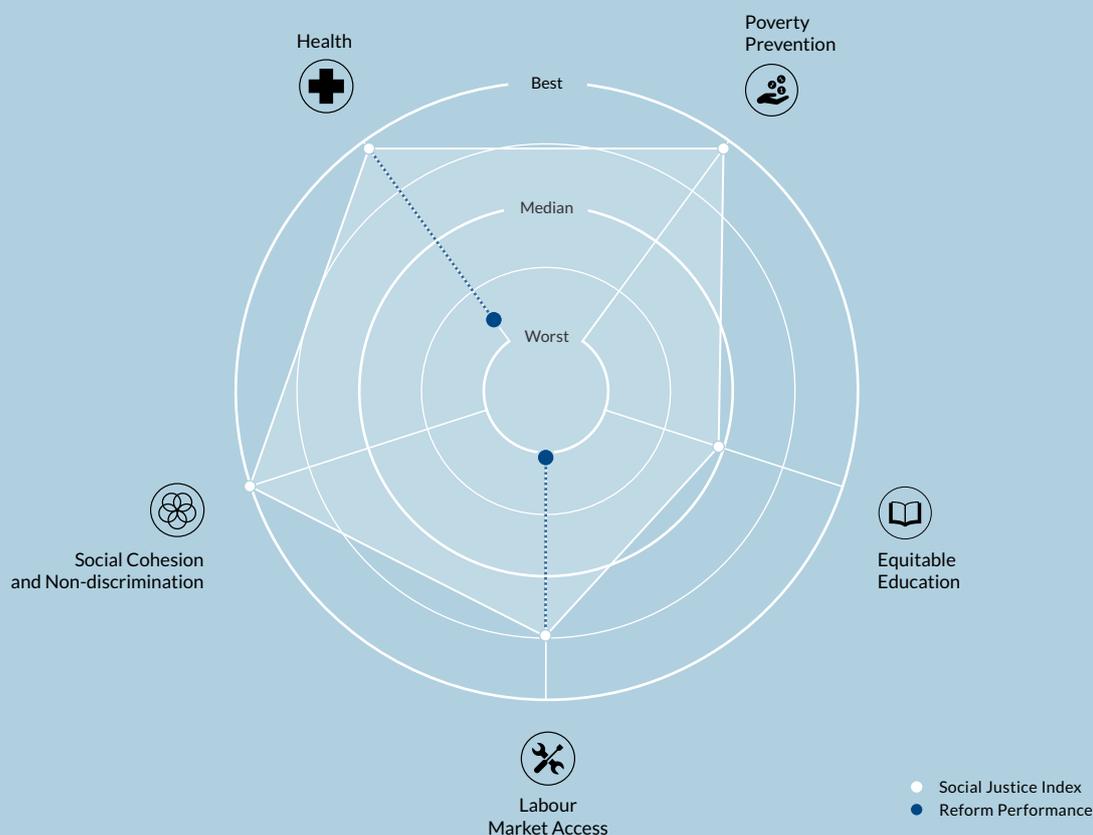


Findings by Country



The Netherlands

How does the country rank in the EU?



Overall Findings

Need According to the experts, the Netherlands has one of the lowest needs for policy reform (1.72), ranking it 3rd and only behind Denmark and the Czech Republic. This accords with the 2015 Social Justice Index (SJI), in which the country scored 6.84 out of 10 and ranked 4th out of 28 EU member states. Only Sweden, Denmark and Finland received better scores. Looking at the different dimensions, the need for reform is lowest in the field of Poverty Prevention (1.36, rank 1/27) and Health (1.68, rank 3/20). It is slightly higher for the dimensions of Labour Market Access (1.78, rank 2/19) and Social Cohesion (2.04, rank 7/18), but relatively low compared to other EU member states.

Activity The Netherlands has addressed 48 percent of the need for reform, ranking the country 8th out of 23 assessed EU member states. The highest activity rate is seen in the dimensions of Labour Market Access (64%) and Health (63%), ranking the country 5th out of 19 and 8th out of 20 countries, respectively. While a moderate activity rate is assessed for the dimension of Social Cohesion (41%, rank 12/18), the activity rate of 18 percent with regard to Poverty Prevention is one of the lowest of all the EU member states examined (rank 25/27).

Overall Reform Performance Ranking

Overview of Reform Barometer Scores



Dimension Findings

Poverty Prevention

Need The need to reform Poverty Prevention in the Netherlands is the lowest of 27 assessed EU member states (1.36). This accords with the country's performance in the 2015 SJI, where the Netherlands scored 7.19 out of 10 and ranked 2nd out of 28, trailing only the Czech Republic. When looking at the different subgroups, the need is slightly higher with regards to refugees (1.75) and foreign-born people (1.71). In contrast, the need is extremely low for the total population (1.00), senior citizens (0.86), children (1.43) and single parents (1.43).

Activity As a consequence of the low need to reform Poverty Prevention policies, the Netherlands show a very low activity rate (18%) in this dimension. Only two countries have shown lower activity in this area: Spain (17%, rank 26/27) and Slovenia (10%, rank 27/27). However, the activity rate was significantly higher with regards to refugees (34%) and senior citizens (56%).

Labour Market Access

Need The need for reforming Labour Market Access in the Netherlands is particularly low when compared to other EU member states (1.78, rank 2/19). Only Denmark has a lower need. Looking at the different policy objectives, the need is at its lowest for reducing in-work poverty and the number of low-wage earners (1.33), ranking the Netherlands 1st out of the 18 EU member states examined. With regard to reducing temporary contracts on involuntary basis (2.14, rank 7/16) and increasing employment (1.87, rank 4/22), the need is higher, though it is still one of the lowest in comparison to other European countries.

Activity In this dimension, the Netherlands is the fifth-most-active country and has addressed 65 percent of the need for policy reform. The activity rate is higher concerning the increase in employment for the total population and senior citizens (79% each) than for the foreign-born population and refugees (47 and 50%, respectively).

One of the new policies reported on by the experts is the ‘Work and Security Act’ (‘wet werk en zekerheid’), which sets new regulations with respect to renewing fixed-term contracts. The length of consecutive temporary contracts was cut from three to two years, and periods between two consecutive contracts before a new chain of temporary contracts begins was extended from three to six months.

Quality The experts criticized the ‘Work and Security Act’ as an incentive for employers to hire more people with a fixed-term contract instead of a permanent contract, thereby creating more flexibility with their staff rather than creating more employment. Furthermore, some experts stated that while this policy might increase employment, it risks creating jobs in precarious conditions. And though it was the government’s intention to create the conditions under which temporary employees qualify for a permanent contract sooner, the experts’ assessment is that flexibility has increased rather than decreased. This assessment is also clearly reflected in the evaluation of the quality of those policy reforms that have been introduced: While they are mildly conducive to increasing employment (0.18, rank 12/19), they will have a negative impact on job chances for refugees (-0.44) and the number of temporary contracts on involuntary basis (-0.68, rank 11/12).

Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination

Need The need for reform in the dimension of Social Cohesion is comparatively low (2.04, rank 7/18). This accords with the 2015 SJI, which gives the Netherlands a score of 7.97 out of 10 and ranks it 1st in the dimension of Social Cohesion and Non-discrimination. Looking at the policy objectives, the need for improving gender equality is high (2.33); in fact, it is the 5th highest among the 17 countries assessed (rank 13). In contrast, the need to reduce income and wealth inequality is comparatively low (1.75, rank 3/22).

Activity The reform activity was rather moderate regarding social cohesion overall (41%, rank 12/18) as well as regarding income inequality (57%, rank 8/22) and gender equality (29%, rank 12/16) more specifically.

 Health

Need In this dimension, the Netherlands has one of the lowest needs for reform overall, ranking 3rd out of 20 countries. Only Denmark and Austria have a lower need. The lowest need for improvement was assessed for the unmet needs for medical help (0.67 rank 1/17), the accessibility and range of health services (1.00, rank 2/19), the outcome performance of the health system (1.33, rank 1/19) and its efficiency (1.75, rank 3/20). With regard to the remaining four policy objectives, the need was assessed as ranging between 2.00 and 2.33, ranking the Netherlands in the top 10 for each objective.

Activity The activity rate for this dimension is the 8th highest, with 63 percent of the need for reform being addressed through government action. The National Prevention Programme 2014–2016 ‘Everything Is Health’ focuses on integrating cure, prevention, health in the community, at school and at work. In an attempt to contain costs, long-term care has been decentralised and handed over to municipalities.