



Press release

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More innovation, better education and more environmental awareness required to maintain current prosperity level

- Dutch population prosperous and happy; concerns about sustainability
- Dutch large-scale consumers of natural resources inside and outside the Netherlands
- Concerns about natural environment, knowledge development and social provisions

The quality of life is high in the Netherlands compared to other European countries, but it seems impossible to retain this level of prosperity in the long run. More innovation, better education and a greener economy are required to achieve sustainability according to the *Sustainability Monitor for the Netherlands 2011*.

The Netherlands is a prosperous country and the Dutch tend to trust their fellow citizens and institutions like the police and parliament. They feel healthy and safe, have many social contacts and are pleased with the way they fill their leisure time.

But our prosperity comes at a price. The depletion of natural resources like fossil fuels, minerals and farmland – domestically and abroad – is acute. This has a negative impact on the quality of the natural environment in the Netherlands and in developing countries. At the same time, the opportunities for future generations here and abroad are reduced.

There are also concerns regarding environment and nature. Climate change is a global problem and biodiversity has been reduced over the past decades on the national and international level.

Other causes for concern are the vulnerability of our financial system and the question to what extent we are able to maintain the current level of social provisions. The financial crisis has seriously affected public finances. The cost of health care and social security will soar in the years to come and these provisions will be jeopardised for future generations.

Lastly, the level of education in the Netherlands is average relative to the rest of the European Union and the school drop-out rate is high. The education and income levels of people with a non-western foreign background in particular are a cause for concern.

The *Sustainability Monitor for the Netherlands 2011* is a joint publication of Statistics Netherlands, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency and the Netherlands

Institute for Social Research and will officially be presented today to the State Secretary of Infrastructure and Environment, Mr Atsma.