

Annual Report 2017
Dutch Electoral Council



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Electoral Council

Photos and illustrations

Between 2017 and 2019 we celebrate 100 years of universal suffrage in the Netherlands. In 1917 universal male suffrage and passive female suffrage was introduced and in 1919 active female suffrage. This annual report shows illustrations from the period that preceded the introduction of universal suffrage in the Netherlands.

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Preface

2017 was the centenary of a radical change in our electoral system. In the constitutional amendment of 1917, the former system of districts was replaced by the system of proportional representation that is still in effect today. In addition, universal male suffrage and passive female suffrage were introduced and the introduction of active female suffrage was removed from the purview of the Constitution - i.e., it was left to general government. The aforementioned is generally known. Less well-known is the fact that the introduction of proportional representation required the establishment of a central electoral committee that would determine the results of the parliamentary elections at the national level, determine the number of votes that each party list achieves and that would choose the candidates. With the district system, national determination of the results was not necessary: the result was determined separately in each district and one of the candidates was then declared elected.

The decision to set up the new central electoral committee dates from 12 December 1917, the same day that the constitutional revision was announced. (Stb.1917-691). The members of the government committee for proportional suffrage (the "Staatscommissie-Oppenheim") then moved to the new central polling station, later called the Electoral Council.

In 2017 – 100 years later – a Government Committee was also set up to advise about the desirability of changes in the parliamentary system and parliamentary democracy (the Staatscommissie-Remkes). Consideration of the current electoral system will certainly be a topic in this. This is shown in the October 2017 coalition agreement, which states, under the heading of "Electoral system", that the Parliamentary Government Committee will be asked to provide a recommendation concerning "options for a change in the electoral system for the House of Representatives, partly in view of the regional function of the electoral systems in the surrounding countries".

The Electoral Council has fulfilled its tasks independently throughout the last hundred years. This independence is still emphasised by the acceptance of the new Accountability Law (the Parliamentary Act of 22 March 2017), by means of which the Electoral Council is purposely set at a distance from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations for management purposes and, henceforth, is placed under the same regime as the High Councils of State.

It is difficult to overemphasise the difficulty involved in holding elections. In other words: it is an enormous operation each time. There are some 13 million eligible voters, nearly 10,000 polling stations and many tens of thousands of persons and officers involved. The Electoral Council considers it a substantial assignment to pay constant attention and work on achieving the standard of free and honest elections under the current electoral system, or a possibly adapted system in the future.



Title

*General Men's Suffrage The 1918 ballot box:
Unfortunately, I can't welcome female voters and
must grant that pleasure to my successors.*

Description

*After the introduction of the general right to vote
for men, a ballot box with a pencil and a ballot
paper rue the absence of women's suffrage during
the July 1918 elections. Design of a political
cartoon in the "Nieuwe Amsterdammer" from
1917 or 1918.*

Illustrator

P. de Jong

Source

National Military Museum (NMM) Soesterberg.

Of particular importance were the House of Representatives elections in 2017 and the request procedure for the referendum concerning the Security and Intelligence Services Act (Dutch acronym: Wiv). The lower house elections of 15 March 2017 were remarkable in several aspects. For example, this involved the largest number of registered political groups and the size of the voting cards, but also the loss of votes. These topics are addressed elsewhere in the annual report. The publicity about the digital components of the electoral process, which resulted in digital transfer of data no longer being possible in the customary manner, was also important. This could be viewed as a problem. And it was, indeed a problem, but this event also led to a new perspective. Awareness concerning digital electoral manipulation increased remarkably. The Parliamentary Government Committee also meets regularly to consider the use of ICT in the electoral process. When developing new, future-proof digital technologies, not only will affordability and efficacy have to play a role, but also security and cyber-security. Transparency and broad buy-in are also required. All things considered, it comes down to the confidence in the electoral process.

The Electoral Council noted on 1 November 2017 that the nomination thresholds for conducting a referendum about the Wiv had been exceeded, so this referendum shall take place. The coalition agreement includes the intention to rescind the currently applicable Advisory Referendum Act (Dutch acronym: Wrr). Naturally, it is not up to the Electoral Council to issue an opinion about the appropriateness and modalities of this. Such things require political-administrative consideration. As long as the Wrr still applies, the Electoral Council will, of course, perform the ensuing activities meticulously.

Altogether, there currently appears to be momentum for the implementation of necessary improvements in the Electoral Act and the electoral process. A legislative proposal for a change in the Electoral Act was accepted for consultation in December 2017; once again, there is now full focus on the security and reliability of the electoral process. Let's use that momentum in the service of our democracy.

J.G.C. Wiebenga,
Chairman of the Electoral Council

1. “Suffrage is not a calm domain. This was confirmed once again by the recent Parliamentary elections.”

Double interview with Chairman Jan Kees Wiebenga and Secretary Director Melle Bakker.

This was your first Parliamentary election as the new chairman of the Electoral Council. What did you think of it?

Jan Kees Wiebenga: You have an idea beforehand of how parliamentary elections go. But still, all kinds of unusual things happen. A first example: an unusually large number of parties had registered. This resulted in a huge ballot paper, with some 30 parties and more than 1100 candidates. And there's also a focus on the digital aspects of the election process, and on the consequences of this for the process of determining the results. In short - it's fascinating from the perspective of a new chairman. But if you reflect on the history of voting rights, you realise that there were often rough conditions. So suffrage is hardly a calm domain. This was reconfirmed by the recent parliamentary election.

How many parliamentary elections have you experienced in your work for the Electoral Council?

Melle Bakker: I worked for the Electoral Council for a few years during the mid-1980s. During the period that I worked as adjunct secretary, there were two elections. I returned in 2010 and, since then, there have been another three elections. But this election was special. Take the hearing in which we had to publicise the validity of the list of candidates, for example. There wasn't enough time within the legally mandated preparation time of one hour and we had to cancel the hearing immediately after opening it. That had never occurred before. In this country, we are constantly adapting electoral legislation. Indeed, suffrage is not a calm domain. It never was, and it probably never will be.

There was also considerable international attention on the election.

Jan Kees Wiebenga: That was an interesting element. Because it placed the national election in an international context. A context that is not limited to the surrounding dykes and the border at Winterswijk. And I understand why there was so much interest: we were the first of a series of European elections after the American presidential election.



Chairman Jan Kees Wiebenga (r) and Secretary Director Melle Bakker (l).

The American election brought a focus on greater vulnerability to the manipulation of results. Were you shocked by this?

Jan Kees Wiebenga: No. To start with, I think that an Electoral Council is not made to be shocked. As it turned out, the American presidential election turned out to be affected from the outside, as far as can be presumed. So you shouldn't be surprised that such an issue also occurs here. A positive element in all of this, I think, is that this drastically increased the awareness of the risks of digital elements in the election process. Consequently, we have to do something about this, of course. The House of Representatives also recognises that it's hugely important that we have safe and secure elections. So that people still have faith in those elections.

Melle Bakker: Safeguards had already been built into our election software to keep anyone from manipulating those results. As long as everyone kept to those procedures - i.e. didn't use computers connected to the Internet, used the four-eyes principle, etc. - then it was really difficult to affect those results. Nonetheless, well before the elections in the US, we concluded that the election software needed to be updated. After all, software has a limited lifespan. Another new element is the threat of state actors that not only influence election results, but also the campaigns. Consider fake news, for example. Therefore, the requirements for new software to be developed – since software will undoubtedly continue to be used to establish elections results – will be all the more stringent. The focus on vulnerabilities has increased and this is good.

Jan Kees Wiebenga: one of the requirements when developing new digital election infrastructure is that it has broad political buy-in. I consider this very important to people's continued faith in elections, also in the future.

This year, the Electoral Council made it known that there will be a second advisory referendum pursuant to the Advisory Referendum Act. This may be the last referendum. Do you regret this?

Melle Bakker: Well, we implement the law with pleasure. But the government assigned us this task at one point, so it's also up to the government to take that task away from us. For example, there was once a consideration that the Electoral Council would be charged with supervising the finances of political parties. That didn't happen. So would I regret it if we no longer performed the referendum task? Okay, maybe a bit. That's because I'm also somewhat proud of how we perform that task.

Jan Kees Wiebenga: As a supplement to this: even if the current Advisory Referendum Act were rescinded, an advisory referendum is still possible – namely, by means of a special law. Such as the European referendum in 2005. So theoretically the possibility remains. But then it will be necessary to adopt a separate, incidental law for this.

How does a referendum differ from a regular election for the Electoral Council?

Melle Bakker: With referenda, you have an introductory phase and a definitive phase in which voters can submit requests to hold a referendum. In a regular election, you have nominations and registrations for the appellations of political parties. The similarity lies in the process of determining the results. Because this is done via polling stations to the municipalities, from the municipalities to the primary polling stations and from these primary polling stations to the Electoral Council.

And in terms of workload?

Melle Bakker: When voting on a referendum, you have only three options – you vote for the act, against the act, or abstain. When establishing the results, there's a huge difference between having to deal only with three categories or with dozens of political parties and countless candidates. The latter requires considerably more work. As it is, we can provide a result more quickly with referenda. However, whether that will also be the case in March 2019 is still the question. Also because the referendum will then be combined with the municipal election.

Starting from the end of 2017, we will be celebrating 100 years of universal suffrage in the Netherlands. Will the Electoral Council itself also celebrate this, with confetti and cake?

Jan Kees Wiebenga: Yes, as far as I'm concerned. For me, December 1917 is a pivotal moment in Dutch constitutional history. Just as 1848 – when we became a democracy. In 1917, two discussions that had raged for dozens of years were concluded: the school battle and the “electoral battle”. With both proponents and opponents of universal suffrage. With a single constitutional amendment, both issues advanced considerably at that moment. It's not that all of the necessary steps were taken in 1917, but they did form the basis. That moment was also vitally important to women's right to vote because it made passive suffrage possible for women. On the basis of this, the first woman was elected to parliament in 1918. That would not have been possible without December 1917.

What public activities will the Electoral Council initiate to celebrate 100 years of suffrage?

Melle Bakker: We are organising an essay competition for students. With the question: “What does the ideal electoral system look like to you?” The competition will conclude with a symposium in the Old Meeting Hall of the House of Representatives, which will put the spotlight on the prize winners. In addition, the Secretariat of the Electoral Council will co-author a number of books. There are countless initiatives in the rest of the country celebrating 100 years of suffrage. So I think the party will last for a couple of years.

Title

The demonstration in The Hague, as this might have taken place, had it not been forbidden.

Description

Opponents feared that troublemakers might misuse universal suffrage in order to overthrow society. On the left, the socialist Domela Nieuwenhuis rouses the inebriated masses. At the lower right, petroleum and dynamite stand at the ready.

Illustrator

W.H. van der Nat.

Bron

Liberal magazine Uilenspiegel 17 September 1892.



2. Organisation

The Electoral Council has a number of legal tasks:

- The Council acts as central electoral committee during elections for the Senate and House of Representatives and for the (26) Dutch members of the European Parliament. In this context, the Electoral Council's tasks are:
 - registering political parties' appellations and logos
 - evaluating and numbering the lists of candidates submitted
 - determining the official election results
 - appointing the members and providing for positions in the aforementioned bodies
- The Council advises the government and Parliament about issues involving technical execution in the area of voting rights and elections. This primarily concerns draft legislative proposals for changes to electoral legislation. On a few occasions, the Electoral Council provides unsolicited recommendations – in the form of evaluations after the conclusion of elections, for example.
- The Council acts as a central electoral committee for conducting referenda based on the Advisory Referendum Act. This implies:
 - making forms available for submitting requests to conduct a referendum
 - evaluating the requests submitted during the introductory and definitive phases
 - determining the number of requests submitted
 - determining the result of a referendum

Pamela Young:

“Maybe I’ll make a six-layer cake with “100 years of suffrage” on top. But there’s no exact moment to celebrate 100 years of universal suffrage. And I’m certainly not going to be baking for two years in a row.”

Other Electoral Council tasks

Throughout the year, the Electoral Council acts as a knowledge and information source about suffrage and elections for municipalities, provincial court offices, political parties, voters and the media. At election time, an Elections Information Point is set up, together with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. An Information Point has been “on air” since 1 November for the municipal redivision elections of 22 November 2017, the advisory referendum of 21 March 2018 and the municipal council elections of 21 March 2018. This will remain active until 1 April 2018.

Finally, the Electoral Council advises the Council of State’s Judicial Division concerning voting right disputes to which the Electoral Council is itself not a party.

Autonomous Administrative Authorities Framework Act and Advisory Bodies Framework Act

As a central electoral committee, the Electoral Council is subject to the the Autonomous Administrative Authorities Framework Act. Nonetheless, a few components of this law still do not apply, due to the necessary independent position of the Electoral Council¹. Moreover, some parts of the Advisory Bodies Framework Act apply² to the Electoral Council, while others do not³.

Relation to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Dutch acronym: BZK)

The Ministry of BZK supervises all independent administrative bodies that perform tasks for which the minister is politically responsible. The Electoral Council’s special position and the correlated and necessary independence affect this supervisory relationship. This relationship was fashioned in 2011 in a “Supervisory Arrangement” between the Electoral Council and the Ministry. Starting in 2018, these specific agreements will lapse, since the Electoral Council falls under the same administrative regime as the High Councils of State.

Electoral Council members

The Electoral Council consists of seven members who are appointed for a period of four years by royal decree. Appointments are made on the basis of expertise in the area of electoral law and elections and expertise in related or relevant areas of policy. Social knowledge and experience also play a role in the appointment of members.

¹ Autonomous Administrative Authorities Framework Act, articles 12, 21 and 22.

² Advisory Bodies Framework Act, article 15, first, third, fourth and fifth paragraph; and article 16.

³ Advisory Bodies Framework Act, articles 1 and 29.



From left to right: Rudy Andeweg, Jacobine van den Brink, Remco Nehmelman, Jan Kees Wiebenga, Trudy Blokdijk, Peter Castenmiller and Willem Stoker.

In 2017, the Electoral Council had the following composition:

J.G.C. Wiebenga, LLM. Chairman. Appointed in 2017. From 2001 through 2016, Jan Kees Wiebenga was a member of the Council of State and (for a number of years) was its acting vice president.

G.M.M. Blokdijk, LLM. Vice Chairman. Appointed member in 2006. Trudy Blokdijk advises and evaluates supervisory boards and boards of directors, is associated with a number of faculties as a (guest) lecturer in the area of governance and supervision, performs various supervisory and management functions and acts as a speaker and chairperson.

W.M.B. Stoker. Appointed member in 2006. From 2000 through 2015, Willem Stoker worked as a senior advisor and head of elections in the Public Affairs department of the municipality of Utrecht.

Dr P. Castenmiller. Appointed member in 2013. Peter Castenmiller works at PBLQ, a consultancy specialising in innovation in the public domain.

Prof. R. Nehmelman, LLM. Appointed member in 2015. Remco Nehmelman is a professor of public organisation law at the University of Utrecht.

Prof. Dr R.B. Andeweg. Appointed member in 2017. Rudy Andeweg is a professor of empirical political science at the University of Leiden.

Prof. J.E. van den Brink, LLM. Appointed member in 2017. Jacobine van den Brink is a professor of European and national administrative law at the University of Maastricht.

Electoral Council secretariat

The Electoral Council is supported in its tasks by a secretariat. The Secretary Director, the head of the secretariat, is charged with daily management. As of 1 January 2018, the Electoral Council will have its own full staff, since the chairman of the Electoral Council is appointed as Chief of Staff by the Minister of the Interior pursuant to the first paragraph, part B of article 4 of the General Federal Civil Service Regulations.

From left to right: Pamela Young, Maaïke van Hoboken, Jan-Jouke Vos, Karina de Klerk Wolters, Heleen Hörmann, Ron de Jong, Melle Bakker, Roderick Al, Marco Segers, Ellen Voogd, Ronald Jansen, Marjolein Walsmit-Brouwer, Edward Brühem and Henny Siero.



At the end of 2017, 16 employees worked in the Secretariat in the following positions:

Melle Bakker, Secretary Director

Pamela Young, deputy Secretary Director and coordinator of legal affairs and information policy

Heleen Hörmann, coordinator of communication, research and support and senior communications adviser

Roderick Al, legal adviser

Edward Brühem, senior legal adviser

Maaïke van Hoboken, administrative assistant referenda

Ronald Jansen, senior management adviser

Ron de Jong, scientific researcher

Petra Kingma, senior legal adviser

Karina de Klerk Wolters, office manager

Myrna Lindeboom, legal administrative assistant

Marco Segers, legal adviser

Henny Siero, management adviser

Ellen Voogd, administrative assistant referenda

Jan-Jouke Vos, IT consultant

Marjolein Walsmit-Brouwer, communications adviser

Until April 2017, the following employees worked at the Elections Information Point: Batsheba White, Wilko Saho and Daley Lupperts. Starting in November 2017, the following employees worked at the Elections Information Point: Adnan Karic and Nynke Veenstra.



Title
Those denied the right to vote.

Description
Women gained no active right to vote from the constitutional revision of 1917. So they were in the company of other excluded groups such as beggars and men convicted to jail sentences. Illustrator L.J. Jordaen designed this advertisement for the Vereeniging voor Vrouwenkiesrecht (League of Women Voters).

Illustrator
L.J. Jordaen, published by J.H. de Bussy, printers in Amsterdam.

Source
From the collection of Reclame Arsenaal, www.ReclameArsenaal.nl

3. Elections and referenda

An election for the House of Representatives was held in 2017. In addition, redivision elections were held in a number of municipalities. No national referendum was held. In the course of the year, it did become clear that the Electoral Council had indeed received a sufficient number of requests in both the introductory and the definitive phases to hold a referendum – at the same time as the March 2018 municipal Council elections – on the 2017 Intelligence and Security Services Law (Dutch acronym: Wiv). Over the course of six weeks, a total of 417,354 requests were submitted in the definitive phase for a referendum concerning the Wiv.

House of Representatives election

The House of Representatives election took place on 15 March 2017. This was a remarkable election in many ways – broad participation of political parties with completely central nomination of candidates by the Electoral Council for the first time; with considerable media interest, both domestic and international, ministerial decision-making with respect to the use of elections software just prior to the day of the vote and with a (looming) shortage of ballot papers in various municipalities.

In the months prior to the House of Representatives election, the secretariat was consulted multiple times by citizens, municipalities, political parties and the media. For many years now, the Electoral Council and the Ministry of BZK have set up a joint Elections Information Point to answer to the informational needs concerning the electoral process. The Electoral Council's website and social media (Twitter) also play an important role in providing this information.

During this election, in its capacity as a central electoral committee, the Electoral Council made decisions concerning the registration of appellations, the validity of the list of candidates and the adoption of the election results, among other things.

Registration of appellations

Political parties could submit a request for registration by the deadline of 19 December 2016 in order to participate in the election for seats in the the House of Representatives with an appellation at the head of the list. Ultimately, 81 parties registered, a record number.

Nomination day

On 30 January 2017, nomination day, 30 political parties submitted their lists of candidates for the electoral districts in which they wished to participate. This included eight more parties than had

Adnan Karic:

“I think it would be good if more attention were paid to suffrage in secondary education. That it gets pounded into you at the age of 14 or 15 that your vote really matters. That, in principle, the voter determines what the laws will be. And who runs our country, and how.”

participated in the previous election for the House of Representatives in 2012. Of these 30 parties⁴, 11 of the parties already had seats in the House of Representatives. This was the first time that the parties had to submit their list of candidates for the various electoral districts to the Electoral Council. In previous elections, these had to be submitted to the principal electoral committee of the municipality of The Hague or, in some cases, to separate principal electoral committees elsewhere in the country.

Evaluation of candidate lists

From the evaluation that the Electoral Council performed of the lists of candidates, it turned out that at least 19 of the parties' lists contained errors to some degree. This concerned the omission of sufficient statements of support, for example. Many of these omissions were resolved in the time period available to do so. It was remarkable that many parties did this only at the very last moment, up to an hour before the public hearing in which the Electoral Council had to make a decision as to the validity of the list of candidates, the candidates appearing on these lists and about the two submitted combined lists. The Electoral Council also numbered the lists of candidates during this session. The Electoral Council was forced to suspend this meeting at the legally mandated hour immediately after the opening because the preparatory activity could not be completed on time because of omissions in the lists of candidates. This also resulted in a number of appeals before the Council of State. *See chapter 6. Court cases.* In its evaluation recommendation concerning the election for the House of Representatives, the Electoral Council proposed to shorten the period for resolving any noted defects by one day so that the central electoral committee would have more time to prepare the public meeting at which decisions are made concerning the validity of lists of candidates.

The Electoral Council published the lists of established candidates in the Staatscourant and on its website. Ultimately, 30 parties and a total of 1116 unique candidates (based on the list of candidates in various electoral districts) participated in the House of Representatives election.

Electoral software

During elections, political parties, municipalities and primary and central election committees can use Electoral Support Software (referred to hereinafter by its Dutch acronym of: OSV). In the run-up to the House of Representatives election of 15 March, there was considerable political attention paid to the possibilities for affecting the election, including via OSV. Media communications about possible vulnerabilities in the software were the reason for this. Because of this, a few weeks prior to the day of the vote, the Minister of BZK decided to forbid the use of OSV at first and to allow it at a later stage only for purposes of calculation. In order to get an objective picture of the security of OSV, the Electoral Council had already asked the company Fox-IT to do a security audit. The

⁴ 3 political parties submitted one list of candidates

(limited) use of the software as an aid to calculation still had to satisfy a number of additional requirements. In particular, no digital transfers of counts were done any longer from municipalities to principal electoral committees or from these committees to the central electoral committee.

Because of the *recommendations from Fox-IT*, improvements to the OSV were implemented, resulting in security *improvements for the OSV* in the run-up to the municipal council elections.

Voting

Voting took place in the elections for members of the House of Representatives of the States General on 15 March 2017. On that day, more than 9000 polling stations were opened from 7:30 AM to 9 PM.

Ballot paper shortage

In the course of the evening of 15 March, there was a (risk of) shortage of ballots in various municipalities. The most likely explanation of this was that the high turnout rate (81.9%), combined with the possibility of voting in any voting booth at some polling stations, resulted in a shortage. Insufficient purchasing of ballot papers also played a role in some municipalities. Fortunately, most municipalities were able to tackle the problems by redistributing ballot papers across the polling stations within the municipality, or by getting ballot papers from neighbouring municipalities. In a few municipalities, however, the polling stations had already run through their stock of ballot papers prior to 9 PM and voters had to be directed to other polling stations. Various municipalities consulted with the Electoral Council about this. For example, municipalities wanted to know what the possibilities were for resolving any problems and what the consequences would be if the ballot papers actually ran out. The Electoral Council also contacted the mayor of the municipality that intended to keep polling stations open later than 9 PM, in contravention of regulations.

Observation missions

During the vote and in the run-up to the vote, various international observation missions visited our country.

- OVSE/ODIHR: Organisatie voor Veiligheid en Samenwerking in Europa/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights;
- CIFRA: Monitoring-Analytics Group CIFRA;
- AEGEE: Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe;
- IESC-GOLOS: International Elections Study Center / European Platform for Democratic Elections and
- GEOM: Gender Concerns Netherlands.

Some of the missions issued a report of their findings. A delegation from the Electoral Council spoke with representatives of several of the missions. Multiple discussions were held with the OVSE/ODIHR mission.

Ron de Jong:

“These days, when people hear “universal suffrage”, they think: everyone can vote. But if you said “I am all for universal suffrage” in 1880, then you meant that only men with a certain socio-economic background could vote. Around 1900, the concept of “universal suffrage” increasingly meant women’s right to vote.”

Determination of the results

On Friday, 17 March, the principal electoral committees determined the total votes for each electoral district. The Electoral Council was immediately informed of these results after the meeting. The Electoral Council then calculated the national election result. At both the principal electoral committee and at the Electoral Council, the result is calculated by hand and with the help of calculation tools (OSV and/or Excel). When calculating the national result, differences arose between the counts forwarded by municipalities to the principal electoral committees and the counts that the principal electoral committees had forwarded to the Electoral Council. For example, more than 7600 votes cast in the municipality of Boxmeer were not included in the count from the principal electoral committee in Den Bosch. The differences noted had no consequences for the determination of the allocation of seats.

On Tuesday, 21 March, during a public meeting, the Electoral Council determined the election result. The Electoral Council determined that there was no reason to doubt the reliability of the election results. The voter turnout percentage in this election (81.9%) was the highest since the House of Representatives election of 1986 (which was 85.82%). 13 parties received a sufficient number of votes to gain a seat in the House of Representatives. This was the largest number of parties since 1972 (14). In total, 10,516,041 valid votes (99.6%) were cast for candidates. 15,876 persons abstained (0.2%) and 31,539 (0.3%) cast an invalid vote. The number of proxy votes was 964,811 (9.1%).

Evaluation recommendation

The Electoral Council evaluated the election and brought points for improvement to the attention of the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the House of Representatives.

In its *evaluation recommendation*, the Electoral Council indicated that the House of Representatives elections confirmed that the Electoral Act requires more than simply a couple of incidental changes.⁵

Municipal redivision election

On 22 November 2017, redivision elections took place in the municipalities of Súdwest-Fryslân, Littenseradiel, Leeuwarden, Leeuwarderadeel, Het Bildt, Franekeradeel, Menameradiel, Bellingwedde, Vlagtwedde, Hoogezand-Sappemeer, Menterwolde, Slochteren, Rijnwaarden and Zevenaar. This was with regard to the municipal redivision into six municipalities on 1 January

⁵ Electoral Council recommendation of 18 April 2014 concerning “integral change of the Electoral Act”.
<https://www.kiesraad.nl/adviezen-en-publicaties/adviezen/2014/04/18/kiesraad-bepleit-modernisering-kieswet>.

2018. No council elections will take place in these municipalities in March 2018. The formal role of the Electoral Council in the redistricting elections was limited to publication of the appellations registered with it and of the names of the authorised parties in the Staatscourant. The Electoral Council did this in view of the so-called “consequential working”. Political parties that had registered with the Electoral Council for participation in the House of Representatives election were not required to register separately for a redistricting election. In principle, their registration with the Electoral Council had consequential effect for this election.

Furthermore, the Electoral Council was available for questions from the municipalities involved about their elections process and about OSV. After the conclusion of the elections, the Electoral Council included the results of the redistricting elections in the *Election Results Database*.

Election software for redistricting and municipal council elections

During the period between September and November 2017, local political parties and municipalities used OSV for the redistricting elections that took place in Leeuwarden, Midden-Groningen, Súdwest-Fryslân, Waadhoeke, Westerwolde and Zevenaar. After the redistricting elections, preparations and improvements were started to the OSV for the municipal council elections and the advisory referendum that will both take place at the beginning of 2018. The abolition of the combined list and the revised models, among other things, are included in the OSV. The first rollout of OSV to political parties, in preparation for the nomination of candidates for the municipal council elections, took place in December. Parallel with this, the IVU organised instructional meetings for political parties and municipalities.

Finally, assessment of the OSV by Software Quality Systems (SQS) was started. A test will be made as to whether the software satisfies the specifications and requirements included in the Electoral Regulation. The report of this test will be available at the start of 2018.



Title

National demonstration for universal suffrage, 18 September 1910, Amsterdam. Open up that ballot box: the people are waiting.

Description

On 18 September 1910, Social-Democratic Labour Party in the Netherlands organised a national demonstration for universal suffrage in Amsterdam.

Illustrator

Albert Hahn, 1910.

Source

Collection of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

4. Recommendations

In 2017, the Electoral Council issued the following recommendations:

1. Recommendation to the Senate's electoral colleges
2. Evaluation recommendation for the 2017 House of Representatives election
3. Recommendation for a change in the Voting Act, abolishing combined lists
4. Recommendation for a change in the Electoral Act and in Wrr concerning a general regulation of data protection

Three recommendations were issued at the request of and addressed to the Minister of BZK. The Electoral Council issued the evaluation recommendation about the House of representatives election at its own initiative on 15 March 2017.

1. Recommendation to the Senate's electoral colleges (22 May 2017)

In broad brush, the Electoral Council was in agreement with a draft legislative proposal that regulates influence by Dutch residents of Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba on the composition of the Senate. Such as the choice of three separate electoral colleges, their composition and the organisation of a combined vote with the island Council elections.

Follow-up to the recommendation

At this moment, *the legislative proposal* is being considered by Parliament.

2. Evaluation recommendation for the 2017 House of Representatives election (30 May 2017)

The Electoral Council advised the new government to develop a new model of ballot paper as quickly as possible after its induction. Preferably, it should also be possible to count this new ballot paper electronically using scanning devices. This can help prevent counting errors when counting votes and can help lighten the load on polling station officials with their tasks. In addition, the proposal was made to take a new look at the legal requirements with respect to the use of election software and, on the basis of this, to decide on the development direction for new election software for the future. In its recommendation, the Electoral Council also pointed out the importance of transparency in the elections process and argued for publication on the Internet of the official reports of polling stations and of the municipal results.

Karina de Klerk Wolters:

“The celebration of 100 years of universal suffrage makes me more aware of the fact that you have a right to vote. I’ve become more aware of this since starting work at the Electoral Council. I now consider it more important to vote as well.”

Follow-up to the recommendation

In a letter to Congress⁶, Minister Plasterk indicated his understanding of the Electoral Council’s desire to develop a new ballot paper; that desire is otherwise shared by various municipalities and by the OVSE. The Minister thought that experiments should be considered with another model of ballot paper for those voters who vote at a polling station. He also noted that the House of Representatives rejected a legislative proposal calling for this in 2016⁷. In the evaluation of the House of Representatives election in the House of Representatives, representative Van Raak (SP) submitted a motion calling for the government to submit a legislative proposal for a new ballot paper as quickly as possible⁸. This motion was rejected by the House.⁹

3. Recommendation for a change in the Voting Act, abolishing combined lists (4 July 2017)

In this recommendation, the Electoral Council indicated that it approved of the draft decision to change the Electoral Act which regulates that political parties may no longer enter into combined lists.

Follow-up to the recommendation

The Electoral Act was changed on 1 December 2017.¹⁰

4. Recommendation for a change in the Electoral Act and in Wrr concerning a general regulation of data protection (14 August 2017)

A draft legislative proposal suggested changing the Electoral Act and the Advisory Referendum Act, adapting them to the General Regulation of Data Protection. The Electoral Council largely agreed with the legislative proposal. Its recommendations also included ensuring that the objections in the polling stations’ official reports remain unchanged.

Follow-up to the recommendation

At the time of this publication, this legislative proposal was still being prepared by the Minister.

⁶ Parliamentary documents II 2016/17, 31 142, no. 62.

⁷ Here, the minister is referring to the proposal for legislative change concerning the temporary experiment law on ballot papers and central count of votes for experiments with the new ballot paper in the polling station (34 288).

⁸ Parliamentary documents II 2016/17, 31 142, no. 73.

⁹ House of Representatives proceedings of 26 September 2017, fourth meeting, 20th item.

¹⁰ Stb. 2017, 415 and 416.



Title

Give the woman her rightful place next to the man.

Description

The Dutch Women Voters' Union was set up in 1907 by Elisabeth van Dorp and Welmoet Wijnaendts Francken-Dyserinck and others as a spinoff from the League of Women Voters. On Saturday, 3 June 1916, the Union organised a provincial country Day in Zorgvliet Park in the Hague.

Illustrator

© onbekend.

Source

Collection of IAV – Atria, knowledge Institute for emancipation and women's history.

5. Appellations and appointments

The Electoral Council registers the names (appellations) and logos of political parties that wish to participate in the elections for the House of Representatives, the Senate and the European Parliament. In addition, as the central electoral committee, the Electoral Council appoints members to openings that arise in the Senate, the House of Representatives and the European Parliament.

Registration requests

In 2017, the Electoral Council received one request for the registration of a party name (appellation) in the registry for the European parliamentary election and 10 requests for registration of an appellation in the registry for electing members of the House of Representatives. On the basis of a temporary ruling¹¹, the Electoral Council also received a number of requests for registration of a logo in the registry for the election of members of the House of Representatives and for the election of European Parliament members.

Senate registry

In 2017, the Electoral Council registered no new appellations in the registry for the election of Senate members. At the end of 2017, the registry consisted of one single appellation. No appellations were deleted from the registry. Registered appellations for the House of Representative elections have consequential operation for the Senate elections. In these cases, this means that no separate registration of the appellation is required in the registry for the Senate at the Electoral Council.

House of Representatives registry

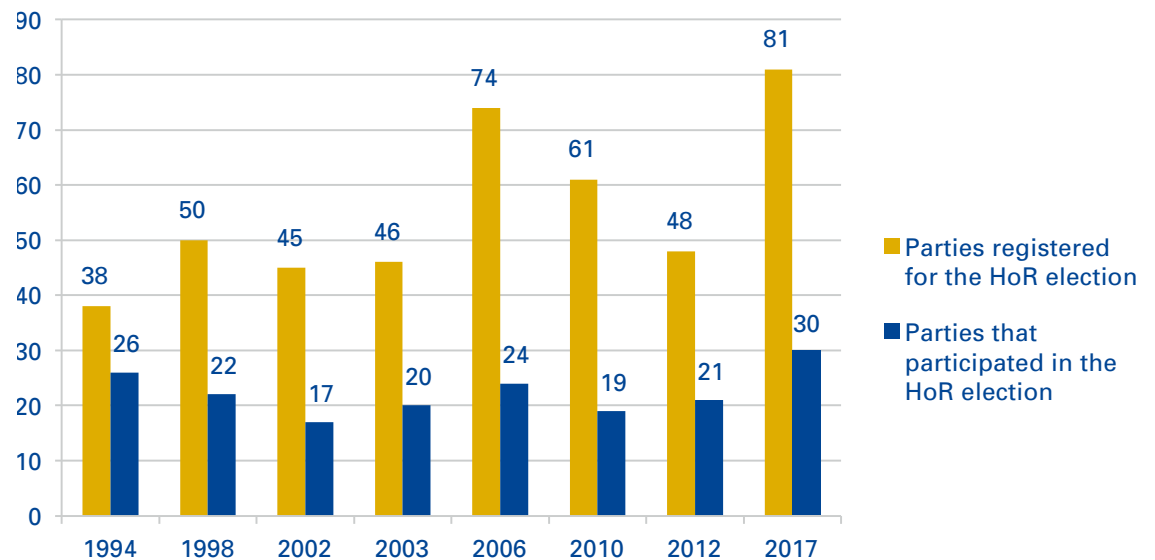
A record number of parties registered for an appellation for the House of Representatives election that was held in March 2017. At the deadline moment for submitting the lists, the registry contained 81 appellations. These were more than could fit on the regular ballot paper and, at the end of December, this resulted in a recommendation from the Council about the structure of an alternative ballot paper. Ultimately, 30¹² parties (distributed among 28 candidate lists) participated in the election. After this, a total of 51 appellations were deleted from the register because these parties ultimately did not participate in the election. The appellation 'VNL (VoorNederland)' participated in the election and – with the associated logo – was deleted after the election at the request of that particular party.

¹¹ The logos were registered based on the temporary experiments decree concerning ballot papers and central counting of votes and these are placed on the ballot paper used by voters outside the Netherlands.

¹² Three political parties submitted one list of candidates.

Since then, the registry has expanded to include 10 new registered appellations: 'Liberale Partij', 'JONG', 'De Republikeinen', 'Trots op Nederland (TROTS)', 'Humanistische Partij Nederland', 'Nieuwe Communistische Partij-NCPN', 'De Groenen', 'ASP (Atheïstisch Seculiere Partij)', 'Verenigde Senioren Partij' and 'OPA'. Furthermore, three of the appellations were changed, respectively, to: 'Basisinkomen Partij (Bipartij)', 'Vrijzinnige Partij (VP)' and 'LP (Libertarische Partij)'. So at the end of December 2017, the registry contained 39 appellations.

Historical overview and parties participating in House of Representatives elections period 1994 - 2017



Several of the parties asked the Electoral Council to register a logo for the House of Representatives election. The Electoral Council chose not to process two requests for registration because these were incomplete. One request for registration of a logo was granted; this concerned the registration of the logo for 'Democraten 66 (D66)'. In addition, registration of the logo for 'StemNL' was rejected because it contained, among other things, the logo of the House of Representatives of the States General. In the Electoral Council's opinion, this could result in misleading associations among voters, and the request was then rejected on these grounds.

European Parliament registry

The Electoral Council received one request for registration of an appellation in the registry for the European Parliament election. This was the registration of the appellation 'DENK'. At the end of 2017, the registry for the European Parliament election consisted of a total of 20 appellations. In addition, for the appellations 'DENK' and 'Democraten 66 (D66) - ALDE', a logo was also included in the registry at the request of these groups.

Appointments

The Electoral Council appoints new members to open positions in the Senate, the House of Representatives and the European Parliament. In addition to the appointment of 150 members of the House of Representatives resulting from the results of the House of Representatives election, 15 appointments also took place in this chamber for intermediate openings. During the reporting year, eight appointments were made for the Senate for intermediate openings and one for a temporary opening due to illness or pregnancy leave. Three appointments to regular positions were made in the European Parliament.

Number of appointments in openings in the period 2008 – 2017

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
House of Representatives	8	8	19	8	18	15	12	15	13	15
Senate	0	4	3	0	3	4	3	2	4	9
European Parliament	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	0	3

DE DRAGER VAN DEN VOLKSWIL

Motto: IK SJACHER NIET!



MINISTER CORT v. d. LINDEN: Vellig zal ik u dragen door de woelige wateren van partijhaat.

Title

The bearer of the will of the people.

Description

In 1913, the government of Cort van der Linden was installed. This government had made the implementation of general voting rights for men its goal.

Illustrator

Louis Raemaekers, published in De Telegraaf of 13 December 1913.

Source

The Dutch labour movement until 1918, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

6. Court cases

In 2017, 14 appeals were lodged against decisions made by the Electoral Council in its function of central electoral committee. The Council acted as the defendant in these suits. In two cases, the appellants withdrew their appeal¹³. In 12 other cases, the Department rendered a decision. In addition, the Electoral Council provided expertise into other court cases. In these cases, at the request of the Council of State's Judicial Division (hereinafter referred to as: the Department), the Council provided information.

The Electoral Council as defendant

Vrijzinnige Partij

On 14 November 2016, at the request of the Vrouwen Partij (VP) Association, the Electoral Council recorded the appellation of 'Vrouwen Partij (VP)' in the registry of appellations for purposes of the House of Representatives election. An appeal was lodged against this by the Vrijzinnige Partij Association. The Vrijzinnige Partij considered the abbreviation 'VP' in the appellation of the 'Vrouwen Partij (VP)' to be confusing to voters since the Vrijzinnige Partij also used that abbreviation itself in regular social communications for its own party. *However, the Department declared the appeal unfounded.* According to the Department, the fact that the Vrijzinnige Partij used the letters VP as an abbreviation and that that abbreviation was also included as an element in the registered appellation for the Vrouwen Partij did not necessarily mean that that appellation would be misleading to voters in its entirety.¹⁴

Niet stemmers

On 21 December 2016, the Electoral Council, at the request of the Association of Non-voters, registered the appellation of "Niet stemmers" in the registry of appellations for purposes of the House of Representatives elections. The LPF Leeuwarden Association, which had previously had the appellation of 'Club van niet kiezers' included in the registry, lodged an appeal against this. According to LPF Leeuwarden, the appellations appeared too similar. *The Department disagreed with this and declared the appeal unfounded.* The Department found that the Electoral Council, in its evaluation of the application for registration, had appropriately not considered whether "voters"

¹³ In both instances, this concerned an appeal against the Electoral Council's decision of 3 February 2017, which was a decision about the validity of the lists of candidates submitted with regard to the House of Representatives election, the retention of the candidates nominated on these lists and the list numbering. The two rescinded appeals were originally lodged by the Pacifistisch-Socialistische Partij '92 Association and the Libertarische Partij Association for personal freedom and responsibility.

¹⁴ ABRvS 13 January 2017, case number 201608868/1/A2.

and “those voting” might mean the same thing. It is not within the purview of a central electoral committee to define the meaning of an appellation, according to the Department.¹⁵

Democratisch Aktie Centrum

The Democratisch Aktie Centrum lodged an appeal against the Electoral Council decision of 3 February 2017. In that decision, the Council judged the validity of the lists of candidates submitted, the retention of the candidates nominated on these lists and the list numbering. The Centrum objected to the fact that, in some cases, a deposit had to be paid in order to submit a valid list of candidates. *The Department declared the appeal inadmissible* because the Centrum had not paid the court fee.¹⁶

Lokaal in de Kamer

The Lokaal Brabant Association lodged an appeal against the Electoral Council decision of 3 February 2017, to the extent that the list of candidates under the appellation ‘Lokaal in de Kamer’ for electoral District 4 (Zwolle) was declared invalid. On the day of nomination, 13 valid statements of support were submitted for this list of candidates and another 19 were submitted during the omission resolution period, so that the required number of 30 valid statements of support had indeed been submitted. The Electoral Council acknowledged the error that had been made; the *Department upheld the appeal* and the error was rectified.¹⁷

De Burger Beweging

The De Burger Beweging Association lodged an appeal against the Electoral Council decision of 3 February 2017, in which two candidates were deleted from the list of candidates below the appellation ‘De Burger Beweging’. According to the party, the Electoral Council had given them insufficient opportunity to correct the breaches that were noted – the lack of copies of two valid proofs of identity – considering the fact that the Council had stated only that the statements of approval for these candidates were missing. This was not precise enough. *The Department was of the same opinion and upheld the appeal*. The party was nonetheless able to provide a valid proof of identity for one candidate so that that person could still remain on the list of candidates.¹⁸

JEZUS LEEFT

The JEZUS LEEFT Association lodged an appeal against the aforementioned Electoral Council decision of 3 February 2017, in which the list of candidates under the appellation of ‘JEZUS LEEFT’

¹⁵ ABRvS 13 January 2017, case number 201609903/1/A2.

¹⁶ ABRvS 10 February 2017, case number 201701237/1/A2.

¹⁷ ABRvS 10 February 2017, case number 2017011 24/1/A2.

¹⁸ ABRvS 13 February 2017, case number 201701170/1 /A2.

Marco Segers:

“When I was able to vote for the first time, I had the feeling that I could finally participate. Not just discussing things over the kitchen table at home. I could finally have my voice heard at elections.”

was (also) declared invalid for electoral districts 9 (Amsterdam), 13 (Rotterdam) and 18 (’s-Hertogenbosch). Originally, the party had not provided any list of candidates for those electoral districts. However, when it turned out to be possible during the omission resolution. To collect a sufficient number of statements of support in those electoral districts as well, the party then submitted a list of candidates for those electoral districts. However, the Electoral Council did not include these. The Department agreed with the Electoral Council that the possibility for resolving an omission covers only those cases in which an omission is noted with respect to the list of candidates submitted on nomination day. Therefore, during the omission resolution, no other list of candidates can be submitted. *The appeal was declared to be unfounded.*¹⁹

Partij voor Mens en Spirit

The Partij voor Mens en Spirit Association lodged an appeal against the Electoral Council decision of 3 February 2017 in which a large number of candidates on the list of candidates under the joint appellation of ‘MenS en Spirit / Basisinkomen Partij / V-R’ for electoral councils 7 (Arnhem) and 8 (Utrecht) were deleted. As a result of this appeal, the Electoral Council once again reviewed all of the statements of approval submitted for the valid lists of candidates. In so doing, it noted that four candidates had been deleted improperly from the list of candidates submitted for electoral district 7 (Arnhem). *The Department upheld the appeal* and rectified the error that was noted.²⁰

Trots op Nederland / Vrouwen Partij

Both the Trots op Nederland Lijst Rita Verdonk Association and the Vrouwen Partij Association lodged separate appeals against the Electoral Council decision of 3 February 2017 in which the list of candidates under the appellation of ‘Trots op Nederland (TROTS)’ and ‘Vrouwen Partij (VP)’ was declared invalid. The Electoral Council had declared the lists invalid because no proof of payment of the deposit had been submitted, nor was a sufficient number of valid statements of support. Both parties believed that the criteria established in the Electoral Act for the validity of lists of candidates that were submitted contravened: the Constitution, the ban on discrimination and the right to passive suffrage. *The Department nonetheless rejected the appeal.* Article 120 of the Constitution does not allow the courts to evaluate the Electoral Act against the Constitution. According to the Department, the ban on discrimination had not been contravened because, with the obligation for payment of a deposit, similar instances were treated in a similar fashion. And according to the Department, the fact that the Electoral Act infringed passive suffrage served a legitimate purpose and was proportional.²¹

¹⁹ ABRvS 13 February 2017, case number 201701132/1/A2.

²⁰ ABRvS 13 February 2017, case number 201701176/1/A2.

²¹ ABRvS 13 February 2013, case number 201701125/1/A2 and ABRvS 13 February 2013, case number 201701122/1/A2.

Partij Voor Alle Zaken

On 27 February 2017, the Electoral Council deleted the 'PVAZ (Partij Voor Alle Zaken)' from the registry for purposes of election to the House of Representatives. The reason for this was the fact that no valid list of candidates was submitted with an appellation above this prior to the House of Representatives election of 15 March. The Partij Voor Alle Zaken Association lodged an appeal against this decision. *The Department declared the appeal inadmissible* because the political party had not paid the court fee.²²

Vrouwen Partij

On 27 February 2017, the Electoral Council deleted the appellation of 'Vrouwen Partij (VP)' from the registry of appellations for the House of Representatives election. The reason for this was the fact that no valid list of candidates had been submitted with an appellation of 'Vrouwen Partij (VP)' above this prior to the House of Representatives election of 15 March. The Vrouwen Partij Association lodged an appeal against this decision. The party found that the Electoral Council had acted in contravention of the Electoral Act by deleting the appellation before election day. *The department did not agree with this and declared the appeal to be unfounded.* After all, at the moment the Electoral Council made its decision, it had been irrevocably established that no valid list of candidates under the appellation of 'Vrouwen Partij (VP)' had been submitted with regard to the House of Representatives election of 15 March 2017.

Mr T.M.

Mr T.M. lodged an appeal against the decision of the Electoral Council of 30 October 2017 in which the Council decided to admit the definitive request to hold an advisory referendum on the 2017 Information and Security Services Act. His objections related primarily to the impossibility of conducting a substantive debate about the law. The Department noted that only an interested party can successfully lodge an appeal against a decision to admit a definitive request. Mr T.M. was not an interested party because his interest was insufficiently distinguishable from the interest of a large number of other parties. *Therefore, the appeal was declared inadmissible.*²³

²² ABRvS 29 March 2017, case number 201701893/1/A2.

²³ ABRvS 13 November 2017, case number 201708777/1/A2.

Roderick Al:

“In 2017, it’s great to mark the start of our journey toward universal suffrage. That hadn’t been completed in 1917. After 1919, when women were given active suffrage, the voting age decreased, for example. But it’s also a reason to celebrate in 2017.”

The Electoral Council as an expert

Term for registration of voters outside of the Netherlands

Prior to 1 April 2017 – the day that the law concerning permanent voter registration for non-inhabitants (Stb. 2017, 93) went into effect – Dutch nationals living abroad had to register for each election anew as voters. They could have themselves be registered between 15 September 2016 (six months prior to election day) and 1 February 2017 (six weeks prior to election day) for the House of Representatives election held on 15 March. A Dutch woman who had emigrated to Belgium submitted her request for registration too late because she was unaware before this that she had to have herself registered. The Department asked the Electoral Council for its opinion. In its information, the Council pointed out that the Electoral Act provided no latitude for deviating from the time periods recorded therein. It also mentioned that municipalities whose inhabitants relocate abroad are not legally required to notify these people that they can have themselves be registered in the Netherlands as persons entitled to vote. Nonetheless, the Department did not fell a substantive judgement. It declared the appeal inadmissible because the appellant had not paid the required court fee.²⁴

Dutch national in Aruba wants the right to vote in the House of Representatives election

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations refused to register a Dutch national living in Aruba as being entitled to vote for the House of Representatives election of 15 March 2017 because he was not party to the electorate on grounds of article B, paragraph 2a of the Electoral Act. The Dutch national residing in Aruba lodged an appeal against this decision with the Department. The appeal was upheld, noting that the House of Representatives also makes decisions concerning the entire kingdom of the Netherlands and that the interests of the residents of Aruba, Curaçao and St. Martin are insufficiently safeguarded in the Kingdom’s current constitutional structure. Therefore, the plaintiff believed that he should also have the right to vote in elections for the House of Representatives. The Department requested advisory from the Electoral Council and substantiated the minister’s standpoint. The Department declared the appeal to be unfounded.²⁵

²⁴ ABRvS 14 March 2017, case number 201702129/1/A2.

²⁵ ABRvS 25 January 2017, case number 20160873211/A2.

7. Knowledge and communication

Elections Information Point

Elections Information Point 2016-2017

Citizens	1503
Municipalities	1440
Political parties	498
Other organisations	181

Questions answered 3622

NOV 2016

APR 2017

Elections Information Point 2017-2018

Citizens	269
Municipalities	625
Political parties	155
Other organisations	22

Questions answered 1071

NOV 2017

DEC 2017

Visitors website 2014-2017

2014	308.516
2015	393.803
2016	276.359
2017	1.186.599

The Elections Information Point was set up in November 2016 with an eye to the House of Representatives election of 15 March 2017. The Information Point remained active until April 2017. The Information Point answered a total of 3622 questions, with a peak in March (1758 questions). Most of the questions were posed by citizens (1503, 41%). There were also many questions from municipalities (1440, 40%). With regard to the municipal council elections and the referendum concerning the Wiv to be held on 21 March 2018, an Elections Information Point was set up in November 2017. This Information Point will remain active until April 2018. In the first two months, the Information Point processed 1071 questions, most of which were submitted by municipalities (625 questions, or 58% of the total).

Website

The website was consulted 1,186,599 times in 2017. This was considerably more than the 2016 figure of 276,359 visitors. This increase is related to the House of Representatives election. In the month of March, there were 819,250 visits to the website, with a peak of 538,071 questions on election day. In 2015, the website was visited 393,803 times, and 308,516 times in 2014.

In 2017, the number of visitors to the "Electoral Act in Brief" page (previously "Electoral Act Explained"), which included an accessible version of the Electoral Act, was 582. In 2016, this was 6333. This portion of the website was developed in 2015 at the request of Minister Plasterk.



Title

Mother, why do you never vote? For women's suffrage. The poor widow's pension.

Description

The poster makes an argument for women's suffrage and government pension. For the left, this latter was an important wish in addition to universal suffrage, but was not achieved by the constitutional revision.

Illustrator

J. Gabriëls, published by Versluys & Scherjon, printers in Utrecht.

Source

From the collection of Reclame Arsenaal, www.ReclameArsenaal.nl.

In 2017, there were 69 news items. This was slightly less than the 75 items in 2016. In 2015, there were 93. In addition, nine news items were placed on the English-language part of the website (in 2016:3).

Press

Press 2017



In 2017, the Electoral Council was approached by press some 677 times. That is considerably more than in 2016, when the press approached us some 150 times with questions. There were 251 questions from the press in March alone. The number of questions from the international press in the first three months of 2017 (136) was remarkably large in that same month – this had to do with the fact that the Dutch House of Representatives election was the first in a series of elections in Europe.

There was a particularly large number of questions about the nomination procedure at an earlier stage, partly because of the large number of party registrations. On nomination day, an RTL news item caused some anxiety about the use of software in the electoral process. This, too, generated a certain amount of (critical) attention from the press. On the part of the media, there was also, of course, particular interest in the meeting in which the result of the House of Representatives election was publicised and in the session publicising the fact that a referendum on the Wiv would be held.

24 interviews were given during the course of 2017. These interviews were conducted with the NOS (news and online), RTL (editie NL), Nieuwsuur, Telegraaf, Radio 1, PowNews, RTL 4 nieuws, SC (previously the Staatscourant), NPO (radio), Volkskrant, BNR and NRC. These interviews discussed registration/nomination and the publication of the result of the election for the House of Representatives, OSV and the digital aspects of the election process, the procedure for counting votes, vote-counting differences, the evaluation recommendation concerning the House of Representatives election, and the announcement about honouring the request for a referendum concerning the WIV. In addition, interviews were held with television stations from Estonia and South Korea (both concerning digitisation in the elections process).

The (news item about the) evaluation recommendation concerning the House of Representatives election was picked up widely in the press. The primary focus was on the recommendation to change the ballot paper and to enable electronic counting. Stamping the ballot papers and the shortage of ballot papers also received attention. Among the media covering these items were NOS, nu.nl, Telegraaf, NRC/NRC, Trouw, and various regional newspapers, including Leidsch Dagblad.

Social media

The Electoral Council uses Twitter primarily to forward news items. In the event of informative questions, people are referred to the Information Point or their tweets are answered, generally referring to content on the website. Throughout the year, the Electoral Council issued (or forwarded) 132 tweets. That was considerably more than in 2016 (49 tweets; in 2015, there were 90). The Electoral Council's number of Twitter followers grew from 1053 in 2016 to 1733 at the end of 2017. It was no surprise that the number of tweets was highest in the first months of the year (with 30 tweets in the month of March) in the run-up to the House of Representatives election. The number of tweets about or to the Electoral Council was also greatest in the run-up to the House of Representatives election, and the peak was in the period between 27 January and 1 February 2017. There were 2514 messages during these few days. During that time period, there were many responses to the RTLNieuws item that the software could be hacked and about Minister Plasterk's decision to determine the entire set of results manually.

Jan-Jouke Vos:

“Actually, we all consider it perfectly normal to be able to vote. But that hasn’t always been the case. An election is the moment that you, as a citizen, can exert your influence on the governance of the country. And, in fact, you must do it: I consider voting something of an obligation.”

A century of of suffrage

- For a timeline about the history of Dutch suffrage, please see the website: <https://www.kiesraad.nl/verkiezingen/100-jaar-kiesrecht>.
- The banner on the homepage was changed on the occasion of the start of the celebration. See: www.kiesraad.nl.
- Information was placed on the website about the essay competition “The Election of the Future”, organised by the Electoral Council in cooperation with Prodemos. See: <https://www.kiesraad.nl/verkiezingen/essaywedstrijd-de-verkiezing-van-de-toekomst-voor-scholieren>.
- During the run-up to the House of Representatives election day, voters were asked to send in photos that exemplify their feelings about the election; this, commemorating the centenary of universal suffrage. These photos have been collected into a photo collage on the website. See: <https://www.kiesraad.nl/verkiezingen/tweede-kamer/100-jaar-kiesrecht>.

Election Results Database

The Database contains elections results since 1848. An updated Database went live in November: www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl. This also includes the results of the 2016 Advisory Referendum and the results of the 2017 elections for the House of Representatives. The results of recent elections are available as [EML files](#) via www.data.overheid.nl.

Publications and research

Edward Brühheim, ‘De beoordeling van kandidatenlijsten bij gemeenteraadsverkiezingen’ [The evaluation of lists of candidates for municipal council elections], *De Gemeentestem* 2017, afl. 7462, p. 813-819. On 5 February 2018, many Dutch municipalities will hold nominations for the municipal council elections. This article focuses on the criteria used by the municipal central electoral committee for its decision on the validity of the list of candidates, maintaining the candidates and, if having the name of a political party leading the list.

Edward Brühheim and Ron de Jong, ‘Waarom mensen met een verstandelijke beperking geen recht hebben op ondersteuning bij het stemmen’ [Why people with intellectual disabilities have no right to support when voting], *Nederlands Juristenblad* 2017, afl. 23, p. 1607-1608. This article addresses the question of why only those people with a physical disability may be assisted when casting their votes and why this is not done for people with other limitations. The Electoral Act makes this distinction because, according to the government, voters must make their choices independently and not according to the instructions of other persons.

Heleen Hörmann and Ron de Jong, ‘Samen wonen samen stemmen’ [Living together, voting together]. *Lokaal kiesrecht voor niet-Nederlanders* [Right to vote in local elections for non-Dutch people], in: Hilde Reiding e.a. (red.), *Nieuwe kiezers nieuwe kansen* [New voters, new opportunities]

(z.p. 2017), p. 40-43. The article describes the introduction of the right of non-Dutch nationals to vote in municipal council elections in 1986, the experiences of non-Dutch people in this regard, the stances of the political parties and the government's information campaign.

See www.kiesraad.nl/adviezen-en-publicaties/publicaties/2017/09/100-jaar-nieuwe-kiezers/100-jaar-nieuwe-kiezers-100-jaar-algemeen-kiesrecht.

Ron de Jong, 'Geschikte en ongeschikte kiezers. Het kiesrecht tussen 1848 en 1919' [Suitable and unsuitable voters. The right to vote between 1848 and 1919], Leidschrift. Historisch Tijdschrift 32(2017) no. 3, p. 17-39. An overview of the House of Representatives thinking about suffrage between 1848 and 1999 in the thematic issue 'Naar de stembus' [To the ballot box]. A century of universal suffrage in the Netherlands.

Ron de Jong, 'Een sprong in het duister. De invoering van het direct kiesrecht in 1848 en de uitbreiding van het kiesrecht tot 1896' [Jumping off a cliff. The introduction of direct suffrage in 1848 and the expansion of suffrage up to 1896], in: Fleur de Beaufort e.a., Tussen geschiktheid en grondrecht [Between suitability and Constitution]. De ontwikkeling van het Nederlandse kiesrecht vanaf 1795 [The development of suffrage in the Netherlands since 1795] (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2017) p. 111-198. This contribution, which appeared on the occasion of the centenary of universal suffrage (1917/1919-2017/2019), discusses the key debates about suffrage in parliamentary history. These include the constitutional revisions of 1848 and 1887, the 'Tak van Poortvliet' legislative proposal that stranded in 1894 and the 1896 Van Houten Electoral Act. The article demonstrates that there was little agreement for a very long time about all sorts of key concepts such as "universal suffrage" and the principles of suffrage. Should the right to vote be individual or organic? Was the right to vote a human right or a function for arriving at a "good" choice?

In 2017, Frank de Winter, an intern at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, performed research into the results of the elections for Provincial Councils in 1999 for purposes of the Elections Results Database.

Scientific Advisory Board

The Electoral Council has had a Scientific Advisory Board since 2008. This consists of (external) experts in the area of elections and suffrage. The Scientific Advisory Board's task is to supervise and evaluate the Electoral Council's scientific research. The Board's members are:

Chairman: **Prof. Dr W. Voermans**, Professor of constitutional and administrative law at the University of Leiden

Members: **Dr H. van der Kolk**, University lecturer and political sciences researcher At the University of Twente

Dr J. van Merriënboer, Historian and researcher at the Centre for Parliamentary History

Secretary: **Dr R. de Jong**, Electoral Council researcher

The Scientific Board met once in 2017 to discuss the current research.

Edward Brüheim:

“I live in the pampered luxury of always having been able to vote. There are plenty of countries without democracy. So the idea that I can participate in having a say in things, that I’m free to do this, is very much a luxury in a certain sense. Sometimes I don’t realise how special this really is.”

Government Information (Public Access) Act

The Government Information (Public Access) Act (Dutch acronym: Wob) regulates both the active and passive publication of documents. The Electoral Council substantiates its obligation for publication by providing as much relevant information as possible. Methods include the website www.kiesraad.nl and by means of publications in the Staatscourant.

In 2017, the Electoral Council received six Wob requests for information concerning:

- the supplementary obligation of identification at elections and election fraud due to mistaken identity
- all of the official reports drawn up by polling stations during the 2017 House of Representatives election
- all of the reports at the polling station level received by the Electoral Council about the 2017 House of Representatives election. This information was requested in a reusable format by means of an appeal to the law concerning the reuse of governmental information.
- the number of votes cast for candidate at the polling station level and address information for the polling stations during the 2017 House of Representatives election
- information about the Ukraine referendum concerning refused persons and/or non-existent persons, a report of this evaluation and reflections on that referendum

These Wob requests were handled in 2017, along with a Wob request submitted at the end of 2016 concerning the electronic submission of definitive referendum requests via the ‘GeenPeil’ application. In addition, the Electoral Council received and started work on a Wob request at the end of 2017 about correspondence conducted with the political party ‘De Groenen’. The Electoral Council provided the information requested to the extent that it had this and to the extent that this information had not already been made public.

8. Network – national and international

Attention was also paid in 2017 to building and maintaining the Electoral Council's network in the Netherlands and abroad.

National

Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Just as in previous years, meetings were held regularly in 2017 with administrative and civil-servant representatives of the Ministry of BZK concerning policy, legislative and management issues.

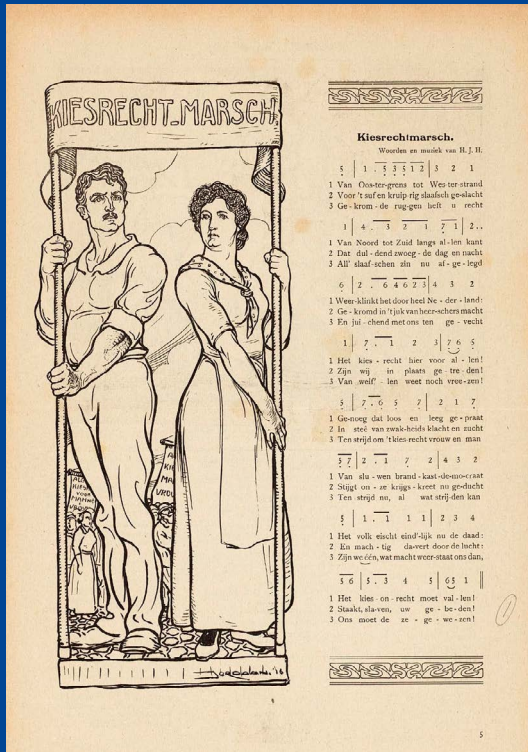
VNG (Association of Dutch Municipalities) and NVvB (Dutch Association of Civil Affairs)
Regular meetings were held with the Association of Dutch Municipalities and the Dutch Association of Civil Affairs.

Political parties and municipalities

In the run-up to the House of Representatives election, various instructional meetings were organised for municipalities concerning the use of Election Support Software (OSV). Because of the municipal redivision of 1 January 2018, redivision elections were organised in these municipalities in the fall of 2017. Instructional meetings were also organised at that time for political parties and municipalities.

Guest lectures, presentations and articles

In 2017, secretariat employees held guest lectures and presentations, such as those at Radboud University in Nijmegen and at the University of Groningen. Secretariat employees also wrote several articles and columns.



Title
March for suffrage.

Description
Song possibly written to sing during demonstrations for universal suffrage.

Illustrator
L.J. Jordaen, 26 August 1916.

Source
Collection of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

International

Foreign delegations and observation missions

In 2017, the Electoral Council hosted the ambassador from Estonia.

During the vote and in the run-up to the vote, various international observation missions visited our country.

- OVSE/ODIHR: Organisatie voor Veiligheid en Samenwerking in Europa/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights;
- CIFRA: Monitoring-Analytics Group CIFRA;
- AEGEE: Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe;
- IESC-GOLOS: International Elections Study Center / European Platform for Democratic Elections and
- GEOM: Gender Concerns Netherlands.

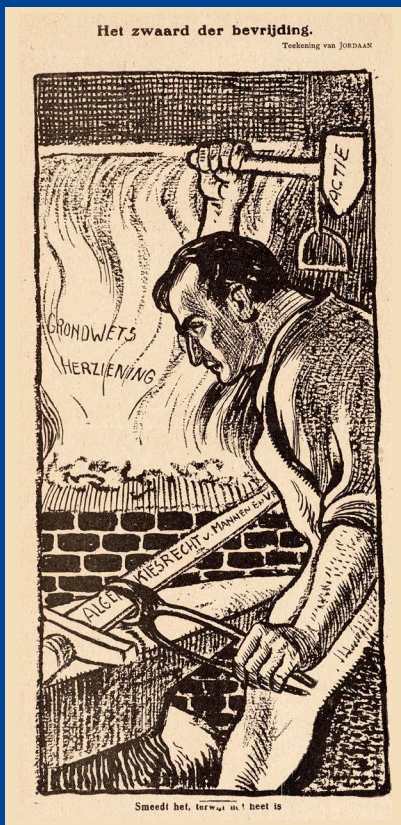
A delegation from the Electoral Council spoke with representatives of several of the missions. Multiple discussions were held with the OVSE/ODIHR mission.

Conventions and conferences

Each year, the 'Venice Commission' (the advisory body for the Council of Europe) organises a convention for European EMBs (Electoral Management Bodies). Representatives of the Electoral Council participated in the 14th convention on 15 and 16 May, which was held in St. Petersburg (Russia). The overarching theme was: 'Operational EMBs for democratic elections'.

From 25 October to 27 October, representatives of the Electoral Council participated in the international conference on electronic voting in Lochau-Bregenz (Austria). During the conference, Electoral Council member Peter Castenmiller presented a paper in which he addressed the structure and the importance of software supporting the election process. This paper received the prize for the best contribution in the category of "practitioners" during the conference.

On 28 and 29 November, the Electoral Council initiated a symposium in Curaçao for the Electoral Councils/Principal Electoral Committees from the four countries within the kingdom. The central theme was: the importance of independent election bodies in the election process.



Title
 “The sword of liberation”

Description
 With the constitutional amendment of 12 December 1917, universal suffrage for men was achieved. All Dutch men above the age of 25 got the right to vote (active suffrage). In addition, women aged 30 and older were given passive suffrage (the same age as men): they were allowed to present themselves as candidates, but were not yet allowed to vote themselves. In 1919, all Dutch women above the age of 25 were given the right to vote. The socialists saw universal suffrage as a weapon for liberating the workers. That “sword of liberation” was forged in the fire of the constitutional revision.

Illustrator
 L.J. Jordaen on 11 December 1915 in Amsterdam.

Source
 Collection of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.

9. Finances

In 2017, the Electoral Council’s budget was brought under Chapter VII of the federal budget for the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, under the terms of policy article 1 “Public administration and democracy”.

The Council followed the budgetary and accounting cycle of the Ministry of BZK. Since 2012, the Electoral Council’s so-called apparatus costs (largely personnel costs) have been bundled together with those of other components of the Ministry of BZK. The Council’s programme budget was nonetheless listed separately in the federal budget.

A Supervisory Arrangement was agreed to with the Ministry of BZK. In this, the Electoral Council reported to the Ministry periodically about operational results, including any depletion of its budget.

Disposable budget

In 2017, the Electoral Council’s disposable budget amounted to €2,407,000. This budget was increased by €188,000 in order to perform the following necessary work activities: the development of the new database for election results, the extra costs for DICTU project and RAPP management, audit of OSV by Fox-IT, advisory from Prof. Wit, RUG, for determining the scale of the sample in the context of the Advisory Referendum Act.

€2,236,327 was depleted from the total budget. €22,000 was reported with the 2017 autumn memorandum for the end-of-year margin.

Compensation for the chairman and members of the Electoral Council

In 2017, the members of the Electoral Council received financial compensation. The chairman received monthly compensation based on 0.3 FTE in scale 18 in accordance with the compensation decree for federal civil servants (Dutch: Bezoldigingsbesluit Burgerlijke Rijksambtenaren - BBRA). The members of the Council received compensation of €274.79 for each meeting, plus travel expenses. As a result of the implementation of the law on standardisation of remuneration for top officials in the public and semi-public sectors (Dutch acronym: WNT), the WNT’s obligation of reporting applies to the positions of the Chairman and members of the Electoral Council²⁶. This standard also applies to the civil service staff.

²⁶ See the Ministry of BZK 2017 annual report.

Security deposits

Parties that participate for the first time in elections in which the Electoral Council functions as the central electoral committee must pay a security deposit to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations for their registration of an appellation and upon the submission of a list of candidates. The security deposits are refunded by the ministry if the parties meet the statutory requirements. If this is not the case, then the security deposits redound to the State.