committee of foreign relationships

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report

CDA 2002-2006

election programme

a caring society

a reliable government

CDA EDUARD FREI

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a carrying society, a reliable government

Preface

"Politics must not let slip time through its fingers, stuck as it is sometimes in between the need for change and the wish to preserve what already exists and a lack of vision on what could replace it".

The Netherlands is a society undergoing change. The society has become considerably more multicoloured and diverse. The new century offers new opportunities and possibilities. Internet brings the world right inside the living room, has an impact on jobs and changes the position of people as citizens and as consumers. The arrival of the Euro demolishes yet another European barrier and is yet another sign of the ongoing internationalisation of the economy.

Living together in a society no longer stops at the borders. Sustainable development is no longer possible without certainty, stability and fair relationships in the international as well as in the national society. If there is no adequate co-operation on an international level, countries will have to deal with uncontrollable processes of poverty, violence, war, terrorism or environmental pollution. The respect for human rights and the promotion of proper democratic government will therefore have to be the central objectives of an international security policy, in addition to economic co-operation. Wherever human dignity is at stake, the international community must not stand aloof. That is why the CDA supports the policy initiated by the US to fight terrorism and to defend the values of justice and solidarity on an international scale, on the EU and NATO level. Values which are very precious to Christian Democrats and which have to be passed on from generation to generation.

The Netherlands have known years of economic prosperity.
The government got richer, company profits rose and a lot of people were better off financially. However, structural problems hide behind these positive developments. The Netherlands are tired of waiting. The health care waiting lists kept growing increasingly, the care provided in, among other institutions, hospitals grew leaner in spite of the extra billions pumped into it.
Classroom sizes in schools have not diminished, the traffic jams continue to grow and the time in the administration of justice between the arrest, trial and sentencing was far too long. The offer of dwellings for households with an average income, especially in the most densly populated areas, is equally insufficient.

There are moreover still vast numbers of people who have to make do with a very small income. Poverty still exists in The Netherlands. The 'poverty trap' has only grown in size over the past years. In addition, people still encounter too many obstructions when they want to find a new balance in their lives between work, care, education and other activities. A lot of immigrants and people over 55 do not have a paid job and the number of almost one million partially or completely incapacitated people living on a benefit under the WAO (Invalidity Insurance Act) is unacceptably high. The confidence in the authorities is low when the execution of their core duties is at stake, such as the enforcement of rules and security.

Slowly but surely a growing number of feelings of discomfort and uncertainty surface. In spite of the high degree of welfare, we observe an increased social concern and fear to lose the social fibre. Social connections are under pressure. People experience society as something complex and impersonal and they are looking for certainty, recognition and respect. There are also doubts concerning the future financing and quality of health care. Feelings of insecurity and powerlessness are clearly discernable.

Christian Democratic Values and Ideals: a Caring Society

In this election programme, the CDA gives answers to the changes and challenges and solutions for the structural problems. In the vision of the CDA, those solutions can only be implemented in a society that grows increasingly diverse and emancipated, if people realise their freedom and ideals in cooperation with their fellow men. That vision is based on our basic programme:

1. Spread responsibility: freedom will be best served if people can take the responsibility for themselves and their fellow human beings and are therefore given the space to make choices of their own and if the authorities strictly occupy themselves with their core duties. That is the key to creating space for an abundantly multi-hued and solidaire society.

2. Public justice: a reliable government must offer the citizen again the certainty of the state under the rule of law and draw clear lines on the basis of eternal values.

3. Solidarity: requires the concern of one generation for the other and of the rich for the poor as well as a just and predictable income policy under which the stronger will have to pull the heavier weight and the point of departure of which will be the financial strength of households.

4. Stewardship: only if we deal in a responsible manner with the living environment, nature and the environment entrusted to us, can we ensure sustainable prosperity, including for future generations.

Concrete Objectives of the CDA for the Period of Office 2002-2006

Our Christian Democratic values and ideals in conjunction with the outline of the present programme have to lead to a:

1. Society in which people themselves or in their affiliations and organisations can take responsibility. It is not the state or the market which run the show for the most part, but above all society itself takes centre stage. A caring society in which respect, decency, integrity, responsibility and care for one another are predominant.

2. Reliable and unambiguous government offering a high level of public services of constant quality and which takes care of its own business. Investing in the core business of the government is more than just handing out some extra money. Structural changes are imperative.

3. Caring and open society showing solidarity with developing countries, defending human rights, advocating the promotion of proper democratic government and fighting inequality and poverty world-wide.

4. Sustained growth of prosperity both for the present and future generations on the basis of sound financial and economic policies allowing for social initiatives and entrepreneurship, and taking into account more than just the interests of shareholders.

The CDA makes concrete policy proposals in the present programme based on the three main principles of approach to bring the caring society it has in mind closer

1. Having a say: less government, more opportunity for people to make their own choices

More money is not the magic wand. The CDA opts for a radical turn-around of control in the field of health care, child care, schooling and education. The government does not define the offer to be given by the institutions, but the users of those institutions. This implies that institutions such as those offering health care services and schools will have to gear their functioning towards the individual needing care, the customer, the pupil or the parent, because they no longer depend on government then, but on the choices made by the people themselves. A lot more needs to be done to meet the wish of many people to be able to find themselves a new balance between schooling, job, education of children, caring tasks and other activities. Especially families with children and the elderly do not really have a choice. This means a choice for financing on the demand side, supporting people's financial strength in the field of health care, child care and living/renting. This

financing on the demand side represents a considerable investment in the various sectors and makes it possible to bridge gaps that have arisen. Government safeguards the quality and (financial) accessibility and lays down the rules for it. This means that more space becomes a available for non-profit and social initiatives and entrepreneurship resulting in a pluriform and a wider fine-meshed offer, making gratuitous state meddling and bureaucracy unnecessary.

2. Quality offensive

Dedicated investments need to be made especially to tackle the shortcomings, the 'poverty' in areas such as justice, safety, education, health care, infrastructure and family policy. The CDA wants to allocate extra money to those areas. The money needed to do this will be found by reducing the current expenses which are inefficient or no longer necessary and via financial reshuffling.

3. Reliable and energetic government

The government's specific task to offer the citizen safety is undermined by a policy of toleration and a "sorry and an excuses culture". The CDA opts for energetic and reliable government when addressing justice, safety, infrastructure and maintaining law and order. A government that wishes to regulate too much and subsequently does not stick to the rules it has issued, deservedly loses people's trust. The policy of toleration must be stopped. Reliable government does not pass the bill on to future generations. The government is also in place to defend the weak and defenceless. That is why restrictions are imposed on biotechnology and why all medical ethical rules have to be strictly maintained. In addition, the CDA wants government not just to be reliable, but also predictable and consistent.

Top 10 of the CDA Priorities for 2002-2006

I Families with children will be given a wider choice in the combination of work, care and learning. In addition they will be given a wider financial scope via higher child allowances and bigger discounts for children. Child care will be extensively expanded creating many thousands of places.

II The policy of toleration will be stopped. Rules and laws will be enforced. Means will be invested to put an additional 10,000 policemen on the streets and in the neighbourhood and to recruit more detectives. Extra money will also be made available to enable the administration of justice and the courts to do a better job. All this will result in rising crime solving percentages, trials will take less time and the detecting possibilities will become greater (DNA and identification obligation).

III Schools themselves will be responsible again. The arrears in education will be made up by additional investments. The schools can use this money as they wish. Proper (material) facilities for teachers and pupils and better working conditions can be paid with it. Smaller schools and classrooms will also be invested in.

IV The waiting lists will be shortened with a demand driven care system, less central regulations, better working conditions and a wider choice for the citizen, all this preserving solidarity. Solidarity in the field of income will be given shape via a discount for care depending on the income, which will be anchored in the social security legislation.

V The influx in the 'WAO' (Invalidity Insurance Act) will be restricted with a clear division of responsibilities. Employers and employees will be given the responsibility during the first two years of the illness and for the disability benefits. Government will remain responsible for the disability benefit insurance for employees who are permanently partially or completely disabled on medical grounds.

VI Tackling traffic problems: extra investments in roads and public transport. The average motorist will not have to pay more due to new pricing systems before alternatives are available.

VII Reduction of the housing waiting lists by giving diversified house-construction more breathing space. In urban areas the imbalance will be broken by considerably increasing the offer of owner-owned property up to 200,000 €: the objective is 25% of all dwellings. Smaller municipalities will

be given more possibilities to hold on to their population, among other things by introducing new bonding requirements. The separation of living and care in the 'AWBZ' (Exceptional Medical Expenses Act) will create more space for new combinations of living and care. Specific poverty combating by reducing rent costs.

VIII The government remains responsible for the 'AOW' (General Old Age Pensions Act) as a cost-of-living-linked basic pension. The national debt will be redeemed within the span of one generation, and this, among other things, to be able to cope with the costs of the increase of the ageing population. Employers and employees will continue to bear the final responsibility for supplementary pensions. Older employees will be stimulated, including financially, to keep working longer (extra investments for labour market measures).

IX With respect to the asylum policy, the UNHCR must become in the long term the organisation (well equipped to that effect) to co-ordinate and organise the first relief for refugees and the assessment of asylum seekers. The asylum procedure will be divided into two stages: the identity will first have to be established before the request for asylum can be processed.

X The Netherlands are not a country for economic immigration. People from outside the EU looking for work are only allowed to stay if they have a work permit. Aliens who can stay, have to sit an integration exam and pass it in order to be allowed to stay on a permanent basis.
This goes with a permanent residence permit.

Overview of the Financial Possibilities and Investments

The economy has been doing well for a long time now in The Netherlands. In the past ten years the Gross Domestic Product has risen by about 25% and the registered unemployment statistics show a drop from 400,000 to 150,000 unemployed. In the same period, the financing deficit of the Kingdom has almost been wiped out: from a deficit of 4% to a small surplus. Nevertheless, the national debt kept growing over recent years to approximately 175 billion €. That is still about 11,000 € per citizen.

The success of the Dutch economy has to be put in an international context. Our relatively small, but powerful economy, is an open one and depends to an exceptional degree on the developments in the global economy. The strong growth of the world trade has contributed to a great extent to the growth of our economy and employment in recent years.
But that is not an automatic mechanism. We have by now lost our international lead in the field of a moderate salary development and as a result the profitability – and consequently the willingness to invest – of the companies is under pressure. In addition, The Netherlands do not yet excel as an innovative trendsetter.

But all these shouts of jubilation with respect to the Dutch economy, go hand in hand with the above-mentioned shortcomings in education, health care and the accessibility to them. Another aspect is that an important part of the job growth is to be found in part-time jobs, often with insufficient training and education opportunities. As a result, still a relatively large number of people have to make do with a low to a very low income and the degree of participation in the labour process is still relatively low in The Netherlands.

As do the other European countries, it looks as if The Netherlands will have to cope with lesser, perhaps considerably lesser, growth percentages in the coming years than those observed in the last decade. In addition, we will have to deal with the increase of the ageing population in the coming decades and The Netherlands have to take care that the state will be able to fulfil its obligations vis à vis the citizens in the future too.

From that perspective, the CDA feels that a solid and energetic financial and economic policy has to be pursued throughout the coming cabinet period. Such a policy implies that:

(1) The national debt of the Kingdom has to be redeemed within the span of one generation in order to be able to cope with the costs of an ageing population in the future.

(2) Public spending has to be adjusted and that specific easing of tax and premium burden has to be introduced and specific investments made.

(3) The degree of participation in the labour process has to increase further, primarily through a greater participation of women, older employees and immigrants and by reducing the influx in the disability schemes. The focus in this respect will be on an optimum degree of participation in the labour process, providing space for education and "life-long learning".

The government has to be steadfast because the care for future generations demands that public money be well spent. The government has to be energetic in order to be able to bring about the necessary turn-around in the management of health care, child care and education; to ensure a better enforcement of regulations, to push back the sense of insecurity; to make the necessary investments in infrastructure; to turn around the rising number of disabled persons and to be able to pursue a specific and just income policy. The tax and premium burden on citizens and companies has to be eased if possible in line with important structural adjustments.

In the past years the CDA has developed a lot of policy initiatives. They form a part of the programme you are reading now. They require investments in terms of money, reshuffling within the national budget and the conversion from financing on the offer side to financing on the demand side. This will result in the restoration of responsibilities and will stimulate involvement.

Sound and energetic financial policy

• The importance of the stabilisation function of the budget has grown as the monetary policy is laid down by the European Central Bank on a European level. Criteria which are important for the budget policy and which are based on sound and sustainable macro-economic points of departure and which are set out in the Stability pact. These criteria – which must not be stretched under any circumstances – apply to all EMU countries and consequently The Netherlands too have to meet them. A budget policy following the trends, separating revenue and expenditure, will result in the necessary governmental peace and quiet.

• In the budget policy following the trends, which the CDA has in mind, 75% of windfalls on the revenue side of the national budget will be used to reduce the national debt.

• Within the framework of the budget policy following the trends, drawbacks on the revenue side in the national budget have to be cushioned via austerity measures as soon as a budget deficit threatens.

• The budgetary scope is (preliminary) estimated on the basis of a growth following the trends of 2.25%.

• The expenditure will be fixed for the entire cabinet period in long-term frameworks for the sectors Administration, Social Security and Health Care. Budget overruns in the sector Administration will have to be remedied within the sector itself.

• Financial surpluses in the social funds belong to the employers and employees who have paid the contributions and will not be allocated to the treasury. The social security contributions will be determined on a cost-covering basis over the conjuncture cycle so that the contributions will be unchanged. Potential surpluses will then be saved for economically worse times.

• The costs of the health care system have to be assessed in real terms up to the introduction of a new tariff system in 2005, in order to ensure that the budget can follow demand. After said date, the expenditure framework for Health Care will be limited to the AWBZ (Exceptional Medical Expenses Act).

Demographic developments will drive up the expenses under the 'AOW' (General Old Age Pensions Act) and those for health care in the coming decades.

• Increasing the degree of participation in the labour process is an efficient way to cope with the costs going with the ageing of the population. In the coming years, the degree of participation in the labour process by specific groups such as older employees, 'WAO-ers' (person claiming a disability benefit) and immigrants will have to be targeted in particular. A job should moreover remain a challenge, labour organisations have to go along with the preferences of people who want a new balance between a paid job and other responsibilities and the impor-

tance of lasting investment in knowledge and schooling continues to grow in respect of a sustainable participation in the labour process.

• In addition to broadening the support by enhancing the participation in the labour process, it is imperative to redeem the national debt in order to be able to cope with the costs of the ageing of the population. This debt cannot and must not be left as an unpaid invoice for future generations. That is why the CDA is of the opinion that the national debt has to be redeemed within the span of one generation. This requires an annual budget surplus of approximately 1% of the Gross Domestic Product (including the contributions to the 'AOW-Spaarfonds' [General Old Age Pensions Act Savings Fund]).

Dedicated easing of tax and premium burden

• The financial possibilities to be used to ease the tax and premium burden are looked at from a perspective of the functioning of the labour market, financial and economic development and the developments in other countries. Dedicated easing of tax and premium burden is preferred over generic easing of tax and premium burden in this respect.

I Tailor-made Jobs For All Generations

Our country is facing a labour shortage, although there is a large group of people who could (and would) work for a wage. There are apparently link-up problems between offer and demand on the labour market. These link-up problems find their cause in the new dynamics of the labour market in the knowledge economy and in the new way people organise their lives to combine a lot of issues. The standard organisation of life consisting of learning, working for a wage and pension, linked to the breadwinner's role, is increasingly more a thing of the past. The limited time available to people in a day, a week, a month or a year, will be divided differently in different stages of life over working for a wage, educating children, providing care, learning and leisure time. In order to have this recalibration of the balances run smoothly, it must be made possible for people to spread their time and income across the course of life.

In order to be able to realise a sustained economic growth it is important to increase the offer of labour. In spite the growth of employment and the high demand on the labour market, the participation in the labour process is relatively low in The Netherlands. The participation in the labour process by minorities is till lagging behind. The labour mobility in the EU is limited. The number of people with a disability benefit amounts to almost one million. It is imperative to reconsider the 'WAO' (Invalidity Insurance Act) fundamentally. The hard core of jobless people has to be helped back into work.

The necessity to keep people involved in a positive manner in the labour process is now standing out clearly. This means that the job has to remain a challenge, that investments are made in people's core competences and that schooling is available and accessible to older workers. The offer of proper education offering tailor-made solutions is crucial in this respect. Innovations in the knowledge economy are introduced in rapid succession. Recurring education and schooling is the only way to meet the need for knowledge. Less than 35% of the people in the age group 55 - 65 has a paid job. A lot of older workers would like to go on working if the job fits in with the particular stage of their life in terms of working hours and content. A condition to make this possible is that workers are given the opportunity throughout their working life to get the training, schooling and coaching important to hold on to a paid job on the labour market up to the moment they reach pension-entitlement age. That is why job discrimination on the basis of age and in employment advertisements for instance, must be prohibited.

The family stage is still the king pin in a person's life. It is also the stage in which spending power is at its lowest and time pressure at its height. Exactly because people want to take care of children (themselves), the dilemma arises to either earn an income to keep spending power on more or less the same level, or to create enough time to care for and pay enough attention to the children. Offering children a proper start presupposes a healthy financial position of the family. That is why the CDA proposes to improve the position of families with children. This also implies the protection of Sundays as the collective day of rest. It is important that families can spend time together and that (sports) clubs have a day for common activities. A pause in the week to be enjoyed together has to remain in the eyes of the CDA.

The loss of all kinds of income-related benefits and subsidies the moment one starts in a paid job again, often means

it does not pay to start working again. The wrong use of all kinds of income-related systems causes poverty traps. Those systems therefore have to be reconsidered and changed.
People who take responsibility by saving and paying their debts in due time, for instance the mortgage on their own house, find themselves in the latter case in the situation that they have to pay a fixed property levy which is higher than the tax deductible mortgage interest. The CDA wants to stimulate this responsible behaviour by making sure that the fixed property levy never amounts to more than the tax deductible mortgage interest.
The jobs subsidised under the 'Wet Inschakeling Werkzoekenden' (Jobseeker's Re-employment Act) and the subsidised jobs (ID jobs) do not offer people enough prospects. There is hardly any transfer to or a contribution to meeting the real demand on the labour market. Part of the persons entitled to national assistance have very little prospect of a regular job because of their limitations. The 'WSW (Sociale werkvoorziening)' (Social Provision of Work Act) should be extended for them so that efficient measures can also be taken in the 'Bijstand' (National Assistance).

II. Investing in People

The knowledge society is a reality with far-reaching social consequences. Knowledge changes rapidly. Life-long learning is no longer a luxury, but a must. This implies that school leavers have to be properly trained and that education institutions have to be geared towards constantly updating the knowledge and skills they pass on. A precondition for a flourishing economy.

Especially in a rapidly changing society, schools have an important formative task. The transfer of living and learning rules, cultural and personality moulding are essential. Inspired and expert teachers are indispensable. The last thing schools need is a stifling centralism and a mania for organisation coming from the top. All this has been nothing but empty words for too long. Schools and education institutions have to take on the role of employers themselves. This makes it possible to realise the required separation of the minister's education policy and the working conditions in education.

Our education shows signs of an eroding quality and relies too heavily on old reserves. The CDA opts for an education system that restores the freedom to flesh out these important tasks at the schools' own discretion. The CDA wants to commit extra funds to this end and spend them primarily on primary education while at the same time increasing the efficiency of education by leaving it to the institutions themselves and through decentralisation and less regulation. Small-scale operations and the thought that man is the measure of all things are the key words in this respect in the eyes of the CDA. The costs for teaching and textbooks have risen considerably in the past decade. This rise was considerably more significant than the overall development of prices. That is why we wish to work towards a special discount for children to cover, among other things, study and education costs.

Schools, parents and government all together bear the responsibility for education. The government guarantees that education prepares pupils and students for a trade or a profession by imposing (quality) requirements, ensuring the link-up between the different schools and appropriate teacher training. Together with the schools and the parents, the government takes care of the cultural and social education. The schools and the parents have to contribute to the moulding of the pupils' personality.

The CDA is aware of both the problems and the surplus values going with the arrival of aliens in our country. The chances this immigration offers have to be used better. The integration of migrants does not always run as smoothly as it should. On average, their education level is lower and the number of school drop-outs is higher. Some of them show a serious lack of knowledge of Dutch. The goal of the debate on the integration and the future of the Dutch society is the conviction that tensions surrounding these problems should not be passed over lightly. Different philosophies of life and religions can form an asset for society in The Netherlands, provided they remain within the boundaries of the state under the rule of law and do not hinder the integration in the Dutch society.

III. A Health Care System that also Functions Tomorrow

Our country has never been as prosperous as today. And yet the waiting lists have never been as long as today. Billions have been invested in health care. And yet doctors and nurses still feel overburdened. There is little time to pay attention to the patients. But at the same time there is an increasing demand for health care (including psy-

chiatric care). Government regulation for years on end budgeting all expenses beforehand, has paralysed the health care system.

The point of departure in health care must once again become the idea that people have to be helped swiftly when they fall ill or need care. That is what they are insured for, not to wait. The annual budget for the health care institutions and, for instance, the number of operations a hospital is allowed to perform per year, are no longer determined from the centre. Health care has to be organised on the basis of the demand for care. A self-regulating health care system offers the best guarantees that the solidarity between the young and the elderly, the sick and the healthy remains alive in the long term.

The CDA opts for a health care system that offers people a wider choice in terms of content and volume of the care insured and the health care institution. Freedom of choice and diversity of competing health insurance companies and health care institutions have to replace the government's central management. This is long overdue. The health care system should entice people to act patient-friendly and make a job in the health care system an attractive challenge again. This requires an approach along the lines of the SER (Social Economic Council) advice concerning the health care system. Extra money will be set aside for the required (financial) measures to meet the higher costs.

IV. Fighting Crime

Over the past years crime has risen in The Netherlands. Violent crimes in particular show an increase. Compared to other countries, the crime rate is also high in The Netherlands. In addition, a growing number of cases remain unsolved. Only 15% of registered crime is solved today. In other countries this percentage is significantly higher. The time between arrest and sentencing is, moreover, too long. On average it takes more than a year before a sentence is actually carried out. All this is generally accepted as a fact and there has been no shortage of investments over the past years. Nevertheless, The Netherlands still do not invest enough in policing and the administration of justice.

The government has to be very clear as to what is allowed and what is not. The government also has to uphold rules. It has to punish violations. Apparently, that is easier said than done. The gap between drawing up rules and upholding them has become far too wide in our country. Step by step too many violations have become a normal feature in the street scene. This may give rise to a no man's land which aggravates citizens and promotes indifference. The overdue remedies cannot be implemented from one day to the other but the CDA does want to push back that no man's land step by step.

That is why we need enough detectives and another kind of police. We need more public prosecutors and judges. There has to be sufficient sentencing and handling capacity. This requires investments. In addition, the authorities charged with security have to start working more efficiently and co-operate better. They also have to be given the right tool kit to be able to act goal oriented and with authority. If there is a shortage of means to trace suspects, international co-operation will also not get off the ground to a sufficient degree. It is necessary to reinforce European collaboration in this respect and to intensify the exchange of data, to introduce European arrest warrants and to harmonise criminal procedures step by step starting with cross-border crime and Eurofraud.

V. Town, Country and Water in Sustainable Harmony

The Dutch population is likely to grow in the next 25 years, the available space in The Netherlands will become scarcer still. Nevertheless we want to live, work and relax in a nice and clean environment and go from one place to another without tailbacks and delays. Everybody wants to expand in this small country in the West European Delta. Towns and villages want to grow, the roads have to be wider, more industrial estates, more nature and water reserves, more spacious houses and more recreation areas. All those claims outdo the space available.

The CDA opts for an allocation of the scarce space which is justified both from a point of view of sustainability and in terms of economy and society. This implies that urban areas must have the opportunity to grow into dynamic urban centres. At the same time, the country side must retain its specific characteristics. It mustn't be covered in stones or swallowed by cities, its provisions have to be kept on the same level, living and working have to be in balance with nature preservation and nature management and its specific economic opportunities have to be used and developed. Highly

valuable areas deserve extra protection departing from the managership idea.

The problems on the roads and of public transport are bad for the economy and unacceptable for the people who are confronted with them on a regular basis whenever they commute to and from work or are on the move for other activities. In urban areas the CDA gives priority to reinforcing public transport in addition to a better use of easily congesting roads and the selective construction of new roads. In rural areas the mobility policy is a combination of the improvement of the local and regional roads and the reinforcement of flexible forms of public transport.

In order to restore the citizens' trust (as a motorist, transport company, hauler) in the government's mobility policy, it deserves serious consideration to allocate a fixed percentage of the levies, excise duties and taxes the road users pay, to a special environment and mobility fund. During the coming cabinet period, a study will be made to determine whether and how such a fund can be given shape.

The growth of the population and the economy also increase the pressure on the environment, although industry, transport and traffic performed well in terms of the environment the past years. An environmental policy forms, as a rule, an integrated part of the overall company policy in Dutch enterprises now. However, the separation of economic growth and pressure on the environment has not yet been brought about in various areas. These environmental problems have to be addressed energetically; the costs must not be passed on to other sectors in society or to future generations. However, the policy should not be dictated one-sidedly from The Hague; a successful approach of environmental problems requires support from and collaboration between all parties in society. In this respect, the business sector has to be given the necessary space to reach at its own discretion the environmental goals set.

VI. A Vital Democracy in The Netherlands and Europe

Elections are an important moment in the communication between voters and politicians, but a vital democracy needs more than elections on a regular basis. Attention needs to be paid again to the improvement of the relationship between government and citizen. One can expect politicians and managers to act and think from the perspective of people. That is why the representation system has to be reinforced, so that people can identify with the democratic process. The system has to provide space for a personal bond between the voter and the person elected and for and independent behaviour of the elected MP vis à vis those who are in office.

Proper administration demands that the government be prepared to listen to the wishes and interests of the citizens when it draws up plans and rules. Accessibility of the information and an identifiable scale of administration are indispensable in this respect. This should also be reflected in the government as an employer and in the revaluation of public office on all levels. The government can be expected to implement plans and to uphold rules. An appeal is made to the younger generations in particular, to give shape to and interpret their involvement in society (especially on the local and regional levels).

VII. A Strong and Sustainable Economy

Our society is undergoing fundamental changes. Information technology, European integration and internationalisation of the economy and the social fibre drive developments. People are more mobile, cover greater distances and make more choices of their own. The CDA looks at those developments with confidence, provided they are to the benefit of people living together: today and in the future. If we want to offer future generations the chance to realise in their turn a high and sustainable prosperity level, it is imperative that more people go back to work, to increase the number of job offers, to give more space to entrepreneurship and that the utilities remain affordable and available for everyone.

In the discussion about on the one hand privatisation and market mechanisms and, on the other hand the government duties, one all too often forgets that we have a major sector of non-profit enterprises. These social enterprises ensure the greater part of the provision of services in, among other fields, health care, education and social housing. The CDA wants to give these enterprises the possibilities to fulfil their social mission at their own discretion, to enable them to give this provision of services a profile of its own. The goods and services referred to are goods and services which cannot only be left to the government or commercial enterprises. They are in a position to fix sharper market prices because they do not have to generate

profit to be distributed to shareholders. These social enterprises fall increasingly under government control and budgeting, meaning that they actually become the performers of public duties.
The CDA explicitly opts for another approach.

The discussion about the privatisation of state companies or of enterprises the shares of which are held by the government, shows a pendulum motion. The interest of the citizen and the national economy has to be the first priority at all times, whenever a decision is made in this respect. The quality and reliability of the goods and services and the pricing are important elements in such a decision.
Monopolies do not lend themselves to privatisation.

VIII. The Netherlands and International Solidarity

People and societies feel the impact of international developments, such as faster communications, the globalisation of the economy, the unpredictable character of political developments in the world, the growing mobility of people and ideas, the countless ways in which citizens are involved in events occurring in other countries. Foreign policy will have to face the following central challenges: stand up for the political, cultural, economic and security interests of Dutch society; contribute to a fair international order and reinforce the international institutions and organisations; reinforce and expand European integration; fight poverty and lack of development.

The significant differences in prosperity and the imbalance (of power) in the world are unjust and have consequences no one can ignore. These circumstances are expressed in migration, which is one of the major social questions of our times. An integrated policy will have to be formulated on a global, European and a national scale to address the root causes and the connection between them of the differences in prosperity and the inequality in the world.

Ongoing liberalisation of world trade is important for the international economic development, provided it is bound by internationally agreed humanitarian, social and ecological standards. These standards have to be defined in international organisations such as the World Trade Organisation. People leave their countries because they are the victims of political persecution, because they are running from wars and domestic conflicts. Those people are political asylum seekers who need our temporary or permanent protection and must be able to count on it pursuant to the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Apart from the above, there are still people who leave their countries because they see opportunities elsewhere to improve their economic position. Those people are economic immigrants. Separate policies are required to address both groups. In the former case the factors humanity and solidarity will be decisive, in the latter case economic interests (including those of the countries of origin) and social coherence are the problems.

IX. Dignified Medical Technology

The development of medical science, new diagnostic methods, therapies and drugs to fight diseases and disorders within dignified boundaries are extremely valuable. In this respect, the government has to protect the life that is vulnerable and show solidarity with the weaker. The CDA does not let go of that point of departure. That is why the CDA will monitor the strict implementation of the new legislation that has been passed.

New possibilities in the field of biotechnology may be worthwhile. In this respect the government has to safeguard the respect for the creation by preventing ecological damage and the neglect of animal well-being.

X. Providing a Guaranteed Income

The income level on its own does not tell the whole story in terms of financial and spending possibilities. It is much more important to know how many people have to be supported by it and which fixed and inevitable expenses have to be paid from it. Our Dutch tax, contribution and subsidy systems take the differences in financial possibilities into account until now. The tax and contribution systems have been individualised, the consequence of which is that the financial possibilities of the family are actually no longer taken into account.
Subdisidies do, however, depend on the family income. The disadvantage of subsidies is that they come with rows of office windows and piles of red tape. The run-down in subsidies leads moreover to income traps: people who

make more before taxes, often end up with less in their pocket. At the same time, a lot of regulations do not provide the relief in financial terms they were intended for, due to their split-up.

What we need is a government that fights poverty with a dedicated policy. Government has to take the middle incomes into account, more than it did in the past, together with the low incomes. The middle incomes are exactly those often facing the highest burden: rent, mortgage, school going children and elevated health insurance premiums. That is why the subsidy for the costs relating to housing, health care and children has to take the social situation and the disposable income into account, and this also if the income consists of a benefit or an allowance. The concrete income measures are described in the various chapters of the present election programme. In addition, tailor-made solutions will still be required, for instance for people who have to rely for a long period of time on a benefit or another minimum allowance. Municipalities are the entities par excellence to provide these tailor-made solutions.

As the government will work towards a system in the coming cabinet period under which it will maximise the burden for essential issues such as housing, health care and costs relating to children via discounts of levies, the government will no longer have to subsidise these goods and services directly. The government will continue to guarantee the quality and the availability and to support people's purchasing power via taxes. Goods and the provision of services can be offered at cost price in this way. Demand driven offer will then be possible in the fullest sense of the word. The offerers who are now subsidised can then function on the market as social entrepreneurs with responsibilities of their own, potentially in competition with commercial offerers. This is the way to be able to use more private means for the provision of public services, without any harm to the solidarity principle, and to put the emphasis on responsibility and the choice of freedom.

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