

VERKIEZINGSKRANT

Election Guide

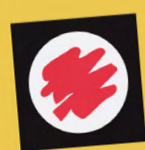


New
ballot paper
test

Online
version



prodemos.nl/
municipal-elections



Time to vote!

Help decide who runs
your municipality

Municipal Council Elections

Wednesday, 18 March, 2026

ProDemos

House for Democracy and the Rule of Law

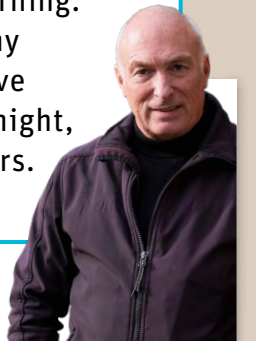
What does the municipal council do?

A municipality is made up of one or more towns.
All kinds of decisions need to be made that affect the area.
That is what the municipality does.

Every municipality has a municipal council.
The council members are elected every 4 years.
These members will decide on the municipal plans for the next 4 years.
The council also decides what to spend money on.

André:

I think the municipality tries to control too much. Bars and restaurants already have to close so early. You used to be able to get a snack in the city at 2 in the morning. There are many people who live their lives at night, like taxi drivers.



Examples of municipal decisions include:



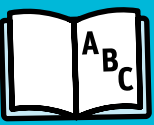
Waste

The municipality organises waste collection.
The council also decides whether waste is to be separated, and which bins are used.



Poverty

The municipality helps people who do not have enough money to live. These include people who are out of work, or who are in debt. The municipal council decides whether more should be done to help people without much money. One idea is a special pass that offers discounts on sports or other fun local activities.



Libraries and Language Lessons

The municipality provides language lessons for people who need them. It also spends money on libraries. The council decides how much money libraries get.



Health

The municipality helps people who need healthcare. This includes wheelchairs and household help. The municipality also supports parents, via Youth and Family Centres and other places.



Sport

The municipality helps fund sports fields, indoor sports centres, stadiums, and swimming pools. It also gives funding to sports associations. The council decides which associations receive money, and how much.



Tax

Municipalities need a lot of money. That is why we pay municipal taxes. An example of a municipal tax is the waste-collection levy, which pays for waste removal and processing. The council decides what taxes must be paid, and the amounts.



Permits

The municipality gives permits to businesses and organisations. Shops, restaurants, theatres, and town festivals are some examples. A permit sets out agreements. These can be about restaurant opening times, or club noise levels.



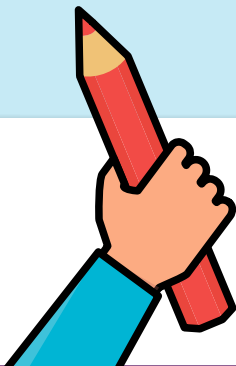
Housing and Traffic

The municipality decides where to build in the area. Building projects include shops, sports fields, playgrounds, bicycle paths, and roads. The municipality also decides on whether to build rental or owner-occupied housing.

Elections



The municipal council elections
will be held on Wednesday, 18 March



Your vote counts!

Your vote helps decide who sits on the municipal council, and who will help shape your municipality for the next 4 years.



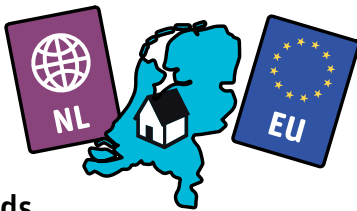
You are aged 18 or over.



You are officially Dutch.
You are registered in your municipality.



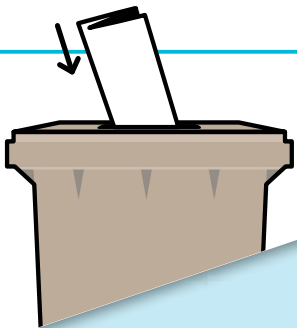
Or you have a different EU nationality
and officially live in the Netherlands.



Or you have been living in the Netherlands
for more than 5 years, and have
a residence permit.



You can vote in your local
municipal elections!



Lorette:

I'm voting for sure.
There was a time when women
were not allowed to vote.
It took even longer for women
of colour to get the vote.
That's why I think it's important.



Yvonne:

The important thing is not to waste
your vote.
Even if you don't fully agree
with any political party.
You will never agree 100%! .



André:

If you don't vote, then you have
no right to an opinion afterwards.
You can't say you disagree with
things later on.
You should have voted when you
had the chance!

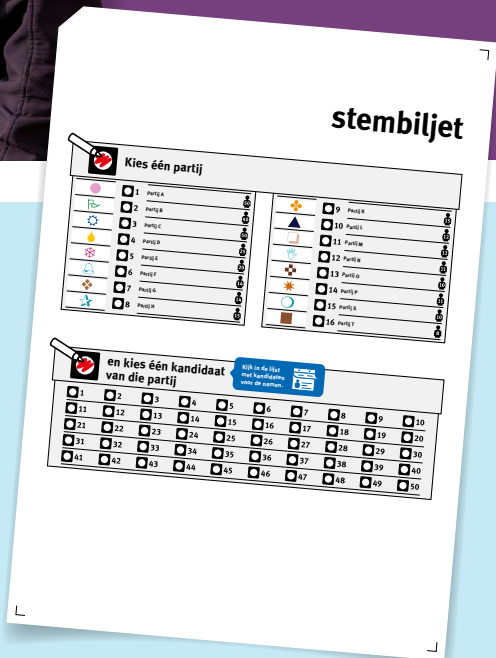


A new ballot paper

Many people thought the ballot paper was too big and difficult to read.
For this reason, a new, smaller ballot is being tested.



The following municipalities are testing the new ballot:
Alphen aan den Rijn, Boekel, Den Bosch, Gouda, Leiden, Meierijstad,
Midden-Delfland, Nijmegen, Noordoostpolder, Soest, and Tynaarlo.
For more information, please visit www.nieuwstembiljet.nl.



How does the municipality make decisions?

Parties work together

After the elections, the party that gets the most votes will be the biggest party. That party will try to find other parties to cooperate with. Together they try to form a majority.

They will negotiate on municipal plans for the next 4 years.

Usually, political parties do not get everything they want.

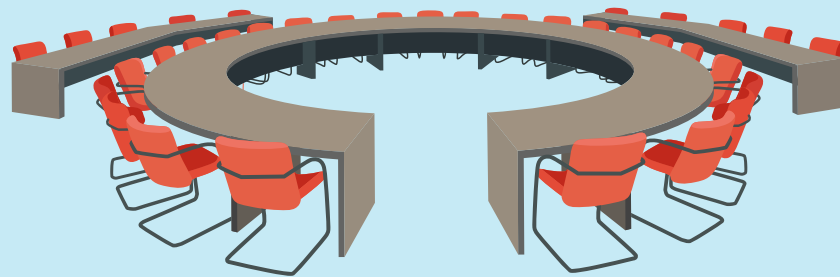
Once the parties have agreed on their plans, they can appoint a municipal executive.

The executive members carry out the council plans, and also suggest their own plans.



Lorette:

People with little money are given a special payment card. The municipality puts €100 on the card. People can use it to do sports, or to visit the theatre or cinema.



What the municipal council does



1 Deciding on local plans and regulations (rules)

A plan or regulation is put in place if over half of the council members vote for it.

2 Monitoring the mayor and municipal executive



If a plan is approved, it is carried out by the mayor and municipal executive.



The council monitors whether the executive carries out the plans correctly.



The council members submit questions to the executive.



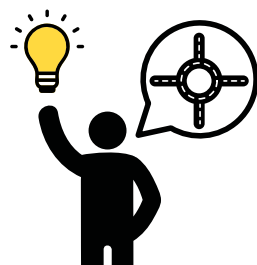
The council can fire (send away) executive members who do not do their job properly. Another executive member must then be chosen.

An example:



1. There is a problem

There is a large intersection where many accidents occur.



2. The municipal executive member thinks of a solution

Turn the intersection into a roundabout!



3. The municipal council decides on the plan

The council discusses the plan. The mayor runs the meeting. Is the plan a good idea? Will there be fewer accidents on a roundabout? The council can also change the executive member's plan. Eventually, the council will vote on the plan. If more than half of the council votes for it, the plan will go ahead.

Decide who gets your vote

Lorette:

Whenever I'm in town, I talk to people to find out what's going on. That's where I get useful information.

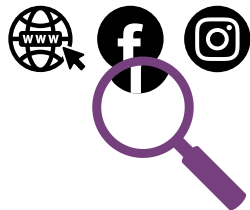


Vote on the political party that best represents your views..

Not sure which party is best for you?
Here are a few tips.

Find out what parties want

Read about the political parties' plans on their websites, or view their social media pages on Facebook, Instagram, or elsewhere.



Ask the parties questions. Send an e-mail, or call them. Their e-mail addresses and phone numbers are on their websites.



Members of political parties hand out leaflets on the street. Sometimes they knock on doors. You can ask them whatever you like.



There are sometimes local election meetings. These are free to attend.



Watch television or listen to radio shows, like election debates. Follow the local news outlets.



That is where political parties often announce their plans.

Talk to others

Ask which political parties they do or do not vote for, and why.

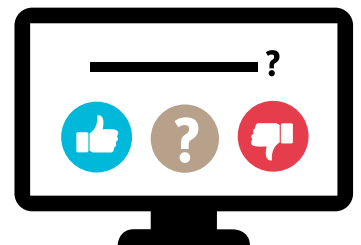
Then think about it: what is your own opinion? Which party you vote for is entirely up to you.



Use a voting tool

See whether there are any voting tools available for your municipality, such as www.stemwijzer.nl.

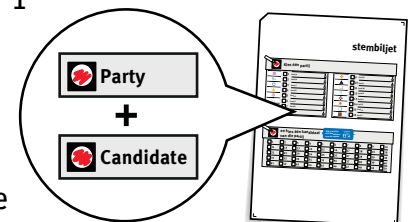
You will answer questions on 30 topics, and the site will tell you which parties agree with you the most.



Which person to vote for?

Lots of people vote for the number 1 in their party of choice. That person is called the 'lead candidate'.

You can also vote for someone else on the party list, if you think they are a better match for your area.



Yvonne:

I use StemWijzer. I also watch the live streams of the council meetings here in Katwijk.



André:

The parties' plans should be clearer, and explained in simple language. What does the party plan to do? Show us! I think it's all a bit vague. There is some reading material, but not for people with low literacy.



Lorette:

Those big election posters often just say: 'Vote for this party.' But they don't say why. My idea is: say what the party actually stands for, and what it wants to achieve.



Voting: Here's How



1 A voting pass will be sent to your house

The council will send you a voting pass and a list of candidates.



2 Choose a political party

The candidate list will show the parties participating in the election, as well as which people represent each party.

7:30 a.m.
9:00 p.m.



POLLING STATION

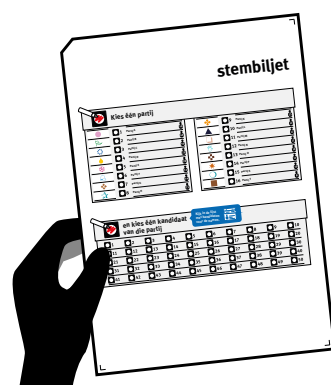
3 Go to the polling station

On **Wednesday, 18 March 2026**, take your voting pass to the polling station. Take your passport, driver's licence, or ID card with you. If they expired less than 5 years ago, you can still use them to vote. You can also show a residency permit as ID. If it is currently valid, you will be allowed to vote.



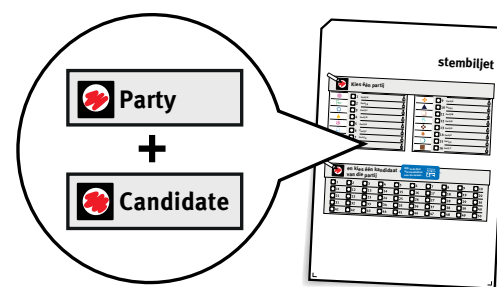
4 Submit your voting pass

Give your voting pass to the people at the polling station. Also show them your passport, driver's licence, ID card, or residency permit. The officers at the polling place will check your voting card, and your identity.



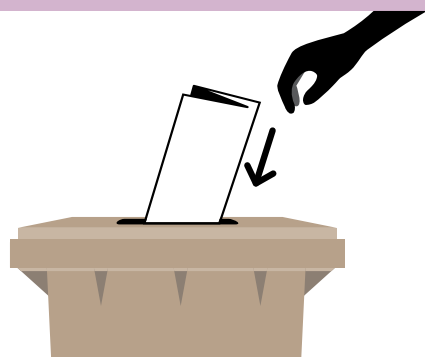
5 You will receive a ballot paper

The ballot paper lists the political parties participating in the election in your municipality. Underneath are the numbers of the people you can vote for. The voting booth will contain a book with the names of the candidates, listed by party. There you can see everybody's number.



6 Fill in two circles red

Take your ballot paper into a voting booth. You must go in alone. Nobody is allowed to watch you vote. In the booth, there will be a red pencil. First find the party you want to vote for. Colour the circle red in front of the party's name. Next, find the number of the person you want to vote for. Colour in the circle in front of this number too.



7 Put your ballot paper into the ballot box

Fold up your ballot paper, and put it into the ballot box.



8 You have voted!

After 9 p.m., all the votes will be counted. The results will be available online, for example at **www.nos.nl**. Also check the news, the radio, the TV, or the newspapers.

Want more information on the new ballot paper?

Please visit www.nieuwstembiljet.nl



Frequent questions about voting

Assistance at the polling station



You are allowed to take a how-to-vote card into the booth with you, showing the party and the candidate you wish to vote for.



Every polling station has a magnifying glass available.



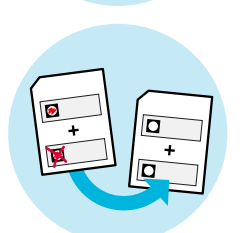
You must enter the booth alone.
You can ask for help, but only outside the voting booth.



You can ask a polling station officer to point out the name of the person you want to vote for.
Note: this is only allowed outside the booth!

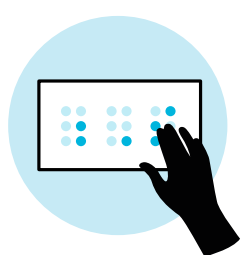


There is one exception.
If you have a physical limitation and cannot colour in a circle, someone else may enter the booth with you.



You can ask for 2 new ballot papers if you make a mistake.

Some polling stations offer the following assistance



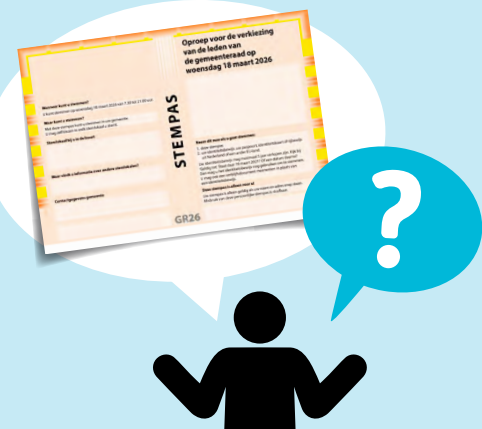
All municipalities testing the new ballot have a voting stencil.
A voting stencil is an aid for people who are blind or visually impaired.
If you want to use a voting stencil but do not yet know who you want to vote for, you can play the list of candidates using the sound box.



Some municipalities offer a sign-language interpreter at the polling station for people who are deaf or hearing-impaired.
Sometimes, a polling station staff member may speak Dutch Sign Language. Or you can video call with a sign language interpreter.



The website www.waarismijnstemlokaal.nl shows what kinds of help are available at each polling station. You can also visit your municipality's election page.



Lost your voting pass?

You can get a new voting pass from the service desk at your municipality, until 12:00 noon on 17 March.

Note: you must do this yourself.

Proxy

Je can authorise someone else to vote for you. This is called 'voting by proxy.'
Note: the person you authorise must live in the same municipality as you.
The person voting for you must also vote or themselves at the same time.

To vote by proxy, do these three things:

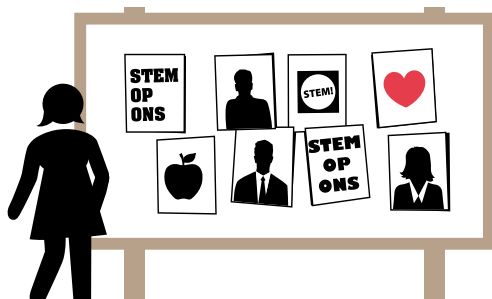
- 1 Fill in the back of the voting pass. Sign the back of the voting pass. This will authorise someone else to vote for you.

- 2 Give your voting pass AND a copy of your passport, driver's licence, ID card, or residence permit to the person who will vote for you. The copy can also be a photograph.

- 3 Tell your authorised person which party and person you wish to vote for.

Get ready to vote!

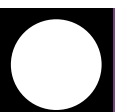
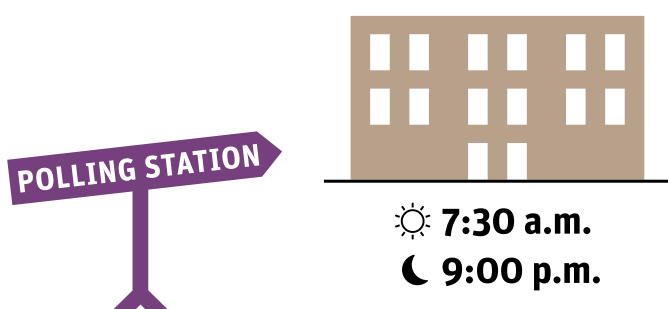
Checklist



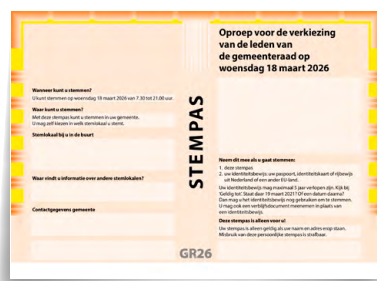
I know which party I want to vote for



I know which person I want to vote for



I know where the polling station is



I have my voting pass with me



I have my passport, driver's licence, ID card, or residence permit with me



Still have questions?

Call us with any questions you have about the election.

070 - 757 02 00

You can also visit verkiezingen.prodemos.nl

ProDemos

House for Democracy and the Rule of Law

We provide information and education on the workings of democracy and the rule of law, and show people what they themselves can do to exercise influence at various levels: through their municipal council, district water board, provincial council, country, or in the European Union.

Election Guide

Production and text: ProDemos

Design: Lidewij Spitshuis ontwerpstudio

Printing: Rodi Rotatiedruk

Translation: Brent Annable

In partnership with:

Het Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations)
Stichting ABC (ABC Foundation),
Stichting Het Begint met Taal (It Starts With Language Foundation),
Reading and Writing Foundation,
Stichting Makkelijk Lezen (Easy Reading Foundation)

ProDemos

Hofweg 1H

2511 AA Den Haag

☎ (070) 757 02 00

✉ info@prodemos.nl

🌐 prodemos.nl

