



Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn ter gelegenheid van het bezoek van de Voorzitter van het Europees Parlement, Roberta Metsola, aan de Staten-Generaal

Datum 30-3-2023

Dear President Metsola,

Also on behalf of the Dutch Senate, I am very honored to welcome you in the Netherlands. It is a great privilege for us to receive you here today.

Your visit to the Netherlands comes at a time when our continent is faced with a military conflict within its borders.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the violence carried out by the Russian army has shocked us all deeply.

However, the war in Ukraine once more proves the importance of European and international cooperation.

In that regard it is good to see, that in Brussels, as well as in The Hague, and in almost all other European capitals, the commitment and support to Ukraine are continuous and unconditional.

This year marks the 30th birthday of the European single market.

Although the single market is never finished, and as recently as 2022 significant changes have been made with the adoption of the Digital Markets and Digital Services Act, it has proven to be a great step forward in the internal functioning of the European Union.

As an institution the Dutch Senate prides itself on an approach and commitment which underline and respect the importance and interdependence of European and national policies. Moreover, the Senate has always committed itself to also inform the Dutch public about this interdependence.

Recently the Senate has adopted resolutions¹ in which the government is requested to put more effort into informing and involving the public in European policymaking.

At the turn of the century the Senate launched its own special European website².

All the European activities of the Senate can be found on this website, for example the agenda and meeting documents of the Senate's standing committees, letters sent to the government and to the European Commission and news items of the Senate about – among other things – interparliamentary meetings.

Specific web pages are built for specific topics or debates of great importance to us, such as the Conference on the future of Europe, the Rule of Law in the EU, and transparency of Council documents. Moreover, every proposal of the European Commission that the Senate scrutinises is processed into a special file.

This file contains all relevant documents, such as the procedures in, and opinion of, the European Parliament, deliberations of the Council and, of course, the views of the Dutch parliament and government.

The public is invited to comment on European proposals and on the activities and opinions of the Senate and its members.

The website provides a forum for everyone to communicate with the Senate on European matters. Use is made of this opportunity by members of the public, NGOs, civil society and academia.

Discussion of a European proposal can result, for example, in oral or written questions to the Dutch government.

¹ Motions Koole 35.403, G and 35.982, G

² www.europapoort.nl



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It may even become the subject of written deliberations with the European Commission, which actually happens on a regular basis.

Letters directed to the European Commission are also sent to the European Parliament to inform the rapporteurs on the questions of the Senate about the proposal concerned.

In the case of a reasoned opinion, it has happened that the rapporteur involved has contacted the Senate to learn more about the objections.

Another important instrument of the Senate is the annual debate on Europe.

Every year the Senate debates the main developments in the EU with the Dutch government. As Europe extends beyond the borders of the European Union, the annual debate on Europe deals with the entire European continent, and also pays specific attention to the policies and goals of the Council of Europe.

Our annual debate gives us the opportunity to discuss the current and future stance to Europe. The debate for this year is planned in a few weeks, on the 18th of April.

Last but certainly not least, none of these instruments can really work without the strong commitment and dedication of the members of the Dutch Senate, in good cooperation with Members of the House.

In spite of differences in critical attitude, all political groups in our Parliament are very much involved in Europe.

There is a strong and active participation of our members in the Interparliamentary meetings.

As for myself, I make it a priority to participate in the yearly EU Speakers' Conference, as I believe it is of the utmost importance to meet my European colleagues on a regular basis to discuss issues that concern all member states, and their parliaments. My esteemed colleague-Speaker, Vera Bergkamp, and I will attend the Conference in Prague, in April.

Dear President Metsola,

Next year the elections for the European Parliament will take place.

Those are always exciting times! Our Senate is two months away from elections as well, so we will see what happens at the end of May.

I wish you all the best for the coming year full of campaigning for the new Parliament, and also for later today when you will have a Q&A-session with students of Leiden University, as I understand.

Thank you.