


AFTER A RECORD NINE MONTHS, DUTCH FORM INTERIM GOVERNMENT

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composed of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Democrats 66 (D66), Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) and the Christian Union (CU) presented its coalition agreement. Mark Rutte (VVD) is expected to be appointed Prime Minister for a fourth term.

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After 274 days without a government—the longest period since WWII—the Dutch people might finally soon have one, *De Telegraaf* [reports](#).

On Wednesday, the newly established formation, composed of the [People's Party for Freedom and Democracy](#) (VVD), Democrats 66 (D66), [Christian Democratic Appeal](#) (CDA) and the Christian Union (CU) presented its [coalition agreement](#). Mark Rutte (VVD), who throughout the past year was Prime Minister only in a caretaking capacity, is on the verge of legally assuming that title for a fourth time.

Early this year, Dutch politics had been rocked by scandal, when on 15 January 2021 Rutte and his entire cabinet offered its resignation after proof surfaced that tax authorities had made [false allegations of child welfare fraud](#). Rutte remained in office through the 2021 general election in March however, leading his VVD to victory for the fourth consecutive election. In the absence of the formation of a coalition, he had remained the caretaker PM ever since and was expected to eventually serve a fourth term.

Also known as ‘Teflon Mark’ because of his knack for coming back from scandals with his reputation unblemished, Rutte is the second longest-serving Prime Minister in Dutch history, with a total of 11 years.




Far from jubilant, the atmosphere at the [press conference](#) remained consistently understated. A typically Dutch pragmatism infused the proceedings, which commenced with Rutte declaring “we realize we are presenting our agreement at a difficult time, a time where a lot of people feel their lives are coming under pressure. A time where, certainly because of the corona crisis, people are fed up. Yet, our country is inhabited by resilient people. It took a long time, far too long, to form a new coalition. But me and the other party leaders feel we came to a solid agreement.”

Following up the PM, D66-Chairman Sigrid Kaag said, “what you hear are no words of pride, but those of humility and appropriate realism instead.” According to Kaag, “Piercing talks about the essence and identity of The Netherlands had been held,” and that “this coalition will stand up to racism, misogyny, antisemitism, hatred towards muslims and will foster emancipation and equal opportunity.”

CDA-Chairman Wopke Hoekstra tempered people's expectations, stressing that “we won’t change all this overnight.” Meanwhile, CDU-Chairman Gert-Jan Segers described the agreement as “is no magic wand that turns everything pretty again,” but emphasized that “ensuring protections for those weaker and the outcast in our society is one important part of it, the second being its vision for the future, with better care for Creation and the climate.” Segers concluded on a note of seasonal optimism: “while December is the darkest month of the year, it’ll be Christmas soon—the feast of Jesus’ birth, bringing new hope. This doesn’t mean we can rest easy however. If we want things to get better, we have to roll up our sleeves. Which we will. This we do with the courage that hope brings while hoping for the best.”

Concrete proposals include lowering taxes, reviving the housing market—with the promise of 100,000 new homes a year—and safer neighborhoods. Politically recuperating the talking point of migration from more conservative parties, such as the Forum for Democracy (FvD) and the Party for Freedom (PVV), Rutte drew attention to the fact that the Netherlands needed to get a grip on its borders, and be more discerning regarding the in-and outflux of non-natives.

Some other proposals outlined in the new coalition agreement, titled 'Omzien naar elkaar, vooruitkijken naar de toekomst' (translation, ‘Caring for each other, looking ahead to the



future'), have struck commentators as ambitious, such as the intention of building [two extra nuclear reactors](#), which would bring the country's total to three. With these new power sources, Rutte's new cabinet intends to simultaneously keep up with the country's energy needs and meet the promised goal of climate neutrality in 2050. So-called '[green taxes](#),' enormous investments in renewable energy to the tune of €35 billion, and potential taxes on driving, are intended to fortify the effort. Actual implementation of the driving tax will rest on the next Cabinet, however.

The planned building of two new nuclear plants offers a sharp contrast with neighbor Belgium. That country's intended and highly [controversial closing of all its plants](#) before 2025, and shifting to the use of gas, has raised fears about future energy scarcity.

On Thursday, the House of Representatives will debate the proposals, where it is expected the opposition will criticize the shrinking of the budget for health and care services by €4 billion.

After the proposals are debated, it is likely that Rutte will be appointed to form his fourth Cabinet. Early January will see them sworn in by King Willem-Alexander, thereby ending the longest formation of a government coalition his country has ever seen.