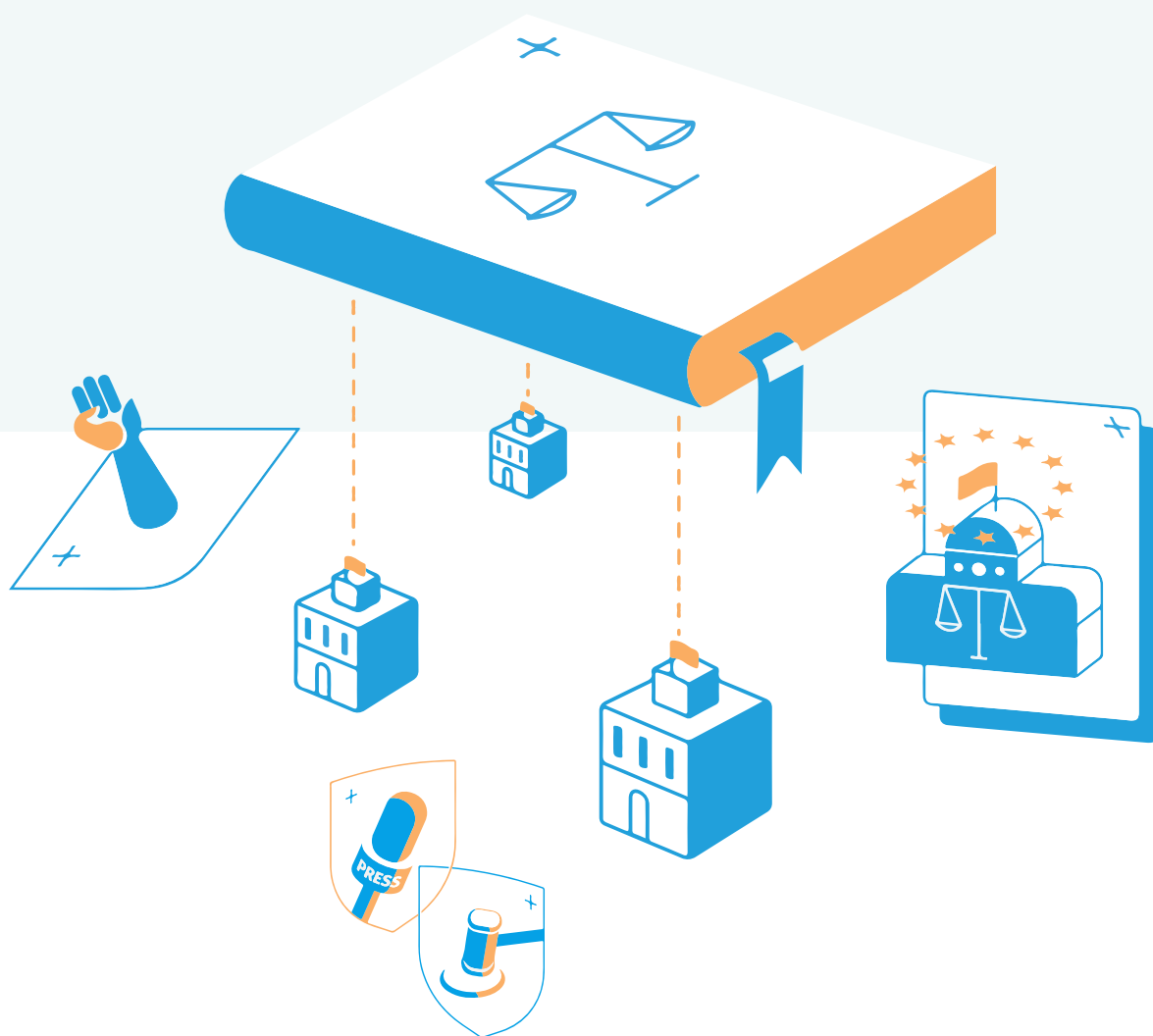


# Annual Report 2025



**Meijers Committee**

**Standing Committee of Experts on International Migration, Refugee and Criminal Law**

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# Foreword

Sanne Buisman, Chair of the Meijers Committee

In 2025, we said farewell to Ashley Terlouw as Chair of the Meijers Committee, who served as Chair of the Meijers Committee from 2020 to 2025. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for her dedication, leadership, and excellent cooperation within both the Daily Board and the Committee. Her knowledge and wisdom will be greatly missed.

As of September 2025, I have officially assumed the position of Chair of a distinguished group of professionals; a role I am deeply proud of, yet one that also presents considerable challenges.

Recent social and political developments in the Netherlands, Europe, and across the world continue to demonstrate, often painfully, that the rule of law cannot be taken for granted; it is inherently vulnerable. The work of the Meijers Committee therefore remains of enduring importance. In the years ahead, we must continue our efforts to safeguard the rule of law by engaging politicians, jurists, and civil servants in recognising the significance of the European rule of law, by identifying rule-of-law deficiencies within European legislative proposals, and by offering concrete recommendations to address these issues.

We will continue to do so by producing high-quality opinions and ensuring that these are actively brought to the attention of our extensive network, among others in Brussels and The Hague, at the highest political levels. This approach, however, is not without its vulnerabilities. The Committee relies on the voluntary contributions of its members. Without their knowledge, experience, expertise, and commitment, the Meijers Committee could not exist. At the same time, increasing demands are being placed on our members outside the Committee. Coupled with recent budget cuts in higher education, the lack of investment in the judiciary, and reductions affecting (social) legal aid, many of us are now required to achieve the same results with fewer resources and limited time.

As Chair, I am committed in the coming years to upholding our vision and mission, while also addressing the new challenges arising in today's social and political climate. These include, among others, the protection of vulnerable groups, the preservation of democracy, and the growing impact of technology on the legal order.

An important instrument in this context is the YMC-project, which not only prepares a new generation of lawyers to serve as defenders of the rule of law, but also strengthens our Committee and, hopefully, inspires future active members to join us in the long term. Furthermore, we must continue to enhance the professionalism of our financial administration and fundraising efforts, so as to ensure that we remain able to initiate and execute significant projects in the years to come.

Fortunately, I do not stand alone in this endeavour, nor could I. As mentioned, we are a group of talented and dedicated individuals, and I intend to make the best possible use of everyone's abilities and strengths. I will continue to seek shared purpose and collective vision, and I very much look forward to building upon our cooperation in my new role.



**Sanne Buisman**  
**Chair of the Meijers Committee**

# Mission and organisation

## Mission

The Meijers Committee influences the quality of European legislation and Dutch legislation with a European component and promotes the safeguarding of human rights through its commentaries, in which (proposed) legislation is critically analyzed for shortcomings the democratic process and for rule-of-law vulnerabilities in regulatory design, and provides recommendations to establish safeguards. It (pro)actively engages in dialogue with stakeholders and organizes expert meetings to ensure wide dissemination of its commentaries. In addition. Through the Rule of Law project. The state of the rule of law in the European Union is monitored.

As a rule-of-law watchdog, the Meijers Committee raises awareness among legal professionals, civil servants, and politicians about the rule of law in EU legislation. The Committee's commentaries influence EU decision-making. The European Commission, the Council, the European Parliament, other European institutions and national legislators regularly implement the Committee's recommendations. The Committee's work is widely recognised, promoting uniform application of EU law and protecting democracy from threats.

## Organisation

The Meijers Committee is a unique group of legal scholars, judges, lawyers and policy experts based in the Netherlands, dedicated to promoting a transparent and democratic European Union in which fundamental rights and the rule of law are safeguarded. The approximately 40 members participate in Committee activities on a voluntary basis. The Committee

maintains a varied network, engaging in regular contact with relevant European and Dutch organisations in the different areas in which we are involved.

The day-to-day administration of the Meijers Committee is conducted by the chair (Dr. Sanne Buisman), the two vice chairs (Dr. Viola Bex Reimert and Dr. Sarah Eskens), the secretary (Jasper van Berckel Smit) and the project officer (Belinda Okoobo). The organisation and the substantive workflow of the Committee is supported and executed by the Secretariat, including communicating with important stakeholders at both Dutch and European level and keeping track of important developments in the legislative sphere. The role of the project worker is to manage the Rule of Law project. The Daily Board comes together every six weeks. Additionally, the whole Committee meets every six weeks too, with a plenary meeting.

The Committee members are affiliated with one or more of the five subcommittees, and/or the Rule of Law Project. They maintain contact with each other whenever it is necessary. The subcommittees each focus on one area; these are as follows: (i) institutional law, (ii) asylum law, (iii) criminal law, (iv) migration law, (v) privacy and non-discrimination law. The subcommittees also meet every six weeks.

In the plenary meeting and subcommittee meetings, a decision is made regarding which developments and signals the Committee will act upon. In this consideration, the decisive factor is whether there is a European dimension and whether an intervention by the Commission can add value compared to the activities of other NGOs and institutions.

# Explanation of letters and comments

In 2025, the Meijers Committee intervened in a broad range of areas, producing over 20 comments with impact at national level, EU-level and in the Council of Europe. Through these interventions, the Meijers Committee has influenced political debates, highlighted problematic aspects of legislative proposals, and suggested a wide range of amendments.

In doing so, the Meijers Committee has sought to ensure European legislation respects the rule of law and guarantees fundamental rights for everyone. Alongside our commentary, 2025 saw the Meijers Committee expand into new terrain: the Young Meijers Committee was formed, equipping a group of young rule of law defenders with the tools necessary to fortify the rule of law across the EU.

## EU migration and asylum policy

2025 saw a host of developments in relation to EU migration and asylum policy, to enact the reenvisioning set out in the 2024 EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Meijers Committee intervened on several occasions with regard to the proposed Return Regulation, critiquing the approach to detention and judicial remedies (CM2501), through to the mutual recognition of return decisions (CM2513), as well as offering targeted amendments (CM2517) and a position paper addressed to the Dutch Government's first chamber, (Eerste Kamer) in advance of their expert meeting on the European Commission's proposal (CM2516).

Firstly, in CM2501, the Meijers Committee considered the extent of the rights ensuing from Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and Article 6 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (CFREU) and how these ought to be reflected in the proposed Return Directive (which has now been withdrawn and replaced with the proposed Return Regulation). We advocated for the maintenance of the existing Article 15 of the 2008 Return Directive, to maintain continuity and certainty. Later in CM2505,

we responded to the Commission's Return Regulation Proposal. Whilst we noted the positive elements of this proposal, such as provisions for full and ex nunc judicial review of return decisions, we expressed concern that the proposal weakens key protections. Two core aspects of contention were the reduction in the prioritization of voluntary return and the creation of a legal basis for return hubs, without adequate legal safeguards. As such, we submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations by which the co-legislators could amend the proposed Regulation. Further, in CM2517, we submitted amendments in response to the new compromise text of the Return Regulation, noting that some fundamental rights safeguards had been deleted or watered down. This is complemented by our analysis in CM2513 where we warned against adopting the mutual recognition of return decisions, as had been introduced in the European Commission's proposal.

Beyond the Return Regulation, we also took the opportunity to issue a comment on the EU's increasing reliance on third country migration agreements (CM2506), the safe third country concept under the Asylum Procedure Regulation (CM2518) and the proposed reform of the European Border

and Coast Guard Regulation, governing the operation of Frontex (CM2519). In this latter piece, the Meijers Committee expressed concern about the expansion of Frontex's activity in third countries, in addition to plans to increase the standing corps and intensify drone surveillance. We contended that these new developments would aggravate existing accountability gaps, including structural and administrative deficits.

Another area in which the Meijers Committee was highly active in 2025 was regarding the proposed Facilitation Directive. In CM2503, we provided comments on how to reconcile the legal basis of the Criminal Law Facilitators Package (Article 83 TFEU) with safeguards to prevent criminalization of humanitarian actors, noting that the EU's criminalisation powers should go hand in hand with exemptions where they touch upon Charter rights. In CM2509, the Meijers Committee wrote to the permanent representatives to the EU, shifting dialogue from whether humanitarian workers should or can be exempted, to how such an exemption can be effectively incorporated into the Facilitation Directive.

### **Transparency**

In CM2515, the Meijers Committee reflected on the question of which legislative documents are or are not to be made public by the Council of the EU. We noted that the lack of full transparency with regard to the document category "Working Documents" undermines the comprehensiveness of the Council's register, as well as previous efforts of the institution for greater transparency, such as the creation of the EU law tracker. We issued a series of recommendations aimed at the Council to rectify this transparency gap. In CM2509, we also took issue with the lack of transparency occurring, though with a

different target audience: the Dutch cabinet. After the cabinet decided to no longer actively publish general diplomatic reports, the Meijers Committee sought to remind the cabinet of their EU and national legal obligations in relation to active disclosure, including to uphold the rule of law.

### **Criminal law**

Elsewhere (CM2510), the Meijers Committee reacted to the obligations of the EU and its Member States to prevent impunity for core international crimes. The comment explained that EU legal instruments and the EU- ICC Cooperation Agreement impose clear obligations to support ICC enforcement. It further stressed the role of Eurojust in this process, and reacted to the new bill criminalizing the glorification of terrorism.

### **Commentary levelled at Dutch proposals**

The scope of the Meijers Committee's commentary did not only extend to EU level critique, but also to legislative proposals put forward at national level in the Netherlands, where the Meijers Committee is based. To this end, the Meijers Committee becomes involved in national proposals where there is an EU element, and where the legislation falls within our thematic remit.

In this regard, the Meijers Committee responded to the online consultation on the draft bill to criminalize the glorification of terrorism and publicly expressing support for terrorist organizations (CM2511). We noted that Member States cannot simply prohibit a broader category of expressions than required by the Directive. Furthermore, in our comment CM2514, we took the opportunity to respond to the online consultation on the Netherlands' draft bill 'Amendment on the Criminalization of Illegal Stay'. We pointed out that the draft bill contains no exceptions for groups that, under

EU law, cannot be punished for unlawful residence, does not provide safeguards for access to basic rights, and does not include grounds for exclusion of punishment. Additionally, in CM2504, we responded to the published legislative proposals for the introduction of a two tier system (Wet invoering tweestatusstelsel) and the Asylum Emergency Measures Act (Asielnoodmaatregelenwet). Our analysis showed that the proposals violate fundamental legal principles, are not feasible within current capacity, and do not provide a structural solution to the asylum quandaries they sought to resolve.

### **The interpretation and amendment of treaties and the ECHR**

Earlier in the year, we offered input on both the necessary treaty amendments for the accession of a new EU Member State, and passerelle and flexibility clauses in EU decision-making (CM2502). With the resurgence of the EU Treaty reform debate, the Meijers Committee further proposed nine EU treaty amendments to improve the rule of law in the EU, including strengthening the Article 7 TEU procedure, reinforcing the independence of the judges and Advocates General of the Court of Justice by revising Article 253 TFEU and enshrining a right for the European Parliament to initiate infringement proceedings (CM2507).

In our last comment of the year, CM2520, The Meijers Committee sought to intervene in advance of a ministerial conference on 10th December 2025, where State Parties to the ECHR would seek to clarify how they interpret the ECHR. This meeting was called for in the aftermath of the letter of nine EU Member States of 22 May 2025 in which they expressed their criticisms of the ECtHR's interpretation of the Convention, particularly in the context of asylum and migration. We noted that constructive dialogue with

the Court is both legitimate and valuable but attempts to curtail its interpretative authority undermine the integrity of the Convention system. In addition, preserving the Court's independence is essential to maintaining trust, stability, and justice across Europe

### **Conclusion**

In our Heidag in September 2025, one beckoning call stood out. "We are awake, we are not asleep" was repeated, symbolising alertness, the importance of interventions and ultimately the objective of the Meijers Committee itself: to hold the EU and national authorities accountable in respect of their fundamental rights guarantees and obligation to uphold the rule of law. In 2025, we most certainly came together to do this, as our 20 comments, range of impact and YMC project stand as testament to.

# Summary of Rule of Law Project 2025

## Young Meijers Committee

In 2025, the Meijers Committee's Rule of Law Project took a new direction with the creation of the Young Meijers Committee (YMC): a group of motivated young people with a desire to defend the rule of law. The Meijers Committee founded the YMC as a response to the growing threats to democracy and the rule of law in the European Union. This initiative aimed to equip motivated students and young professionals with essential skills, knowledge and practical experience, empowering them to challenge the current trajectory of the EU and develop solutions for pressing rule of law challenges.



This year-long training program entailed interactive workshops, hands-on legal experience, and direct engagement with EU decision-makers, enabling members to develop the skills and expertise needed to critically assess the EU's current trajectory and propose tangible solutions to rule of law challenges.

Starting off with the opening ceremony, participants met the Meijers Committee and its members, and learned about the Rule of Law Project. The event featured discussions on pressing EU rule of law concerns, followed by an interactive game where participants explored the arguments used by Member States—both to advocate for stronger legal protections and to justify backsliding.

Alongside these projects, the Young Meijers Committee members attended four workshops, orchestrated by our Meijers Committee members. These took place at different locations across the Netherlands including the University of Leiden, Radboud University and Utrecht University, demonstrating the broadness of the Meijers Committee's roots. The first of these took place in March 2025 and was led by Prof. Jasper Krommendijk and Prof. Kees Groenendijk. It took the YMC Members through the main elements of the legislative process in the EU and how it can be used by NGOs and citizens to support the Rule of Law. Additionally, this workshop shared the history of the Meijers Committee with its latest new affiliates, and how it is equipped to defend the rule of law.

In May, Dr. Alice Dejean de la Bâtie and Dr. Tom Theuns took the Young Meijers Committee through the role of civil society in protecting the Rule of Law. This workshop artfully explained the European rule of law dynamics and actionable strategies for civil actors to confront threats. Further into the YMC trajectory, Prof. Jannemieke Ouwerkerk elicited

further comprehension of rule of law mechanisms by giving a workshop on protecting the rule of law across borders. With its focus on the European Arrest Warrant and national courts, the workshop drew out complex and pressing issues regarding mutual cooperation in the context of rule of law decline. Indeed, due to worrying rule of law backsliding in some parts of the EU, national courts became increasingly faced with pressing questions on the precise limits of their legal obligations under the EAW mechanism. Understanding the nature of these discussions and mechanisms brought further layers to the YMC's rule of law understanding thus far.

In one final workshop, on fire-walling national constitutions, organized by Dr. Evelien Brouwer and Dr. Maarten Hillebrandt, participants explored how the constitutions of EU member states have been pressurized in recent years, and what steps have been taken to restore the integrity of the constitution. YMC Members considered what aspects of constitutions are most critical to "firewall". Through these four insightful workshops, YMC Members were equipped with skills, knowledge and experience to better defend the rule of law in Europe.

Alongside these workshops, YMC members were actively involved in subcommittee discussions and have represented the Meijers Committee at the Rechtstaat Parade. They also created a final research piece per subcommittee. These are available to read here on the website. The Privacy and Non-discrimination group of the Young Meijers Committee created a report which asks: how could the AI Act be strengthened to address discriminatory profiling risks more effectively, in light of lessons learnt from the GDPR and other relevant EU instruments? The Criminal Law group responded to the addition of hate crimes to the list of crimes regulated at EU level. They suggested close alignment with the ECtHR's case law. The Migration law group developed a report on the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum, analysing these emerging changes through the lens of three core rights: the prohibition of refoulement, the right to asylum and the right to an effective remedy. These three projects allowed for a great depth of analysis on emerging issues, yet maintain the typical policy-influencing Meijers Committee lens, each supplying practical recommendations to ensure these new developments uphold fundamental rights.



We are very grateful to our first cohort of the Young Meijers Committee for their enthusiasm, dedication and input. We wish them all success going forward in defending the rule of law.

### **SLAPPs project**

A further development occurring in 2025 was the engenderment of the Meijers Committee's comparative SLAPPs project. This project is centred around reflecting on the implementation of the EU SLAPPs Directive and Council of Europe Recommendations across a variety of different countries and enabling these approaches to be compared. Under the oversight of Committee Members Prof. Tarlach McGonagle, Dr. Alice Dejean De la Batie, Dr. Pola Cebulak and Project Officer Belinda Okoobo, the Meijers Committee has reached out to experts with knowledge of the SLAPPs landscape in their respective regions. These experts are in the process of generating insightful reports, which will be subject to comparison. This will culminate in a conference in June 2026.



# Impact of the Meijers Committee in 2025

In 2025, the Meijers Committee's comments produced a range of impact. To name just some of the impact we have produced, we have been cited in a range of expert reports, letters and commentary, such as the European Parliamentary Research Briefing and Wetenschappelijke Commissie (WeCo) van de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Rechtspraak (NVvR)'s letter to the Minister of Justice and Safety. We have engaged in discussion about our concerns with the European Commission and the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer, as well as with members of the European Parliament. We have participated in the expert meeting in the Senate regarding the proposal for a European Return Regulation. We have received letters from the Private Office of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

On several occasions, our work has been referenced by the Dutch parliament, including here by the Tweede Kamer, regarding CM2410 about the limited involvement of civil society in the legislative process. The Council of State also refers to this CM comment in their advice on the introduction of a dual status system (Wet invoering tweestatusstelsel).

Additionally, in 2025, the Meijers Committee was cited in 47 academic articles and books (source: Google Scholar). These were published not only in English, but also in French, German and Serbian, demonstrating the extensive reach of the Meijers Committee's commentary and the continued relevance of older commentary, with references as far back as 2016.

In total, the number of files downloaded from the Meijers Committee's website in 2025 was 2395, an increase by 34% from 2024. Our most downloaded comment of 2025 was our Comment on the Proposal for a Return Regulation (CM2505) which was downloaded 95 times on the English side of

the website and a further 75 times on the Dutch counterpart. Secondly, the Annual Report was downloaded 149 times and thirdly, Commissie Meijers reactie op wetsvoorstellen Asielnoodmaatregelenwet en Tweestatusstelsel (CM2504) was downloaded 119 times.

Furthermore, we have gained 739 new followers on our LinkedIn account this year, where our comments are shared with the wider public. Through LinkedIn, we have generated 96,632 impressions in the past year, with 1,857 reactions to our posts. The ability to convey our messages in public, to spark discussion and ideas and to reach a varied audience is at the crux of the meaning of impact for the Meijers Committee. This is compounded by the creation of the Young Meijers Committee, wherein the expertise of the Meijers Committee members can be passed on to a diverse range of rule of law defenders, creating impact through learning, skills and engagement.

## In-depth Impact analysis

Our comment, CM2501 was cited in the European Parliamentary Research Service EU Briefing: "The Meijers Committee points out that rules on detention and judicial remedies in the proposed regulation need to comply with human rights standards concerning the justification of detention, the limits imposed on its duration, and the speedy review of the lawfulness of detention. They also suggest retaining specific rules from the current Return Directive, including the safeguards applicable during the return process and the requirement for there to be a connection between the returnee and the receiving country."

Furthermore, CM2503 on how to reconcile the legal basis of the Criminal Law Facilitators Package (Article 83 TFEU) with safeguards to prevent criminalisation of humanitarian actors has created impact. The

Meijers Committee was cited as an entity from whom the rapporteur received input in the formulation of the draft report of the Committee of Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. Our suggestion that a clear exemption to prevent criminalisation of humanitarian actors should be included in the text of the Facilitation Directive and not just in the recitals appears to have been taken onboard in this draft report of the Committee. This is suggested in the changes. A new Article 3 (2a) is proposed: “2a. The provision of ‘humanitarian assistance’ shall not constitute a criminal offence.”

In CM2504, we suggested including relevant social organisations in the law-making process and providing them sufficient time to respond. The IND was involved in a round table discussion on the two bills on 24 March showing some level of stakeholder consultation, possibly resulting from our comment.

In CM2505, we emphasised that Voluntary departure should be prioritised in the Return process. This was emphasised in the LIBE report. Furthermore, Senior Policy Officer at ECRE, Ahmad Reshad Jalali commented on our post that it was “very timely and useful. Many thanks for the great work”.

Our comment CM2506 on Third Country Migration Agreements was cited by de Rechtspraak in Nieuwsbrief Rechtspraak Europa.

Further, the D66 party referred to CM2509 in a cabinet discussion: “The Meijers Committee states that a judge will not accept the non-disclosure of official reports if a decision on an asylum application is made based on the information. Does the Minister share this expectation, the members of the D66 parliamentary group ask.” (Translated from Dutch). In addition, this comment received support from Tim Staal, editor of Investico and Director of transparency expertise

centre SPOON, on LinkedIn. He commented: “Even the Meijers Committee, filled with eminent jurists, tears apart the cabinet decision to keep official reports on the safety of other countries [...] secret from now on.”

Our Comment, CM2511, was cited in Wetenschappelijke Commissie (WeCo) van de Nederlandse, Vereniging voor Rechtspraak (NVvR) letter: ‘The WeCo is of the opinion that the advice of the Meijers Commission contains weighty arguments against the introduction of the proposed criminal provisions and requests the minister for that reason to further address the question of whether he is of the opinion that the Dutch State could act in contravention of EU law with the present bill.’ (translated from Dutch)

CM2512 was referenced in Adviseeraad migratie’s document ‘Aandachtspunten bij de verdere behandeling asielwetsvoorstellen en het amendement ‘strafbaarstelling onrechtmatig verblijf’ and further referenced in Nederlands Juristenblad. Furthermore, UNHCR Nederland reposted our Comment, stating “UNHCR concurs with this and emphasises that the asylum measures as presented are not mandated by the Pact.” (translated).

CM2514 is referred to by the Advice section of the Raad Van Staat. This is then replicated in Kamerstuk 36855.

CM2515 on ‘Working Documents’ and transparency of the legislative process in the Council of the EU was received and discussed by the permanent committee for European Affairs. The committee decided to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Van Weel, to respond to our letter, which we await with anticipation.

Our CM2516 Commissie Meijers position paper for the EC experts’ meeting on the proposal for a return regulation was presented to the Eerste Kamer in the

expert meeting in the Senate on 30th September 2025. The Meijers Committee's Jasper van Berckel Smit and Viola Bex-Reimert both gave input here. Furthermore, the Comment was then cited in a report of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Asylum: 'The members of the VVD and CDA parliamentary groups point out that critics, such as the Meijers Commission, fear that forced return is not easier to achieve than voluntary return. Can the government explain in more detail why it is so strongly focusing on forced return? What instruments does the government intend to use for this?' (translated)

In CM2519, we commented on the proposed reform of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation. This led to a discussion between the European Commission and the Meijers Committee, and subsequently a discussion with the Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer, Jonas Grimheden.

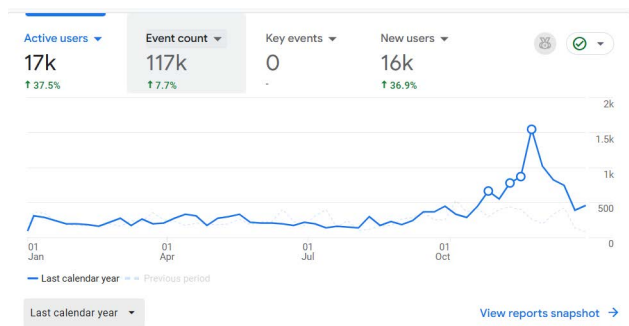
Finally, our last comment of the year, CM2520 received a detailed letter reply from Mr Stefano Piedimonte Bodini, Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, noting that he "has taken careful note of the concerns expressed by the Meijers Committee regarding the importance of preserving the integrity of the Convention system, the judicial independence of the European Court of Human Rights, and the need to ensure that any reflection on the effectiveness of the Convention remains fully consistent with the values

and standards of the Council of Europe, notably the rule of law, democratic governance and respect for human rights".

## Website analytics

In 2025, the Meijers Committee's website had over 17,000 active users. One anomalously large peak arises in mid November 2025, coinciding with the publication of our comment on Frontex (see image 1). The largest number of active users come from China, followed by the Netherlands (see image 2). In terms of which page receives the highest traction of views, the Meijers Committee homepage (in the English language) is our most viewed page, followed by the Dutch version of this page. The Safeguarding the Rule of Law site is also frequently viewed. An additional 1.2K viewers viewed the Young Meijers Committee page. Only 37% of our viewers were new, with 63% of views constituting individuals who return on more than one occasion.

When investigating where our viewers were referred from, the vast majority came directly to the page, or through google (14.4K). However, some were referred through LinkedIn, suggesting our posts lead to much engagement with our webpage. A further 197 were referred to our page through chatgpt, suggesting our commentary is suggested in searches for commentary on rule of law/ human rights topics.



# Case study on the Return Regulation

This case study focusses on developments surrounding the proposal for a Return Regulation (2025/0059(COD)) and the impact the Meijers Committee created through its interventions. This proposed regulation was put in motion to create a common system for returning third-country nationals who do not have the right to stay in the EU, replacing the 2008 Return Directive.

The plan to launch a new legislative proposal on returns was announced by the European Commission in their 2025 work programme. We responded at an early stage, in advance of the proposal, in CM2409 and then again in CM2501. These comments provided the basis for our meeting with the European Commission staff to inform them in the process of drafting the proposal. We also presented our position in a shadow meeting in the European Parliament.

Looking to the legislative proposal by the European Commission, which was revealed on 11 March 2025 (COM/2025/101 final), several aspects from our recommendations have been adopted, such as:

- the inclusion of exhaustive criteria that determine a risk of absconding that relate more directly to the return procedure;
- some detention safeguards (e.g., proportionality, necessity, exhaustive list of grounds, detention conditions, treatment of families and minors);
- full and ex nunc judicial review;

Our work was cited in the European Parliamentary Research Service EU Briefing. CM2409 was downloaded 100 times in the last year; CM2501 was downloaded 38 times.

In response to the proposal for a Return Regulation, we issued comment CM2505. Whilst we noted the positive elements of this proposal, such as provisions for full and ex nunc judicial review of return decisions, we expressed concern that the proposal weakens key protections. Two core aspects of contention were the reduction in the prioritisation of voluntary return and

the creation of a legal basis for return hubs, without adequate legal safeguards. As such, we submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations by which the co-legislators could amend the proposal. Some of these were presented in a European Policy Centre/Egmont Institute policy dialogue in March, with key stakeholders of the Commission, Parliament and Council Presidency as co-panelists.

Alongside our contribution to the discussions in Brussels, we were also invited to present our work in the Dutch senate's (Eerste Kamer) expert meeting on the Return Regulation (position paper: CM2516). A report of the meeting can be found [here](#), and our contribution was also cited in a report of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Asylum: "The members of the VVD and CDA parliamentary groups point out that critics, such as the Meijers Committee, fear that forced return is no easier to achieve than voluntary return. Can the government further explain why such a strong emphasis is being placed on forced return? What instruments does the government intend to deploy for this purpose?" (Translated from Dutch)

Meanwhile, the legislative file was assigned to the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE), with Malik Azmani as rapporteur. After attending meetings with both him and the shadow rapporteurs, and after another comment (CM2513) in which we warned against adopting the mutual recognition of return decisions (as proposed by the Commission), the LIBE draft report was published on 30 October 2025. While reminiscent of the Commission proposal, the report reflects in many ways our analysis and



recommendations, for instance:

- explicit mention of detention as principle of last resort, and the establishment of a maximum time limit of 18 months detention (12 months + possible extension of 6 months) (although we had proposed 6 + 12);
- the removal of mandate to cooperate with non-recognized third country entities (e.g., Taliban);
- the prioritization of voluntary departure over forced removal (order of arts 12 and 13 switched to reflect the political priority of voluntary returns, although no substantive changes in the text reflect this priority);
- the minimum timeframe of 7 days (and max of 30) for voluntary departure.
- the independent monitors have access to relevant locations and documents and have appropriate resources and means to monitor effectively.

We welcomed these positive changes but were also critical on many other points. In CM2517, we submitted amendments in response to the LIBE report, noting that some fundamental rights safeguards had been deleted or watered down. For instance, we suggested that the EU legislator should clearly define the conditions for detention and remove vague grounds to

avoid arbitrary detention. Additionally, we suggested a categorical prohibition on the detention of minors, and the removal of provisions that make entry bans an automatic consequence of return.

On 8th December 2025, the Council adopted a general approach to the proposal, which is more restrictive than the Commission proposal and LIBE draft. The Council extends detention, up to 24 months plus a 6-month extension, even for children, and broadens the grounds for detaining people to include factors linked to poverty or irregular entry. People facing return would be subjected to far-reaching obligations to prove cooperation, home raids, and heavy sanctions for non-compliance, including fines, criminal penalties, and entry bans of up to 20 years or more. Broad and vague public-security derogations allow states to bypass fundamental rights protections, which potentially places people in indefinite detention. The proposal weakens monitoring by removing requirements for an independent forced-return mechanism, and it undermines effective remedies by allowing returns before appeals.

The Meijers Committee will continue to monitor developments carefully as the legislative process enters the final stages.

# Activities, visits and meetings

## Meijers Committee visit to the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO)

On March 10 and 11, the Meijers Committee visited the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), hosted by Dutch European Prosecutor Miranda De Meijer.

The delegation from the criminal subcommittee, consisting of Dr. Sanne Buisman, Prof. Theo Roos, Dr. Pim Geelhoed, Dr. Anne-Marie Smit, Rob van der Hoeven and Belinda Okoobo, gained valuable insights into the functioning, structure, and key aspects of EPPO, as well as its role in protecting the financial interests of the European Union by tackling fraud, corruption, money laundering, and organized crime.

After listening to insights from Luca de Matteis, the EPPO's Head of Legal Services, on European Court of Justice case law and its relevance to the functioning of EPPO, the CM members heard a presentation on the EPPO's case management system, which provided a practical understanding of how the EPPO operates. The visit continued at the Court of Justice of the EU, where the delegation had an engaging discussion with Judge Ben Smulders and attended a Grand Chamber hearing.

## Heidag

In September 2025, the Meijers Committee and Young Meijers Committee came together for our annual away-day. The theme of this year's Heidag (away-day) was Civil Society resistance to autocratisation and illiberalism. This topic was particularly fitting given the current geo-political climate, wherein civil society in the EU and beyond has been facing growing challenges. We lifted the lid on Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), legislative restrictions to the court and access to justice, how we can empower civil society and capacity and governance issues. With our keynote speaker, Maral Khajeh, we heard an insightful discussion about initiatives to counter challenges facing civil society, including the Shelter City Network. All round, it was an excellent and insightful event, with thanks to our daily chair Dr. Alice Dejean de la Batie for guiding this discussion. This Heidag was particularly sentimental, marking the hand-over from Prof. Ashley Terlouw to Dr. Sanne Buisman as Chair of the Meijers Committee.





## New faces

This year, the Meijers Committee welcomed seven new members. These members bolster our expertise and network in key areas, providing practical judicial experience, scholarly insight and strategic understanding to our subcommittees. We are happy to have these new members in our network.



**Dr. Annick Pijnenburg**

*Assistant Professor  
International and European  
Law at Radboud University  
Nijmegen.*



**Jutta Dijkstra**

*Legal Counsel (Migration &  
Asylum law) at Rechtbank  
Noord-Nederland.*



**Dr. Pola Cebulak**

*Associate Professor of  
European Law at Vrije  
Universiteit Amsterdam.*



**Dr. Jonas Bornemann**

*Assistant Professor  
of European Law at  
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.*



**Huub Verbaten**

*Senior Research Fellow,  
Clingendael Institute*



**Dr. Maša Galič**

*Assistant Professor of  
Privacy and Criminal  
(Procedure) Law at Vrije  
Universiteit Amsterdam.*



**Emma Cirpka**

*Senior Strategic Advisor at  
the Dutch Data Protection  
Authority.*

# **We spoke to new members Emma Cirpka and Jonas Bornemann about their background and interests.**

## **Emma Cirpka**

Emma Cirpka is a senior strategy advisor at the Dutch Data Protection Authority, where she primarily coordinates the implementation of new European legislation within the organisation. Previously, she was a council member in the municipality of Apeldoorn and worked for the NGO noyb, which focuses on strategic litigation regarding privacy violations.

Emma holds an MA in Human Rights Law from the School of African and Oriental Studies in London (2021) and an LLM in International Technology Law from VU Amsterdam (2024). There, she conducted research on the use of algorithms in the new European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and the effects on the right to an effective remedy.

### **What is an area of research, within or external to European law, that you are interested in exploring?**

I am very interested in exploring the use of EU information systems and risk assessments regarding third-country nationals from a fundamental rights point of view. In my previous research on algorithmic decision-making by governments, I have seen how it is an area where decision-making has far-reaching consequences for the most vulnerable people and is often opaque and/or difficult to challenge. This is where I also believe the Meijers Committee can make a contribution by assessing the current legal framework and if it respects the rule of law and guarantees fundamental rights for everyone.

**“In my previous research on algorithmic decision-making by governments, I have seen how it is an area where decision-making has far-reaching consequences for the most vulnerable people and is often opaque and/or difficult to challenge.”**

## **Dr. Jonas Bornemann**

Dr. Jonas Bornemann works as an Assistant Professor of European Law at the University of Groningen. He is a member of the Meijers Committee, serves as a member of the editorial board of the European Law Blog and is the research lead of the European Integration Research Group at the Rudolf Agricola School for Sustainable Development. Jonas is a founding member of the Young Network TransEurope, coordinated by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. In 2024-2025, he has been awarded a re:constitution fellowship, funded by Stiftung Mercator. His work focuses on European constitutional law and migration law, and he comments and publishes widely on these topics. Prior to joining the University of Groningen, Jonas has been a postdoctoral and doctoral researcher at Université de Lausanne and the University of Konstanz, as well as a postdoctoral fellow of the nccr – on the move and a visiting researcher at Humboldt-University Berlin.

### **1. What motivated you to join the Meijers Committee?**

I was intrigued by the possibility to contribute to work on timely developments in migration law and the rule of law in Europe.

### **2. What have you enjoyed most about your experience at the Meijers Committee thus far?**

To be able to follow closely ongoing legislative developments and to talk so many inspiring colleagues from academia and practice.

### **3. What would you like to see from the Meijers Committee in the new year?**

More of the same: critical and substantiated reflections on some of the crucial legal developments in the Netherlands and Europe.

### **4. In an alternative universe, whereby you did not work in your current field, what post would you undertake?**

I guess some employment that would allow me to travel and to meet different people. Train conductor springs to mind, but other jobs may have similar perks.

# YMC Reflecties

We spoke to two Young Meijers Committee members, Thinnart Platter and Line Kroon about their experience as members of the first cohort of the Young Meijers Committee.

## **Thinnart Platter told us:**

“I joined the YMC because, I wanted to get more involved with the (European) rule of law during my student time. The YMC offered me a unique opportunity to do so. I found the workshops particularly valuable. They provided a unique insight into how rule of law issues are dealt with in practice. Because the workshops are given by field experts and experienced professionals, you learn all kinds of tips and tricks for tackling rule of law issues. This has given me a toolbox of practical skills that I will carry with me throughout my life”.

“As a member of the YMC Criminal Law Subcommittee, I was able to participate with my subcommittee in meetings of the Meijers Criminal Law Subcommittee.



It was very informative to see up close how the Meijers Committee’s comments come together. Researching our own rule of law issue was also very valuable, because it gives you the feeling that you are actually contributing to the work of the Meijers Committee and deepens your own understanding of criminal law. I also appreciated that there was room for the YMC to join in on comments of the Meijers Committee or attend events that sparked your interest. I had the opportunity to represent the YMC during the University of Utrecht’s “Rechtsstaatparade”. I was able to tell people about the importance of our project and the work of the Meijers Committee. I really enjoyed doing this, because it also shows others how young people are engaged with the rule of law. In short, it was very valuable for me to be able to participate in the YMC because it gave me more in-depth theoretical knowledge of criminal law, offered unique practical insights from field experts, and provided the opportunity to go the extra mile.

Having participated in the YMC, I want to continue to contribute to the rule of law. That is why I will be participating in the Amsterdam Law Clinic at the University of Amsterdam, where I will be able to work on a public interest case for a civil society organization.”

**Line Kroon was a member of the Young Meijers Committee Privacy and Non-Discrimination subcommittee. She told us:**

“As of the beginning of 2025, I started participating in the first edition of the Young Meijers Committee (YMC). During this year, I worked closely with a group of four on the analysis of the European Union’s (EU) AI Act. As the first-ever comprehensive legal framework regulating artificial intelligence, the AI Act offered the unique opportunity to engage with an emerging and highly relevant area of EU governance. In line with the aim of the Meijers Committee and the YMC, our analysis was grounded in a critical reflection on the implications of the AI Act for the rule of law and fundamental rights within the EU. After an initial broad analysis of the framework, our focus shifted to risk profiling under the AI Act and the

potential misalignment between the AI Act and the existing General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As such, we critically assessed how overlapping legal frameworks can create legal uncertainty or enforcement challenges in practice.

Coming from a background in cultural anthropology and political science rather than law, this project significantly broadened my legal expertise, particularly in understanding legal frameworks and the government of technological development. I gained in depth-insight into how AI-systems are defined and categorized based on the risk-levels, as well as more knowledge on the enforcement architecture of the AI Act. Besides some challenges, such as two members leaving in the early stages of the project, others relocating abroad in later stages, and some initial ambiguity over the aim of our analysis, we ultimately managed to establish a healthy workflow and finalize our work. Navigating these challenges has strengthened my teamwork and leadership skills, particularly in adapting to changing group dynamics, coordinating remotely, and maintaining clear communication. In the future, I aim to further build this experience by continuing to work at the intersection of emerging technologies and international governance.”



# Financial report 2025

## Budget and realization

| <b>Commissie Meijers - specifiek Rule of Law</b> | <b>Begroting</b> | <b>Realisatie</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Personeelskosten projectmedewerker               | € 60.000         | € 52.963          |
| Personeelskosten secretaris                      | € 7.500          | € 6.825           |
| 2 stagiaires                                     | € 4.400          | € 8.160           |
| Bijscholing projectmedewerker                    | € 4.000          | € 650             |
| Organisatie seminars                             | € 5.000          | € -               |
| Organisatie 4 workshops YMC                      | € 4.000          | € 5.642           |
| Onvoorzien                                       | € 5.000          | € 1.693           |
| <b>Subtotaal</b>                                 | <b>€ 89.900</b>  | <b>€ 75.933</b>   |
| <b>Commissie Meijers - Algemeen</b>              | <b>Begroting</b> | <b>Realisatie</b> |
| <b>Organisatie</b>                               |                  |                   |
| Personeelskosten secretaris                      | € 68.000         | € 67.342          |
| Kantoorkosten (*worden betaald door SMN)         | € -              | € -               |
| Bijscholing secretaris                           | € 4.000          | € 2.329           |
| Reis-en verblijfskosten                          | € 1.500          | € 1.801           |
| Heidag                                           | € 3.000          | € 5.761           |
| Organisatie seminars                             | € 4.500          | € -               |
| Online/website                                   | € 2.000          | € 1.307           |
| Onvoorzien                                       | € 3.000          | € 755             |
| <b>Subtotaal</b>                                 | <b>€ 86.000</b>  | <b>€ 79.295</b>   |
| <b>Totaal uitgaven</b>                           | <b>€ 175.900</b> | <b>€ 155.228</b>  |

## Income

| <b>Reguliere subsidies</b>            | <b>bedragen<br/>regulier</b> | <b>realisatie</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Stichting Migratierecht Nederland     |                              |                   |
| Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland           | € 35.000                     | € 35.000          |
| UAF                                   | € 10.000                     | € 15.000          |
| NJCM                                  | € 500                        | € 500             |
| Artikel 1                             | € 1.000                      | € 1.000           |
| Stichting Democratie en Media         | € 30.000                     | € 30.000          |
| <b>Subtotaal</b>                      | <b>€ 76.500</b>              | <b>€ 81.500</b>   |
|                                       |                              |                   |
| <b>T.B.V. Project</b>                 |                              |                   |
| Allemansrecht                         | € 7.500                      | € 13.730          |
|                                       |                              |                   |
| <b>Subtotaal</b>                      | <b>€ 7.500</b>               | <b>€ 13.730</b>   |
|                                       |                              |                   |
| Stichting tot steun Commissie Meijers | € 91.900                     | € 67.480          |
| Overige                               | € -                          |                   |
| <b>Subtotaal</b>                      | <b>€ 91.900</b>              | <b>€ 67.480</b>   |
|                                       |                              |                   |
| <b>Totaal opbrengst</b>               | <b>€ 175.900</b>             | <b>€ 162.710</b>  |

# Member list as of 1 January 2026



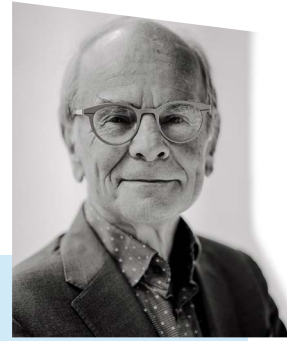
**Dr. Sanne Buisman**  
Chairwoman  
Associate Professor of  
Criminal Law, Vrije Universiteit  
Amsterdam



**Dr. Viola Bex-Reimert**  
Vice-chair  
Associate Professor of  
Administrative Law, Utrecht  
University



**Dr. Sarah Eskens**  
Interim vice-chair  
Assistant Professor in Law and  
Technology, Vrije Universiteit  
Amsterdam



**Arriën Kruyt**  
Interim vice-chair  
Interim Manager



**Jasper van Berckel Smit**  
Executive Secretary  
LL.M. International and  
European Law, University of  
Amsterdam



**Belinda Okoobo**  
Project Officer – Rule of Law  
LL.M. Public International  
Law, University of Amsterdam;  
LL.M. Criminal Law, Vrije  
Universiteit



**Órlaith Higgins**  
Intern  
Candidate LL.M. European  
Law–Leiden University



**Amy Ramswell**  
Intern  
LL.M. International and  
European Law – Radboud  
University



**Jutta Dijkstra**  
Member  
Legal Counsel (Migration  
& Asylum law), Rechtbank  
Noord-Nederland



**Dr. Jonas Bornemann**  
Member  
Assistant Professor of  
European Law, Rijksuniversiteit  
Groningen



**Dr. Pola Cebulak**  
Member  
Associate Professor of  
European Law, Vrije  
Universiteit Amsterdam



**Prof. Karin de Vries**  
Member  
Professor of Fundamental  
Rights, Utrecht University

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**Prof. Frederik Zuiderveen Borgesius**  
Member  
Professor of ICT and Law,  
Radboud University Nijmegen



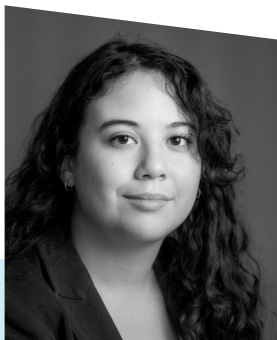
**Dr. Lisa-Marie Komp**  
Member  
Attorney at Law (international  
law & human rights), Prakken  
d'Oliveira Human Rights  
Lawyers



**Huub Verbaten**  
Member  
Senior Research Fellow,  
Clingendael Institute



**Dr. Annick Pijnenburg**  
Member  
Assistant Professor of  
International and European  
Law, Radboud University  
Nijmegen



**Emma Cirpka**  
Member  
Senior Strategic Advisor, Dutch  
Data Protection Authority



**Dr. Alice Dejean de la Bâtie**  
Member  
Assistant Professor in Criminal  
Law, Tilburg Law School



**Dr. Maša Galič**  
Member  
Assistant Professor of Privacy  
and Criminal (Procedure) Law,  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam



**Sadhia Rafi**  
Member  
Head of Strategic Litigation,  
Dutch Council for Refugees



**Prof. Jasper Krommendijk**  
Member  
Professor of Human Rights Law  
and Director of the Research  
Centre for State and Law  
(SteR), Radboud University  
Nijmegen



**Dr. Bahija Aarrass**  
Member  
Associate Professor  
of Constitutional and  
Administrative Law, Vrije  
Universiteit Amsterdam



**Nilza Pinto**  
Member  
Coordinator IDEM Rotterdam,  
Radar/Art. 1 Anti-Discrimination  
Bureau



**Prof. Marloes Van Noorloos**  
Member  
Professor of Criminal Law and  
Criminal Procedure, Leiden  
University

## Member list as of 1 January 2026



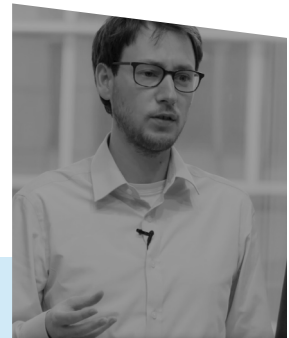
Dr. Florin Coman Kund  
Member  
Associate Professor in EU Law,  
Erasmus University Rotterdam



Prof. Jannemieke Ouwerkerk  
Member  
Professor of European Criminal  
Law, Leiden University



Dr. Evelien Brouwer  
Member  
Assistant Professor in Public  
Law and Technology, Utrecht  
University



Prof. Merijn Chamon  
Member  
Professor of EU Law, Vrije  
Universiteit Brussels



Dr. Els De Busser  
Member  
Associate Professor of  
Information Law, University of  
Amsterdam



Prof. Kees Groenendijk  
Member  
Emeritus professor of  
Sociology of Law, Radboud  
University Nijmegen



Dr. Melanie Fink  
Member  
Assistant Professor in  
European law, Leiden  
University



Dr. Pim Geelhoed  
Member  
Associate Professor of  
Criminal Law, University of  
Groningen



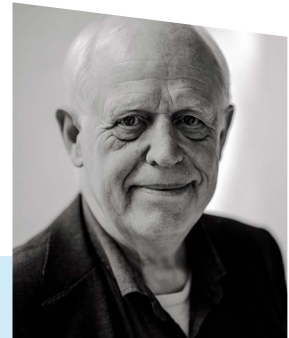
Dr. Maarten Hillebrandt  
Member  
Assistant Professor in Public  
Management, Utrecht  
University



Prof. Tarlach McGonagle  
Member  
Associate Professor of  
Information Law, University  
of Amsterdam; Professor of  
Media Law & Information  
Society, Leiden University

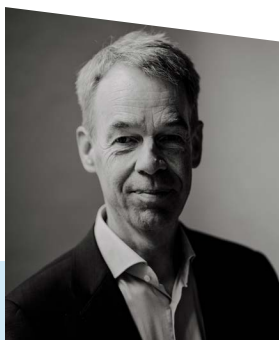


Rob van der Hoeven  
Member  
Deputy Justice Criminal Law,  
Court of Appeals, The Hague



Prof. Theo De Roos  
Member  
Emeritus Professor of Criminal  
Law, Tilburg University

## Member list as of 1 January 2026



Dick Houtzager  
Member  
Senior Policy Advisor NCDR



Dr. Anne-Marie Smit  
Member  
Justice Criminal Law, Court of Appeals, Den Bosch



Nico Tuijn  
Member  
Deputy Justice Criminal Law, Court of Appeals, Den Bosch



Barbara Wegelin  
Member  
Lawyer, European Court of Human Rights



Dr. Janna Wessels  
Member  
Associate Professor of Migration Law, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam