



Ressort: Politik

## The Netherlands at a Crossroads...

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The Netherlands at a Crossroads: Populism, Migration, and the Question of What Can Truly Change

On 29 October 2025, the Netherlands will head to the polls again and this time, the choice may reshape the country's political landscape. The Schoof Cabinet, a right-wing coalition of PVV, VVD, NSC, and BBB, collapsed on 3 June 2025, after less than a year in power (2 July 2024 – 3 June 2025).

The coalition held a majority with 88 seats in total (37 + 24 + 20 + 7). The largest party, PVV, led by Geert Wilders, won the most votes but could not claim the premiership. After months of negotiations, Mr. Schoof was appointed as a compromise figure. But once the PVV walked out, the government fell apart. Now, Wilders seeks a comeback — and according to the latest polls, the PVV still leads with 31 seats. Yet the real struggle is not just about numbers. It's about the direction of Dutch identity — an open Europe or fortified borders?

“Singing welcome songs for refugees today might mean the PVV will be in power in five years,” wrote Dutch author Arthur Umbgrove in “Wat we weten” (2017). Eight years later, his words sound more prophetic than ever.

### Asylum Pressure: Facts vs. Perception

Let's look at the facts. The number of first asylum requests in the Netherlands: 2020: 13,637; 2021: 35,000; 2022: 35,535; 2023: 38,000; 2024: 32,175. In Belgium, similar trends: around 33,000 applications in 2024. According to the European Parliament, Germany received 25.2% of all first asylum seekers in the EU in 2024, followed by Spain, Italy, France, and Greece. Together, these five countries accounted for 82% of all EU applications.

The Netherlands, therefore, is far from being “flooded.”

Roughly one in four applications is rejected each year. Most asylum seekers flee war zones such as Ukraine their search for safety is human, not political. If the EU truly wants to reduce migration, the solution lies not in building higher walls, but in preventing wars. That is both the hardest and the most effective path.

Populism's Global Wave

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Populism is not a Dutch phenomenon it's a global trend. As historian Eric Storm notes: "Populist and nationalist leaders have recently risen to power across the globe Viktor Orbán (Hungary, 2010), Narendra Modi (India, 2014), Rodrigo Duterte (Philippines, 2016), Donald Trump (USA, 2016), Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil, 2018), and Geert Wilders (Netherlands, 2023)."

But have these leaders kept their promises? In the Dutch case, not really. Wilders still campaigns on the asylum crisis, but during his last time in government, little was achieved. The Netherlands, as an EU member state, must follow shared European policies and no country can simply declare, "no more refugees."

The Choice Ahead

So, will populists win again on 29 October, or will centrist and left-leaning parties form the next government? The answer will come soon enough. For Dutch voters, the key question is simple yet profound: Is naming problems enough or do we need leaders who can solve them?

The Netherlands stands at a crossroads and its decision will echo far beyond its borders.

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