorney went no further than 'sedition'. According to the court, the violence was not so great as to constitute rebellion.

The verdict will be seen as a Solomon's verdict by few in the polarised conflict. Supporters of Spain's conservative parties would have preferred a much harsher sentence, while Catalan separatists see their punished leaders as martyrs of 'the Spanish state'.

**Hot autumn**

A political solution seems only further away for the torn Catalonia after the criminal trial. In the autonomous region, where about half of the 7.5 million inhabitants are opposed to secession, it will be another hot autumn. The Spanish government has sent thousands of police officers to maintain order, just like two years ago.

The crisis in Catalonia, which is spiralling out of control, symbolises the lack of willingness to compromise in the southern European land of contrasts. With the fourth national elections in four years on 10 November, the political struggle will only intensify. There is no basis for dialogue now.

For both the large national parties and the Catalan separatists, a short-term collision course will yield the most votes. In doing so, they both put the future of Spain and Catalonia at stake.

There were elected politicians on trial who claimed that they had carried out a political decision with a mandate from the people.

Oriol Junqueras, former vice-president of Catalonia, is seen by the court as 'the engine' of the resistance. He was given thirteen years for sedition and misappropriation of public funds. He was also banned from public office for thirteen years. The prosecutor had demanded 25 years in prison for violent rebellion.

Junqueras was the second man in the regional government of Carles Puigdemont , who on 27 October 2017 considered himself the representative of the new republic of Catalonia. The two leaders found each other in the occasional *Junts pel Sí* (Together for Yes) alliance in their quest for independence, but are political opposites in many other areas.

Junqueras is the face of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), a left-wing republican party. Puigdemont comes from the moderate nationalist power party Convergència.

Unlike Puigdemont, Junqueras did not choose to flee abroad, but ended up in prison. The Catalan considers himself a martyr of 'the Spanish state'. He told *NRC* earlier that he *does not* regret that he did not flee. Our imprisonment shows the failure of a state that has no political solution for a democratic project.

His imprisonment cost him his seat in the ***European*** Parliament for which he was elected this past year.

Jordi Cuixart (44) is the leader of Òmnium Cultural. This organisation, founded in 1961 during the dictatorship, works to preserve the Catalan language and culture, which were suppressed under General Franco. Cuixart, himself an entrepreneur, is also one of the leaders of FemCat, the lobby club of entrepreneurs for independence. FemCat argues that Catalan companies are better off in their own state than in Spain. He was given a nine-year prison sentence and may not hold public office for nine years.

Cuixart has always kept himself aloof from politics and is seen by many as the new leader of the independence movement partly because of this. Famous are the images from 20 September 2017 showing how he and Jordi Sànchez (former leader of the Asamblea Nacional Catalana ) address a crowd protesting against a raid on buildings of the regional government from the roof of a police car. On 16 October 2017, Cuixart and Sànchez were arrested for this. Since then, both have been detained. As a popular leader, Cuixart made himself popular by strongly opposing the trial from his imprisonment, expressing no remorse and saying he was prepared to have to spend years locked up for a free Catalonia

Jordi Sànchez (55) has been an advocate of an independent Catalonia for decades. At the beginning of the 1980s, as leader of the so-called *Crida a la Solidaritat,* he championed the Catalan language and culture. The former professor of political science was an advocate of making Catalan the leading regional language over Spanish. As chairman of the Asamblea Nacional Catalana (ANC), he became the face of mass protests. He stood at the basis of large-scale demonstrations in which hundreds of thousands of Catalans demanded (a referendum on) secession. Sànchez, who received nine years in prison, quit the ANC from his cell and became the number two of the centre-right party JxC.

**Carme Forcadell, 11.5 years President of Parliament**

As president of the Catalan regional parliament, Carme Forcadell (64) played a key role in introducing laws that paved the way for the banned referendum and entering politics as an ERC member in the coalition *Junts pel Sí*, she made a name for herself as the leader of the ANC. In successive years, this social pressure group for Catalan independence organised mass demonstrations on the bank holidays La Diada.

In a first reaction she said: "Free debate in parliament is not a crime, it is a right, and I must continue to defend it."

Former 'ministers' *Jordi Turull, Raül Romeva and Dolors Bassak were* given 12 years in prison for sedition and misuse of public money.

Two other former 'ministers', *Josep Rull* and *Joaquim Fornk got* 10.5 years. They are not suspected of misusing public money.

Former regional ministers *Meritxell Borràs, Carles Mundó* and *Santiago Vila*, who had already withdrawn before the vote on independence in October 2017, were convicted of civil disobedience. They are fined and banned from holding public office for 20 months.

Several other separatists are on trial in Catalonia in the near future for other cases.

**On the run with Puigdemont**

Former regional president *Carles Puigdemont* chose to flee from justice together with former 'ministers' *Clara Ponsati, Antoni Comín, Lluis Puig* and *Meritxell Serret*.

In Spain, defendants are not sentenced in absentia. It is obvious that on the basis of the ruling, their extradition will be requested again. Previously, judges in Belgium and Germany refused to extradite Puigdemont on suspicion of rebellion.

Puigdemont tweeted in a first reaction: "A total of one hundred years in prison. Barbaric. We have to react like never before. For the future of our children. For democracy. For ***Europe***. For Catalonia."

**Graphic**

Photo Josep Lago/AFP

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** Trial + Procedure (94%); Corrections (80%); Fraud + Financial Crime (77%); Sentencing (70%); Corruption (69%); Law Courts + Tribunals (67%); Judges (65%); Bribery (62%)

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[***Nationalist PiS party wins again in Poland***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8C-TP41-JCBS-P0HT-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** OUTSIDE; Page 13

**Length:** 284 words

**Byline:** Rob Savelberg

**Body**

Choice between authoritarianism and democracy'.

by Rob Savelberg

WARSAW - The PiS party won the Polish elections yesterday as expected. "My country has to choose between an authoritarian system and democracy", proclaimed the brand new winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Olga Tokarczuk.

Cheers went up at the PiS headquarters, a drab building from the Communist era. The fact that party leader Jaroslav Kaczynski of all people is residing here speaks volumes. Kaczynski hates communists, but he is making his country look more and more like a communist dictatorship, including a "strong leader", a gagged press and an increasingly partisan judiciary.

According to exit polls, the PiS won a generous 44 per cent. It was followed by the left-liberal block of KO, which won 27 per cent of the voters. This pro-European occasional club aimed to break the omnipotence of PiS.

In third place was the left-wing Lewica with 12%, followed by the peasant party PSL with a tenth of the votes and the far-right Konfederacja with 6%. The fact that the last two parties still passed the five per cent electoral threshold may prevent the nationalist PiS from achieving an absolute majority of seats.

The ballot was eagerly awaited. The turnout may be higher than four years ago, when Kaczynski began the authoritarian transformation of Poland. Four years ago, only 51 per cent of voters went to vote. The record after the democratic revolution of 1989, when Poland regained its freedom lost in 1939, was a turnout of 54 per cent.

The final result is expected only today.

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Rule Of Law (94%)

**Industry:** Public Broadcasting (67%)

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[***Farmers oppose trade agreement***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8C-TP41-JCBS-P0J4-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** FINANCIAL; page 19

**Length:** 100 words

**Body**

***EU-Canada***

Amsterdam - Dutch farmers want the Lower House to torpedo the trade agreement with Canada (Ceta). According to the farmers, this treaty creates unfair competition. This was said by leaders of the Dutch Dairy Farmers' Association (NMV) and the Dutch Arable Farmers' Association (NAV) in the Buitenhof TV programme on Sunday. "Politicians from left to right are full of talk about fair prices for farmers," said Hans Geurts, board member of the NMV. "Trade agreements like Ceta, however, play farmers off against each other worldwide, create unfair competition and distort the market."

**Classification**

**Language:** DUTCH; ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Journal Code:** telegraph,Telegraph

**Subject:** Agricultural Research (62%)

**Industry:** Agriculture (94%); Farmers + Ranchers (65%)

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[***Another whole city***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8C-TP41-JCBS-P0GS-00000-00&context=)

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**Section:** INDOOR; Page 02

**Length:** 763 words

**Body**

Immigration drives population growth rates through the roof again this year

This year, the Netherlands is heading for a population increase of almost 120,000 people. This is the conclusion of an estimate by demographer and professor Jan Latten. The main cause of the growth is immigration.

Although fewer children are being born, the population is growing like crazy. This year, the figures are going through the roof again, predicts demographer Jan Latten, who worked for years for Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and who is a professor of social demography at the University of Amsterdam.

The driving force behind the current increase is also this year's immigration: knowledge workers, labour migrants, students, asylum seekers and family reunification are pushing up the figures, Latten points out. Up to and including August, the number of immigrants had already increased by 65,000. A city the size of Veenendaal.

Leiden

Including births, the counter now stands at 76,000. The total growth this year will be between 115,000 and 120,000, according to the professor's estimate. In terms of size, this is comparable to the total population of Leiden and substantially higher than last year (+101,000).

This trend has been visible for three years. In 2018, the migration balance came to no less than 86,000 people. There were never so many before, says mathematician and anthropologist Jan van de Beek who researches the costs and benefits of immigration and changing demographics.

Since 2011, a net number of about 400,000 people have joined the Dutch population. During all the Balkenende Cabinets (2002-2010), there were still about 40,000. Times were different, though: fewer asylum applications and a period in which, on balance, more people left the country. The borders were also still partially closed to Eastern Europeans.

That has now changed. The Dutch economy is running at full speed. That attracts people, Van de Beek points out. Including Poles and Romanians, but also highly educated Indians come in large numbers. Last year, the latter group numbered about six thousand. According to Van de Beek, unlike asylum seekers, they often provide our society with a lot of money. CBS reported that the Indians have a higher personal income (40,000 ***euros***) than the average employee or self-employed person in the Netherlands.

But mass immigration does lead to even greater pressure on the housing market, where there is already a glaring shortage. Unlike babies born into an existing family, newcomers often have to look for a place to live. Latten: "Their arrival therefore weighs heavily on the housing market.

Flattening

The question is how much immigration and growth the Netherlands can handle. Planning agencies estimate that the inflow will gradually level off. But the extent is structurally underestimated. "There is a culture of 'it won't be that bad and what is happening now is exceptional'. That is belied time and again," says Latten.

He predicts that the influx will actually continue. Not only from ***Europe***. Even if the Netherlands does not receive boat people from Italy, these newcomers with a piece of paper in their pocket from, for example, France or Germany, the professor explains. Those countries have promised to receive these people. Moreover, there are still numerous hotbeds in the world that can cause refugee flows.

During last year's General Political Consultations, the subject was on the agenda partly because of Latten. The minister promised an investigation. Since then, it has hardly been discussed in The Hague. Politicians prefer not to get their fingers burned, researcher Van de Beek observes. While we are now heading for major demographic changes with high immigration and a falling birth rate.

"At this rate, natives will be a minority by 2100," says the mathematician, who also includes the third and fourth generation of migrants in this calculation. "This does not necessarily have to be a problem," he says. "Certainly if newcomers feel Dutch and blend into society. Then they are no longer allochtonen in a cultural sense."

Fracture lines

But segregation is threatening. "We now see that some groups blend into society and mix with natives through relationships", Van de Beek states. "In contrast, you see very little of this in the guest worker groups, such as the Turks and Moroccans. In fact, among some Muslims there is even a tendency to turn against Dutch society", he observes. "If such ethnic fault lines continue to exist, it is not conducive to the cohesion of society as a whole."

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[***Bijleveld clashes with US ambassador; Turkish incursion into Syria***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5X8F-8NX1-DYMH-R4FK-00000-00&context=)

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**ABSTRACT**

Netherlands-USA

After a debate, the Defence Minister denounced "nonsense statements" by US Ambassador Pete Hoekstra.

**FULL TEXT:**

Minister Ank Bijleveld (Defence, CDA) wants to set the record straight. I have heard enough nonsense today", she said by telephone, after a debate on defence that *Elsevier Weekblad* organised on Saturday in the Louwman Museum in The Hague. I will stick to the facts.

She was addressing a statement by the American ambassador, Pete Hoekstra. During the debate, Bijleveld had said she was "disappointed" that the American decision to withdraw from Syria "has surprised us again recently".

Afterwards, Hoekstra told this newspaper that the Netherlands had not been informed about the withdrawal of the Americans from Syria "because the Netherlands itself chose to leave Syria". Hoekstra is referring to the withdrawal of the F-16 fighter planes with which the Netherlands carried out air attacks over Syria until 1 January 2019. "This also meant that the Netherlands was no longer part of the Syria working group, in which tactical decisions about Syria are discussed with those who are active there", Hoekstra said.

Only: there is no 'Syria Working Group'. The anti-IS coalition, of which the Netherlands is also a member, is the club in which the countries active in that region consult each other. We are even members of the small core group", says Bijleveld.

In addition: the anti-IS coalition operates with a mandate from Iraq. Precisely because IS operates across borders", says Bijleveld. All decisions about the region are taken there. But the Americans have not informed anyone of their plans, not even the American Secretary of Defense knew anything about it."

This disagreement took place outside the debate. During the debate itself, in a sold-out room with three *keynote* speakers and three Members of Parliament, the question of whether the Americans are a reliable ally lingered a bit. Minister Bijleveld emphasised that allies must not take each other 'for granted' and must be able to 'continue to count on each other'. Because: "We cannot afford to be played apart." Hoekstra agreed with that. During his speech, he did not say a word about Syria. The debate leader did not ask him about it either.

**'*Europe* is the best you can get'**

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, former Secretary-General of NATO and currently a professor in Leiden, was sharper. A superpower has to create a balance of power', he said in the debate. It was there in the Middle East, very fragile, but it was there. And now that balance is no longer there." He, too, stressed that allies must be predictable and extended that principle: Also when it comes to trade policy against China, we must act together", he told the audience. And, addressing Hoekstra: "***Europe*** is *the best you can get*.

The participants also agreed on many things, such as the changing sense of security in a world where peace is no longer taken for granted. The tone only sharpened when discussing the question: should new submarines be built in the Netherlands? Yes, said the governing VVD party wholeheartedly. Yes, if it is possible, said government party D66. Yes, said the opposition party FVD, indeed, we should build all military equipment in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is about to purchase or have submarines built. Four parties are still in the race for this billion-dollar order, including a combination with the Dutch company Damen. The minister hopes that the cabinet can make its decision "still this year".

Building in the Netherlands may create the most employment and strengthen the so-called naval cluster here. Member of Parliament André Bosman (VVD), pointed out that the current submarine, the Walrus, was also built in the Netherlands. "That was the best submarine for the best price."

His colleague Salima Belhaj (D66) was more cautious: "It would be nice if we succeeded in building the boats here." But a German, French and Spanish party are also involved in the tender. The procedure has to be careful, even if it's only to avoid other countries saying: the Netherlands has political control of this tender. And to be able to explain properly that such an expense of billions has been incurred, "while the local nursing home, for example, has to close down."

Member of Parliament Thierry Baudet (FVD) found the latter "a cowardly attitude". Buying the submarines is, according to him, "investing in our grandeur", something for which "we all have to make sacrifices."

The Americans inform no one of their plans

Ank Bijleveld Minister of Defence

**Graphic**

US Ambassador Pete Hoekstrat during a defence debate organised by Elsevier Weekblad.

Photo Sem van der Wal/ANP

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