



Digital inclusion

Everyone must be able to participate

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NL DIGIbeter 
Digital Government Agenda

Digital inclusion

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Digital inclusion – everyone must be able to participate

More and more, communication in the Netherlands is digital. This has a large impact on everyone's lives. Technology can prepare our country for the future. It creates chances. But for many people, developments are going too fast. We must take this into account. We will make sure that everyone can take part in the digital society. Even those people who need extra help.



Schools are using apps to give parents information about their children. For instance, schools tell parents at what time they can pick up their children. People who don't have a smartphone are missing out on that information.

Around 2.5 million Dutch people find it **difficult to use digital devices**, such as computers, smartphones and tablets¹. 1.2 million Dutch people have never used the Internet². Going digital at work can also cause problems. Sometimes this means that people cannot do their job properly.

¹ Netherlands Court of Audit 2016, Addressing Functional Illiteracy [Aanpak van Laaggeletterdheid].
² Statistics Netherlands (CBS) 2016 - IT skills among Dutch citizens [ICT-vaardigheden van Nederlanders].

Last summer, I told the House that we are going to work on these problems. We have come up with two plans: The 'Dutch Digitalisation Strategy' and the 'Government Digital Strategy: NL DIGibeter'. An important goal of these plans is: **everyone can participate in the (digital) society**³. This is what we call 'digital inclusion'.

We want to make sure that nobody is excluded. Digital services have to be secure, and people need to know this, so that they start to trust digital services. The government needs to **offer digital services the user can really work with**. That is why we will respond to what people want and what they need.



People with disabilities need special tools to use a website - a braille reader, for example, or a voice reader that reads text out loud. This function doesn't work on a lot of government websites.

Improving digital inclusion is a major challenge. It is going to take time and many different parties will have to work together. The various plans need to fit together like a puzzle. That's why we have set out **four main goals**:

1. Making digital services easier for everyone.
2. Helping people go digital.
3. Explaining what happens when people go digital.
4. Working together with companies and other organisations.

In this letter, I explain how we want to make things better for each main goal. The attachments to this letter then explain the actions that we are going to take.

³ In the Moerlag Motion (TK 26642-562), the Lower House asked for a plan to support people with poor digital skills.

1. Making digital services easier for everyone

It is important that as many people as possible are able to communicate with the government themselves. For this to happen, **everyone needs to have access to the government**. And everyone must be able to understand the information given by the government.

The government's communication needs to be clear and as simple as possible. We want to reach this goal with the help of people who have difficulty with reading and writing. They can help us to make sure we use **understandable language**. This letter to parliament is an example of this. Language ambassadors have helped us to write down our plans in an understandable manner.

When we make new laws, we'll make sure that they are **workable laws**. We will test if people can really benefit from our plans. We will also create digital services that will be as easy to use as possible.



Many people have problems with reading and writing. They are best placed to tell us what they struggle with on websites and apps. We will use this information to improve our services.

We will build **websites and apps that work well**. All government organisations have to improve their existing digital services. When we build a new website or app, we will make sure that everyone can use it.

Even when we make digital services easier, some people will still need **extra help**. We will give them that help. We are also going to make it easier for family and friends to help.

2. Helping people go digital

Digital skills are just as important as reading, writing and arithmetic. That's why the government is already doing a lot to help people. But it is **not enough**. That's why we are going to give even more help.

As the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), we are responsible for the digital government. We are going to **work together with more government organisations**, for example, with ministries that work with social affairs and education. We will also work with local authorities, because they are in direct contact with the people who need extra help.

Many organisations help people with reading, writing and digital skills. For instance, libraries and the Reading & Writing Foundation [Stichting Lezen en Schrijven]. However, these organisations cannot reach everyone. That is why we are going to **try to find out** the reasons why people do or do not go digital.

There are already many people who want to help others with language and digital skills. We are going to make this **support network** bigger and stronger. This way, we can use the knowledge and experience that is already in place.



A lot is already being done for people who find it difficult to go digital. But there are many different problems to solve. In order to help everyone, everyone in society must try their best.

In order to reach out to more people, we sometimes need to **try new things**. For example, starting a different type of project or finding a new way of working together. This is how we will learn which approach works best.

3. Explaining what happens when people go digital

We cannot live without technology in our society. It is important that **everyone understands this**, and that everybody knows what this means. The government must do its best to reach that point, and people themselves must do this too.

If you want to understand the effects of technology, you have to work with it first. When people gain knowledge and experience, they also become more **confident in going digital**. With this knowledge and their own experiences, they can join in discussions about going digital. This will also make it easier for people to stand up for their rights.

Going digital provides chances as well as risks. People must therefore **keep on learning** about going digital. Learning takes place not only in schools, but also in other places. Going digital can be difficult in different ways.



Smartphones are handy but there are also risks. Some people think they are difficult to use. Other people think they are easy to use, but don't think enough about what information they are sharing on the internet.

We are going to give more information about going digital and explain what happens when people do go digital. As a result, people can **think about** the role of digitalisation in their lives. We will improve and expand the help that is already available.

To do this properly, we need to know which problems people face when going digital. For example, we can ask people what they think of government websites, if they trust the internet, and if they feel safe using the internet. We will do **more research** into this.

4. Working together with companies and other organisations

Companies, researchers and other organisations also have a lot of knowledge about going digital. The government wants to use this knowledge. Together we can think up **creative ways** to help people going digital.

Other countries are also helping people go digital. In the Netherlands, we can **learn from those countries**. We may learn new things about how to reach more people and help them go digital.

Since the summer, various organisations in a network have been discussing going digital. This network is called the 'Alliantie digivaardig Nederland'. We are going to expand this network and make better use of it. We want to share more **knowledge and experience with each other** in the Netherlands.



In a digital society, governments, businesses and other organisations need to work together. It can help them understand the areas they are working in and they can help each other. Together they can make it easier for citizens.

Our focus on going digital can and must become better. Together we are working on becoming a country in which everyone can take part, digitally or otherwise. In 2019, I will give you more information about our approach.

The State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations,

drs. R.W. Knops

Attachments

Would you like more information about what we are doing? The actions we will take for each of the four main goals are explained below.

1. Making digital services easier for everyone

We are testing if laws and regulations actually work

When we make a new policy, we test whether this new law or these new regulations actually work. Such a test is called a capability test [doenvermogenstoets]⁴. If the new law or regulation does not work, we change our plans.

We are funding the Gebruiker Centraal programme

Gebruiker Centraal is a group of people who want to make government services better. They do this by really listening to the wishes and needs of users. They also find out how the services need to change. All government departments can use the programme. That's why the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations will also be funding Gebruiker Centraal in 2019.

We are campaigning for understandable language

Everyone must be able to understand communications from the government. We are trying to achieve this through our Merkbaar Beter programme. Within this programme, the campaign Direct Duidelijk started on 31 October. This campaign helps government organisations to communicate in an understandable manner - by offering tips for creating understandable websites, for example.

We talk to people who have problems with reading and writing

Talking to people who have problems with reading and writing can help to make digital services better. Various organisations have told me that. These conversations help you understand the practical problems that these people face⁵. We will use this knowledge to improve services.

4 Research Council for Government Policy (WRR) - Weten is nog geen doen: Een realistisch perspectief op redzaamheid.

5 Omdenken vanuit perspectief van laaggeletterden (OPL) is a method of the Reading & Writing Foundation, whereby a group of people with limited literacy skills help think about organisational issues.

We are starting programmes to learn more from each other and get a deeper understanding

Organisations can learn from each other by sharing their experiences with going digital. That's what I am going to focus on. We do this with the Mens Centraal programme, for example. Mens Centraal is where central government, towns and cities, provinces and water authorities all work together. Together they look at the person receiving information from the government. We make things clearer and easier for people by offering combined information from government organisations.

We tell public-sector bodies they have to make their websites and apps better

Everybody has to be able to use websites and apps, also if they have a physical disability that makes it harder for them. This is called accessibility. Since 1 July 2018, there is a law that says that websites and apps have to be more accessible⁶. This law applies to towns and cities, provinces, ministries and other government organisations. Public-sector bodies also have to explain what they have done to make their websites and apps more accessible. They must give this explanation in a special statement called the 'accessibility statement' [toegankelijkheidsverklaring].

We are supporting the public sector in making their services more accessible

For public-sector bodies that want help, we will assist them in making their websites and apps more accessible. We do this, for example, with the DigiToegankelijk platform (www.digitoegankelijk.nl).

Accessibility forms the basis for new systems

When developing new digital services, it is important to take into account from the very start that the services must be accessible to everyone. This will save us money. Because if we make sure that a website or app is properly accessible right from the start, we avoid the need for (expensive) changes at a later stage.

Public-sector bodies must provide appropriate support

We are going to improve a lot of things. But even with all these improvements, many people will still find it difficult to communicate digitally with the government. We have a responsibility to give this group extra help. Therefore I want to make it a legal obligation for public-sector bodies to provide that help. In order to do this, I want to amend the General Administrative Law Act [Algemene wet bestuursrecht].

6 This 'Provisional Decree on Digital Accessibility of the Government' [Tijdelijk besluit digitale toegankelijkheid overheid] is one of the implementations in the Netherlands of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We are starting a programme to make it easier to appoint someone to help

For various reasons, some people find it difficult to manage their own affairs. They would like someone else to help them. It is like this in the real world as well as in the digital world. We need to give these people extra help. We are doing this, for example, with the Authorisation programme [Programma Machtigen]. This makes it easier for people to give permission to someone they trust to manage their affairs digitally with public-sector bodies on their behalf.

2. Helping people go digital

We put people first

Digital inclusion is not just about improving digital services. We focus on the people for whom the services are intended.

We focus on what is already available

A lot is already being done for people who find it difficult to go digital. Many large cities receive money from the government. This money is used to offer training courses⁷, in both large and small towns and cities. In these courses, people learn to read and write, and they also learn about going digital.

Libraries are just one of the places where you can use computers for free. Libraries also organise courses and sessions for people who are finding it difficult to go digital. They often work together with other organisations such as the Tax Authorities, Oefenen.nl and Digisterker. These organisations provide legal advice on laws or regulations and help people with problems such as applying for benefits. Libraries tell us that many people still find it difficult to manage their own affairs with the government and that they need help going digital.

We are investigating why some people participate in going digital and why others do not

Many organisations are doing their best to get people to join the digital society. These organisations include senior citizen organisations (Seniorweb, KBO-PCOB, etc.), the National Library of the Netherlands and Reading & Writing Foundation. Unfortunately, they cannot reach everyone. To reach more people, we need to know why some people are going digital and others are not. There may be all kinds of reasons, related to one's personal situation.

7 Adult and Vocational Education Act [Wet Educatie en Beroepsonderwijs].

We are going to do more research together with other ministries and organisations⁸.

This should give us a better understanding of how we can reach people. We are using existing knowledge in this research, for example, from the national programme 'Tel mee met Taal'. We are also using knowledge gained from local programmes such as DagenDoen (www.dagendoen.nl). We are also looking at the consequences for business owners.

More cooperation within the government

Going digital affects many areas, including education, social affairs and security. It is therefore important that the government chooses one approach. That's why we are making agreements with other ministries such as Education, Culture and Science (OCW), Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) and Social Affairs and Employment (SZW)⁹. We are also working together with municipalities and social organisations, because they have direct contact with various (vulnerable) target groups.

New programme: Tel mee met Taal 2020+

From 2019, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BKZ) will participate in the 'Tel mee met Taal' programme. This programme aims to support people who need help with reading, writing and digital skills. In the new programme, we focus particularly on going digital. The old 'Tel mee met Taal' programme will finish at the end of 2019. We will inform you about the content of the new programme before the summer of 2019. My colleagues at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, municipalities and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and I will determine the content¹⁰.

We are using more language ambassadors

People who find it difficult to go digital often know best what they need. Language ambassadors are people who used to have difficulties with reading and writing and therefore also with digital skills. By taking courses and with practice, they are now able to use their own experiences to help others. People who have difficulty with reading, writing and digital skills often like to hear personal experiences. That's why we want to use more language ambassadors.

8 This study will run throughout the entire government term. The Lower House will be regularly informed of the results of the study.

9 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW).

10 Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)

We are using the creativity of start-ups

Many new, small businesses have creative ways of working. These companies are called start-ups. We want to use the experience of these start-ups more. We do this with our 'Start-up in residence' programme. We ask start-ups to think of ways to help people think of going digital as fun, not scary.

Increasing and improving the help network

People often get help from people they know when they find it hard to use digital services, because of a disability or for other (temporary) reasons. They get help from family members or people in the community, for example. We call this group of people the social network. We are going to focus more on these networks¹¹. We are also going to focus more on volunteers. If volunteers can have all of their questions answered by local social organisations, then they will be able to do a better job.

Libraries are given a more important role

We will make sure that people get even more help in libraries. At this moment, it's possible to get help with completing your tax return. Next, libraries must also be able to give people information about such matters as applying digitally for a benefit or allowance. Fifteen libraries will start doing this in early 2019. Other libraries will follow later.

New partnerships in order to reach more people

We will try to find new ways to reach people who are having trouble going digital. We will also start new partnerships for this. To reach different people, we have to work together with various organisations. We can reach more elderly people through elderly care. We can find out how to reach employees via their employers. In 2019, the Kids Council (Raad van Kinderen) will perform a study of how children's knowledge of going digital is affected by their family environment.

We are starting experiments

We want to improve the help people get with going digital. In order to find out what works well, you sometimes have to experiment. We will be doing this in Groningen in the coming months. We are doing this together with local companies. In this experiment, we will mainly be looking at how we can improve the role of the family. Because you learn more about going digital if your family is also involved.

11 Motion for digital neighbourhood assistance, 35000 No. 15.

3. Explaining what happens when people go digital

Both government and citizens must do their best

We think it is important for people to be digitally aware¹². This means that they are know about both the chances and the dangers in the digital world. They need to gain knowledge and experience for this. The government needs to make an extra effort, but citizens must also do their best.

The importance of technology

It will help people if they learn how to use technology. That is called technological citizenship¹³. We will give this technological citizenship extra support in the coming period. We are starting a campaign for all Dutch citizens. The aim of the campaign is for more people to start trusting the digital world and to gain more confidence in the government's digital services. As a result, they should be better able to stand up for their rights. They will also be able to take part in discussions about the consequences of going digital. For example, discussions about the increasing use of robots and about the effect of 'smart cameras' on security and privacy¹⁴.

We are increasing awareness

Digitalisation creates chances and risks¹⁵. Criminals use the internet for digital burglaries, for example. The influence of technology is often difficult to predict. That is why it is important to keep learning. Schools have already paid particular attention to going digital, but we need to do more. The whole of society needs to think about the importance and impact of going digital. We make sure that this is a topic of conversation. And we encourage people to learn how to use technology.

12 See the competency model of Mediawijzer.net, which distinguishes between active and conscious media use: <https://cdn.mediawijzer.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2013/09/competentiemodel-korte-toelichting.pdf>.

13 Rathenau defines technological citizenship as the collection of duties and rights that allows citizens to benefit from the benefits of technology and protects them from the risks of it.

14 See also Rathenau: Upgrading - Protecting public values in our digitised society and Directed digitalisation. [Opwaarderen - Borgen van publieke waarden in de digitale samenleving en Doelgericht digitaliseren].

15 TK 26643-574 letter about increasing information security in the public sector.

Focus on splinter skills

Some people are good at only one set of digital skills. We call these ‘splinter skills’¹⁶. For example, young people are very skilled in social media, but they sometimes don’t think enough about what happens when they post a message or a photo on social media. Adults are often skilled at internet banking, but they often find it difficult to use new technology. What is easy for one person is difficult for another. That is why we offer different types of courses.

Linking with existing projects

There is already a lot of general information available about going digital. Some examples are:

- Campaign on safe internet use
- The ‘you are sharing more than you know’, [je deelt meer dan je weet] campaign from the Dutch Data Protection Authority
- Campaign on the risks of online purchases via social media¹⁷
- Discussions about the impact of technology on society. We call this the Social Dialogue regarding public values.
- Plans in the field of media and the activities of Mediawijzer.net¹⁸
- Leven Lang Ontwikkelen (Lifelong Development) programme of the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment
- Government campaign about the dangers of fake news. We call this the Awareness campaign to make people aware of fake news.

In 2019, we want to see what has worked well. We will then decide how to continue.

Research into recognition and trust

It is important that people know when a communiqué (an official message) is issued by the government. We will therefore investigate if this is clear¹⁹. Everyone should be able to know if government websites and e-mails from the government are real. We will also try to find out why people have problems with digital services. I will give you more information about the results in 2019.

¹⁶ See municipality of Amsterdam - Building blocks for digital inclusion [Bouwstenen voor digitale inclusie] December 2017

¹⁷ Campaign of the Netherlands Authority for Consumer and Markets (ACM)

¹⁸ As announced in the 2019 media budget letter (TK 35 000, VIII, No 91), which was sent to the House on 16 November 2018.

¹⁹ TK 26 643 no. 574, Information Security.

4. Working together with companies and other organisations

Talking with research, businesses and other organisations

Recently, we have been talking to various people about the digital society. We discovered that we need to improve the way we work together in order to reach more people. For example, by reaching out to people in places they visit every day. This could be the supermarket or the school playground. Several companies have told us that they want to help. For example, by making a space available, by sharing knowledge or by making money available.

We are getting new ideas from organisations abroad

Organisations abroad are also working at going digital. Just like us, they want more people to be able to use their computers and smartphones. We get ideas from them for new solutions in the Netherlands. One example is ‘The Good Things Foundation’ in the United Kingdom. Here, organisations, public authorities and companies work together to help people who have difficulty with reading, writing and going digital. They do this by offering courses in different places and by looking closely at the effects of the different working methods.

Alliantie digivaardig Nederland

The ‘alliantie digivaardig Nederland’ started last summer. This is a cooperative agreement involving government, social organisations and businesses. We all share our knowledge and experiences. We also look at what works and what doesn’t. We look at internet courses, and courses in community centres or libraries, for example. Together we make plans to improve the range of courses on offer. We do this by having both old and new parties consider the existing range. New parties can be, for example, start-ups. Right now, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations is looking at which plans could start as early as 2019.

We are cooperating more closely with companies

Over the coming years, we want to involve more organisations in the alliance. We can then offer a more personalised and varied range. Libraries and social organisations are already running courses, but businesses can also help. Together with all parties, we can reach even more people.

Measures, programmes and costs

Measures to improve digital inclusion

Everyone must be able to participate in the digital society. That is what we call 'digital inclusion'. The overview below shows what I, as the Secretary of State of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, am doing to improve digital inclusion.

Goal	Measure/ action	Start	End
Accessible and understandable	Improving public service from a user's perspective - for instance, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involving the target group Gebruiker Centraal Mens Centraal 		
	Supporting legal requirements (changing the General Administrative Law Act (AWB)		
	Authorisation Programme		
	Implementing Provisional Decree on Digital Accessibility of the Government:		
	raising awareness among public authorities	Q3 2018	Q3 2020
	gaining practical experience with accessibility statements	Q1 2019	Q3 2020
	monitoring the progress of the implementation of the Provisional Decree on Digital Accessibility of the Government	Q3 2019 ²⁰ Q3 2020	
Skilled and self-reliant	Impuls Tel mee met Taal	Q1 2019	Q4 2019
	Follow-up 'Tel mee met Taal' with 'digital impulse'	Q1 2020	
	Experiments to increase our range		
	Digitaal hulpplein		
	Additional range of services for various groups (elderly people, young people)		
	Kids Council - digital inclusion issue	Q1 2019	Q3 2019

Goal	Measure/ action	Start	End
Digitaal bewust	Public campaign	Q1 2019	Q1 2020
	Making additional range of courses available	Q2 2019	
Public-private cooperation	Preparation phase of the Alliantie Digivaardig Nederland	Q3 2018	Q4 2018
	Signing the declaration of intent		Q1 2019
	Implementation and continued development of the public-private network	Q1 2019	Q4 2020
Investigation/ Experiments	Baseline	Q1 2019	Q1 2020
	Trial period for digital inclusion	Q1 2019	
	Public survey (ongoing)	Q4 2018	

²⁰ For websites that came online after 23 September 2018.

Programmes to improve digital inclusion

Going digital is an important area of focus for government. By means of different programmes, the government is working towards a society in which everyone remains included. The table below shows the most important programmes. This is an overview of November 2018.

Driver	Agenda/programme	Explanation
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy	Dutch Digitalisation strategy	Overarching strategy for digitalisation in the Netherlands.
Ministry of Justice and Security	Dutch Cyber Security Agenda	Goal: The Netherlands can safely seize the economic and social opportunities of digitisation and protect national security in the digital domain.
	Social Domain Programme	With the Social Domain Programme, the government and municipalities work together with professionals to provide better help for (vulnerable) people.
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	Tel mee met Taal	Tel mee met Taal is a national campaign aimed at preventing and combating functional illiteracy.
	Mediawijzer.net	The aim of Mediawijzer.net is to encourage as many Dutch people as possible to be or become media literate through a network approach. This is to ensure that they can move
	Adult education	Municipalities buy basic skills courses (including digital skills) for their residents.

Driver	Agenda/programme	Explanation
The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	Leven Lang Ontwikkelen	With Leven Lang Ontwikkelen, the government wants to create a positive and strong learning culture.
	Technology Pact	The aim of the Technology Pact is to improve the link between education and the labour market in the technology sector, thereby reducing the shortage of technical staff.
The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	Onbeperkt meedoen (Unlimited participation)	This is a programme for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The aim of the program is to enable people with disabilities to participate in society more and according to their own wishes and abilities.

Costs of the Digital Inclusion Programme

In the Digital Inclusion Programme, we work together with other ministries and public-sector bodies such as municipalities and provinces. The programme consists of activities from the entire public sector, as well as activities from a particular public sector such as healthcare or education.

The activities from a sector are paid for with money from ministries and other government departments. BZK pays the costs of activities from the entire government. The costs of these 'general activities' for all Dutch people, together with an estimate of the amount of the costs, are shown below.

x 1000€

	2019	2020	2021	Structural
Objective 1: Digital accessibility	2100	1300	1200	900
Track 2: Digital skills and self-reliance				
– Contribution to Tel mee Taal	1500	2500	2500	2500
– Challenge digital inclusion				
– Additional range of courses				
Track 3: Digital awareness				
– Public campaign	500	1000	1000	1000
Objective 4: Public-private partnerships				
– Implementation trajectory	1000	500	500	500
Research/experiments				
– Baseline	500	500	500	500
– Public survey				
– Trial period				
Total	5600	5800	5700	5400

