



Kingdom of the Netherlands

# Guide to Sports and Physical Activity in the Netherlands





**Hall of Fame:** athlete **Nelli Cooman**. At the 60 metres, she is two-time World indoor champion, six-time European indoor champion and former world record holder, running 7.00 secs in 1986. She also won 19 national titles. In 1995, Cooman ended her career as a professional athlete.

---

# Content

---

## 1. Introduction

## 2. General information about sport and physical activity in NL

- The country
- Success
- Government

## 3. Daily physical activity and sport participation

- Facts and figures
- Life events
- New guidelines

## 4. National policies regarding sport and physical activity

- Sport and Physical activity in the community
- Sportinnovator
- National Research programme and Knowledge Agenda Sport and Physical Activity
- Integrity and good governance in sports, a safe climate in sport (National Programme Towards a Safer Sporting Environment (VSK))
- Healthy Schools Netherlands

## 5. Elite sport

- Aims and organisation
- Financing
- Infrastructure
- Dual careers
- Integrity in sports
  
- Integration
- Participation and elite level
- Accessibility of accommodations



**Hall of Fame:** the Dutch Volleyball Team won the gold medal in Atlanta, Georgia with the Dutch Men's National Team by defeating Italy in the final (3-2). In the picture: **Peter Blangé** and **Ron Zwerver**.

## 7. Dutch sport economy

## 8. Large scale sport events

- New ambition
- Two examples: UEFA Women's EURO 2017 and 2016 European Athletics Championships

## 9. Public Spaces: physical-activity-friendly environment and accommodations

- Facilities
- Municipal policies
- Physical-activity-friendly environment

## 10. Highlights of the Netherlands as a sport partner

## 11. Partners in sport in the Netherlands

## 12. Sources

## 13. Colophon



**Hall of Fame:** Marlou van Rhijn is a professional Dutch sprint runner. [ Van Rhijn, who was born without lower legs, is the world record holder in the 100 and 200 metres events and runs with the aid of carbon fibre transtibial artificial limbs. At the Paralympics in London and Rio de Janeiro she got gold medals in the 100 and 200 metres. Until 2009, Van Rhijn was a member of the national team for swimmers with a disability.

---

## Introduction

---

Sport is front of mind in the Netherlands. It is a sporting and active country. We have a large number of local sport clubs run by involved volunteers. Football, swimming and tennis are popular amongst many. And at the same time a vast number of adults and children cycle to work and school everyday which makes us a physical active country.

The Netherlands is a country where we aim high, to be in the top 10 of elite sport rankings. And at the same time we are striving to make it possible for all to participate in organised or unorganised sport and physical activity.

We are proud to guide you through our sport and physical activity culture.

This Guide to Sport and Physical Activity in the Netherlands has been issued in 2017 for the first time. It is available for every organisation that needs an overview of the facts and figures of sport and Physical Activity in our country. The Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands collected a wide variety of policy programmes, projects and good examples in sport and physical activity. And of course KC Sport NL is available for every question concerning this Guide and the information in it. The online version of this guide is available for you at <https://www.kenniscentrumsport.nl/en/international/facts-and-figures/>.

## 2. General information about sport and physical activity

More than half the Dutch population participates in sport on a weekly basis. Fitness training and running are the most popular sports among adults. Government interventions at the level of neighbourhoods, primary schools, secondary schools and sports clubs are intended to persuade more people to take part in sports and exercise, and to support this in a healthy and safe manner. The sports sector employs 150,000 people, and one and a half million Dutch people volunteer in sports clubs and associations every month. The investments in sport talent, and the efficiency of elite sports policy support the strong performances by top Dutch sportsmen and women.

The Dutch government invests more than one billion euros annually. The sports economy accounts for 1% of the total Dutch economy.

### **The country**

With 17,1 million inhabitants and 34,000 km of land, the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. With the sea and multiple lakes, rivers and canals close by, water is a crucial element of Dutch society.

With a history of looking outside its borders, the Dutch economy has a strong international focus. Power has traditionally been in the hands of cities and merchants, rather than royalty. The Dutch have a reputation for being egalitarian, cooperative and open-minded, looking for long-term partnerships in public and private spheres. The cooperation between the government, private sector and knowledge institutions provides the stable base for the integrated solutions that keep the Netherlands a prosperous and lively place to live.

In the Netherlands, it is believed that sharing knowledge creates value. Also for the sports sector in the Netherlands.

### **Success**

In terms of sport, the Dutch pride themselves on their strong traditions, especially in swimming, football and speed-skating. The country always strives for a top 10 position in the Olympic medal tables. Between 1900 and 2016, the Dutch won 395 medals (122 gold is 31 %) at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Swimming was responsible for many gold medals). The all-time best result for the Dutch was Sydney 2000 (8th, 25 medals, 12 gold). The peak at the winter games was Sochi 2014 (5th, 24 medals, 8 gold). (all speed-skating) .

Coming from the 19th position in the Paralympic medal table in Beijing, the Netherlands made it to the 7th position in Rio.

### **Government**

Sports policies are the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Physical education policies fall under the Department of Education, Culture and Science. International Sports Policies as an instrument for international development falls under the responsibility of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Dutch Sport Council is an official advisory panel of the Dutch government. This high level group was installed in 2016 and consists of (former) athletes, politicians, an astronaut and influencers with a background in sport or from other sectors with a passion for sport.

### 3. Daily physical activity and sports participation

#### **Facts and figures**

Short distances and the flatness of the country means riding bicycles is very common in the Netherlands. As a consequence, the general daily physical activity level is quite high. Among the EU-28, the Netherlands ranked the highest for monthly (89%), weekly (83%) and daily (43%) recreational non-sports physical activity in 2013.

The Dutch score 4th among the EU-28 member states in terms of monthly sports participation. Only in the Scandinavian countries is monthly sports participation higher. Between 2009 and 2013, sports participation seemed to have declined a little (from 64% to 62%). 8% of the Dutch take part in sports more than five times a week.

As for most Europeans, health (61%) is the most important motive for the Dutch to take part in sports (56%), followed closely by relaxation and pleasure (both 56%).

Source: Eurobarometer 412 Sport and physical activity. Brussel: Europese Commissie; 2014.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_412\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_412_en.pdf)

**Note: the Eurobarometer concerns the population of 15 years and older.**

In the international monitor Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Dutch youth is ranking average in the field of physical activity and sports. (Currie et al., 2012). In the EU, Irish youth is the most active. Outside EU, the United States of America ranks highest with physical activity of youth.

- 22% of Dutch youth at age 11 is physically active or doing sports at least one hour a day, compared to the average of 23% (HBSC)
- 20% of Dutch youth at age 13 compared to the average of 19% (HBSC)
- 16% of Dutch youth at age 15 compared to the average of 15% (HBSC gemiddeld)

**Source: website Volksgezondheidsinfo of the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).**

In no other European country is the satisfaction of the citizens with opportunities to take part in sports locally, as high as in the Netherlands. Density of population is a factor, accounting for shorter travelling distances and sports facilities that are seldom very far away and often easily accessible. As Dutch children use bicycles, they are less dependent on their parents for transport to sports compared to many other countries from the age of 9-10 onwards

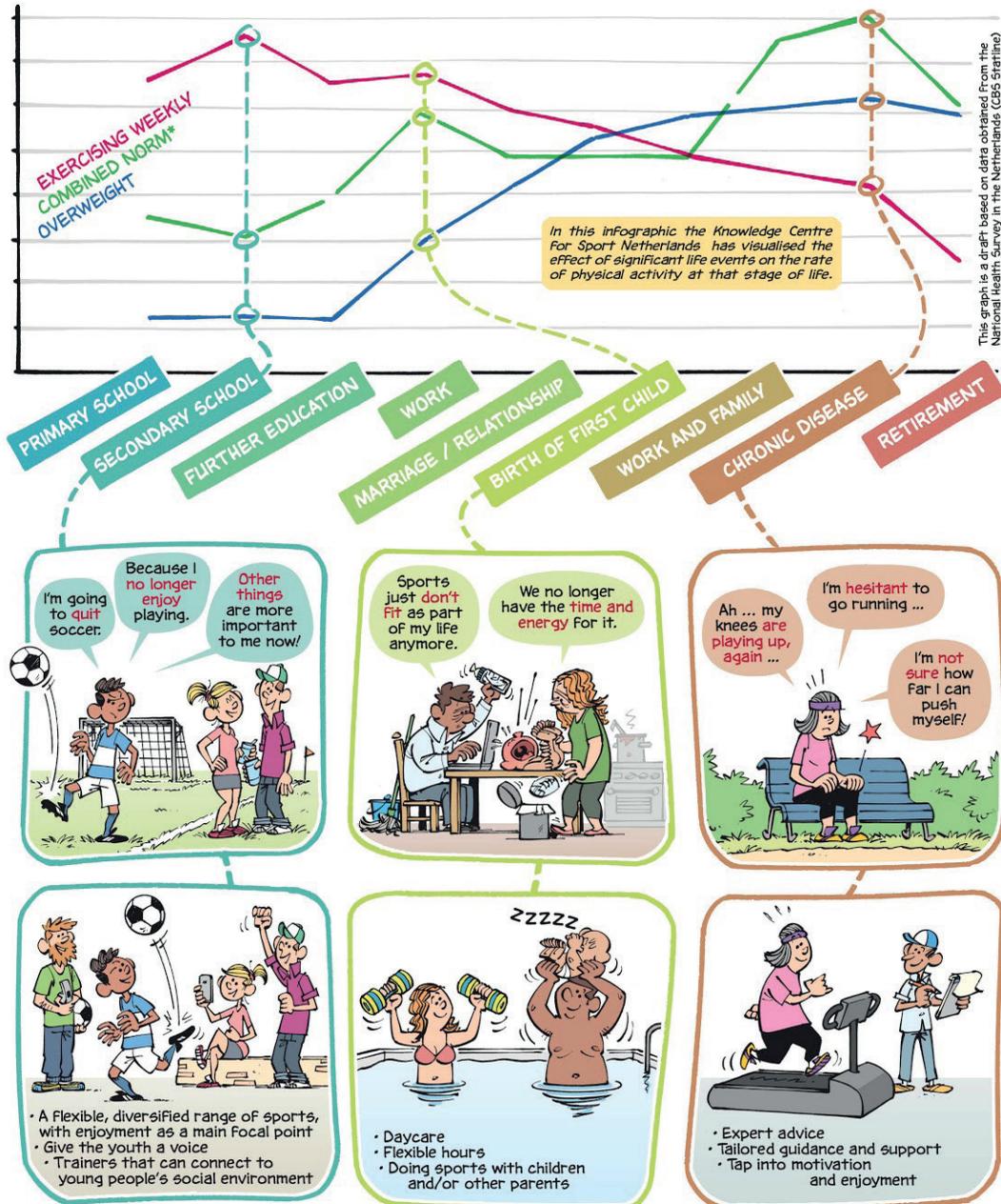
#### **Membership of sports clubs**

The Netherlands ranks highest in the EU in terms of membership of sports clubs, and 2nd for volunteering (after Sweden and jointly with Denmark). With 23,500 sports clubs (on average 62 per municipality), clubs play a central role in the Dutch sports system. There are two reasons for this: first, the Dutch history of 'pillarization', which meant that in each city there would be Catholic, Protestant and public football clubs. Second, the strength of civic society in the Netherlands, which forms a good basis for flourishing clubs. The most popular club sports are football (1,2 mln. members); tennis (0,6 mln.); golf (0,4 mln.); gymnastics (0,3 mln.) and field hockey (0,2 mln). The most practiced sports: fitness, swimming, running, walking and cycling.

The infographic on the next page has made visible what effect life events have on the amount of physical activity in life.

# Respond to / use life events

Life events mark the transition from one stage of life to the next. For a large part, they define the structure of our lives. We are all familiar with the changes we go through during **HIGH SCHOOL**, when we become **PARENTS**, when we are faced with a **CHRONIC DISEASE**. These events impact people's lifestyle, such as **SPORTS BEHAVIOUR** and **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS**, and/or their **WEIGHT**. As a municipality or as a sports club, association or other provider, you can actively respond to these life events and use them to inspire people to stay active and fit their entire lives.



\* The combined norm for physical activity differs for youth, adults and seniors. E.g. as one ages, activities demand more energy.

**Note: the new Dutch Guidelines for Physical Activity (2017) have not yet been integrated in this infographic** Source: This infographic is a sketch based on data of the National Health Enquiry (CBS Statline)

## Guidelines for physical activity in the Netherlands

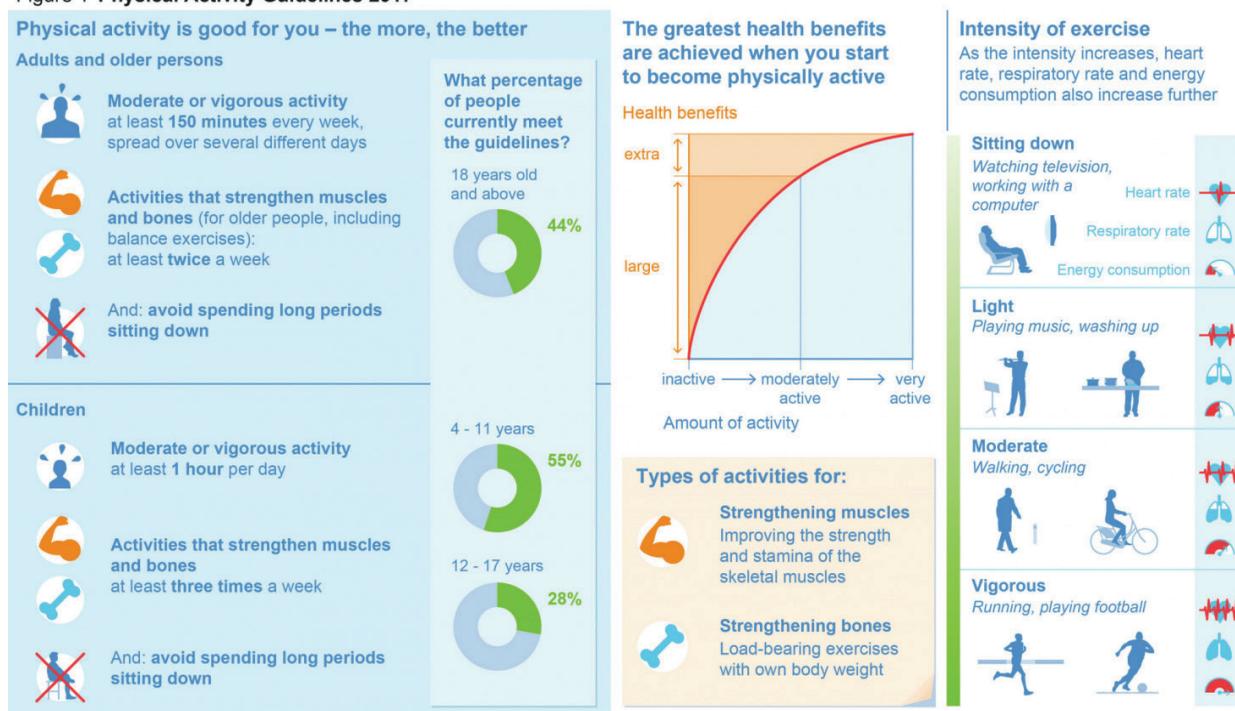
In August 2017, the Health Council published new guidelines for physical activity in the Netherlands. 'Being active is good, being more active is better' was the recommendation: 150 minutes a week instead of 30 minutes of activity five times a week (the 1998 guideline).

For the first time, muscle- and bone-strengthening exercises are part of the guidelines, as well as the recommendation to sit less often. New scientific insights and guidelines from abroad have inspired these small but significant changes.

The new guidelines replace the three guidelines that were implemented in 1998. The Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands plays an important role in disseminating the new guidelines to professionals and the general public.

<https://www.gezondheidsraad.nl/en/task-and-procedure/areas-of-activity/preventie/dutch-physical-activity-guidelines-2017>

Figure 1 Physical Activity Guidelines 2017



New guidelines for physical activity in the Netherlands (2017). Source: Health Council /Gezondheidsraad

## 4. National Policy Programmes on Sports and Physical Activity

Sport policy is carried out both on a national and on a local level. The national government encourages the development of (professional) elite sport and community sport through programs aimed at increasing knowledge and innovation and encouraging sport participation.

Municipalities are responsible for the building and maintenance of infrastructure. Municipalities are supporting local partners, such as sport clubs, and community sport motivators in their work.

### *National programmes*

- a. Sport and Physical activity in the community
- b. Sportinnovator
- c. National Research programme and Knowledge Agenda Sport and Physical Activity
- d. Integrity and good governance in sports, a safe climate in sport (National Programme Towards a Safer Sporting Environment (VSK))
- e. Healthy Schools Netherlands

### *a. Sport and Physical activity in the community*

The Dutch Government aims to make it easier for people to adopt an active and healthy lifestyle. It has set up a programme on sport and physical activity close to home, including three main tools.

#### *Community Sports Motivators*

Community Sports Motivators are tasked with motivating people of all ages to take up sport or become more physically active. The motivators not only operate in the sports sector (i.e. sports clubs), but also in social sectors (such as within education, care organisations, or child care). Extra funding has been made available to municipal authorities for recruiting Community Sports Motivators. Municipalities will also contribute from their own funds. In total there are ca. 3.500 Community Sport Motivators in the Netherlands (in 371 out of 393 municipalities).

### *Sport Impulse: grants for sport and exercise projects*

Sport Impulse grants are intended for sports clubs, fitness centres and other sports providers to set up activity programmes for sedentary or low participation groups. The main requirement is that they work together with local community partners, such as schools, care organisations, child care centres and the business community. The projects must be aimed at one of three target groups: sedentary people, overweight children, and young people in low-income neighbourhoods. The maximum grant period is two years. After that, the activity should continue without funding from the Dutch Government.

### *Sharing expertise*

There are several ways in which municipal authorities and sport providers can learn about motivating people to become more physically active, such as at regional meetings for sharing knowledge and the annual expertise day at national level. Central Government has made agreements with the sport sector and municipal authorities about activities in the programme.

### *b. Sportinnovator*

The national programme for Sport innovation is called Sportinnovator. The programme is led by a team of prominent Dutch leaders in business, science, government and sport (Top Team). The Ministry of Sport, Health and Welfare (VWS) supports the programme through national funding.

The aim of Sportinnovator is realizing sport innovation by connecting research, companies, government and sports.

A wide range of highly qualitative innovation centres is supported to increase (inter)national cooperation, creating new opportunities for starting innovations and realising a strong climate for innovation in sport.



Sportinnovator centres are incubators for innovations that have economic or societal value.

**The Sportinnovator Knowledge and Innovation Agenda Sports 2015-2020** expresses the vision and ambition of the Netherlands when it comes to Innovation. In the coming years, support of innovation will focus on:

- Winning more medals at important top sport events.
- Increasing participation in sports/healthy lifestyles.
- Increasing the economic value of sport innovation.

One of the supported innovation centres is the National Olympic Training Centre Papendal:

### National High Performance Centre Papendal

High Performance Centre Papendal is a multi-functional and internationally oriented training centre that offers a wide variety of high-quality elite sports facilities. It is the home base of numerous world-class athletes.

As a 'Centre for Elite Sports and Education' High Performance Centre Papendal enables young athletes to live, study and train in one place. Thus minimising travel between school, home and sports, and providing tailor-made educational programs that fit their individual training schedules. The centre facilitates sports, such as cycling, BMX, athletics, volleyball, handball and wheelchair basketball.

More than 300 athletes train in High Performance Centre Papendal on a daily basis.



Image: Overview of Innovation centres in the Netherlands - core of the ecosystem.

### c. Research programme and National Knowledge Agenda Sport and Exercise and National Science Agenda

With the new (2016) Knowledge Agenda Sport and Exercise, the Netherlands is developing a sustainable partnership between universities, sport, local and national government and industry. The Agenda emphasises a broad multidisciplinary approach: from individual psychological processes to physiological measurements, smart materials and virtual reality. A new aspect is the vital role of big data and data science as a connecting and cross disciplinary link.

- Three main themes are chosen:
- Improving performance
- Exercising a lifetime
- The values of sport.

The Knowledge Agenda is firmly connected with the new National Science Agenda. In 2017 the execution of the Knowledge Agenda will start. National funding for research will be earmarked to its vision and priorities.

### d. Integrity and good governance and a National Programme Towards a Safer Sporting Environment (VSK)

In line with international developments in sport, the Netherlands puts a lot of effort in the fight against negative aspects that are influencing sport. Integrity takes an important place in current policies. Integrity issues, such as match-fixing, anti-doping, good governance and discrimination in all its forms.

Sadly, in the Netherlands we also face violence and negative behavior in today's society, and unfortunately sport is no exception. Violence, discrimination and threats do not belong to sport. Therefore the Netherlands invests in improving the sports social environment by various activities, so that anyone who wants to do sports can participate without suffering from violence or intimidation. Clear rules of conduct to prevent or address harassment are promoted. Coaches and trainers receive training and guidance to reward positive behavior and to address negative behavior

adequately. Moreover, parents of sporting children are getting advice how to promote the fun of sport and sportsmanship.

Projects are supported to improve the functioning of children with problems in sports and society. Social work and sport clubs work closely together to make these projects successful. Initial experiences with this approach are very promising: the youngsters received these activities positively and perform better than through more regular support outside sport.

Concrete goals of the National Programme Towards a Safer Sporting Environment (VSK) action plan:

- 7,500 clubs dedicate themselves to Sportsmanship & Respect
- 25,000 trainers, coaches and supervisors improve their educational skills
- 5,000 clubs go through a process to improve the educational environment
- 5,000 clubs make it clear which rules apply on and around the field
- Rules with a positive influence on the game will be widely disseminated
- A competent referee trained in resilience for each game
- Top athletes commit to role as ambassador
- A sport-wide approach to excesses in cooperation with law enforcement
- There will be a registration system for excesses
- Effective disciplinary system within each sports association

#### ***Ongoing attention and a new theme***

Ongoing attention is required to reach a new generation of parents, administrators, coaches and referees. Therefore, the National Programme Towards a Safer Sporting Environment (VSK) action plan has been extended for two years by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. A new theme is being added: diversity.

### e. Healthy School system in the Netherlands

The Healthy School system in the Netherlands is a national programme to promote a healthy lifestyle for children in the school environment. It is a collaboration between numerous national, regional and local organisations who merge knowledge and implementation forces. Schools are approached by professional and qualified coordinators. The quality of interventions is one of the programme's cornerstones: using evidence-based interventions to promote health.

A Healthy School spends its time focusing on health as effectively and efficiently as possible. The Healthy School approach helps schools take a planned and systematic approach to health and a healthy lifestyle for students. If a school achieves all four pillars within a chosen theme, it can position itself as a Healthy School with the label of that theme.

The Healthy School pillars are:

- Health education: The lessons pay structural attention to health (e.g. by implementing a curriculum about a theme).
- Physical and social environments: Encourage healthy behaviour through changes in the school's physical and social environments (e.g. being a 'move friendly' or 'green' school, involving parents in the Healthy School programme).
- Signalling: Health problems are detected (e.g. using a tracking system for physical education or social and emotional development).
- Policy: All measures related to the health of students and teachers are laid out in school policy.

The Healthy School label is a quality label for schools that work to improve the health of their students. After earning at least one theme certificate, a school can call itself a Healthy School for three years.

## 5. Elite sport

### *Aims and organisation*

One of the overarching aims of Dutch sport policy is to belong to the top of elite sport countries in the world. Securing a place amongst the top ten sporting nations means winning more medals in more branches of sport. The Dutch National Olympic Committee (NOC) and the sports federations continue to aspire to the highest possible achievements. Competing at the highest level requires constantly raising the bar, as global competition increases all the time.

Certain choices had to be made after the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, so the Dutch NOC reduced the number of elite sports programmes it supports from 180 to 68. That boosted funding for the sports with the best opportunities, and performance improved in a growing number of disciplines. A clear downside to the reduction in overall financial resources is the increased pressure on programmes to develop new talent, geared toward shaping champions for the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and thereafter. To be awarded funding, elite sports or talent programmes must now satisfy certain criteria. No programme has an automatic entitlement to funding. Sports Agenda 2017+ raises the bar even higher: the aim is to win medals at the world level.

*(above : translated from Sportagenda 2017+ NOC NSF)*

The Dutch government emphasises the importance of elite sport in its vision and policy. They aim to accentuate the following:

- Paying ongoing attention to integrity in elite sport
- Enhancing the position of elite athletes
- Formalising the contribution of elite athletes to society
- Maintaining input on Paralympic elite sport
- Encouraging an elite sport landscape that facilitates performance.

### **Financing elite sport**

To realise a long-term strategy and reach the overall goals, NOC\*NSF (National Olympic Committee\*Dutch Sport Federation) chose a strategy to support programmes that perform well. NOC\*NSF chooses elite sport programmes based on the probability that their athletes find themselves at the world podium. Decisions about programmes and athletes are made every four years. The programme should make a realistic chance to deliver podium places at World Championships, Olympic Games or Paralympic Games in 2020 and/or 2024.

NOC\*NSF determines the funding of elite sport programmes.

Athletes can gain an A-status by achieving certain agreed criteria. An A-status gives a right to a stipendium paid by the government.

The sport-specific federation chooses which athlete will be nominated for an selection status. This selection status gives right to certain facilities. The selection status can lead to an A-status. Complementary federations have their own status structure that comes into play when an athlete reaches the top 16 worldwide. The Dutch NOC and the federation decide together on the maximum number of athletes. Young athletes can also be nominated for a talent status.

Selection status or major sport events are not linked to the A-status/non-status of athletes.

### **Infrastructure for elite sport and education**

High Performance Centre Papendal is the largest Centre for Elite Sports and Education (CTO) in the Netherlands. In total there are four (soon to be five) CTOs and seven Regional Elite Sport organisations. The aim of this structure is to maximise the transfer of regional talent to national programmes.

### **Dual careers**

In the Netherlands, universities and the sport movement have developed an approach to elite athletes that includes building “after sport”

career opportunities. It starts with opportunities for young athletes to combine (vocational) training and education with sport, and goes on to include continuous attention and support during an athlete’s sport career. The Netherlands is involved in the European project: Gold in Education and Elite Sport project.

### **Integrity in sports**

Integrity in sports is an important topic in the Netherlands. That is why our nation made it one of the priorities during our EU presidency in 2016. The European Council has come to a decision about enhancing integrity, transparency and good governance at mega-sport events.

It has become clear that governments play a role in these events and in the governance of sport, although the main responsibility and autonomy remain within the sport organisations themselves.

In 2017, some notable actions related to this theme were taken:

- The first doping law, including the formation of a new doping authority, is ready for discussion in parliament. An international anti-doping conference was held during our EU presidency, which inspired an up-to-date doping policy in the Netherlands. It also led to the installation of a plaque at Amsterdam’s Olympic Stadium in February, commemorating the many Dutch athletes who lost out on medals at the Olympics or other world championships because of doping by competitors.
- The International Olympic Committee bestowed the Sport Beyond Borders Award on the KNVB (Royal Netherlands Football Association) in September in recognition of their ongoing efforts to prevent discrimination and exclusion in football.
- In November, the international Play the Game conference will take place in Eindhoven with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. The Play the Game initiative aims to strengthen the ethical foundation of sport and to promote democracy, transparency and freedom of expression in sport.

## 6. Paralympic sport and sport and physical activity for disabled people

### *Integration*

In the Netherlands, sport for people with disabilities is integrated into the regular sport structure. Since 2000, sports for people with disabilities are no longer separate from other organised sports. This signalled the green light for 'organisational integration'. Since then, sports for people with disabilities have used the regular sport infrastructure, such as unions, associations, facilities and supporters, from amateur to elite sport. This is captured in the motto: 'Normal as much as possible, and special as needed'.

The practical details of integration differ for each sport. Some sports require different settings; for instance, people who use wheelchairs play rugby indoors. Sport for people with disabilities`ents is often organised at regular sport clubs. A good example of this is Marlou van Rijn, the Dutch gold-medal winner in running at the 2012 and 2016 Paralympics. She trains at a regular sport club. However, sport for deaf people is still organised separately.

The organisation Gehandicaptensport Nederland (sport for people with disabilities) is an umbrella organisation for those sports that are not linked with a specific sport federation. These include bocce, wheelchair rugby, sledge hockey (para ice hockey) showdown, goalball, and floorball for the blind.

**Hall of Fame:** Esther Vergeer is a Dutch wheelchair tennis player. Combining singles and doubles, she has won 42 Grand Slam tournaments, 22 year-end championships and 7 Paralympics titles. Vergeer was the world number one wheelchair tennis player from 1999 until her retirement in February 2013



### ***The 'Activity without borders' national programme***

The 'Activity without borders' (Grenzeloos Actief) sport and exercise policy was set up to create a national structure and appropriate sport and mobility offerings through which every disabled person in the Netherlands receives the opportunity to play sports and exercise. Collaboration between local and regional parties is quite important to this initiative.

*The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport will make €6.6 million available for 'Activity without borders programme/ Grenzeloos Actief'. Of that total, €2 million is intended for transport to and from sports facilities.*

NOC\*NSF is the umbrella organisation for sports in the Netherlands. As the country's Olympic Committee, it believes that sport has an outstanding capacity to contribute to the development of societies.

As an example, NOC\*NSF has set itself the goal of getting as many people with impairments as possible to participate in sport within the organised sports structure, as close as possible to their homes. They would like to share their knowledge and experiences in this field with international sports organisations.

### ***Participation and elite level***

Participating in sport is not a matter of course for people with impairments. This is due to personal and organisational factors, but also to a lack of local facilities. NOC\*NSF continuously stimulates local sport organisations and municipalities to match supply and demand. Main points of interest are personal support and the removal of constraints such as transport, participation costs and sports supply in the area.

NOC\*NSF and the affiliated sports associations strive to increase sports participation amongst people with impairments by creating a nationwide structure of regional collaboration. The presence of local sport service desks results in more sports participation amongst people with impairments and an increase in the local sports supply. The service desk is the focal point for recognising relevant local initiatives and linking them to each other.

Furthermore, the sports service desks function as central information and support points, both for people with impairments who want to play sports and for clubs that would like to offer required facilities.

In elite-level sport, it is our ambition to rank amongst the top ten sport countries in the world. In this respect, NOC\*NSF runs ten full-time Paralympic programmes. During the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, the Dutch team won 62 medals, ending in seventh place in the medal ranking, behind superpowers like China, the USA and the UK.

### ***Accessibility of facilities***

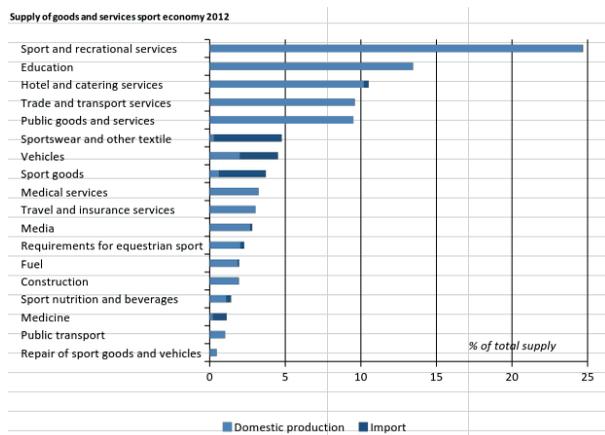
In 2016, the Netherlands ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which means that buildings, roads and transport – including sports facilities – must be equally accessible to people with and without disabilities. Guidelines for the accessible design and maintenance of indoor and outdoor sports facilities and public spaces have recently been published for use by builders, administrators and operators.

## **7. The Dutch sports economy**

The relevance of sport within society exceeds the mere competitive aspect of sport, i.e. winning or losing. Modern society acknowledges a multitude of important facets of sport, such as pleasure and fun, activity, health, competition, social involvement (participation and community cohesion) and personal development. In addition, sport also has an economic dimension. Taking part in a sport often costs money. Many sports require specially designed kit: garments and equipment, and sports activities often take place in purpose-built facilities. All these products are produced and supplied on the goods and services market. There they are purchased by sports participants, clubs, government agencies, etc. Many Dutch companies are involved in building (parts of) stadiums for international sports events or supply knowledge and expertise on logistics and management of the stadiums.

Several interesting questions arise with regard to the economic relevance of sport within society. How much economic wealth does sport generate? What impact does it have on the economy as a whole? How much do consumers spend on sport-related goods and services? How many people are employed in the sport-related part of the economy?

**Infographic: Supply of goods and services sport economy 2012 (Statistics Netherlands)**



- The Dutch sports industry is estimated at €12.7 bln (1% of GDP).
- Most investment in sports facilities and sports clubs comes from the Dutch municipalities. Sport-related final expenditure by government is mainly accounted for by swimming pools and other sport facilities operated by municipalities (1 billion euro), and physical exercise classes in schools, and education in sport academies (together 1.2 billion euro).
- The sport-related part of the economy employed 1.5 percent of all employed persons.

## 8. Large-scale sport events

### New ambition

There is growing interest in organising large-scale sport events in the Netherlands. In September 2017, the Dutch National Sport Council (NL Sportraad) released its new ambition for the coming years: to study the feasibility of hosting mega and large-scale sport events, such as the Olympic Games, in the Netherlands.

This ambitious vision is strongly connected to the aim of bringing together different sectors, such as education, health, integration and economy, and sport. The Netherlands strives for sport events, without match-fixing, doping or other negative sides of modern sports.

The Netherlands also aims to organise cost-efficient sport events in a profitable way. The legacy of (elite) sport events in societal and economic terms is a starting point.

### Examples of successful international events

#### UEFA Women's EURO 2017

The 2017 UEFA women's football championship, which was held in the Netherlands from 16 July to 6 August, was a great success. The icing on the cake was the Dutch team's victory over Denmark in the final, which gave the team, led by coach Sarina Wiegman, its first winning title in the history of this European championship.

#### 2016 European Athletics Championships

The 2016 European Athletics Championships were held in Amsterdam from 6–10 July 2016. It was the first time the Netherlands had hosted the event. It largely took place in Olympic Stadium, which was built in 1927 as the main stadium for the 1928 Summer Olympics in Amsterdam.

**Hall of Fame:** Churandy Martini is a Dutch sprinter from Curaçao, representing the Netherlands. Previously, he represented the Netherlands Antilles until its dissolution in 2010. His personal best time over 100 metres is 9.91 seconds, a Dutch record, achieved in a 2012 London Olympic Games semi-final. He got golden medals at the European championships in 2012 (200 metres, London) and 2016 (100 metres, Amsterdam)





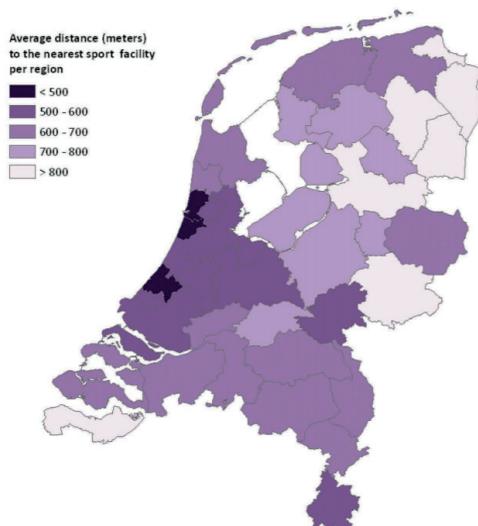
## 9. Public spaces, facilities and a physical activity-friendly environment

### Facilities in the Netherlands

The Netherlands boasts a rather dense sport infrastructure: on average, there are 6.68 sport facilities per 10,000 inhabitants and approximately three different kinds of sport facilities in each area code. The average distance from a person's home to the nearest sport facility is just over 600 metres. Even in non-urbanised areas, the average distance to the nearest sport facility is less than one kilometre. This helps to explain why, of all Europeans, the Dutch are most satisfied with the sport facilities in the areas where they live (European Commission 2014).

Fitness centres and football facilities have the lowest number of inhabitants per facility (6,582 and 6,681 inhabitants, respectively), while baseball and athletics (track and field) facilities have the highest number of inhabitants per facility (89,050 and 85,870, respectively).

By region, the average distance to the nearest sport facility ranges from 446 metres in the urban agglomeration of Haarlem to 857 metres in non-urbanised eastern Groningen.



### Facilities and municipal policies

Municipalities are responsible for facilities on the local level. The necessary level of sport facilities is being reconsidered and debated, also in light of the ageing society and the population declines underway in many places. As large shares of sport budgets are often dedicated to constructing and operating sport facilities, much emphasis has been placed on them when identifying ways to reduce costs. To illustrate, some 85% of the total government budget for sport in the Netherlands goes to constructing and operating sport facilities. In many municipalities and cities, there are



initiatives to create an environment that promotes physical activity. Attractive and safe places to walk, play, cycle and be physically active are part of municipal city planning strategies. A typical Dutch measure is the dense maze of cycle paths: although the Netherlands is a relatively small country, we have about 35,000 km of cycle paths. A new development is the creation of cycle highways: fast and safe connections between cities.



Roombeek, Enschede: school zone "kiss and ride"

## 10. Highlights of the Netherlands as a Sport Partner

The Netherlands has an international outlook, seeks to build bridges and form long-term partnerships with countries all over the world, including in the field of sports. The Dutch are consensus oriented and strive for integrated approaches. Partnerships enhance the exchange of experience and expertise, strengthening sports policies and accomplishments nationally and internationally.

Dutch technologies have a proven track record, and the Netherlands has an excellent reputation in sports. It organized famous sport events, but also participated in constructing stadiums and related infrastructure projects for events like the European Championships Soccer in Poland and Ukraine, World Cup soccer in South Africa and the Olympic Games in London. Together with international partners, the Dutch industry offers its expertise in innovative and sustainable solutions where leisure comes together with commercial interest, culture, social programs and sport to achieve mutual benefits.

There is so much to choose from; in this guide we selected 14 highlights. And of course, 14 is at the same time a reference to the famous nr 14, Johan Cruyff, one of the greatest players in football history.

### **1: The Sport Club system in the Netherlands**

An important characteristic of a Dutch sport club is that it based on volunteerism. Equally important, a sport club is a democratic organisation run by the members themselves. Most sport clubs are members of national sport federations, which, in turn, are members of NOC\*NSF. A sport club has as its primary aim to enable its members to take part in sport. That said, and in the face of a changing society, a growing number of clubs are beginning to resemble community-services organisations (in Dutch: Open Club).

### **2: Partnerships for a Comprehensive Sport Science eco-system**

With the new (2016) Knowledge Agenda Sport and Exercise, the Netherlands is developing a sustainable partnership between universities, sport, local and national government and industry. The Agenda emphasises a broad multidisciplinary approach: from individual psychological processes to physiological measurements, smart materials and virtual reality. A new aspect is the vital role of big data and data science as a connecting and cross disciplinary link.

### **3: Community Sports Motivators**

Community Sports Motivators are tasked with motivating people of all ages to take up sport or become more physically active. The motivators not only operate in the sports sector (i.e. sports clubs), but also in social sectors (such as within education, care organisations, or child care). Extra funding has been made available to municipal authorities for recruiting Community Sports Motivators. Municipalities will also contribute from their own funds.

### **4: Papendal: World Class Integrated High Performance Centre for Elite and Paralympic Sports**

The Netherlands has a nation wide elite sport infrastructure. One of the pearls is Papendal: High Performance Centre Papendal is a multi-functional and internationally oriented training centre that offers a wide variety of high-quality elite sports facilities. It is the home base of numerous world-class athletes.

As a 'Centre for Elite Sports and Education' High Performance Centre Papendal enables young athletes to live, study and train in one place. Thus minimising travel between school, home and sports, and providing tailor-made educational programs that fit their individual training schedules. The centre facilitates sports, such as cycling, BMX, athletics, volleyball, handball and wheelchair basketball. More than 300 athletes train in High Performance Centre Papendal on a daily basis.

### **5: Sport for people with impairments**

The Dutch has set itself the goal of getting as many people with impairments as possible to participate in sport within the organised sport structure and as close to their homes as possible. The majority of sports for people with impairments have been integrated into the regular national sport structure. The aim is to increase and improve the opportunities for people with impairments, by using the knowledge, experience and facilities member sport federations already possess. This is for sports at all levels and includes the training of coaches, trainers and officials.

### **6: High Impact Sportinnovator eco-system**

A wide range of highly qualitative innovation centres is supported to increase (inter)national cooperation, creating new opportunities for starting innovations and realising a strong climate for innovation in sport. Sportinnovator centres are incubators for innovations that have economic or societal value.

### **7: Active environment**

The Netherlands is well known to be a cycling nation, thanks to its flat and densely populated country, cool climate, urban planning that fits the needs of cyclists and for instance a good network of well maintained cycle paths. But there is more than cycling: to stimulate more sport and exercise in the environment, there's a need for quality public spaces and facilities. Urban design influences physical activity. Exercise is not possible without space, but space alone is not enough. A combination of exercise-stimulating programs and communication is necessary to really get people moving and keeping it that way. The Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands followed in the project Active Environment several municipalities in their process of designing and planning active environments. KCSport provides practical information for local governments that wish for more active environments in their neighbourhoods and communities.

### **8: Sport Foresight Study'(Sport Toekomst Verkenning)**

An evidence-based future scan for sport in the Netherlands: this is a new study that has been developed, in which data from history and the present time are combined with scenarios for the future. The first report was a trend scenario. The next publication is a report on perspectives and last but not least one about chances and choices for the sport. This large study will be one of the pillars for new sports policy in the Netherlands.

In the Sport Foresight Study 'Een sportiever Nederland' ('A more active Netherlands'), the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) explore the future of sport and exercise in the Netherlands. If the present policy on sport remains unchanged, the Netherlands could face substantial challenges by 2030, so it is said in this publication. There is a strong chance of a widening gap between elite and popular sport. The Netherlands could be overtaken in the medal rankings; fans will have less to cheer. At the same time, technological developments are bringing the ability to experience sport closer, for example through Virtual and Augmented Reality. It cannot be assumed that people in the Netherlands will be taking sufficient physical exercise in 2030. Traditional sports associations could come under pressure due to a drop in members and volunteers. Modern sports associations offer opportunities for promoting social participation and health. Which of these challenges is the most important depends on the perspective adopted. The Sport Foresight Study is explicitly not a prediction. The findings will help stakeholders to engage in dialogue with their members and constituents about the future.

### **9: National and European Sports Week**

Since 2004, a National Sports Week has been organised by a number of sport organisations and municipalities. In 2015 more than 1 million people participated in one of the 9.000 activities in the Netherlands. Inspired by that success, the European Commission has come up with the initiative of the European Week of Sport initiative,

as part of its overall policy aimed at increasing the level of participation in sport and physical activity in the EU. Since 2016 the European Week of Sport (EWS) takes place every year during the month of September all over Europe. Besides an official opening and flagship event, the European Week of Sport is structured around 4 Focus Themes to appeal to all audiences: Education environment, Workplace, Outdoors, Sport Clubs & Fitness centres. For more information about how to participate in the European Week of Sport, communicate about it or organise an event as part of it, the Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands and a few other national bodies wrote the handbook “How to Participate in the EWS – A Guide for Local Stakeholders.”

### **10: Everything about Sports on one online platform (Alles Over Sport)**

January 2016 was the starting point of a brand new online platform: Everything about Sports, [www.allesoversport.nl](http://www.allesoversport.nl). It is a platform of and for sport organisations and athletes, initiated by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Visitors will find good evidence- and practice-based answers on their questions about sport and physical activity. Together with other organisations Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands aims to fulfill all information requirements of professionals, policy advisors, volunteers and the general public. The content is mostly in the form of articles, but also available are infographics, short video clips, blogs, ‘fact or fable’ information and inspirational quotes and pictures on social media as Instagram and Facebook. ‘Everything about Sports’ aims to reach its 1 millionth visitor end of 2017 and to develop a more personalized platform.

### **Amsterdam Arena**





### 11: Sportfolio

In recent years, representatives of foreign governments and companies have come looking for opportunities to cooperate with Dutch parties in the field of sports or sports science. Sportfolio presents an overview of projects brought together by Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health Welfare and Sport. The goal is to showcase Dutch sports projects that have international ambitions. For economic missions special Sportfolio magazines have been issued. The magazine [https://tijdschriften.jilster.nl/pageflip/?magazine\\_id=208638&full-screen=true](https://tijdschriften.jilster.nl/pageflip/?magazine_id=208638&full-screen=true) and the showcase of projects <https://www.kenniscentrumsport.nl/en/international/sportfolio/> are also online available on the English website of the Knowledge Centre for Sport (Kenniscentrum Sport).

### 12. Modern Sport infrastructure

#### Amsterdam ArenA stadium

The Amsterdam ArenA stadium is an example of modern infrastructure. Amsterdam ArenA is the home of the Ajax football club, and the Dutch national side also hosts its international matches at the stadium. Concerts and dance parties regularly fill in the event calendar. At the Innovation Center, stadium staff collaborate with partners to create the stadium of the future. In terms of energy, Amsterdam ArenA is climate neutral.

#### Thialf ice arena

Thialf will continue to be the undisputed centre of the skating world in the future. With its recent renovation, they have created the best lowland track in the world with the finest facilities and amenities for elite athletes. The new Thialf in

Heerenveen is a compact building with a focus on elite sport, where the sport and sport facilities enrich one another.

#### Sportboulevard Dordrecht:

**Sportboulevard Dordrecht** is a multi-functional sports centre in Dordrecht. It opened in October 2010: the swimming pool from 7 October and the ice arena. from 31 October. The complex also has a sports hall that is used for gymnastics, basketball and volleyball.

The ISU European Short Track Speed Skating Championships 2015 were held in the ice arena here, as was the 2016 ISU Short Track Speed Skating World Cup, from 12–14 February 2016. After Dutch skater Sjinkie Knegt was named sportsman of the year for 2015, the stands were expanded to include 500 more seats. The Korfball World Cup was held in the sports hall in October 2016.

### 13. King's Games

Every April, most primary school children participate in the King's Games, celebrating the birthday of King Willem-Alexander. In 2017, more than 6,000 schools organised a day of games and sport. About 1.3 million children participated, both in the Netherlands and in the Dutch Caribbean islands and at Dutch schools abroad. The King's Games always start with the National School Breakfast and a national 'warm up'. The idea for the King's Games came from former professional tennis player Richard Krajicek to commemorate the king's inauguration in 2013.

## 11. Partners in Sports in the Netherlands

### Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS)

The 'sports mission' of the Ministry of VWS is to make it possible for everyone to play sports. In addition, the Ministry focuses on and funds elite sports, so that the Netherlands can perform well at international tournaments.

The Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) conducts research and provides advice to assist them in this task.

### Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes the interests of the Kingdom abroad. The Ministry coordinates and carries out Dutch foreign policy at its headquarters in The Hague and through its missions abroad. It is likewise the channel through which the Dutch Government communicates with foreign governments and international organisations.



### Topteam Sport innovation

The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport appointed a high level team of personalities from business, science, government and sport sector to take the lead in the development of the National Knowledge and Innovation Agenda.



### The Dutch Sports Council

The Dutch Sports Council is a high-level council that has been installed to give solicited and unsolicited advice to the Minister of Welfare, Health and Sport, the government and the Parliament on sport. The main focus and task of the Dutch Sports Council are to increase the feasibility of organising large-scale sports events in the Netherlands. Secondly, the Dutch Sports Council advises on stronger connections between sport and other sectors, such as education, health etc.



### NOC\*NSF

"Nederlands Olympisch Comité \* Nederlandse Sport Federatie" (NOC\*NSF) is the main organisation for organised sports in The Netherlands. Its 88 member organisations account for around 28,000 sport clubs in The Netherlands, which total more than five million people involved in organised sports.



### Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands

Making sport more impactful through knowledge; Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands aims to strengthen the impact of sport through better use of knowledge and to increase the level of knowledge about sport and physical activity. More knowledge leads to better interventions, more effective programs and a more competent workplace in sport and physical activity.



### Mulier Institute

The mission of the institute is to stimulate the coordination, synchronization and cooperation of more fundamental and policy based scholarly sports research in the Netherlands. The three main tasks of the institute are the monitoring of developments in sports, to comprehend and explain current (policy) issues and to communicate and discuss knowledge on sports and society.



### ZonMW

ZonMw (The Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development) funds health and Sport research in the Netherlands and promotes the actual use of the knowledge this research produces.



### Dutch Sport Infrastructure

Dutch Sports Infrastructure (DSI) is a group of companies that work closely together with the Dutch Government to offer a platform for the international exchange of innovations and ideas around large sports events, like Football World Cups and Olympic Games.



### Orange Sports Forum

Orange Sports Forum (OSF) is a network that supports the Netherlands' sports industry and business in their international ambitions.

**Hall of Fame:** Epke Zonderland is a Dutch gymnast and 2012 Olympics gold medalist in the high bar. He also won the 2013 World Championship and the 2014 World Championship on the high bar and got the silver medal in 2017. He is nicknamed "The Flying Dutchman".



**Hall of Fame:** Johan Cruyff ( † 2016) was the most famous exponent of the football philosophy known as Total Football and is widely regarded as one of the greatest players in football history. Cruyff led the Netherlands to the final of the 1974 FIFA World Cup and received the Golden Ball as player of the tournament. In 2017, Cruyff was named among the 10 greatest coaches since the foundation of UEFA .



## 12. Sources

*Sportagenda 2017+ (NOC\*NSF)*

<https://www.nocnsf.nl/sportagenda-2017> (in Dutch)

*Factsheet the Netherlands a Sporting Nation (Mulier Institute)*

<https://www.kennisbanksportenbewegen.nl/?file=3597&m=1422883353&action=file.download>

*Factsheet Sport and Physical Activity in the Netherlands by (WHO/ EU and RIVM)*

[http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/288119/NETHERLANDS-Physical-Activity-Factsheet.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/288119/NETHERLANDS-Physical-Activity-Factsheet.pdf?ua=1)

*Website RIVM: figures on Dutch Health:*

<https://www.volksgezondheidenzorg.info/onderwerp/sport-en-bewegen>

<https://www.volksgezondheidenzorg.info/onderwerp/english/introduction>

*Guidelines Physical Activity 2017 (Dutch Health Council)*

<https://www.gezondheidsraad.nl/en/task-and-procedure/areas-of-activity/preventie/dutch-physical-activity-guidelines-2017>

*A landscape of sport facilities in the Netherlands (Mulier Institute)*

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19406940.2015.1099556>

*European Barometer Sport and Physical Activity 2015 (EU)*

[https://data.europa.eu/euodp/nl/data/dataset/S1116\\_80\\_2\\_412](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/nl/data/dataset/S1116_80_2_412)

*CBS (Statistics Netherlands)*

<http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?DM=SLEN&PA=37943ENG>

*Wikipedia*

[https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nederland\\_op\\_de\\_Olympische\\_Spelen](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nederland_op_de_Olympische_Spelen)

## 13. Colophon

October 2017

Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands  
(Kenniscentrum Sport)

In cooperation with Mulier Institute, NOC\*NSF,  
SCP, RIVM, ZonMw and other national (sport)  
organisations.

Commissioned by the Ministry for Health, Welfare  
and Sport Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Photography:  
Hans Heus; Bastiaan Heus; Ministry for Health,  
Welfare and Sport, Knowledge Centre for Sport  
Netherlands and others.

Lay-out by:  
AldanaDesign

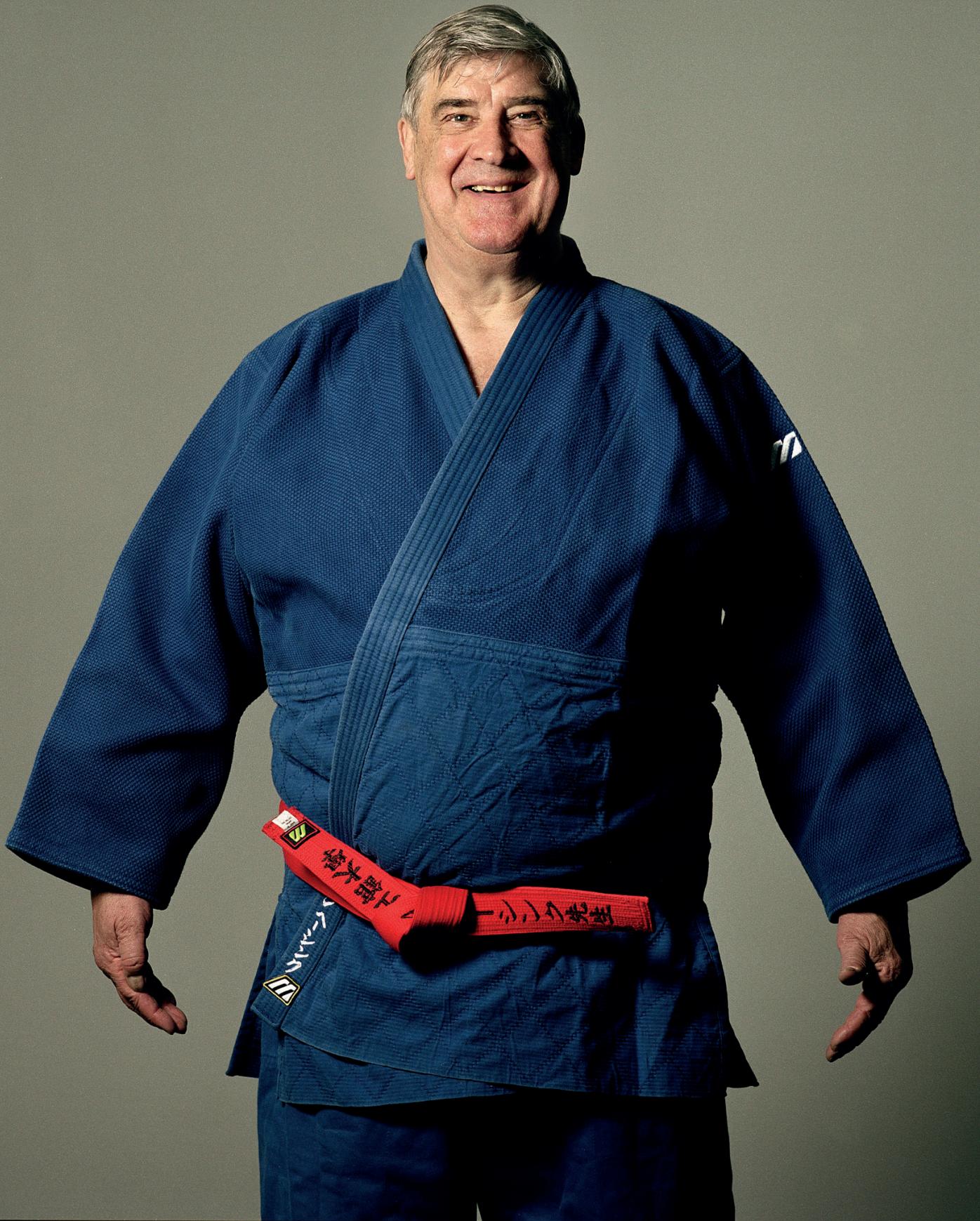


Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands  
Horapark 4, 6717 LZ Ede ( NL)  
Tel. 0031 318 490 900  
<https://www.kenniscentrumsport.nl/en/>

### **Contact**

Peter Barendse  
[peter.barendse@kcsport.nl](mailto:peter.barendse@kcsport.nl)

Jacqueline Kronenburg  
[jacqueline.kronenburg@kcsport.nl](mailto:jacqueline.kronenburg@kcsport.nl)



© October 2017 Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands

Contact  
P 00 31 318 49 09 00  
info@kc sport.nl  
www.kenniscentrumsport.nl

