

# + *For a* change

7 christian-social reforms



*Election Programme 2013-2017*

**ChristenUnie**

# + Vote For Change

Enough has been said about the economic crisis that has such a firm grip on the Netherlands and Europe. It is clearly time for radical change. To continue along the same path will inevitably lead to higher expenditures than revenues and to the further accumulation of debts. The air we breathe, our water and the earth will continue to be polluted, healthcare will be unaffordable, the housing market will collapse further and the European Union will become a substantial burden.

Society needs to change, radically. The government is no longer capable of doing everything, it simply lacks the capacity. People can do more to take care of and look out for each other. Strengthening and cultivating society is something that we must do together. This is not an issue for the government alone, but of public interest: the people, institutions and companies that form the backbone of society. The ChristenUnie wants to give people more responsibility, so that they can make their own decisions in freedom. The kind of

freedom that gives room to a variety of faiths, beliefs, schools, media and healthcare institutions.

The ChristenUnie practices politics based on Christian values. The Gospel teaches us that there is another way, it shows us that there is hope for the future. Our earth is God's earth, and He has compassion on this world. He asks us to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ in loving our neighbours as we love ourselves. In this conviction lies our inspiration to bring about the following seven necessary changes:

1. **Society: free and responsible**
2. **Skilled young people, full of opportunities**
3. **Healthcare: dedicated and affordable**
4. **Labour market: stable and accessible**
5. **Housing market: vital and fair**
6. **Economy: green and strong**
7. **Europe: smaller and better**

# **+ 1. A free and responsible society**

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*A free, liveable and safe society needs strong citizens, companies and organisations. People who understand that the welfare of society depends also on their own actions and input. Though the role and duties of the government may be limited, it must, at all times, be decisive in what it does. The ChristenUnie therefore wants change.*

## **+ Safeguard the freedom of religion and belief.**

Freedom cannot be claimed. It is something you allow others to enjoy in the same measure as you do. In the words of Jesus: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The freedom of religion and belief also lies at the core of freedom of education. This lies beyond the scope of government. However, the abuse of freedom by violating the legal system, killing or wounding others or limiting others in their freedom, must be prevented.

## **+ Create trust in people.**

This means less red tape and bureaucracy in, for example, the educational system and healthcare, and an economy in which social

interests are promoted. Each person should have the opportunity to contribute according to their abilities, take on responsibilities and be involved at a local level in the neighbourhood, district and towns in which they live. This also means that institutions such as housing corporations and healthcare centres should not be too big.

## **+ Preserve public responsibilities.**

Many public utilities have been privatised and made self-sufficient, but the interests of the people involved have often been neglected. The government has a duty to care for education, healthcare, public transport, energy and communication. It also has to supervise banks and other financial

institutions. The ChristenUnie wants transparent forms of saving, insurances and other financial products and services. It also wants to create a distinction between retail banking and investment banking, so that people's savings are not unnecessarily exposed to risks.

**⊕ Protect people against debts and stimulate saving.**

It is very easy to accumulate debts through studies, fast credits or telephone subscriptions. Settling those debts, however, is an entirely different matter. People have to be protected against the accumulation of debts. In order to achieve this and to stimulate saving, the ChristenUnie wants to reintroduce the old so-called Zilvervloot savings scheme, in which mainly young people are given a 10% bonus at the end of a 5-year term. People should also be able to create healthcare savings: fiscally advantageous savings for healthcare expenses later on in life. In addition, the ChristenUnie wants

to stimulate people to pay off their debts and companies to use more of their equity to finance investments.

**⊕ Strive for a safe and secure society.**

A safe society is governed by the law, not by the rights of the strongest. The ChristenUnie is devoted to liveable and safe neighbourhoods, a strong police force, the fight against terrorism, an effective drugs policy (not a policy of tolerance), the fight against prostitution and child pornography.

**⊕ Make our prosperity sustainable.**

Our wealth has a big impact on available space, the environment and natural resources. We can reduce energy consumption, create intelligent mobility and produce less waste. The government can stimulate this by introducing a 'green' tax system, boosting the recycling economy and basing its definition of prosperity on more than the gross domestic product alone.

**'It should be about people, not money'**

## **+** Seven illustrative measures

*related to: Society*

1. Introduce a tit-for-tat policy with respect to juvenile delinquency.
2. Discontinue the current policy of tolerance, there should be no distinction between hard and soft drugs.
3. Grant asylum-children legal residence after residing five years in the Netherlands.
4. Allow religion in public spaces.
5. Protect privacy in this digital era.
6. Preserve monuments, old churches and cultural heritage.
7. Safeguard a multiform media network with ideologically diverse broadcasting stations.

## **+ 2. Skilled young people, full of opportunities**

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*Children need a solid basis to function adequately for the rest of their lives. This means tight family ties, good schools and an environment in which educational values are stimulated. The ChristenUnie therefore wants a change.*

### **+ Give parents the freedom of choice.**

Parents with young children should be allowed to choose how they divide work and child care responsibilities. The ChristenUnie favours maximum freedom of choice for families, which is why we intend to increase child benefits and the child-related budget, and decrease childcare allowance. We want to re-introduce the transferable tax credit for parents who choose to pay for the care of their young children themselves. We also want to maintain the parental leave tax credit. This way, parents will be able to make their own choices without being forced into a specific direction. That is what we call a family-friendly policy.

### **+ Create easily accessible parenting help.**

Parents should be primarily

responsible for their children's upbringing. If they have problems that need to be solved or questions that need to be answered, they can turn to the Child and Family Care Centres in their municipalities for tips and advice. If necessary, specialised aid can be provided, aimed at enhancing the strengths of both child and family. If those strengths are lacking, the youth support services will be there to take quick and effective action.

### **+ Consider education as an investment, not an expense.**

Education is more than an economic value, it is vital. At school, children and youngsters are prepared for life. The ChristenUnie is very much in favour of the freedom of education, so that parents can select schools that fit their children and principles

best. Good education also means special schooling options (which is why we reversed the announced cuts in special schooling). We plan to prune school regulations and give teachers more time in the classroom to do their job. We also plan to invest more into the quality of teaching and into teacher training.

**⊕ Allow youngsters to acquire experience and increase their chances of success.**

Vocational education plays an essential role in training youngsters to be professionals. The ChristenUnie intends to do everything possible to prevent young people from dropping out of school without a diploma and to create good job opportunities for them. This is why we support six years of vocational training and want to reduce the number of studies for which there is little or no demand on the job market. Higher vocational education provides youngsters with the opportunity to develop themselves, experience the world and reflect on society. It therefore offers much more than economic value. The ChristenUnie intends to maintain the basic financial support for both Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

**⊕ Seven illustrative measures:**

*related to: Young people*

1. Increase child benefits and the child-related budget, reduce childcare allowance.
2. Appoint one Minister for Youth, Family and Education.
3. Cut back on regulations, so that professionals can do their work.
4. Give vocational students (in Dutch MBO) a sizeable discount on public transport passes.
5. Maintain the basic financial support system for students, so that they will not be compelled to take out loans.
6. Prevent students from dropping out prematurely by establishing an effective link between preparatory and vocational education, by establishing six-year vocational training and expanding work/study programmes.
7. Invest in the quality of teachers and the training of new teachers.

# + 3. Dedicated and affordable healthcare

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*All life deserves care. The value of human life depends on much more than success, health, age, handicap, happiness and feeling welcome. Those of us who are less fortunate and vulnerable need protection. In order to keep our care services affordable, we have to redefine our healthcare system. The ChristenUnie wants change.*

## + Protect life in all of its stages.

The current legislation for abortion and euthanasia does not provide answers to the hidden needs. We have prevent that putting an end to life, whether that of oneself or an unborn child, is seen as the only way out of a difficult situation.

## + Keep the healthcare system affordable.

The unbridled increase of healthcare costs has to be stopped. We must reduce costs, but responsibly. Not by making concessions to the quality of healthcare or increasing the pressure on healthcare personnel, but by reducing the red tape and by providing funding on the basis of results rather than on medical treatments. Not all

medical treatments are advisable. For someone lying on his deathbed, palliative care and spiritual guidance are more important than the continuation of treatment.

## + Enable people to save for health care.

We will have to increase the contributions for healthcare from those who can afford it. As well as saving for a pension, people should be stimulated to save for the increased cost of healthcare as they get older. Fiscally advantageous healthcare salary savings accounts could see to that.

## **+** Seven illustrative measures:

*related to: Healthcare*

1. Provide care for women who are unwantedly pregnant.
2. Provide palliative care for people in the end-of-life phase.
3. Determine the size of co-payments and deductibles in healthcare according to the financial ability of the patient.
4. Give friends and family who provide informal care a more significant role in the healthcare system.
5. Promote competition between hospitals, but do not allow free market
6. Let specialists be employed by hospitals.
7. Guarantee the freedom of choice when care is needed [in terms of different treatments and personal beliefs].

**‘We must care for each other,  
now even more than ever’**

## ⊕ 4. Stable, accessible labour market

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*Every person can contribute to society. Sadly, however, many people get side-tracked: the elderly, young people and those with an employment disability. And when you do have a job, it is often a challenge to combine work and family responsibilities. We need to create a better balance. The ChristenUnie therefore wants change.*

### ⊕ Create more balance.

The labour market has been thrown off balance. For every person forced to work too hard there is another without the opportunity to develop his or her skills. The bridge between flexibility and security is long and wide. Paid jobs are much higher valued than voluntary work. The ChristenUnie looks at what people are capable of doing rather than at their shortcomings. Senior citizens deserve better access to the labour market. Young people deserve more job security. Families must have better choices in combining work and care responsibilities.

### ⊕ Increase employment opportunities.

Fiscal measures, social security regulations and labour market directives must be deployed

to stimulate job creation. The ChristenUnie wants employers to actively join employees in their search for new work before he is made redundant. If a new job requires training or education, then the dismissal fees can be used to cover the costs. Unemployment entitlements should be linked to educational rights. Training and educating employees is the joint responsibility of the employer and the employee. Naturally, a solid financial and social safety net has to be created for people who genuinely can no longer participate in the labour market.

### ⊕ Create more security.

The ChristenUnie would like to offer people more security. By establishing a flexible working hours scheme, employees can, for example, work longer in good times and save money

that can then be used in difficult times. By agreeing to a temporary cut in wages in difficult times, employees will be able to keep their jobs. Self-employed individuals, for example, can buy shares to join a labour pool that guarantees them work for a period of five years. This also entitles them to minimum social security and enables collective pension accrual.

#### **+** Provide opportunities for young people.

There are currently some 100,000 young people under the age of 25 unemployed at home. The first step to provide them with opportunities is good education, to which they have a right. The ChristenUnie wants to create 10,000 additional specialised positions in healthcare, education, skilled professions and security, so that young people are able to combine work with education. We intend to improve vocational courses that offer good employment opportunities.

#### **+** Improve the position of the senior citizens and those with employment disabilities.

Employers can reduce the salary costs for employees over 55 years old by new fiscal measures. The working conditions for senior employees can be adjusted, subject to mutual agreement between the employer and the employee. The ChristenUnie asks employers to provide more

opportunities for those with an employment disability. Companies that cannot do so will have to pay higher premiums to compensate for the workplace adjustments and additional costs incurred by those companies that can.

## **+** Seven illustrative measures

*related to: Labour market*

1. Lower the costs of employment.
2. Gradually increase the pensionable age to 67 in 2023.
3. Employers should, together with the employees, try to secure a new job for employees who are let go.
4. Consider employment more important than income (less income or working hours if necessary)
5. Draw up temporary contracts for young people on the basis of increased duration.
6. Reward Corporate Social Responsibility.
7. Let the government give the good example: it should provide jobs to people who have been side-tracked from the labour market.

## **+** 5. A healthy and fair housing market

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*The housing market is feeble. The problems facing both home owners and renters must be fundamentally dealt with if first-time buyers are to be given a chance. The ChristenUnie therefore wants change.*

### **+** Create a fairer and less costly housing market.

The current government policy so far has failed: housing prices did go up and families are now seriously burdened with debts. Moreover, the highest income brackets gain most of the tax deductibility of their mortgage interest. The government is short changing itself and losing considerable income. First-time buyers have little chance of purchasing a house, whereas those who have succeeded are faced with residual debts. The ChristenUnie wants the government to focus its housing policy on supporting low-income renters and stimulating home-ownership. After all, home-ownership has a positive effect on the quality of the living environment and the social cohesion of a neighbourhood/village/city.

### **+** Take the time when implementing reforms.

Change must be implemented with caution, so that everyone can prepare for the new situation. First-time buyers with a debt exceeding the current value of their house deserve to be supported. Mortgages must be paid off. The higher and lower tax brackets should benefit from this government policy in equal measure.

## **+** Seven illustrative measures

*related to: Housing market*

1. Reduce the maximum mortgage interest deduction for home owners. The maximum mortgage for which interest can be deducted will be reduced to € 750,000 and subsequently to € 500,000 in annual stages during the government's next term of office. Loans must in principle be paid off within a period of 30 years.
2. Make the mortgage interest deduction 30 percent for all home owners, irrespective of income. Place home-ownership in box 3: the savings and investments box.
3. Grant parents and family the right to give first-time buyers non-taxable donations with which they can buy a house or pay off their mortgage earlier.
4. Give homeowners with a residual debt the option of a higher mortgage, but see to it that they pay off mortgage debts exceeding the value of their homes without having to pay a penalty interest. The employees' share of the pension premium can be used to pay off the mortgage.
5. Gradually bring the maximum rent for subsidised housing in line with market conditions. Increase the housing allowance accordingly, as well as the threshold income levels.
6. Oblige housing associations to pay a contribution to finance that higher allowance. After all, housing associations receive additional rent from occupants living in a house that is too cheap. Moreover, this extra income allows them to develop, maintain and preserve the housing stock.
7. Adjust the rent to market conditions, and try to convince the European Union to recant the recently set threshold income regulations for subsidised housing.

## **+** 6. A green and strong economy

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*The Netherlands is one of the world's major trading nations.*

*Companies are vital to our economy. The surest way out of the crisis and to a vibrant economy is to create a sustainable economy.*

*That is why the ChristenUnie wants change.*

### **+** Learn from the crisis.

The government, financial world, corporate world, employees and citizens all have a role to play and responsibilities to take. The common interest far outweighs personal financial gain. Choosing sustainability means choosing quality of life and the preservation of our world, now and in the future. After all, human kind does not exist in splendid isolation. And besides, growth is no more than a tool. Companies, employees and consumers should be obliged to use both natural and production resources prudently in order to prevent waste and harm to people and the environment.

### **+** Don't burden future generations with our debts.

If we can get our public finances back on track, our children and grandchildren won't be burdened with our debts.

### **+** Transform the Netherlands into the most sustainable and innovative European economy.

The ChristenUnie strives to create an attractive investment and business climate. A climate that incorporates social interests and allows the business community to thrive. In other words, no senseless administrative red tape for companies. The ChristenUnie wants to invest in education and sustainable innovation.

## **+ Seven illustrative measures**

*related to: Economy*

- 1.** Introduce temporary crisis measures (such as VAT rate reduction in construction), create wider depreciation options and maintain less rigid credit provision criteria for companies.
- 2.** Reduce the number of regulations and give entrepreneurs, farmers and fishermen more space to manoeuvre, based on the principle: trust, but verify.
- 3.** Stimulate corporate investment, entrepreneurship and innovation, particularly in respect of small and medium-sized enterprises, the engine of our economy.
- 4.** Reduce the taxation on entrepreneurship and employment. Increase the taxation on polluting production methods and

on consumption, thus promoting a green industry.

- 5.** Reform the labour market, housing market, pension schemes and the healthcare sector in order to keep public utilities affordable and strengthen the economy.
- 6.** Create a sustainable construction industry (existing and new development), mobility and energy supply system, preserve open landscapes, reinforce our national nature infrastructure and invest in a safe delta system.
- 7.** Invest in the recycling economy. Waste consists of natural resources; promote waste recycling.

## **+** 7. A smaller and better Europe

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*European cooperation has given us much to be thankful for: peace, stability and an internal market. The importance of cooperation between Europe's member states is evident, but there is no need for a political union. The European Union should be restricted to performing a number of core tasks. The ChristenUnie therefore wants change.*

### **+** **Vote for Euro-realism.**

It is high time that the European Union eases off in a number of fields. There is not enough consensus among the population to justify a political union. Europe therefore must restrict itself to two tasks: to promote the internal market and to deal with cross-boundary issues in the field of environmental policy, human trafficking and prostitution, asylum and migration policy and terrorism. Europe also has an obligation to monitor global compliance with human rights.

### **+** **Give all national parliaments a significant role in European decision-making.**

Each country has to be able to deal with issues that can be solved

effectively at a national level.

This should not be done by Europe.

The House of Representatives should be able to discuss any subject before the government adopts a final position in the European Council.

The House of Representatives wrongly surrendered its right to approve and amend budgetary policy and its power of veto on European emergency funds.

Not only does this undermine democratic control, it also undermines the extent of support among the people of Europe.

### **+** **Take bold measures to successfully emerge from the crisis.**

The ChristenUnie has always opposed the introduction of the Euro and the accession by Greece and

Italy to the monetary union. Our concern has proven to be well-founded. Ultimately, keeping banks and weak Euro countries on their legs artificially neither provides a solution for Europe nor for the countries themselves. The ChristenUnie wants politicians to realise that, under certain circumstances, creating a smaller Eurozone or dividing it can be a much better option than keeping the Euro countries together at all cost.

### **+ Create a smaller and better Europe.**

The spiralling EU budget has to be dramatically reduced. This can be achieved, as long as Europe limits itself to its core tasks. Dutch expenditure in respect of Europe far exceeds its revenue. This situation has to change. The current regulations must first be implemented and observed before any new regulations can be made. Many of those regulations can be scrapped. As far as expansion is concerned, Europe should mark time, but should cooperate closely with countries with whom agreements have already been made. Turkey should not be allowed to join the EU, but a privileged partnership, subject to certain conditions, can always be discussed.

## **+ Seven illustrative measures**

*related to: Europe*

1. Let the European member states be independent nations that cooperate well together.
2. Restrict the European Union to its core tasks: to promote the internal market and deal with cross-boundary issues.
3. Democratiser Europe: national parliaments keep their say in dealing with the debt crisis in Europe.
4. Reduce the European budget and do not allow more European regulations.
5. Investigate the options and consequences of a smaller or divided eurozone as opposed to maintaining its present composition.
6. Do not allow any more countries to join the EU. Turkey should not be allowed to join the EU, but a privileged partnership,

*Continue reading on the next page >*

subject to certain conditions, can always be discussed.

7. Move the European Parliament to Brussels and stop the constant moving between Brussels and Strasbourg.

## 'Europe has to resume its core duties'

# 'Vote for the ChristenUnie on 12 September'



## LEARN MORE?

These seven reforms form the basis of our election programme. If you would like to know more about our vision and proposals, then please read our entire programme. You can find the complete text in Dutch language on [www.ChristenUnie.nl](http://www.ChristenUnie.nl).



Scan the QR-code for our entire election programme.

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