Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Netherlands' International AI Strategy

AI for values, prosperity and resilience

Contents

Summary

As a systems technology, artificial intelligence (AI) impacts on our economy, security and international relations. Countries and businesses that are proficient in AI use it to strengthen their competitive edge, strategic autonomy, influence and military capability. In the current geopolitical power struggle, AI is increasingly regarded as a strategic tool for shaping the international order to advance one's own interests. Developments are proceeding rapidly and require that the Netherlands reduce its dependence on others for technology, infrastructure, knowledge and norms that will help to determine our future.

The Netherlands has opted to harness AI to benefit our prosperity, security and societal progress, while protecing our public values. This presents us with three challenges: to boost our competitiveness, strengthen our AI sovereignty, including guaranteed access to the most sophisticated AI models, and to ensure the responsible and safe use of AI. This international AI strategy sets out the framework and action lines for a government-wide international approach that supports these challenges.[1]

The opportunities are immense. AI can increase productivity, accelerate innovation and create economic opportunities in sectors in which the Netherlands already excels, such as high-tech, chip and machinery manufacturing, biotechnology, agriculture and food, water, logistics and healthcare. AI also offers opportunities for boosting our security, for instance through enhanced cyber resilience and defence innovation, and for improving the geopolitical position and influence of the Netherlands and Europe. At international level, the Netherlands is therefore committed to achieving stronger European AI capability and infrastructure, improved international market access for Dutch AI providers and international cooperation in terms of research, innovation and talent.

There are also risks, however. Europe's AI infrastructure depends heavily on non-European providers. Against the background of mounting geopolitical tensions, this is an economic and security risk and a challenge to our democracy and the rule of law. That is why the Netherlands is working to reduce and prevent high-risk strategic dependencies in the global AI value chain, strengthen international partnerships and improve Europe's strategic agility and influence. We are protecting our knowledge, infrastructure and investments, enhancing AI governance and boosting our resilience against AI-driven threats, including those in the military domain.

The Netherlands is in a strong starting position and can build on its distinctive strategic capabilities. At international level, we need to work hard to develop AI that improves our prosperity, security and values. We are doing so by, for example, strengthening existing partnerships and practising selective, multilateral engagement with like-minded countries, both within and outside Europe.

1 National efforts help address these challenges but fall outside the scope of this international strategy.

Introduction

The rapid increase in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has coincided with rising geopolitical instability. AI is having a major impact on our society, economy, international relations and the military domain. At the same time, the multilateral system and the open world economy are under pressure. We find ourselves in a new, less predictable world order, in which respect for rules and established institutions cannot be taken for granted. Within this shifting world order, the geopolitical role of a small number of countries and a new category of players – technology companies – is growing.

The impact of AI on international relations requires a strategic and coordinated effort on the part of the Netherlands. This interministerial international AI strategy (IAIS) sets out how the government will achieve this in the coming years. The strategy aims to position the Netherlands and Europe in such a way that AI enhances our prosperity and competitive edge, increases our strategic autonomy and resilience in the AI value chain, and ensures that the development and use of AI are in keeping with our values, human rights and security. This strategy thus builds on current national, European and international legislation and policy frameworks for AI and digitalisation.[2] We have based it on the knowledge currently available to us, while recognising that technology is developing rapidly. The strategy will therefore need to take account of this rapid development on an ongoing basis throughout its implementation.

Defining the problem

Artificial intelligence has become a key factor in economic productivity, societal development, political and geopolitical power and military capabilities. It offers a wealth of opportunities for our overall prosperity, security and the way we tackle societal challenges. AI makes it possible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more quickly, partly through faster medical research, more efficient and sustainable energy and food systems, and better access to education and public services worldwide. Countries and businesses that prioritised AI at an early stage are now enjoying strategic advantages that boost their power and competitive edge.

The United States and China have long been investing heavily in AI, driven by the conviction that an advantage in AI will determine who dominates the world stage. Their technological advantage and access to energy, data and computing power, capital and talent all surpass those of Europe, thanks to a combination of influential technology companies and targeted government support. China is firmly committed to influencing the development of international norms and standards in line with its own interests and state-centric vision. Major technology providers are trying to make countries dependent on their digital products. Whoever controls the AI value chain – from raw materials and chips to the cloud, data, models and applications – wields considerable influence in terms of the economy, security, values and knowledge. With its thriving semiconductor industry, the Netherlands occupies a unique, internationally recognised position in the AI value chain.

Alongside opportunities, AI also poses a variety of societal and security risks.[3] These include misuse, such as AI-driven cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns, as well as systems that make errors or display unpredictable behaviour, and fundamental changes in the military domain. There are also systemic risks, such as the high energy consumption of and space required by data centres and the erosion of human autonomy. These risks are often transnational in nature, directly affecting international security, stability, human rights and our values (democracy, the rule of law and individual freedoms).

Furthermore, the concentration of market power surrounding crucial AI infrastructure and models in the hands of a small number of technology companies could disrupt the international economy and cause countries that are already vulnerable to fall further and further behind, with implications for international relations and stability. The concentration of power also raises questions about democratic oversight, access to models and services, and the values and assumptions embedded within them.[4] Without public safeguards, AI could be used by actors who undermine our security or democracy, intentionally or otherwise.

2 See also the International Cyber Strategy 2023-2028, Government-wide vision on generative AI of the Netherlands (2024), National Technology Strategy (2024), Netherlands Digitalisation Strategy (2025), Defence Strategy for Industry and Innovation (2025), the EU AI Act (2024), the EU AI Continent Action Plan (2025), the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on AI, human rights, democracy and the rule of law (2024), NATO's Rapid Adoption Action Plan (2025), UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, the UN's Global Digital Compact (2024) and the government response to the AIV report 'AI: technology, power, and democratic values in the foreign policy of the Netherlands' (2025) and the establishment of the Taskforce Toekomstige Welvaart en Verdienvermogen [Task force on future prosperity and earning potential, in Dutch] (2026).

3 See for example International AI Safety Report, 2026.

4 AIV report 'AI: technology, power and democratic values in the foreign policy of the Netherlands', 17 June 2025.

Developments in AI are occurring against a background of persistent uncertainty with regard to questions such as how international power dynamics will evolve and what impact AI will have on economies and societies in the medium term. The speed with which AI is developing consistently outstrips the ability of states to establish joint agreements on its responsible use. Nevertheless, the number of international forums in which attempts are being made to do so has increased sharply in recent years, although these attempts are often fragmented and lack coherence. What is more, the perspectives and interests of key players differ widely, and as a result international agreements are not yet having the impact requires of them.

The developments outlined above lead to three core questions:

1. How do we position the Netherlands and Europe in international markets in such a way that AI enhances our prosperity and competitive edge?
2. How do we increase our strategic autonomy and resilience in the AI value chain to protect our security and economy?
3. How do we ensure that AI evolves in line with our values and human rights, and that the risks to security and society remain manageable?

Starting position for the Netherlands and Europe

For the Netherlands, responsible use of AI is key: the exploitation of opportunities offered by AI for prosperity, security and societal progress, while preserving a free, safe and open society in which technological developments reinforce human rights, democratic values, the rule of law, sustainability and international stability. A strong national and European position in the international AI value chain will enhance the effectiveness of our international activities within it.

Economic and technological position

Europe has robust building blocks for a competitive AI position, such as talent, world-class research institutions (such as Imec), sophisticated chip-manufacturing equipment (ASML, ASM) and a large internal market. Looking at the technology stack required for AI, compared with the US and China, Europe has invested much less in the development of its own advanced AI models, applications and infrastructure (energy supply and network capacity, AI design, AI chips). As a result, there is relatively little AI computing power in Europe compared with the US.

Partly due to a lack of venture capital and a fragmented internal market, upscaling remains limited. The application of AI in business and production processes, public services and sector-specific solutions offers Europe and the Netherlands the prospect of a strong international position. The Netherlands excels particularly in high-tech agriculture and food production, logistics (including maritime logistics), chip and machinery manufacturing and the life sciences and health sector.

Strategic position and sovereignty

Access to advanced AI will affect our security, prosperity and values to an ever-increasing extent. To promote such access, we need to look at our dependencies as well as our strong points in the value chain. In terms of both civil and military applications, European companies, governments and research institutions are largely dependent on technology controlled by non-European actors. The war in Ukraine, the conflicts in the Middle East and recent trade tensions illustrate how dependencies can have direct consequences for our security interests. AI is also increasing the scale and complexity of cyberattacks, and we need to make effective use of AI to defend ourselves against them.

Complete independence in the AI value chain is neither feasible nor desirable. It is more realistic to focus on reducing and avoiding high-risk strategic dependencies, diversifying trade partners and investing in basic knowledge and development, as well as in our own capacity in those parts of the value chain where the Netherlands is indispensable or where it excels or has the potential to do so.

The Netherlands and the EU have different strong points. Firstly, the EU has a market of 450 million relatively affluent consumers, the sheer number of whom means it can set requirements for AI on the European market that have a global impact. Secondly, thanks to its semiconductor industry, the Netherlands plays a vital role in the global AI value chain. This offers economic and diplomatic advantages. For example, the Netherlands was the driving force behind Europe's Semicon Coalition. Thirdly, over the past decade the Netherlands has become an internationally recognised player in the cyber domain. A strong information position, international response mechanisms and public-private partnerships form a basis for addressing AI-related cyber threats at an early stage and boosting resilience. Lastly, the Netherlands also has a sound knowledge ecosystem, with institutions well integrated in European research and innovation networks. This provides a broad and robust world-class knowledge base that continues to fuel innovation. All this combines to give the Netherlands a strong starting position from which to shape its international approach.

Position in terms of norms and standards

With its AI Act, the EU provides a regulatory framework for the development and use of responsible AI. Thanks to the size of the European market and Europe's position as a first mover, European legislation has the potential to become the global standard. Various non-European countries already use the act as a point of reference for their own legislation.[5] The international power of the EU's legislation is enhanced by effective enforcement of its own technological development capacity. In negotiations, the Netherlands has pushed fervently for a robust regulatory framework for responsible AI and has taken on a pioneering role in the international sharing of knowledge on AI oversight.

The Netherlands is also promoting this normative approach in the international security domain, so that responsible AI benefits security, strategic stability, the protection of human rights and the promotion of the international legal order. For example, the Netherlands has placed responsible use of AI in the military domain on the international agenda and continues to contribute to international dialogue and policy development. The Netherlands plays a similar role in the cyber domain, with active cyber diplomacy focused on enhancing digital resilience and the responsible use of AI, including in the military domain and in relation to human rights online.[6]

The Netherlands will strive to ensure that global AI development serves to strengthen rather than undermine international stability and democracies, and that countries without their own AI capabilities gain access to the opportunities offered by AI, while preserving digital sovereignty. European AI offerings in which human rights are safeguarded could form a key normative and practical alternative.

Goals

Against this backdrop, the Netherlands is organising its international AI efforts around three goals, whereby we enhance competitiveness in order to remain economically and strategically relevant, we protect our interests with technological sovereignty and we uphold our values through responsible and safe use of AI.

1. **Enhancing Dutch and European earning potential and competitiveness in AI –** supporting Dutch AI providers in exporting their products and services, attracting investment and talent, and positioning themselves in strategic markets worldwide to benefit our prosperity and resilience. The focus here is on the sectors in which the Netherlands excels, including high-tech agriculture and food, logistics (including maritime logistics), chip and machinery manufacturing, the life sciences and health sector, and the defence industry.
2. **Strengthening Dutch and European sovereignty in AI –** reducing high-risk strategic dependencies in the AI value chain, maintaining, strengthening and making strategic use of our relevance and expertise in this area, harnessing Europe's market power and boosting our resilience to AI-driven threats.
3. **Responsible and safe use of AI –** formulating, setting and promoting norms, rules and standards for AI in line with human rights, international law and democratic principles; boosting democratic and societal resilience to the risks associated with the use of AI; and working at international level to foster global AI development that strengthens stability, counteracts AI-driven oppression by autocratic regimes and makes the opportunities offered by AI accessible to countries with limited or no AI capabilities of their own.

5 E.g. South Korea: AI Basic Act; Brazil: Bill no. 2338/2023.

6 The Freedom Online Coalition was set up in The Hague with the United States in 2011. The coalition is made up of more than 40 countries and is committed to the protection of human rights online.

International commitment

1. Enhancing Dutch and European competitiveness in AI

To enhance their earning capacity and competitiveness in AI, the Netherlands and Europe will need to strengthen their position in the global AI value chain in a targeted manner. This not only offers opportunities for future earning capacity, but is also strategically important. Our efforts will be focused on those parts of the chain and areas of application in which the Netherlands excels economically and can stand out internationally.
By promoting innovation, exports, investment, research and talent flows in strategic markets and sectors, and through broad public-private partnerships in, for example, robust knowledge ecosystems, the Netherlands can increase its economic clout and international influence.

Action line 1.1

Strengthening AI ecosystems through joint investments

At EU level, the Netherlands is committed to joint projects that strengthen European positions and address weaknesses, in line with initiatives such as the AI Continent Action Plan and the Apply AI Strategy. This involves the coordinated roll-out of large-scale projects with an associated investment agenda, for which public-private partnerships are key, such as those with knowledge institutions and the AI factories. The Netherlands will help foster competitive conditions and a strong investment climate, enabling European technology companies to flourish and allowing industrial AI applications to be developed, scaled up and used widely. At European level, the Netherlands will push for the expansion of AI infrastructure and a joint ecosystem for AI semiconductor design, including enhancement of Europe's semiconductor manufacturing capacity.

Action line 1.2

Increasing international market access for the Dutch AI ecosystem

At the moment, the Dutch AI sector is still relatively small and needs an international market to be able to upscale. Through economic diplomacy, innovation and trade instruments and the mission network, the government will promote access for Dutch AI providers to relevant markets worldwide, as well as investment in Dutch AI companies. These efforts will focus particularly on industry sectors in which the Netherlands occupies a strong position, such as high-tech manufacturing, agriculture and food, water and delta technology, logistics, life sciences and health and defence. Through sector-specific missions and targeted, long-term programmes, Dutch companies and knowledge institutions will be supported in international innovation collaboration and in doing business abroad.

Action line 1.3

Intensifying international partnerships for AI innovation, capacity and adoption

The Netherlands is developing international partnerships that strengthen the Dutch and European AI ecosystem and thus contribute to the international positioning of the Netherlands and the EU. The Netherlands will work bilaterally with strategic European and non-European partners on joint development of the AI industry, access to test and application environments, talent mobility and knowledge so that Dutch and European strengths in the AI value chain can be further developed and used more strategically.

Action line 1.4

Putting the Netherlands on the map as a pioneer in sustainable AI

With its Sustainable Digitalisation Action Programme, the Netherlands is committed to achieving sustainable competitiveness via the 'twin transition'. Particular attention is being paid to the impact of AI on sustainability and the climate, for example by encouraging energy-efficient AI, responsible use and green data centres. International and European cooperation is vital in this regard. The Netherlands is therefore collaborating actively within Europe's NERIAD network in the field of AI, innovation and data for the green transition, and is participating in the international Coalition for Sustainable AI.

2. Strengthening Dutch and European sovereignty in AI

Our current dependence on non-European providers for advanced AI models, computing power and infrastructure poses risks to our economic and national security. This approach focuses on strengthening key Dutch and European positions in the AI value chain, strategic use of our market power and regulatory power, and reducing high-risk strategic dependencies. In the process we will take a wide range of interests into account.

Action line 2.1

Strategic management of dependencies in the AI value chain

At EU level, the Netherlands will press for a joint approach to reduce high-risk strategic dependencies in the AI value chain. For example, we will promote the development and use of open and European AI language models. Where Europe lacks sufficient advanced AI capabilities of its own, the Netherlands will work with EU partners to secure access to the necessary capabilities, with safeguards for security, reliability and the protection of fundamental rights. Furthermore, the Netherlands will take the initiative when it comes to strengthening and coordinating the EU's external action in respect of AI.

Action line 2.2

Establishing strategic partnerships in the AI value chain

In addition to the partnerships established by the EU with third countries, the Netherlands will work to strengthen partnerships with countries that occupy key positions in the AI value chain. These could involve, for example, the Future of Compute, including the semiconductor industry, AI chips, critical raw amaterials, cloud infrastructure, defence innovation and research. Where possible and appropriate, the Netherlands will continue to keep pace with the AI frontrunners and pursue cooperation with like-minded middle powers. The Dutch mission network will be furnished with more knowledge to champion Dutch positions with authority, identify opportunities and shape AI collaboration. In addition, the Netherlands will engage more actively in dialogue with companies in the AI value chain and, where necessary, conduct dialogue at political level too.

Action line 2.3

Positioning Europe externally and communicating strategically

At EU level, the Netherlands will press for a more assertive, coherent external AI agenda, in which AI is systematically integrated into the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Common Security and Defence Policy and in digital and cyber partnerships with third countries. The Netherlands will work to step up cooperation with the European Commission, so that the EU can make greater and more strategic use of its position as a unified bloc, with coordinated, joint strategic communication on AI to third countries and technology companies, including parties upon which Europe currently depends. The Netherlands will make active use of its forthcoming EU Presidency in 2029, and the run-up to it, to enhance and embed the EU's external agenda and communication.

When it comes to selecting partners, we will consider economic, security and rule of law interests in relation to each other. The Netherlands will also pursue a strategic approach to the EU's international cooperation on AI with third countries, by integrating AI, where relevant, into Digital Partnerships, Digital Dialogues, Cyber Dialogues and Security and Defence Partnerships.

Action line 2.4

Mitigating risks associated with AI capabilities

The Netherlands will make targeted use of its national and European instruments for national and economic security to prevent the undesirable end use of AI technology and to protect strategic knowledge and infrastructure. This includes carrying out export controls on dual-use AI applications, preventing the undesirable loss of high-value AI knowledge and carefully assessing foreign investments in sensitive AI capabilities. Together with like-minded countries, the Netherlands will explore additional forms of international governance focusing on responsible use and oversight of powerful AI infrastructure, such as Compute Governance, in order to mitigate the risk of abuse and escalation.

3. Responsible and safe use of AI

Responsible and safe use of AI is essential in order to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law and international stability. This task focuses on formulating and communicating norms, rules and standards for AI in line with these values and on enhancing democratic and societal resilience against the risks of AI use. Through targeted efforts in multilateral forums, standardisation processes and partnerships, the Netherlands will help ensure that AI fosters stability and sustainable development worldwide rather than oppression and conflict.

Action line 3.1

Strengthening and internationalising norms and rule of law principles for AI

The Netherlands is committed to developing and reinforcing international norms and rule of law frameworks for responsible AI, in line with human rights, international law and democratic principles. Together with like-minded partners, the Netherlands will promote the AI Act, the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on AI and UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI as points of reference for a risk-based approach in which safety and human rights go hand in hand. The Netherlands will work to expand the group of countries that endorse this approach,[7] partly through our presidency of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers in 2027.

The Netherlands will focus its AI diplomacy on a small number of strategic coalitions with like-minded partners and multilateral processes that offer the best prospects for ensuring that European and other norms are implemented at international level. We will critically assess multilateral initiatives for added value and overlap and, together with EU partners, will work to promote simplification, avoid duplication and ensure sufficient flexibility to respond to new developments in AI.

The Netherlands will continue to strive for international standardisation and the sharing of best practices in respect of responsible use of AI in the military domain, to enhance our own security and that of our allies. This aim will be pursued through multi-stakeholder processes, such as REAIM8 and within the UN, and where relevant in coordination with EU and NATO processes. In addition, the Netherlands, together with like-minded countries, defence-related research institutes and the business community, is initiating joint research into the parameters for responsible development and use of AI in the military domain. From 2024 to 2026, the Netherlands also holds the presidency of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, which discusses how existing international agreements, including international humanitarian law, apply to new technological developments relating to autonomous weapons systems, and explores the need for new agreements.

Action line 3.2

Promoting standards for safe and responsible AI

At EU level and in collaboration with like-minded partners and companies, the Netherlands will promote the development and application of technical standards which safeguard the security, transparency and accountability of AI systems and which take specific account of human rights, the rule of law and societal impacts. In doing so, the Netherlands will be showcasing European and Dutch AI products internationally as safe, responsible and reliable. Given that international standardisation largely determines the actual implementation of AI norms and market access, the government will explore how the Netherlands can play a more active and strategic role in collaboration with like-minded countries.

Through focused and coordinated participation in European and international standardisation processes, the Netherlands can influence the technical aspects of AI systems and help to embed public values in global markets. This will not only enhance the safety and reliability of AI, but will also improve the international competitive position of and market access for Dutch and European stakeholders. The Netherlands will link AI governance, standardisation and capacity building through initiatives such as the 'capacity-building journey' for AI standards and the establishment of an international AI standards and policy network that systematically connects countries, standardisation organisations and policymakers with each other in respect of interoperability and the implementation of international standards.

7 Examples are the Council of Europe Framework Convention on AI, UN frameworks, the OECD, the Global Partnership on AI and the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC).

8 In 2023, the Netherlands took the initiative of establishing the Responsible AI in the Military Domain (REAIM) process and introduced the first UN resolution on AI in the military domain in 2024.

Action line 3.3

Protecting human rights, democratic values and resilience in AI applications

The Netherlands will continue working with international partners to protect human rights, democratic values and societal resilience in the development and use of AI. Through EU, NATO, UN and Council of Europe frameworks, coalitions and bilateral dialogue, including with countries in the Global South, the Netherlands will raise awareness of AI-related risks such as discrimination, disinformation, cyber threats, undesirable foreign influence and overdependence on AI systems. The Netherlands will share practical examples such as the algorithm register for transparency, support civil society organisations and promote joint analyses, knowledge sharing and best practices to embed norms in policy, oversight and practice. The Netherlands will also study the convergence of AI applications with quantum and biotechnology.

The Netherlands will actively contribute to the further development and effective implementation of the AI Act by strengthening European coordination and practical exchange. Furthermore, the Netherlands will seek to join the International Network for Advanced AI Measurement, Evaluation and Science. The government will also explore the desirability and feasibility of establishing a Dutch AI safety institute, while taking account of the various existing bodies that already provide our government with advice and expertise regarding AI.

Action line 3.4

Bolstering the international response to AI-driven threats

The Netherlands will work at international level to ensure timely identification, prevention and mitigation of AI-driven threats, such as sophisticated cyberattacks, disinformation, undesirable foreign influencing and high-risk military applications of AI. The Netherlands will work with multilateral and coalition partners to reach agreements on the safe development of, access to and use of AI, and transparency and effective crisis response to reduce the risk of abuse and uncontrolled escalation.

Knowledge development and monitoring

International efforts in respect of AI affect virtually all policy areas and can only be effective if the Netherlands operates on the basis of a single, coherent narrative. That is why this strategy is being implemented across government, with individual ministries continuing to bear their own individual responsibilities. Central coordination and knowledge development are essential in this regard.

Knowledge development

It is essential to invest in the knowledge and skills of diplomats and other officials working internationally in order to enable the Netherlands to operate effectively in the current geopolitical climate. By using AI responsibly in diplomatic work itself, we can enhance our international position and strategic interests. This also provides an opportunity to learn more from international partners about commercial AI applications. This task will be carried out in conjunction with government-wide initiatives such as the AI Competence Centre, which is currently under development.

Monitoring

Given the rapid and, to a certain extent, unpredictable evolution of AI, it is not possible to identify at this stage all the future opportunities and risks that AI will present, or to know what international dynamics they will trigger or what action will be required on our part. The government will therefore continue to monitor developments in technology so that it can respond to them as effectively as possible. The House of Representatives will be informed of progress on implementing this strategy by means of a biennial report. The objectives, principles and formulated courses of action will also be reviewed in the light of ongoing technological and international developments.