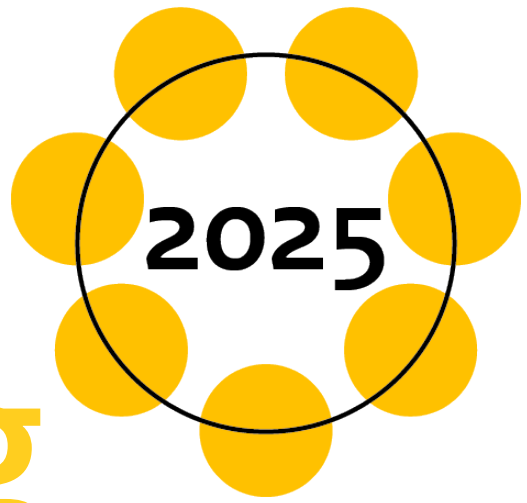




Government of the Netherlands

Working for the public good

Strategic government human resources policy 2025



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Introduction

Every day, 118,000 civil servants and other people working for the central public administration *Rijksoverheid*¹ work to keep the Netherlands safe and prosperous. They do this in very different fields, at a variety of levels, at home and abroad. It is important and fascinating work: from implementing tax legislation and flood protection to putting political decisions into practice. Government employees are a very heterogeneous group, but what they all particularly have in common is that they make an indispensable contribution to the public good.

In this respect, the Netherlands central public administration is proud to distinguish itself from many other organisations. But in a rapidly changing labour market, it must be alert to its position as an employer. How do we continue to attract skilled, committed and high-quality staff and connect them to our organisation? At the same time, the work of our civil servants is changing as a result of social and economic trends. A strategic human resources agenda is indispensable if we are to anticipate the challenges of the future well before they arise. This policy is a long-term goal, and we will be fine-tuning it in the coming years.

The *Strategic human resources policy 2020*, drawn up in 2012-2013, contains principles that are still relevant for the most part. Meanwhile, however, the context has changed completely. Politically, the previous policy framework came into being against the background of the Rutte/Asscher government and its Social Agreement. In 2012 we were in the midst of the economic crisis, which had repercussions for the labour market. In its business operations, the government prepared itself for a period of clearly defined responsibilities, limited employee turnover, and staff who kept their jobs for longer. In 2018 we are in a buoyant economic situation with a rapidly rising number of vacancies in the market, and our staff turnover is increasing. Trends such as digitization are also making their way onto the work floor. All this has prompted the revision of the strategic human resources policy. The coalition's *Confidence in the future* agreement, developments on the labour market, and the changing environment all require such change.

The strategic human resources policy is aimed at all people who work for the central public administration. It is therefore about not just permanent and temporary staff, but everyone who is needed to carry out the tasks of the government properly. This is a very diverse group of people, with great differences in background, roles, and objectives. To do justice to this diversity, we held a large number of interviews in preparation for this document, with the participation council, trade unions and interdepartmental working groups. In addition, we organised various themed sessions. The diverse composition of the participants yielded a wide range of ideas and perspectives. A separate meeting with economists from government departments and planning bureaus contributed to a shared picture of the risks and opportunities that the government will face as an employer in the coming years.

Finally, we have made the process of recalibration externally visible, for example through our activities on social media². Together with the unions, a joint guide to human resources policy³ was drawn up in 2017 in the context of the *Strategische personeelsagenda Rijk 2025* (Strategic Personnel Agenda 2025 - SPAR). This vision builds on that document.

¹ This note concerns the Dutch central public administration sector, consisting of ministries, executive agencies and inspectorates, as well as the high councils of state. It does not include people working as political office holders, nor civil servants employed by other Dutch public-sector bodies such as local and regional public administrations, the police, defence, or the judicial sector. The words *Rijk*, *Rijksoverheid*, central public administration, central government, state, and civil service are used interchangeably in this text.

² See @SPB2025 (Twitter) and 'P&O bij het Rijk' (YouTube)

³ https://aofondsrijk.nl/fileadmin/ao_data/Publicaties/2017/Het_gedroomde_Rijk_18_mei_2017_2.pdf

The great differences between the different parts of the government are our strength, but also bring challenges. The central public administration is a unique 'company' with numerous 'branches' spread across the country and very different processes and activities. This makes it possible for civil servants to shape their entire careers with the same employer - although this is not necessarily the norm - with constantly changing functions and tasks. Internally, the transfer possibilities are potentially infinite. The various organisational units within central government (departments, executive organisations, inspection services, etc.) can also learn continuously from one another and share examples of best practices and new ideas in the field of human resources policy, for example by carrying out pilot projects. At the same time, the large differences between them make it impossible to prescribe in a concrete sense which policy should be pursued. Specific circumstances such as the composition of the workforce may result in different priorities, and harmonising the way in which human resources goals are implemented is not always useful. After all, there is no such thing as a typical civil servant. There are major differences between and within the different types of work, functions, and organisational components. The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is in charge of employment for the entire central government, but responsibility for the execution of human resources policy lies with the various organisations that make up the central public administration. For this reason, we have also tried to formulate the strategic goals from this policy framework in such a way that they offer sufficient space and direction for the various organisational units. Departments will implement the priorities of this strategic staff policy as befits their specific environments. Long-term staff planning is an important tool in this process. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations monitors this implementation, and reports on this in the *Jaarrapportage Bedrijfsvoering Rijk* (Annual Report on Government Business Operations).

In this note, we describe the developments that are relevant to working for the central public administration, such as flexibilisation, technology, and internationalisation. These developments, and the discussions about our strategic human resources policy, have led to a new strategic agenda consisting of seven focus points. This enables us to make the policy relatively futureproof and respond adequately to expected changes.

Relevant developments for the central public administration as an employer

In this section we outline the most important external and internal developments that affect the central public administration as an employer. We look at the effects on policy of trends in the Dutch labour market, and the most significant shifts in the government workforce.

If the government is to continue performing its responsibilities effectively properly, it must be able to respond to its environment and anticipate developments. We have used various reports and surveys to assess which of these developments affect government human resources policy. This has led to a number of publications, including *Arbeidsmarkttrends en gevolgen hiervan op het personeelsbeleid Rijk* (The effects of labour market trends on government HR policy)⁴. Another report analyses the demographic developments that will affect our internal workforce in the period between 2017 and 2025⁵. Others examine key factors affecting civil servants such as work experience, career development, support, leadership, and employment conditions.⁶ These lead to the following analysis.

A growing labour market

From a macroeconomic perspective, the Netherlands is experiencing **strong economic growth**, which in the short term leads to a tight labour market. The number of vacancies has been increasing for years. This makes it increasingly difficult for the government to recruit the right people.

The number of jobs available at the central public administration is also growing, especially in information and communications technology and legal functions. In view of the growing economy, the government has not foreseen a staff cut for the central public administration in the current coalition agreement. If there is a recession, however, new cutbacks will have to be taken into account.

Experience shows that during a slump the government spends less, incomes fall and cuts are made, partly by withholding wage and price adjustments. As a result, the economic climate can have a direct effect on the government's human resources policy. The use of adjustment mechanisms is more complex for the state than for the market, so the challenge for the government as an employer is to respond adequately to increasing volatility in the labour market. On the basis of historical cycles, we can assume that there will be a downturn between now and 2025.

⁴ Ministry of the Interior, *Arbeidsmarkttrends en gevolgen hiervan op het personeelsbeleid Rijk*, December 2017

⁵ Ministry of the Interior, *Een doorkijk in het personeelsbestand van het Rijk*, November 2017

⁶ ICTU, *Behoeften van rijksambtenaren met betrekking tot personeelsbeleid*, november 2017

⁷ Ministry of the Interior, *Behoeftes rijksambtenaren in kaart*, December 2017

The ageing population

The Dutch population is steadily **ageing**. In addition to the consequences for the affordability of facilities such as healthcare and pensions, ageing also affects the functioning of the labour market. For example, people work longer, with less educated people retiring later than highly educated workers for financial reasons. There are cases of three generations working for the same employer, and the number of employees who are also informal carers is rising because the population is growing older.

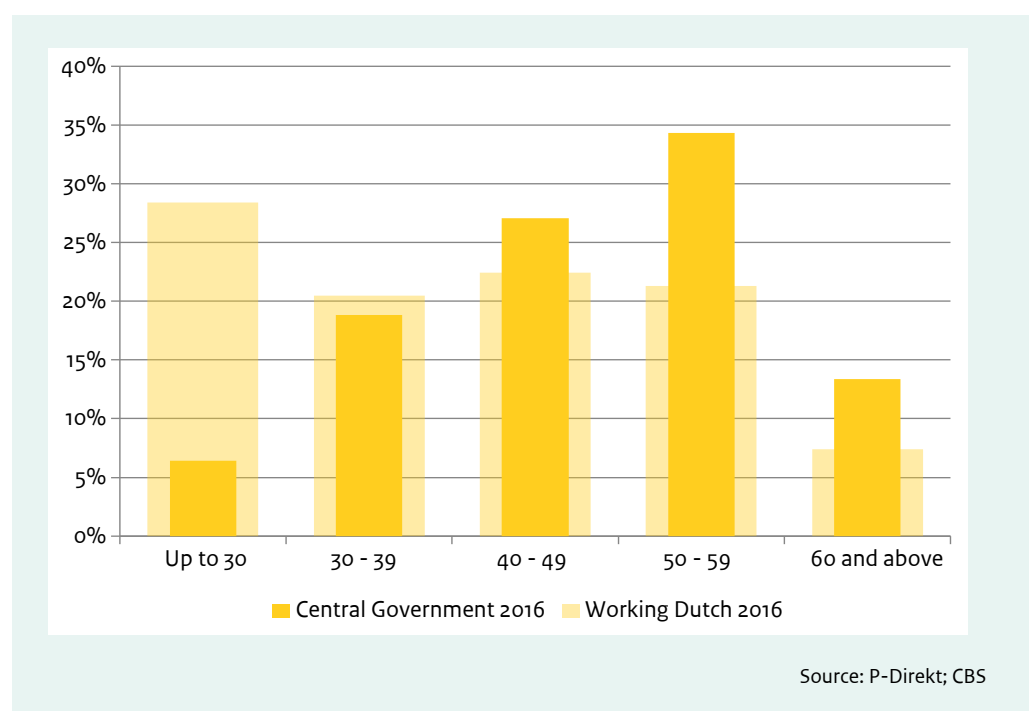
Ageing can also lead to

- Increased absenteeism, because older people are more likely to be ill
- A reduced intake of new employees, because the existing ones work for longer
- Less job mobility, because older employees are less likely to move
- A less educated workforce, because older people tend to spend less time learning new skills. This does not automatically mean that productivity decreases.

Career structures used to evolve from learning to working to managing, and then to retirement, but this pattern often no longer applies. In the labour market of the future, workers at different stages of their lives will move between working, learning, developing, and resting, or even do more than one of these simultaneously.

The ageing of the population is particularly visible within the government, which has an older workforce than the Dutch labour market as a whole (see figure 1). Its employees tend to be loyal and experienced people who have earned their spurs within the organisation. From a statistical perspective, it is wise to anticipate rising absenteeism⁸ and reduced mobility among many older employees, and the government will need to place more of a focus on learning and development, so that they are able to keep pace with change.

FIGURE 1 Working Dutch population with respect to central public administration staff broken down by age⁹



⁸ See, for example, *Kamerbrief over verklarende factoren ziekteverzuim sector Rijk* (letter to Parliament concerning explanatory factors for absenteeism in the cpa sector), November 30, 2017.

⁹ The figures 1-4 are extracted from the note *Een doorkijk in het personeelsbestand van het Rijk* (Taking a look at the work force of the central public administration) by the Ministry of BZK, November 2017

As figure 2 shows, the older population will slowly increase in the coming years. Figure 3 shows that in the next twelve years one out of three employees, more than 43,000 people, will retire on age grounds. Only a limited number of people will leave for jobs outside the central government. The expected outflow, which is considerably lower than was predicted in the 2010 report *De grote uittocht* (The great exodus), offers additional chances for young people to work in government, and creates more career development opportunities for existing staff. However, people will use these only if the central public administration is an attractive employer for young people and experienced professionals, and has relevant knowledge and experience. The presence of different generations in the same workplace offers good opportunities to achieve this. For example, baby boomers can learn from the more developed digital skills of generation X, which in turn can offer specific knowledge of its own. As an employer, the government wants to create an environment in which the various generations feel at home.

FIGURE 2 Prognosis age distribution. source: P-Direkt

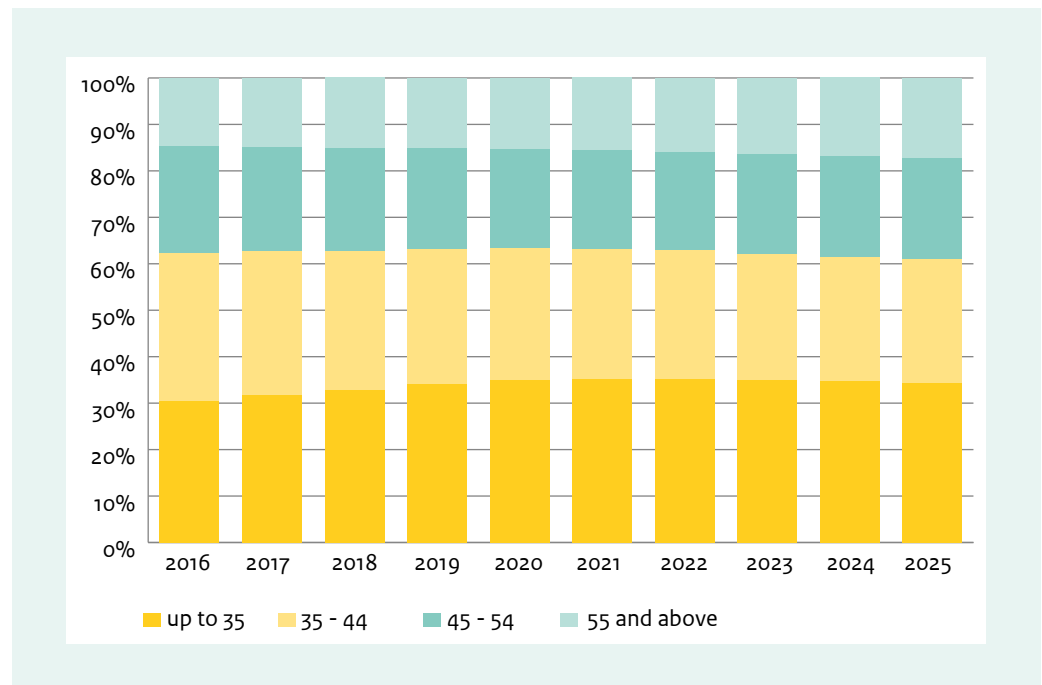
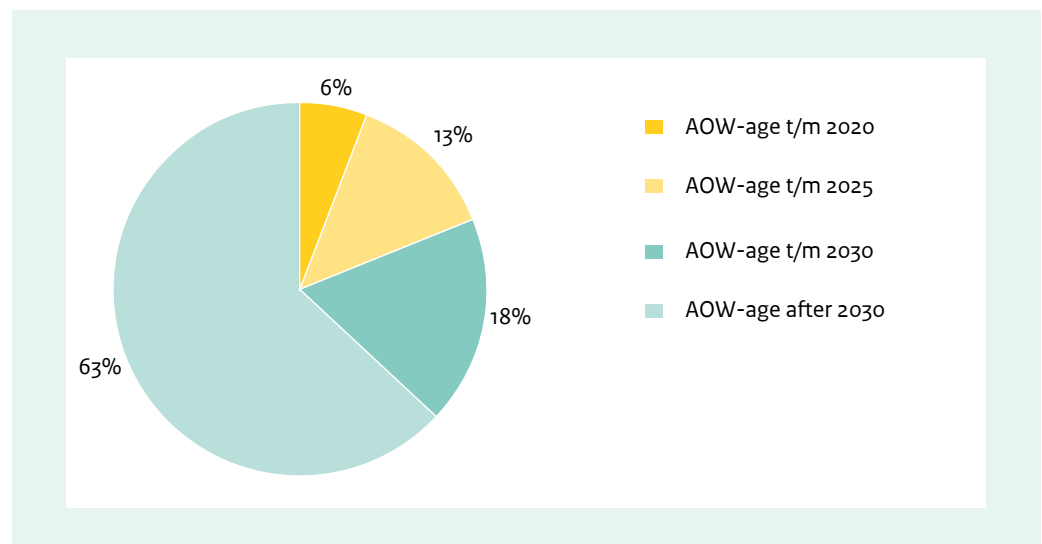


FIGURE 3 Percentage civil servants based on AOW- (Old Age Pensions Act) age.

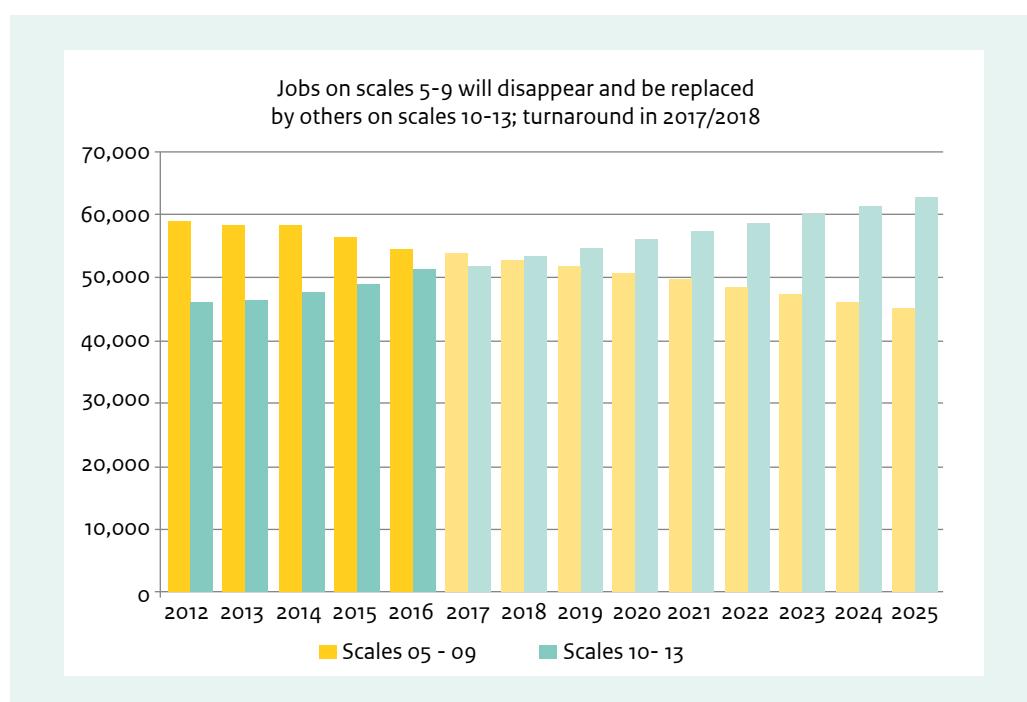


Rising levels of education

On the Dutch labour market, **the number of highly educated people** has risen from 23 to 28 percent in ten years, while the number of less educated individuals has dropped from 37.5 to 32.5 percent. The number of people with a midlevel education has therefore remained the same. The proportion of highly educated women has increased, and is almost equal to the proportion of highly educated men.

In the government's labour force, we foresee a decrease in the number of wage scale group 5-9 employees as they gravitate towards the more highly skilled grades 10-13 (figure 4). In the longer term, this will also lead to an increase in total wage costs for the same number of employees.

FIGURE 4 Prognosis number of employees in wage scale group 5-9 and 10-13



An increasingly flexible labour market

Deregulation of the Dutch employment market has led to a **decrease in the number of permanent contracts**, an increase in flexible contracts for younger and less educated people, and a rise in the number of self-employed workers. Flexible working has important advantages for organisations, such as being able to respond quickly to changes in the demand for employees, and to determine whether employees are a proper match for their jobs. However, an increase in the number of temporary contracts can reduce productivity because people are less interested in learning on the job, less committed to the organisation, and less innovative. It may also reduce opportunities for personal development, and create greater income insecurity and a higher chance of burnout.¹⁰

The vast majority of government employees, 92 percent, had permanent contracts in the third quarter of 2017. This creates job security for the employee and continuity for the employer, but it also makes the government labour market more rigid and less responsive to change. Eighty-two percent of new government employees were on temporary contracts in 2017. In addition, the government uses external

¹⁰ See: WRR, *Voor de zekerheid* (For certainty), 2017

hiring to absorb fluctuations in capacity or temporarily bring in specific expertise, for example by outsourcing certain activities or hiring staff on an on-call basis. In this way, government organisations have various options for matching supply and demand on the internal and external labour markets. They use long-term human resources planning (MPP) to anticipate changing needs.

Nevertheless, the central public administration has limited room for manoeuvre because of its very large permanent core workforce, coupled with the fact that many employees work in the same jobs for a long time. In this respect, the state sector differs from the general trend on the labour market. This has its advantages, but it can also make it difficult to redeploy workers as demand for certain skills changes. In recent years, this has prompted the intensification of measures to stimulate labour mobility¹¹. This involves creating external flexibility using temporary hires, but the possibilities of internal flexibility seem to be insufficiently known and used. This is apparent in the low level of interdepartmental mobility.

The growth of technology

Computers and robots are increasingly able to take on routine cognitive tasks such as administration, calculation, and monitoring and evaluating products. This work is often carried out by people with midlevel skills and education, so they are particularly affected by this development. In addition, there is increasing demand for analytical skills, such as software engineering, and interactive non-routine jobs such as cleaning, hospitality and hairdressing, so more people are needed with high and low levels of education. Technological developments therefore require different types of skills and employees. This can also be seen in the shortage professions where vacancies are difficult to fill, such as highly trained ICT specialists.

What does this mean in terms of working for the central public administration? New technology such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data have major consequences for the nature of our work, and their evolution is difficult to predict, so we do not know precisely how they will affect the government labour market. The growth of digital technology is a fact, but there is less clarity about the pace at which it is taking place. The process also depends on other developments in society and the labour market, the legal framework of technological innovation, political choices, the behaviour of citizens and consumers, flexible working, and changed educational levels. A study¹² from the United States estimates that about 0.6 per cent of new jobs every year are in new professions. That does not seem like much, but it means that 25 percent of people work in occupations that did not exist in 1978¹³.

As technology develops faster, so it will become more difficult to recruit the right IT workers and encourage them to commit to the organisation, possibly by expanding their working conditions. This partly depends on other developments in the labour market and in the economy as a whole.

Digitisation, robots and big data are also altering the ways in which people work and relate to others, and the level of management and support they receive. Internal and external supervision have become proactive rather than reactive. Opportunities for automating government processes are primarily found in the execution and inspection phases. Processes such as automation and robotisation can be both a risk and an opportunity: one risk is that of humans being replaced by computers, but rapid changes in the nature of work as a result of new technology also create new challenges for employees, who must be able to keep pace. The organisation, too, must ensure that its workers are not alienated by technology.

¹¹ See among others 'Kamerbrief over mobiliteit en flexibele inzet van personeel voor een toekomstbestendige Rijksoverheid' (Letter to Parliament concerning the mobility and flexible deployment of staff for a futureproof central public administration), 24 November 2015

¹² Lin, *Technological adaptation, cities and new work*, Review of Economics and Statistics, 2011 93:2

¹³ Other studies arrive at different prognoses. For a full review see: <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/610005/every-study-we-could-find-on-what-automation-will-do-to-jobs-in-one-chart/>

At the same time, these changes are an opportunity to make government easier, safer and more efficient, provided we use the new technology properly. Doing this may however be limited by our working methods, organisational culture, and lack of expertise.

The precise impact of technology will vary from one organisational unit to another, but there are some general observations we can make. **Policy makers** must invest more in their digital skills in order to provide a better service. In **management**, there are plenty of opportunities to organise processes more efficiently by becoming more data driven and innovative. **Inspection** services will see their work change because software can take over parts of the supervision process, though employees can add value by applying customisation. In **executive agencies**, automation can pose a risk for employees, especially those who have held the same positions for long periods. These risks are most urgent in organisations that use a great deal of data, such as the tax, justice and education services, though these can prepare employees by offering study and career opportunities. Employees must respond to this by working on their own personal development.

In late 2018, a labour market analysis is carried out for the central government sector, including an examination of the effects of technological change on current and future working practices. We expect that the majority of our work will not disappear immediately, but will probably change in many cases. This means that in addition to meeting the increasing demand for ICT and data professionals, we must invest in ensuring that existing staff have the right skills. ICT will become a new core competency for more and more employees, and many will find it a challenge to keep up with the pace of digitization over the coming years. Another challenge lies in ensuring that the state has the capacity to implement the new work that appears as a result of technological change. In some cases, external hiring remains the most appropriate way to implement this.

Changes in work will also require different management of workers. If repetitive tasks are taken over by machines, those that remain will become more complex. Leadership must increasingly focus on stimulating basic human qualities such as communication, interaction, interpretation, and creativity, and less on managing output or preventing errors.

There is not always an unequivocal government-wide response to the opportunities and challenges that technology entails, but this discussion underlines the importance of sustainable employability. The various organisational units must continue to work on this in their long-term human resources planning.

Working for the government in a changing world

Increasing **globalisation** is accompanied by tension over national economic and cultural issues. Increasing integration results in a greater role for European institutions, but EU member states want to remain largely autonomous in making important decisions, particularly with regard to the organisation of their own public sectors. For the labour market, integration means that more people from other European countries come to work and study in the Netherlands, and Dutch people can do the same in other European countries.

The government is also increasingly interested in seconding more Dutch civil servants and others to European and international institutions. This concerns both starter positions (normally involving an entrance examination) and senior strategic posts. Bilateral exchanges between national government administrations can also help to strengthen the international function of the state.

In the short term, the scenario of ongoing internationalisation of government policy, higher education and thus the Dutch labour market, seems less likely. In that scenario, the government should reconsider whether Dutch should always be the leading language on the shop floor, or whether English is a more obvious choice in some cases, as is the case with some parts of the Dutch Central Bank (DNB).

Where are we headed as a government?

In addition to the internal and external developments that we have to anticipate in our operations, we must continue to reflect on the ways in which we work so that we not only respond to the developments around us, but also shape the future ourselves. How can the central public administration continue to serve the public interest, add value, and be prepared for the future?¹⁴ The push for innovative forms of working and organising by the Secretaries-General of the central public administration in their letters to the *informatieur*¹⁵ underpins the commitment to get the basics right.¹⁶

The function of the government and its relationship with citizens is subject to change. Functioning as an open government, the state's position is increasingly in the middle of society, in which citizens expect custom-made solutions and public goods and services are created in collaboration with them. It must also maintain a recognisable and reliable government for all citizens, and no longer insist that it has a monopoly on the truth. These new challenges mean that the government's role is changing, and it must find new ways of working with stakeholders.

Innovation through social and public labs will become the new standard, instead of a one-off, inspiring exception. The Policy Lab in the United Kingdom and MindLab in Denmark are two successful examples. Like other organisations, the government should dare to experiment with making new policy, based on the conviction that an agile organisation is constantly looking for new tools and interventions, with the most promising ideas being developed further.

The fact that the government is changing requires officials to have new and different skills. The new civil servant is agile, resilient, and value driven¹⁷, active in a field of influence with ever-changing networks and partnerships¹⁸, and thus acquires a new role as a connector, with associated negotiating, communicating, and connecting skills. In order to be successful, they need trust and a mandate from the top of the organisation.

The future of the state

TABLE 1 taken from Van Erkel and De Lange (2017), p. 23

From	To
Citizens under control	Citizens in control
Govern the citizens	Govern with the citizens
Silos within organisations	Networks within and between organisations
Giant organisations in the public sector	Public organisations are small, flexible, target-driven units
The state as service provider	The state as policy advisor
The state as owner of input and processes	The state as collaborative partner
Measuring output	Measuring outcomes
Cooperation by coercion	Working together based on mutual trust
Faith in a strong leader	Faith in one another, leadership that serves citizens

¹⁴ With regard to these questions Van Erkel and De Lange wrote the essay 'Overheid van de toekomst / Toekomst van de overheid' (Government of the Future/Future of the Government) (Frank van Erkel and Jeroen de Lange, *Overheid van de toekomst / Toekomst van de overheid, Essay over innovatie en technologie in de publieke sector*, IKPOB, July 2017).

¹⁵ After the general elections for the Dutch Parliament, the *informatieur* typically consults political party leaders to take stock of possible coalitions and outlines for a new coalition agreement.

¹⁶ Letter joint Secretaries-General to *informatieur* Schippers, March 30, 2017, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/brieven/2017/03/30/brief-gezamenlijke-sgs-aan-informatieur-schippers>

¹⁷ Ministry of the Interior lunch lecture by Willem van Spijker, August 10, 2017.

¹⁸ Van Erkel en De Lange (2017), p. 61

Now and in the future, the work of civil servants is fundamentally different in a number of ways from that of ordinary employees. We are paid with tax money, operate in a political and administrative environment, and work in a visible, public organisation. Our core values are independence and impartiality, reliability, a caring approach, and personal responsibility.¹⁹

Comparative studies²⁰ regularly confirm that the Dutch government scores well in terms of integrity and lack of corruption. Developments such as computerisation (the development towards a digital information society) and horizontalisation (the increasing importance of networks, co-creation and co-realisation) may, however, entail new risks for our official integrity, which emphasizes the importance of public leadership and professionalism.²¹ This is important, for example, in the principle that information is actively made public whenever and wherever possible. It also requires a focus on the role of civil servants, since active disclosure will affect their work. This openness requires a different attitude on the part of civil servants, and they must receive support in implementing it.

The experience of working in government

Many young people about to embark on their careers associate the government with limited freedom, unwieldy bureaucracy, complexity, limited innovation, and stuffiness. But they also acknowledge that it offers work that really matters, good educational opportunities, and attractive benefits. People with higher vocational and university education say working for the government gives them a sense of relevance, visibility, satisfaction, and involvement.

In the coming years, the challenge for the state is to remain an attractive employer for new recruits, and to offer attractive career prospects that will encourage them to stay. Fifty percent of people with higher professional or university education regard the government as an attractive employer. For lower-level vocational students, the figure is only three in ten. The government's reputation among external target groups remains stable.

A report from the Ministry of the Interior entitled *Brainbox, werken in de toekomst*²² (Brainbox, working in the future) provides an interesting picture of generation Z, young people born after 1995. Their typical character traits include self-awareness, independence, innovation, toughness, realism, and responsibility. In terms of skills, they are digitally literate, pragmatic, and often good at multitasking. They are driven by corporate social responsibility, but are also looking for financial stability, considering it important to work on something that they care about personally and also attaching value to a good work-life balance.

Approximately eight out of ten civil servants regard the government as an attractive employer. They like the pay, benefits and job security it offers, and mention values such as freedom, pride, personal responsibility, and inspiring colleagues. They have a more positive view than outsiders, but are also aware that the government can be bureaucratic and hierarchical.

Young people beginning work tend to be digital natives, valuing personal communication and direct feedback from colleagues, believing cooperation to be important and inclined to dislike hierarchies. They prefer to work in small, well-defined groups with strong peer leaders and clearly demarcated roles and career plans. The value of the work is more important than the financial compensation, and they prefer a

¹⁹ This is elaborated on in the Gedragcode Integriteit Rijk (government code of ethics).

²⁰ See SCP, *Public sector achievement in 36 countries: a comparative assessment of inputs, outputs and outcomes*, December 2015, and Mungiu-Pippidi, A., *Public integrity and trust in Europe*, Hertie School of Governance, Berlin 2015. Also see: *Corruption Perceptions Index*, Transparency International (the Netherlands is one of the world's ten least corrupt countries) and World Bank: *Country data report for the Netherlands, 1996-2014*.

²¹ Peters-Van Rijn, S. (2016), *Een agenda voor toekomstig integriteitsbeleid op de thema's informatisering en horizontalisering* (An agenda for future integrity policies on the themes of computerisation and horizontalisation) (www.kennisopenbaarbestuur.nl)

²² https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2017/05/03/rapport-werken-in-de-toekomst/Rapport_werken_in_de_toekomst.pdf, May 3, 2017

permanent contract and plenty of scope to show initiative. But there is no academic consensus concerning the assumption that generations X, Y and Z have fundamentally different needs to employees who have been working for longer periods²³

The report *De ambtenaar bestaat niet, pleidooi voor nieuwsgierigheid*²⁴ (The civil servant does not exist, plea for curiosity) shows a somewhat similar picture, aside from the conclusion that there are major individual differences. People are generally satisfied with their job security, salary and pension, and career opportunities are also important. Personal development is one of the most important motives, and value is attached to structural investment in this aspect of growth. Government employees aged under 45 are committed to challenge, personal development and career opportunities, and would like to be able to work for a period elsewhere. Further analysis of data has shown that age differences do not show a significant correlation with specific preferences for employment conditions or staff policy.

The government's reputation research²⁵ also shows that the most important reasons among starters and professionals for wanting to work for the government are the opportunities that it offers for personal and career development. We know from other studies²⁶ that pay is not the most important cause of job satisfaction. Government employees stated in a recent flash panel study²⁷ that they were satisfied to very satisfied with the social contribution they were making, but there was also room for improvement in areas such as communication and information provision, career development opportunities, and physical conditions in the workplace. In view of the importance of employee satisfaction, but also because of the increasing scarcity of certain skills on the labour market, it is important to act on these research results, for example by putting skills first, offering a complete range of work, and improving employee development. Although the central government was named the nation's favourite employer in studies by Intelligence Group in 2016 and 2017, we should not rest on our laurels. We must continue striving to maintain this position among all professional groups.

²³ See, for example, Prof. L.I. Stoker in <https://www.rug.nl/hrm-ob/bloggen/blog-07-11-2017-weg-met-de-modieuze-gedachte-dat-millennials-ander-leiderschap-nodig-hebben>, November 2017

²⁴ See www.caorijk2017.nl, October 27, 2016. This report arose from a survey of public servants carried out in 2016 by a group of government trainees.

²⁵ Imagomonitor 2016 (published 2017)

²⁶ Heyma, A. (2017), De relatieve rol van loon in de aantrekkelijkheid van de overheid als werkgever (The relative role of wages in the attractiveness of government as an employer), (www.kennisopenbaarbestuur.nl)

²⁷ Ministry of the Interior, *Behoeftes rijksambtenaren in kaart*, December 2017.

Towards a new strategic human resources policy

In shaping its strategic human resources policy, the government has chosen a direction that responds to the developments described above, and is flexible enough to keep pace with the changing context.

The new policy contributes to the government's overarching mission. *'The government is working towards a just, enterprising and sustainable society. In our democratic constitutional state, it is important that people and civil-society organisations can develop in freedom and security. This requires choices in the Netherlands, Europe, and the world. The central public administration weighs up the various interests involved, invests in the future, and acts when necessary. It does this with the emphasis on the public good, with integrity and knowledge.'*

In order to fulfil this task, this strategic agenda has been drawn up for current and future employees faced with such responsibilities.

A robust and agile central public administration

The central public administration comprises a great variety of organisations that are evolving in different directions. Some are facing a reduction in the range of tasks they carry out, while others are experiencing a growth in their responsibilities. All are having to contend with major external developments, such as the rise of digital technology, which influences different organisations in different ways. And all differ in terms of the types and numbers of people they employ, and their position in the labour market.

As a result, each organisation must shape its own human resources policy, but all face the same challenge: being part of an agile, innovative government that is at the heart of society, brings people together, shares knowledge and encourages initiative. Its role is to provide an appropriate service for everyone, even if this requires employees to go the extra mile.

Government employees are working for the Netherlands. If society is to function efficiently, then so must the government, which means recruiting qualified and motivated staff who adopt a unified approach to citizens and businesses. The government is becoming more responsive and participatory, and must make interaction with the public as easy as possible.

Today's government is moving into the heart of society, rather than operating from an ivory tower. Its employees go out (literally and figuratively), and actively seek dialogue with the public, cooperating with other authorities and stakeholders where necessary. They listen to what is happening in society, and take advice from experts in the field. Involving the outside world in discussions of problems and solutions is important partly because it creates a bedrock of support for current and future policy. This approach requires room for experimentation, and we must accept that some experiments will not achieve the desired result.

At a time of uncertainty and global upheaval, it is important for government to be flexible. It is not the smartest or the strongest who will overcome these challenges, but those that can best adapt in this turbulent society. As a government, we operate in a unique political environment, accountable to parliament, funded by the taxpayer, and dealing with issues such as democratic rules, transparency and integrity. This requires that we remain robust, and clearly visible as a partner for those who rely on us.

Constant attention to important issues

The new strategic HR policy will pay attention to important themes on which we have been focusing. For example:

- Working towards the government acting as a single employer, always leaving room for the specific dynamics of each organisational unit
- Experimenting with new forms of HR policy, for example in the so-called ‘testing grounds’ used by the social partners in the context of the SPAR process
- Adopting a data-driven HR policy, by upgrading raw data into relevant information and using it to the full. Data-driven working can help the organisational units make HR policy choices based on facts and figures.
- Promoting employees’ mobility to increase their expertise and make the government more agile, as described in Minister Blok’s letter to Parliament of 2015²⁸
- ‘Normalising’ the official legal status of civil servants, who will receive a bilateral private employment contract with the government as per January 2020, instead of the unilateral appointments they currently undergo.
- The performance review cycle has recently been implemented within all parts of the central public administration. Regular reviews help to ensure that staff are being used to best advantage, and we are developing data-driven tools to support them.

The coalition agreement *Vertrouwen in de toekomst* (Confidence in the future) contains some guidelines for government HR policy, such as the importance of adequate remuneration; the modernisation of working conditions aimed at sustainable employability, particularly for older employees; training; and diversity. These themes have been incorporated into the strategic HR policy. The government has an exemplary role as an employer, and fulfils this by, among other things, employing lower-paid staff via bodies such as the Rijksschoonmaakorganisatie (Government Cleaning Organisation) and the *Rijksbeveiligingsorganisatie* (National Security Organisation), and by hiring people with occupational disabilities.

Integrity in government

The government’s integrity policy aims to ensure that civil servants and organisations act in accordance with the applicable values, norms and rules. It is therefore not a separate aspect of HR policy, nor a separate priority, but a continuous area of interest, interwoven with the various focal points identified in this policy. Integrity is about professionalism, and requires constant attention, maintenance, and examination.

In the coming years, a number of trends and vulnerabilities²⁹ will remain relevant: the further flexibilisation of the labour market, innovative forms of working, computerization, and participatory and inclusive government. Civil servants are more distant from the organisation and closer to citizens and society, and good employment practices and leadership are crucial.

The most important thing is that civil servants must be able to work in a safe and sound organisation where they can deploy their skills in a professional manner. They must be able to report their concerns, and even act as whistleblowers where necessary. It is important not to impose more rules for their own sake, but the government code of ethics is likely to play an increasingly prominent role in the coming years.

²⁸ *Mobiliteit en flexibele inzet van personeel voor een toekomstbestendige rijksoverheid*, Kamerstukken II, 2015-2016, 31490, nr. 193.

²⁹ Also see the description in Andersson Elffers Felix (2014), *Integriteit in ontwikkeling, Implicaties van trends en ontwikkelingen voor de integriteit van het openbaar bestuur* (Integrity in development, implications of trends and developments for the integrity of public administration) (www.kennisopenbaarbestuur.nl)

The key features of strategic resources policy

The previous analysis clearly shows which developments are relevant for the central public administration in the coming years. Externally, economic and social changes play an important role, such as the current economic growth, the competition for well qualified employees, the ageing population, flexible working, internationalisation, and computer technology. The internal development of our workforce seems to be partly a reflection of this: we are slowly ageing, more highly educated, and working towards more diversity and greater equality between men and women, but we still have a way to go. Government workers are a very heterogeneous group, so it is not always easy to make general statements about who they are and what they can do or want. Reputation surveys show on which points the government scores well among potential future employees. We know from staff research which aspects our employees value positively, and where there is room for improvement.

The analysis shows that a number of priorities in our existing strategic HR policy have already been adequately formulated. The central public administration is a progressive organisation in which many good examples of modern and experimental staff policy are already visible. There is no need for a radical change of course, but it is important to shift the focus in some cases. In the period up to and including 2025 it is important to attract sufficient qualified and motivated new employees, and also to invest in current workers so that they, too, are ready for the future. In addition to our position in the labour market and our focus on potential employees, this requires a new emphasis on the individual approach to employees, the importance of their experience and of the work environment, and the challenges that new developments bring for employees, executives, and the integrity of the entire organisation.

The government is becoming increasingly task oriented, and we are aiming to achieve results. Government bodies must strive to attain the best outcomes for citizens, civil-society organisations, and companies. This requires choosing the right role, and communicating effectively.

The storyline that emerges from this analysis has led to the development of seven focal points. These are not exhaustive, but will determine the government's course for the coming years, and the Ministry of the Interior, as coordinating employer, will translate this course into frameworks for government-wide staff policy. Effective implementation depends on new agreements with the trade unions, particularly insofar as the new policy affects employment conditions. At the same time, the different parts of the government are themselves responsible for implementing the changes within their organisations.

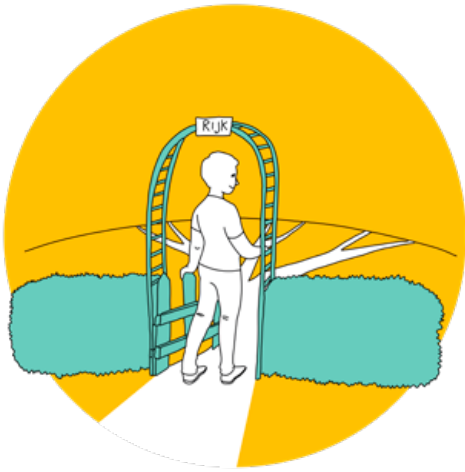
Seven focal points for strategic HR policy

Introduction

We strive for a high-quality, individual and modern HR policy, with suitably flexible employment conditions. A safe, honest and healthy working environment is paramount for current and future employees. The focal points for the new strategic policy have been drawn up on the basis of the most important trends that will affect government employment in the coming years. Automation is the development with the most impact, especially for organisations that use a great deal of data, and the consequences for employees can be far reaching, especially in conjunction with other trends such as the ageing population and flexible working. Employees and employers have a joint responsibility for continuing to invest in long-term employability, and this is expressed in the following focal points.

- 1** Permanent profiling and positioning: responding to the tight labour market by further promoting the government as a unique 'company' where one can perform versatile, challenging and educational work for the Netherlands. Even in a scenario in which the economy is deteriorating, unemployment rises again and labour becomes less scarce for the government, these measures are important if we are to remain able to attract specific target groups.
- 2** Creating an inclusive, and more diverse organisation, especially in the higher grades. This is partly due to the ageing population, the changing labour market, the changes in society, and the increasing complexity of societal issues.
- 3** Put people first: respond to the increased focus on individuals by making customisation and personal development possible for employees, and by modernising working conditions.
- 4** Make the organisation and its employees agile, adopting a flexible response to the government's changing roles and environment, and commit to other ways of working and organising.
- 5** Continuous development: Respond to the need for continuous personal and corporate development, the ageing population and the ever-changing nature of work by allowing employees to develop at the same pace as their fields of expertise.
- 6** The work experience is paramount: respond to the needs of employees and reduce absenteeism by providing a safe, open working environment.
- 7** Public leadership: ensure that managers develop reciprocal relationships with their employees, and share responsibility for supporting them in their career orientation.

We explain the focal points in more detail below.



1 Presenting the government as an attractive employer

The central public administration must present itself as much as possible as a single body. If it is to compete on the improving labour market, it must be a good and attractive employer, offer young people challenging career opportunities, and make better use of older employees' knowledge and experience. Our new external recruitment policy is based not simply on current vacancies within the government, but on potential employees who now work, learn and study elsewhere. By presenting ourselves to secondary and tertiary educational institutions at an early stage, we establish a lasting connection with young people, who then find us when they enter the labour market. It is important to remain visible, even if we do not recruit directly, and our remuneration framework must aim to recruit the right specialists.

The government offers a unique set of challenges and scope for personal development. It is an attractive employer because of the complexity of its work, and the fact that every employee works for the public good also contributes to our unique character. Externally, we want to emphasise these aspects even more as part of our recruitment. Inwardly, we continue to invest in greater transparency on the internal labour market because this improves people's long-term employability and the flexibility of the organisation.

Our starting point is that employees are serving central government as a whole, and it must become even easier for them to move between departments and organisations, so that we can also deliver on our promise on the external and internal labour markets. Talent programmes also contribute to this process. In order to take further steps in this direction, we will focus even more on the various groups, such as managers, employees within a particular field of work, and communities of employees with specific expertise. The experience gained by the ABD (Senior Civil Service Office) in approaching top managers as a group, and the results in terms of personal development and mobility, will be used as an example to identify other groups. Ongoing and new initiatives to develop employees and work types nationwide through targeted cooperation across the boundaries of organisations will be encouraged and supported.

Examples of this include cooperation within the areas of ICT, purchasing, and finance. The joint initiative by the various inspection services to introduce employees to one another and share knowledge is another positive example, as is the focus on more frequent interdepartmental function exchange by policy makers.

As a client and social partner, the government must make smart use of the input of freelancers, casual workers, students, and so on, in line with the trend towards a more flexible labour market. Sometimes the work can be outsourced to external organisations, but it is important to maintain a balance between bought-in skills and those of the many employees who wish to develop themselves.

In this way, we can ensure that we remain one of the most attractive employers in the Netherlands in the coming years. With this new labour market policy, we are also becoming more agile in the face of external economic and other developments.

This focal point will be worked out more concretely by:

Continuously recruiting and establishing long-term contact with trainees and temporary employees. The government gives presentations to educational institutions at an early stage, to ensure that students are aware of the wide range of work opportunities it offers. Details of suitable candidates who are not hired are actively shared with other government departments, subject to data protection requirements. One example of this is the virtual matching team, which shares the CVs of ICT candidates between government entities.

- ▶ We aim to maintain contact with former interns and trainees as possible future entrants.
- ▶ In our recruitment, we are placing an increased emphasis on the career opportunities offered by the government, rather than simply filling vacancies. In order to attract scarce expertise, these vacancies are more focused on characteristics of the government that specific groups regard as important. For example, ICT vacancies will emphasize the diversity and complexity of working for the government. We have been working with the central government ICT trainee programme since 2016, and with the data science programme since September 2018.
- ▶ We keep track of new employees by collecting data, and use these insights to further develop our recruitment and selection policy.
- ▶ Onboarding strategy: every new employee is welcomed professionally as an employee of the central public administration .
- ▶ We are working on further identification of possible communities of expertise. We are also investigating the possibility of further developing our intake and achieving government-wide advancement in consultation with these communities.
- ▶ In order to attract scarce expertise to the government, vacancies are opened up externally more quickly; for positions where there is a shortage on the labour market, market surcharges will be used.
- ▶ The provisions for employees who are temporarily posted abroad are being further harmonised.
- ▶ We plan to investigate the extent to which social service can be a positive consideration for job applicants.



2 The central public administration is an inclusive organisation, with increasingly diverse teams

We value an inclusive organisational culture in which all employees are actively involved in the group, free to be themselves and express their opinions, feel valued and respected, and can develop in a safe learning environment. This culture does not tolerate exclusion, discrimination, bullying, or harassment. Respect for others, correct behaviour and mutual cooperation are core aspects of the government's integrity policy.

If the government is to function well, it must bring together people with different perspectives, backgrounds, orientations and knowledge. The more variation in visions and solutions, the greater the creativity and innovation, and the better the results in terms of policy. This means that working in diverse teams and in an inclusive organisational culture must be promoted.

Society is becoming increasingly diverse and social issues increasingly complex. That is why we make policy together and in connection with society, and the same applies to daily implementation and monitoring. This works only if we know what is going on in society and can form relationships with different groups and organisations.

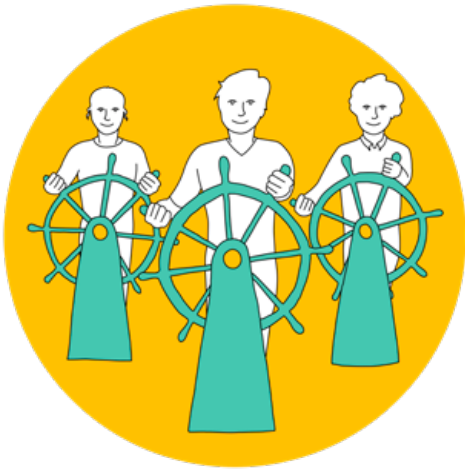
Diversity involves all visible and invisible differences between employees, including competencies, characteristics, educational background, and age. In order to remain attractive as an employer and to recruit and retain sufficiently qualified staff in the face of increasing shortages on the labour market, the government must continue actively to pursue diversity and inclusion in the coming years.

Approximately 55 percent of government employees are men. Those aged 45 and older are even more likely to be male, whereas women are the majority in the under-45 group. At the top level (ABD), 34 percent were women in 2017. In the same year, 10.3 percent of civil servants had a non-western migration background. Our ambition is to increase the number of young people and to promote the intake and advancement of employees with non-western backgrounds, particularly at grade 11 and higher, so that there is a more balanced workforce within the government as compared to the Dutch working population.

We exploit the possibilities of social return on investment to promote labour participation, organising pilot projects with suppliers to explore which types of use create the maximum societal added value using efficient, tailored solutions. This is in line with the cabinet's ambition to achieve more social benefits from purchasing and tendering.

This focal point will be worked out more concretely by ensuring that we

- ▶ Are an attractive employer for young and old, and strive towards a proportionate balance in our workforce
- ▶ Actively manage the influx of people with occupational disabilities to meet the set quotas, and expanding the number of collaborative projects with market parties
- ▶ Promote an inclusive working environment by incorporating this issue into employee surveys, performance reviews, and other processes
- ▶ Require members of recruitment committees to attend a workshop to prevent bias and improve selection interviews
- ▶ Promote an inclusive culture of retention and career development by making diversity and inclusion a permanent part of management courses
- ▶ Develop a government-wide talent programme for scales 12-14 within the policy core. In this way we can better manage the flow of talent, which includes young people and employees with non-western backgrounds.
- ▶ Ask employees attending exit interviews about their experiences of inclusivity in government
- ▶ Make more use of accelerated promotion for managers and for people joining us from outside government



3 People first

The government is an organisation of people, and their cooperation makes it what it is. Our starting point is that the individual is central to our human resources policy. This has implications for the relationship between employee and manager, but also for the way in which we shape our employment conditions policy. Every employee has different characteristics, talents and needs, and this must also be reflected in their relationship with their manager, the way they shape their career, and how the organisation supports or encourages them in this. We expect the employee and supervisor to have open discussions about what the employee needs. In this conversation there must also be room for wishes that do not fit within the standard patterns. In this way we accept people as they are, and offer space for individual development.

The preferences for financial remuneration or free time also vary between employees, and depending on the stage of life they have reached. One person may want more time off to act as an informal carer, while another may have discovered renewed career ambitions. This is not always dependent on age.

The government wants to respond to these differences by making more tailor-made solutions possible, in which the individual comes first, and not the group. In this way, we can develop a better match with employees' intrinsic motivations, and frameworks in which they make their own choices about their conditions.

The remuneration we pay our employees is increasingly based on the work they do rather than their seniority or personal characteristics. As a result, their pay may fluctuate more during their careers in the future than it does now. This kind of flexible pay enables employees to rise through the ranks faster, but they may temporarily lose out financially. Promotion, demotion and re-promotion will become normal parts of the career path.

Parts of the net salary that employees claim on the basis of their employment history can be an impediment to mobility and employability. We are redesigning this to make it easier for people to change jobs regularly. The increasing average age and retirement age of government employees is making this point more and more important.

Furthermore, in order to increase transfer opportunities for younger staff, the government wants employees to leave when they reach retirement age.

This focal point will be worked out more concretely by

- ▶ Reducing elements of remuneration (such as allowances) that impede transfers for employees who are not eligible for these on the basis of the work they do.
- ▶ In consultation with the trade unions, developing an individual choice budget so that employees can more flexibly shape their careers.
- ▶ Requiring employees to leave when they reach the state pension age.
- ▶ Increasing the influence of employees who work in shifts on their schedule by expanding flexible work schedules



4 An agile organisation with flexible employees

Our aim is to create an agile, innovative government that is at the centre of society, and which serves to bring people together, share knowledge and encourage initiative.

As an adaptive government organisation, the central public administration must be able to respond to an increasingly fast-changing environment and remain capable of realising its societal mission. The challenges it faces are characterised by their wide-ranging nature, uncertainty and complexity, and sometimes require different skills from employees.

The government will increasingly work in a task- and results-focused manner, in which flexibility and quality go hand in hand. The emphasis will be less on fulfilling functions, and more on carrying out tasks and assignments. We will allow more space for experiment in ways of organising and managing, and make better use of networks and brainpower to find solutions to tomorrow's challenges. If necessary, we must engage in unconventional and interdisciplinary cooperation to tackle these.

There is room for this flexibility in a learning organisation. Workers will also be expected to become more adaptable to the changing nature of the organisation and its tasks. Government workers will be connectors who bring together different parts of society.

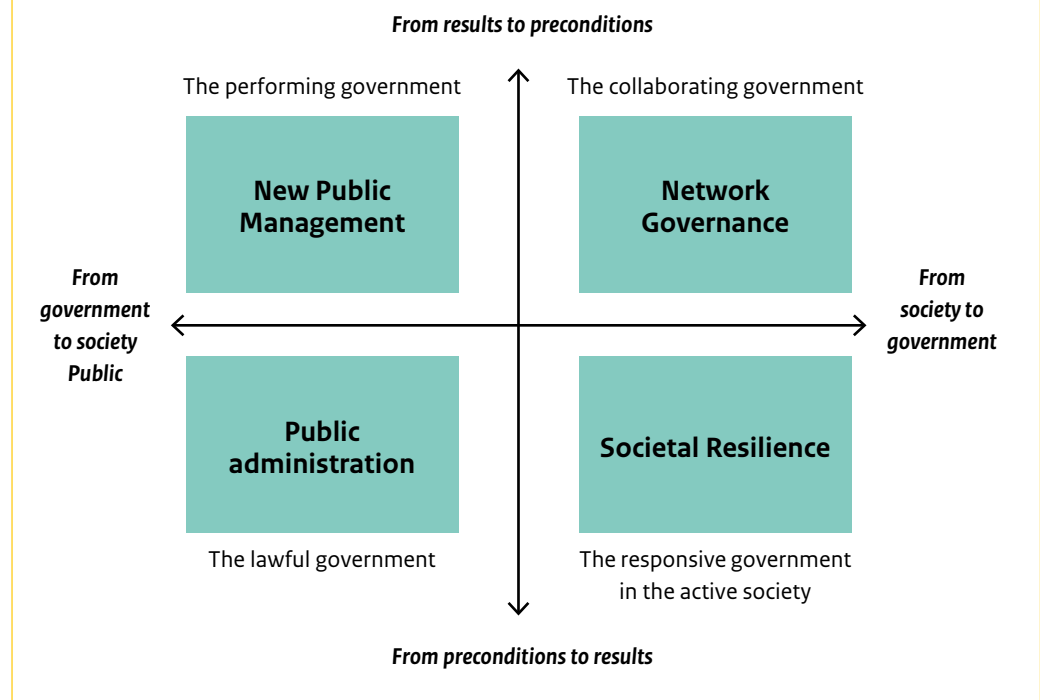
In order to make optimum use of their thinking power, employees will be given the opportunity to present proposals for start-ups within their organisations, and develop these during working hours.

In a rapidly changing society, there are always priority tasks. These require the government to respond quickly and effectively, so it must be agile. But it must also be stable. This also means that we must not take flexible thinking too far: some government tasks do not change and maintain their stable position in the organisation.

Interaction between organisational systems and staff

In *Sedimentatie in sturing*, Van der Steen and others argue³⁰ that networked government is not necessarily a new paradigm that renders previous ones obsolescent. They emphasise that multiple forms of management can coexist, and the best one must be chosen for each problem or issue the organisation is facing. This also requires government employees to adopt changing roles. Deciding which form of management is relevant at what time requires a degree of flexibility from the organisation and the employee. Both must make an assessment on the basis of technical, normative and substantive aspects. This also demands a flexible interaction between the organisation and the employee, in order to switch flexibly between roles and decide which is relevant to the organisation's objectives. The employee of the future will have to master multiple roles, and the organisation will be required to manage multiple systems side by side, so that a multiple control process can take place in which different forms of management coexist. In this way, a government organisation becomes truly agile.

FIGURE 5 Four forms of government guidance



³⁰ Van der Steen, M. et al. (2015), *Sedimentatie in sturing, Systeem brengen in netwerkend werken door meervoudig organiseren*, NSOB (https://www.nsob.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/NSOB_Sedimentatie_web.pdf)

Various initiatives have been taken in recent years to increase flexibility. These include the central placement of civil servant capacity at a number of ministries by forming pools, and by working with programme and project organisations. Various ministries use improvement programmes, including new forms of management and cooperation such as management tables, agreements, supervisory directors, and pairs from different tiers of government. Rules and procedures that impede flexibility are abolished where possible.

In addition, close cooperation between all authorities is necessary: municipalities, provinces, water management districts and the national government. Many societal tasks will have to be carried out locally, regionally and internationally, and the ministries are required to continue acting as one government as much as possible.

On the staff level, the government promotes employability by explicitly focusing on the flexible use of staff capacity. Different people work in different ways: long-term temporary appointments, permanent jobs, external hires (temporary workers, employees, freelancers, etc.). The various organisations within the central government analyse their capacity needs in their long-term staff planning, and the optimal way to organise this capacity. In the coming years, the question will be whether we can respond adequately to the way the labour market develops, in view of the rapid increase in the number of self-employed workers. Every employee is expected to be flexibly deployable, and if the nature of their work changes, we expect permanent employees to adapt accordingly.

The roles of policy managers and support workers are often comparable, independently of the policy area. This is the main type of work where broad employability, and thus improved mobility, are desirable. Specifically for the policy work in core departments, the following measures will be investigated in the coming period in order to promote mobility:

- The 3-5-7 model as a guiding principle in career policy. Employees are encouraged to consider a new position after three years, change positions after five, and leave their jobs after seven years at the latest. A career step can be horizontal or vertical, and inside or outside the government, to another department or organisation. Using the 3-5-7 model as a guiding principle can help to achieve a more focused control of inflows and outflows, and attention should also be paid to maintaining and transferring scarce knowledge and expertise.
- Scale 12 employees are encouraged to work within several government departments during their careers, in a different type of work, or at a position abroad or outside the government. In the long term, experience within multiple departments can be a condition for qualifying for a job at scale 13 or higher.
- We aim to reach agreements with organisations outside central government to encourage exchanges of employees, starting with bodies such as the Ministry of Defence, independent government agencies, and municipalities and provinces.
- Department heads will circulate more across the various departments, and encourage job swaps.

As an employer, we also focus on encouraging former employees to come back and work for us again. This enriches our knowledge and experience, and helps us to move away from the dominant framework whereby employees continue to work for us until their retirement. It is becoming increasingly normal, and regulations that stand in the way of it must be swept aside. It is also important that vacancies are quickly advertised, and exchanges of staff with organisations outside the central government are encouraged, because employees can act as ambassadors for working with the government.

This focal point will be worked out more concretely by:

- ▶ Working with a fixed core, supplemented by a flexible shell of employees with temporary contracts, on call, or externally hired.
- ▶ Limiting secondments to a maximum of one year. For work for a longer period, the employee is taken over by the hiring organisation. The *comply or explain* rule applies here: organisations account for the situations in which a secondment lasts longer than a year.
- ▶ Government buildings, the digital work environment, and the use of open data support the work-oriented approach.
- ▶ In order to respond adequately to internal and external developments, all organisations will draw up a multi-year staff plan before the end of 2019, explicitly mapping the consequences of technological developments and how these can be adequately anticipated. Organisations within a similar domain (eg purchasing, ICT) within the government will also coordinate their personnel schedules.
- ▶ Further supporting analysis will be carried out into the future of the government labour market. Particular attention will be paid to the effects of technological developments on tasks and functions in the context of an increasing labour shortage over the coming years.
- ▶ We are creating startups and policy labs, enabling us to collaborate more easily on clearly defined themes with specialists and members of the public.
- ▶ The *Wet normaliserende rechtspositie ambtenaren* (Act normalising the legal status of civil servants) is expected to come into effect on 1 January 2020. As a result, employees and managers of central government will be faced with private employment laws. This will not affect the unique status of civil servants, who work for the public good, often within a political environment. Because of these laws, all employees will have bilateral employment contracts with the State of the Netherlands. This new legal situation emphasises that employees maintain a reciprocal relationship with the employer. Within the public administration sector, this will also be used as an incentive to strengthen cooperation across departmental boundaries, with social responsibility as a central issue and to promote greater uniformity in personnel policy, for example by further harmonising secondary employment conditions. Everyone is employed by the central government and we will work as much as possible as one service, which helps to reduce the administrative burden.



5 Lifelong learning and development

Permanent learning and development is essential for the proper functioning of the central public administration now and in the future.³¹ It is a necessity, not an optional extra, ensuring that workers remain employable in the short and long term, and that the government maintains sufficient knowledge in its fields of activity. The ability to adapt and innovate comes primarily from our people. In addition, permanent learning improves career development possibilities. As an employer, we therefore expect employees to develop themselves continuously.

The government will also strengthen its position as an attractive employer by offering a good learning environment. From their very first day, employees invest in their development and employability through formal and informal knowledge sharing, self-reflection (for example by means of mutual coaching), changing their working environment through transfers or project-based work, or by attending courses. We encourage employees to go beyond their comfort zones and also look at non-traditional forms of training, make radical changes within their own jobs, and switch to others. This contributes to their development, and thus their employability.

The responsibility for learning and development lies primarily with the employee, and the employer must ensure that the right conditions exist. The government provides financial and organisational support for this, enabling employees to gain experience of complex interdisciplinary problems and working methods, including new talent programmes. We focus on a culture and environment where learning and development are an inseparable part of work and where, for example, senior employees transfer their knowledge and experience to younger colleagues, who in turn share their new insights on the work floor.

The wishes and needs of employees may vary depending on their life circumstances. The government pays special attention to workers during the final stages of their careers, attaching great importance to the employability of the substantial number of older workers and working towards individual policy that takes account of their life stage. We can see that some jobs, in many cases held by non-graduate employees, will eventually cease to exist. We are investigating the possibilities of developing targeted, proactive programmes for this group, so that they remain productive and employable inside or outside the government.

To help employees take responsibility for shaping their learning and development, organisations can experiment with schemes in which individuals are given their own budgets or training entitlements and do not require permission from their managers. However, both parties will still be required to discuss development issues as part of the performance interview process.

³¹ Also see the “Visie op leren en ontwikkelen bij de Rijksoverheid”, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/11/08/aanbiedingbrief-bij-de-visie-op-leren-en-ontwikkelen-bij-de-rijksoverheid>

This focal point will be worked out more concretely by:

- ▶ Making lifelong learning a fixed part of the performance review.
- ▶ Experimenting with tools to support lifelong learning; this could include a personal development budget (in terms of money and/or time) and opportunities for internships with other organisations within and outside the government.
- ▶ Using the RijksAcademie voor Digitisering en Informatisering Overheid (Government Academy for Digitisation and Information Technology - RADIO) to reinforce government employees' IT expertise.
- ▶ Where possible, tailoring work to individual needs.



6 The importance of the experience of work

We see that employees attach value to the experience of their work, and not only to matters such as pay and conditions, so we have made this a priority. We use the term 'experience' in its broadest sense, to include the working culture and environment as well as health and safety. It is important to have an open atmosphere in which managers and employees talk to one another and everyone has access to relevant information and insights. There is no room for fear in this culture, and it is essential that employees feel safe to speak to their supervisors about things that are not going well and obstacles to their work. This requires a certain culture, for which the organisation must offer the preconditions based on shared values. Managers must set an example, be approachable and open to feedback, and engage in regular, organised dialogue. By so doing, they contribute to a culture of communication within the entire organisation.

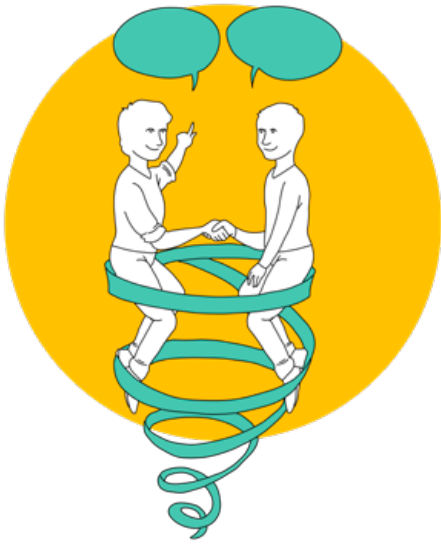
An important part of the work experience is the perception of the work environment. In the coming years, we want to show more emphatically how we can organise this for employees. We see it as an important part of HR policy that goes with good employment practices and contributes to our image. This includes experiments with offsite working, and also building layout and digital support. We see the buildings in which we work as a source of inspiration and an incentive for cooperation, and carry out regular surveys of employees' perceptions.

Government employees must be able to work safely and, if they become ill or otherwise unable to attend work, have access to professional guidance. We provide this in a caring but business-like manner. Both the manager and the employee have a responsibility in this respect, and we also carry out employability interviews to look at what other work the employee is capable of doing if they are unable to carry out their normal duties. We provide a supportive culture in which they can discuss their health and other needs with their manager and plan for the future.

In the coming years, the government will make an extra effort to reduce absenteeism, partly by shifting the focus to prevention, employability, and health. A great deal of absenteeism is the result of a poor fit between the employee and the job, underlining the importance of mobility and learning and development to sustainable employability.

This focal point will be worked out more concretely by:

- ▶ Focusing more attention on the work experience and job satisfaction, including regular employee surveys. If these show that employees are not happy with their physical working environment, this will be improved as soon as possible.
- ▶ Continuously focusing on a culture of openness, with senior managers setting a good example.
- ▶ Placing a greater emphasis on employee health and reducing absenteeism by investigating its correlation with job satisfaction. This can be achieved by introducing new ways of working, making employees more autonomous, and making work more varied and less difficult where possible.
- ▶ Improving digital support so that employees can work more independently of time, place and device.
- ▶ Connecting systems so that organisations can use one another's meeting facilities.



7 Managers developing the organisation and its employees

We aim to achieve mature relationships between managers and employees, in which managers adopt a more coaching-based, less directive role and support their employees in their career orientation. This requires a continuous dialogue between both parties, with the performance cycle as an important additional tool. In this way, managers are an essential link in the development of our employees, and thus of the entire organisation. Some employees need additional advice on their performance or career orientation, and this is being provided in more and more new ways.

We strive to achieve an increasingly reciprocal relationship at work, where managers give space and direction to employees and treat them as professionals, and the two parties engage in dialogue about results, integrity, career orientation, and employability.

What do we expect from leaders within government?

- Integrity: the leader works sincerely and consciously for the public good, and demonstrates this in their everyday actions
- Collaboration: the leader operates shared leadership, focused on the broader context and not exclusively on their own domain, actively seeks cooperation and co-creation, and is able to see things from other people's perspectives
- Reflection: the leader possesses self-insight, asks the right questions, and determines the organisation's course and position on that basis.

Digital knowledge and skills are crucial for the government's performance of its responsibilities, and thus form a core competency for all civil servants and managers. In the coming years, we will make further investments in this know-how, including a variety of leadership programmes.

This focal point will be worked out more concretely by:

- ▶ Ensuring that every new manager attends training that focuses on the importance of career development, mobility, and ICT.
- ▶ Providing more masterclasses and other training for middle managers.
- ▶ Ensuring that the ABD LaB (the ABD Leadership Courses) is open to all ABD directors and focuses on the learning needs of the individual participant.
- ▶ Regularly reporting on employee inflows and outflows within and between government departments and organisational units, and thus emphasizing the importance of mobility in promoting sustainable employability.
- ▶ Making a visible contribution to employee development one of the pillars in the evaluation of managers' performance.

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This brochure is a publication of:

Government of the Netherlands
Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
P.O. Box 20011 | 2500 EA The Hague

September 2018 | Publication no. 115253