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Dutch political parties on the European Union

The results of the Dutch national elections on March 15 are looked upon in the EU as a possible precursor of the upcoming elections in France and Germany later this year. Although the EU has hardly played a role in the debates during the Dutch election campaign, much of the international debate has focused on whether an 'anti-EU' government will be elected.

While there are at least two political parties that desire to leave the EU, this time an extraordinary amount of political parties compete in the Dutch elections (at least 14 serious contenders out of 28). As a result, as far as the EU is concerned, a variety of opinions exists. The outgoing Dutch government consists of two parties (a coalition of the VVD, centre right liberals, and the Labour Party), but if current polls are anything to go by, four or maybe five parties will be needed this time to form the next government. This would render a clear-cut Dutch stance on the EU difficult.

The EU positions of the Dutch political parties

On the first of March, the European Commission introduced a [White Paper on the Future of Europe](#), presenting five scenarios for how the Union could evolve:

- Scenario 1 'Carrying on'
- Scenario 2 'Nothing but the single market'
- Scenario 3 'Those who want more do more'

- Scenario 4 'Doing less more efficiently'
- Scenario 5 'Doing much more together'

The expressed views of 14 Dutch political parties can to some extent be linked to Juncker's scenarios. Specific policy area choices within the scenarios could differ with the positions of the Dutch parties however. The EU positions of the Dutch political parties are best reflected in four (other) categories as demonstrated below. A more detailed overview of the priorities of the political parties can be viewed in the [Mattermap](#).

1. Leaving the EU (2 parties: PVV, Forum voor Democratie)

The (extreme) right wing party of Geert Wilders, the Party for Freedom (PVV), calls for a 'Nexit' and is currently still leading in most polls. At the same time, this lead amounts to an average of 20% of the votes only, with many political parties refusing to form a coalition with the PVV. A new political party, Forum for Democracy (right wing, conservative), that favours more direct democracy desires to (ultimately) leave the EU too.

As these parties want to leave the EU, they do not fall under any of Juncker's scenarios.

2. A more intergovernmental EU (4 parties: CU, SGP, SP, VNL)

The Christian Union (socially conservative, economically left wing), the Reformed Political Party (theocratic, conservative right wing) and the Socialist Party aspire

a more intergovernmental EU with the power of the European Commission being diminished. A new right wing party, called “For the Netherlands”, wants to return to the European Economic Community.

The Socialist Party and For the Netherlands would primarily fall under scenario 2 ‘Nothing but the single market’ and the Christian Union would in addition also be close to scenario 4 ‘Doing less more efficiently’. The Reformed Political Party has affiliations with both scenario 2 ‘Nothing but the single market’ and scenario 3 ‘Those who want more do more’.

3. An EU focusing on ‘main tasks’ (6 parties: PvdA, CDA, VVD, PvdD, DENK, 50PLUS)

Mainstream political parties such as the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid), Christian Democrats (CDA) and the centre right liberals (VVD) still support the EU but express that it should focus on certain so called ‘main tasks’. The Party for the Animals (ecological interest party) does not want to transfer new competences to the EU. The new political parties DENK (left wing immigrant party) and 50PLUS (an interests party for the elderly) are ambiguous about the EU but share the opinion of an EU of ‘main tasks’.

The Labour Party has links with Juncker’s scenario 1 ‘Carrying on’ (e.g. implying a strengthening of the internal market, migration and border policies). CDA and VVD have links with scenario 1 ‘Carrying on’ and scenario 3 ‘Those who want more do more’. The Party for the Animals, DENK and 50PLUS more or less fall under both scenario 1 ‘Carrying on’ and scenario 4 ‘Doing less more efficiently’. Other policy area choices are more likely than in the described scenarios however. The notion of an European Defence Union under Juncker’s fourth scenario would certainly be off-target.

4. Further European integration (2 parties: GroenLinks, D66)

Two parties are explicitly in favour of further European integration. The Dutch Green Left (GroenLinks) desires a stronger European Parliament. D66, a centrist liberal party, aspires in the long run a federal Europe.

GroenLinks would be close to scenario 5 ‘Doing much more together’. D66 falls under the same scenario. In addition, D66 is also close to scenario 3 ‘Those who want more do more’.

Multi-speed Europe

Recently, France, Germany, Italy and Spain as well as the Benelux and the Visegrad states have, to a varying extent, made statements in favour of the idea of a [multi-speed European Union](#). Various Dutch political parties have, as already partially indicated above with reference to Juncker’s third scenario ‘Those who want more do more’, given support to a multi-speed Europe and differentiated integration.

The Dutch Christian Democrats express in general terms that more intensive EU cooperation should be sought in core groups. D66 says that, if necessary, a core group of countries should intensify their cooperation in order to demonstrate what is possible in areas like migration, security, energy, climate and digital economy. The Reformed Political Party states that basic agreement about the internal market is needed by all member states, but in other policy areas flexibility in scope and width is desired.

The VVD stipulates it is in favour of a Europe of multiple speeds and goals. The party also says that weak Euro members refusing to reform should leave the Eurozone. 50PLUS states it wants a strong and stable euro, if need be with less euro members. The Christian Union demands exit-criteria and scenarios for the Euro, Schengen and other major fields of European integration. The party wants Greece to leave the Eurozone with partial debt relief. The party ‘For the Netherlands’ aspires to form a Northern European Alliance with a northern Euro. The Party for the Animals wants EU scenarios for parallel currencies in order to make a return to national currencies or a split between a northern and southern Euro possible.


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