



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

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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 KOOPY, 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