



THE APELDOORN CONFERENCE SERIES
THE YOUNG APELDOORN CONFERENCE 2004
LONDON 18 & 19 MARCH

CAN EUROPE COMPETE?

CONFERENCE REPORT

Partners



Ministerie van
Buitenlandse Zaken



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

 **BRITISH COUNCIL**
Netherlands

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TOUR OF FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE



Foreword

When Foreign Ministers Jack Straw and Jozias van Aartsen met in 2002 they agreed to build on the success of the main UK/Netherlands bilateral Apeldoorn Conference Series by establishing a conference series for young people. They wanted to bring together hi-fliers from the media, politics, government and business to take a fresh and imaginative look at policy problems, and to forge links between young people likely to have a strong and positive influence on future Anglo-Dutch relations.

The first ever Young Apeldoorn conference took place at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London on 18 and 19 March this year. It was organised jointly by the British Council in the Netherlands, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The title of the conference was 'Can Europe Compete?'. Around 30 young Dutch and British people from a variety of fields and backgrounds met over two days to discuss this important issue.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to be present. The programme proved challenging and topical, and the debate was stimulating and of high quality (reflecting the wealth of young British and Dutch talent present). Nick Clegg MEP and Michiel van Hulten MEP co-chaired the conference with great skill and enthusiasm, and have written an excellent conference report, which we expect to have a strong influence on discussion at the main Apeldoorn Conference, which will cover the same issues early next year in the UK.

Feedback from conference participants has been highly encouraging. Those who completed the evaluation questionnaire felt they had had a positive and stimulating experience. The vast majority also agreed that the conference had met its stated objectives, and said they would attend future conferences and recommend others to do so. Based on this feedback, and our own positive impressions, we consider this first Young Apeldoorn conference to have been an unequivocal success. It has laid firm foundations for the future and reinforced our deep conviction that Young Apeldoorn is set to become a key pillar of our bilateral relationship.

Colin Budd

Sir Colin Budd KCMG

*HM British Ambassador to
the Netherlands*



Jan de Ansembourg

**H.E. Count Jan de Marchant et
d'Ansembourg**

*Ambassador of the Netherlands
to the United Kingdom*



THE YOUNG APELDOORN CONFERENCE 2004



FIRST ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: SARAH RICHARDSON, SIGRID VERWEIJ, MICHEL VAN HULTEN MEP, JOHN MACDOUGALL MP, BERNHARD VAN ORANJE-NASSAU VAN VOLLENHOVEN, H.E.
2 SECOND ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: CAROLINE PLUMB, DENISE HEILIGERS, RUTH TURNER, ANDREW VAN DER LEM, SAN LIE, MIRJAM STERK MP, LISE GREGOIRE-VAN HAAREN, ANDY BOUNDS,
THIRD ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: JOANNA DE JONG-KEOGH, GERARD LEMOS CMG, MIRJAM STERK MP, MARTIJN VAN DAM MP, LORD TEMPLE-MORRIS, RONALD DE HAAN, SAN LIE, ANDREW



COUNT JAN DE MARCHANT ET D'ANSEMBOURG, HENRIËTTE VAN NOTTEN, LINDA OKEKE, JOHN MACDOUGALL MP, JOANNA DE JONG-KEOGH

LOES BRINKMAN, LORD WILLIAM WALLACE OF SALTAIRE, JOERI VAN DEN STEENHOVEN, RIA ROERINK

SHAPCOTT, HENRIËTTE VAN NOTTEN, ANDY BOUNDS, MICHAEL WELCH

Conference Report

Nick Clegg MEP

Michiel Van Hulten MEP

The Context

'Can Europe Compete?' was the well chosen theme of this, the first Young Apeldoorn Conference. Well chosen because all participants shared concerns about the comparative lack of European economic competitiveness, and scepticism that the European Union would honour its self imposed target, within the so called 'Lisbon Process', of becoming the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010.

As Nigel Griffiths, the UK Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry responsible for Construction, Enterprise and Small Business, stated in his opening remarks to the conference, it is impossible for Europe to stand still in an age of globalisation and trade liberalisation. The twin challenges of making economic growth both environmentally sustainable and strong enough to meet the needs of a rapidly ageing European society were also highlighted. The Minister underlined that whilst the EU had made much progress in promoting competitiveness, not least in liberalising monopoly utilities and liberalising the financial services market, there was still a long way to go. Given that the UK and the Netherlands have traditionally taken a leading role in the debate on economic reform, it was only right that an Anglo-

MICHEL VAN HULTEN MEP, NICK CLEGG MEP



Dutch conference should dwell on these crucial themes.

Before participants divided up into four separate discussion groups, a short opening debate was held to examine some of the underlying assumptions. There was general agreement that whilst the Lisbon Process was welcome at EU level, it had not percolated down to national policy makers as fully as it should. The Dutch parliament, for instance, had only recently held its first debate about the Lisbon targets. There was also a general reticence about drawing excessively strict parallels between the European Union and the United States. Whilst it was viewed as a useful discipline to draw unflattering comparisons between the economic performance of the EU and that of the US, such comparisons should not ignore structural differences between the two. Above all, it was felt that the EU should improve its own competitiveness for its own sake, not merely as a means to catch up with the US.

Developments in the UK and the Netherlands:

The Dutch and UK economies showed divergent developments in recent years. The Dutch 'Poldermodel', in which the main guidelines of socio-economic are negotiated between the social partners (government, employers and trade unions), which during the 1990s had come to be regarded as a recipe for economic success, was in

crisis. Economic growth in the Netherlands had stagnated and unemployment was on the rise again after almost a decade of continuous decline. A sharp increase in labour costs had begun to undermine the Netherlands's position as one of the most competitive economies in the world.

The Dutch government elected in January 2003 embarked on a programme of budget cuts with a view to respecting EMU criteria. This reduced the government's ability to conduct an activist employment policy. At the same time, a new deal was struck with employers and trade unions to freeze wages - a deal seen by some as a necessary measure in the face of rising costs, but by others as an unhelpful interference with the supply and demand mechanism in the labour market that would protect unproductive sectors and discourage innovation. The Dutch government also announced a programme to cut back red tape, and identified the European Union as one of the main culprits when it comes to excessive and contradictory regulation. In education, the government announced that primary and secondary schools would be given more freedom to conduct their own affairs instead of being 'run from The Hague', and in higher education the government proposed the introduction of variable tuition fees and student selection.

In the UK, the Government was able to boast of record levels of employment and relatively healthy

economic growth. Whilst political controversies have raged about the war in Iraq, about the draft European constitution, and about public service reforms (notably legislation on so called 'foundation hospitals' and university education finance), the economic outlook has been generally positive. Nevertheless, the UK's benign economic climate has disguised some persistent constraints on further improvements in economic performance. The state of public infrastructure, such as in transport, continues to lag seriously behind that of other European competitors, and is regularly cited by the UK business community as a major added cost. Productivity, whilst improved in recent years, is still behind that of the US and large parts of the Eurozone. As in the Netherlands, the increasing problem of detailed Government regulation is also widely viewed as a serious

impediment to productive commercial activity. The problem has arguably been exacerbated by an unduly complex and interventionist approach to budgetary and fiscal policy by the British Treasury.

Both countries are strong supporters of the EU's enlargement to ten new Member States on 1 May 2004, but the impact this would have on their economies has led to intense public debate and government action in both countries. The UK decided to limit the social security rights of immigrants from the new Member States, and the Netherlands decided on a quota of 22,000 immigrants per year. The UK and the Netherlands were among the last countries in the EU to take such measures, seen by some commentators as counterintuitive given both countries' long standing belief in the positive effects of the free movement of labour within the EU Single Market, but perhaps inevitable given the decisions already taken by other Member States in the face of widespread public anxieties.

NIGEL GRIFFITHS, H.E. COUNT JAN DE MARCHANT ET D'ANSEMBOURG



Theme 1: Preparing Young People for Work

The conference was asked to consider the following questions:

- What should be the role of secondary and higher education in preparing young people for work?

- Are we achieving satisfactory basic education levels (or do too many young people leave school with no hope of a decent job)?
- Are schools and universities teaching the right subjects and developing the right skills?
- Should governments be doing more to extend and raise the status of vocational training?
- Should governments make it easier for young people to study overseas and if so how?

There was broad agreement that British and Dutch education systems were failing to give pupils and students the start they needed in life. With respect to the Dutch education system, participants felt there was too much emphasis on equality and access - at the expense of excellence and selection. In the British case it was the other way round: elitism was a cause for concern.

It was pointed out that the first years of a child's life are crucial in determining the opportunities they will have later on. Government action should therefore be concentrated on providing children with a high quality (preschool) education during those years, including (in the case of immigrant children) language skills.

Concern was voiced that many children in secondary education are never actively confronted with the full range of career choices and possibilities available to them and that they make definitive career choices too early in life. This was

due to a number of factors, such as a school's tendency to favour and produce one particular type of graduate, the fact that insufficient advice was given to pupils on the education skills required to take on specific jobs, or the absence of the kind of practical, hands-on experience of different sectors of the economy that would enable students to make an informed choice. In addition, teachers themselves were often insufficiently familiar with the labour market and so weren't providing their pupils with the right information and skills. As a result, many pupils opted for one of the limited number of 'safe' study or career options presented to them, instead of, for instance, having a go at setting up their own business. The answer was to provide pupils with individual, tailor-made curriculum and career advice, and to give schools more freedom in setting a curriculum that

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matched local needs. This also applied in particular to children over 16, who often left school without a diploma because the education programmes did not provide an adequate mix of learning and doing.

A majority of participants were critical of indiscriminate efforts to increase the number of students in higher education. Students often opted for degree courses which were of personal interest to them, rather than of immediate use to society and the economy. Furthermore, many students would be better off opting for vocational training, which was greatly undervalued. Some argued that universities should remain research-focused.

In terms of funding, it was felt that government money spent on a child's early education was money better spent, and that if a choice had to be made, the bulk of the funding should go to preschool and primary school education rather than to higher education. Most conference participants felt that moves to increase students' contribution towards the cost of their own higher education were justified, firstly in order to help make supply meet demand and encourage students to pick the right courses from a labour market point of view, and secondly because of the personal benefits accruing to them as a result of their education. At the same time, students would need to be better informed about labour market needs. The conference also

considered that an increased private sector role in the education system should be encouraged.

Finally on this theme, the conference considered the question of language skills. All participants felt that EU citizens should be taught a second language. The choice of language, however, should be up to them: there should be no requirement, for instance, for everyone to learn English or even another EU language; Chinese or Arabic, for instance, could be at least as useful in a globalised economy.

Theme 2: Promoting the Knowledge Economy

The conference was asked to consider the following questions:

- Should governments do more to promote scientific research, and if so how?
- Why are US companies so much better at the commercial exploitation of scientific research?
- How can our governments improve the climate for R&D, innovation, and new technologies?
- Is it better to promote the knowledge economy at the EU or national level?; what are the growth high-tech industries of the future?

However, the principal question dominating group discussion concerned the general role of Governments in stimulating economic activity and promoting specific competitive sectors. An unambiguous view emerged that, in principle, it

was not the role of Governments to pick winners, still less to micromanage economic activity. This view, interestingly, was held as strongly by Dutch and British participants and united those from different political persuasions and those from the public and private sectors. In adhering so forcefully to such a liberal, hands-off approach to economic policy, it was interesting to conjecture whether a similar view would prevail in a conference bringing together young people from other EU countries, notably France or Germany.

However, whilst the principle of a hands-off approach was widely shared, it was also noted that in practice Governments were far more involved in economic policy management than the theory suggests. For a start, in providing the conditions in which competitive companies can thrive, Governments must make deliberate choices in everything from fiscal incentives to research and development funding which affect economic behaviour. Whilst in theory such decisions only set the framework for commercial activity, in truth they can confer preferential treatment on some sectors as opposed to others (e.g. Government support for the biotechnology sector).

It was also noted that Governments have long committed tax payers to providing massive subsidies to certain sectors, notably agriculture and defence manufacturing, even though the objective logic of doing so is often weak.

None of the participants demurred from the important role that Governments play in funding and maintaining the basic infrastructure upon which all economic activity rests. Good transport links and a strong educational sector are obviously indispensable to the EU's competitiveness agenda. Interestingly, however, few participants focused on the differences in infrastructure performance between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. A discussion about the comparative performance of the two countries' public transport systems, for instance, was notable in its absence.

Throughout the discussion, there was a clear assumption that the European Union could, in an ideal world, provide the economies of scale necessary to boost economic competitiveness. Several participants, for instance, noted that the most productive sectors in the United States often

MIRJAM STERK MP, SIGRID VERWEIJ, ANDREW VAN DER LEM



thrive in economic 'clusters' created in part by deliberate Government R&D support and intervention. However, whilst the theoretical advantages of EU support in the research and development field may be obvious, serious reservations were expressed about the practical ability of the EU to be effective. As one participant declared 'in Europe, we are still thinking on a national level and money is being scattered'. Given the tendency for EU decisions to be taken by consensus, and the need for national Governments to demonstrate that they have all received a slice from the EU budget cake, EU R&D policy was failing to provide a significant boost to the development of the knowledge economy, and was proving to be woefully inadequate in that task.

In short, the discussions highlighted the discrepancy between policy theory and political

practice: a liberal, hands-off approach to economic management is widely considered to be flouted in practice; the potential for value added action by the EU in boosting the knowledge economy is widely considered to be undermined by the tug-of-war between national Governments in allocating EU resources.

Theme 3: Developing a wider, more flexible and better skilled labour market

The conference was asked to consider the following questions:

- The right people with the right skills in the right place – can we leave this to the market?
- Are social partnerships such as the Dutch Poldermodel an anachronism?
- Do governments need to legislate on work-life balance issues?
- Is lifelong learning just a political gimmick?
- Should governments actively seek to increase the workforce (by controlled immigration, raising female participation rates, getting long term unemployed into work, prolonging the working life)?

In keeping with the general sentiment amongst conference participants that economic liberalisation and change was an unavoidable priority in Europe, there was much pessimism about the continued viability of the Netherlands'

ANDREW VAN DER LEM, PETER WESTERINK



famous Poldermodel. Its heavy emphasis on consensus and policy making stability was widely felt to be out of step with modern economic realities. Interestingly, a sizeable number of participants from the Netherlands seemed to suggest that the recent performance of the UK's economy underlined the need to shift to a more 'Anglo Saxon' economic policy approach. It was left to British participants to point out that, whilst the Poldermodel might be in trouble, the notion that Britain was enjoying unbridled economic success was far from the truth – poor public services and poor productivity were notable exceptions.

Whilst most participants believed that it would be dangerous to attempt to create too many environmental and social standards at European level, since they would risk making the European economy even less flexible, this did not imply that there should be no such standards at all. Minimum levels of workplace regulation, social standards, and environmental protection were widely, if not unanimously, regarded as essential in distinguishing European values from those in the United States, and that they should not all be sacrificed in the pursuit of greater economic competitiveness.

By far the most controversial discussion related to immigration. On no other issue were opinions more sharply divided along lines of nationality: many, though not all, Dutch participants stressed

that the recent measures to remove asylum seekers from the Netherlands, and tighten the eligibility criteria for immigrants, were an unavoidable response to overwhelming social and cultural pressures. Particular concern was expressed about the way in which family links and marriage are being abused to allow large numbers of new immigrants into the Netherlands without any subsequent efforts being made by them to integrate with Dutch society, either economically or culturally. The fact that the Netherlands is a relatively small and crowded country was felt to make the pressures created by mass immigration all the more acute.

By contrast, the majority of British participants maintained that the introduction of strict new limits on immigration was based on irrational fears. The overwhelming economic benefits of

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immigration were stressed, as was the moral imperative to maintain an openness to incomers from poorer parts of the world. This sentiment was perhaps sharpened by the widespread feeling that recent announcements made by the British Government restricting the welfare entitlements available to migrants from the new EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe, were almost entirely generated by a hysterical and faintly xenophobic campaign in parts of Britain's infamous tabloid press.

In the end, participants on either side of the debate about immigration agreed to disagree.

Theme 4: Promoting Entrepreneurship and SMEs

The conference was asked to consider the following questions:

MIRJAM STERK MP, ERIC TRINTHAMER



- Is the European ethos very different to the US ethos? Does Europe lack real entrepreneurial spirit?
- Is European growth and investment held back by short-termism and risk aversion?
- What is the role of government in promoting the creation of new 'innovative' / high-tech businesses?
- Beyond a stable economy and a level playing field, how can governments improve the general climate for SMEs?
- Is the regulatory burden in Europe really so high and how can it be cut?

The conference agreed that there were big differences between the European business ethos and that of the US, and that Europe did indeed lack entrepreneurial spirit. Europeans were more risk-averse, more cautious than Americans. They lacked the ambition to excel, to head for the top. Some participants blamed Europe's welfare states for discouraging entrepreneurialism. Others pointed out that Americans simply deal with uncertainty in another way: their compensation culture was the equivalent, in terms of cost, of Europe's restrictive labour laws and generous welfare states.

Initially a general discussion took place on the role of SMEs, but it was quickly pointed out that although some 70 percent of the workforce are employed by SMEs, few of these companies

resemble each other, not all are innovation-driven (just as entrepreneurship is not limited to smaller companies), and they require different policy responses from government - a difficult task. The stereotype of the go-getting, globetrotting entrepreneur (e.g. Richard Branson) was seen as a problem in attracting young people to entrepreneurship: other, more modest role models were needed.

There was a consensus that more needed to be done in Europe to promote entrepreneurship and encourage risk-taking, although participants cautioned against a 'one-size-fits-all' approach: European Union countries each had different traditions and cultures and policies to promote entrepreneurialism needed to take account of that fact.

Four concrete steps were discussed. First, there was a need to tackle regulation, and the calls for less red tape unsurprisingly came primarily from the business participants. The usefulness of independent impact assessment of proposed government regulations was underlined, and recent Dutch experience with a new impact assessment agency pointed to as a good example of the way forward. Second, bankruptcy laws needed to be relaxed to make it easier for 'failed' entrepreneurs to start over within a shorter time frame. Third, business should be provided with 'one-stop-shops' to handle all administrative

matters - rather than forcing them to hire consultants to take them through a complex maze involving different agencies at different levels of government. Fourth, the conference discussed the concept of an entrepreneurship insurance, either by new businesses sharing the risk burden, or by the state guaranteeing loans to new businesses at lower rates of interest (the Dutch National Mortgage Insurance was pointed to as an example). While there was considerable enthusiasm for the principle of insurance, the conference did not have a chance to work out the details, and some participants said that introducing an insurance scheme would only encourage that excessive risk-taking and that fiscal measures to stimulate innovation and risk-taking were more appropriate.

Conclusions

It is difficult to distil two days of debate - involving a mixed group of British and Dutch politicians, entrepreneurs, journalists, civil servants and academics - into simple conclusions. But if one compares the debate on European competitiveness that took place at Young Apeldoorn 2004 with the discussions in the run-up to the European Council meeting of 26 March, which also looked at the Lisbon agenda, a few interesting differences emerge.

First, the Young Apeldoorn participants put more emphasis on the role of the market in increasing competitiveness, whereas the European Council tended to focus on government action at the national and EU levels. The message from public and private sector participants alike appeared to be: governments should pull back (less and better regulation, tax incentives instead of subsidies) to allow the market to determine where innovation can and should take place. Professor Bart van Ark, professor in 'Economics of productivity and technology policy' at the University of Groningen, who spoke at the official conference dinner, was most vociferous in arguing that the role of the market should be strengthened and the role of government and interest groups curtailed.

Second, the Young Apeldoorn participants put more emphasis on the abilities and responsibilities of individuals. They called for a tailor-made approach to education and training and they advocated making individuals (financially) responsible for choices in higher education. But they also pointed out that in order to make the right choices, better information was needed. They argued that individuals should be encouraged to take risks, and that commercial failure should not be unduly penalised or stigmatised.

But it was also clear that governments still had a major role to play. First, by ensuring that all

children receive an outstanding education in their earliest years, thus ensuring genuine equality of opportunity. Second, by setting the agenda for reform: one participant remarked that even at this conference, politicians and public sector representatives seemed to be looking to the business community for answers, when at the same time the business community was looking for governments to take a lead.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the conference was the discussion on immigration, which polarised opinion like no other issue: with few exceptions, the British participants were more supportive of an open, liberal approach to immigration, stressing the economic and social benefits of a vibrant, diverse community; the majority of Dutch participants, by contrast, were more sympathetic to the acute social and cultural pressures which, they believed, made a more restrictive approach both to asylum seekers and immigrants necessary. It is interesting to note that in expressing these views, the Dutch participants seemed to provide tacit support to the recent immigration legislation passed by the Dutch Government, whilst the British participants seemed to be rejecting the intense campaign against migrants from Central and Eastern Europe in large parts of the British press.

To that extent, the discussions showed that all participants, whilst striving for the utmost

objectivity, were nevertheless reacting to the most recent events in both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It is surely an encouraging sign for future Young Apeldoorn conferences that such important contemporary political debates should have animated this year's conference in the way they did.

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Participant Biographies

Conference Chairs

Nick Clegg MEP

Member of European Parliament, Liberal Democrat
Nick is a UK Liberal Democrat MEP, and the Trade & Industry Spokesman for the Liberal Group in the European Parliament. Prior to entering politics he worked as a journalist, an EU trade negotiator and as a manager of development projects in the Former Soviet Union. He is an author of numerous pamphlets and essays on EU affairs, and a political columnist for Guardian Unlimited.

Michiel van Hulten MEP

Member of European Parliament, PvdA
Michiel is a graduate of the London School of Economics and the College of Europe in Bruges. Before his election to the European Parliament he worked as a policy officer with the Netherlands Trades Union Confederation, as special adviser to the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science and as an administrator with the EU Council of Ministers. He is a member of the European Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control and one of the founding members, with Nick Clegg, of the cross-party Campaign for Parliament Reform.

Participants

Andy Bounds

Journalist, Financial Times

Andrew is acting editor of the Financial Times's Observer diary column, which casts an ironic eye over prominent personalities and issues in international business, politics and the arts. From 2000-2002 he was its correspondent in Central America, based in Panama, and also worked for a number of international publications. He joined the FT in 1997 after training with the Kent Messenger Group. He holds a degree in International History and Politics from the University of Leeds.

Loes Brinkman

Directorate General Innovation, Ministry of Economic Affairs

Loes studied Economics at the University of Amsterdam. She started work in the Department for Infrastructure and Innovation and in December 2003 moved to the Department for Strategy, Research and International, where she deals with external research programmes, the translating of scientific insights into policy, and issues relating to competitiveness.

David Burton

Second Secretary, Political Section, British Embassy Netherlands

David studied Law at the Universities of Strathclyde and Hanover before studying for a Masters in Public International Law at University College London. He joined the Diplomatic Service in 2001 and was head of the Foreign Office's forced marriage unit before being posted to The Hague in 2003. He is currently a member of the Embassy's Political Section, dealing mainly with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Court and various foreign policy issues.

CLOSING PLENARY



Ronald de Haan

Account Manager Corus

Ronald graduated in Geology from the University of Utrecht and started his career at Hoogovens Aluminium in research and development. Later he specialised in business development and strategic marketing. Today he is account manager for the Dutch and German markets.

Lise Gregoire-van Haaren

Adviser to Director General for Regional Policy & Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

After studying Business Communications at Nijmegen University, Lise started her career as a management trainee in the Netherlands Home Office. The Home Office seconded her to the European Commission/Directorate General Justice and Home Affairs, where she worked in the area of European Asylum and Migration. Currently she is working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where she is the main contact for the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Dutch Trade Agency EVD.

Laura Guy

Desk Officer, Poland/Forward Planning (Prosperity), Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Laura is a policy entrant and joined the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in 2003. Currently she is Desk Officer for Poland/Forward Planning (Prosperity), in the European Union Directorate.

She has recently written a paper on demographic change and the Lisbon agenda and is currently writing another paper on demographic change and immigration. Laura spent 2 months living in Amsterdam and working in Rotterdam for KPMG in assurance.

Rupert Harrison

Productivity and Innovation Research, Institute for Fiscal Studies

Rupert is a research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, an independent think-tank based in London. He is a graduate of Oxford University and University College London. His research interests include the economic impact of labour and product market regulations, government policy towards innovation, and the role of Information Technology in productivity growth. He is also studying for a PhD in Economics at University College London and is a visiting research student at London Business School.

Denise Heiligers

International Policy Adviser, Department for Research and Science Policy, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

After studying French Literature and Linguistics at Leiden University, Denise qualified as a trilingual negotiator in international trade. She started working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, later

moving to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Currently she is responsible for positioning the Netherlands in international and EU-research policy (Lisbon-strategy, Framework Programme, Competitiveness Council), bilateral co-operation programmes and preparation of the Netherlands EU-presidency in 2004.

Ben Hoyle

Journalist, The Times

Ben is a journalist with The Times newspaper. He joined the newspaper two years ago, and worked in home news and as a gossip columnist before joining the Foreign Desk earlier this year. Before becoming a journalist he worked as a management consultant and for an internet start-up. He graduated from Cambridge in History in 1998.

San Lie

Head Investment Research ABN AMRO Bank N.V.

At 32 years of age San is the face of ABN AMRO for investors. As a young economist, he joined the training programme 5 years ago and has recently succeeded Theo Kraan as Head Investment Research.

Antony Manchester

Economic Reform Policy Adviser, Cabinet Office

Antony covers the Internal Market and the Lisbon Agenda at the European Secretariat in the Cabinet

Office, which supports the Prime Minister in developing his EU policy. He was previously a policy analyst at HM Treasury, and has an academic background in History and Law.

Linda Okeke

Employment Solicitor and Allen & Overy's (A&O) Pro Bono and Community Affairs Officer

Linda is gaining recognition for her work around diversity issues, winning the Young Solicitor Pro Bono award in 2003 for her pro bono and community work which include working with Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities and various mentoring schemes. She was recently featured in the Guardian's 50 Women to Watch series. She joined A&O in September 2000 as a trainee and qualified in September 2002. Linda is currently on secondment managing A&O's extensive Pro Bono and Community Affairs programme.

Caroline Plumb

Co-Managing Director FreshMinds

Caroline Plumb and Charlie Osmond founded the award-winning FreshMinds Ltd in September 2000 after completing a degree in Engineering, Economics and Management at Oxford. FreshMinds' unique model links business with a network of Europe's top graduate professionals, providing a range of research and recruitment

solutions. FreshMinds was recently named as the second-fastest growing research firm in the UK by the British Market Research Association, and in October 2003 FreshMinds opened an office in Mumbai, India. FreshMinds now employs 28 fulltime people with a network of over 500 researchers.

Paul Rankin

Head of European Economic Reform, HM Treasury
Paul is head of the European Economic Reform team in Her Majesty's Treasury. He has previously worked on a range of policy areas in HM Treasury, including global financial issues, the Budget, EU enlargement and macroeconomic policy. He is a graduate of economics.

NICK CLEGG MEP, BEN HOYLE, ANDY BOUNDS



Ben Rawlence

Foreign Affairs & Defence Adviser, Liberal Democrats
Ben is responsible for advising the Liberal Democrats in the British Parliament on foreign affairs and defence, including European issues. He has previously worked for the International Peace Academy, the Social Science Research Council of the USA and Human Rights Watch.

Sarah Richardson

Conservative Candidate for European Parliament
Sarah is fighting to represent East Midlands Region in the June European Elections. She writes on education and employment issues for The Guardian and The Telegraph and has worked as a commissioning editor on the Evening Standard. As a Westminster City councillor, she handles the education portfolio and is part of the management team that oversees a £90 million budget and 50 schools. She previously worked in politics at the Conservative Central Office and on Capitol Hill.

Ria Roerink

Parliamentary Correspondent, Het Financieele Dagblad
Ria works as a political correspondent in The Hague for 'Het Financieele Dagblad', a Dutch financial daily. She studied Macro Economics at the University of Amsterdam. Ria wrote her thesis on

the Netherlands Central Bank, where she worked for a couple of months before entering journalism.

Andrew Shapcott

Head of Service Initiatives Lloyds TSB

On leaving university Andy joined Tesco as a Management Trainee where he held various appointments in branch management and marketing. In January 2003 he joined the Lloyds TSB Group as Head of Customer Strategy and Development.

Jeroen Slaats

Policy Officer Forward Strategy, Unit Directorate-General of European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Jeroen joined the Ministry in May 2002 and became attached to the Forward Strategy Unit of the Directorate-General of European Affairs. As a macro-economist his focus is on socio-economic subjects, such as the Lisbon strategy, health care and social policy. In these areas he is responsible for analysing trends which are relevant to the position of the Netherlands in the EU.

Victor Spoomaker

President Netherlands Network of PhD-candidates
Victor studied at Utrecht University, and obtained a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology. After he had graduated, he went to Stanford to conduct

research on nightmares with a VSB-grant. He has worked as a teaching assistant since January 2002 and has taught courses in clinical psychology and statistics. Since September 2002 he is working for his doctorate.

Mirjam Sterk

Member of Parliament, CDA

Mirjam entered the Dutch parliament in May 2002 where she covers the monarchy, development work and integration. She is a member of the UK/NL Parliamentary Contact Group. Prior to that she was personal assistant to Councillor Van der Tak, Rotterdam. Before entering politics she was a lecturer in Religious Studies and Ethics and also worked as an editor for the broadcaster IKON.

Eric Trinthamer

Secretary General Dutch Group Liberal International

Eric is a member of the VVD and works as an assistant on European and Defence affairs in the Dutch Parliament. He is a member of the Executive Board of Liberal International, a worldwide organisation of liberal parties. Before he started working in Parliament he joined the Dutch Naval Academy and studied Politics at Leiden University. During the last campaign for the national elections, he was responsible for the media co-ordination of the new members of Parliament.

Ruth Turner

Director Vision 21

Ruth is a director of Vision 21, a social research and consultation company, and she specialises in public involvement work. Ruth is also a director of Sustainability North West; an Invention and Innovation investment committee member for the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts; a member of Labour National Executive Committee; and co-founder and former chairman of the Big Issue in the North.

Martijn van Dam

Member of Parliament, PvdA

Whilst studying Technological Business Administration, Martijn was a member of the local council and a member of the PvdA executive committee. At 26, he is now the youngest Member of Parliament. Martijn is a member of various parliamentary committees, among others Education, Culture and Science, Economic Affairs and Government Expenditures. He is also a member of the thematic committee on technology. He is the official PvdA spokesperson on knowledge economy, technology, innovation and scientific policy, ICT and student affairs, second spokesperson for higher education.

Joeri van den Steenhoven

Founder and Secretary The KnowledgeLand Foundation (KL)

KnowledgeLand is an independent think-tank on the knowledge economy which is based in the Netherlands. Joeri is currently responsible for development of new projects and advises governments, companies and NGOs on strategies for becoming stronger in the knowledge economy. Whilst studying Political Science at the University of Amsterdam, Joeri was Vice President to the National Union of Students and policy adviser to the Association of Universities for Professional Education. Before founding KL he worked on projects for techno starters and MeetingMoreMinds, an innovation network for businesses.

Andrew van der Lem

First secretary, UK Representation to the EU

Andrew is currently on secondment to 'UK Representation to the EU' and is responsible for policies on competitiveness, the internal market and intellectual property. Previously he worked on competition matters in the Department of Trade and Industry. Before joining the UK civil service Andrew worked in the European Commission in the directorate-general responsible for the Internal Market.

Bernhard van Oranje-Nassau van Vollenhoven

Director Clockwork B.V.

Prince Bernhard studied Economics at the Georgetown University in Washington (USA). From 1989 he continued his studies in economics at the University of Groningen, specialising in marketing and following an internship with Philips in Singapore. During his student time, and together with two friends, Prince Bernhard set up a couriers business Ritzen Koeriers B.V. Several years later he founded Clockwork B.V., an internet company specialising in e-business consulting.

Sigrid Verweij

Adviser on Environmental Affairs, Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers VNO-NCW

Sigrid is adviser for the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers VNO-NCW - representing Dutch businesses on a wide range of issues to achieve a business friendly climate. She is currently focusing on environmental affairs such as sustainable production & consumption. Prior to this, she worked for several years in the VNO-NCW Brussels office as adviser European affairs, dealing with European social and economic policies.

Michael Welch

Managing Director Black Circles Ltd

Leaving school at 15 Michael became a tyre boy in the local garage. Since then he has run a mail order

tyre business while studying for an Honours degree in Business Administration and also worked and learnt from the biggest names in the business. At 24 he set up Black Circles. Starting with a mobile phone and a loaned desk in someone else's offices he has built Black Circles to a projected first year turnover of £400,000 with no debt and an expected 3rd year turnover of £2.5m+. In 2003 he was voted Shell Livewire Young Entrepreneur of the year. Securing corporate clients like McDonalds, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's.

Peter Westerink

Process Engineer Shell International Chemicals

After his internship for Unilever in Vietnam, Peter started his career as a design engineer for Shell International Chemicals working on large scale global projects in petrochemical industry, mainly in the Middle- and Far East. He is the Shell co-ordinator for Jet-Net in Amsterdam. Jet-Net is a project in which the Dutch business community has joined forces with government agencies, intermediary institutions and education, with a view to encouraging high school students to opt for technical courses of study at college and university.



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