



Our future in Europe

GIVE PEOPLE AGED 50 AND OVER A VOTE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Election Programme

European Elections - 22 May 2014

What does 50PLUS stand for in Europe?

1. Europe belongs to the citizens, so an advisory referendum on the EU should be held.
2. Europe has to keep its hands off of our pensions
3. Europe talks with the elderly, not about them
4. Europe needs to make care for the ageing population more affordable and better
5. Europe needs to get more involved with regard to our safety
6. Europe gives people aged 50 and over better prospects on the job market using tandem jobs
7. Europe needs to make our economy sustainably competitive
8. Europe needs to combat the countryside's depopulation
9. Europe needs to facilitate poverty reduction
10. Europe needs to apply the same rules to each member state
11. Europe has to implement a European senior citizens card.

What does 50PLUS want to save on in Europe?

We need to get rid of what does not work!

12. Europe needs to cut back on agricultural subsidies: produce for the market and not for the farmers
13. Europe has an exit-system for financially weak eurozone countries
14. Europe cannot give money to "lax" countries
15. Europe needs to get rid of the travelling circus to Strasbourg
16. The European Union cannot expand for the time being
17. Europe needs to reduce the number of Members of the European Parliament, the number of commissioners, civil servants, consultancies, and junkets



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1. Introduction

Our future in the European Union

50PLUS stands up for people aged 50 and over, the fastest growing electorate in Europe.

50PLUS wants to tackle European issues in a pragmatic, realistic and critical way. To do so, a team of people with the relevant expertise stands at the ready. Europe should be there for all people, old and young, and it should be prepared for the future.

In what way does 50PLUS differ from other parties?

Many Dutch politicians are convinced that the European Union has brought us many great things and that it is vital for a trading nation such as the Netherlands.

Compared to other parties, 50PLUS is clear about Europe. The party is critical in its choice for a European Union that is practical and realistic in its approach.

50PLUS is clear about Europe in its election programme. 50PLUS is not opposed to the European Union. 50PLUS chooses a practical, realistic and critical approach.

50PLUS acknowledges that European cooperation has been beneficial to the Netherlands (70 years without war, more prosperity).

50PLUS wants to safeguard the interests of the fastest growing electorate, people aged 50 and over, now and in the future. They have made a significant contribution to the great prosperity that benefits everybody. They are entitled to an indexed income (state and private pensions), housing for the elderly and health care.

50PLUS is against age discrimination. Continuing to work after the retirement age is a privilege and should not become an obligation.



50PLUS believes that Europe should work for the Netherlands. Starting point for 50PLUS is that the Netherlands as a member state determines what is good for the Netherlands. Therefore, it has to be clear what issues the Netherlands itself is responsible for, such as our pensions and savings. Do whatever is possible domestically, and the rest in Europe.

Europe needs to focus on issues that transcend the national level, such as economic and monetary policy, environmental policy, foreign policy, and defence.

It is possible to do this with fewer civil servants, a smaller European Commission and a reduced European Parliament. National parliaments should become more involved in Europe. The aim of the European Union should be a community whose citizens live in an environment in which wealth is the guiding force, followed by physical and social space, and supported by resources in order to reach an optimum quality of life.

Social legislation in Europe should be a national matter, unless the implemented social policy disrupts competitiveness. 50PLUS respects the free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour/people.

50PLUS believes that the Netherlands should keep the right of veto over crucial legislation.

For other matters a qualified majority should be sufficient. A qualified majority means half of the member states +1 as long as they together represent at least half of the European population.

This means that European legislation should only concern major issues.

National parliaments are responsible for further detailed legislation to fit their own needs.



2. 50PLUS: gives people aged 50 and over a vote in the European Parliament

The elderly put importance in themes such as health care, income (state and private pensions), employment, economic growth, social services, and crime prevention. However, the voice of the elderly is barely heard in the European Parliament, even though they are the fastest growing electorate in Europe. This is why 50PLUS fights for their interests and why 50PLUS is clearer than all other parties: whoever damages the interests of people aged 50 and over also affects future prosperity and the welfare of all generations.

50PLUS can, with its team of experienced people, exert sensible and strategic influence. At the moment, the Netherlands has 26 Members in the European Parliament who are part of different European political groups. 50PLUS will make a firm stand for the interests of people aged 50 and over wherever it is needed.

The political group to which 50PLUS belongs in the European Parliament is looking for collaboration or participation with groups whose programmes are closest to that of 50PLUS.

The European Union does not have a role to play in all areas. Issues such as state and private pensions, poverty reduction and health care are a national matters. This should stay this way. However, the EU does play an important role in fostering economic growth. The European Union can make it easier for entrepreneurs and employees to get working in other European member states. This promotes employment, labour mobility and consequently economic growth.

3. Pensions and savings

Europe has to keep its hands off of our pensions. 50PLUS will make sure that the 28 European member states will not tax our savings more like the IMF once proposed. People who worked (often for a long time) want to be assured that their pensions are safe. This is why the independent Dutch pension funds should not be aligned with banks and pension insurers. There are a lot of financial problems in Europe. Member states must adhere to the 3% deficit limit.

50PLUS is in favour of keeping the pension system a Dutch affair. We have to do everything to prevent the Netherlands from giving away Dutch pensions as collateral. It should not be up to

Brussels to prescribe (higher) buffers because that will cause pensions to be lowered, now and in the future. The Netherlands has a unique pension system. Nowhere else in the world have people saved so much for their retirement. And though many Dutch pension funds are having some difficulties the last few years, the total pension reserve of the Dutch population is very high and – especially internationally – generous. This has to stay that way. Attempts by Brussels to align the different pension systems in Europe may never be the cause of cutbacks or a decline of the Dutch pension system. Pensions are deferred pay which belong fully to those who have worked hard for it, often for many years.

4. Referendum and exit strategy

4.1 Referendum: the Netherlands in or out of the EU? YES or NO

50PLUS regrets that the European election campaign in the Netherlands is dominated by negativity. Because our future lies in Europe and in order to give the Netherlands a renewed and clear vision on Europe, a referendum would be an excellent tool to start a discourse. 50PLUS wants a serious discourse on the European Union. Uncertainty about the Dutch position in the European Union is a feeding ground for populism, which, in turn, leads to discussions based on false premises. 50PLUS wants to quickly move forward with an advisory referendum in which the Dutch people can express their choice for or against the European Union. For or against denouncing the EU Treaty. And for or against maintaining the euro or parting from the currency.

50PLUS is convinced that in a referendum a majority would express themselves in favour of European cooperation. After all, the European Union offers mostly advantages to citizens and companies and benefits us collectively. Because of populist movements in the Netherlands, national politicians are often afraid to make clear choices. It is about time that the Netherlands makes its choice known.

50PLUS has already spoken out in favour of an advisory referendum in the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer). As soon as it is possible to request this referendum, 50PLUS will commit itself to collecting the 300,000 signatures needed to make sure that the advisory referendum can be held. This will not remain an election promise!



Let it be clear:

50PLUS wants to stay in the European Union because it is good for the Netherlands but maintains a critical attitude towards the European Parliament.

4.2 Exit strategy

To prevent the European Union from soon ending up in a crisis again, because one or more of the member states can no longer comply with the agreed terms, there has to be a procedure to place these member states outside of the eurozone for a short or longer period of time. In other words, an exit strategy. Countries should be able to indicate their desire to (temporarily) leave, but the initiative could also come from others. This should also be possible in the eurozone. Countries in extreme financial trouble should be placed outside the eurozone in order to sort out their financial and monetary affairs.

This gives countries the opportunity to devalue their currency, restore employment and stimulate export. Other member states will then not be fully responsible for saving banks, plugging gaps and compensating deficits. Bail-outs for failed banks should not have adverse effects on private savings and pension funds. An exit procedure should not necessarily be considered a sanction. In extreme circumstances, it grants the opportunity to temporarily loosen the constraints of participation in the eurozone.

5. Core tasks of the EU in the future

50PLUS sees three core tasks for the EU, namely

5.1 Economic and monetary policy (internal market and the euro)

5.2 Environmental policy

5.3 Border policy

5.1 Economic and monetary policy

5.1.1 Internal market

The Internal Market is economically speaking the most important thing the European Union has accomplished.



However, much can be improved. The voters' trust in the European Union can be restored when the European Union produces more visible economic progress. This can be done by dealing with protectionist policies of individual member states. Removing unnecessary obstacles leads to more competition, better products and services for the consumer and consequently more growth.

50PLUS will commit itself to dealing with market disruption caused by protectionism. For instance, we need to combat disproportionately high price differences between countries of products such as alcohol, tobacco and fuel.

We will strive for harmonisation of taxes and excises.

5.1.2 Employment

The job market is increasingly becoming more international because of the principle of the free movement of labour. At the same time, employment opportunities for people aged 50 and over are decreasing. Many people aged 50 and over are expected to participate in the job market for at least another 15 years. Most of them want to. In their 2014 work programme, the European Commission has made it their top priority to find a solution for youth unemployment. This is great, but 50PLUS would also like to see a work programme intended to improve the position on the job market of people aged 50 and over, both the employed as well as the self-employed. It has to be studied whether this can be done using European funds.

50PLUS wants to provide new opportunities for people aged 50 and over by realising "tandem jobs". These are jobs in which older people pass their experience on to young people during work, enabling both to expand their skill sets, and which help prevent unemployment among both the old and the young. For society in general it also is important that older people continue to participate socially.

The ageing of the population is usually regarded as a problem, but 50PLUS wants to approach it as an opportunity. Large groups of relatively wealthy elderly people require new services, products and innovations to remain active in society and on the job market. The targeted use of knowledge, expertise and capital to achieve these aims can lead to a new, flourishing "Silver Economy".

5.2 Environmental policy

Europe plays an important part in the area of environmental policy. Air and water pollution are not bound by borders. At the same time Europe should work to make the European norms and caps in environmental policy the international standard, thereby preventing European industry from having a severe competitive disadvantage compared to other countries and regions not governed by such strict norms.

Sustainability should secure our wellbeing and prosperity. 50PLUS is in favour of a strict European environmental policy. A European environmental policy helps to make the Netherlands clean and environmentally friendly without unfair competition from other member states. This is why 50PLUS insists that this European environmental policy is enforced with the same urgency in other member states.

5.3 Border policy (security, defence, foreign policy)

5.3.1 When it comes to diplomacy, politics, economy and defence, Europe needs to stand united against present and future world powers, such as the United States, Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

5.3.2 It is essential that national security forces work together on a European level.

5.3.3 50PLUS wants to intensify cross-border cooperation in cases of (international) crime. For criminal gangs and networks borders are increasingly irrelevant.

5.3.4 Every member state must make a declaration that in their own country they have spent European money correctly. Incorrect spending should be fined by the European Commission.

5.3.5 50PLUS highly values privacy, but privacy cannot hinder security. This is why 50PLUS strives for a European satellite network, such as Galileo, to be independent of American networks and guarantee the privacy of European citizens.

5.3.6 50PLUS is in favour of a single European diplomatic service in the various countries of the world. The Netherlands will keep its embassies and consulates mainly to promote its trade interests. 50PLUS stands for efficiency. That is why research needs to be done in the benefits of cooperation in housing and finance.

5.3.7 Member states will work towards a European defence policy in which each country takes upon itself one or more core tasks (The Netherlands and the UK the navy; France and Sweden the air force

etc.). This can result in substantial savings and also safeguards European security. Increased European cooperation in defence is inevitable as national defence units have been weakened by budget cuts.

5.3.8 The external borders need to be better secured. The costs should be divided among all member states in order that a country such as Luxembourg pays a proportional share in the security of the borders of Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Spain, Italy, etc. Only through European cooperation can the massive flow of immigrants be dealt with.

5.3.9 Development cooperation needs to be of a more economic character.

6. Education, knowledge and innovation policy

Though education will remain a matter for member states, Europe can play a complementary role. This would mainly be European programmes such as Erasmus, which enables students to spend (part of) their studies at a foreign university. It is easier for well-educated young people with experience abroad and language skills to find a job, in their own country or elsewhere in Europe. Europe needs to play a bigger part in ensuring mutual recognition of degrees and certificates. On a European level, more needs to be done to promote knowledge and innovation. This is crucially important to maintain employment in the European Union. The mutual recognition of professional qualifications is guaranteed by European legislation, but its implementation in member states needs to improve. After the elections, 50PLUS will set up a Dutch website for people to file their complaints about failures in European policy and implementation. Using these complaints, 50PLUS will confront member states in order to prevent this type of protectionism.

We do not lack in knowledge or innovations, but compared to the United States and the Far East we do offer the global market fewer new products and services. We need to close the gap between education, research and business. Knowledge and innovation policies need to be further developed. Europe cannot beat low-cost countries in terms of wages, but it can with innovation. Which results in new products. The top sectors policy that is taking shape in the Netherlands will also have to be carried out in Europe in order to create more jobs in the whole European Union, which in turn prevents disruptive internal European migration.



Functional illiteracy is a European problem which good education can solve for both young and old. 50PLUS believes that Europe should tackle functional illiteracy, including digital illiteracy, among its citizens. There should be coherent literacy strategies. One in five European 15-year-olds and almost one in five adults do not possess the required reading and writing skills to successfully function in modern society. Functional illiteracy leads to a decrease in work productivity, a decrease in tax income and an increase in benefits. It also has a social cost: poverty and functional illiteracy form vicious cycles which reinforce each other with consequences to health and welfare.

Europe can gain a lot from improving the literacy of its citizens. Many people aged 50 and over are unfamiliar with the digital world. 50PLUS wants to improve the digital skills of people in the EU aged 50 and over using money from the European Social Fund. It is important for the elderly to be able to participate digitally in terms of health (modern communication in health care), civic participation (communicating with the government using the DigiD code) and social contacts, especially for those who are confined to their homes.

7. European markets and the euro

7.1 European telecoms market

The European telecoms market needs to reduce the costs of telephone and data services and improve their quality. 50PLUS will also continue to call for European standards to ensure that everybody can use their own (smart)phone everywhere in Europe and remain reachable. 50PLUS has already called for such standards for universal mobile phone chargers.

7.2 European energy market

There needs to be a European energy market which enables us to be less energy dependent on Russia and large non-European suppliers. This can be accomplished by building a network throughout Europe of pipes and transmission lines for gas and electricity. Countries or their citizens should be able to purchase whatever they need and supply back energy they have generated through, for instance, wind and solar power. Because Europe doesn't function well in the area of energy it is possible that there is no level playing field for companies, which can even lead to bankruptcies.



50PLUS strives for a Europe that is independent of energy-supplying countries outside of Europe. To achieve that goal it is necessary to promote all types of sustainable and safely generated energy from the sun, water, light and wind. As far as 50PLUS is concerned, nuclear energy is off the table as long as there is still the problem of nuclear waste. 50PLUS strives for the construction of concentrated solar power plants in the Mediterranean.

7.3 Infrastructure

Within Europe, companies and citizens should be less constrained by borders. This should be achieved not just by closing border posts along roads and at airports. Air traffic still experiences a lot of hindrance from old regulations and provisions.

Because of this, individual airline companies are often forced to travel unnecessary long routes. This leads to a waste of fuel, an unnecessary impact on the environment, and to inconveniences and unnecessary costs for travellers.

50PLUS is of the opinion that the infrastructure for gas, water and electricity should remain in the hands of the state. This offers the member states the best foundation for cooperation on a European level in order to bypass borders. Transport by road, water, rail and air often crosses borders. This is why it is necessary to further develop European policy in order to achieve a fair, competitive market. The levying of tolls is a national matter, but 50PLUS believes that large differences in tolls between member states should not lead to obstacles to the free movement of people and goods.

7.4 Euro as currency

50PLUS is in favour of the euro. The euro is the European currency which contributes to a stable European economy that no longer sees costly value fluctuations or exchange rates. The European Central Bank (ECB) plays a leading role by making adjustments in interest rates based on economic developments. The Banking Union makes it possible that member states are reprimanded for not honouring commitments regarding the Stability Pact and economic policies. No direct European tax is needed to finance European policies; the current form of financing will be maintained. 50PLUS is opposed to mandatory eurobonds when there is no guarantee that the member states will keep to the agreements made within the eurozone. In short: the Netherlands will not pay for the deficits of others.

8. Asylum and immigration policy

Asylum and immigration policy should be a European issue. The influx should be dealt with equally throughout Europe and the costs should be shared by all member states.

9. Poverty reduction

Poverty reduction and debt assistance may be national matters, but among the fundamental rights as included in the treaty of the European Union is also the right to a decent existence, which imposes an obligation on the member states. Europe could help communities through the exchange of sample projects within Europe.

10. EU legislation

50PLUS is glad to see that in recent years the national parliaments as well as the European Parliament have had more influence in creating AND in stopping European legislation. The most important innovation is the new authority to enforce subsidiarity. This principle entails that the European Union only acts when actions on an EU level are more effective than actions on a national level. In order to make that assessment, national parliaments receive the draft legislation at the same time as the legislators of the Union (the European Parliament and the Council). It requires much vigilance from national parliaments to effectively use this granted authority.

11. More European Union for less money

A lot of cutbacks can be made in Europe. The number of European Commissioners can be at least halved (at the moment there are 28) and maybe even reduced to seven. 50PLUS wants the Council to nominate three candidates per post and for the European Parliament to choose one of the three. The number of Members of the European Parliament should be reduced (there are 435 in the US). Now there are 751. The treaty needs to be amended to achieve this.

Other austerity measures

11.1 Abolish expensive institutions: the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. These two advisory bodies are very expensive talking shops that produce reports and recommendations that nobody reads. In 2014 alone the two combined cost the European taxpayer more than 210 million euro. Even costlier than the maligned travelling circus between Strasbourg and Brussels. 50PLUS also wants to put an end to the growth of various agencies.

11.2 Reduce the number of directors-general (DGs).

11.3 Reduce the size of the civil service and not let it grow beyond the number of civil servants in 2014. 50PLUS wants to implement a maximum income standard for civil servants similar to the Dutch regulation. National civil servant quotas will be abolished.

11.4 50PLUS is in favour of sober delegations by Members of the European Parliament. No more junkets.

11.5 A common agricultural policy: 50PLUS wants to prevent more subsidies going to European farmers than is strictly necessary and significantly less than is now the case. The subsidy policy that basically guarantees an income for farmers has led to excessive production. This is why there needs

to be a reduction in subsidies which cause more food to be produced than is necessary. Part of the money that comes available can be used for rural development. This helps prevent complete villages from disappearing and the quality of life in the countryside from falling.

11.6 Cutting back agricultural subsidies will prevent food waste. Almost a third of food that is produced worldwide is not consumed but discarded. That is a huge waste of nature, energy, land, and water. Through agricultural subsidies, still the largest item on the European budget, European citizens help pay for that waste. European agricultural policy should be more focused on the need for food in Europe and elsewhere in the world. The European Parliament should take the lead in reducing agricultural subsidies and by aligning market forces with the actual need for food. As long as there are subsidies, they should be used flexibly to ensure the quality of life in the countryside.

11.7 Food waste can also be countered by public awareness campaigns on food and selling more single serve packets in stores, including for fresh produce. Furthermore, producers should guarantee the quality of their products up until a certain number of days after their sell-by date. Now people often think that a product is spoiled immediately after the sell-by date.

12. No money for “lax” countries

The European Union should take action against the prohibited state aid that governments provide companies and other private organisations. For instance, according to the European Commission Spanish commercial football clubs have billions worth of outstanding taxes that are not being collected. In other countries as well professional football taxes are not or insufficiently collected. This leads to a distortion in competition on a European level and an unfair playing field compared to other countries and clubs that do follow the rules. 50PLUS believes that countries that are guilty of these practices are not entitled to European support when they face problems. Those who are not willing or able to handle their own affairs should not expect European help. The European sanctions policy against prohibited state aid needs to be strengthened.

13. Culture

Europe is a continent with an unparalleled multitude of languages and cultures. That diversity needs to be preserved. The most important working languages of the Union are English and French. Smaller languages, such as Dutch, also have an important place in Europe. There is no language in which a person can express themselves like in their mother tongue. The Dutch language cannot disappear. Europe needs to encourage the member states to develop and maintain art and culture and cultural heritage. An example of this is the Frisian language.

In the same way that there is a European Youth Card that provides discounts in the areas of art and culture, 50PLUS wants to introduce a European Senior Citizens Card. This card should give elderly people, when they are in another member state, the same rights as other elderly people in that country (e.g. art, culture and public transport).

14. Care for the ageing population

Care is not about numbers, but about improving the quality of life. Care can be more affordable in Europe. A European market for care and health will make it easier to receive care and medical treatment across the border. Europe contributes to innovation, development and production of new medicines, medical equipment and products, allowing people to receive the care they deserve, sometimes even for lower costs.

It is important for 50PLUS that medicines against age-related diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, Alzheimer's and mental disorders receive extra attention. 50PLUS will commit itself to the advancement of preventative care. Research has shown that acute care is many times more expensive and more invasive for those involved than preventative measures.

In the current supply-side driven health care system costs are constantly rising, threatening to make it prohibitively expensive. That trend can be reversed only when citizens take more responsibility for their own health. Research shows that half of all diseases are related to lifestyle choices.

People need to have both more choice and more freedom when it comes to what treatment they want to undergo and where. A European telecoms market will also lead to better care and especially preventative care. The deployment of new technology, including webcams that allow doctors and nurses to remotely speak with, follow or monitor a patient, can lead to great improvements in quality and much lower costs. However, 50PLUS does believe these developments may never be to the detriment of personal contact. The exchange of best practices in Europe will bring about a health care system that puts as much emphasis on preventing diseases as it does on curing them.

Because the average age in Europe is rising, many more people will suffer from – often chronic – age-related diseases. These diseases can often not be prevented, and 50PLUS wants to ensure optimal care.

To safeguard the quality of care within its borders, the European Union could establish a set of quality standards. 50PLUS is committed to stimulate all kinds of research within Europe that can improve the health and quality of life of the ageing population.

50PLUS values good quality care so highly that it calls for a general portfolio on Ageing Issues without appointing more European Commissioners. This portfolio could possibly be merged with another. Its



aim is for all legislation and policy to be assessed based on the consequences of and for the ageing population now and in the future.

15. Rural development policy

In 2025 over 20% of Europeans will be 65 or older. The increase of octogenarians is especially rapid. Because of the ageing of the population and the migration of young people to the cities, many necessary services in the Dutch countryside are disappearing. Even shops are disappearing. 50PLUS wants to use part of the European agricultural funds to go to services for the countryside in order to keep these at the required level. This will prevent the disappearance of complete villages and ensures the quality of life.

16. European Parliament out of Strasbourg

The European Parliament is seated in Brussels, but once every month 750 members of parliament, 1000 staff, 2000 civil servants and countless lobbyists move to Strasbourg. This costs the taxpayers 160 million each year! Because the French and the Germans want to keep it this way, it is not realistic to get rid of this traveling circus soon. A majority in parliament would prefer to just meet in Brussels, but the parliament does not have a say in its own meeting place. 50PLUS continues to strive to abandon Strasbourg as a meeting place as fast as possible. Something can be done about this ridiculous situation. 50PLUS will submit an initiative proposal in Europe to make it possible for members of parliament, who prefer not to go to Strasbourg, to vote digitally and debate from Brussels using large screens. Brussels and Strasbourg will become a single digital environment. This will result in huge savings.

17. Expansion

50PLUS believes that a European Union with 28 member states is enough for now. It should not happen again that countries which are not ready for membership are given entry in the hopes that they gradually come to meet all criteria. The European Union itself is not organisationally ready for



further expansion. Only when that is the case, can we consider further expansion with solid, stable and democratic countries.