



Universität
Münster



The Münster
DIALOGUES

GERMAN–DUTCH YOUTH CONSULTATIONS

**BOOTSTRAPPING EUROPEAN SECURITY
AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIC AUTONOMY:
DUTCH AND GERMAN PERSPECTIVES**

BERLIN, 5–6 MARCH 2026

Including:
Youth Agenda for
the Future
European Security
Architecture



Organised by:



DGAP

planpolitik



› Jacco Pekelder, Hester Somsen, Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut, Linn Selle

CONTACT

Jacco Pekelder
e-mail: jacco.pekelder@uni-muenster.de

PHOTOS

Anita Back (www.anitaback.de)

LAYOUT

Tim Mäkelburg (www.blijsatz.de)

PUBLISHER

Zentrum für Niederlande-Studien
Alter Steinweg 6/7
D-48143 Münster

phone: +49 251 83-28511
e-mail: zns@uni-muenster.de

© 2026 Zentrum für Niederlande Studien

SUPPORTED BY

NL **Niederlande**



Auswärtiges Amt

REMONDIS®

WORKING FOR THE FUTURE

FOREWORD

Dear reader,

On a sunny day in March 2026, a group of students from Germany and the Netherlands came together in the airy Botschaftsviertel in Berlin-Tiergarten to discuss one of the defining questions of our time. This question felt more urgent than ever, as missile attacks struck EU-member state Cyprus and a blockade of the strait of Hormuz once again showed European dependency on foreign energy-sources. The German-Dutch Youth Consultations, held on 4–5 March 2026, followed The Münster Dialogues #2, a day-long exchange at which a diverse group of experts portrayed their views on European security. The Youth Consultations brought together students from *Young DGAP* and the *Germany Institute of the University of Amsterdam (DIA)* as well as students from the binational European Studies programme of *Radboud University Nijmegen* and the University of Münster's *ZNS Centre for Dutch Studies*. In a full day of dialogue

tables these young European citizens formulated concrete policy-solutions for four pre-identified domains: defense, economy, society and institutions. This publication is a result of this dialogue.

The solution-based approach of the consultations, and the many promising proposals they produced, has for us also underlined the necessity of reflecting in a more thorough way on the fundamental issues we discussed. It inspired us to make further reflections on the European Project: what kind of Europe do we want? Which values lay at its heart? And – as became clear during our talks – what do we actually mean when we speak about Europe? By engaging these fundamental questions, we might discover a roadmap for Europe's survival in an age of geopolitical extremes.

When looking at the recommendations presented in this booklet it becomes clear how important it is to reflect on Europe and on its values. These pro-

› Participants during the drafting of the “German-Dutch Youth Conference”





› *Coffee-table discussions on Dutch and German perspectives on European security and economic strategy*

posals all find their legitimization in the need to defend the European way of life, based on certain European values and a supposed European identity. Still, considering the vast differences between social classes and regions in Germany and the Netherlands alone, can we really speak of a single European way of life? The notion of European values remains open to interpretation. Is this the heritage of the Declaration of the Universal Rights of Man? Is it the result of a free and liberal society in which each individual can live the way they want? Or is this the more cultural heritage of a ‘Christian’ occident? Or, for the economic and administrative elite, is it a Single Market, dedicated to the proliferation of free trade and neoliberalism throughout the continent? These visions do not have to be mutually exclusive, yet only through open dialogue is it possible to reconcile the vast differences of European identities into a joint and secure European home.

We admire the organizers for taking on the challenge of bringing German and Dutch youth together to reflect on the radically changed geopolitical landscape, as well as on the complex political, eco-

nomic, and above all, emotional implications of vehement change. Additionally, the effects of the climate crises only compound these geopolitical complexities, and their impact on matters of finance and migration. We can only commend The Münster Dialogues for providing a space in which the new generation of Europeans can freely discuss their future. In doing so, they help to return a sense of agency to a generation that has too often been taught to fear the future rather than shape it. The most important output of these consultations therefore is not this booklet, but the dialogue itself. Politicians can make the compromises but let us do the dreaming.

16 April 2026,

ROBIN BARTELS, LAURENZ BUTZKE, MATTHIJS DAMSTEEG, JAN-DOUWE DELICAT, LEONARDO DIMEO, VINCENT VAN EE, LARA FORESTIERI, FAYE HAGENDORN, FABIAN HOPPMANN, MORITZ JACOBS, MARIJE VAN DER KOOY, TOM KÜHNEL, LARA OLTHOF, JOHANNA PATZ, NINA RUNTE, JULIUS QUANDT, LUUK SIMON, KES WIERINGA, KEES DE WIT, LAURA WOLTMEIJER.



› Participants during the reception and discussing with experts from The Münster Dialogues

› Participants during the reception at the premises of the DGAP



CONCEPT & FORMAT

On 23 May 2013, in the historic town of Kleve near the Dutch border, the first German-Dutch governmental consultations took place. Led by Chancellor Angela Merkel and Minister-President Mark Rutte, cabinet ministers from both countries evaluated mutual relations. Since then, every three years the consultations have returned, underlining that Berlin and The Hague remain alert to the fact that even their neighbourship, as uniquely thriving as it is, needs a regular check-up and the warmth of direct human relations.

In this spirit, at the last consultations in Rotterdam in 2023, it was agreed to add a new format for German and Dutch youth to exchange views on the future of Europe and the world. In the slipstream of The Münster Dialogues #2, the first German-Dutch Youth Consultations on 4–5 March 2026, brought together 20 Dutch and German Master’s students from the *Duitsland Instituut Amsterdam* (DIA), *Young DGAP* (Berlin), and the *ZNS Centre for Dutch Studies* (Münster). The initiative aims to strengthen German-Dutch dialogue by actively involving the next generation of experts on German-Dutch-European cooperation.

The programme opened on 4 March 2026 with welcoming remarks by the German Ambassador to The Hague, Dr. Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut, and the Dutch Ambassador to Berlin, Hester Somsen. The students then met experts from The Münster Dialogues and enjoyed a working dinner providing them with an opportunity for informal exchange and preparation for the second day.

On 5 March 2026, a full-day interactive workshop focused on the future European security architecture. Through expert inputs, moderated discussions, and group work, participants explored key strategic challenges and developed concrete policy-oriented ideas. The programme papers of The Münster Dialogues, written by Adam Dargiewicz and Jacco Pekelder, served as an intellectual point of reference.

The workshop culminated in the drafting of a concise, joint “*German-Dutch Youth Agenda for the Future European Security Architecture*”.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Europe’s security environment has changed profoundly. Germany and the Netherlands, as neighbouring countries and close partners within the EU, NATO, and bilateral military cooperation, face major foreign and defence policy challenges. At the same time, structured German-Dutch dialogue can no longer be taken for granted. Declining language proficiency, domestic political pressures, and the discontinuation of earlier dialogue formats have created gaps in exchange.

For young professionals in particular, this gap is significant. They will assume responsibility in a period marked by geopolitical uncertainty and structural transformation. The Youth Consultations therefore provide a platform for dialogue, networking, and joint problem-solving at an early stage of their careers.

PHOTO: ELSE HENKES



Jacco Pekelder
Director ZNS
Centre for Dutch Studies
University of Münster

PHOTO: ZSÓFIA PÓLÓSKÉ



Linn Selle
Alfred-von-Oppenheim
Director Europe Center
DGAP

PHOTO: KIM KRUIJEN



Hanco Jürgens
Lecturer and Researcher
Germany Institute (DIA)
University of Amsterdam



Stephan Naumann
Developer and Trainer
planpolitik

PROGRAMME

DAY 1

OPENING ADRESSES BY BOTH AMBASSADORS

Dr. Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut & Hester Somsen



RECEPTION AND EXCHANGE WITH THE MÜNSTER DIALOGUES EXPERTS



GERMAN-DUTCH NETWORKING BINGO



DAY 2

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

Identifying your circle's vision | Connecting vision to concrete ideas | Telling the story





FORMULATING THE “GERMAN-DUTCH YOUTH AGENDA”



PARTICIPANTS

DIA

Matthijs Damsteeg
Vincent van Ee
Marije van der Kooy
Lara Olthof
Kes Wieringa



YOUNG DGAP

Laurenz Butzke
Leonardo Dimeo
Lara Forestieri
Fabian Hoppmann
Moritz Jacobs
Tom Kühnel
Julius Quandt
Luuk Simon



ZNS

Robin Bartels
Jan-Douwe Delicat
Faye Hagendorn
Johanna Patz
Nina Runte
Kees de Wit
Laura Woltmeijer



German–Dutch Youth Agenda for the Future European Security Architecture

De tijd dringt – Die Zeit drängt

PREAMBLE

At the invitation of the ZNS Centre for Dutch Studies of the University of Münster and the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), on 4–5 March 2026, twenty students from Germany and the Netherlands came together in Berlin for the first German–Dutch Youth Consultations. Building on the second edition of The Münster Dialogues of experts and leaders from both nations, we were asked to develop a shared vision for a European Security Architecture. Spanning the fields of defense and strategic autonomy, industrial base, institutional set-up, and democratic resilience, we exchanged perspectives and gained a common understanding of the imminent challenges Germany, the Netherlands, and Europe are facing. Together, we drafted this agenda as our recommendation to the politicians, diplomats, and decision-makers who shape European policy, trusting that the urgency of this moment accelerates the necessary reform.

VISION FOR EUROPE

We, Dutch and German students, envision a solidary, democratic, and representative Europe where Europeans experience a shared identity alongside, not instead of, their diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Our continent must become an independent and capable global actor that is able to defend its values and its way of living against internal and external threats. The European Union (EU) is at the centre of our vision, functioning as the primary embodiment of democracy, security, and resilience.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To realize this vision, we identified key challenges, and the concrete steps Germany and the Netherlands can take to address them. We consider the Dutch–German relationship to be more important than ever. With deeply interlinked economies, aligned European ambitions, and even integrated armed forces, Germany and the Netherlands demonstrate that European integration is working.

Therefore, their partnership must function as an example for advancing a stronger EU.

1. INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP

At the foundation of an independent and secure Europe must be an institutional set-up which enables autonomous European collective defense. Such a mechanism needs to be trustworthy, capable, and functional under the pressure and contested information environment of a crisis.

- › **Establish a European Security Council:** A permanent regional security institution that enables rapid collective defense decisions through qualitative majority voting, integrating political coordination with military command structures.
- › **Establish a standing European rapid response force:** Member states should commit a fixed share of national forces to a permanently integrated multinational, European force under a unified command to ensure credible deterrence and immediate crisis response.
- › **Take the lead through German–Dutch military cooperation:** Germany and The Netherlands should take the front in institutional and military integration. The cooperation will serve as an exemplary framework, eventually expanding into a broader European security structure.

2. DEFENSE & STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

To make this institutional set-up credible and a useful mechanism of deterrence, it needs strong, independent defense capabilities. Such capabilities must be ready to operate quickly and effectively in moments of crisis without relying on the goodwill of non-European actors.

- › **Reduce dependencies on US strategic enablers** including strategic airlift, ISR, and space-based assets by prioritizing the development of these capabilities within Europe through joint investment and the European Defense Mechanism (EDM), building on the EDA, PESCO, and Readiness 2030.

- › **Establish permanent, regionally integrated corps** across the EU modelled on the German-Netherlands Corps to harmonize training and doctrine Union-wide; institutionalize operational lessons from EUMAM-UA, particularly on drone warfare and hybrid threats, into these corps from the outset.
- › **Introduce a bilateral “Military Erasmus”,** a joint voluntary service program for Dutch and German military personnel embedded in each other’s forces, further deepening strategic and cultural interoperability.
- › **Accelerate the Military Schengen and strengthen critical infrastructure protection:** Remove barriers to cross-border troop movements and enhance EU-level coordination against sabotage and cyberattacks on critical infrastructure.

3. INDUSTRIAL BASE

For Europe’s defense capabilities to function independently and be a mechanism of deterrence, it needs a defense industrial base that can produce material in the needed quality, quantity, and the timely manner appropriate to the threat the continent faces.

- › **A unified production scale:** Broaden the scale of existing cooperation frameworks between Ukraine and Germany/The Netherlands to leverage Ukrainian battlefield experience for innovation and scale production capable of strengthening European security.
- › **Promote Dual-Use industrial integration across borders:** Closer cooperation between research institutions such as TNO and the Fraunhofer Institute should support the development and transfer of dual-use technologies between defence and civilian industries.
- › **Improve Supply Chain Awareness and Resilience:** Europe must increase transparency in supply chains in critical industrial sectors by conducting investigations to identify and rank vulnerabilities based on their potential to disrupt production, a model project between Germany and the Netherlands should be an initial starting point. Furthermore, counter-dependencies, competitors have in Europe, should be leveraged when needed.
- › **Achieve sustained public support:** Senior political and military leaders as well as experts from all adjoining fields should guide open discussions to create resilient societies as well as being always transparent regarding the spent public funds.

4. DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

Security without democratic legitimacy is not sustainable. Thus, strengthening the connection between citizens and the EU, through transparent institutions, a shared public sphere, and genuine political participation, is the foundation upon which all the above depends.

- › **Promote a shared European public sphere and media literacy:** Invest in cross-border media initiatives, coordinated public broadcasting on EU affairs, and youth-focused digital platforms to counter disinformation, reduce polarization, and build a common European understanding of political challenges.
- › **Strengthen European civic identity through education and citizen programs:** Expand European-focused civic and history education, cultural exchange, and joint programs to foster shared democratic values and a common European narrative which reinforces democratic thinking and making cross-border cooperation tangible.
- › **A Civilian-Ready Reserve' and Cross-Border Exercises:** Establish a joint German-Dutch pilot for civilian preparedness, including public awareness campaigns, and voluntary training with civil protection agencies and where relevant military actors.
- › **Strengthen the European democratic legitimacy:** Push to reform the EU democratic process. Support the introduction of EU-wide electoral lists to make European elections more direct, visible, and competitive, fostering a genuine European political sphere.

CONCLUSION

The values and way of living we grew up with are under active attack. To restore an environment in which these values and the people of our countries can prosper, Europe must reclaim its ability to shape and control its own destiny. This will require long-term commitment and shared responsibility – felt and lived across society, politics, and industry. We will inherit the Europe you shape, and we urge you to take our recommendations seriously.

De tijd dringt. Die Zeit drängt.



The ZNS Centre for Dutch Studies is the academic centre of expertise on the Netherlands and German-Dutch relations in Europe. Within its multidisciplinary Bachelor's and Master's programmes students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to operate in the field of German-Dutch exchange. In their research PhD candidates and staff produce insights in Dutch politics and history, its economy and European relations, and its culture, with a special eye for cross-border intercultural cooperation. ZNS knowledge transfer activities lay the foundation for countless German-Dutch encounters and ever-expanding networks across borders. Its homebase in Münster city centre is the historic Haus der Niederlande, or House of the Netherlands, where in 1648 Spain and the Nether-

lands signed a peace agreement, ending the Eighty-Years War for Dutch independence. Thus, Münster is not only the city of the Westphalian Peace, an honour shared with nearby Osnabrück, but also a birthplace of the Netherlands as an internationally recognized European state.



Universität Münster
Zentrum für Niederlande-Studien
Alter Steinweg 6/7
D-48143 Münster



web: www.uni-muenster.de/ZNS/
phone: +49 251 83-28511
e-mail: zns@uni-muenster.de

DGAP

German Council on Foreign Relations

DGAP

PHOTO: ANNETTE HORNISCHER



The German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) is dedicated to fostering impactful foreign and security policy on a German and European level that upholds democracy, peace, and the rule of law. Since its founding in 1955, this non-partisan organization has played a central role in shaping Germany's foreign policy debate. DGAP's experts offer strategic advice to decision-makers in politics, business, and civil society, grounded in rigorous foreign policy research. Through its work, DGAP aims to support well-informed foreign policy decisions, advance informed debate on foreign policy issues in Germany, and contribute to the development of foreign policy expertise in the country. DGAP is a non-profit association with about 2,900 members. Young DGAP, for those under 35 interested

in foreign policy, has over 1,000 members who appreciate its networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities. Seven regional forums actively facilitate debate on current foreign policy topics throughout Germany and on to Brussels. In addition, DGAP publishes the bimonthly journal *Internationale Politik*, which features in-depth analyses of foreign policy.



**Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Auswärtige Politik e.V.**

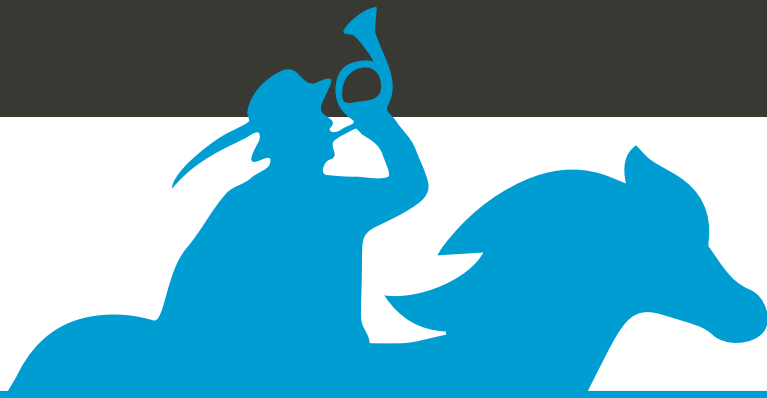
Rauchstraße 17/18
D-10787 Berlin



web: dgap.org

phone: +49 30 254231-0

e-mail: info@dgap.org





Universität
Münster



The Münster
DIALOGUES

THE MÜNSTER DIALOGUES #2

**BOOTSTRAPPING EUROPEAN SECURITY
AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIC AUTONOMY:
DUTCH AND GERMAN PERSPECTIVES**

BERLIN, 3–4 MARCH 2026



Organised by:



DGAP



› The Münster Dialogues logo at the Dutch Embassy in Berlin

CONTACT

Jacco Pekelder

e-mail: jacco.pekelder@uni-muenster.de

PHOTOS

2026: Anita Back (www.anitaback.de)

2025: Else Henkes (www.elsehenkes.com)

LAYOUT

Tim Mäkelburg (www.blijtsatz.de)

PUBLISHER

Zentrum für Niederlande-Studien

Alter Steinweg 6/7

D-48143 Münster

phone: +49 251 83-28511

e-mail: zns@uni-muenster.de

© 2026 Zentrum für Niederlande Studien

SUPPORTED BY



Auswärtiges Amt



REMONDIS®

WORKING FOR THE FUTURE

FOREWORD

Dear reader,

The Münster Dialogues are conceived as a recurring Dutch-German platform for strategic exchange on key European challenges, with a particular focus on security. Initiated by the or ZNS Centre for Dutch Studies at the University of Münster, the format brings together policymakers, scholars, and practitioners from both countries to engage in open, binational dialogue. The choice for a Dutch-German setting reflects the uniquely close political, economic, and societal ties between the two countries, which are seen as a strong basis for mutual learning and joint contributions to Europe's future. The aim is not only to deepen understanding of shared challenges, but also to foster a sustained conversation that can inform policy and public debate.

Building on the first edition of The Münster Dialogues (TMD#1) in March 2025, for the second edition, in 2026, fortunately, ZNS was able to team up with the Europe Center of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). A second innovation came with the addition of an extra day of German-Dutch Youth Consultations. Inspired by the bilateral government consultations that since 2013 have been a regular format in German-Dutch relations, we invited twenty students from the *Germany Institute at the University of Amsterdam* (DIA), *Young DGAP* and the joint master's programme in European Studies of *Radboud University Nijmegen* and the *ZNS Centre for Dutch Studies of the University of Münster* to develop and discuss their views on Europe's security. In conclusion they formulated an ambitious German-Dutch Youth Agenda for the Future European Security Architecture.

TMD#2 continued the core idea underpinning the Münster Dialogues: that meaningful progress on European security and sovereignty depends on open, cross-border dialogue between closely connected partners such as Germany and the Netherlands. At the same time, it moved a step further by emphasizing the need to translate shared analysis into strategic orientation. Where the first edition mapped out key tensions—between NATO and autonomy, openness and resilience, internal cohesion and external pressure—the second edition ex-

plored how these tensions can be managed in practice, and what role European actors can play in shaping outcomes rather than merely reacting to them.

Keynotes by former Dutch foreign minister Ben Knapen and ASML Supervisory Board member Karien van Gennip set the stage by respectively addressing the need for Europe to dare to break free from outdated ideas about its geopolitical identity and the challenges in the field of economic and innovation policies and financial and social frameworks at the national level and within the EU. After that, participants, edged on by several impulses, debated at length, in three separate sessions, Europe's industrial base and innovative prowess, the institutional set-up and financial strategies, and the pace and scale of adjustments to defence organisation and military build-up. This booklet presents a concise summary of these exchanges.

In sum, TMD#2 reinforced the notion that European sovereignty is not an abstract goal, but a pragmatic response to a world in which traditional certainties can no longer be taken for granted. It underscored that strengthening Europe's capacity to act—economically, politically, and militarily—must go hand in hand with maintaining partnerships, particularly across the Atlantic, while also preparing for other scenarios. By continuing to bring together experts from politics, academia, think tanks, and society, The Münster Dialogues aim to consolidate their role as a platform where Dutch and German perspectives jointly contribute to shaping Europe's strategic direction in the years ahead.

16 April 2026,

PHOTO: ELSE HENKES



Jacco Pekelder
Director ZNS Centre for Dutch Studies
 University of Münster

PHOTO: ZSÓFIA PÖLÖSKE



Linn Selle
Alfred-von-Oppenheim Director Europe Center
 DGAP

PROGRAMME

DAY 1

OPENING AT THE EMBASSY OF THE NETHERLANDS IN BERLIN

Welcome Hester Somsen & Keynote Ben Knapen



STANDING DINNER & DRINKS



DAY 2

SESSION 1

Draghi's Dance Macabre: Industrial Base, Innovative Prowes



SESSION 2

Holding the Centre: Institutional Set-up and Financing EU priorities



SESSION 3

Armies of the Future: Weapons, Strategies, People



CONTENTS

KEYNOTES

BEN KNAPEN (Former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands) – 3 March 2026

Ben Knapen opened TMD#2 with a forceful speech, in German, that he afterwards, on 21 March 2026, published in the Dutch daily *NRC* under the challenging title “*Europe must now become a geopolitical power – and thus dare to provoke.*” He argued that Europe is entering a fundamentally new geopolitical era marked by instability, accelerating crises, and the erosion of familiar certainties. What may appear as a series of unrelated shocks—conflicts, geopolitical tensions, and shifting alliances—signals the end of a historical phase in which Europe could rely on stability, soft power, and external security guarantees. Europe, long accustomed to seeing itself as a global norm-setter, now increasingly finds itself sidelined.

He noted that Europe’s self-image as a centre of economic strength and moral authority contrasts sharply with external perceptions. As he put it, critics now argue that “*the only power Europeans still have is the power to set up working groups.*” Such perceptions, whether exaggerated or not, have real consequences: they make it easier for external actors to challenge, pressure, and destabilise European societies.

Knapen identified three major threats: intensifying hybrid warfare, including cyberattacks and infrastructure disruption; the risk of a Russian advantage in Ukraine, potentially encouraging further destabilisation; and growing uncertainty about the reliability of the United States as Europe’s security anchor. While NATO cooperation remains operationally strong, political trust in the US has weakened significantly. Even beyond current leadership, structural geopolitical shifts—particularly

› Keynote-speaker Ben Knapen



the US focus on China—mean that European security may increasingly be seen as a regional responsibility.

He warned that Europe risks strategic vulnerability due to fragmentation, complacency, and overreliance on past assumptions. The fundamental choice facing Europe, he argued, is stark: “*national sovereignty and powerlessness, or deeper integration and the ability to act.*” Yet this choice is often postponed, either out of complacency or the hope that current tensions will fade.

To respond effectively, Europe must strengthen its economic and military capacity, deepen integration, and accept greater responsibility for its own security. This includes investing in defence, reducing dependencies, and reinforcing the Single Market and capital structures. Europe already possesses the necessary resources and capabilities—its wealth, industrial base, and technological expertise are not in question. What is lacking is political will and a shared sense of urgency. Without this, even well-known solutions will remain unimplemented.

KARIEN VAN GENNIP (Member of the Supervisory Board, ASML; former Dutch Minister of Social Affairs) – 4 March 2026

Van Gennip emphasised the urgency for Europe to step up in defence, competitiveness, and technology, while noting that national approaches still dominate. Fragmented defence industries, the absence of unified export controls, and limited consensus on EU-wide frameworks such as the “28th regime” continue to hinder progress.

Geopolitically, Europe faces a situation reminiscent of the Cold War, but without guaranteed US protection. This raises fundamental questions about unity, strategic vision, and the willingness of societies to make difficult trade-offs, for instance between welfare and defence spending.

Strategic autonomy also depends on the resilience of the middle classes. Declining upward mobility and growing distrust in elites risk undermining political cohesion. At the same time, Europe retains strengths in areas such as quantum computing, biotech, and AI adoption, but must reinforce its own technological base and startup ecosystem.

Key proposals included investing in future industries, using the energy transition as a growth driver, completing the capital market, removing internal Single Market barriers, building European digital infrastructure, promoting lifelong learning, and strengthening Franco-German cooperation with Dutch involvement.

**SESSION 1:
DRAGHI’S DANCE MACABRE:
INDUSTRIAL BASE, INNOVATIVE PROWESS
EVA VAN PELT (DNHK), WOLFGANG NIEDERMARK
(BDI), ANTONIA HMAIDI (MERICS), YOSHUA
WITTEVEEN (Draghi Report team).**

The session highlighted that the EU’s “Brussels Effect” is weakening: regulatory power alone no longer guarantees competitiveness. Europe is not facing a sudden collapse but a gradual loss of global relevance, which also translates into growing security risks. Strategic autonomy should therefore be understood as the capacity to act, not as isolationism.

A central concern is Europe’s dependence on external suppliers for critical inputs such as semiconductors and rare earths. If China succeeds in its industrial strategy, Europe risks a slow process of deindustrialisation. Strengthening supply chains and rebuilding industrial capacity are therefore essential.

At the same time, Europe lacks a clear strategic direction and implementation capacity. Compared to competitors, particularly China, European industrial policy remains insufficiently detailed and coordinated.

Key themes included the need for targeted deregulation/simplification, strengthening supply chains, deepening internal integration in capital markets, energy and digital sectors, and reducing dependencies while maintaining openness.

Proposals focused on joint hydrogen infrastructure, an integrated European energy grid, coordinated strategies for critical infrastructure, enhanced high-tech cooperation, cross-border regional partnerships, and building new alliances in the Global South.

SESSION 2:

HOLDING THE CENTRE: INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP AND FINANCING EU PRIORITIES

SHAHIN VALÉE (DGAP), **MEYNDERT VAN DER KOLK** (Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs), **WINAND QUAEDVLIEG** (VNO-NCW).

This session focused on the institutional and financial foundations of European strategic autonomy. The EU is preparing for enlargement without sufficient public debate or consensus at either national or European level, creating the risk of overpromising to candidate states. External interference further complicates this situation.

There has been a notable shift in EU priorities: competitiveness has moved to the centre of the agenda. Earlier approaches relied heavily on regulatory leadership and the belief in the “Brussels Effect”, but rising costs and the impact of successive crises have increased pressure on European industry.

Institutional fragmentation and unanimity requirements continue to hinder effective decision-making. New formats such as the E6 aim to facilitate progress among a smaller group of member states.

Key challenges include fragmented governance, lack of consensus on tariffs and industrial policy, and tensions between national interests and European coordination.

Proposals included temporary “European preference” for strategic industries, improved enforcement of Single Market rules, closer cooperation between innovation agencies, assessing a business case for legacy chips, and cooperate on improving the EU legislative process and good governance.

SESSION 3:

ARMIES OF THE FUTURE: WEAPONS, STRATEGIES, PEOPLE

PATRICK KELLER (DGAP), **HUIB ZIJDERVELD** (Netherlands Defence Academy), **BEATRICE DE GRAAF** (Utrecht University).

The *Zeitenwende* of 2022 is no longer sufficient in a new era of power politics. Europe must recon-

sider both the scale and speed of its defence capabilities, as well as the nature of future warfare.

Two contrasting perspectives emerged. One emphasised urgency: given ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, rapid procurement—including from outside Europe—may be necessary. The other stressed that increased defence spending should strengthen European integration and interoperability.

This reflects a broader tension between short-term readiness and long-term strategic autonomy. While NATO planning structures remain effective, Europe must decide how far it wants to rely on them versus developing its own coordinated capabilities.

Key challenges include balancing speed and scale in defence investments, aligning procurement with long-term integration goals, and ensuring interoperability between European armed forces.

Proposals focused on strengthening Dutch-German research and innovation cooperation, joint procurement and maintenance, mobilising venture capital for defence industries, developing operational plans for private sector involvement (“O-Plan”), creating a civilian counterpart, and preserving democratic legitimacy through local and cross-border engagement.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

LINN SELLE (DGAP), **JACCO PEKELDER** (ZNS, University of Münster).

The concluding remarks emphasised the need to translate strategic ambitions into practical action. A central message across keynotes and sessions was that Europe must focus on what it can achieve itself, with German-Dutch cooperation as a potential driver.

Participants also highlighted the risks posed by declining public support. Concerns about the erosion of the social contract underline the importance of building a broad societal constituency for European security. Initiatives such as the German-Dutch Youth Consultations aim to involve younger generations in shaping future approaches and strengthening long-term support for European strategic autonomy.

PARTICIPANTS TMD#2

Wouter van Aggelen, REMONDIS, Lichtenvoorde

Remco Andersen, *de Volkskrant*, Berlin

Robin Bartels, ZNS

Andrea Befort, Foreign Office, Berlin

Dr. Sara Borella, German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), Berlin

Ambassador Catalina Cullas Skrijinskaia, Foreign Office, Berlin

Moritz von Cölln, Intern at Deutscher Bundestag

Adam Dargiewiz, ZNS

Jan-Douwe Delicat, ZNS

Kris Derks, Netherlands Atlantic Association, The Hague

Otto Fricke, German Olympic Sports Federation

Edgar Alfred Gansen, DGAP

Karien van Gennip, Member of the Supervisory Board, ASML

Prof. Dr. Beatrice de Graaf, Utrecht University

Sebastian Gröning-von Thüna, Representation of North Rhine-Westphalia, Berlin

Günter Gülker, Deutsch-Niederländische Handelskammer (DNHK), The Hague

Michelle Haas, Ghent University

Faye Hagedorn, ZNS

Lara Hendriks, Netherlands Atlantic Association, The Hague

Dr. Judith Hermes, Federal Ministry of Finance, Berlin

Antonia Hmaid, Mercator Institute for China Studies MERICS, Berlin

Honorary Consul Dr. Eduard Hüffer, Münster

Dr. Hanco Jürgens, DIA

Dr. Patrick Keller, DGAP

Roy Kenkel, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Meyndert van der Kolk, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate, The Hague

Dr. Ben Knapen, Former Dutch Foreign Minister

Sanne Löwenhardt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

Ambassador Nikolas Meyer-Landruth, The Hague

Wolfgang Niedermark, Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI), Berlin

Prof. Dr. Ton Nijhuis, DIA

Dr. Cyrill Nunn, Former Ambassador

Wilfried Oellers, Member of Deutscher Bundestag (CDU)

Johanna Patz, ZNS

Prof. Dr. Jacco Pekelder, ZNS

Eva van Pelt, Deutsch-Niederländische Handelskammer (DNHK)

Winand Quaedvlieg, VNO-NCW, Brussels

Kerstin Reinke, Bezirksregierung Münster

Ronald van Roeden, Former Ambassador, ZNS

Ilse Rooze, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Nina Runte, ZNS

Dr. Rüdiger Scholz, Federal Ministry for Economy and Energy, Berlin

Linn Selle, DGAP

Lucas Sitanala, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Ambassador Hester Somsen, Berlin

Dr. Jorrit Steehouder, Utrecht University

Shahin Vallée, DGAP

Timo Verheij, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Erljine Wissels, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

Kees de Wit, ZNS

Yoshua Witteveen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

Christoph Wolfrum, Foreign Office, Berlin

Laura Woltmeijer, ZNS

Maj. Dr. Huib Zijderveld, Netherlands Defence Academy, Breda

FLASHBACK TO TMD#1

The first edition, *The Münster Dialogues #1*, focused on the theme of European security between NATO and strategic autonomy. Moderated by Linn Selle, this first edition brought together experts from government, academia, think tanks, and media for an in-depth exchange at a moment of growing geopolitical uncertainty. The event opened with an informal dinner at the Embassy of the Netherlands, setting the tone for what became a frank and at times contrasting dialogue.

The conference began with opening remarks by Jacco Pekelder and Ambassador Hester Somsen, followed by a keynote address by Tom de Bruijn. Drawing on arguments he later elaborated in the influential Dutch daily *NRC*, the former Foreign minister warned against premature speculation about alternatives to NATO—particularly a European nuclear deterrent based on France. He argued that such debates risked undermining the credibility of the alliance and could even become self-fulfilling. While Europe should take greater responsibility for its own security, this, he stressed, must go hand in hand with preserving strong American guarantees.

The first session, *“European Political Strategies and Military Capabilities”*, addressed how Europe might balance this ambition for greater autonomy with its continued reliance on NATO. Anna van Zoest, Nicolai von Ondarza, Jörg Noll, and Gesine Weber explored questions of defence spending, institutional reform, and military coordination in light of Russia’s war against Ukraine and shifting U.S. priorities.

The second session, *“Economic Strength, Industrial Base, and Innovative Prowess”*, turned to the economic foundations of security. Sander Tordoir, Nils Redeker, Yoshua Witteveen, and Otto Fricke discussed how Europe could strengthen its resilience by reducing dependencies, investing in strategic industries, and fostering innovation—while maintaining its commitment to open markets.

The third session, *“Political Volatility, Societal Resilience, and Migration”*, brought together René Cuperus, Timo Graf, Remco Andersen, and Thu Nguyen, who examined the internal dimensions of security and the impact of political fragmentation, migration debates, and societal pressures.

› Jacco Pekelder, Ronald van Roeden, Hester Somsen and Ton de Bruijn during the opening of *The Münster Dialogues #1*





› A snapshot from Session 2 of The Münster Dialogues #1 2025



› Impressions from the three sessions of *The Münster Dialogues #1 2025*

The concluding plenary brought together these strands. It was opened by students of the ZNS Centre for Dutch Studies, who introduced questions developed during the day. Eckart Conze compared the current situation with earlier shifts in the global power system. Inspired by his call to fundamentally rethink Europe's security needs, the discussion returned to the central question of the conference: what impact can German-Dutch cooperation have on Europe's path towards greater strategic autonomy?

Reflections after the conference pointed to both convergence and tension. While some participants emphasized the continued centrality of the United

States, others argued that Europe must prepare for a future in which American guarantees are less certain. At the same time, the discussions underscored the often underappreciated potential of Dutch-German cooperation—particularly in the field of defence—as well as the need for greater ambition in shaping European security policy.

In this sense, the first Münster Dialogues not only highlighted the urgency of the issues at stake, but also demonstrated the value of sustained, binational exchange across sectors and generations. By combining strategic reflection with open debate, the format created a space for confronting difficult questions that are central to Europe's future.

PARTICIPANTS TMD#1

Remco Andersen, *de Volkskrant*, Berlin

Chiem Balduk, Dutch public news broadcaster, Berlin

Pieter Bernaers, ZNS

Manon van den Bovenkamp, ZNS

Sarah Bressan, Global Public Policy Institute, Berlin

Tom de Bruijn, Former Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

Hans von der Burchard, Politico Europe, Berlin

Prof. Dr. Eckart Conze, Philipps University Marburg

René Cuperus, Clingendael

Clemens Deurloo, ZNS

Florian Eder, *Süddeutsche Zeitung/EUI*, Berlin

Juurd Eijssvoogel, *NRC*, Amsterdam

Otto Fricke, Member of Deutscher Bundestag (FDP)

Gijs van Gent, Ministry of Defence, The Hague

Dr. Timo Graf, Centre for Military History and Social Sciences of the Bundeswehr, Potsdam

Rik Hoeben, ZNS

Dr. Hanco Jürgens, DIA

Roy Kenkel, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Prof. Dr. Bert Koenders, Advisory Council on International Affairs, The Hague

Paulien Koning, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Katrin Konst, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Mia Kuchenbecker, State Representation NRW, Berlin

Edgar Lenski, Federal Chancellery, Berlin

Joost Lina, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Thomas Lommerse, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Sanne Löwenhardt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

Doudou Luitse, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

Derk Marseille, BNR Business Radio, Berlin

Franz Xaver Mauerer, Member of Deutscher Bundestag (CDU)

Jip Mennen, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Famke Minnee, ZNS

Michiel Mulder, Leiden University

Dr. Thu Nguyen, Jacques Delors Centre, Berlin

Wolfgang Niedermark, Federation of German Industries (BDI)

Prof. Dr. Ton Nijhuis, DIA

Dr. Jörg Noll, Netherlands Defence Academy, Breda

Nicolai Ondarza, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin

Johanna Patz, ZNS

Prof. Dr. Jacco Pekelder, ZNS

Wiebke Pittlik, DIA

Dr. Nils Redeker, Jacques Delors Centre, Berlin

Ronald van Roeden, Former Ambassador, ZNS

Max van Rij, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Rob Savelberg, *De Telegraaf*, Berlin

Ute Schürings, Schürings Kommunikation Interkulturell, Berlin

Linn Selle, State Representation NRW, Berlin

Robert-Jan Sieben, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Philippa Sigl-Glöckner, Dezernat Zukunft, Berlin

Ambassador Hester Somsen, Berlin

Dr. Jorrit Steehouder, Utrecht University

Benjamin Tallis, Democratic Strategy Initiative, Berlin

Funda Tekin, Institute for European Politics, Berlin

Dr. Sander Tordoir, Centre for European Reform, Berlin

Timo Verheij, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Renske de Vries, ZNS

Abi Watson, Global Public Policy Institute, Berlin

Gesine Weber, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Berlin

Yoshua Witteveen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

Mira Woldberg, Dutch Embassy, Berlin

Anna van Zoest, Atlantische Commissie

