

Export to the Netherlands



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1. General information

Political landscape

- **Government Spending:** There is an increase in government investment spending, which is expected to support economic growth in 2024.
- **Public Debt:** The general government budget deficit is limited but expected to increase towards the EU threshold of 3%.
- **Election Outcomes:** The far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) secured the largest share of seats in the recent general election but has faced challenges in forming a coalition.
- **Policy Issues:** The next coalition government will grapple with environmental issues, farming, housing, and immigration controls.
- **EU Relations:** The Netherlands' policy is often modeled after EU policy, with significant areas including security, development cooperation, finance, transport, and agriculture.

Economics

- **Economic Growth:** The Dutch economy is expected to grow modestly by 0.7% in 2024, following a period of stagnation in 2023.
- **Inflation:** Inflation rates have decreased significantly from the previous high levels, with a forecast of 2.6% for 2024.
- **Labour Market:** Unemployment is slightly higher than in previous years but remains relatively low at 4%. Wages are expected to rise sharply.
- **Private Consumption:** Private consumption is set to recover as real wages increase due to decreasing inflation rates and strong nominal wage growth.
- **Housing Market:** The government continues to aim for the construction of new homes, although labor shortages and other crises have cast doubt on these targets.
- **Private Investment:** Business investments have slowed down, and private investment is expected to remain weak due to labor shortages and financial conditions tightening in 2023.

Overall, the Dutch economy is showing signs of recovery with a focus on government spending and a gradual improvement in private consumption. The decrease in inflation and the rise in wages are positive indicators for the economic outlook of 2024. However, challenges such as labor shortages and the need for fiscal adjustments remain. The Netherlands continues to be a prosperous country with a strong legal system and open market economy, facilitating foreign investment and trade.

Here are the key industries that are particularly relevant in the Netherlands ([government.nl](https://www.government.nl)):

- **Agriculture & Food:** Known for its innovations in sustainable agriculture and food production.
- **Chemistry:** The chemical industry contributes significantly to solutions for global challenges.
- **Creative Industries:** Dutch creativity is instrumental in addressing complex global issues.
- **Energy:** The country is transitioning to more sustainable energy systems.
- **High Tech Systems and Materials:** Advanced technological innovations drive progress across various sectors.
- **Life Sciences & Health:** Collaboration in this sector generates leading health solutions.
- **Logistics:** The Netherlands plays a crucial role in European commerce and logistics.



- **Horticulture and Propagation Materials:** The Dutch horticultural sector is a global trendsetter supplying markets all over the globe, as well as being a leading innovator in greenhouse technology.
- **Water Management:** Expertise in water management and climate change adaptation is a top priority.
- For a prospecting company, these industries offer numerous opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and growth, especially in a country that values sustainable development and technological advancement.



2. Additional indicators

Economic indicators

Find the main socio-economic indicators for this country, as well as its trade with Brussels and Belgium, in the publication "[Brussels and the world – Country statistics](#)" on analytics.brussels, hub.brussels' online data library.

The "[Brussels and the world - General statistics](#)" publication also provides data on trade between the Brussels-Capital Region and the rest of the world, by continent and by major world region. The same type of data is also available for the various regions of Belgium, as well as for Belgium as a whole.

Social and environmental indicators

If you'd like to know where your country stands in terms of social, environmental and economic issues, access a series of [composite indicators from the European Commission](#), structured according to the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹ and the European Commission's 6 priority policy areas².

Free trade agreements

European agreements have a major impact on market accessibility and trade with certain countries. The links below, published by the European Commission, will provide you with all the information you need on free trade agreements and trade barriers. Existing agreements, those that have not yet been ratified and those that are expected to be ratified, can be consulted here:

- [Free trade agreements](#)
- [Trade barriers](#)

¹No poverty, Zero hunger, Good health and well-being, Quality education, Gender equality, Clean water and sanitation, Clean and affordable energy, Decent work and economic growth, Industry, innovation and infrastructure, Reduced inequalities, Sustainable cities and communities, Sustainable consumption and production, Measures to combat climate change, Water life, Land life, Peace, justice and effective institutions, Partnerships to achieve the goals.

² A green pact for Europe, An economy serving people, A Europe fit for the digital age, A stronger Europe on the world stage, Promoting our European way of life, A new impetus for European democracy.



3. On-site: a step-by-step guide

First contacts

Prospecting

The Netherlands stands as a beacon of entrepreneurship and international trade, with a vibrant start-up ecosystem that is particularly welcoming to innovative projects from abroad.

Successfully entering the Dutch market requires a thorough understanding of the local business landscape:

- **Initial Contact:** Start with an intake interview with the Economic Representative in The Hague for essential information.
- **Market Scan:** Each new exporter request prompts a fresh market scan, prioritizing current data over outdated studies.
- **Trade Fairs:** Gain market insights by attending sector-specific trade fairs, utilizing digital catalogues for efficient visits.
- **Networking:** Engage in network events, with business clubs and consider presenting your expertise at conferences.
- **Local Focus:** Target the densely populated and affluent Randstad region or the Eindhoven high-tech cluster for initial market entry.
- **Proximity and Accessibility:** The Dutch market is close to Brussels, making it easily accessible without intermediaries.
- **Cultural Nuances:** Recognize the cultural and regional differences within the Netherlands, such as the “Bible-belt” and regions above and below the rivers.
- **Business Culture:** The Dutch business environment is informal, with faster decision-making processes and a preference for direct communication.
- **Preparation:** Dutch businesses expect thorough preparation, with well-formulated documentation and knowledge of the Dutch language being advantageous.
- **Communication:** Initial contact should be by phone, followed by a detailed follow-up email. Cold calling is necessary but time-consuming due to privacy laws.
- **Regulations:** Be mindful of anti-spam legislation and GDPR compliance when contacting potential clients.
- **Perception:** Belgian/Brussels companies are generally well-regarded in the Netherlands, though business practices may be seen as more complex and bureaucratic.
- **Distribution Channels:** Consider various channels such as direct sales, agents, e-commerce, and procurement organizations. Establishing a local entity can be beneficial.

Exporting

Payments

The payment terms in the Netherlands for companies, especially those looking to export to the country, are the following:

- **Standard Payment Term:** The standard payment term in domestic commercial transactions is 30 days.



- **Maximum Payment Term:** Large companies cannot agree to a payment term longer than **30 days** in new contracts with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- **Legal Interest and Collection Costs:** If payment does not occur within this term, legal interest and collection costs (at a minimum of EUR 40) are due.

These terms are designed to ensure that payments are made promptly, particularly to protect SMEs and independent entrepreneurs from the financial strain caused by delayed payments. The use of debt collection services remains a common practice for following up on payments. Learn more at [cms.law](https://www.cms.law).

Company types

In the Netherlands, you can choose from a variety of company types, each with its own characteristics and legal implications. Here's a list of the most common types of companies (business.gov.nl):

- **Sole Proprietorship (Eenmanszaak):** Ideal for individual entrepreneurs, where the owner is personally liable for the company's debts.
- **Private Limited Company (BV - Besloten Vennootschap):** A company with shareholders, where liability is generally limited to the amount invested.
- **Public Limited Company (NV - Naamloze Vennootschap):** Similar to a BV but suitable for larger businesses, with shares that can be traded publicly.
- **General Partnership (VOF - Vennootschap onder Firma):** A partnership where all partners are equally liable for the business obligations.
- **Professional Partnership (Maatschap):** A form of partnership typically used by professionals like lawyers and doctors.
- **Limited Partnership (CV - Commanditaire Vennootschap):** Consists of at least one general partner with unlimited liability and one limited partner whose liability is limited to their contribution.
- **Cooperative (Coöperatie):** A group of members who collaborate for a common economic goal, with limited liability for the members.
- **Association (Vereniging):** An organization formed around a certain goal or activity, not necessarily commercial.
- **Foundation (Stichting):** Established to achieve a specific social or charitable objective, without members or shareholders.

These structures cater to different business needs, from individual entrepreneurs to large corporations, and offer various levels of liability and tax implications. It's important to choose the one that best aligns with your business goals and operational style. If you're considering starting a business in the Netherlands, it's advisable to consult with a legal expert to understand the nuances of each type and comply with the local regulations.

Support and subsidies

Discover all subsidies for Brussels businesses on the Brussels Economy and Employment website.

Interesting markets for a first export

For a first-time exporter to the Netherlands, the following six markets stand out as particularly important due to their current trends and growth potential (investinholland.com):



- **Agri-food:** The Netherlands has a strong focus on sustainable agriculture and food production. Exporters from Brussels can leverage this by offering organic and sustainably produced agri-food products.
- **Creative Industries:** With a shared cultural affinity, creative products and services from Brussels, such as design, fashion, and multimedia, have a receptive market in the Netherlands.
- **Healthcare, Digital Health and Wellness:** Innovations in patient monitoring and home care technologies are in high demand due to market forces and an aging population. Nutritional supplements, fitness equipment, and wellness services, driven by an increasing focus on personal health.
- **Energy Transition:** Solutions that facilitate the transition to renewable energy, including energy storage and smart energy management, are key. The focus on climate-neutral homes and energy-efficient buildings offers significant opportunities.
- **E-Commerce:** As the e-commerce market continues to grow, there is a significant opportunity to export digital services, IT solutions, and consumer products catering to the online market.
- **High-Tech Systems and Materials:** The Netherlands has a strong high-tech industry, and there is a demand for advanced materials and components, particularly those used in semiconductors and electronics manufacturing.

These markets are not only growth-oriented but also align with the Netherlands' emphasis on sustainability, innovation, and technology. Moreover the strategic position of Brussels as a hub for innovation and its proximity to the Dutch market, facilitate the market entry for first-time exporters making them ideal for new entrants looking to establish a foothold in the Dutch economy.

Calendar of all trade shows

Trade Shows in the Netherlands between 2024 and 2025 can be found at the following link:

www.eventseye.com/fairs/c1_trade-shows_netherlands.html

This resource provides dates, venues, and details for a variety of industry-specific events that can be invaluable for networking and expanding your business in the Dutch market.



4. Business culture

Communication

- **Flat Hierarchy:** Dutch companies often have a flat organizational structure. Hierarchies are minimal, and decision-making is decentralized. Employees are encouraged to voice their opinions, regardless of their position.
- **Open Communication:** Directness is prized. Expect candid feedback during meetings. Don't be surprised if your Dutch colleague challenges your ideas – it's a sign of engagement, not disrespect.
- **Direct Language:** Dutch communication is straightforward. Avoid beating around the bush – state your point clearly.
- **Handshakes:** A firm handshake is the norm. Maintain eye contact.
- **Email Etiquette:** Keep emails concise and to the point. Avoid excessive formality.

Attire

- **Business Casual:** Dutch professionals favor smart-casual attire. Blazers, trousers, and stylish shoes are common. Ties are optional.
- **Avoid Flashiness:** Subtle elegance is appreciated. Skip flashy accessories or overly formal outfits.
- **Bike-Friendly:** Many Dutch commute by bike. Practical shoes and rainproof gear are essential.

How to prepare a visit

- **Work-Life Balance:** The Dutch value work-life balance. They work efficiently during office hours but rarely stay late. Weekends are sacred for family time and leisure.
- **Standard Workweek:** The Dutch work around 36-40 hours per week. They value productivity over long hours.
- **Flexibility:** Remote work is increasingly common. Companies prioritize results over rigid office hours.
- **Summer Fridays:** Some offices close early on Fridays during summer months.

Negotiating

- **Polder Model:** Named after the Dutch word for reclaimed land, this model emphasizes consensus-building. Stakeholders collaborate to find solutions. Decision-making involves negotiation and compromise.
- **Networking:** Dutch professionals network informally. Coffee breaks, lunches, and after-work drinks are excellent opportunities to connect. Be genuine and show interest in others.
- **Time Management:** Punctuality matters. Arrive on time for meetings. Lateness is considered disrespectful.

What are the public holidays?

National Holidays in 2024

- New Year's Day: January 1



- Good Friday: March 29
- Easter: March 31 and April 1
- King's Day: April 27
- Liberation Day: May 5
- Ascension Day: May 9
- Whit Sunday and Whit Monday: May 19 and 20
- Christmas: December 25 and 26
- School holiday 2024 - 2025



5. What can we do for you?

Local contact points

The General Delegates and local representatives employed by hub.brussels are official representatives of the Brussels Government abroad, they support Brussels companies that want to export, and search and prospect for new investors.

They have the information, expertise and in-depth knowledge about the specifics of different foreign markets. Based on that knowledge, they help to refine and fine-tune your export plans, with advice on regulations, competition, market entry conditions, permits, etc. Furthermore, they can support you with your questions regarding exports, certain sectors within the jurisdiction, contacts with intermediaries, business culture, and much more.



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Key addresses

Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium in the Netherlands

(Chancelry, Treasury and Military Attaché)

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2582 NE Den Haag
T +31 (0)70 312 34 56
<https://netherlands.diplomatie.belgium.be/nl>
thehague@diplobel.fed.be

Dutch Embassy in Brussels

Av. de Cortenberg 4-10
1040 Brussels
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+3226791711
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Belgian Embassy-Brussels Capital Region Office

Brussels Agency for Entrepreneurship (BAE)

Mauritskade 33
2514 HD Den Haag
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thehague@hub.brussels
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Dutch Chamber of Commerce for Belgium (NKVK)

Belgian Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce for the Netherlands (BELUNED)

Avenue Louise 500
1050 Brussels
Belgium
Tel: +32 2 219 11 74
info@nkvk.be
www.nkvk.be



Useful website to delve into

Governmental Websites and Trade Agencies:

- **Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA):** Assists foreign companies looking to invest in Holland by providing support and advice. Visit their website at investinholland.com.
- **Business.gov.nl:** Information about the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA) and how they can help foreign entrepreneurs move their existing companies to the Netherlands. Access it via business.gov.nl/contact/netherlands-foreign-investment-agency/.
- **Netherlands Trade Commission:** Supports Dutch companies wishing to export worldwide and provides information on trade development. Explore their services at netherlandstradecommission.nl.

Databases and Economic Analysis:

- **CBS - Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek Economy Dashboard:** Provides current figures on the Dutch economy, including regional economy, gross domestic product, labor market, inflation, and more. Access it at cbs.nl/en-gb/visualisations/economy-dashboard.
- **CPB.nl:** Offers economic data, research, and analysis related to the Dutch economy, including topics like global value chains, GDP growth, and energy transition. Visit cpb.nl/en for more information.
- **OECD Data on Netherlands:** Provides data across various sectors for economic analysis. Explore the data at data.oecd.org/netherlands.htm.
- **Crunchbase - Netherlands Companies:** Provides information on the top 10,000 companies and startups in the Netherlands. Explore it at crunchbase.com/hub/the-netherlands-companies

