

**The New Appeal**

**D66**

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The reasonable centre is under pressure; these days, constructive cooperation is a radical choice.

One guilder (ca. 48 eurocent); that is how much people paid in 1966 at newspaper kiosks and bookstores for the Appeal of the Initiative Committee Democrats 66 (D66). And today it still makes for interesting reading, in which examples like *Vietnam* are easily replaced by *Syria*. Those who recognized themselves in the Appeal could return the perforated response card, the sixties' equivalent of a *like*. Over 2500 people did; the call to join in the creation of "a plan for a new, fair, and energetic democracy" was a big hit. Just a few months later, D66 had become the movement that unified the worried of the time.

And we still are. But are we worried about the same dilemmas as back then?

No.

There are new threats (and old threats in new shapes and sizes) that pull us away from an open and prosperous society that does not distinguish on the basis of philosophy of life, religion, sexual orientation, or origin. To Democrats, this is unacceptable.

Much has changed for the better in the last 50 years, especially here at home in the Netherlands. But there is also a great deal wrong in the world, sometimes due to malice, but more often as a result of negligence, conservatism, selfishness, and a focus on short-term benefits instead of long-term damages. Populists are once again excluding people, setting groups against each other, and offering a false sense of security. Important public goals like drastically narrowing the social divide and promoting equality of opportunity have not yet been reached and sometimes even seem further off than ever. It all reminds us that history is not a steady upward curve, but a pendulum swing.

So now is the time to stand up for our values.

In the face of these trials, the worst thing we can do is look away or "not rock the boat." We have to work together constructively. All those who believe in respect, (international) cooperation and dialogue, safeguarding the democratic rule of law and human rights, personal freedom, and responsibility for future generations should speak up.

And rock the boat.

Our worries need to be transformed into action and optimism.

D66 will lead the way.

## Worry Over Democracy and the Rule of Law

The need for a more transparent and direct relationship between citizens and politicians is more evident than ever. Already obsolete back then, the constitutional rules against which our predecessors also rebelled in 1966—the reason why D66 was founded—have hardly changed. As such, they are even more outdated and less effective than in those days, because society has changed and will keep changing.

The rule of law and democracy are empty shells when the people they affect are not directly involved in them. That is why D66 wants a direct say for stakeholders in the formation of the administration of cities, regions, our country, and our continent, but also our schools, hospitals, and pension funds. Where possible, D66 will create structural democratic systems that allow stakeholders a say in the smaller questions on which major decisions are built.

We are not in favour of the emergency-break democracy of makeshift referendums that we are seeing around Europe nowadays. We want a referendum, but one that is legally binding, not just a glorified public poll, and only to approve or disapprove of laws that have already passed both chambers of parliament.

Representatives and public administrators should not be appointed through favouritism but work on the basis of a direct and finite democratic mandate. If goals are not met or tasks are not properly carried out, the mandate is revoked.

In the coming decades, D66 will continue to fight to break down the defensive walls maintained by insiders to keep outsiders at bay. We see this on the jobs market and the housing market, but also on boards, in inspectorates, and in education. Biased hiring is not only unfair, it also wastes talent and fuels frustration and instability. D66 fights for equal opportunities for every individual.

D66 cherishes diversity; differences enrich us and create a more generous society. And yet, women, immigrants—including those of the second and third generation—people with disabilities, young people, and LGBTs; they are all far too rare in the places where decisions are made in this country. The fact that no formal rules are broken does not mean that there is no discrimination, and those affected rightfully claim that it is unfair.

More and more we see the basic rights and values that are the foundation of our society, hard won after hundreds of years of struggle, being casually and recklessly set aside. Often this happens with an appeal to safety. In the end though, we are made less safe for it, because true, lasting safety lies in the creation of a free and fair world, which is only possible on the basis of those same rights and values.

D66 fights the illusion that isolation and exclusion bring security and justice. Although the world has become less stable, anxiety, however justified, is never an excuse for intolerance towards “others” or newcomers. A sense of pride and unity in a shared heritage is good; the adulation of your own group and a solidified sense of its identity and traditions is not. A global shared destiny has emerged. There is only one option: creating a better world together.

There can be no give and take when it comes to human rights. Under no circumstances may the rights of the free media, both online and offline, be limited, even temporarily. Those who wish to corrode basic rights—even of people with whom we vehemently disagree—will have to come through D66 first. A democratic majority is never an excuse to limit the rights of minorities. This is the essence of democracy and the rule of law. Democracy is not just a system to decide who rules; it is the way we share rights and responsibilities together, equally. In that spirit, the majority of the moment has the solemn obligation to protect minorities and safeguard their civil rights.

### **Worry Over Liberty and Control Over Limbs, Love, and Life**

We must all be free to be who we are and make our own choices. For over 50 years, it has been D66’s quest to change the rules based on the old Christian status quo that kept people from making decisions about their own bodies, about whom to love, and about the course and end of their lives. In that time, we have created new laws regarding marriage, inheritance and family law, abortion, and the right to die. The state now interferes less and less in the personal choices we want to make, but the battle is not yet won. People still oppress others because of their sexual preference or (the abandonment of) their religion. Even in our open and free society, there are people who live under immense pressure to conform to group standards. This must change. As always, D66 will strive for everyone’s right to openly be themselves.

### **Worry Over Personal Development**

Everyday life is unruly, relations are not always clear, agendas sometimes clash, and opportunities and threats are not distributed purely by chance. The answer to this turmoil is not to capture everything in rules and regulations, imposed through strict supervision and control. This will only result in an inhuman and undesirable world with no room for creativity and innovation. The only path to an open society comprised of independent, empowered, social people who live together in harmony and share a common desire for progress is good and comprehensive education.

In schools, children of different backgrounds should grow up together, and both those who excel and those who have a tougher time of it should be encouraged to reach their highest potential.

D66 wants to build an education infrastructure that allows and pushes both children and adults alike to develop themselves intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Pupils and students need to be prepared

for the (international) labour market of today, tomorrow, and the day after. This way, people will get the chance to develop skills and talents that suit them and that contribute to society as a whole.

Everyone should have a fair chance at fulfilling work. A job, either paid or as a volunteer, represents self-esteem, a social network, and emancipation. The legal constructs of hiring and firing change constantly, as do the skills called for by certain professions, but the desire and need to earn an income—and with it, independence—stay the same.

D66 thinks it is only fair to reward people for their efforts and results, because society as a whole benefits from those who push themselves and come up with new ideas and solutions. But we also share our wealth to enable everyone to perform based on their talents and abilities, and because when we succeed, we never do so purely on our own, but always stand on the visible and invisible shoulders of others.

## Worry Over the World

It is obvious to all but a few that we have been, and still are, demolishing our environment. Negligence, greed, and the ability to pass the bill on to the next generation without consequence enable our present unsustainable consumption and production of energy. This will eventually affect everyone on the planet; near and far, rich and poor, young and old.

D66 will work hard to put a price on unsustainability and reduce it as soon as possible. Pollution will no longer be free of charge. Sustainable innovation and creativity will be stimulated, rewarded, and shared.

Geopolitical instability is growing dangerously. Nations stand in opposition to each other. Dictators endanger the fate of their peoples and their countries without shame, supporting one another on every continent. Bullies on the global stage think no one will dare to stop them. Our present dithering, indecisiveness, and inability to close ranks will make much more drastic and radical interventions necessary in the long run.

Once again, millions of people are fleeing injustice, powerlessness, and turmoil. A very small number of them manage to reach the borders of Europe. With small children on their shoulders, carrying what little is left of their belongings, they cling to their phone as a last link to those left behind and as a compass pointing them towards safety. D66 makes room in the Netherlands and in Europe for true refugees. We must stop the endless procedures and paperwork and swiftly decide on the legitimacy of claims. In short order, refugees should move on to a normal neighbourhood, an intensive language and adaptation course, and an independent existence in their new country. Those who are brave enough to give up everything to save themselves and their families are not weak but able and willing to make sacrifices and work hard. Let them be neighbours, employees, mothers, students, or just children. We will all benefit.

D66 thinks and acts internationally, also in tumultuous times. It is a mistake to think tyranny is far away and will not reach our shores as long as we do not interfere. It is not enough to keep our own nations in order. Going it alone is impossible in a world that is connected in every possible way. And it is a bad idea. The Netherlands has a lot to offer to the rest of the world, and we are strongly impacted by decisions and activities in countries close by and across the globe. This is why we have to have a voice and a vote in international decisions that affect our safety, trade, economy, and environment, and why we work together with our European partners.

We want a strong and powerful Europe that unites us, is a strong negotiator on our behalf, and sets the gold standard for democracy and human rights. This also means that we need to be strict internally when it comes to abiding by our own rules and agreements. And we have to stop spending money based on an obsolete economic distribution system.

In the Netherlands, the past decades have given us more freedom, more prosperity, and more wellbeing than ever before. It would be a big mistake, however, to take this progress for granted. Now that the world is becoming less stable and bullies on the left and right are again calling for extreme solutions, it is time to join forces once again and defend what is right.

D66 chooses optimism, connection, and action.

What about you?