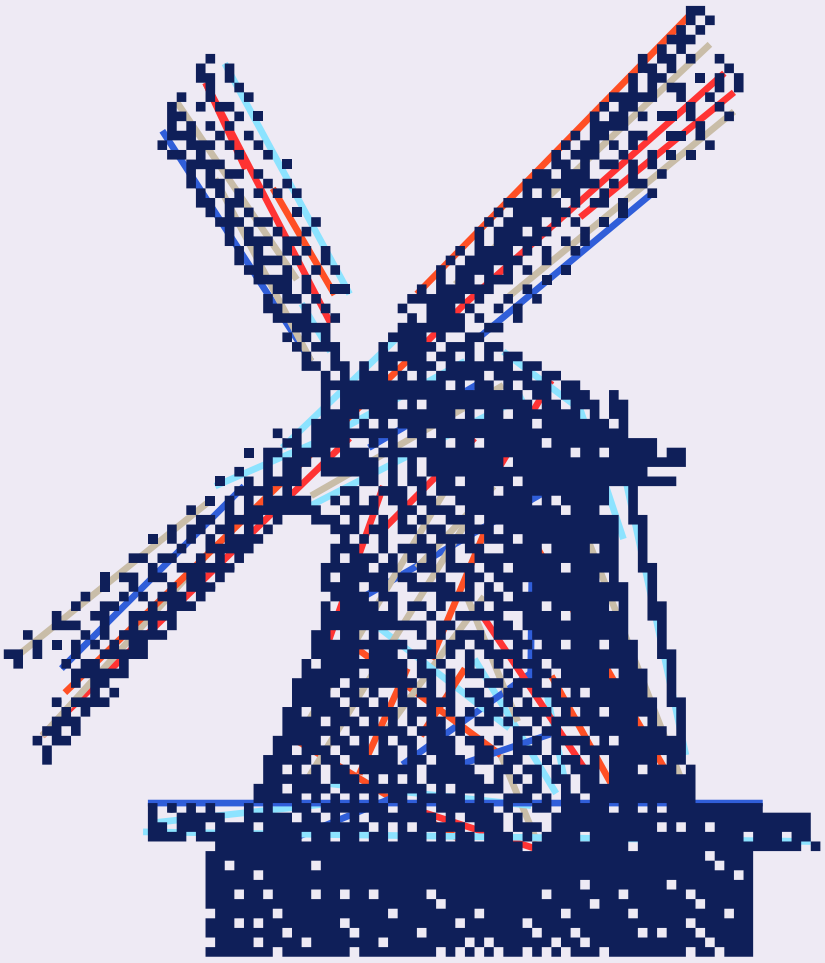
A prosperous, innovative,
and resilient Netherlands in 2035

National AI Delta Plan



AI Plan

Summary

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping our economy and society. While other countries are anticipating this new reality with massive investments, the Netherlands risks losing control over the technology that will soon determine our economy, security, and democracy.

In this Delta Plan, we outline what's needed to regain control: a leap in computing power and energy infrastructure, mass AI adoption and literacy, a competitive AI ecosystem, strong democratic embedding, and ambitious national AI projects that will allow us to lead again. Just like with the original Delta Works, the nation-defining flood protection program built after the 1953 disaster to protect the Netherlands for generations, this is about investing in the foundations upon which our future rests.

Just like the computer, AI will fundamentally reshape our economy and society. It not only determines the way companies produce goods and provide services but also how we organize our work and what skills people need. Many of our jobs will change drastically or disappear, while new employment opportunities will arise elsewhere. But AI will transform our society, too. In sectors such as healthcare, education, and government, it'll play an increasingly significant role in how we work, learn, and make decisions. To steer this change, we need to have control over the technology itself.

The Netherlands is currently barely participating in the development of AI. We are heavily reliant on American and Chinese AI companies. They determine which AI systems are available, how they operate, and how much they cost. Without our own infrastructure and technology, our earning capacity will flow away abroad and we will lose control over systems that shape our society.

There is a path forward by investing in AI knowledge and infrastructure. The Netherlands has a strong starting position with its top universities, a lot of technical talent, and innovative sectors that can become world leaders in the AI transition. If we invest now, we can ensure that our companies remain competitive, we retain our AI talent,

and we work together on the societal and technological breakthroughs of the future. Using AI, we can develop more sustainable materials and better batteries, for example. We can age more healthily by better understanding the human body and achieve scientific breakthroughs at a rapid pace. In construction, robots can alleviate labor shortages. In healthcare, AI can help nursing staff can spend more time with patients by automating administrative work. And in agriculture, we can enable more sustainable food production that extracts less from nature.

To realize these ambitions, we must now take concrete steps to prepare the Netherlands for this. This plan contains 52 recommendations, including:

- **Invest in sufficient computing power and renewable energy.** AI computing power will be crucial for our economy. Accelerate the permitting process for local data centers through AI Compute Zones and invest across the EU in increased computing capacity. Optimize the use of existing network capacity and invest in renewable energy.
- **Broaden AI adoption by promoting AI literacy and implementation.** The Netherlands is significantly lagging in AI adoption, driven by high levels of skepticism and a lack of knowledge. Ensure that all teachers, politicians, and civil servants receive AI training. Encourage AI education among employees and support companies in the AI transition by promoting applied AI research.
- **Invest in a competitive AI ecosystem to make the Netherlands the best location for AI business in Europe.** We train a lot of top talent, but lose some to foreign countries due to a lack of challenges and a non-competitive entrepreneurial climate. Make it attractive for companies and talent to come and stay, unlock capital for AI investments, and adjust regulations that currently prevent companies from growing quickly.
- **Monitor the societal impacts of AI and give citizens a voice in decision-making.** Establish independent oversight with a National AI Impact Institute that monitors the effects on employment, well-being, and democracy, and advises parliament. Involve citizens in decision-making on AI policy through citizens' assemblies.
- **Invest in AI projects that achieve breakthroughs with major societal and economic impact.** Establish a National Agency for

Disruptive Innovation (NADI), modeled after DARPA, with autonomy to finance technological breakthroughs. Support a Dutch ELLIS Institute to attract top international researchers and become a European leader in AI research.

This AI Delta Plan was commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and developed in consultation with over sixty experts from academia, industry, government, and civil society.

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is having an increasingly significant impact on our economy and society. Both economically and societally, we will lose control if we do not invest now in large-scale AI adoption and literacy, computing power and energy supplies, our business climate, and the social resilience and democratic embedding of this technology.

We are entering an era where AI, in the form of algorithms and robots, can work on science, production, and services day and night. AI will become a determining factor for our productivity, innovation, and our competitive strength.

The impact on society will be just as significant. AI systems are making an increasing number of decisions, for example about which treatment a patient receives. Teachers struggle with students who use AI, while they themselves hardly know how the technology works. And while the revenue model of our independent media is under pressure, AI disinformation threatens our democratic process.

For this technology, which has an increasingly significant impact on our economy and society, we are becoming more and more dependent on American and Chinese AI companies. They determine how AI works and reap the benefits thereof. Dutch companies pay for every answer, every action of a robot, and every calculation performed elsewhere, but they have no insight into how the results are produced. This way, we are losing control of systems that have more and more influence on our lives and will soon become the driving force of our economy.

Just like with the Delta Works, we are at a historical crossroads: do we let our fate be determined by external forces, or do we take matters into our own hands? Do we accept that the United States and China define the digital foundations of our future, or do we choose to build the infrastructure and technology upon which our economy and society will rest for the coming decades? The coming years are decisive: doing nothing means opting for dependency; strategic investment means working on our autonomy, prosperity, and resilience.

The opportunity: a prosperous, innovative, and resilient Netherlands in 2035

The Netherlands possesses an exceptionally strong position to become a leader in Europe. With ASML, world-class knowledge institutions, an innovative business sector, room for investment, and strong sectors such as the chip industry, agriculture, logistics, healthcare, biotech, and energy, we have all the ingredients to leverage AI for increasing our future wealth, our societal progress, and an AI transition that aligns with our values.

AI has the potential to significantly boost our productivity and the pace of innovation. This allows us to achieve breakthroughs in the next ten years that might have taken us a hundred years without AI.

In healthcare, this could mean that with the help of AI we can detect cancer early, develop personalized medicines for rare diseases, and have AI-enabled robots assist nurses in doing repetitive tasks, allowing them to spend more time on human contact.

In agriculture, this could mean that hundreds of thousands of robots will enable a new form of farming where, just like in nature, many different crops grow intermixed. This would make sustainable production possible without depleting the soil, with each plant receiving exactly the amount of water and nutrients it needs. Pesticides would no longer be necessary because robots can mechanically remove weeds, and the diversity of plants keeps natural predators at bay.

In traffic, self-driving cars can reduce the number of fatal accidents by more than ninety percent. There will be virtually no more traffic jams because AI systems can optimize traffic flow and computers react much faster than humans. Because all cars will be able to drive themselves to garages outside the city, parking spaces in prime locations can be replaced by terraces or playgrounds.

Due to the acceleration in science that AI enables, we will increasingly see breakthroughs in new, environmentally friendly materials, cheaper energy production, and other sustainable technologies.

In education, teaching methods will be tailored to each child, personalized for their individual learning style, pace, and interests, allowing more time for relational learning, exploring nature, and developing practical, feasible skills.

When managed well, the negative consequences, although less predictable, would be adequately addressed. A National AI Impact Institute monitors the societal impact and frequently advises the government regarding impending negative consequences, so our government and its policies remain flexible. Citizens are actively involved in the decision-making about AI through citizens' assemblies that strengthen our democracy. With regards to the labor market, we would have ensured the transition is fair by broadly investing in retraining and upskilling. The Dutch media landscape remains strong and independent through fair compensation models for creators. And in crucial public infrastructure such as education and government, we use AI models that align with our own values instead of becoming fully dependent on foreign systems.

This vision of the future is far from a given, but it is within reach. It is only possible if the government continues to update its AI policy wisely and consistently over the coming years, without being driven solely by hype, fear, or ignorance. By consciously choosing this course now, we are building a country where AI enhances our prosperity and strengthens our autonomy.

The approach: a National AI Delta Plan

This AI Delta Plan makes policy recommendations to turn this future scenario into reality. It was commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and developed in consultation with more than sixty experts from academia, business, government, and civil society.

The recommendations are divided into four central themes. First, we strengthen the key technological foundations on which these applications rest, such as computing power and energy infrastructure (**Chapter 1**). Then, we focus on what's needed for a broad understanding and accelerated application of AI in businesses, government, and education (**Chapter 2**). After that, we address the conditions for a strong AI

ecosystem such as talent, capital, entrepreneurship, and regulation (**Chapter 3**). Finally, we ensure the societal integration of AI by investing in resilience, public values, democratic processes, and reliable information provision (**Chapter 4**). In **the epilogue** we look back at the success of Dutch AI policy in a fictional reflection from the year 2035.

In 2019, the Dutch government already published the Strategic Action Plan for AI (SAPAI) which at the time formed the basis for our AI policy. Given the particularly rapid technological and societal developments surrounding *generative AI* such as ChatGPT, it is time for a new AI action plan. Although the precise AI developments of the next ten years are difficult to predict, it is essential that the Netherlands now focuses on the domains that are crucial regardless of the specifics of these developments, such as societal resilience, infrastructure, and responsible innovation. By investing in these foundations now, the Netherlands ensures that it can both manage the risks of AI and maximize its opportunities, in any scenario that will unfold.

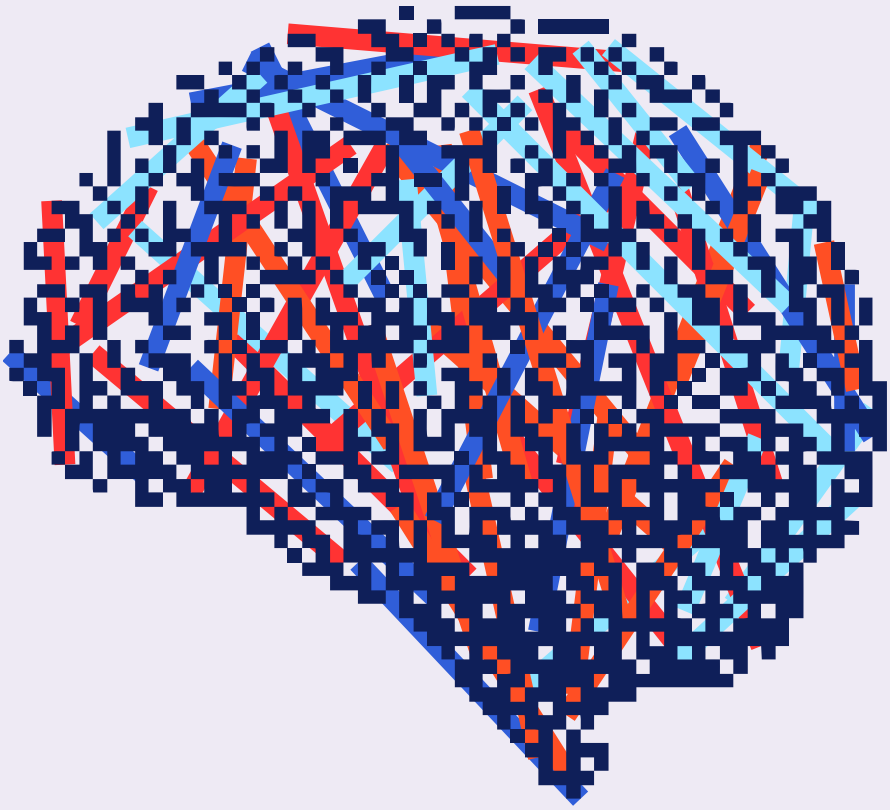
1

Build the infrastructure for AI

Computing power is becoming increasingly important for our economic production and depends on both the number of advanced AI chips (GPUs) in data centers and the energy these systems can use. As AI becomes more powerful and better integrated into business processes, computing power and energy threaten to become the main constraints on economic growth. At the same time, the demand for these resources is expected to exponentially increase, which puts the Netherlands at risk of countries with more of this infrastructure reserving their available computing power for their own industry and population, while the Netherlands is left with a shortage.

Europe currently houses merely 5% of the world's AI computing power, compared to about 75% in the United States. The Dutch supercomputer Snellius has only 640 GPUs and even the upcoming Groningen AI factory, with a budget of €200 million, is expected to house no more than approximately 2,500 GPUs. In comparison, OpenAI currently has access to a total of over 1 million GPUs and is building multiple new data center campuses each of which will contain 500,000 next-generation NVIDIA GPUs.

To narrow this gap, the Netherlands needs a strategy that systematically maps the demand for and supply of computational power, removes



spatial and permitting barriers, stimulates private investment, and strongly focuses on the generation and infrastructure of renewable energy.

1. **Develop an AI Compute Plan in the first half of 2026.**

   Currently, there is no overarching national strategy for AI computational power, unlike countries such as the United Kingdom, where a UK Compute Roadmap has been released. On the demand side, a Dutch AI Computational Power Plan maps out how much computational power the Netherlands and Europe will need in various scenarios. Explicit consideration must be given to the specific (high-security) needs of the public sector, knowledge institutions, and defense and intelligence services, which should be the first to transition to sovereign computational power.

   On the supply side, the plan will serve as the basis for decision-making on which investments need to be made in both public infrastructure and private collaborations. The estimates should also include scenarios where access to foreign compute capacity is restricted, or our demand for compute increases exceptionally quickly, due to AI models continually self-improving, for instance. Both the demand forecasts and supply plans should be regularly updated so that the government can quickly respond to new developments in the market and society.

   In the computational power expansion plans, strong emphasis should be placed on close cooperation within Europe, for example, to establish joint infrastructure or to facilitate decentralized AI training . The plan should investigate how many AI gigafactories are needed in the Netherlands, including any expansion of the planned factory in Groningen, and set clear guidelines for the swift, flexible governance of these factories with streamlined procedures to optimally allocate their capacity to prioritized applications.

2. **Remove structural barriers in space, energy, and permits that impede the development of digital infrastructure.**

   The development of large-scale AI infrastructure in the Netherlands is hindered by factors such as lack of space, nitrogen restrictions,

difficult grid connections, and slow permitting and consultation procedures. These bottlenecks obstruct the establishment of essential infrastructure, calling for an integrated approach where sharp choices and careful trade-offs will have to be made, such as allowing exceptions for crucial AI projects and simplified consultation procedures.

Data centers can, for example, be connected more efficiently to the power grid by utilizing the existing grid's *emergency lane*. The emergency lane is redundant grid capacity that is typically only used in emergencies. Data centers are particularly suited for connection that utilize this emergency lane because they can switch to their own backup power supplies in the rare instances the emergency lane is unavailable, such as during power outages. In this way, the reliability of the grid is maintained, while the available capacity is optimally utilized. By providing data centers access to the emergency lane by default, additional space is created on the grid for AI infrastructure without compromising other current and future users.

3. **Create special AI computing zones where computing power can be rapidly scaled up.**

   Create special AI compute zones that enable the fast expansion of computing power by removing bottlenecks in energy and network infrastructure. Select locations with direct connections to the high-voltage grid or their own substation so that new capacity does not put additional strain on the low-voltage grid. In these zones, permitting procedures for data center construction and associated energy supply can be streamlined, allowing room for *behind-the-meter* solutions. Designate one or two of these locations as *best-practice* clusters where efficient chips, liquid cooling, waste heat utilization, nearby sustainable generation, smart grid integration, and flexible backup options converge. By combining zoning with high-quality sustainable infrastructure, a fast, market-driven route is created to scale up computing power, while the government can gradually address structural bottlenecks in the network and energy supply.

4. **Encourage private providers to build computational power capacity in the Netherlands.**

   Due to our higher energy prices and more complex permitting framework compared to true global AI infrastructure hubs like the United States and the Gulf States, it is currently significantly less attractive for market parties to establish large-scale AI infrastructure in the Netherlands. Therefore, the market needs to be temporarily stimulated with policy incentives such as favorable permitting processes, energy contracts, and network connections, and by providing favorable government loans to parties developing this crucial infrastructure. Strategic partners for this should be actively engaged through the AI establishment and partnership agenda[#15]. In exchange for this support, providers may be asked to offer Dutch startups and research institutions discounts on computational power or reserve a portion of their capacity for national priorities such as NADI[#12], a Dutch ELLIS Institute[#11], universities, and Dutch companies and startups.

5. **Invest massively in energy infrastructure to enable AI ambitions and economic growth.**

   While the global availability of chips was long the limiting factor for AI development, this bottleneck is now shifting to energy capacity. In the Netherlands, there have already been significant issues in recent years with the construction of business parks and industry due to the lack of grid capacity. This situation is at risk of escalating as AI adoption accelerates, the electrification of industry and mobility continues, and housing development demands more electricity. The solution does not lie in distributing scarce capacity between sectors, pitting AI, industry, and citizens against each other, but rather in creating sufficient capacity for all applications we need as a society.

   This requires an investment program of tens of billions of euros in high-voltage infrastructure, regional grids, and smart network solutions. These investments must be explicitly focused on renewable energy sources, where AI applications can help in optimizing energy distribution and balancing supply and demand. A crucial aspect of this is the accelerated training of technical personnel for grid operators, as the shortage of technicians and

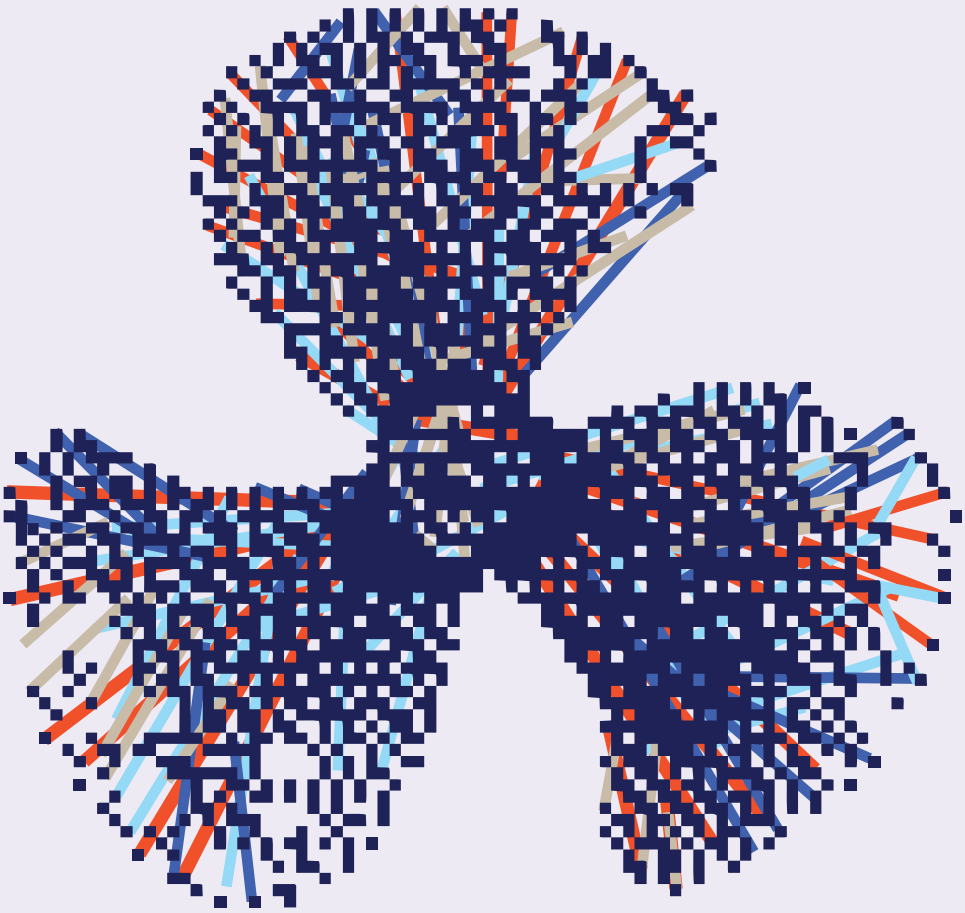
engineers is already hindering expansion plans. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate recently took a first step towards this goal by supporting an initiative by grid operators and contractors to train 5,000 additional technicians with a subsidy of €25 million. This effort must be continued and substantially scaled up to achieve the required 30,000 additional technicians by 2030.

2

Encourage adoption and development of AI

No matter how great the potential value of AI is, the technology only translates into prosperity when it is broadly and responsibly adopted by businesses, government, and education. However, the Netherlands is still among the countries where AI usage and AI literacy significantly lag behind compared to other innovative economies. Furthermore, a recent survey among Dutch organizations revealed that a lack of internal AI knowledge is one of the most frequently mentioned barriers to adoption, even among organizations that have already started with pilots.

To accelerate adoption, we must therefore invest in AI literacy and applied research, and ensure that businesses, the government, and education have the right conditions to use AI safely and effectively.



2.1 Adoption

Too few Dutch people know how AI works and what it could potentially mean for them. Due to a lack of application knowledge and sectoral coordination, AI in businesses remains stuck in pilot phases too often. To break this pattern, there must be massive investment in AI skills for every Dutch citizen, targeted adoption plans must be developed for important growth markets, and it must be ensured that AI is applied responsibly in government and education.

6. **Accelerate AI adoption in strategic industries by developing joint adoption plans and supporting them with public-private partnerships.**

   The speed at which companies integrate AI into their core processes greatly determines how future-proof our economy will remain. Due to our lag in adoption, it is therefore essential to quickly make significant advancements in AI adoption. That's why companies and knowledge institutions in key growth markets should come together to create joint AI adoption plans. The government should collaborate with them to help remove existing policy barriers and to allocate budgets to co-finance high-potential plans and research resulting from these initiatives.

   In these partnerships, it should be examined which AI applications create the most value, which bottlenecks need to be removed, and how conditions like data, compute, permits, and testing environments can best be set up. Companies can also collectively establish datasets, test new AI models in practical scenarios, and develop scenarios for how new AI-native companies would operate in their market, so that existing players establish a clear roadmap for AI adoption.

   In selecting the initial industries, alignment will be sought with the new industrial policy of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and full use will be made of the resources and partnership opportunities within the eleven priority domains of the European Apply AI Strategy. For the implementation, the government is making a programmatic budget of several hundred million euros available to fund part of the costs for these activities, including precompetitive investments, joint

infrastructure, and acceleration projects. In this way, a focused national AI commitment arises that creates conditions for a structural acceleration of AI adoption across all growth markets.

7. **Invest in AI literacy.**

   Everyone in the Netherlands must have access to basic knowledge on the way AI works, so they can understand the possibilities, limitations, and ethical considerations surrounding it. The government must therefore ensure that existing initiatives such as the *Nationale AI-Cursus* and the upcoming *Nationale AI Upskilling Strategy* are comprehensive, align with the European DigComp framework, and are widely available for free through schools, libraries, online platforms, and employers.

   Because offering these courses is not enough, AI training must be actively encouraged: employers need to consistently allocate time and training budgets and improve their learning culture, and the government should consider implementing personal learning budgets or other incentives to motivate people to follow relevant AI courses. Additionally, special attention should be given to AI literacy within the government and public roles. Therefore, policymakers, civil servants, educational staff, and politicians need to be upskilled soon, with the help of high-quality external programs where needed.

8. **The government must lead by example in the responsible use of AI.**

   Building on the Government-Wide Vision on Generative AI (Overheidsbrede Visie Generatieve AI) and the National Digitization Strategy (Nationale Digitaliseringsstrategie) , each major government organization should develop its own AI adoption plan that clarifies how AI can add value to their processes and services. The Secretary of State for AI[#31] should coordinate the harmonization of these plans and the exchange of knowledge. Additionally, invest in industry partnerships for the use of frontier AI within the government, following the example of recent collaborations between the German government and OpenAI and the Luxembourg government and the European AI provider Mistral. Where possible, preference should be given to European or Dutch providers, but to ensure that civil servants have safe access to the highest quality AI

models, collaboration with foreign parties should not be excluded. By working with European infrastructure providers and international model developers, the Netherlands can thus ensure both quality and sovereignty.

9. **Make the Netherlands a leader in the responsible use of AI in education.**

   AI must be responsibly integrated into classrooms from primary school to university. Teachers, administrators, and support staff need to be trained in the use, evaluation, and ethics of AI, so they can utilize the technology in a way that suits the development and learning processes of various age groups and convey this to their students. The Netherlands should thereby become a global exemplar of the safe and balanced use of AI in education~~, following the example of Estonia's AI Leap programme~~. Additionally, particularly in higher education, the curriculum must be carefully adjusted to the changing demand for labor due to the AI transition.

2.2 Development

Despite our top universities and research institutions, we lag behind in bringing our research to market. As a result, we miss opportunities to translate our groundbreaking research results into economic growth and societal progress. And although Dutch educational institutions are internationally recognized as sources of much AI talent, we lack large research institutions that can compete internationally to attract or retain top talent. Consequently, we end up training talent for foreign companies.

To position the Netherlands as a leader in AI, we must strengthen both fundamental and applied research and better facilitate valorization. This requires substantial investments in research, a targeted approach to high-risk R&D, and a smart use of public resources to enhance the broader innovation ecosystem.

10. **Stimulate technical, societal, and interdisciplinary AI research.**

    Allocate substantial research funds to establish new scientific AI research programs. These funds should provide space for technical, societal, and interdisciplinary AI projects. In addition, explicit funding

must be available for research into (AI) chip technologies and (energy-efficient) AI hardware, a domain where the Netherlands has a very strong starting position and that is crucial for future AI capacity. We should proactively make more use of existing European research resources in these fields as well.

11. **Support the establishment of a Dutch ELLIS Institute.**

    The Netherlands has dozens of research groups, labs, and knowledge institutions conducting AI research, but lacks a national AI research center that can serve as a European talent magnet. Within the European ELLIS network, which includes 42 labs and two flagship institutes, some of Europe's best researchers collaborate on fundamental AI research and knowledge exchange with industry. The Netherlands currently has only three regional ELLIS Units, but by establishing Europe's third ELLIS flagship institute, it can position itself as a European leader in AI research. The institute should strategically align itself within the AI landscape, including collaborating with existing Dutch structures such as ICAI and ELSA labs, to create synergies and avoid duplication.

    Furthermore, valorization must be an important aspect of the institute from the outset: research groups should be actively supported in conducting joint research with companies and creating spin-offs, so the institute not only strengthens the academic AI ecosystem but also the Dutch entrepreneurial ecosystem. Additionally, it must be ensured that the institute's setup provides researchers with sufficient high-quality compute to be able to compete with international top research centers. The government should financially support the establishment of such an institute to attract new international top talent.

12. **Use NADI as a catalyst for Dutch AI development and the Dutch AI ecosystem.**

    The Ministry of Economic Affairs is exploring the creation of a National Agency for Disruptive Innovation (NADI), intended to achieve disruptive breakthroughs through targeted high-risk R&D programs and problem-driven challenges, with teams from academia and industry competing and collaborating within

innovation challenges. This initiative, inspired by examples such as DARPA (US), IARPA (US), ARIA (UK), and SPRIND (Germany), should be continued and provided with a structural budget because of its potential to become a powerful engine for Dutch innovation and a springboard for breakthroughs in key technologies such as AI, on which NADI should actively focus from the start.

Therefore, NADI must have the right conditions: sufficient autonomy, entrepreneurial leadership, and agile execution that works with clear annual results and performance-oriented evaluations, allowing programs to quickly scale or be terminated if goals are not met. Therefore, NADI should use English as its working language, be open to international partners, and be led by program directors with scientific and entrepreneurial experience who are given the freedom and space to experiment and take risks.

13. **Expand and simplify the WBSO scheme for AI research and applications within companies.**

    The WBSO is the Dutch government's most important instrument for financially stimulating technological development and thus promoting innovation in the Netherlands. Currently, however, the development costs for many AI and machine learning activities fall outside the scheme because they are seen as applications of existing technology rather than innovative development work. At the same time, the evaluation process is often so complex that the administrative burden is high, and technical staff spend a lot of time substantiating applications. Therefore, the WBSO should be expanded to include this type of AI development work, and the available WBSO budget should grow significantly in the coming years with the increasing demand. Additionally, the administrative burden should be reduced so that innovative companies can spend more time on actual development work.

14. **Use the defense sector as a catalyst for the AI ecosystem with dual-use innovation.**

    The defense and national security sectors can be powerful drivers of innovation, particularly through the development of *dual-use* technologies that are applicable both within and outside of the defense domain. D-SII and STRAIIK-D already represent important

initiatives from Defense to encourage this, but the rising defense budget presents an opportunity to the Netherlands to further expand targeted investments in dual-use AI innovation in a way that strengthens both our national security and the broader innovation ecosystem. This requires a parallel investment in the internal digital and AI expertise within the Dutch military, so that the organization can act as a smart procurer.

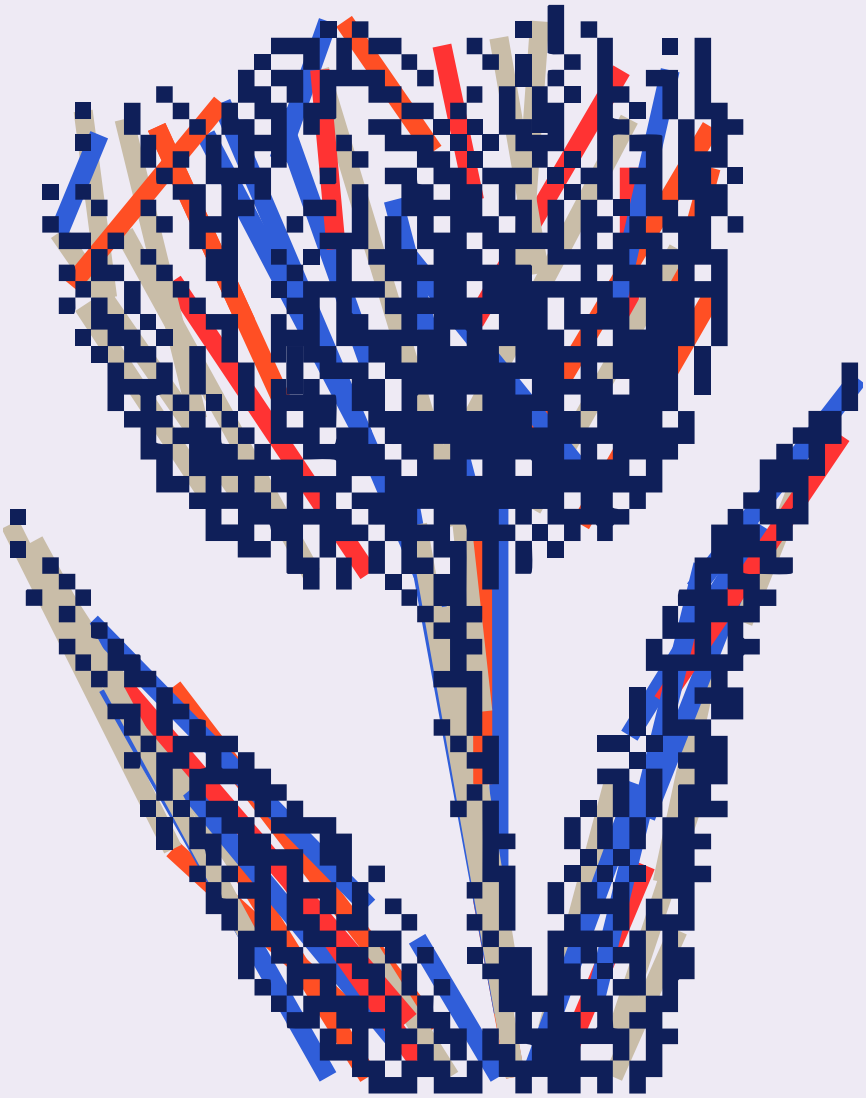
3

Conditions for an AI ecosystem

Among today's startups is tomorrow's ASML. However, this startup may leave to the US unnoticed. Of the promising companies established in the Netherlands, more than one-third plan to move abroad within two years. Several companies that invest heavily in the Dutch tech ecosystem have scaled back their expansion plans due to concerns about our business climate. Moreover, a lot of top talent is leaving for America because they miss the challenges here, and our economy has dropped from fourth to tenth place on the list of the world's most competitive economies in the past three years.

The root cause of this can be traced back to labor regulations that make it risky for companies to scale quickly, a lack of capital to grow, and regulations that hinder the testing and rollout of innovations.

The solution lies in offering more flexible employment contracts to people with top salaries, reducing the risks associated with prolonged staff illness for small businesses, attracting talent and foreign companies, freeing up venture capital, and adequately adjusting laws and regulations that hinder innovation.



3.1 Talent and ecosystem

Top talent is essential to building the necessary AI systems and applications. Unfortunately, a large portion of top talent is leaving for abroad. The global competition for AI talent is enormous. Top salaries, with individual researchers earning millions, are no longer exceptions. At the same time, many people are willing to accept slightly lower salaries than they would get paid abroad, provided that the challenges they get to work on are interesting, and they can do this in a good living environment. The Netherlands is seen as a very attractive country to live in, but it lacks the right companies to work for.

By creating an attractive ecosystem, following the examples of London, Zurich, and Paris, the Netherlands has the opportunity to retain our talent and attract foreign talent.

15. **Make strategic establishment deals to attract AI companies to the Netherlands.**

    Grant an existing government organization the mandate to set up an 'AI Landing & Investment Office' that positions the Netherlands as the preferred location for the European headquarters of AI and deep tech companies. This office combines marketing, dealmaking, and policy. Firstly, it must map out the entire Dutch AI value chain to identify its strong and weak links and translate this into a targeted establishment and partnership strategy: from chips, cloud, and data centers to software, applications, and export. Secondly, it can enter into framework agreements and *advance purchase agreements* with strategic players, and develop programs that allow foreign companies to establish themselves in the Netherlands in exchange for investments, knowledge sharing, and high-quality employment. The focus is on a limited number of companies that demonstrably add value to the existing Dutch ecosystem. Finally, it can offer companies a 'red carpet' to the Dutch and European market: a single integrated pathway for legal assessment, technical validation, and guidance towards AI Act compliance. Through predictable rules, swift procedures, and clear contact points for potential partners, the Netherlands thus becomes the most reliable gateway to the European internal market.

16. **Establish a specialized AI recruitment team to attract leading talent to the Netherlands.**

The Netherlands lacks a targeted approach to attract international top AI talent for universities, public AI institutes, government organizations, and strategic companies. Therefore, a specialized AI recruitment team should be established, modeled after the British example. *AI Opportunities Action Plan* and successful talent programs in countries like Singapore. This team is tasked with identifying and approaching talented AI researchers, developers, and entrepreneurs. It complements existing initiatives such as ITAG and Welcome to NL but focuses specifically on leading AI profiles and research teams. To this end, it can offer tailored solutions, such as an expedited visa process, practical support for relocation, and personal assistance in transitioning to the Netherlands. The team not only focuses on foreign talent but also explicitly aims to bring Dutch AI professionals who have moved abroad back to the Netherlands. A key part of the proposition is actively linking talent to strategic Dutch locations where groundbreaking AI projects are being developed, such as the National AI Impact Institute[#46], the ELLIS Institute[#11] NADI programs[#12], AI hubs, and frontier companies.

17. **Strengthen the AI talent concentration with an AI hub in Amsterdam.**

In other leading European AI ecosystems, such as London, Paris, and Zurich, AI companies, startups, and research labs are concentrated within one compact area. This proximity attracts international top talent and enhances knowledge exchange, collaboration, and innovation. Due to the fragmentation of the Dutch AI ecosystem, it is important that investments in this ecosystem preferably take place in Amsterdam, which already employs almost 40% of our AI talent. Additionally, the establishment of an Amsterdam equivalent of *Project Beethoven* should be considered, which is the project with targeted area development and investments that have been hugely accelerating the chip sector in the Eindhoven region. Furthermore, it is critical that the government and municipality structurally support one AI hub initiative, such as Techleap's, with financial resources, long-term certainty, and space to accommodate more startups, scale-ups, and AI teams. Additionally, facilitate that other ecosystem partners, such as AI

companies, AI campuses, startups, and research labs, can establish themselves in close proximity to the chosen hub, for example through project subsidies, area development, and permits. This will create a compact and internationally competitive cluster of AI talent.

18. **Provide long-term certainty about the Dutch expat scheme.**

    The expat scheme (previously known as the 30% ruling) is one of the Netherlands' most important tools to attract tech talent worldwide. The recent uncertainty regarding the continuation of this scheme directly harms the Dutch business climate, as many international top talents are actively reconsidering relocating to the Netherlands because of this uncertainty. Therefore, establish it for an extended period to offer stability to employers and international employees. Additionally, investigate the possibility of abolishing the WNT limitation within the scheme to attract and retain the absolute global elite in AI, engineering, and research.

19. **Introduce a separate salary and career path within the government to allow technical talent to advance within their organizations.**

    Currently, making a career within the government based on technical and specialist knowledge is not rewarded. Progression to senior roles is almost exclusively through management positions, but not everyone wants to manage staff. At the same time, the government also needs experienced technical specialists for knowledge retention and execution, but struggles to attract and retain these experts. As a result, expensive self-employed constructions and brokers are frequently used. With a separate salary path for specialist roles, the government can, among other things, bind more technical talent over the long term, as it becomes possible to get promoted to the highest scales based on substantive knowledge.

3.2 Capital

The Netherlands is one of the richest countries in the world, yet startups lack the capital to scale up. One of the main reasons for this is a lack of venture capital: money that is invested in a risky manner in innovative companies during their early growth stages, which is crucial for reaching

scale. The difference with abroad is significant: in the United States, there is six to eight times more venture capital than in the entire European Union. As a result, it is much easier for American startups to gather domestic capital, talent, and market share than for their European counterparts.

In the Netherlands, it is also difficult to find specialized investors willing to take high risks with large amounts of money. European pension funds invest significantly less in venture capital than American pension funds, and it is often challenging for startups to access public funds through subsidies or public tenders. The solution lies in exploring how more money from pension funds, European funds, and venture capitalists can consistently be directed towards innovation in the Netherlands.

20. **Co-invest in funds that make large startup investments.**

    Many startups indicate that direct government investments, where the government becomes a shareholder, are less attractive than capital from private VC funds. Moreover, national financing instruments mainly focus on early investments, while the largest funding gap occurs in later growth phases, where rounds of €50–€200 million are needed. To bridge this gap, the Netherlands should expand its commitment to European fund-of-funds initiatives such as DVI and ETCI, so that more capital becomes available for private VC and growth funds operating at this scale. Use existing EU instruments such as the European Innovation Council, InvestEU, and Apply AI as a leverage, and update the list of recognized funds annually. Ensure that a substantial part of these investments benefit Dutch companies.

21. **Enhance the impact of the Seed Capital scheme for early investment rounds.**

    For early (pre-)seed investment rounds, the Netherlands already has the Seed Capital scheme from RVO, which allows funds to invest in the earliest startup phases without the government stepping in as a shareholder. A recent evaluation shows that the scheme is effective, is expected to recoup the majority of the invested capital, and has realized a substantial capital injection of over €700 million. However, the Seed Capital scheme has an average annual budget of only €72 million, and the same report concludes that a larger budget would

have led to more strong funds and more successful early investment rounds. Therefore, investigate up to what amount the budget of the Seed Capital scheme should be expanded so that more qualitative pre-seed and seed funds can access capital, thereby aligning the Dutch investment level more closely with that abroad.

22. **Make it more attractive for pension funds to invest more in Dutch innovative growth capital.**

    Dutch pension funds manage over €1,800 billion, but currently invest only to a limited extent in growth funds that finance innovation in the Netherlands. Therefore, the government should explore together with pension funds potential adjustments, such as improved fund-of-funds structures, adjusted mandates, or European co-investment vehicles, that are needed so that more pension assets can responsibly flow into Dutch innovation.

23. **Establish an EU Desk to assist entrepreneurs in applying for EU funds and connecting with EU consortia.**

    The EU Desk supports securing European funding because this currently happens too infrequently. The desk offers assistance with ready-made forms and templates and can refer entrepreneurs to ongoing networks and consortia within the EU. It will become a recognizable point of contact, even for government officials themselves.

24. **Make investing by business angels and founders more attractive.**

    In the early phase, many (AI) startups are heavily reliant on so-called business angels: private investors, often with their own entrepreneurial experience, who are the first to dare to invest and bring not only capital but also mentorship, experience, and networks. A significant portion of the success of startup ecosystems, such as those in the United States, is due to the fact that successful entrepreneurs reinvest their returns in other startups. To encourage this, there are policies in the United Kingdom, France, and the United States that promote this reinvestment. Recently, the House of Representatives requested the cabinet to investigate a Dutch equivalent. This can be achieved by deferring taxes when capital is invested in Dutch startups within a short period.

25. **Provide market-rate loans to startups for infrastructure investments.**

    Deeptech startups often need to make large capital investments in physical infrastructure such as equipment, buildings, and factories. This physical infrastructure often serves as excellent collateral for loans, but there are almost no parties offering this type of loan. The loans that are available charge extremely high interest rates because startups are perceived as risky, without considering the collateral that retains its value, even if the startup fails. Through Invest-NL, loans can be offered as a form of non-dilutive capital for such investments.

3.3 Business climate

When companies truly want to grow, they must be able to scale up quickly. In many sectors, this is a race between players with similar products. Dutch companies face not only a shortage of growth capital but also regulations that hinder scaling up. Strict labor laws regarding dismissal and wage continuation during illness make it risky to quickly hire people with high salaries. Stock compensation is legally complex and fiscally unattractive, and when expanding their businesses within Europe, entrepreneurs become entangled in varying national regulations.

By making it easier to dismiss highly paid employees, sharing the financial risk of sick employees, and simplifying European establishment rules, the Netherlands can become more attractive for companies to stay and grow here.

26. **Focus on the rapid implementation of EU-INC.**

    Currently, there are 27 different legal forms within Europe, each with its own laws and regulations. For Dutch startups and scale-ups looking to raise capital or open offices in other member states, this means months of legal work and high costs. The new pan-European company form EU-INC offers a single uniform framework (a '28th regime') that accelerates cross-border entrepreneurship and drastically reduces legal and fiscal friction between member states. This is both a strategic opportunity for the European startup ecosystem and a chance for the Netherlands to become the

preferred location for companies looking to establish themselves in the EU. Therefore, ensure full commitment to EU-INC by preparing all relevant ministries and implementing organizations to be EU-INC-*ready* Additionally, it is essential that there is explicit advocacy within the European Council for EU-INC to become a regulation rather than a directive, so that a truly harmonized regime is established.

27. **Enable innovative companies to offer more flexible contracts to employees at the upper end of the labor market.**

    Our labor laws make scaling down teams, for example when innovation projects fail, significantly more difficult than abroad. This makes innovation in the Netherlands significantly riskier and much more expensive compared to other countries. As a result, companies are reluctant to hire staff for new opportunities or high-risk development projects, and research teams are not expanded, are relocated abroad, or are not built in the Netherlands at all. Additionally, this often involves employees with highly competitive salaries for whom the current labour market protections can even be counterproductive, as such employment shifts abroad.

    Therefore, innovative companies should be enabled to offer an employee earning above a high salary threshold (for example, €100,000) a contract form that can always be dissolved. These contracts require prior transparency, clear anti-abuse provisions, and a tailored, appropriate statutory transition compensation. This contract form should be available to be offered to employees of startups and scale-ups, and to employees in other companies who are, for instance, hired for innovative work that the company has an R&D declaration for.

28. **Establish a collective health insurance for employees of small organizations, such as startups and scale-ups.**

    In the Netherlands, employers have to continue paying wages for up to two years during an employee's illness, which poses a disproportionate risk for small companies and hinders their potential growth. This period is significantly longer than in many neighboring countries, making a reduction necessary to keep our entrepreneurial climate competitive. Recently, a motion in the House of

Representatives was passed to investigate how the second year of sick leave for small employers can be collectively financed. This initiative must be continued and expanded, with the payment period for small employers further shortened. After this period, for example, six months, a collective provision would fully take over the wage payments up to the usual two-year illness period, ensuring that employees remain fully protected and small companies can grow more easily.

29. **Introduce improved employee participation as soon as possible.**

    In the Netherlands, employee participation is fiscally much less attractive than abroad. This means that it's less appealing for companies to offer shares to their staff, making it significantly harder for many startups, where shares often comprise a major part of compensation, to attract top talent compared to abroad. This is one of the reasons why many (AI) startups prefer to expand outside the Netherlands. We can improve this situation in the Netherlands by taxing shares of employees in startups and scale-ups only upon sale or purchase, so employees no longer pay taxes on paper value. The same holds for certificates via the STAK arrangement. Furthermore, the tax rate should be aligned with capital gains tax, so that shares of investors are not treated differently than those of employees. Parts of these intentions have already been outlined in the government's voorjaarsnota (spring memorandum) of 2025, and it is essential for our competitive position to implement this as soon as possible.

30. **Improve the viability of university spin-outs.**

    Dutch research results reach the market too slowly, partly because universities often impose unfavorable conditions on spin-outs. Even the recently announced revised conditions are still significantly less advantageous for the spin-out compared to those offered by American, British, or Swiss universities. Therefore, the " deal-term principles" within universities should be revised again: universities, for instance, may hold a maximum of 5% of the shares in a spin-out and avoid mandatory revenue sharing or complex licensing terms. Instead, universities should receive substantially more budget to identify and support spin-outs more quickly. This way, we enhance

the investability of spin-outs, strengthen the knowledge-to-market chain, and create scalable growth in strategic technology areas.

3.4 Regulation and governance

Innovative companies often get stuck in legal uncertainty. For instance, where self-driving cars are already commonplace in various American and Chinese cities and reduce the number of traffic fatalities by 80%, in the Netherlands, there are only small-scale pilots in environments that are hardly a test for application in the rest of the country. Similarly, a Dutch company like Thuisbezorgd is not allowed to experiment here with delivery robots, and is forced to move these experiments to Zurich. Smaller companies also miss out on public procurement opportunities, despite this being a strong tool to stimulate our innovative companies.

The problem is the lack of central coordination. Responsibility for AI development is fragmented across departments and governments without a political point of contact. Regulation is delaying innovation instead of facilitating it. Additionally, there is no room for experimentation with breakthroughs in the physical domain.

This requires decisive governance. Appoint a State Secretary for AI and establish a National AI Strategy Agency that consolidates talent, capital, and infrastructure. Reform the procurement strategy. Create special economic zones for physical innovation. And develop a clear definition of startups so that policies can be applied effectively.

31. **Appoint a State Secretary for AI within the Ministry of Economic Affairs.**

    This State Secretary would be responsible for the implementation of this National AI Delta Plan and for coordinating AI policy between departments. Additionally, the State Secretary maintains direct contacts with, among others, the European European AI Board. This gives the Netherlands a clear political point of contact and governance over the development and application of AI, emphasizing the strategic importance of this technology for our society.

32. **Establish a National Agency for AI Strategy to ensure our strategic autonomy in AI.**

The Netherlands must, following the example of the British Sovereign AI Unit, establish a national Agency for AI Strategy responsible for strengthening the Dutch position in the global AI stack: ecosystem development, talent, data, infrastructure, security, and international partnerships. This agency acts as the execution body for a substantial portion of this Delta Plan and falls under the State Secretary for AI[#31], who will further develop its precise structuring, governance, and budget.

The agency, among other things, can develop and invest in AI development and adoption plans together with Dutch consortia in strategic growth markets[#6]. Furthermore, the agency ensures sovereign AI infrastructure, including AI computing zones[#3], international partnerships, and the development and implementation of the AI Computing Power Plan[#1]. The agency is also tasked with collecting strategically valuable public datasets and making them accessible while acting as a data broker within the European Data Spaces, facilitating innovation and research.

To strengthen the Dutch AI ecosystem, the agency actively recruits top talent and frontier researchers in close collaboration with universities, NADI[#12], the ELLIS Institute[#11] , and the regional AI hubs[#16]. Simultaneously, the agency works closely with security and intelligence services to proactively identify AI risks and protect crucial digital capabilities. It also forms strategic partnerships with frontier AI companies to bring them to the Netherlands[#15]. Additionally, the agency annually organizes the National AI Summit[#33] and acts as a director of strategic projects that bring together public and private parties.

33. **Organize an annual National AI Summit to accelerate progress, collaboration, and implementation of the AI strategy.**

Introduce an annual AI summit under the auspices of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, where the most ambitious Dutch AI initiatives can be showcased, new projects can be announced, and the progress of previous commitments can be presented. This summit also provides an opportunity for the AI Impact Institute[#46] to present their annual

State of AI in the Netherlands report. By structurally organizing this meeting place, a platform is created where businesses, government, academia, and other sectors gain better insight into each other's challenges and priorities, and are encouraged to actively take responsibility for progress and results in the joint approach to AI issues.

34. **Create a competitive and results-oriented procurement strategy for the government to give innovative companies better access to government contracts.**

    The Dutch government spends €113.6 billion annually on procurement, but often only large companies qualify for any contracts. Reforming our procurement strategy would not only create opportunities for new businesses, but it could also save us a substantial amount of money: due to their new procurement strategy, the United Kingdom has hired over 40 times more SMEs and saved more than £4.9 billion in a single year in 2024. The procurement strategy of the Dutch government needs to be updated, actively focusing on increased access for small companies like startups. In this new strategy, policies regarding the procurement of digital services and products should become as centralized as possible, procurement processes should be simplified, and framework agreements should be opened up to the entire market.

35. **Establish a special economic zone for innovation in the physical domain.**

    Innovations in the physical domain, such as self-driving cars, can improve traffic safety, give back urban spaces to pedestrians and cyclists, and make mobility available day and night for people who currently cannot travel independently. This potential can only flourish if there is room to safely test systems like autonomous buses, ships, drones, and delivery robots in realistic conditions. In the Netherlands, this is currently only possible through complex exemptions and small-scale, route-bound pilots. In the United States and China, several large cities and regions have implemented innovation-friendly rules that have significantly accelerated developments in autonomous mobility. In the Netherlands, there are already successful regulatory relaxation initiatives like the Green

Village in Delft for climate innovation, but comparable large-scale zones for AI-relevant technologies such as autonomous vehicles and robotics are still lacking.

Therefore, the Netherlands must designate one or more special economic zones, such as a city or region, where companies and governments can safely experiment with innovations in the physical domain with temporary deviations from existing laws and regulations. Make it legally possible to apply area-specific exemptions in these zones so that breakthroughs can occur more quickly, safely, and in a better-controlled manner. Establish a structural feedback loop in which lessons from the zones are systematically translated into national regulations, allowing successful innovations to be responsibly scaled up.

36. **Create a single office within the government that serves as a point of contact for innovative companies.**

    Establish an office within the government for innovative companies that encounter outdated or insufficiently suitable regulations. This office has the mandate and a strong network to quickly identify and resolve bottlenecks, and it communicates insights back to policy. This creates a clear point of contact that accelerates innovation and makes regulations more future-proof.

37. **Develop an appropriate legal definition of startups and scale-ups as a foundation for future AI and innovation policy.**

    Startups and scale-ups are unique business forms: they operate with high risks, grow rapidly and dynamically, and can create exceptional economic and societal value. A clear and applicable definition allows policy and instruments to be specifically targeted at their needs, instead of generic measures that are less effective and more costly. ongoing exploration within the Ministry of Economic Affairs must therefore be continued and structurally applied in relevant regulations, resulting in a framework that does not unnecessarily exclude innovative and fast-growing companies, but remains feasible and enforceable. This definition must take into account sectoral differences in capital intensity, time-to-market, and growth patterns. Deep-tech and hardware companies often experience years-long development phases with little revenue and

high R&D costs, while SaaS companies can rapidly scale with limited physical assets. A usable definition therefore operates with multiple dimensions (such as age, growth rates, R&D intensity, and degree of innovation) and with sector-dependent bandwidths, ensuring that companies do not fall out of crucial schemes due to arbitrary revenue or FTE thresholds.

38. **Use the establishment of a Dutch AI *regulatory sandbox* as a strategic instrument to accelerate the adoption of responsible AI.**

    Under the European AI Act, each EU member state must establish a legal experimental space ('regulatory sandbox') for AI applications, or join that of another EU country. For the Netherlands, it is important to have its own sandbox to stimulate domestic innovation, as this provides significant opportunities to help companies comply with the new legislation early on. Therefore, resources should be made available to support and expedite the proposal by the Autoriteit Persoonsgegevens (the Dutch data protection authority) and the Rijksinspectie Digitale Infrastructuur (Authority for Digital Infrastructure) for the establishment of a national regulatory sandbox.

3.5 International collaboration

Collaboration with other countries is essential for a successful Dutch AI strategy. AI development requires investments in computing power, talent, and infrastructure that no single European country can make on its own in the short term. In areas such as frontier model development, compute infrastructure, and international AI oversight, efforts must be joined with other EU countries and partners like Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

The Netherlands must therefore, among other things, take the lead in European coordination, join the European Frontier AI Initiative, and profile itself internationally on specific AI themes.

39. **Develop integrated foreign policy on AI.**

    Design a cohesive foreign AI strategy with two pillars: strengthening the EU position and partnerships outside the EU. Establish an

interdepartmental coordination structure. Include AI diplomacy, the development of international standards, and participation in the EU Global Gateway in the policy.

40. Join the European Frontier AI Initiative.

In 2026, the new European Frontier AI Initiative by Germany, France, and the European Commission will develop a public-private initiative that supports the strongest European AI teams with an environment for frontier model development. In the first quarter of 2026, the Netherlands should engage in discussions to explore joining and assess how the final setup aligns with Dutch strategic principles. In this context, the Netherlands can explore how our researchers, companies, and knowledge institutions can participate structurally, for example, through financial contributions or by offering and supporting locations in the Netherlands for establishment. Furthermore, the Netherlands should actively involve international partners with whom we can strategically collaborate in the field of AI and computing power, such as the United Kingdom and Canada.

41. Profile the Netherlands internationally on chosen AI themes.

Select one or two domains where there is worldwide demand for direction and build a recognizable Dutch profile, similar to the British focus on AI Safety. Suitable themes for the Netherlands are, for example, *global compute governance*, where we can play an important and credible role thanks to our strong knowledge base and chip sector, and the responsible use of AI in the military domain, a topic on the Netherlands has previously profiled itself in cooperation with South Korea. It is essential that this societally relevant international profiling is explicitly used to strengthen the Dutch industry and competitive position.

42. Strengthen AI capacity at Dutch embassies in key countries.

Determine in which key countries, both within and outside the EU, the Netherlands requires AI expertise, and enhance the capacity there to make the Dutch AI offerings known, identify opportunities, actively support companies, and engage in acquisitions to reinforce the Dutch AI ecosystem. Consider countries such as the United States, China, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Finland, Switzerland, Singapore, and

Taiwan. Train diplomats in AI knowledge and international technology politics and appoint an international envoy for AI. Coordinate this effort with the European External Action Service, so you can act flexibly when necessary and exert more influence when desired.

43. Lead in European AI coordination and investments.

To pool resources around common priorities and to prevent duplication among multiple member states, the Netherlands should take the lead in aligning AI investments within the EU. Establish a European coordination agenda with the Benelux, France, Germany, and Italy, and use the proposed *Important Project of Common European Interest* for AI (IPCEI-AI) as a framework to consolidate joint European investments. The Netherlands must strategically position itself in this initiative (currently led by Germany) as a core partner, so that Dutch companies, knowledge institutions, and public organizations play a central role in shaping the future European AI ecosystem.

4

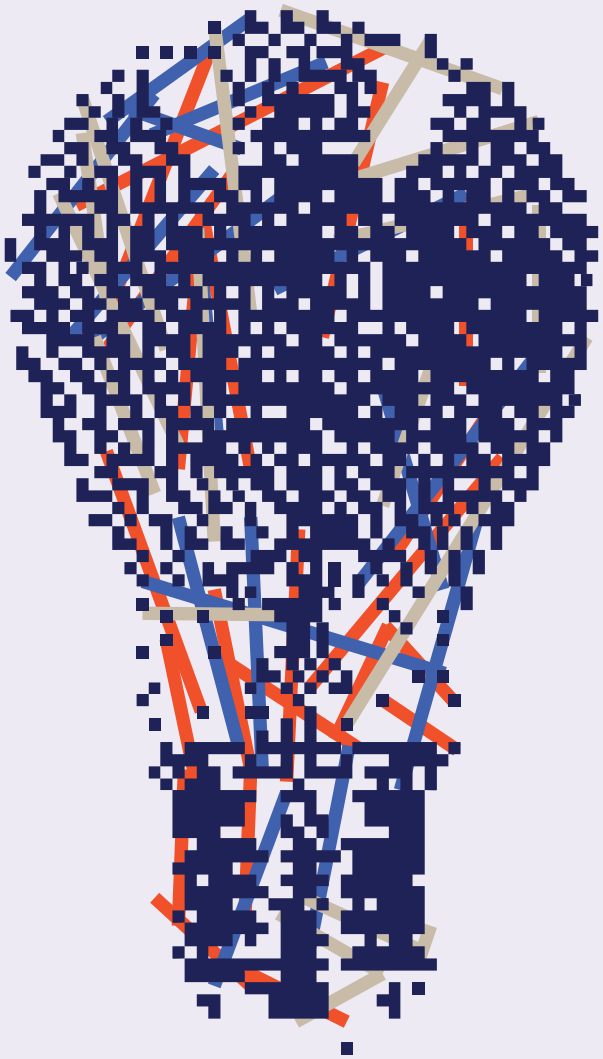
Control over AI

AI is drastically changing the way we work, learn, and live. These changes are happening so quickly, and across so many sectors at once, that many people feel overwhelmed. Additionally, when AI is employed in crucial domains, from healthcare and education to banking and government, citizens rightly ask questions: who is responsible, where can I voice my concerns, and is my humanity still being recognized?

Without deliberate guidance, a new form of inequality threatens to arise: a growing gap between people who can take advantage of AI because they have access, time, language skills, and digital literacy, and those who become more dependent on systems that are increasingly complex and less approachable. They fall behind not because they lack willingness or ability, but because the world around them is changing faster than most people can reasonably keep up with.

The prevalent skepticism towards AI in the Netherlands is therefore not an irrational fear. It is a genuine concern about work, livelihood security, human dignity, and a society that could become imbalanced if access to technological advancement is unequally distributed.

We must therefore become resilient and collectively gain and maintain control over the AI transition. This begins with the citizen: with fair and accessible information, with genuine input into how AI is shaped, with systems that strengthen our democratic values, and with policies that



ensure the benefits of AI are widely and fairly distributed. Not just to those already ahead, but to everyone.

4.1 An honest narrative

44. Make an AI awareness campaign part of AI literacy.

In addition to ensuring AI literacy ('how does AI work?'), it is also important to inform citizens about the impact of AI. This includes realistic scenarios for work, healthcare, and education, information on development and retraining, and clarity on where people can turn regarding civil rights and the input citizens have. The government should launch a large-scale, ongoing public campaign in 2026 that not only focuses on abstract opportunities and risks but provides concrete tools for understanding the impact on daily life. It is a national campaign, implemented locally through channels such as libraries.

45. Facilitate a structured and local public debate.

Building on the awareness campaign, the government facilitates a structured public debate on AI through tools like regional debates, citizen dialogues, and local forums. In 2026, a citizen dialogue on the impact of AI on their personal lives will take place in every province.

4.2 Know what's happening

To be able to guide effectively, we must continuously measure the societal and economic impact of AI. We need a national "dashboard" that looks beyond just economic growth and warns us of undesirable societal impacts.

46. Establish a National AI Impact Institute.

To better equip the government and society for the AI transition, the establishment of a new, independent National AI Impact Institute is necessary. This institute brings together policymakers, economists, sociologists, psychologists, and technical AI expertise to research and advise on the societal, economic, and security consequences

of AI. It focuses on, among other things, adoption speed and quality, public trust, inequality in opportunities, psychological well-being, democratic values, and broader information dissemination. In addition to analyzing the current situation, the institute also develops future scenarios that consider various speeds and directions of AI development.

The institute will be part of an international network of public AI institutes that exchange knowledge and takes the British AI Security Institute as an example for effective setup, operation, and organizational culture. An explorer will work out the optimal structure, scope, and collaborations in the first half of 2026. It must be ensured that the institute collaborates with and complements existing European initiatives such as the EU AI Office. Key societal tasks include the quarterly collection and analysis of signals on acute societal effects and the annual publication of a *State of AI in the Netherlands* report. With this, the institute reports to parliament, the AI Council[#48] and the cabinet. The technical focus is on developing standards and test methods that simplify AI Act compliance and accelerate AI adoption in society.

47. Focus on AI and existential security.

AI changes not only the amount of work available, but also how work is organized, which skills become central, and how economic value is distributed. This directly touches on the core tasks of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and signals from the Social and Economic Council (SER), which have long highlighted the necessity of a predictable labor market transition. Therefore, the National AI Impact Institute is tasked with systematically monitoring the labor market and distribution effects of AI: from sectoral and regional shifts to the way work processes themselves change and which groups benefit or suffer from them. Based on this, the institute develops policy options that ensure a manageable, future-proof transition for companies, regions, and workers.

48. Establish an AI Council.

As proposed in the motion Kathman-Six Dijkstra an AI Council must be established. This council should consist of a multidisciplinary

group of experts from business, academia, and civil society. The council provides concrete advice on adoption and impact mitigation.

4.3 Democracy and AI

AI is developing at a pace that our democratic institutions can barely keep up with. This creates a dual reality: on one hand, AI-driven disinformation and disruption of processes can put democracy under pressure. On the other hand, AI offers possibilities to make decision-making faster, more transparent, and more responsive. Gaining control therefore means both mitigating the risks and seizing the opportunities.

49. Protect democratic processes against AI manipulation.

The government must actively counter AI-driven influence and disruption. This requires continuous monitoring of manipulated AI content during elections, supported by rapid and clear response mechanisms. Additionally, democratic processes such as consultations and public participation rounds need to be fortified against AI-generated mass requests intended to overwhelm systems, such as the automatic submission of large numbers of objections or other forms of obstruction. A key component of this defense is the use of international standards (such as C2PA) to make the origin and authenticity of digital media verifiable. Where possible, seek collaboration with other European countries.

50. Establish a citizen panel infrastructure for AI decision-making.

The speed and impact of AI exceed what regular democratic processes can handle alone. Therefore, a fixed, institutional infrastructure is needed in which representative groups of citizens are systematically involved in preparing major choices about AI: from public AI infrastructure to data use and societal preconditions. Ideally, citizen panels work with 100–200 randomly selected participants, ensuring that the diversity within society is sufficiently reflected. Independent experts provide factual explanations, scenarios, and risk assessments, but the judgment lies with the citizens themselves.

This infrastructure should focus on the careful gathering,

comparison, and weighing of diverse perspectives so that decisions are widely supported and democratically legitimized. Build upon international examples such as vTaiwan in Taiwan, citizen panels both domestically and abroad, and tools like Pol.is, Stanford Deliberative Democracy Lab, Dembrane, and Populytics. Initiate a citizen panel in 2026 on a specific AI theme to anchor this approach.

4.4 The importance of media

A strong, diverse, and economically healthy media landscape is a cornerstone of democracy. At the same time, media companies, creators, and cultural institutions are also producers of high-quality, verified Dutch (language) data. This data is used as a source for the development of AI models, ensuring they remain up-to-date.

The government must therefore create the conditions for a sustainable, market-driven data market. The focus here is on creating a workable model for AI access to current media sources to ensure both the revenue model of media and the quality of AI responses.

51. Support a licensing model for the use of media by AI.

The Netherlands should take the initiative to facilitate the establishment of a collective, sector-run licensing organization, inspired by the model used by Buma/Stemra (the agency responsible for music royalties in the Netherlands). This entity, set up by the media parties and cultural institutions themselves, reduces transaction costs and strengthens the collective bargaining position. The role of the government is not to build an infrastructure itself, but to stimulate and position this private marketplace as a pragmatic prototype for the rest of Europe. From the beginning, this Dutch model should be designed to align with European enforcement frameworks (such as the Digital Services Act) and should seek active coordination with counterpart organizations in other member states.

52. Make public data heritage accessible and usable.

The Netherlands possesses a unique public data treasure within the archives of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Beeld & Geluid, and other

cultural institutions. This data has high inherent value but is often difficult to access for modern research and applications. The government should ensure the sustainable unlocking of this heritage. This program funds the development of specialized, high-quality tools (e.g., for reading old manuscripts or understanding regional dialects) through a federative infrastructure where the institutions themselves retain control. This unlocked data serves as an essential, reliable source for public tasks such as education, science, and journalism, and can become available for AI developers through licensing.

Epilogue: A reflection on the future

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Introduction

Ten years ago, we were on the brink of losing control. It became clear that AI would have a significant impact on the economy and society without the Netherlands having any leverage over it. Our AI adoption was low, top talent was moving abroad, and we were entirely reliant on American and Chinese tech companies.

Now, after ten years, we can look back and conclude that strategic choices and bold investments have turned the situation around. We have not become the largest AI power, but we have proven that a small country with focus and ambition can play a leading role, thereby maintaining control over its own future. This is a brief reflection on the path we have taken.

Digital Infrastructure and Sovereignty

- **Energy Infrastructure and AI Computing Zones**: In 2025, the Dutch energy grid was a major bottleneck for our AI ambitions. Data centers were waiting years for grid connections. By massively investing in energy infrastructure and innovative solutions, we have resolved the energy issue. We established three AI computing zones with streamlined permit processes and direct connections to offshore wind farms. Today, these data

centers provide 80% of our computing power needs, without any CO2 emissions.

- **Sovereign government AI** In 2025, the Dutch government was entirely dependent on foreign AI platforms and struggled to attract top technical talent. With the establishment of the National Agency for AI Strategy, which decided to execute all complex projects internally rather than outsourcing, investments in public AI infrastructure, and the introduction of a separate career path for AI specialists, top talent was attracted by the challenge. Today, the Dutch government's AI runs on servers in the Netherlands, managed by a Dutch entity. The Ministry of the Interior now has one of the strongest technical teams in Europe. "The funny thing is that no one talks about it anymore," laughs Ms. Gerda P. Uilenbroek, chief data officer at the Ministry of the Interior. "In 2025 this was science fiction, now it is as natural as our drinking water being clean."

Adoption and AI Development

- **ICAI labs as a bridge between science and practice**: In 2025, the Netherlands had 55 ICAI labs (Innovation Center for AI), but AI adoption in businesses lagged behind. The gap between academic research and business practice was significant. We expanded the ICAI network to more than 120 labs and 4 Units over 3 years and developed joint AI adoption plans with priority sectors. The results are evident: the ICAI Logistics Lab developed an AI system that made container flows in the Port of Rotterdam more than a third more efficient and is now standard in dozens of European ports. In healthcare, nurses spend much less time on administration. "The ICAI model works because our researchers work three days a week in the hospital, with real data, real patients, real problems,"
- **NADI: Moonshot Innovations**: In 2025, the Netherlands had no mechanism to finance high-risk projects. We established the National Agency for Disruptive Innovation, where an interdisciplinary team received a substantial budget and the freedom to experiment and fail. The first public setbacks, such as the first agricultural robot that exploded during a demonstration,

led to parliamentary questions. However, over time we learned to applaud each explosion because it was a sign that we were ambitious enough. NADI was then at the forefront of various successes, such as the NADI Defense AI Program and the 'Master Program,' where instead of a thesis, students write a NADI proposal. Thus, NADI taught an entire generation of students to think big.

- **Dutch ELLIS Institute**: In 2025, Dutch AI talent was scattered across dozens of universities. With substantial public funding and a radical focus on valorization, the Netherlands ELLIS Institute in Amsterdam became Europe's third flagship institute in 2026. It immediately attracted international talent and produced dozens of successful spin-outs. In collaboration with other European AI Labs, the first GPT-EU was trained in 2028, spread across the European Gigafactory network.

Talent, Capital and Ecosystem

- **Amsterdam AI Hub**: In 2025, the Dutch AI ecosystem was fragmented across the country. Startups had difficulty finding the right people or collaborating with researchers. We strategically chose to concentrate AI investments in Amsterdam. Now, around the Rembrandt Halls and the Science Park, there are hundreds of AI companies. Amsterdam is, after London and Paris, the third largest tech hub in Europe. "There are at least 365 meetups per year, and every weekend several hackathons from which new startups emerge," says Constantijn van Oranje, Envoy of Techleap.
- **Expat Scheme**: In 2025, the expat scheme was under political pressure and international talent had reservations about settling in the Netherlands. By securing the scheme for a longer period, it became easier for companies to attract talent. The number of international AI talents coming to the Netherlands doubled.
- **Capital Market** Dutch startups seeking growth capital found it scarcely available within the country's borders for a long time. In the US, comparable companies received on average five times as much funding, allowing them to scale up much more quickly. As a result, many promising scale-ups moved abroad or were acquired

early in their development, before they could realize their full potential. That picture has dramatically changed. Through new arrangements that freed up more capital, including a substantial increase in pension funds invested in innovation, there have been more IPOs last year than in the entire period from 2015–2025. At these public offerings, thousands of employees became millionaires thanks to their stock options. Hundreds of them have since started their own companies, and most are actively investing in other startups.

Breakthroughs in Sectors and Companies

- **Almere as a testing ground for autonomous mobility** Testing autonomous vehicles in 2025 was limited to small-scale pilots with complex exemption procedures. By designating Almere as a special economic zone with area-specific exemptions, we were able to experiment on a large scale. From 2029 onwards, only self-driving vehicles were allowed to operate in the center of Almere. The number of traffic accidents decreased by more than ninety percent, and soon parking spaces were replaced by dozens of playgrounds and parks. Now, manual driving has become a hobby, and self-driving cars are only not allowed on Pampus.
- **Monumental: Robotics in Construction**: Already in 2025, Monumental was clearly one of the startups with the most potential, and thanks to a major defense contract for building walls and barracks, they were able to scale up even faster. Today, Monumental robots are used in 24 different countries to build millions of homes. The bricklayers of that time are now foremen leading robot teams.
- **General Intuition: Robotics Datasets** In 2025, robots struggled with navigation. Thanks to the vast trove of game data from General Intuition, it became possible to train world models for robots. Robots now assist on Dutch farms, in our military, in hospitals, and in an increasing number of households. A surprising effect is that, as robots took over much of the household work, a more equal distribution of other work between partners has emerged. "Robots have not completed

emancipation," says sociologist Dr. Rob Otto, "but they have reduced structural inequality." Additionally, thanks to the ability to offer top salaries with flexible contracts, General Intuition decided to build a large team in the Netherlands.

Social Embedding and Democratic Control

- **AI Impact Institute and Early Warning**: In 2025, there was no systematic monitoring of the societal impact of AI. This changed with the establishment of the National AI Impact Institute as an independent knowledge center with multidisciplinary teams. The institute publishes the State of AI in the Netherlands report annually and provides timely warnings of impending issues. For instance, when it became evident that AI adoption in healthcare disproportionately affected workers without higher education, it led to a large retraining program that assisted tens of thousands of healthcare workers. "We are not an early warning system for delay," says director Dr. Ingrid Tuut. "We warn to adjust. That's the difference between a transition and a disaster."
- **Citizen Assemblies for Democratic Embedding**: In 2025, AI decision-making was predominantly top-down, without structural involvement of citizens. Regular democratic processes couldn't keep up with the pace. With the establishment of a structural citizen assembly infrastructure, several assemblies are now organized each year where citizens can participate in decision-making on pressing issues. For instance, the Citizen Assembly on AI in Education recommended that schools should also be required to incorporate 'pen-on-paper' moments alongside AI usage. This recommendation was adopted in national policy. "What moved me the most," says participant Oskar Poeterel, "is that we were taken seriously. Our voices mattered. That's how democracy should be."
- **Licensing model for content and media creators**: In 2025, media creators were not compensated when their work was used to train AI models, or when an AI quoted from their work. AI companies quickly began competing with traditional media. The Dutch media landscape came under pressure. Through the development of a collective licensing model based on the

Buma/Stemra model, the 'AI Content Bureau' now ensures fair compensation. For media parties, this means a new source of income. For AI companies, it means easy access to high-quality Dutch content. "It is not perfect," says Karel Rant, the CEO of the AI Content Bureau, "but it is workable. And it is fair. That's what matters."

Predictions from the Past

We also regularly identified opportunities for the Netherlands. *State of AI in the Netherlands* report from 2026

Pre-competitive datasets The Health Consortium, consisting of hospitals, universities, and biotech companies, previously made a high-quality dataset available. This dataset led to new insights into genetic disorders for which medicines can now be developed. The same consortium is now exploring the next step: closed-loop automated laboratories where AI systems independently design, conduct, and analyze experiments. These labs combine the earlier datasets with real-time experimental data, whereby AI not only discovers patterns but also formulates and directly tests new hypotheses.

Hardware Through our semiconductor ecosystem with ASML, NXP, and Philips, we have a unique position in the global AI hardware supply chain, and Dutch startups like Axelera AI and Innatera are developing AI accelerators that make calculations ten to a hundred times more energy-efficient than traditional GPUs. This is crucial as data centers worldwide are reaching energy limits. Alternative technologies like photonic chips, which compute with light instead of electricity, are also gaining more attention. A hardware breakthrough in one of these domains could challenge the current GPU dominance. For the Netherlands, this means not only lower AI costs but, more importantly, a strengthening of our position in the critical chip industry.

Edge AI: The future of AI is not only unfolding in gigantic data centers. With fifty billion connected devices worldwide generating more than ninety zettabytes of data, a large portion of AI computing is shifting to the edge: to devices, factories, vehicles, and urban infrastructure. Edge AI

offers not only shorter response times but also fundamental benefits for privacy (sensitive data remains local) and energy efficiency (no constant data transfer to central servers). The Netherlands can set standards here by combining our expertise in energy-efficient hardware with innovative decentralized AI architectures. This aligns perfectly with European values regarding data privacy and the global necessity to drastically reduce AI energy consumption.

Lessons and Reflection

Looking back over the past ten years, several lessons stand out:

Focus works. We chose our strengths and fully invested in them: chips, logistics, healthcare, agriculture, biotech, energy, and climate.

Thinking long term pays off. The investments made in 2026 seemed enormous at the time, but they were crucial to creating momentum.

Failure is part of the process. NADI taught us that spectacular failures are acceptable if you also achieve spectacular successes.

Democratic control helps. The citizen assemblies, independent oversight, and transparent decision-making did not slow down the transition but instead created more support.

Together we are stronger. The cooperation between government, business, science, and citizens was indispensable.

The Netherlands is not an AI superpower in 2035. But we do show that you can embrace AI without losing your values. That you can be economically successful without losing human contact. That you can be innovative without becoming reckless.

We have proven that a small country can think big.

The work is not finished. AI is still evolving rapidly. New challenges are emerging. But we now know that we can handle it. Because we have already done it.

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The design of this strategy and our house style are provided by Verve.

At the same time, this document is not an endpoint. It is the start of a broader conversation. We are opening up the strategy to public feedback with curiosity. We explicitly invite people to share suggestions, additions, or criticism through the form below. We believe that the AI transition can only succeed if we shape it together: learning and as a collective.