

Aanleiding

In gesprekken met andere lidstaten is het belangrijk een consistente woordvoeringslijn over ons nationale Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) uit te dragen. Er is veel interesse in ons plan en ook andersom zijn wij geïnteresseerd in de plannen van andere lidstaten. Deze factsheet bespreekt eerst de context en daarna de woordvoeringslijn met de Nederlandse positie t.a.v. de inhoud en tijdslijn voor het Nederlandse RRP. Een Q&A biedt informatie voor specifieke vragen.

Context

- Tijdens de Europese Raad op 21 juli jl. bereikten de regeringsleiders een akkoord over het Europees herstelinstrument *Next Generation EU*, waar de Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) een groot onderdeel van is. De totale omvang van de RRF is 672,5 miljard EUR, waarbij Nederland aanspraak kan maken op 5,6 miljard EUR aan subsidies.
- De onderhandelingen in de Raad zijn recent afgerond en de onderhandelingen met het Europees Parlement starten naar verwachting in november. Belangrijke elementen van de Nederlandse inzet t.a.v. het RRF zijn dat toegang tot de middelen conditioneel is aan het doorvoeren van structurele hervormingen in lijn met de landspecifieke aanbevelingen van 2019 en 2020 (country specific recommendations; CSR's) uit het Europees Semester en dat de middelen ten goede komen aan de groene en digitale transitie. Deze inzet is voldoende geborgd in het Raadsvoorstel.
- In de beoordeling van de plannen en de monitoring van de uitvoering zal moeten blijken hoe strikt de voorwaarden in de praktijk zullen worden gehandhaafd. Er bestaat een risico dat lidstaten niet alle CSR's zullen adresseren die wij noodzakelijk achten, of dat de balans tussen hervormingen en investeringen uit zicht raakt. Nederland pleit ervoor dat de Commissie hier strikt op zal toezien. De Commissie heeft tot nu toe bevestigd streng te zullen toetsen.
- De Commissie stimuleert lidstaten om snel te starten met het opstellen van hun RRP, dat ze vanaf 15 oktober 2020 in concept kunnen indienen bij de Commissie. Van 1 januari tot 30 april 2021 kunnen lidstaten hun definitieve plannen indienen. Deze deadlines zijn niet gekoppeld aan een specifiek jaar: lidstaten kunnen er ook voor kiezen om hun RRP in te dienen tussen 15 oktober 2021 en 30 april 2022, en tussen 15 oktober 2022 en 30 april 2023. Aandachtspunt daarbij is dat de Commissie 70% van de middelen moet committeren aan een lidstaat voor eind 2022, en de resterende 30% in 2023.
- Op dit moment wordt er in Nederland nog op politiek niveau gesproken over het nationale proces en timing rondom het opstellen en indienen van het RRP. Belangrijke factor hierbij is de aankomende verkiezingen, waardoor de eerste deadline (van 30 april 2021) lastig haalbaar lijkt. Zeer waarschijnlijk besluit dit kabinet om de formele besluitvorming over de invulling van een RRP aan het volgende kabinet te laten en daarmee zal een definitief RRP hoogstwaarschijnlijk tussen 15 oktober 2021 en 30 april 2022 ingediend worden. De Commissie is hiervan op de hoogte gesteld.
- Ter voorbereiding op een definitief plan wordt onder het huidige kabinet gestart met het opstellen van een concept-RRP, dat bestaande en reeds voorgenomen maatregelen (waartoe na 1 februari jl. is besloten) bevat. Hierover wordt vanaf oktober informeel van gedachten gewisseld met de Commissie. Tevens worden potentiële nieuwe investeringen geïnventariseerd, die vervolgens worden gebundeld en meegenomen in de formatie.
- Deze politieke lijn wordt besproken in de REA van 10 november en waarschijnlijk formeel bekrachtigd in de Ministerraad op 13 november 2020. Deze factsheet maakt daarom onderscheid tussen een woordvoeringslijn voor en na 13 november.
- In het algemeen zullen we dus terughoudend moeten communiceren over de voorgenomen maatregelen in het (concept) RRP, omdat deze besluitvorming aan een volgend kabinet wordt gelaten. Terughoudendheid en eenduidigheid in woordvoering is ook van belang vanwege grote interesse door nationale stakeholders in het Nederlandse RRP.
- Richting andere lidstaten kunnen we de nadruk leggen op de hervormingen die sinds februari 2020 zijn aangekondigd. Deze adresseren voor een groot gedeelte de landspecifieke aanbevelingen uit het Europees Semester, wat ze geschikt maken voor het RRP.

Woordvoeringslijn (EN)*General*

- The COVID-crisis affects all member states significantly. It is good to see that member states take measures to address the consequences of the crisis. The Netherlands has also announced a number of substantial measures (estimated at €50 bln).
- The Netherlands sees the RRF as an important opportunity to link investments to structural reforms, in order to improve the economic resilience and potential growth of member states. For the Netherlands, and specifically for the Dutch Parliament, it is crucial that reforms address the 2019 and 2020 CSRs. The Commission has announced in its RRF guidance that, in principle, all CSRs should be addressed unless member states can substantiate why they need to deviate from this principle.
- The Netherlands is pleased with the binding percentages for climate and digital, as included in the current draft regulation (Council position). It is important that green and digital transition investments are spent in an effective way.

Before 13 November

- Our cabinet currently explores the possibilities of the RRP for the Netherlands. We can therefore not give any details on the substance and process of our RRP yet. We expect our government to decide mid-November on the process and timing of submitting the Dutch RRP. The elections for the Dutch Parliament in March 2021 are an important factor in this regard. It is likely that the next government will submit a final RRP.

After 13 November

- Given the Dutch parliamentary elections in March 2021, the cabinet has decided that the next government will submit the final RRP for the Netherlands. This may imply that the Netherlands will not be able to meet the first deadline of April 30, 2021, and will submit a final RRP between October 15, 2021 and April 30, 2022.
- *Substance:* In the coming months, we start formulating a draft RRP. The current government has initiated multiple reforms since February 2020 that seem to meet the conditions for the RRF and provide a solid foundation for the draft plan. These reforms address the 2019 and 2020 CSRs and serve as the starting point of the draft RRF. These measures involve:
 - Reduction of mortgage interest deduction;
 - A new pension scheme that will make the system more robust and better geared to individual needs.
 - Paring back the fiscal allowance for self-employed;
 - A mandatory disability insurance for the self-employed is yet to be formulated.
 - Measures to counter aggressive tax planning;
 - Reforms in the green transition;
 - The implementation of the National Climate Agreement;
- Next to these reforms possible investments will be assessed. Both investments started since February 2020 and potentially new investments that could be agreed upon in the coming years will be taken into account.
- The draft RRF will be assessed by the Commission. Possible feedback of the Commission can be taken into account by the new government that will decide on the final plan.
- Despite some uncertainty regarding the plan due to the elections, we are eager to remain in close contact with other member states to discuss the RRFs. Also, our Parliament is very interested in the content and implementation of the RRF in other member states and will follow developments closely.
- *Governance:* We update stakeholders through our ordinary decentralized approach. Individual departments remain in contact with their relevant stakeholders.

Q&A (EN)

What are the Dutch expectations on the total size of the national recovery plan (including direct support, potential loans and/or national funds)?

- Our expected allocation of RRF subsidies amounts to €5,6 billion. Naturally, other European funds (including national cofinancing) play a role too, but they will be assessed separately insofar the goals and means differ. We will decide upon synergies of the RRF with other funds in a later stage.

Will the Netherlands apply for a loan from the recovery fund? (If yes, how much?)

- We will most likely not apply for a loan from the recovery fund, as we are probably able to borrow against a lower interest rate than the EU-rate.

Will the Netherlands link funds from the Recovery Fund to national funds? (If yes, how much?)

- We are still looking into this point. National funds such as our National Growth Fund and Infrastructure Fund have separate and independent governance structures. We are figuring out if and how we want to combine them.

Could you please elaborate on the specific measures that will be included in your draft plan?

Reforms

- *Reduction of mortgage interest deduction*; In 2020, mortgage interest payments can be deducted from taxable income at a maximum rate of 46%. This rate is gradually reduced to 43% in 2021, 40% in 2022, and 37.05% in 2023.
- A new *pension scheme* that will be implemented in the years 2021-2026; The government has worked closely with the social partners to agree reforms that will make the system more robust and better geared to individual needs. At the same time the strengths of our pension system will be retained. As well as reforming the 'second pillar' (occupational pension schemes), the government and its partners have made agreements to ensure that working people in the Netherlands are still in good health by the time they retire. These agreements cover matters such as sustainable employability, early retirement and a slower rise in the state pension age.
- *Paring back the fiscal allowance for self-employed*; The self-employed person's tax allowance will be further reduced, but this will be compensated by the increase in the employment tax credit and the decrease in the basic rate of income tax from 37.35% to 37.10%. This will reduce the differences in the tax burden on employees and self-employed people. From next year, the allowance will be reduced by an extra €110 a year, until it reaches €3,240 in 2036.
- A mandatory *disability insurance for the self-employed* is yet to be formulated;
- Measures to counter *aggressive tax planning*. These measures consist for example of a withholding tax on interest and royalty's (2021) and dividends (2024) for payments to countries that have no or a too low tax on profit (<9%) and countries that are on the European black list regarding taxation. Multinationals will bear a fairer share of the tax burden, but the business climate will be taken into account. For instance, the offsetting of losses will be limited from 2021 onwards and we will explore how to ensure more equal tax treatment of equity and debt.
- Reforms in the *green transition*, for example regarding nitrogen and a CO₂ tax. Under the National Climate Agreement, industrial companies will be encouraged to invest in cutting their CO₂ emissions. Companies that do not reduce their emissions sufficiently will pay a CO₂ tax. The tax will enable the target for 2030 to be achieved without undermining Dutch companies' competitiveness and the Netherlands' position as an attractive business location. The more efficient a company's production process, the less tax it will have to pay. The implementation of the *National Climate Agreement* will continue as planned wherever possible.

Investments

- Besides this substantial set of reforms we are exploring potential investments for our recovery plan. We are looking at both investments agreed upon by the incumbent government as well as potentially new investments that could be agreed upon in the coming years.
- The quality of these investments (effectivity and efficiency) is of utmost importance. This ensures that the funds that are allocated to the Netherlands are being put to good use. Investments should of course also be in line with the country specific recommendations for the Netherlands, the policy priorities of the Commission (climate, digitalization, economic recovery) and other relevant criteria.

How does the Netherlands look at cross-border projects under the RRF? Will you be open for cooperation in this regard?

- The next government will likely decide on the substance of the final RRP. [Before a new government is in place, we both explore reforms and investments that have been announced since 2020, and possible new measures that may apply for the Dutch RRP.]
- In general, we focus on the 2019 and 2020 CSRs and investments in the green and digital transitions, in line with the RRF-regulation.
- Naturally, we are open to look at possibilities for cross-border projects, but we will be reluctant given the fact that the final decision will be made by the next government.
- We can, however, definitely look at cross-border projects under other EU-funds; think of Interreg, other cohesion funds, CEF, and Horizon Europe. We will be happy to bring you into contact with the relevant colleagues.