



National Ombudsman | Ombudsman for Children
Ombudsman for Veterans

2025 Summary

Do what is necessary



“Working for all citizens requires a government that does not wait but looks ahead. One that does not let people get lost in a jungle of bureaucracy, but utilizes available information to actively reach out to and help people. Currently, this happens too infrequently.”

Reinier van Zutphen

The National Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Children and the Ombudsman for Veterans are there to help people, children and veterans when things go wrong between them and the government, and to challenge governments and other authorities to safeguard the standpoint of citizens in everything they do and to ensure that children's rights are observed.

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Reinier van Zutphen

Reinier van Zutphen has been the National Ombudsman since 2015. He is the Local Ombudsman for more than 80 per cent of Dutch municipalities and he is also the Ombudsman for Veterans.



Margrite Kalverboer

Margrite Kalverboer has been the Ombudswoman for Children since 2016.



Linda Molenaar

Linda Molenaar was appointed to the post of substitute Ombudsman in 2024.

Foreword

The arrival of an asylum seekers centre in Albergen led to widespread unrest and protests. Residents who had complained about the council's actions and communication found themselves facing four lawyers, without having been given the opportunity to speak to council staff themselves. In 2025, the National Ombudsman ruled that Tubbergen Council, to which Albergen belongs, had not dealt with these complaints properly. The council had outsourced the contact with its citizens and in doing so had effectively severed their ties with them, which resulted in the residents not being heard.

What happened in Tubbergen is still relevant today. The relationship between citizens and the government is under strain. When the government loses direct contact with citizens, this leads to distance, mistrust and misunderstanding. That is precisely why the government must tell the honest story. That means being clear about what is and is not possible, and where citizens do and do not have a say. Tubbergen shows how important it is that the government not only enforces rules, but also genuinely engages in dialogue.

This is why we operate on the basis of four core values in our Ombuds work: good contact with citizens, do what is necessary, work for all citizens and act fairly. These values serve as a practical compass for a government that wishes to do the right thing.

Good communication

Good communication is particularly important when mistakes have been made. Those affected by small gas fields in Ekehaar and Hooghalen, for instance, had different expectations regarding their property damage claims settlement. In this case, the Mining Damage Committee determined that the scheme did not provide enough support for those affected. Close contact with residents identified where the friction lies, and thus what needs to change. Without regular contact, redress remains a promise on paper.

Do what is necessary

The government must do what is necessary, even if that is complicated. That means taking responsibility and acting in the interests of citizens. At times, rules can get in the way and adaptations can make the difference. Due to changes to the Participation Act (Participatiewet), local authorities





are no longer obliged to turn away young people who apply for social assistance for four weeks before they can help. Since last year, the law no longer stands in the way of doing what is necessary.

For all citizens

Policy that does not reach everyone, exacerbates inequality. In 2025, for instance, it emerged that only citizens with a DigiD and digital abilities could apply for the Temporary Energy Emergency Fund. This meant that many people did not receive the help they needed. The government must be there for all citizens. This calls for looking ahead, not waiting to see what happens. Not letting people get lost in the bureaucratic jungle, but using the available information to actively reach out to people and help them. This still does not happen often enough. The government should act proactively and should not wait for citizens to contact them but actively inform and support people. To truly achieve a proactive government, breakthroughs are needed. That is why the National Ombudsman is publishing the Ombudsman Vision on a Proactive Government simultaneously with this annual report. In this vision, we state that proactive service delivery is not an optional extra, but the norm.

The honest story

Honesty is the basis of trust. Citizens need to know where they stand. If procedures are unclear and time consuming, this will lead to frustration and mistrust. This can be seen, for instance, in complex personal injury compensation schemes, where veter-

ans are left in uncertainty for years. Openness, clear communication and personal attention can prevent this and make processes more humane and fair.

Acting properly is not an abstract ideal, but a daily task, on the phone and at the counter, and when making policy and political choices. The fact that this is necessary is evident from the 25,000 complaints and reports that we receive every year. Where things go wrong between citizens and the government, we sound the alarm so that the government can learn and improve. Because the government should treat citizens, veterans and children properly. Not because we say they should, but because the government wants to do so.

Following our report, for example, the Municipal Executive of Tubbergen indicated that they wanted to restore residents' trust in them: "by listening more effectively, being transparent and working together to find solutions. We can only move forward together." Let us do what is necessary.

**National Ombudsman
and Ombudsman for Veterans,**
Reinier van Zutphen

Ombudswoman for Children,
Margrite Kalverboer

substitute Ombudsman,
Linda Molenaar

The work of the National Ombudsman

How fairly does the government treat citizens and how does it communicate with them? The National Ombudsman helps citizens who have problems with the government, no matter how big or small. We have a team of specialists who are ready to answer enquiries and deal with complaints. We provide support by offering answers and practical tools. And we show citizens the way to the appropriate information desks. Through our investigations and advice, we also challenge the government to take a fresh look at its work and services.

What does the National Ombudsman do?

We conduct investigations based on the complaints that we receive. In 2025, we launched seven new investigations. This included not only investigations into individual complaints but also on fundamental problems. In this way, we hope to prevent similar complaints in the future. We advise the government on how to deal with the underlying causes of problems. We hope this will contribute to a government that dares to learn from complaints. The citizen's perspective must always play a key role in everything that the government does.

The National Ombudsman is also the Ombudsman for all provinces and water boards, for 284 of the 342 municipalities and for almost all joint schemes. The three special municipalities in the Caribbean

Netherlands, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, are also part of the work domain of the National Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Children and the Ombudsman for Veterans.

“Saying sorry also means acknowledging that this has happened to people and that the government now has the responsibility to ensure that something is done about the distress that people are still experiencing.”

Reinier van Zutphen



The relationship with Parliament

The National Ombudsman talks to citizens and the government. We not only help citizens in their dealings with the government, but we also assist the government in incorporating the citizens' perspective into policy and implementation. We therefore inform them about the findings of our investigations and about what we observe in society. In 2025, we wrote 17 letters of concern (in 2024 there were three) to draw attention to a particular issue. These letters were often addressed to ministers or state secretaries. We wrote three of the 17 letters of concern together with the Ombudsman for Children. Letters of concern or reports from the National Ombudsman sometimes result in parliamentary questions being raised or they are referred to in parliamentary questions and documents.

Helping citizens better

The people we talk to include members of the Cabinet, officials from national and local authorities and executives of implementing bodies about the issues that citizens frequently encounter and what the government can do about them. In addition, we often talk to staff of civil society organisations and societal interest organisations who are in close contact with citizens. Civil servants, staff of implementing bodies, intermediaries and other professionals can also turn to us for advice. We help them find their way to enable them to be of better assistance to citizens with a request for help.

Facts and figures

The National Ombudsman receives requests by phone, email, WhatsApp and via the complaints form on our website. Requests include complaints, concerns, enquiries and reports. In most cases, we lend a listening ear, provide information and refer people to the appropriate government or other organisation. Sometimes it is necessary to intervene. We then approach the government agency and ask if a solution is possible.

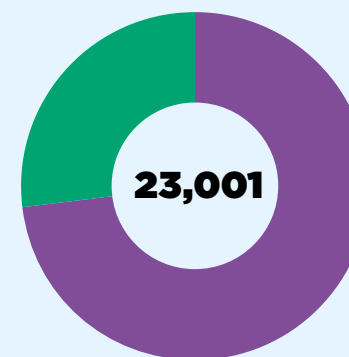
In 2025, we received a striking number of requests concerning the IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service). This was also the case in 2024. There was a slight decrease in the number of requests received. However, we did receive more requests concerning the COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers), the police and the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration. Furthermore, we received fewer requests about the UWV (Employee Insurance Agency).

In response to the requests that we received, we wrote 483 letters and 41 reports. If we receive many complaints on the same subject, for instance, we conduct further investigations. In 2025, we wrote two reports concerning the Caribbean Netherlands: **Openbaar lichaam Bonaire schoot tekort na melding illegale afgraving grond met diabaas** (The Public Entity of Bonaire failed to act after reports of the illegal excavation of soil containing diabaas) and **Doorbreek de stilte** (Break the silence).

The National Ombudsman also received requests concerning the Open Government Act (Wet open overheid; Woo) and GDPR. Woo requests are submitted by citizens who wish to obtain further information. GDPR requests are requests from citizens wishing to access, delete or edit their personal data.

Number of requests received

What were the requests received?



Complaints and reports	16,896
Enquiries and notifications	6,105

Number of requests from Top 5 organisations

1. Local authorities
2. Police
3. IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service)
4. Tax Administration
5. UWV (Employee Insurance Agency)

Top 3 increases compared to 2024

1. Police
2. COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers)
3. Tax Administration

Developments in 2025

The National Ombudsman's mandate

The structure of the government is changing. The government is increasingly outsourcing tasks to other organisations or forming new partnerships in which government bodies collaborate with one another. This makes it more difficult for citizens to know where to turn when things go wrong. The House of Representatives therefore decided that the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations should begin exploring the National Ombudsman's mandate.

This exploration study is about the areas in which the Ombudsman may intervene, even when a government task is carried out by another organisation. The National Ombudsman is involved in this process. We inform them of the issues citizens encounter and how the concept of 'government' can be better aligned with citizens' perspectives. The exploration study is likely to be published in 2026.

Decency and fairness

Do citizens play a key role in everything the government does? And does the government also operate on the basis of this principle? The National Ombudsman's Propriety Guide helps complaints handlers and other government staff to improve their services and to assess citizens' complaints against the standards of decency and fairness.

In 2025, the National Ombudsman updated the Propriety Guide in collaboration with academics, complaints handlers, other Ombudspersons, government professionals and National Ombudsman staff. The standards in the Propriety Guide describe what constitutes decent service provision by the government. In January 2026, we launched the new Propriety Guide, which will

make it easier for complaints handlers to assess complaints about government services. We will continue to discuss decency and fairness in 2026.

Towards a workable government

Do the government's plans work and do they fit in with citizens' daily lives? The National Ombudsman, the Council of State and the Court of Audit discussed this at the 'Naar een realistische overheid' (Towards a workable government) symposium in December 2025. In their recommendations, they state that the government must set clear and achievable goals and be honest about what is and is not possible. The High Councils of State also recommended that legislation and regulations should be simplified.

The government must demonstrate in advance what choices are necessary, what they will cost and what the impact will be. Furthermore, it must be clear whether the measures actually work and that they will not create new problems. Implementing bodies and local authorities must be involved in exchanging ideas from the outset so that problems can be prevented sooner.

Local Ombudsman

One of the National Ombudsman's ambitions is to be easily accessible and close to the citizens as a Local Ombudsman. This is why the National Ombudsman travelled around the country on several occasions. We spoke to citizens to hear what their concerns are and what citizens and local authorities come up against. We spoke with veterans about what a drop-in centre means to them, with farmers about regulations and with everyday experts about how to tackle poverty, for instance.

In recent years, the Ombudsman has mainly focused on supporting local authorities, the police, water boards and joint schemes in improving their complaints handling procedures. In 2025, the National Ombudsman organised workshops and discussions specifically for local authorities on professional complaints handling and dealing with persistent and excessive complaining.

Of the 23,001 requests (complaints, reports and enquiries) that the National Ombudsman received in 2025, 5,572 concerned local authorities. In 2024, there were 6,271 such requests out of a total of 24,269. In both years, these requests mainly concerned municipalities and joint schemes.

Online community *Raadbaak*

To pick up signs, share experiences and to learn from each other, we believe it is important to maintain a good relationship with professionals and intermediaries who are in direct or indirect contact with citizens who come to a deadlock in their contact with the government. The *Raadbaak* is the place where this takes place: our online community for professionals and intermediaries. In 2025, the *Raadbaak* had 1,100 professional members.

This online community enables professionals to discuss problems they encounter in their work in online and in-person meetings. Members of Parliament can also turn to the *Raadbaak* for all kinds of information on how to better help citizens. Professionals can get in touch via the Counsellor Helpline if they have questions, advice or wish to notify regarding signs/concerns.

The National Ombudsman in the field

Inadequate investigations by local authority on complaints about debt counselling

A couple is dissatisfied with the debt counselling their family has been receiving for many years. The debt counselling is being carried out by an organisation specialising in debt services on behalf of the local authority. However, the communication with this debt services agency has been troublesome for years. The couple now want nothing more to do with the agency. They lodged a complaint with the local authority.

This resulted in two meetings between the couple and the local authority. The local authority is of the opinion that the couple must first submit their complaint to the debt services agency before the complaint can be dealt with further. The local authority says that it is willing to discuss the matter with the debt services agency but only if the couple is also present. The couple was not keen to do this and lodged a complaint with the National Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman agrees that it is reasonable that complaints should generally first be dealt with by the organisation providing the debt services. However, in this case, the couple no longer has any confidence in the debt services agency as they do not respond to any of their messages. The Ombudsman is therefore of the opinion that the local authority should enter into discussions with the debt services agency. The couple does not need to be present during these discussions. They only need to consent to information being requested from the debt counsellor so that the local authority can clarify how things went so wrong. We were pleased to hear that, after our investigation, the local authority was willing to enter into discussions with the couple to restore their trust and confidence in the local authority.





The work of the Ombudsman for Children

It does not matter how old you are or where you are from: everyone has rights. Even children and young people. That is why there are laws and regulations to protect children. The Ombudsman for Children ensures that children's rights are observed in the European and Caribbean Netherlands. In this way, we ensure that the government, as well as organisations in the field of education, child care and healthcare, respect children's rights. We deal with many different issues, but the wellbeing and development of the child is always the key focus. The UNCRC, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is always the underlying principle for our work.

What does the Ombudsman for Children do?

Children, adults and professionals can contact the Ombudsman for Children if they believe that the government or other organisations are infringing children's rights. Reports may be focused on obtaining help or information but could also be a complaint about an individual situation. When dealing with a query, we always consider what is in the best interests of the child. We provide information, offer advice or contact the organisation named in the complaint. If we receive a significant number of complaints on a particular subject matter, we initiate an investigation. Specific reports in the media or from civil society organisations may also prompt an investigation. In our investigations, we focus on fundamental problems and pitfalls and on the underlying causes of the problems. We then advise the government and other organisations on how to address these issues.

In our advice, letters and reports, we draw the attention of the Cabinet, the House of Representatives, local authorities and other organisations to the children's rights that are under pressure. The Ombudsman for Children also gives advice on legislative proposals and policy. In 2025, we did this, for instance, in relation to the government's strategy for online children's rights and the poverty policy.

Together with children

We often work together with children and young people. In this way, we highlight what matters to them and how they experience their situation. We aim to ensure that all children's rights are respected. This means that all children in the European and Caribbean Netherlands can grow up safely, without violence and in an environment that helps them in their development. The interests of

“The enforcement of children’s rights is too non-committal and lacks consistency. These shortcomings are clearly evident in the wellbeing of children: research has shown that they rate their quality of life lower than in previous years. This is an alarming indicator of how we, as society, treat children. Investing in the environment in which they grow up is therefore urgently needed.”

Margrite Kalverboer

children and young people must always come first in all decisions and they must be treated equally. Their opinions matter.

There has been increasing emphasis on children’s rights over the past years and the interests of children are being acknowledged more and more in decision-making. Yet there is still much to be done. That is why the Ombudsman for Children continues to urge organisations and authorities to place the interests of children at the forefront in laws, policies and decisions. Children have the right to have a say in this or to be a factor. The Child Rights Impact Assessment, which has been in place since December 2024, enables the government to prioritise children’s rights when drawing up laws and regulations, and policy.

Facts and figures

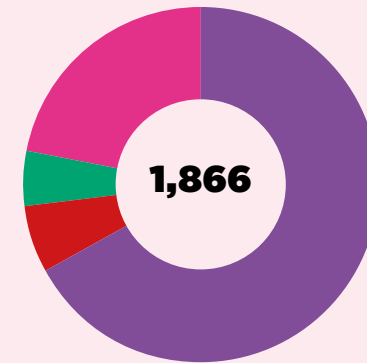
The Ombudsman for Children receives requests by phone, email, WhatsApp and via the complaints form on our website. In most cases, we lend a listening ear, provide information and refer people to the appropriate government or other organisation. In 2025, we received a total of 1,866 requests, which is 54 more than in 2024. Most complaints were related to subject matters that we usually receive complaints about, such as education, youth care, parental authority and conduct, poverty, immigration law and law enforcement authorities.

Of the requests that we received, we launched 12 investigations that were accompanied by a report. Together with the National Ombudsman, we wrote three letters: the Letter of Concern regarding asylum measures, a letter on the situation in reception centres for Ukrainian refugees and children, and the harshness letter on adults and children who are severely affected by the drafting and implementing of laws and policies.

In 2025, the Ombudsman for Children and the National Ombudsman also launched an investigation into the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The pact will have major implications for how European Member States deal with asylum applications. The Ombudspersons are investigating what the introduction of the new rules means for people applying for asylum in the Netherlands, and in particular for children and young people.

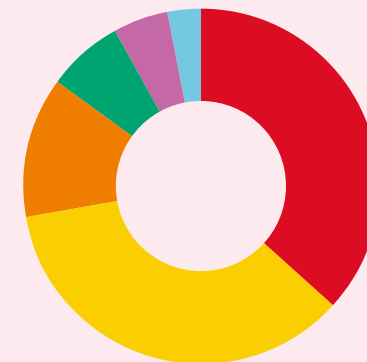
Number of requests received

Who made the requests?



Parents	1,250
Professionals	115
Children	95
Other	406

Requests were about



Education	554
Youth care	539
Parental authority and conduct	191
Poverty	106
Immigration law	76
Law enforcement authorities	43

Growing up in uncertainty

“We don’t have much money, and for that reason, we have moved often over the past 5 years. We have to move out of our house again now because the landlord wants to sell it and we cannot afford to buy it. Additionally, I am worried about studying and getting a driver’s license, because I have to pay for it all myself and really don’t have the money for it; my parents used my old savings account to pay off debts. I am currently taking a gap year during which I am working a lot so that I can save money myself for a driver’s license and studying, but studying is very expensive... So that is what I am worried about; I will therefore have to borrow a lot of money.”

17-year-old girl

Developments in 2025

Education

One of the key issues for the Ombudsman for Children in 2025 was education. The number of children not attending school continues to rise. Despite all the efforts made over the past years to improve this situation, many children with disabilities still do not have access to integrated special needs education, even though they are entitled to it. The problems with school transport are also growing and inclusive education is still not a reality.

In a letter for the debate on integrated special needs education in the House of Representatives, we highlighted that it is necessary to adopt inclusive education more rapidly. This also includes the school transport problems. School transport is just as much a type of care.

Children’s rights online

The lives of children are increasingly taking place online. Children often even hardly notice a difference between the online and offline worlds. Children face all kinds of problems in the online world, such as bullying, harmful content or unequal opportunities. According to the Ombudsman for Children, the government must therefore include a specified financial

justification, clear time lines and effective cooperation between departments in its strategy. It is important to support parents in this regard, but the wellbeing of children is also a responsibility of the government, the education sector and the private sector. We must therefore actively involve children, young people and parents in these matters.

In 2025, we contributed to an episode of BOOS (an investigative journalism programme on Dutch television) on vlogging families: families that earn their living by recording their daily lives on camera. Various studies have shown that the potential negative effects for children can be significant. In our earlier study [Als je het ons vraagt](#) (if you ask us) we also asked children about this. In 2025, we sent a letter to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment about our concerns regarding children in vlogging families. The State Secretary subsequently commissioned a study in which children were interviewed about the impact this had on them. The plan now is to amend the Working Hours Act (Arbeidstijdenwet), increase fines, develop a framework of standards for mental health and provide parents with better information.

Lhbtq+ kinderen

“When you have just come out, it is uncomfortable when everyone reacts negatively and no one offers support or guidance.” **16-year-old girl**



Domestic disputes and violence

“I find the bathroom to be the safest place in my house. No drugs are used, but there is a lot of swearing and shouting.”

14-year-old boy

The Ombudsman for Children in the field

The Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)

The **Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)** is a key point for further consideration for the Ombudsman for Children. This assessment is a tool designed to help policymakers keep children’s rights at the forefront at all times when developing legislation, regulations and policies. The aim of a CRIA is to safeguard children’s development and wellbeing in all proposals that affect them. Ultimately, we want all laws, regulations and policies to result in the best possible outcomes for children. We published the CRIA in December 2024. The CRIA helps the government reflect on the question: what does this policy mean for children? And equally important: are the best interests of the child paramount?

In 2025, we encouraged the government in various ways to use the CRIA and to prioritise the children’s perspective. We provided various ministries and organisations with information on the CRIA. Even if a proposal does not directly have an impact on children, it may still significantly affect their development and wellbeing through their parents or in the longer term. Thanks in part to our investigations and letters, the CRIA is being used more and more often.

While this is a step in the right direction, much remains to be done to ensure that children’s rights play a key role in all legislation and regulations.

When parents fall short

When parents are under pressure because of debts, complex regulations or a lack of appropriate support, for instance, this has a direct impact on the lives of their children. Children have the right to a safe and stable environment. But this can only be achieved if parents are given the space and support needed to play their role properly. Youth and protection policy must therefore not only focus on the child, but also at empowering parents.

The CRIA helps to highlight this correlation. By explicitly examining the effects of new policies on children and their parents, a broader and more realistic picture emerges. We can then prevent measures that are intended to solve problems from actually putting more pressure on families, for instance. Another important aspect is the voice of the children themselves. By taking their perspective seriously, policy can better reflect day-to-day practice.



The work of the Ombudsman for Veterans

The National Ombudsman has also been serving as the Ombudsman for Veterans since 2014. The Ombudsman for Veterans help veterans, military war and service casualties and their relatives when they come to a deadlock with the government or with organisations that carry out government tasks in the areas of healthcare, recognition and appreciation. The Ombudsman for Veterans campaigns for the interests of veterans and their relatives and helps government bodies to improve their services.

What does the Ombudsman for Veterans do?

The Ombudsman for Veterans helps veterans, military war and service casualties and their relatives when things go wrong between them and the government. We support them by providing answers and practical tools, and we show them the way to the appropriate information desks. Where necessary, we carry out further investigations. In areas where we have determined that the treatment of citizens can be improved, we challenge government departments to take a different view on their services and processes, with the aim of preventing similar complaints in the future.

According to the NLVi (Netherlands Veterans Institute), the Netherlands had more than 100,000 veterans in 2025. We deal with veterans' complaints, reports and enquiries regarding the Ministry of Defence, ABP (pension fund for employees in the government and education sectors), NLVi or a local authority, for instance, but veterans' family, friends and acquaintances can also

contact us. The Ombudsman for Veterans regularly receives indications that veterans' relatives do not feel heard or seen by the government. Due to the exceptional circumstances under which they live, they too can be overwhelmed. The home front plays a crucial role before, during and after military deployment.

Relationship with the Cabinet and Parliament

In 2025, the Ombudsman for Veterans had regular contact with the Cabinet and Parliament. During this contact, we advocated for the interests and needs of veterans, former and current military personnel and their relatives. For example, in 2025 we raised the issue of future-proof policy for veterans and military personnel as the new reality calls for new frameworks.

“Whatever your task or mission was: if you took risks, if you committed yourself and went where we asked you to go, then you should receive the same protection as everyone who returns. There should be no distinction between military personnel with or without veteran status. This is just as important for those at home as it is for the military personnel being deployed.”

Reinier van Zutphen

The Ombudsman for Veterans also conducts its own investigations. In 2025, we raised the issue of the lengthy processing times for personal injury claims for the second time. Furthermore, we advise the government, the House of Representatives and the Senate on the implementation of the Veterans Act and policies that affect the proper treatment of veterans – now and in the future. To this end, we regularly talk to veterans, veterans’ organisations, the Ministry of Defence, politicians and people in government.

The Ombudsman for Veterans is also a help desk for civil servants, staff at implementing bodies, intermediaries and other professionals to enable them to better assist veterans with a request for help.

Facts and figures

In 2025, we received 279 requests from veterans, current and former military personnel and their relatives. This is roughly the same as the number of requests received in 2024 (277). We received 27 requests from veterans’ relatives in 2025. The Ombudsman for Veterans resolved a large proportion of the requests received through intervention. Intervention includes, for example, putting questions to a relevant government organisation. In some cases, we helped veterans by lending a listening ear and engaging in conversation with them. In certain cases, we also found it appropriate to visit veterans and their relatives at home for talks. The Ombudsman for Veterans works closely with the Inspector-General of the Armed Forces when dealing with complaints. They regularly tackle issues and seek solutions together.

Many complaints about recognition

Most complaints last year concerned a lack of recognition, as was also the case in 2024. We also received many complaints about income support and full personal injury and other compensation. Some complaints consisted of multiple issues.

Who seeks the help of the Ombudsman for Veterans?

To gain insight into the group of veterans who seek the help of the Ombudsman for Veterans, we record the mission in which the applicant served, the branch of the armed forces and the veteran’s age group. The largest group of veterans who requested our help in 2025 served in the former Yugoslavia. This was followed by the group of military personnel who took part in missions in Lebanon and Afghanistan. As was the case in 2024, the vast majority of veterans served the Royal Netherlands Army. Most of the veterans were aged between 41 and 60.

Number of requests received

What were most of the requests about?



Developments in 2025

The geopolitical context has changed tremendously over the past ten years. The world is a complex game of chess, in which countries try to secure the best positions and expand their influence. Missions have become more complex, warfare is becoming digitalised and public engagement with the Ministry of Defence is growing. National security is not only safeguarded through traditional combat operations, but also through training, deterrence, surveillance and digital and hybrid operations. As a result, the divide between veterans and non-veterans is blurring. This calls for a different approach to healthcare, recognition and appreciation of military personnel and veterans.

In June 2025, we advocated for a veteran policy that is future-proof in the position paper **De veteraan van de toekomst** (The veteran of the future). It is not the legal status, but the burden experienced that should be the deciding factor for healthcare, recognition and appreciation. By re-examining how we appreciate veterans and military personnel, we can contribute to motivation, connection and staff retention. In response to this, the Minister has committed to drafting a new, transparent assessment framework for veteran status.

Insufficiently seen and understood

Veterans are citizens in society, but have served during war and peacekeeping missions under exceptional circumstances. Their experiences result in specific knowledge, skills and sometimes also healthcare needs. In 2023, we investigated what veterans need. The report

Gemeente, ken uw veteraan! (Local authority, know your veteran!) showed that many veterans feel insufficiently seen and understood by their local authority. Our recommendations were also included in the report.

Since then, organisations including the NLVi and the VNG (Association of the Netherlands Municipalities) have focused on strengthening the role of local authorities in implementing the Veterans Act (Veteranenwet) and on increasing knowledge and awareness. The fact that the recommendations are actually being acted upon is also evident from a growing number of local initiatives. The Municipality of Zutphen, for example, adopted a Veterans Bye-law this year and Tilburg City Council passed the 'Connecting with Veterans' motion (Verbinden met Veteranen) on 24 November 2025. Other local authorities are also actively working on the recommendations of the Ombudsman for Veterans.

Veterans' relatives and children

We published the report **Erken mijn zorgen** (Acknowledge my concerns) at the end of 2024, in which we included recommendations on how to improve support for relatives of veterans who are no longer in service with the Ministry of Defence. As a result of our report, the government began implementing our recommendations. They also set up a working group. Together with the Ombudsman for Children, we also launched a study on the impact of deployments on veterans' children. We expect to publish the research report in 2026.

Veteran care in detention

As early as 2021, the Ombudsman for Veterans called attention to veterans in detention through the report **Toegang tot veteranenzorg achter slot en grendel**. (Access to veteran care behind bars). This report showed that not enough consideration had been given to access to specific veteran care within prisons. There were certainly good intentions and initiatives, but these did not lead to adequate availability of care behind bars. We therefore made three recommendations and since then access for NLVi care coordinators to institutions has improved and work is underway to improve coordination between the Custodial Institutions Agency and the Ministry of Defence and care partners. These developments are promising, but not the final goal yet. Specific agreements are necessary.

Return trips to Bosnia

The NVLi has been organising return trips for Dutchbat III veterans and their relatives since 2022, based on recommendations by the Borstlap Committee. The aim of these trips is to help the veterans share their experiences and integrate better into society. In 2024, the Ombudsman for Veterans received a complaint from a veteran who had been involved in organising the first return trips for Dutchbat III veterans to Bosnia. The Ombudsman for Veterans subsequently held talks with other veterans and various organisations involved in these return trips and made recommendations.

Not urgent enough?

Pieter* is a veteran and finds himself in a difficult situation. He and his wife separated years ago. Since then, they have been going through a difficult divorce. Their joint house now needs to be sold. This is causing major problems for Pieter as he cannot afford to buy a new home.

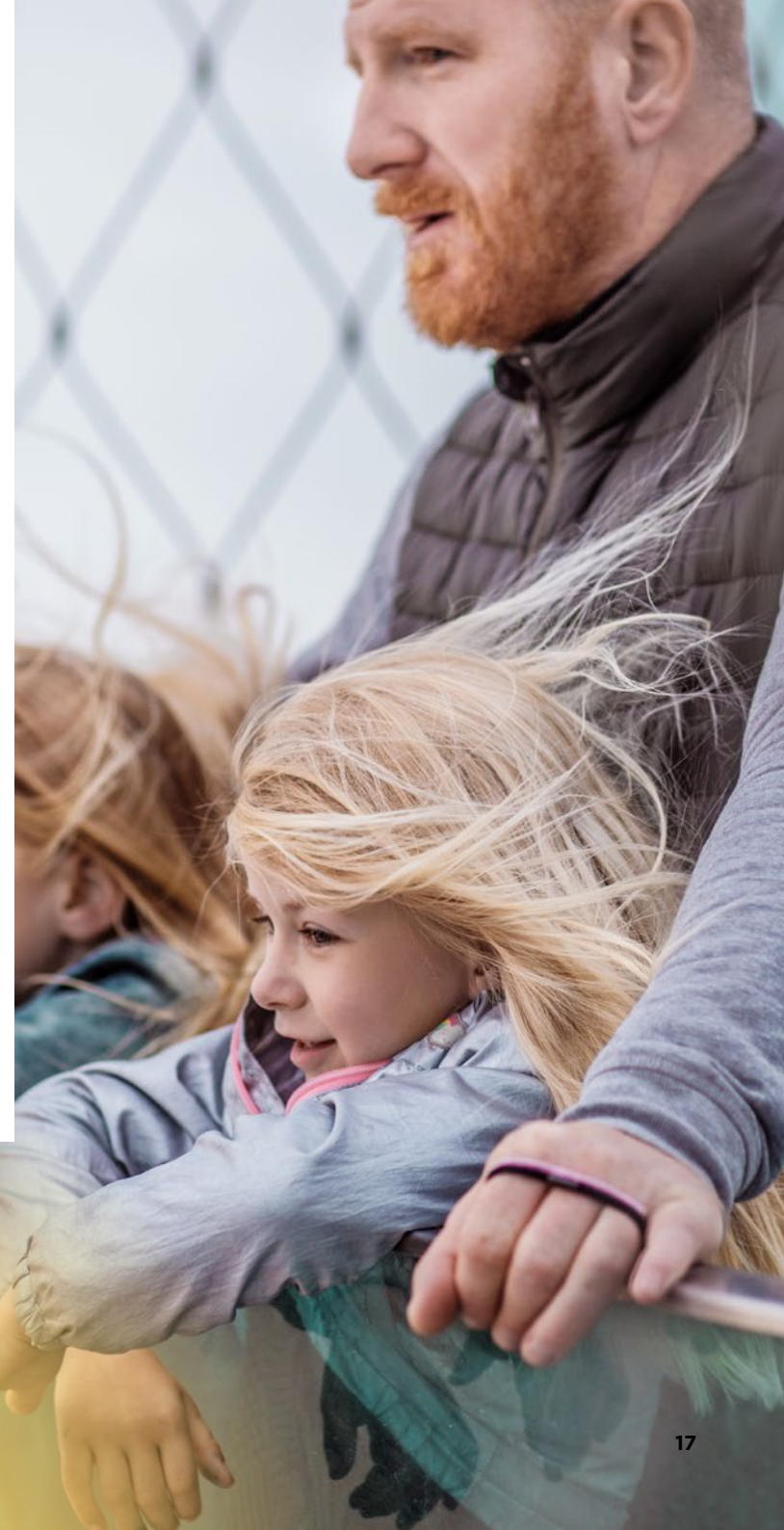
Following his deployment, Pieter developed post-traumatic stress disorder, which meant he was unable to work. He receives disability benefit from the UWV (Employment Insurance Agency), but you cannot apply for a new mortgage if you receive this benefit. Once the house is sold, he and his children are at risk of becoming homeless within a few months.

Pieter sought help from several organisations, but he kept being told that his situation was not urgent enough yet. On paper, he has assets and appears to be self-sufficient, but this is certainly not how he feels. Things have not been going well for him and his children for some time now. And the closer the sale of the house is getting, the greater his concerns.

* Not his real name

One week before the house was due to go on the market, Pieter came to us for help. Our colleague Hans listened to his story and recognised the urgency, which is why he immediately contacted several organisations. He emphasised that Pieter really needs help and asked if they could do something for him. Shortly afterwards, the local council took action. Two days later, the mayor and a council employee turned up at Pieter's doorstep. They listened to his situation and discussed possible solutions. Pieter was allowed to reapply for a certificate of urgency from the housing association.

After a month of uncertainty, there was finally good news: the certificate of urgency was granted and the housing association had even found a suitable rental property for him. This was just in time as the old house had been sold and was due to be handed over shortly. Fortunately, Pieter and the children would be able to move before that date. After a long period of stress and despair, this would mean a new and fresh start for them.





**nationale
ombudsman**
als het misgaat tussen
u en de overheid

The Ombuds Agenda

In addition to dealing with complaints, Ombudspersons also conduct investigations on their own initiative if, for example, a significant number of complaints on a particular subject matter are received. Specific reports in the media or from civil society organisations may also prompt an investigation. The subjects that the Ombudspersons focused on their own initiative are listed in the Ombuds Agenda. In 2025, these subjects were fundamental rights, poverty, participation and influence, access to public services and quality of life.

We presented the letters and investigations published on these themes by the National Ombudsman, Ombudsman for Children and Ombudsman for Veterans in 2025. We also addressed the progress of investigations that we started earlier and that are still ongoing.



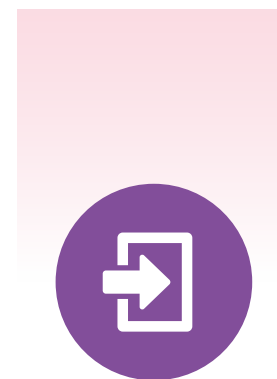
Fundamental Rights



Poverty



Participation and Influence



Access to Public Services



Quality of life

Fundamental Rights



Examples

Children's rights in asylum centres

Interrupted education, poor hygiene, unsafe conditions and accommodation that is unsuitable for children to live in – the Ombudsman for Children has been receiving reports about this for years. In 2023, the National Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children published the report **De crisis voorbij** (Beyond the crisis) on emergency asylum accommodation. Two years on and the situation had still not adequately improved so the Ombudsman for Children wrote a letter to the House of Representatives Committee on Asylum and Migration. In the letter she called for swift action to be taken. More attention was paid to children in asylum centres in 2025, but no major improvements have taken place yet.

Homelessness among adults and children

The number of homeless adults and children is rising every year. The National Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children had already drawn attention to this urgent problem as far back as 2019 and 2024. In 2025, we conducted a further investigation. Based on this, we concluded that we will take further steps on this issue in 2026.

Functioning of the rule of law

It is important that the government reviews laws more closely and implements them with care. New laws must be assessed more thoroughly in advance to prevent errors, such as the childcare benefits scandal. The Senate plays an important role in this regard. This is how you restore citizens' trust and confidence and reinforce the rule of law. This is what the National Ombudsman stated in a **written contribution** in preparation of the debate on the State of the Rule of Law in June 2025.

Serious concerns about new asylum measures

In March 2025, the National Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children contend in an urgent letter that the Emergency Asylum Act (Asielnoodmaatregelenwet) and the Act on the introduction of the two-tier status system (Wet invoering tweestatusstelsel) by the Minister for Asylum and Migration are marked by improper governance and contravene children's rights.

Reception centres for Ukrainians

Lack of privacy, inadequate facilities, poor treatment and forced relocations to other reception centres – in 2025, 110 complaints were received from

Ukrainians in 70 municipalities regarding asylum centres. In April 2025, the National Ombudsman sent a **letter** on this matter to municipalities responsible for reception. In December, he sent another **letter** on the same matter together with the Ombudsman for Children to the Minister of Asylum and Migration and municipalities.

Supervision and access procedure of CTER registration

Without knowing it, people end up in the Counterterrorism, Extremism and Radicalisation (CTER) register. This puts their right to privacy under pressure. They are then also unaware with which authorities and countries information about them has been shared. This means that they may unexpectedly run into problems abroad or elsewhere. In November 2024, the National Ombudsman published a report on this subject entitled **Blind vertrouwen?** (Blind Trust?). In this report, he described the CTER registration procedure as a 'black box'. In 2025, the Ombudsman discussed this with the involved parties and wrote to the House of Representatives to draw attention to the matter once again. Promised improvements have not yet been implemented.



Example from daily practice

Police provides inadequate justification for not having to process a complaint

A man requests an overview from his local council of data disclosures from the BRP (Personal Records Database). This showed that the police had accessed his BRP data hundreds of times in recent years. The man lodged a complaint with the police regarding this. He complained about the high number of requests and about the specific data that the police accessed. The police refused to deal with the man's complaint.

The man lodged a complaint about this with the National Ombudsman. He is under the impression that the police are doing everything they can to avoid having to disclose anything about the essence of his complaint. In his [report](#), the Ombudsman

concluded that the complaint was well-founded.

The course of events gives the impression that the police are primarily looking for reasons not to have to deal with the complaint, whereas the police should have looked at what was actually possible and how they could learn from the man's complaint. The man no longer has any confidence in the fact that the police will respond appropriately and decided to drop the matter. The National Ombudsman brought this report to the attention of the Data Protection Authority. The information obtained on the functioning of the police systems showed that they do not meet the legal requirements.

Example from daily practice

Growing up in uncertainty, report

On 24 September 2025, the Ombudsman for Children published the study Opgroeien in onzekerheid (Growing up in uncertainty). This study showed that the wellbeing and development of children who grow up in poverty remain under serious pressure despite numerous initiatives such as school breakfasts and support in the purchase of a bicycle, laptop or sports membership.

The study was based on data from five editions of the survey Als je het ons vraagt (If you ask us) conducted between 2016 and 2024.

The results showed that little has changed for children living in poverty. Over the years, these children have given their lives and their quality of life a lower rating than their peers who have enough money at home. For children who rate their lives with 5 or less, their wellbeing and prospects for the future are seriously at risk. Children's rights are under severe pressure for this group.

The Ombudsman for Children concluded that current poverty policy is failing. She therefore called on the government and local authorities to draw up a comprehensive poverty policy specifically focused on children, based on the 14 environmental conditions. She also called for dialogue with children growing up in poverty and asking them what they need. In addition, the Ombudsman for Children asked local authorities to provide financial support to parents (where necessary) to help in childrearing.



Poverty



Poverty and debt have a major impact on people's lives. In 2025, the National Ombudsman again observed more people ending up in problematic debt situations. This social insecurity is increasingly affecting those who work as well. Even the temporary reintroduction of the Temporary Energy Emergency Fund and the increase in the minimum wage, have not managed to resolve the problems for everyone yet.

The National Ombudsman wishes to contribute to the prevention of debts and the alleviation of poverty. In 2025, we informed public authorities of improper debt collection practices. We expressed our concerns about the lack of structural funding to help prevent people from falling further into debt. At the same time, we have seen that public organisations have improved their services with the aim of combating poverty. The Ombudsman would like to see a more proactive government. A government that informs citizens better and grants them what they are entitled to immediately and, where possible, automatically.

Children living in poverty have a bleak outlook for their future. According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), one in 28 children in the Netherlands lives in poverty. On average, one child per school class cannot take part in school trips or sports and worries about financial or other stress at home. These children start life at a disadvantage. Their development is under great pressure because of constant stress, not enough attention at home and a lack of opportunities.

Examples

Debt and fine collection by the CJIB

The National Ombudsman reiterated in a **letter** to the State Secretary for Justice and Security that the government must do more when collecting debts and fines to prevent further debts. The government should provide tailored solutions where possible and necessary. As of mid-2026, the CJIB (Central Judicial Collection Agency) will send payment reminders with no extra charge. In

mid-2025, the CJIB began waiving surcharges in unreasonable and harsh situations.

Improving Benefits Recovery Operation

The Benefits Recovery Operation was still not running smoothly in 2025. That is why the National Ombudsman made six recommendations with accompanying actions in a joint **memorandum** aimed at better alignment with the perspective

and needs of parents: ensure that parents can tell their full story as early as possible; provide clarity; integrate procedures and work in a solution-oriented manner; create space for implementation; take responsibility for the entire process; monitor the recovery operation from the parents' perspective. The State Secretary for Finance indicated that work would be started on many of the recommendations.

Participation and Influence



The National Ombudsman believes it is important that citizens have a say in the decisions and developments that directly affect them. This applies all the more to citizens who depend on the government for social support. In 2025, ten years after the decentralisations in which important tasks and responsibilities were transferred to local authorities, the Ombudspersons looked back at three studies on citizens' participation and influence under the Social Support Act (Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning; Wmo), the Participation Act (Participatiewet) and the Youth Act (Jeugdwet). This showed that decentralisation had a negative effect on the trust and confidence in the government.

Example

Report: Ten years as Ombudsman, ten years of decentralisation, ten years of declining trust

Ten years on, the National Ombudsman concluded that the decentralisation in the social sector contributed to growing mistrust in the government. Despite good intentions, many people do not feel heard and lack control over their lives. "Citizens did not lose faith and withdraw, but they were pushed aside", the Ombudsman said in the opinion piece **Tien jaar ombudsman, tien jaar decentralisaties** (Ten years as ombudsman, ten years of decentralisation).

Since 2015, local authorities have been responsible for youth support, work and income, and home support services. The aim was to make services more accessible, better and cheaper, but local

authorities were given fewer resources. This resulted in significant differences between local authorities and consequently to legal inequality.

Our studies on the Wmo (Social Support Act), Participation Act and Youth Act showed that citizens feel that they have very little influence. This undermines their self-esteem and increases mistrust. The WRR (Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy) had already warned that this could lead to health problems, unease and even conspiracy thinking. The National Ombudsman sees this in his complaints practice.

The decentralisations also made it clear how complex daily life is. Many people have to navigate

countless regulations and forms just to make ends meet. "We now understand better than we did ten years ago how difficult it is to get by in this society", said the Ombudsman. The government should ensure that everyone can participate. A tailor-made approach is not the solution for poor policy. Trust and confidence will only grow once citizens are allowed to contribute ideas, participate and have a say in decisions.

In 2026, the Ombudsman will present an Ombudsman's Vision on participation, designed to help public authorities organise participation fairly and with care. In doing so, the Ombudsman wants to contribute to better governance and to restoring citizens' trust in the government.



Example from daily practice

Tubbergen Council fails to deal properly with residents' complaints about arrival of asylum seekers

The Blauw Foundation complained to the National Ombudsman on the way in which Tubbergen Council deals with residents' complaints about the arrival of an asylum seekers centre in Albergen. During the complaints handling procedure, the council is represented by lawyers who were previously also involved in the asylum seeker centre case. This means that residents with a complaint could find themselves facing four lawyers during a hearing. As a result, residents feel they are not being heard. Furthermore, the Blauw Foundation has complained about the lengthy time being taken to process the complaints.

Ombudsman's office staff had talks with the foundation, the council and the mayor. The council acknowledged that the handling of the complaints is taking

too long. The Ombudsman assessed the council's conduct against the requirements 'listening to citizens' and 'proactiveness'. Conclusion: the council did not act appropriately. It did not adequately listen to the citizens and the maximum time frame was considerably exceeded. In his **report**, the Ombudsman concluded that the foundation's complaint was justified. It is clear that there were, and still are, heightened emotions and sensitivities surrounding the procedure of the arrival of the asylum seekers centre. The Ombudsman saw the impact this had, and continues to have, on both residents and the local council, and that trust and confidence in the future would have to be restored. The local council intends to achieve this by listening more effectively, being transparent and working together to find solutions.



Example from daily practice

Appropriate care after the age of 18

Marie* is 17 and will turn 18 in a few weeks time. She requires a lot of care because of her mental health issues. Marie lives in a residential group where she is almost constantly supervised. The local authority funds the residential group under the Youth Act. When Marie turns 18, she will no longer be covered by this Act. A few months earlier, the local authority had already determined that, from then onwards, the Long-term Care Act (Wet langdurige zorg; Wlz) would be the most appropriate care act for her. A care office would then arrange the funding.

Marie's parents submitted a Wlz application to the CIZ (Care Needs Assessment Centre) with the help of the youth protection officer involved. Marie's needs level was too low for her to be able to stay in the residential group. The parents could appeal against this decision by the CIZ, but they did not do so because they were greatly concerned about where their daughter would end up and because the youth protection officer involved was not adequately aware of the Wlz requirements.

Marie's 18th birthday is fast approaching, but there is still no plan for how her care can be

properly continued afterwards. The organisations involved agreed that she cannot live with her parents without support, but the organisations shifted the responsibility to each other.

The local authority indicates that they are no longer responsible for Marie after her 18th birthday because Marie has now been assessed and given a Wlz needs level. The youth protection officer said she is no longer involved in the case as Marie will no longer be under her charge after her 18th birthday. The CIZ stated that an appeal by Marie and her parents was still possible against the low needs level, but that processing this would take two to three months.

The National Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children believe that Marie should not be the victim of the strict division between the funding of care for young people and adults. This is why we asked the relevant care office to start providing care immediately and not to wait until the funding was finalised. Funding can be sorted out afterwards. The care office addressed this and within a week Marie received the care that she needs.

* Not her real name

Access to Public Services



Citizens are still finding it difficult to contact public authorities and implementing bodies. The government is exploring whether digital services can offer solutions, but citizens continue to face long waiting times and find it difficult to apply for services and assistance. This applies particularly to those who require multiple and long-term services. In such cases, people have to deal with various help desks, digital systems, laws and regulations and feel that they are being sent from pillar to post. A glimmer of hope in 2025, was the appointment of an ambassador who will campaign for the interests of Q fever patients.

Examples

Theme Digitalisation gets priority

The National Ombudsman regularly draws attention to structural problems within the government on his own initiative. One of these structural problems is digitalisation. The government is deploying digital technology on a large scale to improve its services. In many cases, this makes government services simpler and more efficient. However, digitalisation can also result in citizens not receiving what they are entitled to. This might include problems with online forms, inadequate justification for automated decisions, discrimination resulting from the use of artificial intelligence or inadequate protection against harmful online content.

The Ombudsman wants to get a better understanding of this subject matter and therefore initiated an internal investigation in mid-2025 into the role that digitalisation plays in complaints and how complaints handlers can deal with this. The role of digitalisation in the fields of policy and media is also being investigated. And subsequently, how the National Ombudsman can respond to this in line with his mission, vision and mandate.

Q Fever Ambassador appointed

The National Ombudsman drew attention to the situation of Q fever patients as early as 2012, then again in 2017 and once more in 2024. One of his recommendations was that the government, given its specific responsibility, should apologise to this group of patients.

In addition, the Ombudsman emphasised the importance of a centre of expertise dedicated to Q fever patients in the region. However, the government continued to take the view that they did not act unlawfully during the Q fever epidemic (2007-2010). No apologies were forthcoming in 2025 either. However, there was more consideration for Q fever patients. In response to the Ombudsman's call to support patients and seek the best possible solutions, the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport appointed a Q fever ambassador in 2025. This ambassador was tasked with ensuring that every Q fever patient feels heard within a year and perceives that their issues are being addressed. All of this was aimed at improving the quality of life for these people.

Quality of life



Examples

After the gas extraction in provinces of Groningen and Noord-Drenthe

Residents of the provinces of Groningen and Noord-Drenthe who were affected by the repercussions of gas extraction in the area, can turn to the National Ombudsman if they encounter problems with the handling of their damage claim or the reinforcement of their homes. It is important that they have as much accessible support as possible in their own surrounding environment, preferably from people they know and trust.

This is why National Ombudsman office staff work from Groningen to support residents in the earthquake-affected area and they play a role in meetings with residents and information sessions in the region. Our staff also maintain contact

Changes to the environment where citizens live and work are bound to have an impact on their daily lives. The government often plays a major role in the such changes. It is important that the government puts the interests of citizens first in this regard. What can citizens expect from the government? And what will the government do if things go wrong? The National Ombudsman examined the repercussions of gas extraction in the north of the Netherlands, spoke with water boards about proper claims settlement in dyke reinforcement projects, looked into claims settlement regarding the Almelo-De Haandrik canal and sounded the alarm regarding the health of residents living near the landfill site at Lagun on Bonaire.

with village consultation groups and community reference groups.

In 2025, the National Ombudsman received 98 requests from residents in the earthquake-affected area regarding claims settlement and reinforcement. Of these requests, 51 were about whether or not the NCG (National Coordinator Groningen) had taken action and 40 were about whether or not the IMG (Groningen Mining Damage Institute) had taken action.

We spoke with residents' support workers, earthquake coaches, but also with residents and scientists about the impact of the gas extraction. This helps us in determining how we can best support the residents.

New recommendations for Almelo-de Haandrik canal

The claims settlement in the area near Almelo-De Haandrik canal still has room for improvement. This was the conclusion of the National Ombudsman following visits to the area. He once again wrote a letter on this matter to the relevant member of the Provincial Executive, in which he recommended that apologies be offered to the residents of the affected area, but also that guidelines be drawn up to enable proactive action to be taken in the event of (suspected) new damage.

A response from the Provincial Executive of the province of Overijssel followed at the end of 2025. They indicated in the letter that they would take the National Ombudsman's advice to heart. The province will, for instance, enter into discussions with residents about offering an appropriate apology.



Example from daily practice

Local authority fails to deliver on promised berth

A man lives in a town with a harbour. He hears about the construction of a new housing estate near the harbour with the option of berths for boats close to the homes. He is interested in one of these homes with a berth nearby. Before purchasing the property, he enquires with the local authority about securing a berth. Based on the verbal and written response, as well as the policy in force at the time, the man assumes that he has been promised a berth near his new home. He buys the property.

Months later, he attends a meeting where the local authority announces that the allocation of berths will be changed for the part of the new-build estate where the man bought a house. It would now be done by drawing lots. He responded immediately by stating that this did not apply to him as he had already been promised a berth. However, the local authority stated that this was not the case.

This resulted in a discussion and subsequently a complaint to the local authority, but the council maintained its stance that a berth had not been allocated to the man. The man then lodged a complaint with the National Ombudsman, who then investigated the man's complaint regarding the alleged promise and its withdrawal.

In his **report**, the Ombudsman concluded that the man's complaint was justified. The local authority's statements, combined with the previously applicable policy, mean that the local authority raised a legitimate expectation that the man would be given priority for a berth. That is why the ombudsman recommended that the local authority find an appropriate solution that does justice to the expectations raised regarding the allocation of a berth.



Caribbean Netherlands

The three special municipalities of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba (collectively known as the Caribbean Netherlands), are also part of the work domain of the National Ombudsman. Residents of these municipalities can contact us if they have complaints about the government. This also includes local government: the public entities.

Citizens who wish to lodge a complaint in this regard are in a special position. Unlike citizens in the European Netherlands, they can contact the National Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children directly. They do not first need to complain to the public entity itself. Our staff visit the islands two or three times a year. There they hold walk-in sessions, where citizens can submit their complaints in person.

Over the past year, the complaints included the government's failure to respond to applications for leasehold, building permits and the conversion of leased land. They also concerned the lack of a response to complaints in general, waste management issues, illegal excavation of rocks (diabase), the police and healthcare on the islands.

The Ombudsman investigated nine long-standing complaints regarding the Spatial Planning and Development department of the Public Entity of Bonaire (OLB). This resulted in the report **Doorbreek de stilte!** (Break the silence!), in which the Ombudsman calls on the OLB to significantly improve its services to residents.

The situation regarding the landfill site at Lagun (the landfill) on Bonaire is urgent. The smoke, stench and constant uncertainty are taking a heavy toll on local residents and employees of waste management company Selibon. According to the National Ombudsman, the situation is so serious that immediate government action is required. The landfill must be closed immediately and a clean-up operation is needed.

Example from daily practice

Enough is enough: dumping of waste at the landfill on Bonaire must stop

During his visit to the landfill site at Lagun on Bonaire on 11 September 2025, the National Ombudsman spoke with local residents and the general director of waste management company Selibon. The smoke, stench and constant uncertainty are taking a heavy toll on local residents and Selibon employees working at the landfill. That same month, the Ombudsman wrote a **letter** to the Standing Parliamentary Committee on Kingdom Relations to highlight the seriousness of the situation and to once again bring it to the attention of the House.

In the subsequent parliamentary debate, the Ombudsman was quoted and a motion was passed calling on the government to close the landfill as soon as possible in consultation with the island's administration and to ensure that a clean-up operation takes place.

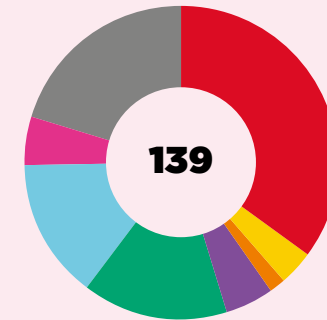
The landfill is still in use without a permit. Fires occur regularly and harmful substances have been found in the air, soil and sea. The ILT (Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate) describes the situation as urgent and concerning; the RIVM (National Institute for Public Health and Environment)

and Wageningen University confirm the risks to health and environment. Despite this, waste is still being dumped.

Meanwhile, families are experiencing health problems. Parents say that their children cannot play outside, they are incurring extra costs to stay safe indoors and there are no prospects for the future. The stress and uncertainty are having a profound impact on family life. Enough is enough: this practice must stop now. It cannot and should not be possible that what is unthinkable in the European Netherlands is taking place in the Caribbean Netherlands.

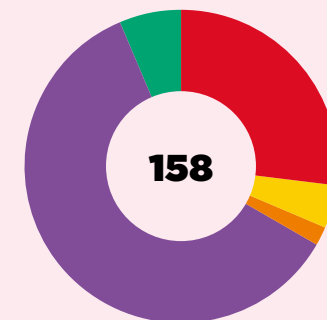
In addition to the immediate discontinuation of dumping waste, a clean-up operation is required. This should focus on what local residents living near the landfill need right now: acknowledgement of their concerns, assurance regarding their health and a living environment in which they can raise their children safely. Attention should also be devoted to former residents. Our report **Herstel bieden: een vak apart** (Providing redress, a specialism in its own right) will offer guidelines for a proper clean-up operation.

Requests received



Public Entity of Bonaire	49
Public Entity of Sint Eustatius	5
Public Entity of Saba	2
KPCN (Dutch Caribbean Police Force)	7
ZJCN (Care and Youth Caribbean Netherlands)	21
RCN (National Office for the Caribbean Netherlands)	20
Tax Administration	7
Other	28

Dealt with



Resolved through intervention	43
Investigation, including a report	7
Resolved or terminated during investigation	3
Information or referral	95
Terminated before investigation started	10

International activities

The National Ombudsman is also active internationally. He gathers and shares knowledge and experience with fellow Ombudspersons in Europe and beyond. This adds enrichment to the Ombudsman's daily work, which is also beneficial to Dutch citizens.

In 2025, the Ombudsman advocated for greater use of internationally recognised standards for Ombudsman work. He organised a Poldershop on the impact of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum on the work of European Ombudspersons. And he strengthened the cooperation with the European network of human rights organisations.

The Ombudsman for Children is a member of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC). Every year, this network issues a joint statement with recommendations. In 2025, this

statement was about children's right to physical health. In 2025, the ENOC also issued a **statement** on the situation of children in Gaza.

In 2025, the international work of the Ombudsman for Veterans focused on connection, supervision and oversight, and addressing the position of military personnel and veterans in a changing world. Through working visits (Lithuania, Geneva) and international conferences (Johannesburg), we helped facilitate better conditions, greater recognition and stronger collaboration.

Examples

European branch of the International Ombudsman Institute

The National Ombudsman is also the European Regional President of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI). This organisation is important for Ombuds institutions worldwide and in Europe. Members share knowledge and experience and the organisation supports Ombuds institutions in difficult situations. In January 2025, the National Ombudsman organised a training session for European Ombudspersons on persistent and cross-border complaining behaviour. The training session was provided by the National Ombudsman's office staff.

Collaborating with Greek, Indonesian and Serbian Ombudspersons

The National Ombudsman continued his cooperation with the Greek Ombudsman in 2025. In November 2025, during a meeting in Athens facilitated by the Dutch Embassy, both Ombudsmen discussed the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. In 2026, a Greek delegation will visit the Netherlands as part of strategy development.

A delegation of the Indonesian Ombudsman visited us in December. The National Ombudsman has been working with the Indonesians for more than ten years. The

discussions were primarily focused on the Ombudsman's mandate: how does an organisation deal with having its mandate expanded to include additional tasks so that governments can meet national and international obligations?

Finally, there was a final meeting as part of the collaboration with the Serbian Ombudsman. The project was concluded with a conference in Belgrade. It was agreed that both Ombuds organisations will continue to work together as they have done since the Serbian organisation was established.

Poldershop EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

In 2024, the Council of the European Union adopted the Pact on Migration and Asylum, which will enter into force in mid-2026. The EU aims to gain greater control over migration and distribute the number of refugees more fairly across Member States. The pact will have major implications for how European Member States, including the Netherlands, deal with asylum applications. The National Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children want to know what the introduction of the new rules will mean for people applying for asylum in the Netherlands, particularly for children and young people. The Ombudspersons therefore launched an

investigation into the pact in 2025, which will run until 2027.

As the rules will apply across Europe, it is meaningful and beneficial to talk to other European Ombudspersons about the potential consequences and the role of Ombuds organisations. The National Ombudsman, in his role as IOI European Regional President, therefore organised a Poldershop in Brussels in February 2025. A Poldershop is an informal non-hierarchical way of sharing knowledge and expertise and an opportunity for all kinds of questions and challenges to be openly brought to the table. Ombudspersons from various EU Member States were present, as was the European Ombudsman.

During the Poldershop, we discussed which parts of the Migration Pact are most relevant for the work of Ombuds institutions. The participants focused on five themes: the independent monitoring mechanism that Ombuds institutions can take part in, the care of unaccompanied minor refugees, the provision of legal aid, the pushback of refugees at the borders and the interpretation of the regulations and the directive that comprise the pact. In September 2025, an online follow-up of the Poldershop took place.

Our organisation and our people

How is our organisation structured? How do we deal with complaints about Ombudspersons? And how do the staff working at the offices of the National Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Children and the Ombudsman for Veterans experience their work?

Facts and figures

The number of staff working in our organisation remained roughly the same in 2025. In 2025, the National Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Children and the Ombudsman for Veterans had 234 staff members (217 FTEs). In 2024, they had 233 staff members (218 FTEs).

Staff composition

Our organisation mainly employs people with a professional training or university qualifications. Many staff members hold the position of investigator or complaints investigator. This is why most staff members fall within salary band 11.

Handling complaints

The National Ombudsman also receives complaints from citizens regarding the conduct of its own organisation and the Ombudsman's staff. These complaints come from citizens who are dissatisfied with their contact with an Ombudsman's staff member, for instance. In 2025, the Ombudsman received 172 such complaints, which was as many as in 2024. Most of the complaints in 2025 concerned staff failing to respond or failing to

respond in a timely manner, and the time taken to process cases. These complaints were mainly caused by waiting times for complaints.

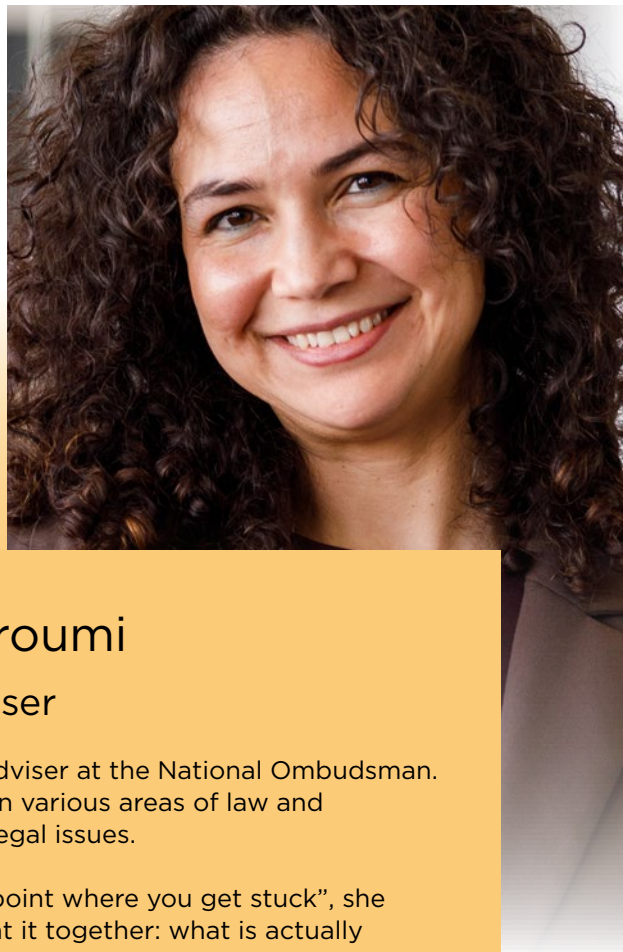
In 2025, 162 complaints were handled (169 in 2024). There may be a difference between the number of complaints submitted and the number processed as not all complaints are always completed in the same calendar year. Of the 162 complaints dealt with, 89 were formally processed. This means that a decision was issued by the Ombudsman. Of these 89 formally processed complaints:

- 26 complaints were justified;
- 31 complaints were unfounded;
- No decision was made on two cases;
- 30 complaints were partly justified/partly unfounded and/or no decision was made for part of the complaint.

Please also refer to the statistical appendix to this Annual Report at nationaleombudsman.nl for these figures.

The average sick leave rate for 2025 was 5.2 per cent. In 2024, this was 6.2 per cent.

“I see my work as a final stop in bridging the gap between the government and citizens. It is this search for what is possible that gives me energy.”



Smahane Karroumi

Senior Legal Adviser

Smahane is senior legal adviser at the National Ombudsman. She supports colleagues in various areas of law and contributes thoughts on legal issues.

“Sometimes you reach a point where you get stuck”, she explains. “Then you look at it together: what is actually possible?” That is precisely where she steps in. She brings rules and daily practice together and helps colleagues arrive at solutions that have been considered with care and are effective.

Furthermore, she organises training and onboarding sessions together with her direct colleague. In this way, Smahane ensures that colleagues know how to make use of available options, helps to clarify considerations and builds that pragmatic bridge in practice.

“The best thing about my work is that you can really be there for this group of people. So that someone feels heard and realises: I am not on my own.”



Hans Lankhuijzen

Complaints Investigator

Hans deals with requests from veterans and the Ministry of Defence at the National Ombudsman. He works in a small team and has a lot of contact with people who would normally not automatically seek help.

“If someone cannot come to us, we go to them”, he explains. Listening then plays a key role. Even if a request cannot be resolved immediately, it helps that someone can tell their story and is taken seriously.

A case that made a lasting impression: “When, after repeated insistence on our part, the Ministry of Defence increased the MIP (Military Invalidity Pension), as it had not been indexed for years. That is how you can really make a difference for veterans and military war and service casualties.”

“For a child it is never ‘just a case’. What seems small to us can mean everything to a child - whether they can join a school trip, get to say goodbye or move forward.”



Geeta Harnam

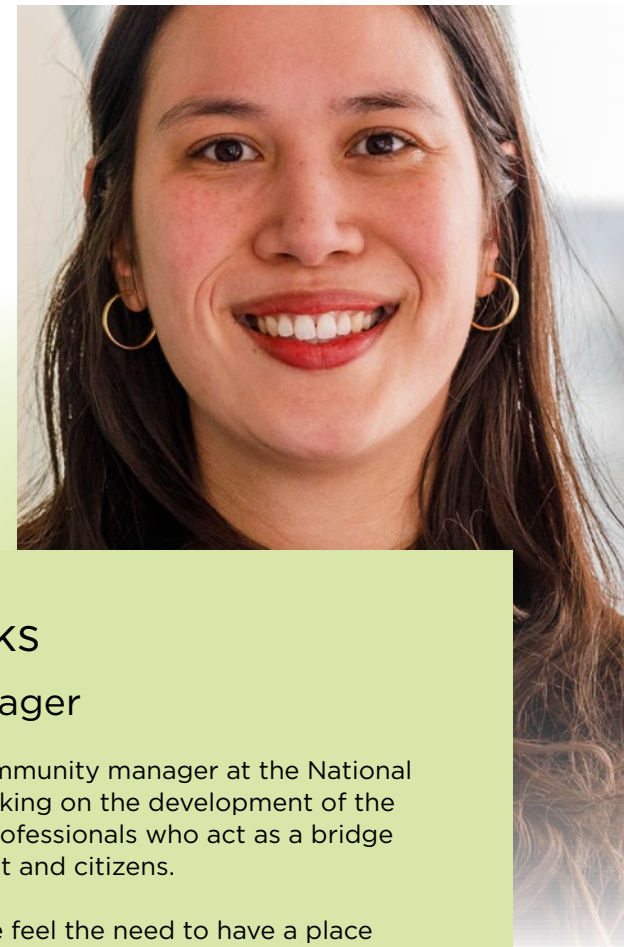
Complaints Investigator

Geeta works as complaints investigator at the Ombudsman for Children’s office on cases in the Care and Youth domain. She has dedicated herself to promoting the rights of the child every day.

“You sometimes see how significant something can be for a child”, she says. “While for others it might seem insignificant.” It is from this perspective that she tries to find solutions that can change a situation.

When asked which case she remembers most, she replies with a smile: “Which one out of so many?” She made it possible, for instance, for a child who was initially not allowed to go on a school trip to be allowed to go in the end. She also helped a sick child say goodbye to her grandparents who lived abroad. She helps children and families move forward through advice and small steps.

“What I really like is that professionals who act as a bridge between the government and citizens, come together to share knowledge and experiences. In this way, we work together to improve services for the public.”



Lys-Anne Sirks

Community Manager

Lys-Anne works as a community manager at the National Ombudsman. She is working on the development of the *Raadbaak*: a place for professionals who act as a bridge between the government and citizens.

“You can tell that people feel the need to have a place where they can meet”, she says. “To share what works, but also what does not work.” Based on that need, she brings professionals together and encourages the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Lys-Anne ensures that there is room to share examples from practice and observations. This creates a place where professionals learn from one another and use that knowledge to further improve services for citizens.

“I think that it is important that people can easily understand what the Ombudsman does. If that helps someone find appropriate support, even if my contribution is small, it means a lot to me.”



Remy Libbenga

Senior Content Specialist

Remy works as content specialist at the National Ombudsman. He creates content that shows what the Ombudsman does and why. Together with his colleague Charlotte, he maintains the social media channels, writes articles and ensures that information is easy to find across various platforms and is understandable.

“You want people to be able to grasp what it is about immediately”, he explains. “So that they know what the Ombudsman can do for them.” That is why he creates content that clearly explains complex topics and appeals to people.

He writes articles with a clear beginning and end so that they are comprehensible for everyone. In doing so, he makes it clear what the Ombudsman does and why that is important for the public. “When people see the content, it also helps them to find us”, he says. In this way, his work helps raise the Ombudsman’s profile.



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