



Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations

Open for everyone

The Netherlands

Open Government Action Plan 2023-2027



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Inhoud

Foreword 5

Summary 6

1. Introduction 8

2. Open government efforts to date 10

Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo) 10

Proactive disclosure of decision notes 10

Proactive disclosure under the Woo (Woo-index) 10

Disclosure upon request 10

Improving Information Management 11

Advisory Board on Public Access and Information Management 11

Open Government at Local and Regional Government Levels 11

Learning from international experiences 11

Building on previous action plans 11

3. Action plan development process 14

Co-creation 14

Civil society coalition Talking About Information 14

Themes with introductions 14

Timeline 15

Communication 15

4. Commitments 17

5. Conclusion 22

Formats 23

I. Citizens own their own information 23

II. Improve accessibility 26

III. Equal information position of citizens 37

IV. Enhancing active and passive public disclosure 48

V. Dialogue on information needs and research 64

VI. Awareness, training, culture change and experimentation 73

VII. Renewal of the civil servant oath of office 78



Foreword

An open government is the cornerstone of our democratic rule of law. Open government is based on the simple and powerful belief that the people we serve have the right to know what their government is doing and the opportunity to participate. This means not only being transparent about our actions as a government but also listening to the residents of our country, being accountable for our policies, and improving processes based on feedback and criticism.

Because everyone has the right to know how their government operates, what decisions are being made, and why. This also includes enabling journalists to gather information, critically monitor government actions, and provide society with reliable news.

In recent years, significant progress has been made in the field of openness and transparency. The Dutch Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo) has been enacted, expanding the right to information. Since September 2022, the decision notes for all parliamentary documents are also made public. A decision note provides an overview of considerations, alternatives, relevant facts, and risks for the government official. By making these decision notes public, it becomes clear and comprehensible how decisions are made.

The essence of an open government is also reflected in the newly revised text of the civil servant oath of office, which was recently updated for the first time in 25 years. In this revision, we make it even clearer that those working in government do so not for their own benefit but for the public interest, in service to society. Taking responsibility for an open government is an integral part of this service.

With this action plan, the fifth since its introduction in 2011, we build on previous action plans. Despite these positive steps, much remains to be done to be the open government we want to be.

By ensuring that information is actively shared, that information requests are processed on time, and by actively involving all Dutch residents in decision-making processes so that they can have their voices heard and exert influence. In this way we ensure that everyone, regardless of background or skills, can access and benefit from the opportunities offered by open government.

Not only in the Netherlands are we working towards an open and responsive government, we can also learn a lot from the knowledge and experience of other countries, and they can learn from us. That is why the Netherlands has been an active member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) since its creation in 2011. This action plan has been developed in collaboration with the civil society coalition 'Talking About Information' and is also being implemented in partnership with the coalition. The coalition includes various stakeholders: civil society organizations, businesses, and knowledge institutions. Through seven thematic areas, the goal is to shape an open government, including improving accessibility, fostering dialogue on information needs, and empowering every citizen to have a grip on their own information.

This coalition shows that the path to open government is not the responsibility of government alone. It can only take shape through the involvement of everyone. Through dissent and criticism, but also through dialogue and an ongoing search for what unites us. Here lies a task for all of us.

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations,
Hanke Bruins Slot

Summary

Since 2011, the Netherlands has been a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), a global collaboration focused on promoting an open and responsive government. As a member of the OGP, the Netherlands is required to develop a national Open Government Action Plan. The fifth action plan, which covers the period from 2023 to 2027, has now been presented to the Dutch House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer).

The action plan builds upon previous efforts to achieve an open government and comprises 17 commitments within 7 themes. These themes are derived from the manifesto “Talking About Information” by the respective civil society coalition. They encompass improving information accessibility, involving citizens in decision-making processes, and fostering a cultural shift towards greater openness within government organizations.

The Open Government Action Plan is a (non-exhaustive) compilation of efforts that include existing initiatives as well as new endeavors, all directed towards the realization of an open government. The goal is to ensure that everyone, irrespective of their background or skills, has access to and can benefit from the opportunities offered by an open government. It is important to note that the Open Government Action Plan is different from the Dutch Government’s Multi-year plan for Public Access and Information Management (Meerjarenplan Openbaarheid en Informatiehuishouding), which focuses on the accessibility of information and improving information management in the context of Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo).

The previous Open Government Action Plan of the Netherlands was positively evaluated in an independent evaluation, and its self-evaluation can be found on the OGP website. The fifth action plan was developed through close collaboration between the government, civil society, and knowledge institutions, with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations taking on a coordinating role.



1. Introduction

Since 2011, the Netherlands has been a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). As part of this membership, the Netherlands previously developed and implemented an Open Government Action Plan every two years. This action plan is the fifth and, for the first time, has a duration of four years (2023-2027). The four-year period ensures continuity and sustainability in stakeholder engagement with the action plan and the OGP process. The Open Government Action Plan contributes to fostering collaboration among government organizations, civil society organizations, and citizens towards a more open government.

Trust in government is a crucial pillar of our democracy. In recent years, this trust has come under pressure. By providing information more openly and actively, transparency around policy choices increases, which can enhance trust in government. Openness also contributes to the proper functioning of government and is necessary for fulfilling its responsibilities. A sound information management system enables government to carry out its tasks reliably and transparently. This, in turn, helps journalists, citizens, and researchers to be better and more promptly served. Promoting openness and public disclosure are fundamental values of Dutch democratic rule of law.

In addition to providing information, it is important to improve the information relationship between the government and citizens and to be responsive as a government. Open government does not only mean disclosing more information, but also listening to citizens, being accountable for policies, and improving processes based on feedback. The individual choices of civil servants play a crucial role in this and determine the quality of our services. This requires professional expertise and attention to working towards disclosure. The fifth Dutch Open Government Action Plan includes commitments that align with these developments. For example, actively gathering ideas and opinions from citizens through digital platforms, working towards inclusive services, and promoting a cultural shift towards more openness within government organizations.

Over the years, an active network of professionals has emerged around the action plan who are committed to promoting a more open government, both within and outside government. Every quarter, the commitment leads and stakeholders come together to discuss progress, exchange knowledge and experiences, and provide support whenever possible. These diverse parties include organizations such as Open State Foundation, Institute for Social Innovation, Netwerk Democracy, Transparency International Netherlands, and the Dutch chapter of the Internet Society (Isoc).

The development of a new action plan always involves collaboration with multiple partners from both within and outside government.

The action plan is part of the government-wide Open Government Program (POO). The action plan has a broader scope than the POO, both in terms of topics and stakeholders involved. It covers all levels of government as well as societal stakeholders. We also build upon what has been achieved in previous action plans. At the same time, we sought external feedback to ensure that the themes identified align with societal needs and to gather insights into other relevant aspects. To leverage the strengths of both the government and civil society, the action plan has established a close collaboration with the civil society coalition 'Over Informatie Gesproken' (Talking About Information).

Therefore, this action plan is organized according to the various solution directions proposed by the coalition in its [manifesto Talking About Information](#).

1. Citizens own their own information
2. Improve accessibility
3. Equal information position of citizens
4. Enhancing active and passive public disclosure
5. Dialogue on information needs and research
6. Awareness, training, culture change and experimentation
7. Renewal of the civil servant oath of office

The action plan was developed with active input from partners in civil society, making it a great example of open co-creation. We also aim for a collaborative approach in implementing commitments, investing in the engagement of relevant stakeholders from various layers within and outside the government. This collaboration will continue unabated in the coming period.



2. Open government efforts to date

Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo)

This is the first Open Government Action Plan following the enactment of the Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo) since May 1, 2022. The Woo is the successor to the Public Access Act (Wet openbaarheid van bestuur or Wob) and regulates citizens' right to access information from the government. It ensures that everyone has insight into the government's actions. This enables everyone to scrutinize the government and have the opportunity to exert influence. The basic principle is that everyone has the right to government information. Therefore, in principle, all government information is public. Only in exceptional cases, to safeguard justified interests such as privacy and security, deviations from this principle are allowed.

This new law mandates a wide range of open government reforms. For example, the Woo explicitly includes proactive disclosure alongside the disclosure of government information upon request. Due to these legal obligations, the focus of open government efforts in the Netherlands is on disclosure and improving information management. At the same time, the Woo raises new questions, which are also addressed in this fifth action plan. For example, it addresses which information should be proactively disclosed and how it meets the needs of citizens.

Proactive disclosure of decision notes

Since Prinsjesdag 2022 (Prince's Day or Budget day in the Netherlands, takes place annually on the third Tuesday in September), the decision notes accompanying all parliamentary documents have been made public. These decision notes are the underlying documents that the government official used to make decisions regarding the document to be sent to the parliament. A decision note presents considerations, alternatives, relevant facts, and risks for the government official. By making these decision notes public, it becomes transparent and traceable how decisions have been made.

Proactive disclosure under the Woo (Woo-index)

The Woo mandates public authorities to proactively disclose information, including at least 17 categories of information such as contact details and research reports. This obligation is being implemented gradually, category by category. Currently, some categories are already proactively disclosed, such as laws and parliamentary documents, in anticipation of the enforcement of the obligation under the Woo. The remaining categories will be further developed this year, providing clarity to public authorities regarding the specific information they need to disclose for each category. In the second half of this year, the Woo-index will be launched, allowing public authorities to align with it and make their information publicly available. This will ensure that the information is easily accessible and searchable from a central location.

Disclosure upon request

The Open Government Act (Woo) ensures that everyone has the right to access public information without having to provide a reason. However, there are several exceptions, such as personal data or confidential business information shared with the government. Under the Woo, the government is required to process requests for disclosure of information (Woo requests) more quickly than before, specifically within 4 weeks with an additional 2 weeks for complex or large requests. Currently, this is not yet the practice in implementation.

Government organizations are working hard to improve the handling of requests, with the aim of processing more requests faster. The following measures have been taken to improve the handling of Woo requests:

- A public, government-wide Woo instruction has been established upon the enactment of the Woo, ensuring that government organizations handle Woo requests in a consistent manner.
- Multiple communication tools, guidelines, and training programs have been developed for employees and managers to support the implementation of the Woo.
- Many government organizations are currently utilizing Woo support tools (such as search and find software and redaction software).

- The capacity for processing information requests has been expanded in various organizations.
- Several ministries have initiated Woo pilots in 2023, implementing measures to accelerate and improve the Woo process.
- Lastly, government organizations have implemented various measures within their own organizations to optimize the process of handling Woo requests.

Improving Information Management

To provide information quickly and comprehensively, having well-organized information management is crucial. In response to the report '[Unprecedented Injustice](#)' by the Childcare Allowance Parliamentary Inquiry Committee (Parlementaire ondervragingscommissie Kinderopvangtoeslag or POK), a plan to improve the information management of the Dutch government was published in 2022 ([action plan 'Open in Order'](#)). The update of this plan will be included in the Multi-year plan for Public Access and Information Management (Meerjarenplan Openbaarheid en Informatiehuishouding), which will be sent to the House of Representatives in 2023 for the new parliamentary year.

Advisory Board on Public Access and Information Management

In 2022, the Advisory Board on Public Access and Information Management (Adviescollege Openbaarheid en Informatiehuishouding or ACOI) was established. In the same year, the chairperson and three members of the board were appointed. The ACOI provides both solicited and unsolicited advice to the government and the parliament on the implementation of regulations regarding the disclosure of public information. Additionally, the board acts as a mediator between public authorities and professional information requesters who have filed a complaint with the ACOI regarding the manner in which the public authority discloses public information. The ACOI also promotes the application of the Woo (Open Government Act).

Open Government at Local and Regional Government Levels

Local and regional governments are also actively working towards an open government. The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten or VNG) supports municipalities through the project 'Control over Information' (Grip op Informatie), which assists municipalities in organizing their information management, proactively disclosing government information, and making it available as open data. The VNG organizes annual knowledge-sharing events such as the 'Week of Control over Information' (Week van Grip op Informatie),

where municipalities and other government organizations collaborate on these topics. On the [project's website](#), all webinars, along with their presentations, Q&As, and guidelines, can be found. There is also a [Knowledge Base for Control over Information](#). Since the fall of 2022, two ambassadors have been working on the project. These former mayors are dedicated to accelerating the implementation of the Woo and increasing the awareness among governmental officials about the importance of a transparent government.

At the provincial level, the twelve provinces collaborate on proactive disclosure within the Association of Provincial Authorities (Interprovinciaal Overleg or IPO). They combine their efforts to disclose documents and participate in the algorithm register. The Association of Dutch Water Authorities (Unie van Waterschappen or UWV) also focuses on proactive disclosure of information and disclosure upon request within water boards. They adapt information systems and business processes and raise awareness among employees about the importance of disclosure. These collective efforts contribute to a more open and transparent government at the local and regional levels.

Learning from international experiences

In 2022, at the request of the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), Leiden University conducted an [international comparative study](#) on legislation regarding the disclosure of government information in six different countries. The countries examined were Sweden, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Slovenia, and Estonia. Additionally, various (digital) study visits were made to OGP (Open Government Partnership) member countries in 2022 and 2023. Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Norway shared their knowledge and expertise on open government practices. The outcomes of these visits were compiled into a [publication](#). By looking beyond national borders, potential best practices can be identified that the Netherlands could adopt.

Building on previous action plans

For this fifth action plan, we did not start from scratch. We are building upon the experiences gained during the development and implementation of the previous four action plans. These lessons are provided in independent reviews by the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and documented in self-assessments. The assessment of the previous action plan indicates that despite internal shifts and competing priorities within the government, the level of implementation remained high. 10 out of 13 commitments were largely or fully completed. In addition to independent reviews, the OGP asks for self-assessments. Some key points highlighted in the most recent self-assessment include the following:

- The involvement and enthusiasm of individuals does not automatically translate into organizational involvement as a whole. It is important to be aware of this and inquire about support within the organization.
- It is crucial to ensure that expectations are realistic and to be clear about the (formal) status of input during the consultation phase of the action plan. Additionally, there are often requests where the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), as the coordinator of the plan, depends on the willingness of other ministries and organizations as the subjects fall under their jurisdiction.
- Furthermore, it is of great importance to carefully address follow-up actions by informing stakeholders about how their input will be utilized and how they can follow the development and implementation of the action plan (via open-overheid.nl).



3. Action plan development process

Co-creation

In the development of the fifth Open Government Action Plan, co-creation is central. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) has collaborated with other government entities and civil society organizations. Lessons learned from stakeholder meetings, experiences from previous action plans, and independent evaluations by the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) are incorporated into this new action plan.

Civil society coalition Talking About Information

In 2022, it was decided to merge the Open Government Alliance with the civil society coalition, as a similar initiative had been launched under the Open Government Action Plan in 2020. The coalition comprises a wide range of stakeholders from civil society, government, business, and academia. Organizations such as IBM, NLdigital, the Institute for Social Innovation (IMI), the National Archives, and the Sustainable Digital Information Management Program are involved in the coalition. The coalition aims to foster an equal information relationship between citizens and government, where citizens are co-owners of information and contribute to a strong democracy.

Op 17 november 2022, the coalition presented a manifesto that outlined seven concerns and seven directions for solutions regarding the information relationship between the government and citizens. The coalition and the ministry worked closely together to incorporate these solution directions into the fifth action plan.

The manifesto identified the following seven solution directions that shape the structure and content of this action plan:

1. Citizens own their own information
2. Improve accessibility
3. Equal information position of citizens
4. Enhancing active and passive public disclosure
5. Dialogue on information needs and research
6. Awareness, training, culture change and experimentation
7. Renewal of the civil servant oath of office

Significant progress has already been made and continues to be made in some of these solution directions. For instance, for the first time in 25 years, the civil servant oath of office, which civil servants

take upon entering central government service, is being changed. The new oath emphasizes even more clearly that those who work for the government are not working for themselves but in service of society. The revised oath explicitly highlights that handling information with care and promoting an open government are essential aspects of this service.

Themes with introductions

I. Citizens own their own information

In order to provide certain services, the government necessarily has a lot of information about the activities and behavior of its citizens. However, those same citizens often have limited insight into what data is collected about them and how it is used. It is crucial to find a balance between the information needs of the government and the rights of citizens. By striving for a stronger information position for citizens, we can create a more balanced system that respects both the interests of the government and the protection of citizens' privacy.

II. Improve accessibility

It is important that government information is accessible to all citizens, regardless of their digital skills. This means that citizens should always have the opportunity to interact with the government in a way that is accessible to them, even if it is not digital. This promotes equality and inclusivity, ensuring that no one is excluded from important information and services. Additionally, government information is not always stored and made available in an accessible manner, which makes it difficult to find and reuse information. Improving this is crucial to increase access to government information for everyone.

III. Equal information position of citizens

An important principle in a democratic rule of law is that citizens should have access to the same public information as the government itself. This public information is financed with public resources and should, in principle, be accessible to the public. Although there are exceptions, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (Algemene verordening gegevensbescherming or AVG) and information related to criminal investigations or national security, transparency is essential. Moreover, citizens should be able to actively participate in the democratic process by providing input to the policymaking process based on equal access to information alongside the government.

IV. Enhancing active and passive public disclosure

The Open Government Act (Woo) is an important step towards a more open and transparent government. However, there is still room for improvement. The implementation of the Woo has encountered difficulties in certain areas, such as the processing times for Woo requests. Efforts are being made across the government to improve and expedite this process, as described in Chapter 2 on Open government efforts thus far. At the same time, there is still much work to be done. It is desirable that the improvement of proactive disclosure and disclosure upon request is approached from a societal perspective as well.

V. Dialogue on information needs and research

The disclosure of government information serves society. Therefore, it is essential for the government to involve citizens, civil society organizations, and businesses in the development of policies regarding information and participation in the policy-making process. Through research and dialogue with citizens, we identify their needs in terms of information provision, accessibility, and disposal. In this way, we aim to strengthen the information relationship between the government and society.

VI. Awareness, training, culture change and experimentation

A progressive disclosure policy requires an open work culture. It is important to raise awareness among citizens, civil servants, and policymakers about the value of information. This can include developing educational materials that emphasize the importance of working with open, accessible, simple, and clear information. However, this alone is not sufficient. It requires ongoing commitment and attention from civil servants to become aware of their actions. By promoting a cultural shift where civil servants prioritize the interests of society, we contribute to a new governance culture.

VII. Renewal of the civil servant oath of office

The oath of office taken by civil servants at the start of their service in the central government has been revised for the first time in 25 years. The new oath emphasizes the essence of working in government: serving society. The revised text places extra emphasis on the responsibility of fostering an open government. To give meaning to the new oath, sessions will be organized and conversations will take place at various places and moments. By jointly exploring what working towards an open and transparent government entails in practice, we ensure that the oath is effectively upheld within government organizations, by both new and existing employees.

Timeline

A new action plan is always developed in collaboration with a diversity of partners. The development of the fifth Open Government Action Plan started in 2022 with exploratory discussions within and outside the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK). The new action plan was announced and a call for input was made during the Program Council of the Open Government Program, the Interdepartmental Consultation on Open Government, and a meeting with commitment leads and stakeholders. Below is an overview of the consultations and meetings where the Open Government Action Plan was on the agenda:

- Meeting with commitment leads and stakeholders – March 30, 2022
- Program council open government – April 7, 2022
- Interdepartmental consultation on open government – April 14, 2022
- Interdepartmental Woo meeting
- Stakeholder meeting – September 21, 2022
- Meeting with stakeholders and Alan Wu (person of contact OGP) – October 7, 2022
- Meeting with representatives of municipalities, provinces and water boards – May 1, 2023
- Starting from early 2023, there have been weekly meetings between the Open Government Program (POO) and the civil society coalition Talking About Information.

In addition to the above consultations and meetings, numerous discussions have taken place in smaller settings and on a one-on-one basis with (potential) commitment leads and other stakeholders.

Communication

To engage a broad audience of citizens and professionals in the process surrounding the Open Government Action Plan, the website open-overheid.nl is utilized. This website provides information about previous action plans and their implementation. It also offers information about the development of the fifth action plan and invites everyone to contribute their input and participate in the civil society coalition Talking About Information.



4. Commitments

I. Citizens own their own information

1. Control of own data

Commitment lead: Waag Futurelab

Supporting stakeholders: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the civil society coalition Talking About Information

Duration: September 2023 - December 2023

In order to provide certain services, the government necessarily has a lot of information about the activities and behavior of its citizens. However, those same citizens often have limited insight into what data is collected about them and how it is used. Through research, this commitment provides insight into the available tools that citizens can use to gain more control over their own data.

To present this information in an accessible way, an infographic will be created. This infographic provides a clear picture of the various options available for gaining control over personal data.

In addition, a report will be prepared for those who seek more detailed background information.

II. Improve accessibility

2. Public Access Center Amsterdam

Commitment lead: Municipality of Amsterdam

Supporting stakeholders: Open State Foundation

Duration: September 2023 - December 2024

The Municipality of Amsterdam is working on the Public Access Center Amsterdam. Anyone with an information request can turn to the Public Access Center. At the Public Access Center, you will be assisted in searching, finding, and using information, both digitally and physically. Additionally, the Public Access Center serves as a space for dialogue on open government, a place to co-design with users, a hub for knowledge development and sharing, and a platform for organizing dissent.

3. FAIR Woo files

Commitment lead: University of Amsterdam

Supporting stakeholders: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Open State Foundation, IMI, Government Program for Sustainable Digital Information Management (RDDI), VNG, IPO, Dutch Water Authorities, National Archives, and Open webconcept

Duration: September 2023 - December 2023

This commitment aims to publish the results of information requests under the Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo) according to the FAIR principles: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. This ensures, for example, that searching within documents is facilitated.

The commitment focuses on raising awareness through the Woo Coordinators' Meeting of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO), professional literature, and a website showcasing best practices. Technical support is also provided to governing bodies, and a FAIR Woo Publication Award is presented to recognize and encourage governing bodies to publish reusable information.

4. Open standards

Commitment lead: Forum Standardization

Supporting stakeholders: Government-wide consultation on digital public policy (OBDO)

Duration: September 2023 - November 2027

Forum Standardization aims to promote the use of and accountability for the implementation of open standards. Forum Standardization assesses (semi-)annually the implementation of the open standards listed under the "comply or explain" policy. These evaluations reveal that there is still significant room for improvement. Fortunately, these measurements have had a positive impact on the adoption of open standards. Additionally, there is an intention to organize an event on openness, covering topics such as open source, open data, and open government. The goal is to increase awareness, convince stakeholders of the importance of using open standards, stimulate action, and gain administrative support.

5. Multi-year plan for Public Access and Information

Management of the Dutch Government

Commitment lead: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Supporting stakeholders: Central government and subnational governments

Duration: September 2023

Currently, information from the Dutch central government is often organized and made accessible only when it is requested as part of an information request or when information is transferred to the National Archives after twenty years. As a result, information is difficult to find, and processing information requests requires a significant amount of time and effort. Solving this problem is a complex challenge that will require much time and effort from government organizations. The multi-year plan focuses on

improving both information management and the disclosure of government information, enabling these issues to be addressed collectively. The multi-year plan outlines how the Dutch central government will ensure sustainable access to its digital government information. It provides a long-term perspective and outlines the steps to be taken in the short term.

III. Equal information position of citizens

6. Information position of citizens and businesses in administrative proceedings

Commitment lead: Leiden University

Supporting stakeholders: Ministry of Justice and Security, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, IMI

Duration: October 2023 - June 2024

In an administrative proceedings, it is important to ensure an equal information position between citizens and the government. However, in practice, it is often argued that there is an information asymmetry between the two parties. To address this issue, a research is conducted to identify specific obstacles experienced by citizens, businesses and governments and explore potential solutions. The findings of this research are compiled into a report that is submitted to the Ministries of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and Justice and Security, as well as the judiciary. Additionally, an expert meeting is organized to raise awareness of the issue among the involved stakeholders.

7. Open Parliament

Commitment lead: ProDemos

Supporting stakeholders: Relevant partners

Duration: September 2023 - December 2026

An open government starts with the foundation: citizens who are familiar with the rules of democracy and the rule of law, and who know what they can do to exert influence. Education center ProDemos has a unique role in making democracy and the rule of law accessible to a wide audience. Their mission is to inform and engage as many people as possible in the Netherlands about democracy. They do this by organizing activities that enhance people's knowledge and skills to participate in democracy. They focus on youth, with a special focus on vocational education (MBO), and strive to reach a broader adult audience. ProDemos also undertakes various activities to enable people to make informed choices in elections and is brainstorming with partners on the future of a new Parliamentary Visitors Center.

8. Strengthening citizen participation with digital tools

Commitment lead: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Supporting stakeholders: ICTU

Duration: September 2023 - December 2025

The Dutch government aims to actively involve citizens in finding policy solutions for societal challenges. To achieve this, AI-driven digital tools for citizen consultation and consensus-building, known as eConsultation, will be deployed and further developed. Research indicates that citizen engagement through eConsultation can enhance the quality of government decision-making. The Pol.is tool provides an accessible platform where citizens and policymakers can propose ideas, vote on them, and reflect on group input. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations aims to further develop the Pol.is tool for national use. The intended outcome is an open-source platform that complies with the Web Accessibility Guidelines, ensuring safety, privacy protection, and GDPR compliance. By 2025, the ministry's goal is to offer at least three opportunities for public participation in policy development through Pol.is. The use of eConsultation tools ensures that the desires and ideas of citizens are better incorporated into policy development.

IV. Enhancing active and passive public disclosure

9. Implementation assessment of the Open Government Act

Commitment lead: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Supporting stakeholders: Other ministries, government bodies and subnational governments, Advisory Board on Public Access and Information Management (ACOI), Government Commissioner for Information Management, High Councils of State, and Woo requesters

Duration: September 2023

One year after the enactment of the Dutch Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo), an implementation assessment of the Act is conducted to evaluate the actual progress and identify any challenges related to the law. An independent external research agency carries out an inventory study to identify the experienced challenges and best practices. At the start of the implementation assessment, a participatory element is ensured through exploratory discussions with various parties. This allows their input to be taken into account in the survey and interviews. Additionally, the end of the implementation assessment also includes a participatory validation session to consider scenarios with different parties. Based on this and taking into account the [comparative law study on freedom of information legislation](#), the research agency will provide recommendations for the identified issues. The report is presented to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and subsequently submitted to the House of Representatives. This report serves as input for further policy decisions to improve access to government information and optimize the practicability of the Woo for government bodies. Following the implementation assessment, the Advisory Board on Public Access and Information Management (ACOI) and the Government Commissioner for Information Management are requested to reflect on the outcomes and provide advice.

10. Central Government Annual Report on Operational Management

Commitment lead: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Supporting stakeholders: Other ministries

Duration: Yearly from 2023

The new Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo) represents a significant step to a more open government. An important component of the Woo is that anyone can request a public authority to disclose information. The government body is required to make a decision on the disclosure of information within four plus two weeks. Both government organizations and civil society organizations have indicated to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations that the processing times for Woo requests are too long. The legally prescribed deadlines are often not met. The exact figures were long unknown. Starting from 2023, the handling of information requests within the Dutch central government will be reported annually in the Central Government Annual Report on Operational Management to improve transparency and openness.

11. Open data

Commitment lead: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
Supporting stakeholders: VNG, Geonovum, Intergovernmental Data Strategy (IBDS)

Duration: September 2023 - December 2027

Government organizations produce and use a wide variety of data to carry out public tasks. The use of open data can stimulate entrepreneurship, lead to innovations and help to address various societal challenges. However, at present, the potential of open data in the Netherlands is not fully utilized. The European High Value Dataset Regulation provides an opportunity to boost the availability of open data. To fully harness the potential that this regulation has to offer, it is essential to provide support in implementing the regulation. This is achieved by increasing the involvement of government organizations, addressing governance issues, and providing guidance on privacy matters.

12. Open Source Program Office

Commitment lead: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Supporting stakeholders: Tax Administration, VNG, Province South Holland, Cadastre, Alliander, NL Net, SIDN Fund, Open State Foundation, Public Spaces, Foundation for Public Code

Duration: January 2024 - December 2027

Open source software has become essential in the ICT infrastructure of the Dutch government due to several benefits. Making the source code publicly available promotes transparency, trust, and collaboration with stakeholders, other government entities, and citizens. It also enhances security, efficiency, and innovation. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) has already taken steps by releasing source codes through a 'BZK Github', such as those for the

DigiD app. Additionally, the European digital identity (eID) is being developed as open source. To promote and support open source practices, an Open Source Program Office (OSPO) is being established within the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Knowledge, experiences, and events related to open source practices are shared through a newsletter and the [website Open source \(pleio.nl\)](https://www.pleio.nl).

13. Open procurement

Commitment lead: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
Supporting stakeholders: Other ministries, Procurement Execution Centers (IUC's), Open State Foundation, Open Contracting Partnership (OCP)

Duration: January 2024 - January 2026

On December 1, 2022, the public procurement platform 'Rijksinkoop' (Doing Business with the Government – Zakendoen met het Rijk) was launched online. This commitment aims to maximize the use of this platform by improving the information provided and expanding its scope to cover all aspects of government procurement, potentially including provinces and municipalities. The open platform enhances access to information about government procurement for citizens, businesses, and interest organizations. The desired information is organized and explained in an accessible manner, including the option to ask follow-up questions. This commitment contributes to obtaining optimal bids for procurement using public funds and promotes transparent and comprehensible procurement practices by the government.

V. Dialogue on information needs and research

14. Research on information needs and protocols

Commitment lead: Institute for Social Innovation (IMI)

Supporting stakeholders: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, VNG, Civil society coalition Talking About Information, Open State Foundation, Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ), Netherlands Association of Investigative Journalists (NVOJ), Leiden University

Duration: March 2024 - December 2024

Limited research has been conducted on the information needs of users of government information. This commitment aims to address this by conducting research on the information needs of society and exploring the possibilities of information protocols. This involves engaging in conversations with journalists, civil society organizations, and government officials. By gaining a better understanding of information needs, the government can develop guidelines for proactively disclosing information with priority. This ensures that users of the Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo), such as citizens, journalists, researchers, and civil society organizations, receive the information they need.

15. Societal benefits of transparency

Commitment lead: Institute for Social Innovation (IMI) and the Civil society coalition Talking About Information

Supporting stakeholders: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, National Archives, VNG, Government Program for Sustainable Digital Information Management (RDDI), Open State Foundation, Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ), Netherlands Association of Investigative Journalists (NVOJ), Leiden University

Duration: March 2024 - December 2024

In recent years, research has been conducted on the costs of transparency, but less attention has been given to its societal effects and benefits. In light of discussions on government information transparency, it is important to gain more insight into the advantages of openness. This commitment aims to achieve this by identifying the societal benefits of openness through literature research, an analysis of the Public Access Act (Wob) and the Open Government Act (Woo) requests from the past 15 years, and interviews with stakeholders. This commitment will lead to a clearer understanding of the benefits of transparency and contribute to improved accountability of the transparency regime. This commitment will result in a better understanding of the advantages of openness.

16. Professionalization of Participation

Commitment lead: Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management

Supporting stakeholders: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen

Duration: October 2023 - November 2024

Engaging stakeholders through participation is essential in the development and implementation of policies. Policy officers also want to apply participation because they believe it can improve policies. The Knowledge Hub for Participation, established by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, aims to further develop the field of participation. An updated strategic knowledge agenda will be published based on experiences, input, and a knowledge conference. In addition, there will be a focus on more intensive interdepartmental collaboration in the field of participation, and a digital tool will be developed to support design choices for participation plans. These developments contribute to the professionalization of the field of participation.

VI. Awareness, training, culture change and experimentation

17. Guide to Professionalism in Civil Service

Commitment lead: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Supporting stakeholders: Advisory Council on Public Information

Duration: October 2023 - December 2024

The Guide to Professionalism in Civil Service (Gids Ambtelijk Vakmanschap) by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations provides guidance on the values that form the basis for the work of the government. It offers civil servants practical tools and inspiring examples to put the values of openness and transparency into practice within an open government. Through dialogues on openness and publicness, these values gain meaning in daily work practice, and civil servants learn to make joint considerations. Good practice examples are documented for inspiration. Additionally, research is being conducted on how establish moral precedents (moral jurisprudence or moresprudentie) can be developed based on experiences to support civil servants in critical moments of their work. These experiences contribute to the further development of the guide and foster an open working culture within the government.

VII. Renewal of the civil servant oath of office

The oath of office for civil servants in the Dutch government has been revised after 25 years. The new oath emphasizes serving society and taking responsibility for an open government. To give meaning to the new oath, various sessions and conversations will be organized. In these sessions, employees are encouraged to express their views and engage in dialogue about the importance of working openly and transparently. By promoting a culture change where civil servants act primarily in the interest of society, we contribute to a renewed governance culture.



5. Conclusion

The fifth Open Government Action Plan demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the Netherlands to achieve an open and responsive government. The pursuit of a transparent and participatory government is crucial in enhancing citizens' trust in the democratic rule of law. This action plan emphasizes the value of openness, accountability, listening to citizens, and improving processes based on feedback.

The implementation of the Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo) marks a significant milestone in the Netherlands' efforts to achieve a more open government. This law aims to increase transparency and active disclosure of government information. Concrete steps towards greater openness and comprehensibility of decision-making processes include the publication of decision memos for all parliamentary documents and the proactive disclosure of specific categories of information under the Woo.

The action plan also recognizes the importance of an improved information relationship between the government and citizens. Through digital platforms and dialogue, the action plan aims to enhance citizen engagement and amplify their voices in decision-making processes. Pursuing an equitable information position for all citizens and promoting awareness, education, and cultural change within government organizations are other significant aspects highlighted in the action plan.

Furthermore, the action plan emphasizes collaboration and co-creation with civil society organizations, businesses, and knowledge institutions. The civil society coalition Talking About Information (Over Informatie Gesproken) plays a crucial role in the pursuit of a collective approach. This demonstrates that the path to an open government is not solely the responsibility of the government, but a shared responsibility among all stakeholders involved.

While significant progress has already been made, the action plan acknowledges that there is still much work to be done in achieving the desired open government. Timely processing of information requests, promoting a cultural shift within government organizations, and ensuring accessibility for all citizens remain important challenges.

In a time when trust in governments worldwide is under pressure, the Netherlands demonstrates its commitment to promoting openness, participation, and accountability with this action plan. The path to an open government is a collaborative effort involving the government, civil society organizations, knowledge institutions, and citizens. By building upon previous efforts and working together towards the objectives of the action plan, the Netherlands is moving closer to achieving an open government where transparency, participation, and accountability are central.

Appendix. Formats

I. Citizens own their own information

In order to provide certain services, the government necessarily has a lot of information about the activities and behavior of its citizens. However, those same citizens often have limited insight into what data is collected about them and how it is used. It is crucial to find a balance between the information needs of the government and the rights of citizens. By striving for a stronger information position for citizens, we can create a more balanced system that respects both the interests of the government and the protection of citizens' privacy.

1. Control of own data

Commitment 1 – Control of own data			
Brief Description of the Commitment	In today's digital society, information is central, but we often do not have a clear picture of where all our information goes. There is an imbalance in access to information between governments and businesses on one side and citizens on the other. Citizens often don't know where their data goes, who uses it and for what purpose. Through an inventarization and three case studies, we want to give citizens insight into available tools that can give them more control over their data.		
Commitment Lead	Waag Futurelab		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)	Civil society coalition Talking About Information	
Period Covered	2023		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Citizens often do not know where their data goes, who uses it and for what purpose. This has led to growing distrust between citizens, government and businesses.
- When data is not used correctly, citizens can suffer adverse consequences and it is often difficult to seek justice. This was evident, for example, in the childcare benefits scandal, where data was used improperly, resulting in personal tragedies.
- This research focuses on restoring citizens' trust in government and improving the unequal information relationship between the two parties. We explore ways in which citizens can gain more control over their data and provide tools to exercise this control. Through these efforts, we aim to promote trust in government.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- The causes of the problem include:
 - There is a lack of transparency about:
 - What data is collected from citizens.
 - Where this data goes.
 - How this data is used and by whom.
 - Citizens have limited ability to gain control over their data and its use.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- There is a Privacy Act designed to protect citizens' data. However, it is often not clear to citizens what their rights are regarding data protection, nor how they can exercise these rights. It is important to provide more insight into this issue. In addition, it is necessary to provide citizens with tools that allow them to exercise more control over their data and its use.
- Steps are already being taken in specific areas, such as in healthcare with the introduction of the Personal Health Environment (Persoonlijke Gezondheidsomgeving or PGO).

2. What solution are you proposing?

- The goal of this research is to identify available methods to give citizens more control over their data. We are interested in both technical tools and data governance approaches (ethical principles and guidelines and their integration into the social organization around data management) that enable citizens to gain control over their data.
- The research questions we want to answer are as follows:
 1. What technological and governance approaches are available to gain more control over one's own data?
 2. What initiatives already exist in the Netherlands to give people control over their data and how are these initiatives perceived?
 3. Are there possible good examples abroad (via a quick scan)?
- Currently, citizens have limited insight into how they can exercise control over the use of their data. We want to conduct this study to give citizens more insight into what they can do.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- The results we want to achieve by implementing this commitment are as follows:
 - An infographic that provides insight into different approaches to data management that citizens can use,
 - A report that (a) describes the available methods to gain control over data, as mentioned in policy reports, websites and articles, and (b) describes the experiences with these methods, and the potential to give citizens more control over data, based on cases selected by the steering committee with representatives from the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations and the civil society coalition Talking About Information.
 - Present and share the final results with the Ministry, the steering committee and the civil society coalition Talking About Information.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	The infographic gives citizens an accessible understanding of the various existing ways to gain control over their data. The report will provide necessary background information for those who want to know more. And the presentation will provide insight to the Ministry and steering committee so they are aware of available methods and stakeholder evaluation.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	The overall project helps promote transparency about the methods available to gain more control over one's data. If citizens are more aware of the methods of gaining control over their data, they may use them. If the stakeholder evaluation shows that the methods available to gain control over data are inadequate, the government may conclude that improvements are needed.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	The civil society coalition is one of the supporting partners of this project and will be actively involved in both implementation and evaluation of the results. We will conduct interviews with stakeholders who have experience with the various methods of gaining control over data. The findings of these interviews will be included in the report as an output of this project.

CommitmentPlanning					
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders		
Input for report: based on literature review (M1)	Presentation to steering committee (D1)	Month 3	Lead: Waag Futurelab		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			Ministry of BZK	Civil society coalition Talking About Information	
Input for report: description of interview results (M2)	Report (D2) Infographic (D3) Presentation to steering committee (D4)	Month 6	Lead: Waag Futurelab		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			Ministry of BZK	Civil society coalition Talking About Information	

II. Improve accessibility

It is important that government information is accessible to all citizens, regardless of their digital skills. This means that citizens should always have the opportunity to interact with the government in a way that is accessible to them, even if it is not digital.

This promotes equality and inclusivity, ensuring that no one is excluded from important information and services. Additionally, government information is not always stored and made available in an accessible manner, which makes it difficult to find and reuse information. Improving this is crucial to increase access to government information for everyone.

2. Public Access Center Amsterdam

Commitment 2 – Public Access Center Amsterdam			
Brief Description of the Commitment	We are working on an Public Access Center Amsterdam. Everyone with an information request can turn to the Openness Center Amsterdam. At the Openness Center, you can receive assistance with searching, finding, and using information, both digitally and physically. Additionally, the Public Access Center serves as a hub for dialogue on open government, a space for co-designing with users, a platform for knowledge development and sharing, and a venue for organizing dissent.		
Commitment Lead	Municipality of Amsterdam		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
		Open State Foundation	
Period Covered	2023 -2024		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Everyone has the right to access information. However, for many people, government information is difficult to find or understand/use. Not everyone has the same information needs, information literacy, digital skills, and/or language skills. While it may be sufficient for one person to simply place information “as is” on a website, it may not be accessible for others due to various reasons.
- This means that a significant group of potential users lacks (easy) access to information, with all the resulting consequences: they cannot hold the government accountable, cannot fully participate, and this affects trust and other factors.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- There are several causes of this problem, including:
 - The Open Government Act requires information to be made accessible in digital form but does not address physical accessibility. The designated contact person, as stated in the law, can partially bridge this gap.
 - The government’s information management is not in order, making it unclear what information the municipality possesses.
 - Insufficient consideration has been given to the comprehensibility and accessibility of documents for everyone.
 - Inadequate service provision has been organized for information requests regarding recent information, while this differs for historical information.
 - Insufficient consideration is given to the impact and outcomes for different target groups when designing systems and processes, without input from the target groups themselves.
 - Etc.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- In recent years, the focus has primarily been on internal organization and laying the foundation: implementing information management systems, streamlining processes for handling information (Woo) requests, shaping organizational behavior and culture, establishing operational rules, and so on. While this forms an important groundwork, it is not sufficient to reach a broad audience as described earlier.
- Amsterdam has established the publication platform open.amsterdam for proactive disclosure of information. The development of this platform involved conducting user research, which informed the launch of an initial version (0.1). Based on the experiences thus far, there are plans for further development of open.amsterdam as part of the Public Access Center Amsterdam.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- Placing only legally required information on a website is insufficient. We need to engage in conversations with users to understand their information needs, how they prefer to receive information, and when. It is essential to consider all potential users, including those with limited digital skills or low literacy.
- At the Public Access Center Amsterdam, anyone can seek assistance with information inquiries, both digitally and in person. For example, there are individuals available to help with searching, finding, and utilizing information. Through these efforts, we expand the role and responsibilities of the designated contact person mandated by the Open Government Act. We also facilitate dissent through an external advisory group, foster learning and development, and actively disclose additional information of societal importance.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- As a result of this commitment, anyone with an information request can turn to the Municipality of Amsterdam. This means that we have organized our services both digitally and physically to assist individuals with various information queries, needs, and skills, helping them search, find, and use information effectively.
- By involving potential users in the design of the Public Access Center and organizing dissent, we aim to ensure that the services provided by the Center align well with the existing needs and ultimately better achieve the goals of an open government.
- Emphasizing knowledge sharing and development enriches the expertise of municipal employees, leading to continuous improvement in service delivery. Simultaneously, it contributes to the knowledge development of residents regarding a transparent government.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	Government information is being made more accessible to a wider audience and is better aligned with user needs through this approach. Additionally, emphasis is placed on knowledge development and sharing, enabling more people to become aware of their information rights in the Netherlands and make better use of them.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	As mentioned earlier, this approach allows more people to access information in a way that meets their specific information needs.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	The first step in implementing this initiative is organizing a design workshop with residents and community organizations to discuss the scope and priorities of the Public Access Center. Additionally, an advisory group will be established to facilitate constructive feedback and consolidate knowledge, ensuring the best possible outcomes are achieved.

CommitmentPlanning					
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders		
User session	Gathering needs Action plan Prioritization Advisory group	September 2023	Lead: Municipality of Amsterdam		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			Government commissioner for Information Management	Open State Foundation	Residents and civil society organizations (TBD)
			National Archives		
Opening of Public Access Center 0.1	Opening during the Digital Rights Week	December 2023	Lead: Municipality of Amsterdam		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
				Open State Foundation	Digital Rights House
Closing of project	Depends on the achievement of the first milestone	December 2024	Lead: Municipality of Amsterdam		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
				Open State Foundation	

3. FAIR Woo files

Commitment 3 - FAIR Woo files			
Brief Description of the Commitment	In this project, we take action to address the issue of non-FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) published Woo files (Wet open overheid - Open Government Act files). ¹ We will raise awareness among administrative bodies about this problem and support them in implementing a cultural shift with the help of convenient software and nudging techniques. Through an award, we aim to generate attention for both the problem and effective solutions.		
Commitment Lead	University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Science, Mathematics and Computer Science, Institute of Informatics.		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), Government Program for Sustainable Digital Information Management (RDDI), VNG, IPO, Waterboards	IMI, Open State Foundation	National Archives, Open Web Concept
Period Covered	2023 - 2024		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Although it is encouraging that an increasing number of decisions regarding information requests (hereafter: Wet Open Overheid – Woo requests) are being made public and the processing time for such requests is decreasing, it appears that the reuse of these files and documents is problematic in practice.
- This is mainly because the disclosed information is often merged into one enormous file, making it impossible to search using functions such as Control F. Moreover, simple metadata, such as the date of the request and the decision, is often not made available.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- The assumption is that in most cases, the lack of compliance is not due to unwillingness but rather a lack of digital technical skills and ingrained work processes that underlie this issue. We have spoken with numerous ‘Woo coordinators’, all of whom demonstrate a strong desire to publish responses to Woo requests, which involve significant time and financial investments, in a proper and accurate manner. This project proposal aims to support these coordinators in their efforts.
- The implementation of the Open Government Act (Woo) faces various challenging obstacles. The mentioned publication issue is an example of a relatively straightforward problem that can be solved with the right combination of awareness, technical support, and encouragement. It is like “low-hanging fruit” that we aim to address with this project proposal.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- The Open Government Information Platform (Platform Open Overheidsinformatie or PLOOI) ‘open.overheid.nl’ is being developed as a reference index: the Woo Index. There have also been initiatives to make Woo requests accessible in a FAIR manner at lower administrative bodies, such as the municipalities of Hoeksche Waard and Amsterdam. However, despite these efforts, the described problem still persists on many of these platforms, where the quality and accessibility of documents need to be improved.

¹ FAIR principles: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. [See Article 2.4.3.a of the Open Government Act (Wet open overheid)]

Commitment Description

2. What solution are you proposing?

- The proposed solution consists of three different instruments:
 1. Raising awareness: We will create awareness through the Woo Coordinators' Meeting of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO), as well as through professional literature such as BinnenlandsBestuur and the journal Overheidsdocumentatie (Od). The aim is to demonstrate how simple it actually is to publish according to Article 2.4.3 of the Open Government Act (Woo).
 2. Technical assistance: Often, the solutions to the problem are surprisingly simple, such as adjusting the settings of redaction software. For example, the default setting of Zylab does not remove words or merge documents together. This creates a clear overview with neatly redacted PDFs that can be searched using Control+F.
 - Through VNG CommonGround, we offer software that automatically extracts all metadata from a decision. The Woo legal expert can then perform a review and make any necessary adjustments or improvements.
 - We adopt the "PC student at home" model, where computer science students visit administrative bodies to ensure the technology is properly set up.
 3. Nudging through good examples: We will assist administrative bodies in improving their publication process and ensure that this improvement is visible through a website showcasing best practices. These best practices for publication methods can then be integrated through recommendations for the Woo Index and Woogle, thus ensuring the information is well-preserved for the future.
 - Through the FAIR Woo Publication Award, we recognize and highlight administrative bodies, generating extra attention for the publication of reusable information.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- Article 2.4.3 of the Open Government Act (Woo) receives the attention it deserves.
- A significant number of administrative bodies at various levels are actively engaged in publishing their Woo files in a FAIR manner, making them reusable for everyone.
- Accessible technical support is provided in the form of free software, FAQs, and comparisons (similar to Consumer Reports) of various redaction software aimed at ensuring FAIRness. This is integrated into the Common Ground and open web concept within the VNG community.
- A Fair Woo Publication Award is presented.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	Thanks to this project, access to the released documents under the Open Government Act (Woo) will be significantly improved, including better accessibility for visually impaired individuals, for whom many documents are currently difficult to access. Furthermore, the documents will be more easily findable as OCR (Optical Character Recognition) errors are avoided. Preserving the almost original form of documents is an essential requirement for transparency, and this project ensures compliance with that.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	This project places the responsibility on administrative bodies to make the Woo files accessible in a FAIR manner, as mandated by law in Article 2.4.3 of the Open Government Act (Woo).
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	When the desired behavioral and cultural change takes place, it will become easier for citizens to access, verify, and search through documents.

CommitmentPlanning			
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders
Step 0: Overview	Creating a database of all administrative bodies covered by the Open Government Act (Woo) and their contact information.	Q2 2023	Lead: University of Amsterdam
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Step 1: Raising awareness	There are already several good examples that we use to demonstrate how to publish FAIR Woo files.	Q2, Q3 2023	Lead: University of Amsterdam
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Step 2: Assisting and engaging administrative bodies	We will proactively approach administrative bodies from all levels and assist them in transitioning to FAIR publication practices.	Q2, Q3, Q4 2023	Lead: University of Amsterdam
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Step 3: Award ceremony	We will generate additional attention for the problem by organizing an award ceremony. This ceremony will recognize and highlight administrative bodies that have successfully implemented FAIR publication practices	Q4 2023	Lead: University of Amsterdam
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			IMI, Open State Foundation, VNG IPO

4. Open standards

Commitment 4 – Open standards			
Brief Description of the Commitment	Forum Standardization assesses (semi-)annually the implementation of the open standards listed under the “comply or explain” policy , which are mandatory for most government organizations. This reveals that there is still much room for improvement. However, the assessments do have a positive effect on the adoption of open standards.		
Commitment Lead	Forum Standardization		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Members of the Government-wide Policy Consultation on the Digital Government (OBDO) See Article 5, paragraph 1 wetten.nl - Regeling - Besluit Sturing Digitale Overheid 2022 - BWBR0046935		Members of Forum Standardization appointed on a personal basis See Article 3 wetten.nl - Regeling - Instellingsbesluit Forum Standaardisatie 2022-2026 - BWBR0047650 (overheid.nl)
Period Covered	2023-2027 Note: The establishment decree of Forum Standardization is valid until the end of 2026. However, there is a high likelihood that it will be extended.		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- The issue that the commitment focuses on is the lagging adoption of open standards by government organizations. This has implications for the quality of ICT in government organizations and, therefore, for the reliability, security, and overall functioning of public services.
- The application of open standards is an essential part of utilizing open technology, which is necessary to address the diverse challenges of our time. The application of open standards is a crucial prerequisite for improving public ICT, making it more efficient, secure, and transparent. Without the application of open standards, there would be no smooth data exchange over the internet, no counterbalance to big tech, no secure and reliable internet, no accessible government information, no open data, and no open source.
- This makes the application of open standards in the design of government ICT an important prerequisite for achieving many objectives of the open government program, such as *inclusion, anti-corruption and integrity, digital governance, civic space, justice, open parliaments, better environment, climate, and health*.
- For more information on the value of open standards for digitalization within the government, refer to the [document on value-driven digitalization and open standards](#), available on the website of Forum Standardization, where you can also find all other meeting documents of the Forum Standardization. This document provides a high-level overview of how the open standards listed in the “comply or explain” policy contribute to the societal objectives mentioned above.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Forum Standardization regularly conducts research on why government organizations do not apply open standards, despite the fact that these standards have been mandatory for them since 2008. Roughly, the causes can be divided into three categories: lack of awareness, lack of capability, and lack of willingness.
 - **Lack of awareness:** Particularly when it comes to the moment of acquiring new ICT systems, those involved often indicate that they are not aware of or do not know exactly what the open standards policy entails. Additionally, the underlying value of applying open standards is still unknown to many people. Open standards are often confused with open source.
 - **Lack of capability:** The responsibility for complying with the policy is often not well assigned within organizations. Furthermore, people often do not know which open standards are applicable in a specific situation or how to apply them.
 - **Lack of willingness:** The application of open standards competes with other desires and interests. The benefits do not always align with the burdens. While applying open standards is beneficial for public service delivery as a whole, voluntary adoption in practice can be too demanding for individual organizations.
- For a more nuanced answer to this question, please refer to the [latest major research on the causes behind the lagging adoption conducted by PBLQ on November 10, 2020](#).

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- The current “comply or explain” policy regarding open standards in the Netherlands was initiated with the Vendrik motion in 2002 and further shaped with the establishment of Forum Standardization in 2006. Since then, several positive changes have occurred. Awareness regarding the usefulness and necessity of open standards has increased, and adoption has grown. In 2022, discussions with most administrators of government-wide facilities focus more on the how and when of implementation rather than on the importance of open standards in general.
- At the same time, it is evident that open standards are still not universally and consistently applied, and there are various obstacles hindering further adoption.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- Forum Standardization recognizes that achieving the application of all relevant open standards by government organizations is a long-term goal that requires persistence. People are easily convinced of their importance, but the practical implementation can be challenging. Often, there are other more pressing matters that demand attention.
- Regularly measuring the use of open standards has its limitations but has proven to be a useful tool over time to keep the topic on the agenda and engage in ongoing discussions with stakeholders. Therefore, measuring the application of open standards is listed as a concrete commitment. More information about past measurements can be found on Forum Standardization’s website under [“Metingen en monitor” \(Measurements and Monitoring\)](#).
- Additionally, there is a plan to organize an event on openness in collaboration with civil servants from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations who are involved in open source, open data, open government, and open procurement topics. This idea has also been discussed with Open State. There seems to be broad support for it, but Forum Standardization still needs to make a decision on this.
- More information about Forum Standardization’s other activities can be found in the work plan: [“Werkplan Forum Standaardisatie 2023” \(Work Plan Forum for Standardization 2023\)](#) on Forum Standardization’s website.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- Increasing awareness, convincing stakeholders about the importance of applying open standards, fostering more willingness to take action, and ensuring stronger governance support.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	<p>This commitment promotes transparency in various ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• By increasing the use of open standards in general, there is greater transparency regarding the setup of government ICT. The documentation of open standards is freely accessible and reusable, creating a level playing field for companies to compete and innovate based on these standards. The theme of digital sovereignty is also intertwined with increased vendor independence.• Through the increased application of specific standards listed in the “comply or explain” policy, particularly those related to accessibility and data quality, government data becomes more reliable, discoverable, and reusable. Examples include standards for the identification of laws and regulations, geospatial information, and water quality.• However, access to government data and information also heavily relies on the reliability, confidentiality, and security of the connection. Standards related to these aspects are also included in the “comply or explain” list.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	Both the annual Open Standards Monitor (Monitor Open Standaarden) and the semi-annual measurements of the Information Security Standards are published on the website of Forum Standardization and regularly sent to the Dutch House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer). These measurements stimulate accountability for complying with the “comply or explain” policy. Hopefully, these efforts also lead to improvements in the accountability reports of government organizations, encouraging them to provide more comprehensive information in their annual reports.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	The standards are open: stakeholders can participate in their development, as well as their ongoing evolution and management. When it comes to including standards on the “comply or explain” list, Forum Standardization follows an open assessment procedure that involves an open consultation round. In the implementation of the Open Standards Monitor, the parties under investigation are approached, and discussions take place. Additionally, all meeting documents of Forum Standardization are publicly available.

Commitment Planning

Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders
Four reports of the Open Standards Monitor: 2023 to 2026 Eight IV measurements (at the beginning and middle of the year) 2023 to 2026	Increase in the adoption of open standards and more accountability in annual reports or otherwise	March 2023 to 2027 June and November 2023 to 2027	Lead: Forum Standardization
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			CSOs
			Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			OBDO
			Lead: Forum Standardization
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			CSOs
			Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			Policy departments at the Ministry of BZK related to open source, open data, open government and open procurement
			Open State Foundation

5. Multi-year plan for Public Access and Information Management of the Dutch Government

Commitment 5 – Multi-year plan for Public Access and Information Management of the Dutch Government			
Brief Description of the Commitment	The multi-year plan outlines how the Dutch central government will ensure sustainable access to its digital government information. It provides a long-term perspective and outlines the steps to be taken in the short term.		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	<p>Government agencies (all need to take measures to achieve the end goal)</p> <p>System parties (Inspectorate for Government Information and Heritage, National Archives, Doc-Direkt, the Organization for Development, Digitization and Innovation of the Government, the National Program for Sustainable Digital Information Management)</p> <p>Supporting directorates (Government CIO, CZW, Ministry of Education, Culture and Media)</p> <p>Associations of other government bodies (UWV, VNG, IPO); similar challenges are faced by these other government bodies. We collaborate and aim to learn from each other.</p>		
Period Covered	Until the digital government information of the central government is sustainably accessible. This does not have a specific end date. For information management, the period is from 2021 to 2026.		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Information is difficult to find, and processing information (Wet open overheid – Woo) requests currently requires a lot of time and effort.
- The problem (refer to question 2) affects government organizations, government employees, parliament, journalists, and society. It affects these parties in carrying out their work or when requesting information.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Currently, information from the Dutch central government is often organized and made accessible only when it is requested as part of an information request or when information is transferred to the National Archives after twenty years. As a result, information is difficult to find, and processing information requests, for example, requires a significant amount of time and effort.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- In 2021, a generic action plan for improving information management, called “Open in Order” (Open op Orde), was developed. This marked the beginning of a major improvement effort.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- Solving the problem is not a simple task; it requires a complex change effort that will take significant time and effort from government organizations. This multi-year plan brings together multiple challenges (disclosure, information management), allowing for a comprehensive approach.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- We are implementing measures related to knowledge, skills, and capacity of employees, as well as work processes/policies, IT systems, and governance and compliance.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	By improving information management and disclosure (proactively and upon request), the national government can be more transparent earlier and more effectively, as relevant information can be found and made public more quickly.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	By improving information management and disclosure (proactively and upon request), the national government can be held accountable earlier and more effectively, as relevant information can be found and made public more quickly.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	N/A

Commitment Planning

Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders
Publishing the multi-year plan. (Simultaneously with the plans of other government entities.)	Multi-year plan	Prior to the start of the new parliamentary year (Prinsjesdag 2023).	Lead: Ministry of BZK Supporting Stakeholders Government CSOs Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
Annually updating the steps we are taking in the short term and reporting on the progress in the <u>Central Government Annual Report on Operational Management</u> .	Annual updates	Yearly	Lead: Ministry of BZK Supporting Stakeholders Government CSOs Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)

III. Equal information position of citizens

An important principle in a democratic rule of law is that citizens should have access to the same public information as the government itself. This public information is financed with public resources and should, in principle, be accessible to the public. Although there are exceptions, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (Algemene verordening gegevensbescherming or AVG) and information related to criminal investigations or national security, transparency is essential. Moreover, citizens should be able to actively participate in the democratic process by providing input to the policymaking process based on equal access to information alongside the government.

6. Information position of citizens and businesses in administrative proceedings

Commitment 6 – Information position of citizens and businesses in administrative proceedings			
Brief Description of the Commitment	Research on identifying the areas in administrative procedural law where information asymmetry arises in the relationship between citizens/businesses and the government. The aim is to map out the areas where problems occur and provide potential solutions.		
Commitment Lead	University of Leiden, Faculty of Law, Institute of Administrative Law, Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law.		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	The Ministry of Justice and Security (JenV) and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)	Institute for Social Innovation (IMI)	Various judges and lawyers will be approached for interviews and an expert meeting to present the preliminary findings
Period Covered	2023-2024		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- In proceedings before the administrative court, there should be an equal information position between citizens and the government. However, it is often argued in practice that there is information asymmetry in administrative procedural law between the government and the citizen. Through this research, we aim to identify the specific obstacles experienced by citizens, businesses and governments, and subsequently outline potential solutions.

Problem Definition

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- The administrative procedural law, as laid down in the General Administrative Law Act (Algemene wet bestuursrecht or Awb), provides a procedural framework for situations where a citizen appeals against a decision made by the government. In such cases, the “documents relating to the case” must be shared with the citizen (and the judge). However, if there are weighty reasons, it can be decided that only the judge can have access to certain documents. In practice, various challenges arise, including:
 - When a citizen seeks information before a decision is made or before initiating a legal procedure, there is ambiguity regarding whether the administrative procedural law or the Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo) is applicable. Government bodies sometimes classify such information requests as “abuse of rights,” and with the current processing times for Woo requests, the information often arrives too late.
 - Administrative procedural law focuses on the proceeding over a government decision rather than the information needs of citizens. This can lead to discussions about what constitutes the ‘case’ and, therefore, which information should be disclosed as documents relating to the case.
 - When it is decided that the citizen cannot access certain information during the procedure (while the judge and other parties can), information asymmetry arises. This puts the citizen in a vulnerable position, as even their lawyer does not know the content of those documents, which affects their ability to defend themselves. It is also challenging for the judge to critically question the government about the “classified” information in the presence of the citizen, even though it could potentially be advantageous for the citizen.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- In the academic literature, particularly in commentaries on court judgments (annotations), partial problems that arise in practice have been previously addressed. However, these have not yet resulted in solutions, such as legislative amendments.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- First and foremost, the aim is to comprehensively assess the scope of the problem by consolidating the issues previously described in literature and annotations. By gaining a better understanding of the areas where the issues occur, potential solutions can be proposed. These recommendations can be directed towards the legislator, administrative courts, or government bodies.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- The research will result in a research report. This report will be submitted to both the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) and the Ministry of Justice and Security (JenV), as well as the judiciary.
- Additionally, an expert meeting will be organized for the purpose of the research, allowing the involved stakeholders to gain greater awareness of the problem.

Commitment Analysis

Question

Answer

1. How will the commitment promote transparency?

The research results can contribute to strengthening the information position of citizens and businesses in proceedings with the government. This may involve providing citizens with earlier and/or more information, as well as enhancing their procedural position in cases where certain information must remain confidential.

2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?

The research not only focuses on the information position of citizens but also examines the position of the administrative court. Part of the research involves exploring how the administrative court can better safeguard the equal information position between citizens and the government. This way, the government will be held accountable to the court.

3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?

The research aims to identify ways to strengthen the procedural position of citizens in administrative procedural law. During the research, interviews will be conducted with lawyers to assess the issues experienced by their clients (including citizens, businesses, and government entities) in procedural law and to validate potential solutions.

CommitmentPlanning			
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders
Step 1: Overview	Through desktop research, the legislative history, jurisprudence, and literature will be analyzed to map out the issues at hand.	Q4 2023 / Q1 2024	Lead: Leiden University
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Step 2: Interviews	Interviews will be conducted with experts from the field, such as lawyers and administrative judges. These interviews will aim to determine whether the identified issues are recognized, identify any additional problems that should be addressed, and gather insights into potential solutions from these experts.	Q1 2024	Lead: Leiden University
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Step 3: Expert meeting	Based on the desktop research and interviews, a draft research report will be prepared. This draft will be presented to various experts during an expert meeting for their review and input.	Q1/Q2 2024	Lead: Leiden University
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Step 4: Research report	Delivery of research report.	Q1/Q2 2024	Lead: Leiden University
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government

7. Open Parliament

Commitment 7 – Open Parliament			
Brief Description of the Commitment	An open government starts with the foundation: citizens who are familiar with the rules of democracy and the rule of law, and who know what they can do to exert influence - at the municipal, regional, provincial, national, and European Union levels.		
Commitment Lead	ProDemos		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
			(Relevant partners will be involved as appropriate).
Period Covered	2023-2027		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Research from the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau or SCP) shows that compared to the past fifteen years, Dutch citizens have a more negative perception of the state of the country and politics. The dissatisfaction with the direction of the country is closely related to the dissatisfaction with politics: nearly half of those who believe things are going in the wrong direction attribute it to politics. In the fall of 2022, 43% had confidence in the House of Representatives (down from 52%) and 41% had confidence in the government (down from 50%).
- Our democracy and rule of law require constant maintenance. The Dutch democratic rule of law has a long history and continues to evolve. While our democratic rule of law is robust, there are ongoing discussions about its functioning, as [research indicates a decline in trust in democracy and the rule of law](#), with significant differences among different groups in society. This underscores the importance of active citizenship, which cannot be taken for granted.
- The democratic rule of law cannot exist without active citizens. The democratic rule of law depends on citizens who are aware of their democratic rights and exercise them. Active citizenship can manifest in various ways, from voting to becoming politically engaged. Active and well-informed citizens can contribute to government policies that represent the interests of the residents and enhance support for measures.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Active democratic citizenship is not innate; it needs to be developed and requires basic knowledge. Political socialization largely takes place during adolescence, and education plays a crucial role in this process.
- Education informs young people about democracy and the rule of law and emphasizes their invaluable role in a free and peaceful society. By doing so, education contributes to the learning and development of democratic awareness.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- Education center ProDemos has a unique role in making democracy and the rule of law accessible to a wide audience. Their mission is to inform and engage as many people as possible in the Netherlands about democracy.
- ProDemos has three core objectives:
 - Informing: ProDemos provides knowledge about democracy and the rule of law and imparts the skills necessary to participate in them.
 - Activating: ProDemos encourages people to exercise their right to vote.
 - Promoting participation: ProDemos fosters participation so that people can make use of the opportunities to exert influence.
- ProDemos organizes activities that enhance people's knowledge and skills to participate in democracy. This strengthens political self-confidence, an essential requirement for active citizenship. Through their offerings, ProDemos contributes to increasing individuals' understanding and engagement in the democratic process, resulting in stronger and more active citizenship.
- The core activities of ProDemos currently include:
 - **Visitors Centre:** ProDemos' Visitors Centre, located next to the Binnenhof in The Hague (Dutch Parliament), offers tours, educational programs, and other activities. Each year, they welcome tens of thousands of students, the general public, members of political organizations, and other interested individuals. Through these experiences, visitors gain insight into how politics, democracy, and the rule of law function.
 - **Education:** ProDemos collaborates with municipalities, provinces, courts, and educational institutions throughout the country. Through their educational programs, facilitators, and teaching materials, they provide clear explanations on various topics, such as becoming a city council member, the responsibilities of provinces, and the process of a court case.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- A. Educating Youth:** ProDemos enables young people to become acquainted with the levels of governance and institutions of democracy and the rule of law in the Netherlands during their school years.
 - Through their teaching materials, in-person and online guest lectures, and the expansion of their programs nationwide, they aim to align better with the curriculum and provide a range of opportunities to integrate democracy and the rule of law into the curriculum. This is particularly important in vocational education (MBO).
 - Additionally, ProDemos recognizes that The Hague is sometimes perceived as too distant for young people from outside the city, making it more challenging to reach them. Therefore, in the coming years, ProDemos will invest in increasing its reach by offering comprehensive activities throughout the country.
- B. Knowledge Center:** In the coming years, ProDemos aims to reach a broader adult audience by providing access to knowledge and information on how they can exert influence and eventually develop an expanded educational offering. ProDemos aims to be a reliable source of information for them.
- C. Promoting Active Citizenship:** Promoting citizen participation remains a significant ambition of ProDemos. Voting in elections is one of the most essential ways in which people can participate in the political process. Therefore, ProDemos undertakes various activities to enable people to make informed choices when elections take place.
- D. Parliamentary Visitors Center with a Future:** ProDemos, together with the Municipality of The Hague and the Central Government Real Estate Agency (Rijksvastgoedbedrijf), is committed to keeping the city center vibrant during the renovation of the Binnenhof (Dutch Parliament). Their goal is to ensure that as many people as possible continue to visit political The Hague during the renovation, and they adapt their offerings accordingly. In collaboration with various partners in their network, they brainstorm about the future of the Visitors Center in preparation for the reopening of the Binnenhof after the renovation.

Commitment Description

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- A. During primary school, students are introduced to democracy, both in the classroom and through visits to places like the municipal hall. In secondary education, students ideally visit the parliament.
- In the programs for secondary education in The Hague, ProDemos aims to achieve a more balanced representation of students from vocational schools (vmbo), which is currently relatively small. Additionally, in the coming years, they want to expand their outreach through primary schools and vocational education (MBO), so that a broader audience can acquire knowledge about democracy and its functioning.
- B. In the coming years, ProDemos aims to reach a broader audience of adults and make politics and democracy more accessible for everyone. An important principle in this regard is to ensure that activities are as accessible as possible. This may involve adapting the language used or making the content more relevant and engaging for a wider target audience.
- C. During election periods, people actively seek information about the elections, presenting ProDemos with an excellent opportunity to inform and engage with harder-to-reach individuals. However, promoting active citizenship remains an important focus even outside election periods. Through various tools and activities, ProDemos explains how people can exert influence, whether it involves participating in demonstrations, having a say in municipal councils, or becoming politically active themselves.
- D. ProDemos is voornemens te verkennen of de Grafelijke Zalen na renovatie breder ingezet kunnen worden en een maatschappelijke bestemming kunnen krijgen. Als nieuw Parlementair Bezoekerscentrum, of anderszins door ruimere openstelling voor publiek, bijvoorbeeld door middel van evenementen en opendagen. ProDemos intends to explore whether the “Grafelijke Zalen” (historic halls at the Binnenhof), after renovation, can be used more broadly and given a societal purpose. This could involve transforming them into a new Parliamentary Visitors’ Centre or opening them up to the public through events and open days.
- Currently, these halls serve as a reception centre for the government and the High Councils of State, with limited availability for conferences, receptions, and other events. ProDemos wants to investigate whether these historic halls can serve a broader societal function, providing an accessible space for visitors to learn more about parliamentary democracy and bringing citizens and politics closer together.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	ProDemos aims to make the functioning of our parliamentary democracy more transparent by providing physical access to the parliamentary buildings for young people and adults in the Netherlands, and by educating them about democratic processes, participation, and the rule of law.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	Indirectly, by increasing the knowledge level of a broad audience regarding democratic processes, institutions, and the rule of law, people become more aware of their rights and are better able to critically follow government actions.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	ProDemos explains the rules of democracy and the rule of law and demonstrates what individuals can do to exert influence at the municipal, water board, provincial, national, and European levels. Through these efforts, ProDemos promotes active citizenship and empowers individuals to participate more effectively.

CommitmentPlanning			
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders
Introducing students to democracy and the rule of law.	Direct reach of students (activities under the personal guidance of ProDemos). Target number: 350.000	2026	Lead: ProDemos
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			CSOs
			Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
Introducing people in the Netherlands to the democratic rule of law and active citizenship.	Direct reach of participants (activities under the personal guidance of ProDemos). Target number: 75,000	2026	Lead: ProDemos
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			CSOs
			Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
Exploration of the social purpose of the Grafelijke Zalen.	ProDemos intends to explore in the coming period whether the Grafelijke Zalen can be utilized in a broader way and given a social purpose. This could include establishing a new Parliamentary Visitors Center or expanding public access to the premises.	2025	Lead: ProDemos
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			CSOs
			Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)

8. Strengthening citizen participation with digital tools

Commitment 8 – Strengthening citizen participation with digital tools

Brief Description of the Commitment	The Work Agenda for Value-Driven Digitalization (Werkagenda Waardengedreven Digitaliseren) includes the commitment of the Dutch government to use and further develop AI-driven deliberation and consensus-building tools. The Cabinet aims to deploy such tools in at least three processes during its term for citizen participation.		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	ICTU		
Period Covered	2023-2027		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- The Netherlands faces significant societal challenges that require efforts from the government, business sector, and citizens. The Dutch government has expressed the desire to actively involve citizens in several areas, including climate policy. In the Work Agenda for Value-Driven Digitalization (Werkagenda Waardengedreven Digitaliseren) released in November 2022, the Cabinet outlined its intention to utilize and further develop AI-driven digital tools for citizen consultation (eConsultation) and consensus-building in at least three processes.
- Previous research has shown that citizen engagement through eConsultation can enhance the quality of government decision-making. By involving a diverse range of citizens in the policy-making process, the diversity of ideas and potential solutions is increased. eConsultation also provides governments with new opportunities to reach specific groups of citizens who might otherwise not participate in policy-making.
- Furthermore, the use of eConsultation can enhance the legitimacy of policies. It can lead to governments being more open to and aware of the desires and preferences of society regarding specific policy areas and developments.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- When it comes to major societal issues, citizens don't always feel heard, leading to societal discontent. However, the government currently lacks a consistent way to gather widespread feedback from the community on specific topics and listen to the input and ideas of its residents.
- A citizen forum, for example, is a method to involve citizens' perspectives in policy-making. To reach as many people as possible and enable effective participation, an e-consultation tool can be utilized, allowing citizens to engage and deliberate on the central topic of the citizen forum.
- Therefore, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) is seeking an AI-driven mass deliberation and consensus tool that meets the latest requirements regarding safety, privacy, and accessibility.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- Some research has been conducted on potential solutions. The open-source platform Pol.is is an AI-driven e-consultation tool that can gather opinions on a specific issue and identify areas of consensus and disagreement. The tool is already being used in other countries, including Taiwan, New Zealand, and the United States.
- Pol.is was first tested and implemented in 2020 through pilots in the Dutch municipalities of Groningen and Amsterdam. The pilots were the result of the project “Digital Deliberative Democracy in the Netherlands” by the partners Stichting Netwerk Democratie, Democratie in Actie, and the municipalities of Groningen and Amsterdam, with support from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK).
- While the tool is considered promising for organizing e-consultations, some shortcomings have been identified that warrant further development.
- It is important to have a Dutch or European version of Pol.is. Currently hosted in the United States, this raises issues regarding compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming or AVG).
- Furthermore, the open-source software is currently not sufficiently developed to be easily installed by government organizations. Finally, the UX design of Pol.is also requires improvement.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- AI-driven tools for mass deliberation and consensus, such as Pol.is, provide an accessible platform where large groups of citizens and policy-makers can make proposals, vote on them, and reflect on group input.
- AI-driven tools for mass deliberation and consensus, such as Pol.is, provide an accessible platform where large groups of citizens and policy-makers can make proposals, vote on them, and reflect on group input.
- There are several ways in which a digital tool like Pol.is can complement a citizen forum and other offline forms of participation:
 - A. Before the citizen forum: Pol.is can be used to visualize different opinion groups.
 - B. During the citizen forum: Pol.is can be used to gain insights into citizens’ opinions on the input provided during the forum.
 - C. After the citizen forum: Pol.is can be used to collect citizens’ opinions on the outcomes of the forum and evaluate.
- While e-consultation is currently seen by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) primarily as a complement to a citizen forum, the ministry has the ambition to explore whether Pol.is can also be used independently without a citizen forum. For example, Pol.is can be employed during policy development to gain an understanding of citizens’ diverse perspectives on a policy proposal.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) aims to further develop the Pol.is tool for national-level use. The tool should be open source and compliant with Web Accessibility Guidelines. The developed platform must prioritize security, privacy protection, and compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (AVG).
- Authentication should be implemented in a way that allows participants to easily join while preventing abuse by bots. A privacy-proof authentication method, where authentication is not traceable, is preferred.
- In addition to providing open and accessible digital participation for everyone, participation on the platform should also be inclusive of a representative group.
- Naast open en toegankelijke digitale participatie voor iedereen moet deelname aan het platform ook mogelijk zijn voor een representatieve groep.
- Finally, it is desirable to have an up-to-date overview of existing digital participation possibilities within the government to ensure coherence and integration with the existing digital participation opportunities within the national government. This includes creating a landing page and overview of the different digital participation options available within the national government.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	The use of e-consultation tools enhances transparency of the government by enabling citizen participation in the policy-making process and ensuring that the desires and ideas of citizens are better reflected in policy-making.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	By gathering public opinions through e-consultation, citizens can hold government organizations accountable to ensure that their ideas and viewpoints are well-represented in policy-making.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	Thanks to e-consultation, citizens can directly participate in the policy-making process by digitally collecting and processing their perspectives.

Commitment Planning

Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders		
1. Basic Readiness of Polis.overheid.nl	At least three opportunities will be provided for public input on policies using the Polis/participation and consensus platform.	2025	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
2. Deployment/ Usage of Polis.overheid.nl e-consultation tools in three policy trajectories			Supporting Stakeholders		
3. Further Development of e-consultation tools			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			ICTU		

IV. Enhancing active and passive public disclosure

The Open Government Act (Woo) is an important step towards a more open and transparent government. However, there is still room for improvement. The implementation of the Woo has encountered difficulties in certain areas, such as the processing times for Woo requests. Efforts are being made across the government to improve and expedite this process, as described in Chapter 2 on Open government efforts thus far. At the same time, there is still much work to be done. It is desirable that the improvement of proactive disclosure and disclosure upon request is approached from a societal perspective as well.

9. Implementation assessment of the Open Government Act

Commitment 9 – Implementation assessment of the Open Government Act			
Brief Description of the Commitment	One year after the enactment of the Dutch Open Government Act (Wet open overheid or Woo), an implementation assessment is planned. The implementation assessment is a new evaluation tool aimed at quickly assessing how the implementation has actually taken place and how it is currently progressing. The Woo implementation assessment will take the form of a factual inventory study to identify the challenges and best practices experienced by users and implementers. The research will be carried out by an independent external research agency. At the start of the implementation assessment, a participatory element is ensured at the front end through exploratory discussions with various parties. This allows their input to be taken into account in the survey and interviews. Additionally, the end of the implementation assessment also includes a participatory validation session to brainstorm scenarios with different parties. The implementation assessment is expected to result in an independent report that uncovers the challenges and best practices in the practical application and execution of the Woo. Additionally, the research report should provide concrete recommendations for addressing the identified challenges.		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Other ministries, government bodies, and subnational governments. Advisory Board on Public Access and Information Management (Adviescollege Openbaarheid en Informatiehuishouding or ACOI) and the Government Commissioner for Information Management.		High Councils of State, and Woo requesters (citizens, journalists, researchers, etc.).
Period Covered	2023		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- The commitment aims to identify the challenges experienced by users and implementers of the Woo. The focus is on uncovering unintended side effects for the users of the law and the feasibility of implementing the Woo for government bodies. Additionally, the research will also gather best practices regarding the Woo from both parties.
 - Mapping best practices in handling Woo requests is also a proposal put forth by the civil society coalition Talking About Information. This coalition has identified that learning from best practices is relevant for governments to facilitate faster processing of information requests.
- The implementation assessment will take the form of an inventory study conducted to identify challenges for the target audience (Woo requesters such as journalists and researchers, as well as citizens) and in the implementation practice (for all parties covered by the Woo: ministries, provinces, municipalities, water authorities, and since the implementation of the Woo, the High Councils of State and the States General).
- Although the Woo is a new law, some of the challenges experienced have existed for a longer time as they were also applicable under the Public Access Act (Wet openbaarheid van bestuur or Wob). However, these (older) challenges, if identified by users and/or implementers as challenges of the Woo, will be included in the inventory study of the Woo implementation assessment.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Many Woo requesters (citizens, journalists, researchers) experience challenges in the implementation of the Woo. The handling of Woo requests often exceeds the legal and/or agreed-upon timeframe, resulting in prolonged waiting periods for requested information.
- At the same time, various ministries and other government bodies are currently raising concerns about the feasibility of the current legal framework of the Woo. Due to extensive requests and the broad definition of documents that may be requested under the Woo, government bodies have to gather and evaluate various types of information, which compromises the feasibility of the Woo for these bodies.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- To gain more insight into the openness of government information in other countries and draw lessons from abroad where possible, several international study visits have been conducted, particularly to Scandinavian countries.
- Additionally, Leiden University has conducted an international comparative law study on freedom of information legislation. The purpose of this study is to learn where the Dutch disclosure system could be adjusted to improve both access to government information for everyone and feasibility for government bodies.
- The research focuses on how the United Kingdom, Sweden, France, Germany, Estonia, and Slovenia have legally ensured the disclosure of government information at the national level and how this legal framework is implemented in practice.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- Currently, there is a lot of attention in politics and the media regarding the challenges surrounding the implementation of the Woo. The implementation assessment aims to directly identify the issues and successes experienced by users and implementers (the “best practices”). This will shed light on the obstacles faced by Woo requesters. The same applies to the challenges faced by different levels of government and how they relate to each other (issues experienced by ministries may not apply to municipalities to the same extent). This factual inventory is crucial for making strategic policy decisions regarding the Woo.
- For the implementation assessment of the Woo, it is important to consider all perspectives on the use and implementation of the law. This includes various users and employees in different government bodies, all of whom have valuable insights into various aspects of implementation.
- As part of the assessment, concrete recommendations should be provided for the identified challenges based on the factual inventory study. These recommendations should be derived from the outcomes (challenges and best practices) of the implementation assessment. The international comparative law study on freedom of information legislation conducted by Leiden University can be used as input for this purpose.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- The inventory study should result in an independent report that highlights the challenges and best practices in the use and implementation of the Woo. It should primarily focus on the experiences of users and implementers of the law, as well as utilize existing quantitative data such as the number of Woo requests, their scope, and the duration of processing.
- Additionally, the research report should provide concrete recommendations for the identified challenges, distilled from the outcomes of the implementation assessment, while taking into account the findings of the international comparative law study on freedom of information legislation conducted by Leiden University.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	<p>An independent research agency will conduct a factual inventory of the challenges and best practices related to the Woo for users and implementers. This will result in a factual inventory study. Based on this study, the research agency will also provide concrete recommendations regarding the identified challenges.</p> <p>These recommendations, along with the further outcomes of the implementation assessment, will serve as input for strategic policy decisions aimed at improving both the access to public information in the Netherlands and the feasibility for governing bodies.</p>
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	<p>The research report containing the outcomes of the implementation assessment will be submitted to the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK). The Minister of BZK will forward the report to the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer), making it publicly accessible. Subsequently, it can serve as input for the dialogue between users and implementers of the Woo.</p>
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	<p>To ensure the perspective and experiences of users of the law are included in the inventory study, an adequate number of Woo requesters (citizens, journalists, and researchers) should be consulted about their experiences with the Woo, including both the challenges they have encountered and the best practices they have identified.</p>

Commitment Planning

Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders			
Delivery of research report by research agency	The research report will provide a factual inventory of challenges and best practices among users and implementers of the Woo. Based on this, concrete recommendations will be made for the identified challenges.	2023	<p>Lead: Ministry of BZK</p> <p>Supporting Stakeholders</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Government</td> <td>CSOs</td> <td>Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)</td> </tr> </table>	Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)				

10. Central Government Annual Report on Operational Management

Commitment 10 – Central Government Annual Report on Operational Management			
Brief Description of the Commitment	Starting from 2023, the handling of information requests within the Dutch central government will be reported annually in the Central Government Annual Report on Operational Management (Jaarrapportage Bedrijfsvoering Rijk or JBR).		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Ministries		
Period Covered	Starting from May 2023, the Central Government Annual Report on Operational Management (JBR) will include annual reporting on the processing times of Freedom of Information (Woo) requests at ministries.		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- On May 1, 2022, the Public Access Act (Wob) was replaced by the Open Government Act (Woo). This new law represents a significant step towards a more open government. The Woo enhances access to government information, promotes proactive disclosure, and updates the rules regarding transparency and openness. An important component of the Woo is that anyone can request a public authority to disclose information.
- The government body is required to make a decision on the disclosure of information within six (4+2) weeks. The data shows that Woo requesters are often not provided with the requested information in a timely manner, and despite their efforts, ministries face challenges in implementing the Woo.
- Both government organizations and civil society organizations have indicated to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) that the processing times for Woo requests are too long. The legally prescribed deadlines are often not met. The exact figures were unknown for some time.
- It was not known which ministries received how many requests, how many of them resulted in a decision within the prescribed timeframe, and how many penalty payments (in terms of quantity and amount) were incurred and paid. This information will now be made transparent and openly accessible for each ministry.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Ministries are working on responding to Woo requests, but there was no comprehensive overview of the processing times for Woo requests across the government.
 - There was no overview of the status of processing times for Woo requests at different ministries.
 - Due to the lack of centralized coordination and sharing of data between ministries, concrete figures were not transparent and proactively published.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- An inquiry was made once to the ministries regarding the judicial rulings on Woo requests. These rulings were shared with the parliament. However, this did not provide the necessary transparency to have an overview for monitoring purposes over the years.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- In order to create a comprehensive overview of the processing times of Woo requests at ministries, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) will annually report on the processing times of information requests. Through this annual report, it is ensured that the information from all ministries is collected centrally at the Ministry of BZK and can be shared with all Dutch citizens. Therefore, starting from 2023, the information regarding Woo requests will be included in the Central Government Annual Report on Operational Management (JBR).
- The report will not only cover the processing times of Woo requests but also provide insights into the frequency with which the court declares an appeal (partially) substantiated or unsubstantiated, and the amount (penalties) the government spends annually as a result of court rulings on delayed handling of Woo requests and its development over the years.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- The output is a list of information for the JBR in which we report the following for each ministry:
 - The amount of Woo decisions within or outside the statutory processing time.
 - The number of substantive objections and appeals.
 - The number of decisions in which penalty payments were forfeited due to late decision-making and corresponding amounts forfeited and paid.
- The central government considers transparency and openness very important. Also when it comes to its own results and performance. In this way, transparency is improved

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	Until now, Woo request processing times have not been reported frequently. By reporting Woo requests annually, everyone can see how Woo requests are processed. This will make the government more transparent.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	The annual report provides insight into the processing times of Woo requests by ministries. The report also provides insight into the progress of the various ministries in handling Woo requests and they can be held accountable for this. Ministries that do process Woo requests within the legal deadlines can share best practices. Because everyone can see annually whether processing times have accelerated or slowed in the previous year, residents can more easily check how implementation is going.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	Proactive disclosure of information allows residents to obtain figures on the processing of Woo requests at various ministries.

CommitmentPlanning					
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders		
Starting in May 2023, the JBR will report annually on the processing times of Woo requests at ministries.	Report on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Woo decisions within or outside the statutory processing period. • The number of substantive objections and appeals. • The number of decisions in which penalty payments were forfeited due to late decision-making and corresponding amounts forfeited and paid. 	May 2023	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			Ministries		

11. Open data

Commitment 1 – Control of own data

Brief Description of the Commitment	Open data stimulates entrepreneurship, innovation, and transparency, but is not yet fully utilized in the Netherlands. Increasing engagement and addressing privacy issues are necessary to harness its potential.		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	VNG, Geonovum, Intergovernmental Data Strategy (Interbestuurlijke Datastrategie or IBDS)		
Period Covered	2023-2027		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Government organizations produce and use a wide variety of data to carry out public tasks. The increased availability of open data can stimulate entrepreneurship and lead to innovations that help address various societal challenges, such as climate change and social inequality. Moreover, broader availability of open data can result in greater openness and transparency of governments.
- However, at present, the potential of open data in the Netherlands is not fully utilized due to challenges such as lack of engagement and concerns about privacy. The European High Value Dataset Regulation provides an opportunity to boost the availability of open data, as a list of specific 'high value' datasets must be made available free of charge by June 2024.
- To fully harness the potential that this regulation has to offer, stakeholders need to be appropriately motivated and supported. By supporting stakeholders (in terms of content) in making high-quality datasets available, while respecting public values such as privacy, we enable various stakeholders and users, such as media, NGOs, and startups, to benefit optimally from the improved and expanded availability of open datasets in the Netherlands.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Making high value datasets available faces several challenges:
 - Privacy concerns;
 - Lack of engagement from government organizations: Other projects may take precedence as there are no immediate financial benefits associated with making datasets available.
 - Lack of capacity, knowledge, and expertise within government organizations regarding the process of releasing open data.
 - Lack of centralized governance regarding open data policies.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- One of the solutions is to promote the use of the national open data portal, which was launched in 2011. The open data portal 'data.overheid.nl' provides an overview of all available datasets from government organizations in the Netherlands.
 - The portal and the registry were initiated and are managed by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The Knowledge and Exploitation Center for Official Government Publications (Kennis- en Exploitatiecentrum Officiële Overheidspublicaties or KOOP) is responsible for the maintenance and development of the portal.
 - Over 185 Dutch government organizations make data available through the platform in approximately 16,051 datasets. The data portal is updated daily through data retrieval, API updates, and individual users.
 - The DCAT standard for data exchange is used and has been extended for use in the Netherlands (DCAT-AP-NL). Version 1.1 is currently in use.
 - The data registration is based on the software platform CKAN and Drupal 8. Currently, there are over 1,194 Dutch datasets available in English.
- In 2016, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations published the National Open Data Agenda (NODA), which later merged into the broader Government Data Agenda.
- Additionally, from 2016 to 2021, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations organized the Stuivering Open Data Award to promote and raise awareness about the use of open data.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- Assisting stakeholders in the implementation and updates of European high-value datasets through guidance and support is crucial. Previously, such support was not always provided, and as a result, the high-value datasets have not been fully implemented.
 - This support will help increase stakeholder engagement as they are encouraged to make more open data available.
 - Additionally, it can partially address the issue of lack of centralized governance concerning open data policies.
 - Furthermore, it can include guidance and guidelines on how to address privacy issues related to open data.
- The Interadministrative Data Strategy (Interbestuurlijke Datastrategie or IBDS) will also seek collaboration with policy developments such as the Federative Data System. This involves an optimized system for responsibly using data from different sources, thereby maximizing the potential of data in a responsible manner. The data sources made available within the scope of HVDL are added to the Federative Data System (the further development of the system of basic registrations).

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- Increasing the availability of open government data to stakeholders, in line with the [Value-Driven Digitization Work Agenda](#).
- The agenda mentions the promotion and utilization of open data, as well as the expansion of open data offerings from the national government, local governments, and public organizations (for example, the KNMI Data Platform or RIONED for urban water management). This commitment aims to provide tangible implementation in this regard.
- Creating more awareness about the value of making open government data available for addressing societal challenges.

Commitment Analysis

Question

Answer

1. How will the commitment promote transparency?

Supporting stakeholders in making high-quality datasets available will result in more open data on various significant societal topics such as business information, mobility, and statistics. By making more open data accessible, journalists, citizens, and NGOs gain insights into data produced by government agencies. This can contribute to building trust between the government and societal actors and can lead to a more effective and responsive government.

2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?

Supporting stakeholders in the implementation of the High Value Data List (HVDL) has the potential to significantly impact accountability by promoting transparency and increasing access to government information. By proactively making valuable datasets available to the public and supporting the actors who possess the data, it helps citizens, researchers, journalists, and businesses hold governments and public organizations accountable for their actions and decisions. Access to business information, for example, can contribute to identifying cases of waste, fraud, and corruption. Geo-information and statistics can be used to track trends and monitor the progress of policy goals, such as reducing carbon emissions or improving public health. This information can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of government programs and policies and identify areas for improvement.

3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?

By supporting stakeholders in making high-quality datasets available, citizens can utilize the increased number of open datasets on various topics (e.g., environment, statistics, and geoinformation) to define, monitor, and address societal developments. This can ultimately lead to the creation of new data products or innovations that can help tackle societal challenges such as climate change and housing.

CommitmentPlanning			
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders
Collecting and elaborating on key themes from the impact analyses of the High Value Data List (HVDL).	Detailed analysis of key themes shared with HVDL stakeholders in the Netherlands.	Q4 2023/Q1 2024	Lead: Ministry of BZK
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Geonovum			
Establishing governance and providing substantive support for optimal implementation of the High Value Data List (HVDL).	Elaborated governance/support plan for the HVDL.	Q1 2024	Lead: Ministry of BZK
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Geonovum			
Preparing fact sheets and organizing information sessions about the High Value Data List (HVDL).	Elaborated factsheets for HVDL implementation and organized information sessions.	2024-2027	Lead: Ministry of BZK
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
Geonovum			

12. Open Source Program Office

Commitment 12 – Open Source Program Office			
Brief Description of the Commitment	According to the government policy of “Open, unless” (Open, tenzij) government-developed software should be open source as much as possible. To encourage and facilitate open-source work within the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), an Open Source Program Office (working title) will be established. In international contexts, this is referred to as an Open Source Program Office (OSPO).		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Directorate of Digital Government and Digital Society (BZK), CIO BZK, CIO Rijk, Open Government Program (BZK), Tax Administration (Belastingdienst), Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), Province of South Holland	NL Net, SIDN Fund, Open State, Public Spaces, Foundation for Public Code	Cadastre, Alliander
Period Covered	2023-2027		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Open source software has become a crucial part of the ICT infrastructure of the Dutch government. According to the government’s “Open, unless” policy introduced in 2020, software developed or commissioned by the government should be open source to the greatest extent possible. This means that the source code should be freely accessible and reusable.
- Making the source code of government software public has several important benefits:
 - Transparency and trust: One key advantage is that the functioning of the software and the operations it performs are visible to everyone. This transparency fosters trust in how the software works and aligns with the goal of a transparent government.
 - Collaboration: Open source also offers opportunities for new ways of collaborating with partners in the chain and other government organizations. It contributes to effective and efficient public governance. It also provides opportunities to enhance collaboration with citizens and businesses.
 - Collaboration: Open source also offers opportunities for new ways of collaborating with partners in the chain and other government organizations. It contributes to effective and efficient public governance. It also provides opportunities to enhance collaboration with citizens and businesses.
 - Efficiency and innovation: Open source can accelerate innovation and development processes while saving on licensing costs. It promotes reuse, thereby reducing software development costs. It also stimulates innovation and economic growth by providing cheaper access to software and opportunities to use it in private services.
 - Flexibility and independence: Open source increases flexibility in software usage and reduces the risk of costly migration processes by avoiding dependence on a single vendor (vendor lock-in).
- The inclusion of open source is a requirement of the Digital Government Act (Wet digitale overheid or Wdo), which will take effect on July 1, 2023. The Digital Government Act aims to ensure that citizens and businesses can log in to government services reliably and securely. Open source helps in achieving this because the source code is freely accessible, making it easier to improve and distribute the software. One question that has arisen is how the government can organize this in practice.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- In 2020, the European Commission published its Open Source Software Strategy 2020-2023. One of the measures provided by the strategy to encourage and facilitate open source within national governments is the establishment of an Open Source Program Office (OSPO), which is a central unit within the government responsible for open source software.
- Several EU member states, including France, Luxembourg, and Germany, already have an OSPO.
- Failing to establish an OSPO would result in fragmented efforts on this topic, a lack of much-needed impetus, and organizations (within the BZK domain) lacking the knowledge and skills to adequately meet the growing demand for IT openness.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- The Dutch government has already taken several steps to promote open source within the government. For example, the Ministry of BZK has already published several source codes through the 'BZK Github.' In January 2023, the ministry released the source code of the DigiD app on this platform. Additionally, the European digital identity (eID) is being developed as open source in collaboration with others on this platform.
- The Tax Administration (Belastingdienst) and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) have also previously established a similar office comparable to an OSPO.
- In October 2022, the report "Working with Open Source, Beyond Voluntariness" (Open source werken, de vrijblijvendheid voorbij) was released, outlining the open source strategy for the Ministry of BZK. The report provides various recommendations on how the ministry and other government organizations can embrace the principles of open source. One of the key recommendations from this report is the establishment of an OSPO.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- The ultimate goal of the government's open source strategy is to make open source practices a regular part of software usage and development. An OSPO can stimulate and facilitate open source work within the Ministry of BZK.
- By being the first Dutch ministry to establish an OSPO, the Ministry of BZK also takes on a crucial role as an example within the government when it comes to open source.
- Knowledge, experiences, and events related to the OSPO and open source work in general are shared through a newsletter and the [Open Source website \(pleio.nl\)](https://open-source.pleio.nl).

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- In order to stimulate and facilitate open source work within the Ministry of BZK, an OSPO is being established.
- The OSPO will fall under the Chief Information Officer of the ministry and will collaborate with various policy and support departments. This includes areas such as procurement, disclosure of government information, and the European digital identity.
- The goal of an OSPO is to remove internal barriers and limitations related to open source and to shape collaborations with other OSPOs, governments, companies, and developers.
- Furthermore, the OSPO will engage with each department of the ministry to conduct pilots or open source existing applications. This will provide the necessary knowledge and experience to ensure a successful transition to open source.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	The OSPO promotes open source work within the Ministry of BZK. Open source means that the source code of software is freely accessible and reusable by the public. This creates transparency about how government software works and what functions it performs.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	By making the source code of government software public, the public can test and improve the quality of the software. This can help hold the government accountable for using secure and reliable software.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	By making the source code of government software public, the public can test and improve the quality of the software. This can help hold the government accountable for using secure and reliable software.

CommitmentPlanning					
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders		
Start OSPO BZK		1-1-24	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			CIO BZK		
Expand OSPO knowledge network	Five governments each year	Annually	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			Tax Authority, Ministry of BZK	ICTU	VNG, Cadastre, Alliander, Province of South Holland

13. Open procurement

Commitment 13 – Open procurement			
Brief Description of the Commitment	On December 1, 2022, the public procurement platform ‘Rijksinkoop’ (Doing Business with the Government – Zakendoen met het Rijk) was launched online. The IRM review indicates that the potential of this platform can be further leveraged. This can be achieved, on one hand, by improving the information on the platform, and on the other hand, by expanding the scope of the platform to cover all aspects of government procurement, potentially including provinces and municipalities (leveraging function). This contributes to the expansion of public procurement information provided by the government and enhances the dialogue with external stakeholders. It increases the chances of obtaining the best possible bid for procurement with public funds and ensures that the procurement practices of the government are transparent and accessible.		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	The coordinating directors of procurement from the ministries, Procurement Execution Centers	Open State Foundation, Open Contracting Partnership (OCP)	Advisory group with external stakeholders (citizens, interest groups, and businesses)
Period Covered	2024-2026		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- The government policy ‘Procuring with Impact’ (Inkopen met Impact), which combines government procurement with social objectives, requires significant knowledge and expertise from companies interested in such contracts.
- If these companies are not informed in a timely manner about market tenders and lack the necessary information regarding the context of government procurement, the risk increases that the government will not receive optimal bids for its procurement. This can result in contracts that do not meet the desired quality standards.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- There are several causes contributing to the problem:
 1. It is challenging for citizens, businesses, and interest groups to navigate the abundance of information regarding the integration of social objectives into government procurement.
 2. It is unclear whom they can approach for inquiries related to the various topics associated with this integration.
 3. Particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), they lack the business volume to build knowledge and expertise concerning the complexity of government procurement.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- With financial support from the EU, a platform called Open Inkoop (Doing Business with the Government – Zakendoen met het Rijk) has been developed. This platform provides a well-organized compilation of all public information about government procurement, ranging from the procurement strategy to the realized government contracts. Additionally, it indicates whom interested parties can contact for further information.
- In addition, a calendar has been created that includes the procurement schedule. This allows companies and other stakeholders to look ahead for at least a year and see when market inquiries are planned.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- To further improve the platform, we propose the following solutions:
 - Publishing the remaining category plans.
 - Developing a dialogue function to facilitate structured conversations between the government and external stakeholders.
 - Performing a GAP analysis to determine the missing desired information.
 - Organizing an app challenge where the winning app is used to promote the use of the platform.
 - Expanding the scope of the platform: on one hand, from generic procurement (as currently) to specific procurement, and on the other hand, from (central) government procurement to procurement by provinces and municipalities (with a leverage function).

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- The desired outcome is that citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders are informed in a timely manner about the aspects of linking government procurement to social objectives. Moreover, they should be able to engage in a dialogue with the government on this topic. This not only contributes to an open government but also increases the likelihood of optimal use of taxpayer money.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	Access to data and information for citizens, businesses, and interest organizations will be improved through an open platform where the desired information is organized and explained in an accessible manner. Additionally, it will provide the opportunity to ask follow-up questions on the published information.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	By being transparent about how the government links government procurement to social objectives, both before and after the conclusion of government contracts, including the disclosure of suppliers and contract amounts. By organizing the information in a user-friendly manner, tailored to the needs of the users and the different stages of the procurement process, citizens can easily track the implementation and evaluation of the process.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	By engaging in timely, active, and professional dialogue with external stakeholders, the government demonstrates its commitment to transparency and collaboration.

CommitmentPlanning					
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders		
Organizing an app challenge to stimulate the use of the platform using the winning app.	Market request for the app challenge and awarding the contract to the winning supplier.	01-01-2024	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			The coordinating directors of procurement from the ministries Procurement Execution Centers	OSF	External stakeholders
Making the remaining category plans public. Developing a dialogue function to structure the conversation between the government and external stakeholders.	All category plans made public. Dialogue function, aligned by the government with external stakeholders.	01-03-2024	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			The coordinating directors of procurement from the ministries Procurement Execution Centers	OSF	External stakeholders
Performing a GAP analysis to identify missing desired information.	GAP analysis.	01-06-2024	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			The coordinating directors of procurement from the ministries Procurement Execution Centers	OSF	External stakeholders
Expanding the scope of the platform. On one hand, from generic procurement (current) to specific procurement. On the other hand, from government procurement to procurement by provinces and municipalities (leveraging function).	Broader scope of the platform.	01-01-2026	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
			The coordinating directors of procurement from the ministries Procurement Execution Centers	OSF	External stakeholders

V. Dialogue on information needs and research

The disclosure of government information serves society. Therefore, it is essential for the government to involve citizens, civil society organizations, and businesses in the development of policies regarding information and participation in the policy-making process. Through research and dialogue with citizens, we identify their needs in terms of information provision, accessibility, and disposal. In this way, we aim to strengthen the information relationship between the government and society.

14. Research on information needs and protocols

Commitment 14 – Research on information needs and protocols			
Brief Description of the Commitment	Identifying government information that is relevant to citizens and other stakeholders, and exploring possibilities for establishing agreements between information requesters (citizens, journalists) and information providers (government) to obtain this information.		
Commitment Lead	Institute for Social Innovation (IMI)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Open Government Program), Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)	Civil society coalition Talking About Information, Open State Foundation, Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ), Netherlands Association of Investigative Journalists (NVOJ), Leiden University	
Period Covered	2023-2024		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Little research has been conducted on the information needs of users of government information. This is problematic for citizens because they cannot be properly served. It is also problematic for governments because they lack guidance in making choices about which documents to actively disclose as a priority.
- Information requests under the Open Government Act (Wet open overheid – Woo) are often complex and extensive. The handling of Woo requests frequently exceeds legal deadlines. Clear agreements are lacking regarding what requesters and providers of government information can expect from each other in terms of approach and prioritization.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Research has been conducted on the information needs of citizens in life events such as marriage, birth, education, etc. This information is generally provided clearly, such as information on childcare, education, passports, or vacations (from a customer or user perspective). However, there has been much less research on the information needs of citizens in their role as engaged citizens.
- There is a lack of comprehensive research available at the national level on Freedom of Information Act (Wob) requests, including their content, the nature of the requester, and the nature of the documents provided, etc. Investigating information needs is also challenging due to the wide variety of topics. One year, theme X may be of great interest, while in another year, it may be theme Y. Moreover, there are different user groups with different needs, such as citizens, journalists, NGOs, and researchers.
- Some requests under the Open Government Act (Woo) are extensive, making it difficult to gather all relevant information. This is especially true when care is involved in the request. Additionally, the government's information management is not well organized, making some documents difficult to locate.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- Customer journeys have been created for information related to life events such as marriage, etc. IMI, on behalf of RDDI, conducted an initial exploration in the “Societal Information Needs; Quick Scan 2021” (Maatschappelijke behoeften aan informatie; Quick Scan 2021) report. This has put the topic on the agenda, but the key questions have not yet been answered.
- The new Open Government Act (Woo) states in Article 4.2A that in the case of extensive requests, the requester and the government should consult each other regarding prioritization. However, the analysis in the [“Matglas” report](#) suggests that this has been implemented to a limited extent so far.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- Analysis of Wob/Woo requests for patterns in the content of inquiries.
- Interviews with journalists and civil society organizations regarding information needs.
- Analysis of the effectiveness of information protocols, mapping best practices and lessons learned.
- Interviews with journalists, civil society organizations, and government officials regarding information protocols.
- Meeting(s) with journalists, civil society organizations, and government officials to discuss the findings of this research and the possibility of reaching agreements on an information protocol.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- Understanding the information needs of citizens, journalists, and civil society organizations.
- Assessment of the effectiveness of information protocols.
- Proposals for pilots on information protocols, with a focus on agreements between ministries and journalists regarding the handling of Woo requests.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	By gaining a better understanding of the information needs, the government will have guidance on which information should be actively disclosed to the public as a priority. This ensures that citizens receive the information they require.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	By establishing agreements with journalists, the public accountability function can be strengthened.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	Specific civil society organizations will be actively involved in the research.

CommitmentPlanning			
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders
Interviews with journalists and civil society organizations about information needs.	Report analyzing patterns in the content of Wob/Woo requests. Meeting(s) with journalists, civil society organizations, and government officials to discuss the findings of this research and explore the possibility of reaching agreements on an information protocol.	Spring 2024	Lead: IMI
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			CSOs
			Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
Interviews with journalists, civil society organizations, and government officials about information protocols.	Report analyzing the effectiveness of information protocols and mapping out best practices and lessons learned.	Summer 2024	Lead: IMI
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			CSOs
			Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
	Meeting(s) with journalists, civil society organizations, and government officials to discuss the findings of this research and explore the possibility of reaching agreements on an information protocol.	Fall 2024	Lead: IMI
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government
			CSOs
			Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)

15. Societal Benefits of Transparency

Commitment 15 – Societal Benefits of Transparency			
Brief Description of the Commitment	Mapping the societal benefits of government information transparency through literature review, analysis of Wob/Woo requests from the last 15 years, and interviews with stakeholders.		
Commitment Lead	Institute for Social Innovation (IMI), Civil society coalition Talking About Information		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Open Government Program) National Archives and/or Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and/or Central Government Program for Sustainable Digital Information Management (RDDI)	Open State Foundation, Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ), Netherlands Association of Investigative Journalists (NVOJ), Utrecht University, Leiden University	
Period Covered	2023-2024		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- In recent years, research has been conducted at regular intervals on the costs of transparency (SEO 2013, ABD Topconsult 2016, Ecorys 2019). However, much less attention has been given to the societal effects and benefits of transparency.
- In light of discussions regarding the usefulness, necessity, and scope of government information transparency, it is desirable to gain a better understanding of the benefits of transparency.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Transparency in government is a crucial pillar of a democratic rule of law. In practice, transparency also results in a significant workload for civil servants, including searching and retrieving relevant documents and assessing exceptions. As a result, much attention is dedicated to these practical matters, while less attention is given to the 'bigger picture' that highlights the benefits of transparency.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- In the Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) of the Dutch Open Government Act (Woo) conducted by Ecorys (2019), the benefits of transparency are quantified by using the search time of civil servants as a parameter. However, none of the previously mentioned CBAs have investigated the societal value of transparency.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- This research includes several actions to assess the societal benefits of transparency:
 - Literature review of national and international publications on the benefits of transparency.
 - Identification of several significant issues that have emerged over the past 15 years, partly through the use of Wob/Woo.
 - Selection of ten cases for in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders.
 - Reporting of findings.
- This has not been done before. This research can provide a better understanding of various types of societal benefits, such as identifying social misconduct, preventing the misuse of public funds, or uncovering unintended effects of regulations.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- Understanding the societal benefits of transparency.
- Understanding the mechanisms that lead to the non-disclosure or untimely sharing of relevant government information.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	The commitment will lead to a better understanding of the societal benefits that transparency in governance yields.
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	This commitment will lead to a clearer understanding of the benefits of transparency and contribute to improved accountability of the transparency regime.
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	For this commitment, several civil society organizations will be actively approached.

Commitment Planning

Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders
Mapping 100 issues that have received public attention in the past 15 years and involved the use of the Wob/Woo.	Literature review of national and international publications on the benefits of transparency. Report findings.	Spring 2024	Lead: IMI
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government CSOs Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
	Selection of 10 cases, interviews with relevant stakeholders.	Summer 2024	Lead: IMI
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government CSOs Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
Report findings.		Fall 2024	Lead: IMI
			Supporting Stakeholders
			Government CSOs Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)

16. Professionalization of Participation

Commitment 16 – Professionalization of Participation			
Brief Description of the Commitment	The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (IenW) aims to further develop the field of public participation in collaboration with the network of participation professionals from both within and outside the government. To achieve this, they intend to publish a new strategic knowledge agenda. The research questions outlined in the agenda will then be disseminated for further investigation. Additionally, a knowledge conference will be organized. Furthermore, the ministry will explore enhanced interdepartmental collaboration in the field of participation and develop a digital tool to assist in making design choices for participation plans.		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (IenW)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Ministry of BZK	Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen	
Period Covered	2023-2026		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- Participation is becoming an increasingly important part of the core work of civil servants, particularly within the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. In today's world, it is almost unthinkable to develop and implement policies without involving society. When stakeholders do not feel sufficiently engaged, they often demand their involvement.
- Even among policy officials themselves, there is a strong drive and desire to engage in participation, based on the belief that participation can truly improve policies. However, the question of how to organize participation effectively is not always easy to answer, as participation requires tailored approaches. International experience has shown that successful participation processes share certain common characteristics. The Knowledge Hub has identified eight success factors, such as providing stakeholders with sufficient, relevant, and accessible information to make meaningful contributions to the participation process, and providing feedback on how stakeholder input is considered and incorporated.
- To further develop the field of participation, the Directorate of Participation (part of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management) established the Knowledge Hub for Participation (Kennisknooppunt Participatie) several years ago.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- Designing and implementing participation processes heavily depends on the context, which is determined by various factors such as legal, governance, social, temporal, geographical, and political variables. How to navigate these contextual factors is not always clear. Additionally, there are no universally accepted standards, methods, training programs, or approaches for (policy) officials who want to engage in participation, despite the significant demand for them.
- Furthermore, the available knowledge on participation is scattered across disconnected organizations, leading to fragmentation of knowledge. This is due to a lack of coordination in an emerging and rapidly growing field. One major concern regarding fragmentation is the collaboration between theory and practice. The scientific community already possesses considerable knowledge about successful participation, but this knowledge has limited reach in the practical work of participation professionals. Conversely, participation professionals have valuable practical experience and case studies that are often not systematically documented and scientifically researched.
- Although participation is clearly its own field of expertise, it is still in its early stages as of 2023. Developing and professionalizing this field is necessary to better design and implement participation in the future. Bridging the gap between theory and practice of participation can play a crucial role in this process.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- In 2021, the Knowledge Hub for Participation (Kennisknooppunt Participatie) developed the first national knowledge agenda. The knowledge agenda was created through discussions with various research and knowledge institutions to address the current developments in the field of participation. The objectives of the knowledge agenda are:
 - To identify and prioritize urgent knowledge gaps for investigation.
 - To conduct fundamental practice-oriented research and encourage applied practice-oriented research while providing guidance.
 - To stimulate interaction between research and practice.
 - To strengthen the existing participation knowledge network.
- The 2021 knowledge agenda highlights five research themes. Based on these themes, various studies have been conducted, such as research on guidelines for successful participation. In early 2023, the Knowledge Hub, in collaboration with several other parties, organized a networking event called “Participation Research & Practice” (Participatie Onderzoek & Praktijk or POP). The purpose of this event was to bring together participation professionals from research and practice to share state-of-the-art insights. This event generated new research questions that can be used to update the 2021 knowledge agenda.
- Additionally, participation is rapidly gaining attention on the political agenda. Recently, the government presented a plan for strengthening citizen participation and citizen fora (at the national level) in a letter to the Dutch Parliament. This letter was sent on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior and other departments, including IenW (Infrastructure and Water Management) and EZK (Economic Affairs and Climate). One aspect of this plan is learning from practical experiences and actively conducting research, such as research on citizen fora.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- Based on the experiences with the first knowledge agenda, the “Praktijk Onderzoek Participatie” (POP) event in spring 2023, and the input from participation professionals within the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, the Knowledge Hub intends to publish an updated knowledge agenda in the autumn of 2023.
- The issues addressed in this updated knowledge agenda will serve as input for new (practice-oriented) research on participation. To ensure the ongoing relevance of the knowledge agenda, the Knowledge Hub plans to organize another POP event in 2024. This will help keep the knowledge agenda up-to-date and aligned with future needs and developments.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- The new knowledge agenda and network event provide strategic guidance for the development of the field of participation and align with the government’s ambition to actively develop, gather, and share knowledge and good examples. The new knowledge agenda focuses on current developments related to participation in the physical domain, including themes such as housing, spatial planning, environmental and climate policies, water management, agriculture, nature, food quality, transportation, and spatial-economic development.
- Based on the new knowledge agenda, we aim to foster the emergence of various new research projects within the network or initiate them ourselves when necessary. Research outcomes can lead to practical knowledge products, such as guidelines, animations, podcasts, and more.
- Ultimately, our efforts contribute to the development of the field, the training of participation professionals, and the empowerment of civil servants who engage in participation for their policy challenges. The intended outcome is an improvement in the quality of participation, resulting in better (implementable) policies for society.

Commitment Analysis

Question

Answer

1. How will the commitment promote transparency?

By publishing a public knowledge agenda and organizing a widely accessible POP event, the Knowledge Hub for Participation helps to improve the quality and diligence of participation processes. We also transparently address areas for improvement and acknowledge what has not worked in the field of participation in the knowledge agenda. Furthermore, we outline our plans for improvement in the knowledge agenda. Additionally, citizens (and other interested parties) can send questions, ideas, and/or comments about the content and further development of the national knowledge agenda through the [website of the Knowledge Hub for Participation](#).

2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?

The knowledge agenda serves as a foundation for the development of products by the Knowledge Hub for Participation and for the knowledge network within and outside the government. The new research and practical guidelines developed by the Knowledge Hub can be traced back to the research questions formulated in the knowledge agenda. Additionally, a periodic POP event can provide an opportunity for reflective evaluation of the implementation of the knowledge agenda and update it as necessary.

3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?

The ultimate goal of a knowledge agenda, as well as the network event, is to improve participatory practices. The research questions in the knowledge agenda lead to new guidelines and other knowledge products, which ultimately enhance the expertise of civil servants and help improve the quality of (public) participation processes.

CommitmentPlanning				
Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders	
Developing a new strategic knowledge agenda for the field of participation.	The (strategic) participation knowledge agenda 2023, which serves as a foundation for the development of the products of the Knowledge Hub.	1-10-2023	Lead: Ministry of IenW	
			Supporting Stakeholders	
			Government	CSOs
			Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen	
Organizing a second network meeting ('POP2') to set out follow-up actions together with the network of governments, knowledge institutions, and practical professionals from NGOs, citizen initiatives, consulting firms, etc.	A report on the POP2 meeting.	1-11-2024	Lead: Ministry of IenW	
			Supporting Stakeholders	
			Government	CSOs
			Ministry of BZK	Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen
Exploring more intensive interdepartmental collaboration in the field of participation.	A report on the exploration.	1-11-2024	Lead: Ministries of BZK and IenW	
			Supporting Stakeholders	
			Government	CSOs
			Ministry of Defense	
Designing an online participation guide for national-level participation.	A digital tool that assists policy officials and other professionals within the national government in making design choices for participation plans.	1-11-2024	Lead: Ministries of BZK and IenW	
			Supporting Stakeholders	
			Government	CSOs

VI. Awareness, training, culture change and experimentation

A progressive disclosure policy requires an open work culture. It is important to raise awareness among citizens, civil servants, and policymakers about the value of information. This can include developing educational materials that emphasize the importance of working with open, accessible, simple, and clear information. However, this alone is not sufficient. It requires ongoing commitment and attention from civil servants to become aware of their actions. By promoting a cultural shift where civil servants prioritize the interests of society, we contribute to a new governance culture.

17. The Guide to Professionalism in Civil Service

Commitment 17 – The Guide to Professionalism in Civil Service			
Brief Description of the Commitment	The Guide to Professionalism in Civil Service (Gids Ambtelijk Vakmanschap or Gids AV) provides common principles and values that serve as a guideline in our work, and working based on the principles of the guide gives legitimacy to our professional conduct. The values of openness and transparency require further clarification and substance beyond how they are currently articulated as of May 2023. The Open Government Program (Programma Open Overheid, BZK) and the Boundaryless Collaboration (Grenzeloos Samenwerken, BZK) Program are jointly exploring the meaning of these values and how they are manifested in the work of civil servants. Examples of good work (Beelden van Goed Werk or BGW) are being recorded in which these values play an important role. Professionalization is strengthened through experiences within the government service. Therefore, efforts are being made to establish moral precedents (moral jurisprudence or "moresprudentie"). The Guide to Professionalism in Civil Service will be further developed based on the results and experiences.		
Commitment Lead	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK)		
Supporting Stakeholders	Government	Civil Society	Other Actors (Parliament, Private Sector, etc)
	Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Open Government Program) Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Dialogue and Ethics) Advisory Council on Public Information (Voorlichtingsraad)		
Period Covered	2023-2024		

Problem Definition

1. What problem does the commitment aim to address?

- There is a growing demand from society for a more transparent and open government. What does this exactly mean for civil servants and how does it manifest in their work?
- In practice, critical moments often arise where employees have questions about the meaning of regulations, guidelines, and exceptions regarding transparency.
- The Guide to Professionalism in Civil Service (Gids AV) provides clarity on the various principles from which we, as a government, operate. By further elaborating on the values of openness and transparency, providing actionable perspectives, and offering inspiring examples (Beelden van Goed Werk or BGW), civil servants gain more guidance on the intended meaning of these values and how to act accordingly. It fosters a collective awareness of professional craftsmanship within the civil service.
- Moresprudence can play a crucial role in the provision of knowledge by incorporating solidified experiences, where descriptions of practical situations can serve as helpful guidance when adding a feedback loop to the knowledge offering.

2. What are the causes of the problem?

- The childcare benefits scandal, among others, has revealed the need to pay more attention to professional craftsmanship within the civil service. It has made it clear that the government has sometimes lost sight of the people for whom we do the work. Civil servants need to become more aware of the impact their actions have on individuals and society.
- Prudent professional practice is the result of making good considerations during critical moments. The absence of such opportunities leads to coping strategies such as fight, flight, freeze, or face. Experiences in various sectors of society (such as accounting and healthcare) demonstrate that the quality of prudent decision-making depends on individuals internalizing and collectively understanding those decisions.
- Rigid adherence to rules, including those related to transparency, hinders effective communication. Insufficient insight into how individuals or teams make decisions prevents the creation of a shared space: just as case law indicates what is “common practice” in similar situations and based on what considerations. Such insight should also lead to greater ease and confidence in disclosure practices and more consistency in decision-making.

Commitment Description

1. What has been done so far to solve the problem?

- By continuously engaging in dialogue, we keep professional craftsmanship alive and contribute to a culture in which we learn to discuss considerations with each other and hold each other accountable in critical situations.
- The Guide to Professionalism in the Civil Service (Gids AV) was launched two years ago, with the general principles of good governance, the code of conduct for integrity, and conversations with many civil servants being important sources of input. Feedback from these conversations, such as those with Open Government, forms the basis for further development of the guide. Civil servants have noticed that the language currently used in the guide does not sufficiently align with their work practices.
- Increasingly, conversations are being held on openness and accountability (e.g., research conversations, moral deliberations, and dilemma discussions).
- The 'Guidance for Dilemma Discussions on Transparency' (Handreiking dilemmagesprekken bij Openbaarheid) was completed at the end of 2022 and will be implemented in 2023.
- Virtually all ministries have initiated awareness programs regarding transparency.

2. What solution are you proposing?

- Together with the Open Government Program, we will explore the meaning of the values of openness and transparency and how they manifest in the work of civil servants. This will be done through sessions where we investigate the understanding of these values.
- By continuously engaging in conversations about (issues related to) openness and transparency, we give meaning to these values in our own work practices and learn to collectively weigh the tensions between these values. In this process, we build a work practice based on experiences. As part of this, we will document some examples of good work (Beelden van Goed Werk or BGW) in which the values of openness and transparency played a significant role. This will serve as inspiration for how others handled critical work situations and why they did so.
- We explore how we can develop a form of moresprudence based on these experiences. Just as legal jurisprudence helps document the practical meaning of legislation, solidified experiences of open conduct in the form of moresprudence can provide guidance to (civil) servants in critical moments.
- This moresprudence focuses on how to answer the question of what constitutes "good" action in specific situations: professional craftsmanship in critical moments. Based on the results and experiences, the Guide will be further developed.
- Strengthening professionalization can be achieved through experiences within the civil service. By actively seeking collaboration with programs such as Open Government, we align with the value tensions in daily work practices.

3. What results do we want to achieve by implementing this commitment?

- Creating awareness about the importance of engaging in conversations about openness so that civil servants can hold each other accountable and feel empowered to express themselves.
- The Guide to Administrative Professionalism serves as a guiding principle for civil servants, providing more direction and clarity to their work. By organizing these sessions collaboratively, the values of openness and transparency will align better with the language and lived experiences of civil servants.
- Establishing a dynamic form of moresprudence with practical approaches and examples.

Commitment Analysis

Question	Answer
1. How will the commitment promote transparency?	<p>The Dutch government consists of 140,000 civil servants who work within it. The way they carry out their work and the choices they make are crucial for delivering services to citizens. With the Guide to Professionalism in the Civil Service (Gids AV), we continuously strive to cultivate this awareness. The guide serves as a compass and tool for civil servants, providing more direction and clarity regarding what we collectively deem important in our work and offering actionable perspectives.</p> <p>By providing a deeper understanding of the concept of transparency, we have gained clarity on how to provide others with insight into what we do, how we do it, and why we do it. We demonstrate our willingness to share information about our work and provide explanations.</p> <p>Employees experience a strengthening effect when it comes to the appropriate, secure, and relaxed application of transparency in governance. This should be evident in public interactions.</p>
2. How will the commitment help foster accountability?	<p>Our work as civil servants can have significant consequences for individuals, groups, organizations, and businesses. Therefore, they have the right to know how decisions are made and the considerations taken into account. This requires us to be conscious of our work and ensure its accountability.</p>
3. How will the commitment improve citizen participation in defining, implementing, and monitoring solutions?	<p>Engaging in the development of the Guide to Professionalism in the Civil Service (Gids AV) primarily involves collective self-reflection by civil servants on the values and principles that are important in the way we carry out our work.</p> <p>For discussions on working openly and transparently, we propose involving societal parties and citizens as well. This will allow us to listen to their perspectives on administrative professionalism and what they consider important in terms of an open and transparent government.</p>

CommitmentPlanning

Milestones	Expected Outputs	Expected Completion Date	Stakeholders		
1. The government-wide open government project team engages in discussions with the administrative professionalism team about the language, dilemmas, and examples that are important regarding the values of openness and transparency.	Further development of the Guide will focus on these values. This version can serve as a basis for the government-wide discussions on the values of openness and transparency that we are organizing together.	Oct-Dec 2023	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)
2. Discussions and sessions are being held throughout the government organizations to explore what working openly and transparently means in practice and how to implement it. These conversations also focus on how the Guide can be used as a tool in this process.	Government employees across the board engage in conversations about what working openly and transparently entails. They discuss critical situations that may arise and explore the available options in those cases. The input from these sessions is used to build moresprudence, which can contribute to the ongoing development of the guide.	2024	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc) Lawyers and judges
3. Further development of the Guide	The outcomes from the sessions contribute to the establishment of moresprudence, which in turn aids in the ongoing development of the Guide.	2024	Lead: Ministry of BZK		
			Supporting Stakeholders		
			Government	CSOs	Others (e.g., Parliament, Private Sector etc)

VII. Renewal of the civil servant oath of office

The oath of office taken by civil servants at the start of their service in the central government has been revised for the first time in 25 years. The new oath emphasizes the essence of working in government: serving society. The revised text places extra emphasis on the responsibility of fostering an open government. To give meaning to the new oath, sessions will be organized and conversations will take place at various places and moments. By jointly exploring what working towards an open and transparent government entails in practice, we ensure that the oath is effectively upheld within government organizations, by both new and existing employees.

This initiative to promote an open and transparent government is further developed in this action plan as part of commitment 17, “The Guide to Professionalism in Civil Service,” within Theme 6.

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