

NETHERLANDS

Dates of Elections: 1 July 1980 (First Chamber)
26 May 1981 (First and Second Chamber)

Purpose of Elections

1 July 1980

Elections were held for one-half (38) of the members of the Senate on the normal expiry of their term of office.

26 May 1981

Elections were held for all the members of both Chambers in connection with proposals to change the Constitution; the date of these elections coincided with the normal expiry of the term of office of the members of the Second Chamber (Lower House).

Characteristics of Parliament

The Parliament of the Netherlands, the States-General, is bicameral. The First Chamber (Upper House) comprises 75 members indirectly elected for 6 years, half of whom are renewed every 3 years, except in case of a change in the Constitution, when the whole Chamber is dissolved. The Second Chamber (Lower House) is composed of 150 members elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

Every Netherlands citizen who is at least 18 years old and resident in the Netherlands is entitled to vote unless he is insane, a prisoner, has been disenfranchised as a result of certain criminal convictions, or has been deprived of parental authority or guardianship over his children.

Any Netherlands civil servant serving abroad and his Dutch spouse are deemed to be residents of the Netherlands for the purpose of the Election Act.

Electoral registers are continuously kept up to date. Voting is not compulsory. Proxy voting is permitted within strict limits.

To be eligible for election to either Chamber, a candidate must have Netherlands nationality and be at least 25 years of age. The parliamentary mandate is incompatible with the office of civil servant, member of the armed forces, Minister, Vice-President or member of the Council of State, judge of the Supreme Court, member of the General Board of Auditors, Queen's Commissioner in a province and Clerk of either Chamber. A Minister who is chosen as member of the States-General may nevertheless, for a period not exceeding three months, hold both these posts.

In each electoral district, lists of candidates must be supported by at least 25 electors. The 25 nominating persons can appoint a representative who is empowered to link their list with

other lists, at the national level, into what is then called a group of lists. Nominations of lists of parties which are not already represented in the Second Chamber must be accompanied by a deposit of 1,000 *guilders*. This deposit is not refunded if the number of votes obtained by the political group remains below 75% of the established electoral quota.

For elections to the Second Chamber, voting takes place in 18 districts, under a party-list system with proportional representation. Seats are distributed on the national level among different lists or groups of lists, each being awarded as many seats as its total number of votes for its candidates is the multiple of an established national quota (the total of valid votes in the country divided by the number of seats (150) to be filled). Within each list, seats are then allocated among candidates according to the order in which they appear on the list. The seats remaining unfilled after this first distribution are then allocated according to the d'Hondt method of highest average.

Members of the first Chamber are elected by the 11 provincial councils (grouped into four electoral colleges) by party-list system, with seats proportionately filled as for members of the Second Chamber.

If a seat becomes vacant between general elections, it is filled by the candidate who is "next in line" on the list of the same party which previously held the seat.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

26 May 1981

Following the May 1977 general elections, protracted negotiations between political groups preceded the formation of a centre-right coalition Government in December 1977. This coalition, between the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and the conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VD) (Liberals), was headed by Mr. Andries van Agt (CDA). Supported by 77 of the 150 Second Chamber members, the Government subsequently overcame censure motions and ministerial resignations. Controversial national issues raised during the campaign included nuclear development, the Government defending its nuclear energy proposals on economic grounds; deployment of NATO Cruise missiles on Dutch soil; the wage-freeze policy begun in January 1980; unemployment; the Government's housing policy; and social security expenditure. The campaign was also marked by the personal confrontation between the Prime Minister, Mr. Andries van Agt, and Mr. Joop Den Uyl, the former Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party.

On polling day, the country's three largest parties -CDA, Labour (PvdA) and VD —lost seats, largely at the expense of the smaller progressive-liberal Democrats '66 (D '66) group, which more than doubled its parliamentary representation to arrive at 17 seats. CDA replaced Labour as the biggest party in the Second Chamber, but the outgoing governing coalition lost its absolute parliamentary majority. Out of 28 parties which had taken part in the election, 10 succeeded in obtaining seats.

On 10 September 1981, the leaders of CDA, PvdA and D '66 reached agreement on a centre-left coalition Cabinet after three and a half months of negotiations. Mr. van Agt remained Prime Minister.

Statistics

1. *Distribution of Seats in the First Chamber
following the 1 July 1980 Elections*

Political Group	<i>f</i> **
Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)	27(4-3)
Labour Party (PvdA)	26 (+1)
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (WD) (Liberals)	13 (-2)
Radical Party (PPR)	3 (-2)
Democrats'66 (D'66)	2 (+2)
Netherlands Communist Party (CPN)	1 (-1)
State Reform Party (SGP)	1 (=)
Pacifist-Socialist Party (PSP)	1 (=)
Reformed Political Association (GPV)	1 (=)
Independent	—(-1)
	75

2. *Results of the 26 May 1981 Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the Second Chamber*

Voters . . .	86.1%
Valid votes	8,689,263

Political Group	Votes obtained		Number of Seats
Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)	2,677,259	30.8	48 (-1)
Labour Party (PvdA)	2,456,338	28.3	44 (-9)
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VDD) (Liberals)	1,505,311	17.3	26 (-2)
Democrats '66 (D '66)	961,121	11.1	17 (+9)
Pacifist-Socialist Party (PSP)	184,422	2.1	3 (+2)
Netherlands Communist Party (CPN)	178,292	2.0	3 (+D)
State Reform Party (SGP)	171,324	1.9	3 (=)
Radical Party (PPR)	171,042	1.9	3 (=)
Reformed Political Federation (RPF)	108,364	1.3	2 (+2)
Reformed Political Association (GPV)	70,878	0.8	K (=)
Others	204,912	2.5	—(-2)

150

3. *Distribution of Seats in the First Chamber
following the 26 May 1981 Elections*

Political Group	Number of Seats
CDA	28(4-1)
PvdA	28 (+ 2)
W.D.	12 (- 1)
D'66	4 (+ 2)
Others	3 (- 4)
	75

