

# Going Dutch

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## Summary

What will the knowledge society of the future look like? What does internationalization mean in the context of knowledge, research, technology and innovation? The AWT intends to provide input and inspiration for the debate in politics and society on the future of the knowledge society. Based on its analysis, it has formulated four recommendations to help make Dutch policy on knowledge and innovation more strategic and future-proof.

A knowledge society is more than just a knowledge economy. In a knowledge economy, scientific research focuses on economic competitiveness, and people devote more and more of their working lives to producing, processing, using and transferring knowledge and information. In a knowledge society, the societal perspective comes into play. The AWT takes the concept of the knowledge society to mean a society in which knowledge is valued not only as a factor of production, but also for its intrinsic value and for its ability to help solve societal problems.

The knowledge society can only develop properly if there is a firm and stable support base, and if large cross sections of the population are able to participate in it. Support for the knowledge society entails a broad appreciation of knowledge, science and research, and a public and private willingness to invest in these aspects.

Investing in knowledge is important, but also difficult to realize. The yield is uncertain, may be delayed considerably or provide benefits in unexpected places. The AWT believes that there are opportunities to invest in knowledge that will limit these risks, specifically by developing the Netherlands further as a knowledge society so that it achieves the status of an international hotspot of knowledge.

Whereas development in an industrial society is driven by a global search for cheaper means of production, the dynamics of the knowledge society are to be found in international knowledge hotspots. And whereas industrial dynamics inevitably produce losers, the knowledge society primarily produces winners. This is on the condition that the society invests in knowledge, and that the society makes wise choices when it comes to knowledge. The AWT is looking to other countries for inspiration that will help the Netherlands make even better choices than is already the case.

There are various types of knowledge societies: the Anglo-Saxon (adventurous knowledge society), the Germanic (the cautious knowledge society) and finally the emerging societies. Whereas the production of knowledge in Anglo-Saxon societies is primarily the domain of the leading universities and innovative start-ups, the production of knowledge in Germanic societies takes place primarily in companies. Whereas research and education are closely integrated in Anglo-Saxon countries without interference from business, the Germanic societies feature a close integration of knowledge development, knowledge application and labour market practice. Emerging knowledge societies are embracing the importance of knowledge in their economic development, and are working diligently to catch up. The Netherlands is in a separate category, combining features of both the adventurous and the cautious knowledge society: it is a combination society.

We need to specify the international context in order to decide how the Netherlands can best develop as a knowledge society in the future. Will knowledge become more freely available, or will countries continue to feel the need to protect 'their own' knowledge? The Council has identified three potential lines of development: i) 'West Wind' (business as usual): continued progress on the current course, a half-open knowledge system where Western countries dominate and emerging countries remain dependent; ii) 'Open Field' (high trust): an open knowledge system in which publicly generated knowledge is shared worldwide; iii) 'Islands' (low trust): a closed knowledge system in which publicly generated knowledge is shared only with a select group of countries from the same environment.

As a combination society, the Netherlands is ideally equipped to thrive in the West Wind line of development, meaning the country can continue its current course into the future. In the long term, however, this is not the most likely scenario. The world can change, and knowledge structures may develop into a more open, global knowledge system, for example. In that case the 'adventurous' Anglo-Saxon knowledge societies will feel more at home. On the other hand, the world might also develop into a more closed, regional knowledge system, which will better serve the interests of the 'cautious' Germanic countries. Whatever direction international developments take, the Netherlands is in an excellent position to adapt to any scenario.

The Council recommends *going Dutch* in order to remain among the most innovative knowledge societies in the decades to come. By going Dutch, the Council primarily means consciously building on Dutch qualities such as openness to criticism, informal communication channels and horizontal organizational structures, the drive for consensus and support (our 'polder tradition'), and balance (our 'and-and tradition'). These are qualities that enhance the development of knowledge and innovative potential. Secondly, the AWT means that the Netherlands must take responsibility and actively seek to make a

relevant contribution in the global context. The Dutch are no free riders, so: let's go Dutch! The AWT has formulated the following four recommendations based on this argument:

1. Develop a nation-wide knowledge and innovation strategy which builds on the Dutch 'and-and tradition' (global & European, applied & basic research, specific & generic innovation policy).
2. Search for broad political consensus for this strategy among industry, institutes of knowledge, trade unions and societal organizations. To this end, strengthen the following: i) the ambition of entrepreneurs, scientists and employees, ii) the participation of all workers and social cohesion – with a focus on IT, databases, education, childcare, landscape quality, mobility, accessibility and infrastructure – and iii) resilience and adaptability of sectors through an international orientation.
3. Build on the 'combined character' of the Dutch knowledge society (which is characterized by a combination of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic elements), but repair some weaknesses and learn: i) from emerging societies about enthusiasm for a strategy and creativity in the worldwide search for usable knowledge; ii) from cautious societies about a greater appreciation for the online production of knowledge, more private responsibility for education and research, and reaching consensus on the strategy to be pursued; and iii) from adventurous societies about a greater appreciation for the offline production of knowledge, a better acceptance of failures and support for 'challengers'.
4. Use the top sector policy to develop leading hotspots with a regional and a societal dimension, ensuring a proper branding of the Netherlands as a whole: the Netherlands as a centre of knowledge.

The Council is convinced that the Netherlands is fully capable of continuing to make a significant contribution to the development and application of knowledge well into the future. This will require a consistent policy that takes into account the quality and diversity of Dutch companies and institutes of knowledge, but above all a policy that encourages entrepreneurs, workers, researchers, school pupils and students to be innovative.