

*An introduction page by CCI to this Dutch Parliamentary Letter is attached separately, see below.

Source: [Kamerbrief TK over voortgang Nederlandse inzet gendergelijkheid, SRGR en gelijke rechten van lhbtq+ personen in de EU | Kamerstuk | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

CCI is referred in the original document in footnote 6:

[\(2021\) Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe | E P F \(epfweb.org\)](#)

The Minister of Education, Culture, and Science

The Speaker of the House of Representatives of the States General

P.O. Box 20018

2500 EA THE HAGUE

Date: 30 November 2022

Subject: Progress of Dutch commitment to gender equality, SRHR and equal rights of lhbtq+ persons in the EU

With this letter we inform you about the progress of the Cabinet's commitment to gender equality, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and equal rights of lhbtq+ persons in the European Union (EU). The Cabinet does so annually through the Minister of Education, Culture and Science in the Legislative Consultation on Emancipation on December 6, 2021.

A broad and comprehensive international commitment to women's rights, SRHR and equal rights of lhbtq+ persons remains undiminished. The government is concerned about the increasing pressure on these human rights, which in recent years within and outside Europe has increased. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court has the Federal right to abortion removed. Hungary tightened national abortion laws and regularly repressed the rights of the lhbtq+ community. Romania is working to copy Hungary's anti-lhbtq+ legislation. In Serbia, after much community backlash, Europride could only take place in a slimmed-down form. And while same-sex marriage in Slovenia was legally allowed, such a bill in the Czech Republic met with considerable resistance. Similarly, the continued suppression of women's rights and the crackdown on protests in Iran following the death of Masha Amini are also of great concern to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet is additionally concerned about growing discrimination, hatred and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and is shocked by the fatal shootings at gay bars on June 25 in Oslo and October 12 last year in Bratislava.

The debate is also characterized in the Netherlands by a hardening tone. Rhetoric by politicians directed against lhbtq+ persons and the reporting to the police of anti-lhbtq+ hate crimes increased sharply in the last year in all member states, including in the Netherlands. There is an increasing number of trans-nationally organized and funded campaigns that seek to limit the rights of women and lhbtq+ persons. ***Ultraconservative organizations are uniting in agenda-setting against what they call "gender ideology" and are also playing an important role.*** Transgender and non-binary persons are particularly a target.

This regressive pressure is also increasingly visible in multilateral forums. Hard-won rights are even in the EU and UN context becoming a new point of discussion. During EU negotiations that touch on gender equality, SRHR and lhbtq+, a number of member states are trying to backtrack on agreed language on these topics by banning or weakening them. This complicates EU consensus on new texts and policies. It not only undermines the credibility and fundamental values of the EU, but also the notion that previously agreed language remains the basis for negotiations. This can lead to the EU being unable to reach a common position, making it less able to operate effectively in other international forums. The government stands firmly for the protection and promotion of European values based on Article 2 of the Treaty on the EU, including the rule of law and respect for human rights.

The Cabinet has therefore spent the past two years developing a strategy to protect those rights more consistently and proactively. We want to provide counter-pressure to subversive forces, the so-called push back. This letter discusses developments over the last year.

In this letter we also address the commitment of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Senate, and we inform you about the commitment of the Dutch government within the EU for feminist foreign policy and the commitment to lhbtqi+. We do so at the request of Stienen (D66), a Member of the Senate. The cabinet also addresses how it is implementing the motion by members El Yassini (VVD) and Van Dijk (SP) on the Dutch commitment to support the European Commission's lhbti strategy. Finally, we address the PvdA motion on a diplomatic offensive for the Istanbul Convention, on preventing and combating violence against women, and on domestic violence.

Dutch commitment

The Netherlands is part of the European Union with open borders. The government stands for the preservation and promotion of European core values that affect the citizens of the EU. The Dutch ambitions on gender equality and equal rights for lhbtqi+ persons must also be reflected in - compliance with - tough, clear and ambitious European and international agreements on these human rights. Partly for this reason, the government is committed to a feminist foreign policy. On 13 May 2022, the Chamber was informed that the Netherlands will work towards an even more structural integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of foreign policy: diplomacy, multilateralism, security, foreign trade and development cooperation. On 8 November 2022, the House of Representatives was informed that the Cabinet is committed to the feminist foreign policy to reduce inequality and strives worldwide to achieve equality between men, women and non-binary persons. In doing so, it pays particular attention to the position of lhbtqi+ persons.

The Netherlands addresses countries at all levels, official and political, about preserving these European values and about our concerns. Within this framework, the special envoys and thematic ambassadors also play an important role. For example, the ambassador for gender equality and women's rights went on a working visit to Slovakia and Bulgaria. The Special Envoy for Religion and Belief visited Poland. The human rights ambassador made a case for the continuation of the Europride in Serbia.

Dutch embassies are leading the way with proactive cooperation and networking with civil society partners, also in relation to European partners. The funding of projects for gender equality and equal rights of lhbtqi+ persons from the Human Rights Fund support the Dutch commitment in the area of gender and lhbtqi+. Embassies also pay attention to the opportunities for NGOs to claim funds from the EU program 'Equality, Citizenship, Rights and Values (2021-2027)'.

In line with Sjoerdsma's motion and the Rainbow Voting Agreement, the Cabinet will put more funding for women's rights, and equal rights for lhbtqi+ persons in Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. In addition, organizations that focus on these themes can count on more diplomatic support. The Netherlands will also continue to call on other countries and partners to support organizations in those regions.

In close consultation with like-minded parties, the Netherlands advocates a strong commitment in the EU, in order to keep the European Commission on its toes in its role as guardian of the treaties. The government supports the implementation by the European Commission of the EU Gender Action Plan III and the gender objectives within the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument 13 (NDICI) programs. Also, a Dutch official delegation participated in an international meeting in Germany for effective cooperation in the EU commitment to gender equality, sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and equal rights of lhbtqi+ persons.

In addition, the Cabinet has continued its proactive and strategic engagement on these issues towards the current and upcoming EU presidencies. To the extent possible, the Cabinet engaged with the European Commission and Member States about the commitment and red lines of the Netherlands. When preparing the formulation of Council conclusions the Netherlands always objects when previously agreed language that refers to gender equality, lhbtqi+ and SRHR threatens to be weakened or removed.

Opposition by EU member states

A number of EU member states are increasingly frustrating negotiations on various EU documents. Affected countries want to, with the threat of a blockade, remove all references to gender equality or non-discrimination based on sexual orientation deletion. The number of member states that consistently do this in negotiations on EU internal topics has increased consistently. The Netherlands continues to oppose this along with a majority of like-minded member states. This joint approach proves especially effective for draft texts of Council conclusions.

Nevertheless, there are also examples of texts that have been watered down in order to reach a compromise. Partly because of regressive pressure against gender, SRHR and lhbtqi+, for example, have failed for more than two years to Council conclusions on the EU citizenship report because of discussion on these issues. To break the deadlock in the Council in such situations, the Netherlands is exploring with like-minded people whether it is possible to move more frequently to the adoption of Presidency conclusions, with the support of a broad majority of member states.

Deployment of legal means

The government will continue to encourage the Commission to make optimal use of the of the EU rule of law instruments. The Netherlands closely to the developments surrounding the infringement procedure against Hungary, following the anti-LGBTi legislative amendments. The case has been brought before the European Court of Justice, in which the Netherlands will intervene on the Commission's side. The Netherlands is actively calling on other member states to do the same. The government is keen to ensure when assessing Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) plans that member states explain how the measures contribute to gender equality and equal opportunities for all, including lhbtqi+ persons. The Netherlands has also called on the Commission to include those conditions when assessing and monitoring of the plans.

Deployment of financial resources

The Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) contains guidelines to suspend payments to countries when they are guilty of discrimination, undermining the rule of law or fraud. These measures were set up because of discrimination against lhbtqi+ persons by Polish municipalities. In response, four of the five Polish regions lost their status of lhbtqi-ideology-free zones withdrawn or substantially modified, by removing discriminatory elements. The Commission was informed. The Cabinet is looking at whether the CPR can be used more broadly and calls on the Commission to do the same.

Finally, the Cabinet urges that, in the Financial Regulations, there should be an explicit obligation, when spending funds, to respect the fundamental rights and compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights respect.

Mixed success

Gender equality, SRHR and equal rights of lhbtqi+ persons are also addressed by the Netherlands in due diligence legislation, cyber and regional dossiers. For example, the Netherlands is keenly monitoring that gender equality, SRHR and equal rights of lhbtqi+ persons are integrated into association treaties. However, this does not always succeed. **At the recent EU-AU summit, there was no reference to SRHR in the final document, despite the efforts of the Netherlands and like-minded countries.**

Commitment to the Istanbul Convention

The government is also committed in the Council of Europe to gender equality and the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence. For the implementation of their motion, the Cabinet has called on members and non-members of the Council of Europe to ratify the Istanbul Convention.

The treaty was promoted with a social media campaign and a joint declaration by like-minded countries. Over the past year the United Kingdom, Ukraine and Moldova have ratified the treaty ratified. In addition, the Netherlands is committed to EU ratification of the Istanbul Convention and welcomes the resumption of the negotiations to this end in the EU Council.

Hard-won successes

Despite regressive pressure on EU and UN agreements, the Netherlands, in cooperation with like-minded member states, aim to preserve existing agreements and sometimes even make progress. For example, more and more EU Council conclusions contribute to gender equality. Examples include Council conclusions on the impact of artificial intelligence on gender equality in the labor market and Council conclusions on the renewed partnership of EU with the least developed countries, referring to the importance of a transformative approach that addresses the root causes of gender inequality.

The Netherlands also advocates for gender equality, SRHR and equal rights of lhbtqi+ persons within for example, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD).

Countries with regressive positions within the EU and UN involve in negotiations on themes that have nothing to do with the content of the texts. It is the established approach of the global anti-gender movement. For example, there was a struggle to secure the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to be expanded to Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls. Through successful efforts by the Netherlands, along with like-minded individuals, amendments to weaken the text were rejected and the resolution was eventually adopted by consensus. The extension of the mandate of the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) was heavily attacked. Requests for support from the Netherlands, in cooperation peers, to other countries, ensured that the resolution was nevertheless adopted after all.

At the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, The Netherlands, as a member of the EU negotiating team, played a substantial role as lead negotiator on issues such as education, social and gender standards, and the role of boys and men. The UN resolution on violence initiated by the Netherlands and France on violence against women was adopted on Nov. 10 in the Third Committee. This is the first UN resolution to focus specifically on gender stereotypes and social norms that underlie violence against women.

Outside the EU, the Netherlands is working with a broad group of organizations. Examples include: the Equal Rights Coalition of which the Netherlands co-founder, the UN LGBTI Core Group in New York, and the Group of Friends on SOGI in Geneva. In addition, the Netherlands is a donor to the Global Equality Fund (GEF), which has distributed more than \$100 million to lhbtqi+- organizations since 2011. Through the GEF, the Netherlands contributes worldwide to emergency funding for lhbtqi+ human rights defenders.

Intensifying deployment in 2022 and 2023

The government is deeply concerned about the international anti-gender movement, which seeks to detract from rights of women and lhbtqi+ persons, and attacks civil society head-on. In response, the Cabinet is exploring opportunities to work with like-minded countries against the strategy of conservative member states in relevant forums.

The cabinet is also exploring opportunities for the Netherlands to gather input and dialogue on these themes in order to support positive forces. In 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will organize an international conference on feminist foreign policy. In addition, the cabinet is committed to The Netherlands as a candidate to host the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia (IDAHOT+) Forum, a congress on international developments in the field of lhbtqi+- emancipation and policies. Furthermore, in 2023, the cabinet wants to organize a meeting where like-minded member states can exchange knowledge and experience and strengthen cooperation. The cabinet is also proud that WorldPride will come to Amsterdam in 2026.

Support for organizations in conservative countries

The Netherlands continues to ensure that money from the EU program 'Equality, Citizenship, Rights and Values (2021-2027)' (for gender equality and anti-discrimination against lhbtqi+ persons), goes especially to member states where worrying developments are taking place. Through NGOs and Embassies, the Netherlands will draw further attention to the EU program in those member states, and, where necessary, provide help with financial applications.

With the above-mentioned efforts and measures, the government is contributing to the protection and promotion of European values, and opposes against pressures on gender equality, SRHR and equal rights of lhbtqi+ persons. We will update you again on progress in 2023.

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science,
Robbert Dijkgraaf

The Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Wopke Hoekstra

The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation,
Liesje Schreinemacher

CCI's Introduction page to the Dutch Parliamentary Letter

Herewith attached you can find the Parliamentary letter that was written by the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation on 30 November 2022 to inform the Senate and House of Representatives. The letter describes the progress of Dutch commitment to gender equality, sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and equal rights of LHBTIQ+ persons in the European Union (EU). LGBTQ+'s stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queers and persons who name their gender or sexuality differently.

This letter shows the Netherlands progressive agenda on the above-stated issues and their aim to preach their agenda and progressive values to the more conservative countries inside and outside the EU. As can be read, the Netherlands deems any country which does not adhere to their progressive values as failing to respect human rights (as defined by The Netherlands). For example, Hungary, Romania, and Czech Republic are a few EU countries that do not share the views of the Netherlands and are therefore put in the box of human rights violators and instigators of hate crime. Further, the letter warns the reader for push back to their progressive values from so-called "ultraconservative organizations" like CCI that call the "sexual orientation and gender identity movement" a gender ideology which harms the fundamental foundations of the right to life, traditional family, and freedom of religion and education.

What implications does this have for the EU-ACP Agreement?

The Netherlands perceives any form of criticism as dangerous forces that try to undermine their agenda and progressive values. This thinking is unfortunately similar to the EU institutions. Conservative EU countries are therefore heavily pressured by the EU to implement progressive policies related to gender equality, sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and equal rights of LHBTIQ+ persons.

However, this pressure does not only apply to the conservative EU countries. The new EU-ACP Agreement is a perfect example in which the EU also tries to impose its progressive values on other countries, both inside and outside the EU. By including gender equality, sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and equal rights of LHBTIQ+ persons as human rights in the EU-ACP Agreement, which supersedes national law, all countries in the EU, Africa, Caribbean, and the Pacific are obliged to implement policies that promote those issues within their own countries. For many ACP countries, most of which have citizens that are conservative and highly critical on these issues, this means that they have to adapt their national laws and policies in order to adhere to this 20-year EU-ACP binding Agreement.

The bottom line is that the EU-ACP Agreement violates life, family, and freedom but also the national sovereignty of all the EU, African, Caribbean and Pacific member states by taking away their ability to decide on their own laws and policies based on their country-specific social and often deeply religious and cultural values.