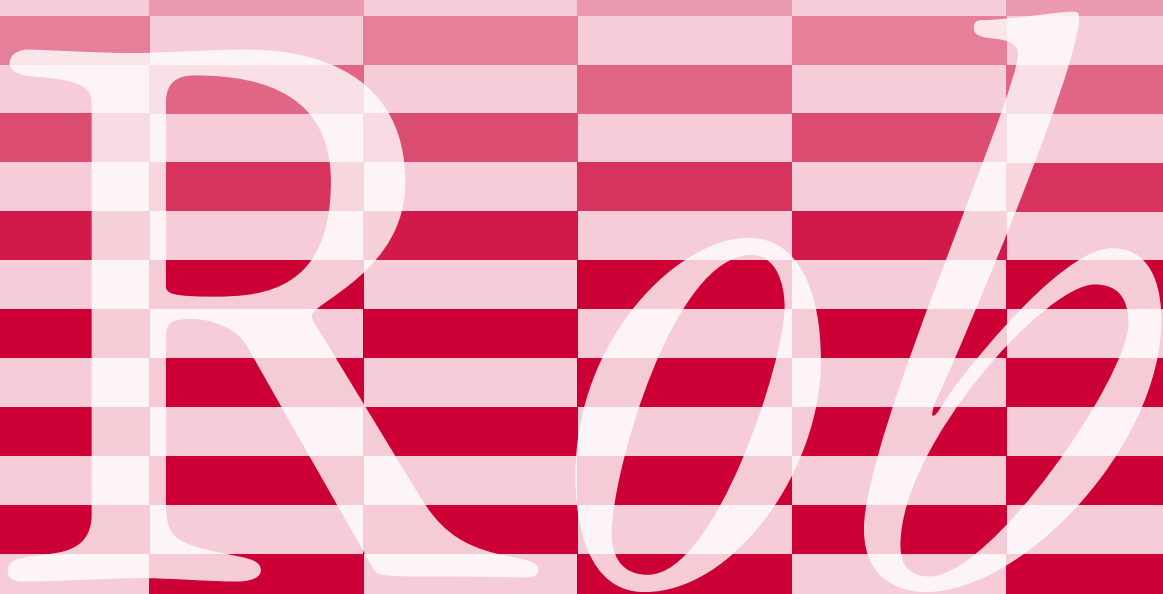


Democracy and the EU – the debate on the future of Europe

Rob-lezing 2015, by Nick Clegg

A large, stylized, white outline of the word 'Rob' is centered on a background of a red and white checkerboard pattern. The letters are thick and have a slight shadow effect, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The 'R' is a classic serif font, while the 'o's are more rounded and script-like.

Profiel

De Raad voor het openbaar bestuur (Rob) is een adviesraad van de regering en het parlement. De Rob is ingesteld bij Wet van 12 december 1996 (Wet op de raad voor het openbaar bestuur, Staatsblad 1996, nr. 623).

Taak

De wettelijke taak van de Raad is de regering en het parlement gevraagd en ongevraagd adviseren over de inrichting en het functioneren van de overheid. Daarbij geeft de Raad in het bijzonder aandacht aan de uitgangspunten van de democratische rechtsstaat.

Samenstelling

Tien onafhankelijke deskundigen op het terrein van het openbaar bestuur, politiek en wetenschap vormen samen de Raad voor het openbaar bestuur. Zij zijn geselecteerd op basis van hun deskundigheid en maatschappelijke ervaring. Daarnaast kunnen afhankelijk van het onderwerp tijdelijke leden de Raad versterken. De leden van de Raad worden bij Koninklijk Besluit benoemd.

Werkwijze

De Raad kan zowel gevraagd als ongevraagd advies uitbrengen. Adviesaanvragen kunnen van alle ministeries en van de Staten-Generaal afkomstig zijn. Bij het voorbereiden van zijn adviezen betreft de Raad vaak mensen en organisaties die veel met het openbaar bestuur te maken hebben of die over relevante inhoudelijke expertise beschikken. Ook via andere activiteiten (publicaties, onderzoek, bijeenkomsten) levert de Raad een bijdrage aan het politiek-bestuurlijke en maatschappelijke debat. De komende jaren stelt de Raad het begrip 'vertrouwen' centraal. Het gaat daarbij om het vertrouwen tussen burgers en bestuur, maar ook om het vertrouwen van de verschillende overheden in elkaar.

Secretariaat

Een secretariaat ondersteunt de Raad voor het openbaar bestuur (en de Raad voor de financiële verhoudingen). De secretaris en zijn medewerkers leggen over hun werk verantwoording af aan de Raad. Het jaarlijkse Werkprogramma geeft sturing aan de werkzaamheden.

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Den Haag, 19 november 2015

Rob



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Introduction to the Rob-lecture ‘Democracy and the EU – the debate on the future of Europe’

By Hanneke Möhring

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Netherlands Council for Public Administration, welcome to our 12th ROB lecture. Regrettably, our chairman Jacques Wallage cannot be here today, so I have the honour of giving you a brief introduction to today’s lecture.

The Council for Public Administration is an independent advisory body to the Dutch government and parliament on matters of public administration, democracy and security. We are greatly honoured that Nick Clegg was willing to come to The Hague to give this year’s lecture. Today’s topic is a subject that has been of concern to people in many EU member states lately, not least the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, precisely the two countries with which Nick Clegg is closely connected.



Europe is the focus of political and public interest. It is no longer only a matter for the political elite. And that is a good thing too, since more and more, Europe is what determines the scope of policy and the methods of our national public administration. The European dimension features prominently in our Council's recommendations. Our recent advice about the national government observed that in many areas, the national government is increasingly a middle layer between Europe and decentralised local governments. And in 2012, we made a contribution to the often-heated political and public debate about the idea of Europe with our collection of essays entitled 'Europe, citizenship and democracy'. Today, we are delighted and honoured that Nick Clegg can give us an insider's view of the British debate about Europe, and perhaps compare the ways this discussion is being conducted in the two countries.

Nick Clegg himself was and is at the centre of the debate about Europe. He was the leader of the Liberal Democrats. He was also Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom until May 2015, when the Conservative Party won an absolute majority in the House of Commons with 37 percent of the votes, and no longer needed help from the Liberal Democrats. He is currently a British Member of Parliament. At the moment, the debate about Europe is heating up in the United Kingdom in the run-up to the referendum on Britain's membership in the EU, which will be held before the end of 2017.

The British and Dutch situations show some major parallels when it comes to people's feelings about Europe. In both countries, those for the European project and those against it keep each other more or less in balance, with the opposition being more vocal. The liberal-democratic parties in both countries are the most fervently pro-Europe or 'Europhile', while the socialist and nationalist political circles are more often opposed, or 'Eurosceptic'. The original reasons underlying the European project - 'no more war' and the creation of a common market - are less and less convincing to citizens, and to politicians as well. The message from Eurosceptics on both the left and the right of the political spectrum is partly the same: that the European project will threaten the national identity and sovereignty of its member states, undermine the achievements of the national welfare states and result in excessive bureaucracy and unnecessary regulation. Opinion polls and election results show that this message is gaining more and more ground. And this Euroscepticism is only being increased by the Eurocrisis, the current problems with refugees, our tense relationship with Russia, the threat of IS and Europe's inability to formulate effective and broadly supported solutions to these problems.

Ten years ago, on the 1st of July 2005, this Euroscepticism became manifest in the Netherlands when 62 percent of Dutch voters expressed their opposition to the European Constitution in a consultative referendum. For many politicians this came as an unpleasant surprise: not only the government, but also a comfortable majority of Parliament supported the Constitution. The tone of the referendum campaign was set by two opposition parties: the Socialist Party and the Party for Freedom, a few weeks before the referendum. These parties argued that the European Constitution would create a 'European superstate' in which the Netherlands would be delegated to a powerless province. In response, the proponents of the European Constitution presented what might go wrong without

support for it. The minister for Foreign Affairs warned the citizens that if the Netherlands were to vote 'no', that 'the lights would go out and we would lock the gates'. The minister of Justice warned of wars and a potential Balkanisation of Europe. In doing so, the ruling parties, like the opposition, were playing on fears, while a year before they had kicked off a rather half-hearted campaign with the upbeat but often ridiculed motto 'Europe: it's rather important!'.

Those in favour of the European Union and EU membership are having a tough time. The founding fathers' ideals of 'no more war' and the common market are no longer enough to convince the public. In addition, the way European institutions work is perceived by many as aloof and expertocratic. We need to do more. In 2012, in his ROB lecture entitled 'On the soul of Europe', professor Gabriel van den Brink argued that the differences between the EU member states could only be resolved within moral horizons. He expressed the wish that the European imagination could go beyond markets and power to include more principles, and especially moral principles. This will require vision and perseverance from our politicians, especially those at national level.

The relationship between the Netherlands and the EU is sometimes called a marriage of convenience. This is certainly also true for the marriage between the United Kingdom and the EU.



And by the end of 2017, we will see whether this marriage will last after the British have held their referendum on Britain's EU membership. In the Netherlands, the referendum on the EU treaty with Ukraine planned for April 2016 will help to answer the question of how much support there is in our country for the European project.

Ladies and gentlemen, I will now give the floor to Nick Clegg, who I hope can offer us inspiration and ideas for conducting the debate about the future of Europe with new energy, and – in the words of our chairman Jacques Wallage – come out of the 'blind spot of mistrust and cynicism'.

After the lecture, Mr Clegg will be happy to answer your questions, and you can debate with Mr Clegg and each other, moderated by my fellow council member Sarah de Lange.

Democracy and the EU – the debate on the future of Europe

By Nick Clegg

Rob-lezing 2015

My speech today will try to address why the European Union is in a state of crisis, which I believe it to be, and what we can do about it. I think it is no exaggeration to say that the European Union is probably in a more perilous condition, certainly as far as public support is concerned, as was alluded to earlier, than at almost any time since its establishment over half a century ago.



For the first time in living memory, it is possible to imagine that the European Union might – at the very worst – unravel, or certainly, descend into a state of prolonged semi-permanent disunity. Even in core founding member states like the Netherlands, public and political opinion has never been as threadbare as it is now.

Euro scepticism, in other words, is no longer just a British issue, a British phenomenon. According to the Eurobarometer survey, between 2007 and 2012 net support for the European Union which shows the difference between those who tend to trust the European Union and those who do not, fell astonishingly from +10% to -22% in France; from +20% to -29% in Germany; from +30% to -22% in Italy; and from -13% to -49% in the United Kingdom. Here in the Netherlands, net support for the European Union during that period of time, in just five years from 2007 to 2012, fell from +44% in 2007 to -8% in 2012.

Now, you might not wish to trust opinion polls. I have certainly learned not to, sometimes I wish I trusted them a bit more – I might have known what was coming! But even if those figures may be approximations, they nonetheless should prompt us to ask ourselves why. Why is this happening? Why has there been this precipitated and sudden collapse in public confidence and trust in the European Union? I believe that there are a mixture of long term, short term and general and specific reasons for that. One of them clearly is the continuing after-shocks of that terrible economic earthquake that was witnessed across Europe, across the developed world, in 2008. I think it is impossible to exaggerate what a debilitating effect it has had on people's faith in governments at all levels when millions of our fellow citizens have sustained such an unprecedented long period of decline in their living standards and their disposable incomes.

The effect on people's family budgets, on people's abilities to provide for their children, to plan for the future with confidence, has been under greater pressure for a longer period of time than any time since the oil shocks in the early 1970s. Arguably worse than any time in the post war period. And people feel enraged, understandably. They feel unprotected from the mistakes made by a distant elite in the financial and banking sector, and they feel that governments of all descriptions have failed to protect them from the after-effects which they themselves feel.

And then I think probably of all the explanations, remains one of the most powerful, for the era of populism, of political volatility, of distrust in politics we are experiencing across the European Union.

But there are other reasons. The tensions within the Eurozone, the currency union between the creditor countries – Germany, the Netherlands and others particularly in the north of Europe – and the so-called peripheral debtor countries is placing a huge strain, is creating a chasm at the very heart of the European Union.

Of course when the Eurozone was first launched, the imbalance between the creditor and debtor countries in the currency union was papered over, it was disguised as banks that just threw money at people irresponsibly. And over-indebted consumers in Spain and Portugal happily bought Philips

washing machines and Volkswagens manufactured in Germany. Everyone was happy. And that disguise, that camouflage, also covered up that terrible error made by the then Chancellor of Germany, Gerhard Schroeder, and the then President of France, Jacques Chirac, when in 2005 they basically decreed that the fiscal rules of the Eurozone would not apply to France and Germany. If it does not apply to France and Germany, what kind of a message does that send out to the rest of the Eurozone? But the effects of that north-south divide might have been submerged by the period of irresponsible and easy credit that was provided to millions of consumers at the outset. But of course when the crisis hit in 2008, the huge imbalance came to the surface and is still there for all to see with devastating social consequences, particularly the mass unemployment in a huge swathe of southern Europe.

I think the generational shift away from that generation of voters and politicians and leaders who felt in their hearts, in their solar plexus, that visceral emotional commitment to European integration as a triumph of peace over war, is giving way to a post war generation that does not feel this. As I quite rightly alluded to earlier, as that episode in European history increasingly fades into history and into history books they do not feel that sort of emotional attachment to the founding reasons for European integration. And that leads to a loss of both unity and emotional commitment to European cooperation. The risk that one of the European Union's largest member states, the United Kingdom, might choose to – and I firmly hope it will not, we will not – leave the European Union which is now coming to a head in the forthcoming referendum, only adds to a palpable feeling of a lack of leadership amongst the larger countries in the European Union. The United Kingdom is basically talking to itself, exercising almost no meaningful leadership on the big issues of the day within Europe. The Franco-German [cure] is simply not what it once was.

When I first worked as a junior official in the European Commission in the mid-1990s, those were the days when people would say 'France decides, Germany writes the cheques and everybody else basically obeys'. This has changed now, it has changed utterly. And now we have a dominant nation, Germany, that is for historical reasons understandably reluctant to exercise the leadership which in a sense is naturally incumbent upon it. So we have a vacuum of leadership from the larger member states in particular, exacerbated by the prospect that one of them may soon quit altogether.

The migration crisis and the patent inability of the current European Union to cope with the huge numbers of desperate people fleeing violence and catastrophe in their own nations has done huge, and is continuing to do huge, damage to public confidence.

I have always felt, that in the European Union or at least in the Schengen area you should either have no internal borders and very strong external borders, or you should have very strong internal borders and no external borders. What you cannot have is neither, which is now what we have got. This is why Schengen and the very principle of freedom of movement is now under unprecedented pressure.



And then finally of course, and most tragically, the acute sense of vulnerability that millions of our fellow citizens feel in the wake of terrorist attacks, and particularly in the wake of that gruesome, bloody and barbaric attack in Paris last year also does grievous damage to people's confidence in how things are being run. And the European Union, so far at least, simply does not seem to be the answer to people's very primeval legitimate hope that those in charge will keep their streets safe and keep their families safe in their homes.

In the past, when the European Community or European Union has encountered crises, almost always those crises have served as catalysts, as spurs for ingenuity, for new forms of integration and for new solutions for those crises to be found. Looking back, in a sense each crisis has led to several different unions developing in an overlapping manner. The very creation of the European Community was of course a union of reconciliation, a union which sought to reconcile principally but not exclusively France and Germany, to cement peace in a continent which had been so drenched in blood and conflict for so long.

The creation later of the single market and then the single currency was an attempt to create an economic union of prosperity after the deep recessions of the 1970s and 1980s. Entry for Spain, Portugal, Greece helped create a union for democracy responding to the crisis of military fascism and dictatorship in those southern European countries. Extending membership to a string of countries in Central and Eastern Europe created yet another union, a union of stability. It provided stability to a whole string of countries that had suffered so terribly under the yoke of Soviet communism.

In my view, in response to this latest crisis, a number of things must happen in order for the European Union to recover its sense of unity, its sense of relevance and purpose. First of course, we must resolve the British issue. We must make the positive case not only for membership of the United Kingdom in the European Union, but also for leadership of the United Kingdom in the European Union where that leadership is appropriate and welcome.

We will need to accept that a move to, in effect, a sort of hub and spoke model of membership in the European Union is already a lived reality. It is something to be welcomed rather than shunned with member states having slightly altered, slightly different forms of membership within one single European Union, a club to suit their cultural and political situations. The notion, in any event, of a perfectly uniform straightjacket of membership for a club as diverse as one made up of 28 member states was never feasible. But we must now embrace the supple ingenuity and flexibility which does allow somewhat altered terms of membership. Some countries are members of the Eurozone, others are not. Some are members of Schengen others are not. Some members such as the United Kingdom participate in justice and police cooperation, but do not cooperate in various provisions of it. And so on and so forth while still of course adhering to some of the core basic rules and principles.

We need, and I suspect it would be a spectacularly unwelcome thing to say to a Dutch audience, an honest debate about the need for fiscal transfers from richer to poorer member states. So solidarity as well as discipline within the Eurozone. I know that is not popular here, but just as much as debtor

countries in southern Europe need to understand that their membership depends on sticking to the rules, to budgetary and fiscal discipline and self-discipline, it is my view that creditor countries must also accept that no diverse currency union is sustainable without accompanying shock absorbers, which in one way or another have to be paid for by the wealthier member states. And throughout all of this we will need to put a good old-fashioned Dutch principle into play which Prime Minister Rutte has spoken about so articulately, Europe where necessary, national where possible.

But where I want to focus my remaining remarks is on the most pressing task of all. I believe that the European Union must now create in effect a new union of security and liberty to provide its citizens with a sense of safety and protection at a time of unprecedented fear. If the European Union fails to provide that reassurance, populists will win the day. We have seen what Marine Le Pen has done in France and Nigel Farage in the United Kingdom, and what populists elsewhere have been saying this week in the wake of the Paris attacks, already seeking to use those terrible attacks to pursue their wider ambition of turning countries inwards and away from each other. And in my view the creation of a new union of security and liberty has three main elements.

First properly policed and controlled external borders. The arrangements at the moment are simply too weak. Frontex, which is the external border agency of the European Union, has a measly budget of EUR 143 million and is wildly overstretched. It is little more than a rather weak coordination agency. It has no staff or equipment of its own, and it is hugely hampered by a lack of cooperation and support from member states to provide the resources on the ground. Frontex's own leaders believe that a fully functional border agency can only exist if given executive powers to demand or own equipment. This is understandably highly controversial. It would in effect mean member states with external borders accepting border guards which might be line managed by an EU agency. Now I do not believe that that is ever going to happen. But we do need to start having the debate about how we can act and act fast to have properly policed borders if we want to safeguard that cherished principle of freedom of movement within the borderless Schengen area. And this also points in my view to the need for common immigration and asylum policies. At the moment there is a lot of uncertainty about what to do with people once they have been picked up at the EU's external border. Frontex was designed to combat small flows of illegal immigration. It was *not* designed to cope with mass migration from war zones.

Secondly, accompanying properly policed and administered external borders, we need a step change in internal security and cooperation as well. There is already pretty sophisticated cooperation against organised cross-border crime within the European Union, through Europol here in The Hague, and police and judicial authorities have been cooperating, sharing databases and working to common standards for many years. In fact it has been a source of great frustration that the United Kingdom does not participate in these measures more fully. Yet cooperation on counter-terrorism lags way, way behind. The reports which we have read in the newspapers this week, and they are as yet unconfirmed and may not prove to be true, that one of the Paris terrorists entered Greece from Syria in the summer raises questions about counter-terrorism cooperation within the European Union. This has been neglected for far, far too long.



Of course the European Union does not need and will never be able to impose some kind of harmonised arrangement of different security and intelligence agencies across the European Union. But the question is whether we can do more to coordinate cross border operations and share intelligence. There is also a long way to go on cyber crime which is among the biggest borderless challenges that we face. The relatively new European Cybercrime Centre, again based here in The Hague, is an excellent start, but we need to do a whole lot more.

But third and perhaps the hardest and biggest task of all is a huge geo-strategic challenge and it is this: what can we do to provide stability across the Mediterranean basin? The Mediterranean in my view is now a region in acute distress, large stretches of North Africa, especially in Libya, are [facing] internal instability. Southern Europe is still facing acute economic difficulties. The Middle East is engulfed by violence. In the longer term the demographic pressures on Europe's southern borders are only going to grow. By 2050 Europe's population is projected to fall from 730 million to 700 million, while Africa's is expected to double to 2.4 billion.

A few weeks ago, NATO's Deputy Secretary General was quoted as saying that the Mediterranean is now considered to be, I quote, 'contested space'. Now that comment, that somewhat chilling comment, encapsulates how dramatically the stakes have changed in the Mediterranean region as Russia moves to challenge American and NATO hegemony and to defend its strategic interests. The response by the European Union and the wider world to the collapse of the Berlin wall back in 1989 gives, in my view, a clue to all of us about what we should now do in the Mediterranean. At that time hundreds of billions of Pounds of economic support were poured into Central and Eastern Europe. New institutions like the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development based in London were created. The prospect of EU membership was offered to countries in Central and Eastern Europe. And it was a devastating success story.

There was a collective effort to provide economic, social and political stability to a whole part of our hemisphere which had been left traumatised by Soviet, communist rule. Europe desperately needs to rediscover the same level of ambition that we showed in 1989 towards Central and Eastern Europe towards the Mediterranean today. If the European Union can preside over post-war reconciliation between France and Germany, can extend its membership across the whole continent, can create the world's largest borderless single market, create a new currency, surely it can also lead an international effort to bring hope and stability to the Mediterranean. This in my view should be the single most important project for every single leader of European Union governments. It is an effort that requires years if not decades of application. And yet, the European Union has a history of failed initiatives in this area and responded in a hopelessly piecemeal fashion to the Arab Spring five years ago.

In 1995, the European Union established the Barcelona Process to foster integration across the Mediterranean. It was widely criticised, rightly, for failing to achieve its goals. It was then replaced in 2008 by the 43 nation Union for the Mediterranean which, in turn, is all but defunct today. Following the Arab Spring, further attempts were made under the auspices of the European Union's

Neighbourhood Policy with the then British Commissioner and EU High Representative of Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton, announcing a partnership in democracy and shared prosperity for the southern Mediterranean. Again, however, the words were never translated into deeds.

After the Second World War, the Marshall Plan saw the United States give the equivalent at today's prices of USD 130 billion to help rebuild the economies of Western Europe. I believe we now need something similar, if not bigger, for the Mediterranean today. The Mediterranean may be the crucible of so much European culture and civilisation, but it is also now the source of many of the ideological, economic and social problems our continent faces and that we will continue to face for many years to come.

This effort will require a huge amount of finance at a time when governments are short of money. Yet history and experience suggests that in the end this is a matter of political will, not accountancy. As the US response after World War II and the EU support following the collapse of the Berlin Wall have shown, if the threat that the Mediterranean now poses is sufficiently well understood – and I believe it is not – then the money can and will be mobilised.

So in conclusion, the European Union is indeed at a very perilous point in its history. We are, and I use that over-used cliché, at a fork in the road. The climate of fear in which we live will either drive us apart, drive us toward ever more extreme beggar thy neighbour, chauvinistic policies across the European continent, or it will, as has occurred in the past, push governments to raise their sights, raise their ambitions and work together for the security of the continent as a whole. The choice is theirs. For the sake of future generations, let us hope they make the right choice.

De lezing is terug te zien op film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vaol7xjggxU>

Bijlage 1

Overzicht van Rob-lezingen

2015 | Nick Clegg

Democracy and the EU – the debate on the future of Europe

2014 | Wim van de Donk

De centralisatie in openbaar besturen. Over dunnen denkramen, pertinente pragmatiek en ambivalente ambities.

Co-referaat: Marcel Boogers

2013 | Louise Gunning

Politiek retoriek, de markt en de angst voor de dood

Co-referaat: Malou van Hintum

2012 | Gabriël van den Brink

Om de ziel van Europa

Co-referaten: Hans van Baalen en Thijs Berman

2011 | Henri Beunders

De burger als bondgenoot

Co-referaat: Sarah de Lange

2009 | Mark Elchardus

Hollandse burger of Romein

Panelleden: Marja Wagenaar en Rob Wijnberg

2008 | Evelien Tonkens

Herwaardering van professionals, maar hoe?

Panelleden: Hans Boutellier en Mirko Noordegraaf

2007 | Ad Verbrugge

Tussen Kosmopolitisme en provincialisme

Panelleden: Dick Pels en Bart Jan Spruyt

2006 | Dorien Pessers

Goede en kwade trouw in het openbaar bestuur

Co-referaat: Dik Wolfson

2005 | Ian Buruma

Democratie tussen rationaliteit en spiritualiteit

Co-referaat: Paul Schnabel

2004 | Frans Andriessen

Integratie en differentiatie in de Europese Unie

Co-referaat: Geert Hofstede

2003 | James Kennedy

Crisis en vernieuwing

Co-referaat: Arthur Docters van Leeuwen

Bijlage 2

Samenstelling Raad voor het openbaar bestuur

Voorzitter

De heer prof. drs. J. Wallage, honorair hoogleraar Transities in het Openbaar Bestuur aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Vice voorzitter

Mevrouw drs. J.W. Möhring MMC, zelfstandig adviseur

Leden

De heer prof. dr. M.J.G.J.A. Boogers, bijzonder hoogleraar Innovatie en Regionaal Bestuur aan de Universiteit Twente en senior adviseur bij BMC

De heer L.J.P.M. Frissen, oud-commissaris van de koningin Limburg en waarnemend burgemeester van Schinnen

Mevrouw dr. S.L. de Lange, universitair hoofddocent bij de afdeling Politicologie van de Universiteit van Amsterdam

Mevrouw prof. dr. M.H. Leyenaar, hoogleraar Vergelijkende Politicologie aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

De heer prof. mr. dr. R. Nehmelman, hoogleraar Publiek Organisatierecht aan de Universiteit Utrecht

De heer dr. M. Schoenmaker, burgemeester van Gouda

Mevrouw A. van Vliet-Kuiper, waarnemend burgemeester van Bussum en voorzitter van het bestuurlijk overleg 'Samen werkt beter'

Waarnemend lid

De heer mr. M.A.P. van Haersma Buma, dijkgraaf Hoogheemraadschap van Delfland en voorzitter van de Raad voor de financiële verhoudingen

Tijdelijk lid

De heer drs. Ch.J. Kalden, oud-directeur van Staatsbosbeheer en voormalig secretaris-generaal van het ministerie van LNV

