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Oversight through insight

Evaluation of Dutch influence on policy in the European Union (2016 – 2023)

IOB Evaluation | Summary

Context, relevance and key question

In the autumn of 2024, a new European Commission has taken office, with new plans for policies, laws and regulations that will have a direct impact on Dutch citizens and businesses. Many European laws and regulations are directly applicable and take precedence over national laws; in practice, the EU operates as an independent tier of governance in the Netherlands, alongside the state, provinces and municipalities. In addition, there are EU funds and subsidies that organisations in the EU can use to implement their plans; in the period 2014–2020, some 11,000 Dutch organisations applied for a total of €5 billion. Before the EU decides on policies, laws and regulations, the Netherlands negotiates with the 26 other Member States and the EU institutions on the proposal in question. In this game of give and take, the Netherlands tries to represent its national interests as well as possible. Influence plays a vital role in this process.

This evaluation examines the influence of the Netherlands¹ on the European policymaking process – specifically, the extent to which Dutch policy preferences have been successfully translated into European decisions through strategic actions and interventions. What lessons can we draw from the Dutch approach to working in the EU in recent years? What should a cabinet consider to maintain or strengthen Dutch influence in the EU, if it wants to represent Dutch interests as effectively as possible?

The independent Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (Directie Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie, IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands analysed this using five interrelated elements² that collectively determine the central government's ability to exert influence on the EU policymaking process: (1) networks and relationships; (2) knowledge, manpower and mandate; (3) policy coherence and strategy; (4) governance; and (5) flexibility. The report (in Dutch only) discusses these in detail and makes recommendations in each of these areas. The summary is limited to the core message.

¹ In this study, the Dutch contribution refers to the efforts of the national government.

² This is line with the analytical framework used in the [evaluation of the Dutch EU-coordination](#) (2021)

Core message

During the period under review, from 2016 to 2023, the Netherlands had considerable influence on EU policy compared to other EU Member States. The Netherlands regularly punched above its weight. This was partly due to: 1) its solid contribution of expertise and experience, 2) the active and bridging role the Netherlands played within effective coalitions, as well as its proactive efforts to build new partnerships, 3) the prime minister's engagement at the highest political level within the EU, and 4) a strong Dutch Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels. The Netherlands' image fluctuated over time and varied according to the dossier, but it was generally perceived as competent, pragmatic, clear, well-organised, reliable in EU negotiations and, in certain areas, constructive.

This positive outcome is no guarantee for the future. Developments both domestically and in the European and wider geopolitical context can either help or hinder Dutch influence in the EU. If the Cabinet wants to maintain or strengthen the Netherlands' accumulated influence in the EU, IOB believes that it should invest in: (I) increased awareness and knowledge at all levels of government and politics about the EU as the fourth tier of governance in Dutch public administration and how it works, (II) strengthening networks and relationships at home and in the EU, and (III) more proactive political and administrative guidance. This should be achieved while maintaining the strengths already mentioned. To compensate for the departure of the influential prime minister, it is important to safeguard administrative support at the highest political level within the EU.

The core message is further elaborated in the following sections.

The Netherlands has been influential in the EU

The evaluation shows that the Netherlands has been influential in the European Union. This was particularly evident in five EU dossiers that were examined in depth: (I) Cross-border carbon tax, (II) Rule of law conditionalities in the multiannual financial framework (MFF)/COVID-19 Recovery Fund, (III) 55% Climate Target, (IV) Legislative transparency in the Council, and (V) the Strategic Compass for a stronger European defence.³ These cases are exemplary for the large number of EU dossiers that are negotiated every year. The Netherlands' influence is further confirmed in (grey) literature, and by the opinions of Dutch stakeholders and external parties, such as professionals from EU institutions, other EU Member States, representatives of the media, social partners, businesses and civil society organisations. These perceptions were gathered through interviews conducted for the five case studies, cross-case interviews and two large-scale surveys among Dutch civil servants.

In the five EU dossiers examined, the Netherlands was active in different phases of the European policy process. This policy process consists of five phases: agenda-setting, policy-making, decision-making, implementation and evaluation. In four of the dossiers examined, the Netherlands exerted influence at an early stage, i.e. when the Commission sets the agenda for new policy proposals and starts to develop them into proposals. This proactive stance ensured that the agenda or the text of the proposal was already largely aligned with the Dutch position. In the fifth case studied, the rule of law conditionalities in the MFF/COVID-19 Recovery Fund, the Netherlands only became involved late, during the decision-making stage. Partly due to the active involvement of the prime minister and strong administrative support during this phase, the Netherlands was also influential in this case.

A comprehensive analysis of the factors explaining the level of the Netherlands' influence in the EU during this period is provided in the [report](#) (in Dutch). A brief overview is provided in the following sections.

³ Case studies have been published on the website, in Dutch only

1. Expertise and experience: influence through solid contributions

Dutch civil servants and ministers are valued in Brussels and other Member States for their timely contributions, presenting a well-prepared (initial) position on a Commission proposal, for their policy expertise and for their willingness to share this knowledge. This gives the Netherlands authority and credibility, enabling it, as a medium-sized Member State, to participate in discussions, facilitate possible compromises and make (innovative) proposals. For example, due to its thorough and timely preparation for the potential consequences of Brexit, the Netherlands' strong knowledge base gave it 'exceptionally direct access' to the European Commission's Brexit negotiating team. This contributed positively to Dutch advocacy in the Brexit negotiations with the United Kingdom.

2. Active bridge-builder: influence through effective coalitions

The importance of forming coalitions to effectively represent Dutch interests has grown over time. This is due to the rise in the number of (sensitive) EU policy areas that are increasingly decided by qualified majority voting, but also due to the enlargement of the EU with new Member States and the enhanced role of the European Council, where personal relationships between heads of state and/or government play an important role. The Netherlands has actively and pragmatically sought cooperation with like-minded Member States. On priority dossiers, the Netherlands often played a leading role, for example in raising the EU's climate ambition, or acted as a bridge-builder between Member States with differing views, as in the case of the Strategic Compass. The departure of the United Kingdom as a large, 'permanent', like-minded Member State made the Netherlands even more aware of the importance of broader coalition-building.

Bilaterally, the Netherlands has cooperated most often with Germany, Belgium and France. The Franco-German axis is important for Dutch influence in the EU: medium-sized Member States such as the Netherlands need at least one of the two countries to form a winning majority or a blocking minority. Investing early in cooperation with a large Member State pays off, as the case study on legislative transparency shows. However, this is not always the case, as the political process around the COVID-19 Recovery Fund shows: the Franco-German proposal for such a fund caught the Netherlands off guard, leaving it involved only at the decision-making stage.

Where Dutch embassies in EU Member States have been active in their host countries, this has contributed to cooperation, greater understanding and support for the Dutch position and a more positive image of the Netherlands. The role and added value of embassies in EU advocacy varies from embassy to embassy and from policy dossier to policy dossier. It depends, among other things, on the strategic importance of the host country for the Netherlands, the extent to which ministries in The Hague are familiar with the colleagues in the embassy, the size of the embassy and the expertise available.

3. First among equals: influence through the prime minister

During the period under review, the Netherlands benefited greatly from the role played by the then prime minister at the highest political level of the EU. The European Council (of heads of state and government) became a powerful force in European decision-making. In almost 14 years as a head of state in Brussels, this prime minister built up a strong network, extensive European knowledge, significant experience, seniority and a solid reputation in the EU. In the second half of his tenure, in contrast to the first, he became known as a facilitator who could sit down with all parties and resolve difficult negotiations. He was well-informed and surrounded by knowledgeable Dutch officials from the EU-coordinating Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Permanent Representation to the EU (PR EU), the Ministry of General Affairs (GA) and various line ministries, which provided him with the expertise needed to advise him on both substantive and EU strategic matters.

4. Broad presence, short lines; influence through strong Dutch PR EU

The PR EU has a team of knowledgeable and highly capable staff who ensure that the Netherlands maintains a broad presence in Council processes, builds coalitions with other Member States, raises awareness of the national position within the European institutions, and engages with media, lobbyists, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to promote the national position.

The PR EU negotiates on behalf of the Netherlands, monitors the dynamics within the EU, uses contacts from all levels in the EU institutions, and identifies opportunities and threats for civil servants and/or political leadership in The Hague. The ministries in The Hague give instructions to the PR EU and provide it with operational flexibility, based on trust in its competence. The short (informal) communication lines between the PR EU and The Hague facilitate this process – whether between junior staff and senior officials and ministers, interministerial meetings on specific themes or contacts between the PR EU, GA and MFA on high-priority dossiers, or the morning staff meetings at the PR EU. However, the overlap between these meeting structures sometimes places a heavy burden on civil servants.

About influence and the image of the Netherlands

The Netherlands' influence in the European Union also depends on its image. The Dutch EU presidency in the first half of 2016 gave the Dutch image a boost. The Netherlands' austere stance in the negotiations on the MFF and the COVID-19 Recovery Fund had the opposite effect. Domestic political and social developments in the Netherlands, such as the 2023 election results and the farmers' protests, are having an impact.

Dutch negotiators have a generally positive image among other EU Member States and EU institutions: pragmatic, clear, well-organised, well-prepared, reliable – and in some areas constructive. However, the image varied during the evaluation period and from dossier to dossier. Sometimes the Dutch position was perceived as inflexible, lacking in diplomacy and reactive, partly due to the domestic political process for determining EU positions, where compromise and an active parliament played an important role, as well as the cultural background of the Dutch. The image of Dutch reliability and credibility in the EU could be undermined by the implementation challenges the Netherlands has faced and is likely to continue facing in the near future.

Room for improvement

The above findings are positive, but that is no guarantee for the future. There are also opportunities to do things better.

A. Raise awareness and knowledge of the EU as the fourth tier of governance

There is not always sufficient awareness among politicians and national government (from junior civil servants to directors-general) that the EU essentially operates as a fourth tier of governance. Outside the 'bubble of EU professionals', keeping track of European developments in one's own policy area is not always seen as a core responsibility. Decision-making processes in Brussels generally do not align with those in The Hague, which means the European dimension of national policy tends to be overlooked. Dutch civil servants, particularly in thematic directorates, have limited awareness of the European origin of certain laws and regulations once they have been transposed into national legislation. As a result, the link between the agendas of Brussels and The Hague is not made automatically.

Sometimes, dossier managers and supervisors only take action once a Commission proposal lands on their desk. This is a missed opportunity to put a good Dutch idea on the Commission's agenda or to co-author a proposal. Sometimes the instructions from The Hague ('champion of the desirable') for the Dutch stake in Brussels do not align with what the PR EU ('champion of the feasible') considers realistic: the wishes of the national parliament may play a role here. Also striking is the lack of systematic attention in The Hague for the European Parliament, which acts as a co-legislator on many dossiers. The focus tends to be on negotiations between Member States in the Council.

EU knowledge and experience are not prerequisites for positions in the Senior Civil Service (SCS) of the national government. As a result, some leaders at this high level of the civil service may fail to recognise the importance of the EU and do not adequately guide their ministers, themselves or their staff in influencing the European policy process.

At the political level, involvement in EU affairs is also uneven. Ministers are not always or only partly present at Council meetings. Time is short. However, active participation in a Council meeting from start to finish is necessary to show that the Netherlands attaches importance to a particular dossier and to exert influence with more authority. Moreover, not everyone in Dutch Parliament seems to be aware that they are part of the system trying to influence the EU policy process. The focus of the Dutch Parliament is directed at the government in The Hague, with little attention given to the dynamics of the European arena or the collective European interest. Dutch civil servants often face (sometimes unworkable) motions with short deadlines or debates scheduled the day before a Council meeting, when the window of opportunity to influence Brussels has already passed. It would be helpful if members of Parliament were well supported in this respect, and if their scrutiny role led them to invest in knowledge of how the EU works and to attend technical briefings. When parliamentary demands undermine the Netherlands' advocacy on a specific dossier or its strategic position in the EU, it is up to the minister to use his/her expertise to bring this to the attention of Parliament more frequently.

The lack of EU knowledge in government and politics is not a new observation. Indeed, the latest [Eurobarometer](#), an annual opinion poll, shows that the Dutch are on average less well-informed about European affairs than citizens of other EU member states. People entering the labour market lack basic knowledge about the EU. Investing in basic EU knowledge through education will promote effective representation of Dutch interests in the EU. It can also contribute to a more informed public debate about the Netherlands in the EU and to better parliamentary scrutiny of the Dutch position in the EU. For civil service positions, additional requirements and courses can help build specific EU knowledge in the short term. This could include EU courses offered on the market, as well as the free online EU module for national civil servants developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Promoting EU knowledge is also important in view of the upcoming Dutch presidency of the EU in 2029.

B. Invest in networks and relationships at home and in the EU

EU policies and legislation are increasingly 'cross-sectoral'. At the same time, the Netherlands faces challenges in implementing the rules agreed on at the European level. For example, compared to other EU Member States, the Netherlands is reaching the limits of land use more quickly. These trends require the national government to invest more in networks and relationships with stakeholders in the Netherlands to gain timely knowledge on implementation. In addition, early and systematic investment in relationships and networks with representatives of EU Member States and institutions helps to enhance their understanding of Dutch interests, demonstrate understanding for other's interests and gain greater control over developments in the European policymaking process.

Cooperation between ministries in The Hague is generally good. On 'cross-sectoral' EU dossiers, where different ministries and their constituencies have different interests, coordination is sometimes difficult. Ministries do not always involve each other when considering their own interests because of the potential impact/constraints on their own strategic activities. With insufficient investment in getting to know each other and each other's positions, this risk remains. In cases of procedural or substantive friction between departments, the EU-coordinating ministry (MFA) adds value as a mediator and process guardian. It ensures that all interests are considered, safeguards the Netherlands' strategic position within the EU and steers the process towards a decision. The ability to fulfil this role depends on the willingness of the EU-coordinating ministry to actively take it on, the willingness of the line ministries to cooperate and the political support for this role.

Issues with the implementation of EU legislation in the Netherlands negatively affect the country's credibility in the EU and, consequently, its influence on the development of new EU policies. Knowledge of the implementation implications of new EU policies is often available in the Netherlands. There are also examples of the national government using this knowledge. However, in the case of EU dossiers that impact the work of implementing organisations or agencies outside the policy area of the responsible ministry, there is a risk that the interests of these agencies are not always taken into account in the Dutch position.

Determining which implementing organisation should be involved at an early stage can be challenging, especially in the case of framework legislation, as the final direction of the resulting directives is often unclear during the Commission's drafting phase. This more complex context calls for a system that ensures all key government organisations likely to be affected by EU policy are involved in influencing it.

The national government and devolved governments involve each other by default during the Assessment of New Commission Proposals (BNC-fiche) phase. Beyond that, contact between the government and devolved governments depends on the specific dossier and varies in intensity from ministry to ministry. There is room for improvement on both sides. Devolved governments feel that the national government does not always use their expertise. They also lack consistent points of contact due to the high turnover of national civil servants. The national government, on the other hand, has problems with the lack of EU awareness, knowledge and expertise among many devolved governments. As a result of these issues and differing interests, the various levels of government in the Netherlands often go their own way in Brussels. There is growing awareness of the need for better intergovernmental coordination. Contact between national civil servants and devolved governments, knowledge institutions, social partners, businesses and civil society organisations are positive for the Netherlands' knowledge base, particularly on cross-sectoral dossiers.

Much is going well in the relationship between the Netherlands and EU Member States and institutions, but there are gains to be made if ministers and senior civil servants invest more and more proactively in their relationships with colleagues in European capitals, the European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions. In practice, relationship-building often takes a back seat to personal preferences and urgent 'crisis du jour' issues. However, proactive, high-level investment in bilateral networks and networks in Brussels is important for several reasons. First, a European legislative proposal does not emerge out of the blue; it is preceded by a long period of extensive conceptual development, often behind the scenes. Contacts in the 'right' networks can provide the Netherlands with access to information about nascent policy ideas, which can be used to influence future policy at an early stage. Second, it offers deeper insight into the dynamics of the European arena, preventing surprises and promoting more effective cooperation. Maintaining an open attitude towards cooperation is also important, including with Member States that may not be obvious partners or with political groups in the European Parliament.

C. Focus on more proactive political and administrative coordination

The cases showed that active political coordination during the agenda-setting and policy-making phases of the EU policy process contributed to the Netherlands influence in the EU'. However, the level of active and early political engagement in EU matters fluctuates. Not all members of the government have the same affinity with the EU, and there is no dedicated minister for European Affairs. Active political guidance tends to occur with highly political dossiers or in cases of disputes within 'regular' dossiers. Senior administrative guidance can facilitate this political involvement, but even at this level it fluctuates and often depends on individuals. Systematic high-level guidance is consistently provided by the PR EU, which is ideally placed to guide a realistic negotiation effort in Brussels.

The Dutch polder culture makes it difficult to make a clear assessment of how the choice of Dutch priorities in the EU relates to the commitment to other policy dossiers and to the interests of other EU Member States or EU institutions. To what extent are the wishes feasible within the EU landscape? What is the minimum that the Netherlands wants to achieve in the EU and at what potential price? These questions are not easy to answer, especially for policy dossiers in which several ministries have an interest.

Compared to many other Member States, Dutch negotiators receive a fairly detailed political mandate from the Dutch Parliament, which has its advantages but also its drawbacks. Sometimes the Netherlands has sidelined itself by not wanting to contribute to a policy it opposes, even when it was clear that it was going to happen anyway. Sharing relevant knowledge, contributing to the development of 'European' solutions and engaging with EU policymakers increases the willingness of others to consider the Dutch position and make concessions to the Netherlands. This strengthens the Netherlands' strategic position in the EU. This awareness was not always self-evident, but it has grown in recent years.

As the coordinator of the Dutch position, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is best placed to have oversight of where EU dossiers stand on the Brussels negotiation treadmill. Having oversight and managing activities throughout the policy cycle are essential to identifying overlaps between dossiers – which are increasingly becoming cross-sectoral – and ensuring coherence in the Dutch position. The MFA has this oversight at the level of the BNC, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the General Affairs Council, the Foreign Affairs Council and the European Council, but less so during the early agenda-setting and policymaking phases of the policy cycle, the negotiations in Council working groups and the trilogue phase. This is partly because the primary responsibility for the progress of dossiers lies with the ministries, and because the digital oversight of dossiers in the decision-making phase – the ‘chessboard’ – is not yet fully functional. Furthermore, there is no centralised oversight of participants in the Commission’s expert groups, Dutch non-papers in circulation or which Dutch civil servants work at which EU institutions.

In terms of Dutch nationals working at EU institutions, the Netherlands has been under-represented in the EU workforce for years. Due to an ageing population, this is likely to increase. One of the reasons is that the Dutch are not sufficiently familiar with or motivated to pursue a European career. On the other hand, the organisation of the EU’s strategic human resources policy within the national government is fragmented.

There is no centralised overview of Dutch nationals employed in EU institutions, including those temporarily seconded. When ministries allocate funds for secondments, they do not coordinate with each other, even though the person could be useful to other ministries, as EU dossiers are increasingly cross-sectoral. Ministries also make insufficient use of the knowledge, experience and networks of secondees. Furthermore, there is no ‘return policy’ to make better use of the knowledge and experience gained during secondments or to value it properly within the organisation. Measures taken by the national government to address these issues are recent, and therefore it is still too early to assess their impact.

Finally, the departure of an exceptionally long-serving prime minister raises the question of how the Netherlands can consolidate its influence at the highest decision-making level in the EU. A European Affairs minister with solid EU knowledge and experience could handle some of the increasingly intense EU agenda that normally falls to the prime minister or foreign minister – whose own agenda is dominated by global crises and geopolitical issues. If this political choice is not made, it is all the more important that the Dutch civil service and diplomatic structure remain as stable as possible in order to preserve EU knowledge, skills and networks, and to continue the high level of senior civil service and diplomatic support that has emerged from the evaluation.

Toolbox for Dutch advocacy in the EU

The Netherlands is one of the 27 Member States of the European Union. Together, they decide on new European legislation, regulations and policy. All Member States, including the Netherlands, try to promote their interests as effectively as possible in the development of European policy. What tools do representatives of the Dutch government have at their disposal to ensure Dutch interests are being heard by EU-institutions and by the other 26 EU Member States? The Policy and Operations Evaluation department (IOB) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed a metaphorical toolbox, an overview of possible instruments that representatives of the Dutch government can use to exert influence in the EU (full version available in Dutch only).

- 1 Coffee mug:** building relationships
- 2 Loupe:** research and monitoring
- 3 Voltage tester:** analysis of Dutch stakeholders and their interests
- 4 Notepad:** feasibility of Dutch agenda in the EU-landscape
- 5 Claw hammer:** (in)formal Dutch position
- 6 Spirit level:** coalition-building with other Member States
- 7 Tape measure:** strategy
- 8 Pencil:** sharing ideas and solutions to help shaping the EU-agenda and EU-policy formulation
- 9 Electric drill and nylon plugs:** effective (non-) verbal communication
- 10 Flashlight:** outreach to shape public opinion
- 11 Coping saw:** accountability and learning



Recommendations

A. Raise awareness and knowledge of the EU as the fourth tier of government

Cabinet

- Determine how Dutch priorities align with the competences and expanding agenda of the EU. In doing so, consider the feasibility of the Dutch EU priorities in the EU landscape, the resources needed to achieve these priorities and at what cost to other dossiers.

High-level civil servants

- Ministry of Interior Affairs / SCS: For managers in civil service from grade 15 upwards, consider (I) making EU knowledge and experience part of the career policy of the SCS through a placement in the PR EU or in one of the EU institutions, bodies or agencies, and (II) making EU policy guidance a fixed component of leadership training programs within the national government, of the SCS candidate programme and during meetings for civil service managers and top management.
- Ministry of Interior Affairs: Facilitate placements at EU institutions as part of the National Trainee Programme.
- Secretaries-General Council (SGC): Consider breaking down the 'EU experience' element in the Job Classification Framework of the Dutch national government (Functiegebouw Rijk) into distinct types of experience, enabling more targeted recruitment and selection of new employees.

Civil servants in line ministries (thematic)

- Consider which EU developments have an impact on your dossier(s), and how and when technical knowledge can best be brought into the EU policy process. Use the EU expertise of international directorates/EU directorates, PR EU and/or MFA for advice.
- Make better use of framework instructions that are well-aligned with the PR EU and ensure the message is as constructive as possible, with clear strategic objectives and red lines.

MFA/PR EU/EU directorates of ministries

- MFA: Work with the Academy for International Relations to add a session on the European Parliament to the online EU module. The PR EU and EU directorates can help raise awareness of the availability of the online EU modules among their constituencies.

B. Invest in networks and relationships at home and in the EU

Cabinet

- Invest sufficient time in building relationships with counterparts in the EU Member States – including the less obvious ones – and in the EU institutions. Consult Dutch businesses and (government) organisations that need to implement new legislation on the feasibility of the Dutch position being negotiated, and use this input when considering the Dutch negotiating position in Brussels.

High-level civil servants

- Directors-General (DGs) and directors: Make time to visit your counterparts from EU Member States or EU institutions and invest in the relationship. Encourage ministers and staff to do the same. Be aware of your role model function.
- Establish clear ownership of the Dutch strategic EU human resources policy. Ensure that tasks and responsibilities are clearly assigned and monitored. Set clear objectives for what the Netherlands wants to achieve through its involvement in EU human resources policy and implement indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of this involvement.

Civil servants in line ministries (thematic)

- Continue to use interministerial consultations for cross-sectoral EU dossiers to ensure that decisions are taken coherently and that the Netherlands speaks with one voice in the EU. Start this process early. Involve organisations responsible for implementation through intergovernmental consultations or communities of practice at regular intervals to draw on each other's expertise. Also use the expertise and experience of colleagues at embassies in EU capitals and the PR EU to gain a good understanding of the realities in Brussels.
- Examine the consequences, including the financial ones, of the intended negotiating commitment in the EU for dossiers in the pipeline with potentially major consequences for the Netherlands. Make the request for an implementation assessment in good time, preferably at the agenda or policy-making phase, so that there is time to implement it.
- Organise regular meetings with Dutch European officials, Dutch officials seconded to the institutions and EP staff in the PR EU.

MFA/PR EU/EU directorates of ministries

- MFA and EU directorates of ministries: Continue to invest in mutual contacts and discuss mutual expectations and cooperation, including strategic thinking on complex dossiers. Priority should be given to identifying and solving problems in a timely manner, with flexible use of human and financial resources. This will only be possible if everyone in the Cabinet and central government acts with a shared sense of responsibility.

C. Focus on more proactive political and administrative coordination

Cabinet

- Ensure as much presence as possible at all EU Council meetings and play an active role in the Dutch interest during or in the margins of the meeting.

High-level civil servants

- European Union High-Level Committee (HCEU): Ensure that strategic discussions consider the impact of the Dutch EU agenda on the agendas of EU institutions and Member States during the 2024 – 2029 Commission period and in the run-up to the Dutch EU presidency in 2029. Determine what the Dutch ambitions mean for the interdepartmental organisation, given the increasingly cross-sectoral and complex nature of EU dossiers.
- HCEU: Identify for each ministry the strategic positions in the EU – whether in Brussels or EU capitals – that are important, along with their ideal timing, particularly with the Dutch EU presidency in mind. Evaluate potential overlaps and explore opportunities for interministerial cooperation. Consider a range of placements, from senior to junior roles, including staff, thematic directorates and cabinets in EU institutions, agencies or in an EU Member State holding the presidency.
- SGC: Create flexibility by making resources available quickly to respond to opportunities, such as funding a strategic secondment or additional staff for dossiers that are very complex for the Netherlands.
- Staff directorates of ministries: Ensure that staff on temporary secondment from an EU institution or Member State, or from the PR EU, are in a position where their EU experience and contacts can be used on their return to The Hague.

Civil servants in line ministries (thematic)

- Heads of policy directorates in ministries: Proactively encourage staff to improve their own knowledge of EU procedures through a clear overview of available (online) courses and training, and draw their attention to available EU expertise within the state. International departments or EU directorates can provide support in this respect.

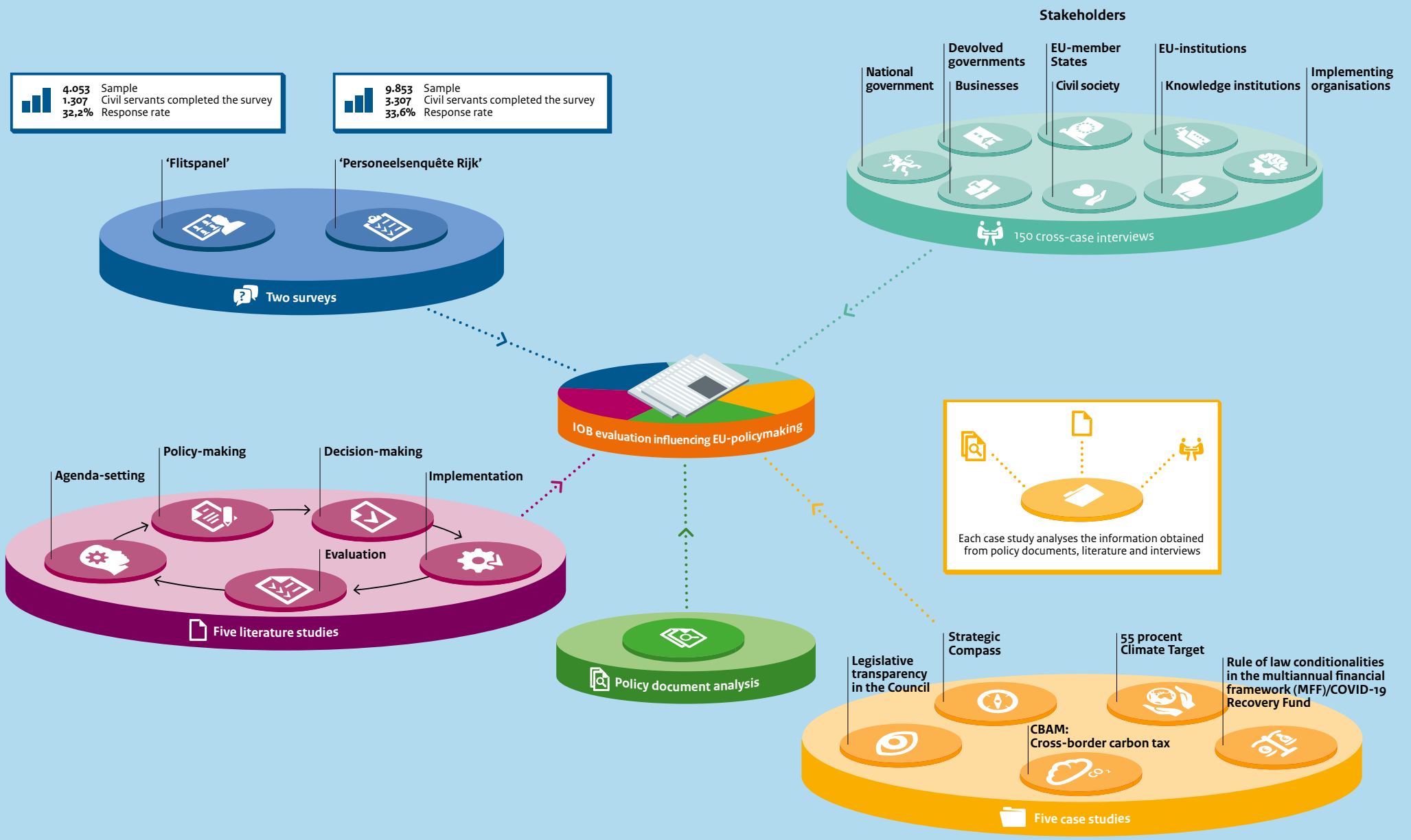
MFA/PR EU/EU directorates of ministries

- MFA: Continue to take the initiative in proposing ideas for an overview of relevant Dutch activities on EU dossiers across the national government in the CCEU. This could include written and circulating Dutch papers, current and desired strategic secondments, numbers of interdepartmental officers, etc. EU directorates of the line ministries and the PR EU can actively contribute to this out of a shared sense of responsibility.

The Dutch coordination process and input into Brussels decision-making



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