

# UNITED AGAINST DISPARITY

**Manifesto for Solidarity  
and Livelihood security**

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**Everyone should be able to provide for their livelihood. This includes buying food, having an affordable home, receiving good healthcare, and access to education. Unfortunately, too many people currently lack this sustenance security. To address this injustice, radical changes are necessary. These changes should prioritize the common good and solidarity over individual interests and profit-seeking. They should ensure a fairer distribution of wealth and place essential services that contribute to sustenance security, such as affordable housing, healthcare, public transportation, and energy, in public hands, free from profit motives and competition.**

#### **Livelihood security under threat**

The Netherlands has undergone significant changes in recent decades. Inequality has increased, and progress has become elusive for large segments of the population. Household disposable income has barely risen for almost forty years. While housing, healthcare, education, and energy are theoretically considered fundamental rights, in practice, they have become more of a privilege. For many people in our society, sustenance security is already at risk, and for others, it's on the verge of being compromised.

The statistics speak for themselves: approximately 825,000 people in our country live below the poverty line, including 200,000 children. The Dutch bureau for economic policy analysis (CPB) warns that this number could rise to 1 million next year. A huge portion of those living in poverty are the “working poor,” with 220,000 individuals holding one or more jobs while living below the poverty line. Additionally, an estimated 600,000 households are struggling with problematic debts, and 800,000 households have risky debts. About 135,000 renters have payment arrears, and 1 in 5 people regularly avoids seeking medical care due to fear of bills or deductibles. Food banks are overwhelmed, and the number of homeless individuals is on the rise, with many of them being young people who are concerned about their financial future. The Netherlands faces a significant challenge.

### **Growing disparity**

Not only has the number of people in poverty increased significantly, but the number of millionaires has also risen in recent decades. Our country now has a growing number of “super-rich” individuals. Dutch corporate profits have seen tremendous growth, with record profits in the past year. Working people contributed to these profits but saw no benefits in return. The profits were exclusively distributed to shareholders, while the disposable income for most of our citizens has barely increased since 1977. This disparity Manifests itself in all aspects of life. People with lower incomes tend to live shorter lives and have fewer healthy years. Children of parents with practical education have less opportunity to advance in their educational levels. Income-based segregation is commonplace, even in political participation.

### **A deliberate political project**

The increased insecurity and disparity in livelihood are not natural occurrences; they are the result of a deliberate political project. In the Netherlands, this political project primarily took place under the leadership of prime minister Wim Kok’s Administration, Jan-Peter Balkenende’s cabinets, and 13 years of Marc Rutte’s leadership. Taxes on top incomes, large fortunes, and high profits were rapidly reduced. The public sector was privatized and stripped down, with the market being seen as the answer to everything. Important public responsibilities that belonged to all of us were taken away from the government and handed over to the market, all under the false promise that it would become cheaper or more efficient. Consequently, the societal good became subservient to economic interests.

### **Erosion of public services**

Everything from public transportation, energy, healthcare, and our housing associations was either sold off and left to the market, or “market incentives” such as competition and profit-seeking were introduced. Various euphemisms were used: distancing, privatization, outsourcing, marketization. However, it was a deliberate dismantling of the public sector that belonged to all of us. Our energy was privatized and sold off. Our housing for the people was torn down and left to deteriorate. Our public transportation was privatized and derailed. The profits generated by our society through our resources, knowledge, and labor ended up in the hands of companies and, by extension, shareholders and CEOs, those who were already well-off. However, the risks were shouldered by society, as we saw during every crisis.

### **Consequences for society**

The consequences of this policy are significant. It has led to a weakened government, one that can do less and less. With the dismantling of the public sector, the organizational capacity, knowledge, and execution capabilities of the government were also eroded. Trust in the government and other collective institutions has been completely shattered.

When a withdrawing government tells people for decades that their success is their own merit and their misfortune is their own fault, and that individuals should have their affairs in order, people tend to adopt more individualistic behaviors. Solidarity is eroded. And when one of the most important instruments of the people - participation in the democratic process - becomes less valuable because politics and government deal with fewer essential matters, people turn away from each other and, especially, from politics.

By subordinating societal interests to economic interests, the welfare state has been replaced by a distrustful and punitive government.

We see this, among other things, in the earthquakes in the province Groningen and the social benefits scandal.

### **From dismantling to building**

To promote livelihood security and combat inequality, more than a few simple band-aids are needed. It's not enough to slightly increase the minimum wage or reduce prices a bit. A different approach is required. After years of dismantling, we need to rebuild collective provisions: good healthcare, reliable public transportation, efficient energy resources, and a secure retirement plan. This way, we not only regain control but also share in the profits. Livelihood security is the result of fair sharing.

### **United Against Disparity**

Real change can only be achieved when we mobilize people. If we can turn hopelessness into courage and anger into action. Every slight change that we collectively push for can instill renewed faith in a different future.

We invite everyone to join us in building a new social movement. To join us in the fight. Because we believe that another country is possible, now and in the future. A country where we stand united against disparity and for solidarity and livelihood security.

**Therefore, with this Manifesto, we advocate for:**

- Every person must be able to provide for their sustenance. We immediately raise the minimum wage to €16 per hour. Linked benefits such as AOW (State pension), Wajong (youth disability benefits), WIA (Disability Benefits Act) and the social minimum (welfare) will also increase. This ensures that everyone can provide for their livelihood. We introduce a millionaire's tax and raise the corporate tax for large companies.
- Every person has the right to an affordable home. We lower rents and prohibit the sale of social housing. To make renters less dependent on the market, we propose setting a maximum rent for all types of housing. This will create more affordable homes for people to live in, rather than for slumlords or speculators to profit from.
- Every person has the right to good healthcare. Healthcare is not a market. Therefore, we establish a National Healthcare Fund with no deductibles. Dental care, physiotherapy, and mental healthcare will be included in the basic package. We crack down hard on pharmaceutical profits and "healthcare entrepreneurs."
- Every person has the right to clean energy. We reduce costs for individuals by lowering energy taxes for households and increasing them for large consumers. We also implement a new price cap without subsidies to energy companies. To gain direct control over pricing, sustainability, and supply, we nationalize our energy.
- Every person has the right to sufficient food. We lower the VAT on food products to make groceries more affordable. We also make agreements with supermarkets to lower the prices of essential groceries, as is done in other countries. When supermarkets do not adhere to the agreements, we introduce an additional profit tax.

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<b>Marije Lander</b>	Activist for the preservation of hospitals
<b>Daniëlla de Leeuw</b>	Student
<b>Chantal Manders</b>	Tenant
<b>Lilian Marijnissen</b>	Leader of the Socialist Party (SP)
<b>Aiden Middendorp</b>	Geriatric nurse
<b>Nadia Mijns</b>	Tenant
<b>Martine Nijkamp</b>	Home care worker
<b>Kristie Rongen</b>	Victim of the childcare allowance scandal
<b>Gerwin van der Sloot</b>	Distribution center employee
<b>Lisanne Zandvliet-Oldenkamp</b>	Teacher
<b>Jeremy van den Berg</b>	Cashier

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