France–Netherlands Trade and Investment

2nd annual barometer by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its partners 2026

Netherlands

Special thanks to our partners

Foreword

I am pleased to present the second edition of the **France–Netherlands Trade and Investment Barometer**, an initiative of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in France developed in close cooperation with our partners.

The international economic environment has continued to evolve over the past year. Geopolitical tensions, changes in global trade, the acceleration of technological developments and growing attention to economic security are reshaping the way countries and businesses operate. In this context, a clear understanding of our economic relationship is more valuable than ever.

This publication provides an evidence-based overview of the economic ties between the Netherlands and France. It combines the latest figures on bilateral trade and investment, economic forecasts for the year ahead and insights from Dutch companies active in France. Together, these different perspectives help to paint a comprehensive picture of the opportunities and challenges facing our economic partnership.

I would like to warmly thank our partners, the Netherlands France Chamber of Commerce, PwC Netherlands and ING for their continued expertise and commitment in making this publication possible.

The first edition of the Barometer demonstrated the strength and diversity of the economic relationship between our two countries, and was published in the context of the bilateral Franco-Dutch Economic Year 2025. This second edition confirms that the Netherlands and France continue to be close and reliable partners, while also highlighting the evolving environment in which businesses operate. It shows that maintaining competitiveness, fostering innovation and technological leadership, and strengthening resilient value chains are increasingly shared priorities.

Beyond presenting data, the ambition of this Barometer is to provide a useful reference for businesses, policymakers and all those involved in Franco-Dutch economic cooperation. By monitoring developments over time and bringing together quantitative analysis with the perspectives of companies on the ground, it aims to support informed decision-making and encourage dialogue between public and private stakeholders.

Ultimately, the strength of the France–Netherlands economic relationship rests on the thousands of companies, entrepreneurs and institutions that work together every day. I hope this second edition will contribute to a better understanding of our partnership and help identify new opportunities for cooperation in the years ahead.

H.E. Mr. Thijs van der Plas
Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to France

“This second edition confirms that the Netherlands and France continue to be close and reliable partners, while also highlighting the evolving environment in which businesses operate.”

Content

Foreword 3

Bilateral trade and investment analysis 6

Introduction 7

Trade index 8
- Recent developments 8
- A closer look at 2025 10

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) 13
- Recent developments 13
- Bilateral investment relations 14
- A closer look at 2025 15

Barometer Survey of Dutch companies operating in France 18

- Overall index (score: 3.2 out of 5) 20
- Sales and activity (3.0 out of 5) 21
- Economic outlook (3.4 out of 5) 21
- Impact of external events (3.0 out of 5) 22
- France vs the EU (3.2 out of 5) 23
- Regional presence and expansion plans 24
- Descriptive statistics 25

Annex: ING's economic forecasts for 2027 28

Bilateral trade and investment analysis

€117bn

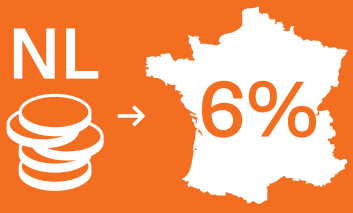
In 2025, total trade between the Netherlands and France remained at €117 billion in current prices, equivalent to €84 billion in 2015 euros (deflated)

€19.4bn

In 2025, services exports from the Netherlands to France increased by 7.4% to €19.4 billion, confirming the rising weight of services in bilateral exchanges

3rd

France was the Netherlands' 3rd largest export destination in 2025, accounting for 6.8% of total Dutch goods exports



In 2025, Dutch companies announced 113 investment projects in France, representing 6% of all foreign projects

7th

The Netherlands was France's 7th largest export destination in 2025, accounting for 4.0% of France's total goods exports

Introduction

The economic relationship between France and the Netherlands remains deep and diversified, supported by strong bilateral trade and substantial cross-border investment. From 2015 to 2020, both dimensions expanded significantly, followed by exceptionally strong growth in the early 2020s after the COVID-19 slowdown and a period of consolidation from 2022 onwards.

This section of the barometer examines trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) separately, reflecting the different availability of the latest data. The trade analysis covers developments through 2025, including goods and services and both directions of trade, while the FDI analysis focuses on investment positions through 2024, the latest year for which comparable data are available. As FDI data are subject to retrospective revisions, the figures presented in this edition differ from those published in the previous edition of the barometer.

The analysis points to continued resilience in both dimensions. In real terms, bilateral trade remained 21% above its 2015 level in 2025, despite declining from the peaks reached in 2022 and 2023. The recent moderation has been driven mainly by goods, while services have continued to grow. Investment follows a different pattern, with French FDI in the Netherlands increasing strongly since 2015, while Dutch FDI in France has remained broadly stable in real terms. The scale of investment stocks and the significant corporate presence in both countries underline the continued depth of the bilateral economic relationship.

To assess these developments consistently over time, the analysis distinguishes between nominal values, which refer to current prices, and real values, which are adjusted for inflation to allow meaningful comparison across years.

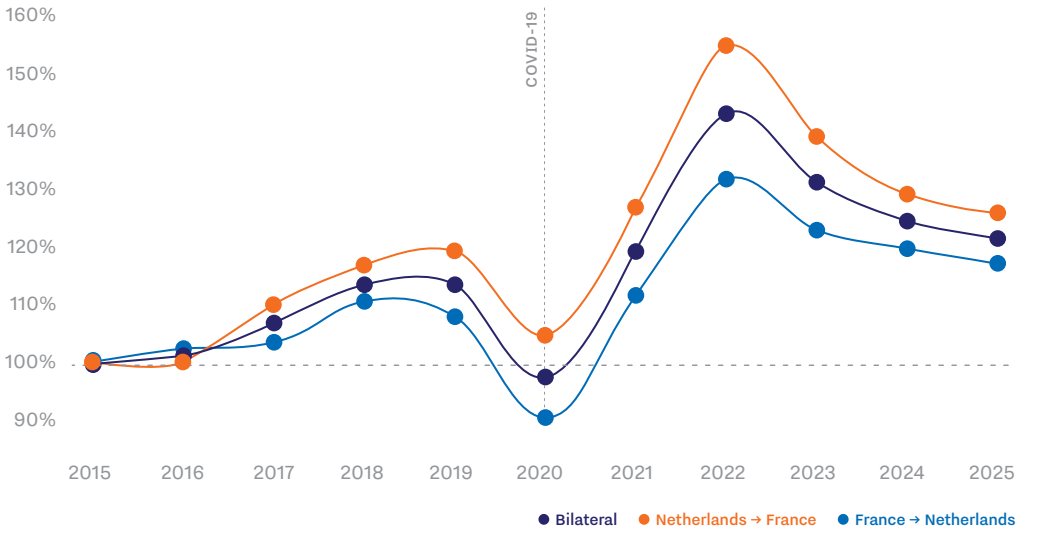
“The economic relationship between France and the Netherlands remains deep and diversified, supported by strong bilateral trade and substantial cross-border investment.”

Trade index at 121 in 2025: consolidation after a decade of growth

★ Recent developments

The Franco-Dutch bilateral trade index reached 143 in 2022, its highest level since 2015, before moderating to 131 in 2023. It stood at 124 in 2024 and 121 in 2025, remaining 21% above its 2015 level.

FIGURE 1 — Trade Indexes, 2015–2025 (2015 = 100): bilateral trade, Dutch exports to France and French exports to the Netherlands, in real terms

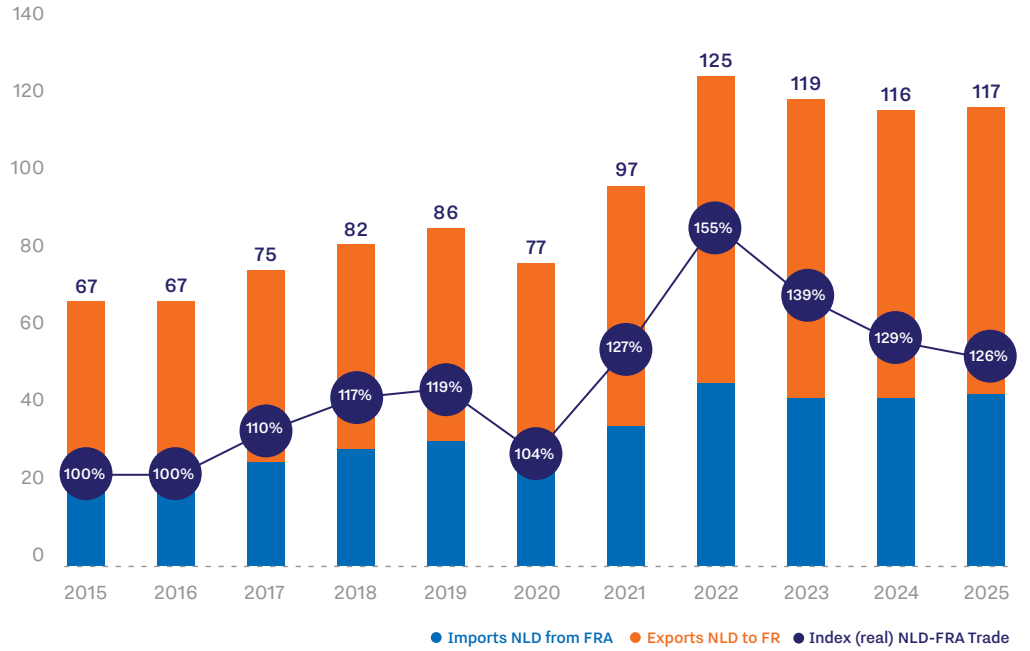


Source: Embassy of the Netherlands in France, based on Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and French Customs data, provided by PwC (accessed in July 2026)

BOX 1 — METHODOLOGICAL NOTE ON THE TRADE INDEX

The Franco-Dutch Trade Index measures the evolution of real bilateral trade between France and the Netherlands since 2015. It is based on inflation-adjusted data to reflect real changes in trade and investment volumes. A value above 100 indicates an increase compared with 2015, while a value below 100 indicates a decrease compared to 2015. Different national GDP deflators are applied to French and Dutch trade flows to account for differences in price developments between the two economies.

FIGURE 2 — France–Netherlands bilateral trade in goods and services, 2015–2025: imports, exports, total trade, in nominal terms (€bn) and real trade index (2015 = 100)



Source: Embassy of the Netherlands in France, based on Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and French Customs data, provided by PwC (accessed in July 2026)

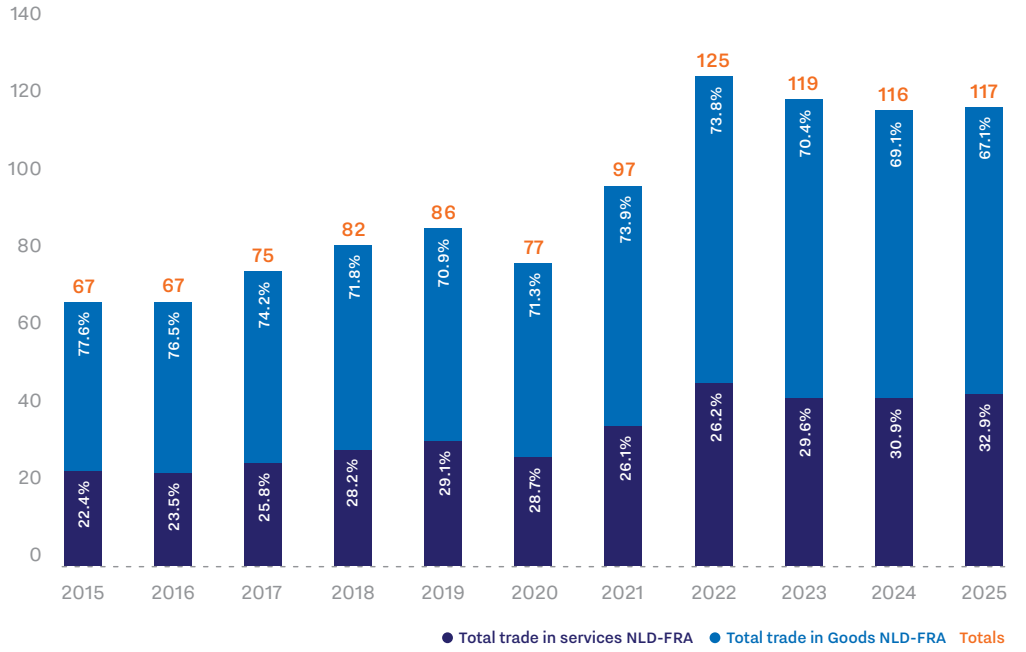
"In 2025, bilateral trade remained substantial, with total trade between the Netherlands and France reaching €117 billion in current prices."

A closer look at 2025

In nominal terms

In 2025, bilateral trade remained substantial, with total trade between the Netherlands and France reaching €117 billion in current prices. This is equivalent to €84 billion in 2015 euros after adjusting for inflation, confirming that trade remained at an elevated level in real terms. Moreover, the share of services in total trade has increased steadily since 2015 and continued to rise in 2025.

FIGURE 3 — France–Netherlands Bilateral Trade in Goods and Services, 2015–2025: share of goods and services in total trade, in nominal terms (€bn)



Source: Embassy of the Netherlands in France, based on Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and French Customs data, provided by PwC (accessed in July 2026)

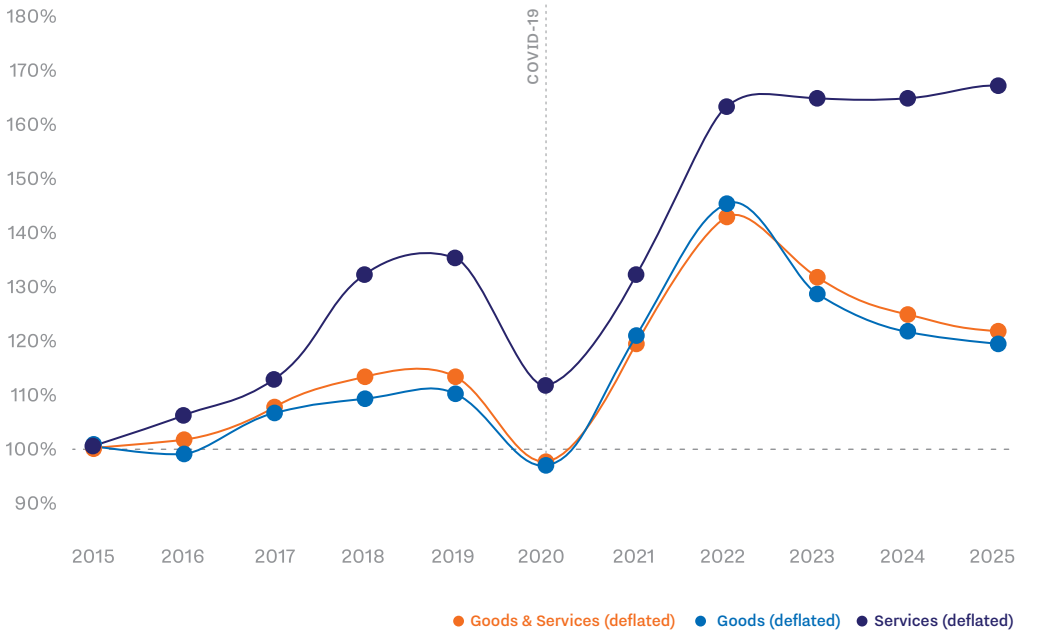
Goods vs services

Looking separately at goods and services reveals two contrasting trends. The decline in the overall real trade index has been driven primarily by goods, while services have continued to expand. Nominal trade in services has increased steadily since 2015 and has also recorded real growth, outpacing GDP growth.

In real terms

In real terms, bilateral trade has declined from its 2022 peak, following the strong increase recorded in the post-Brexit and post-COVID period. A similar trend can be observed in Dutch trade with Germany. Nevertheless, bilateral trade between France and the Netherlands remained more than 20% above its 2015 level in 2025. This resilience comes despite slower GDP growth in the Eurozone and continued macroeconomic and geopolitical uncertainty.

FIGURE 4 — Total Trade Levels, 2015–2025 (2015 = 100): goods versus services, in real terms



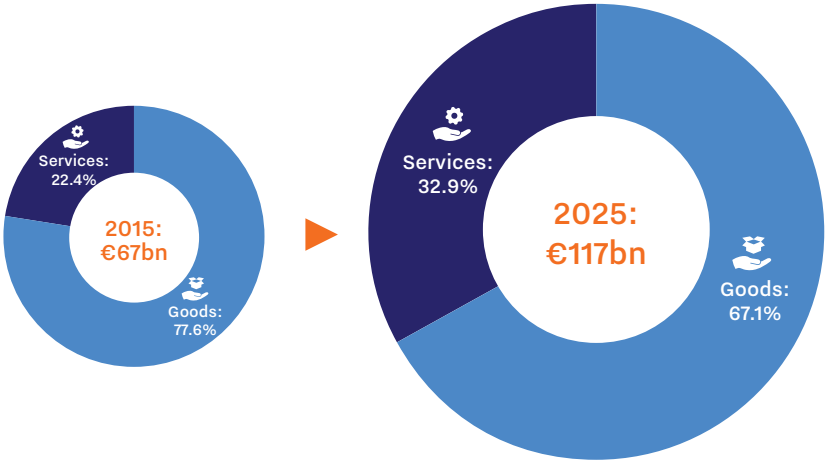
Source: Embassy of the Netherlands in France, based on Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and French Customs data, provided by PwC (accessed in July 2026)

In 2025, France was the Netherlands' 3rd largest goods export destination, accounting for 6.8% of Dutch goods exports while the Netherlands ranked as France's 7th largest goods export destination, accounting for 4% of total French goods exports.

"The Netherlands ranked as France's 7th largest goods export destination"

Dutch exports to France

FIGURE 5 — Share of Goods and Services in France–Netherlands Total Trade, 2015 vs 2025, in nominal terms (€bn)



Source: Embassy of the Netherlands in France, based on Statistics Netherlands (CBS) and French Customs data, provided by PwC (accessed in July 2026)

Dutch exports to France remained diversified in 2025, with services continuing to grow while goods exports moderated from the elevated levels recorded in 2022 and 2023.

Goods exports declined by 2.8% from their 2024 level in nominal terms to €53.7 billion. Food and live animals, representing 15.1% of total Dutch exports to France, were the strongest-performing major goods category, increasing by 7.2% year-on-year. According to CBS, around 61% of Dutch exports to France concern re-exports.

In nominal terms, services exports from the Netherlands to France showed a year-on-year increase of 7.4% to €19.4 billion. Services imports from France to the Netherlands equally showed a significant nominal growth of 7.1% to a total of €19 billion. A striking example of this growth is found in the travel sector, representing 14.5% of total Dutch imports from France in 2025, having shown 27% year-on-year growth.

Overall, continued growth in services helped support Dutch exports to France as goods trade moderated.

> "In nominal terms, services exports from the Netherlands to France showed a year-on-year increase of 7.4% to €19.4 billion."

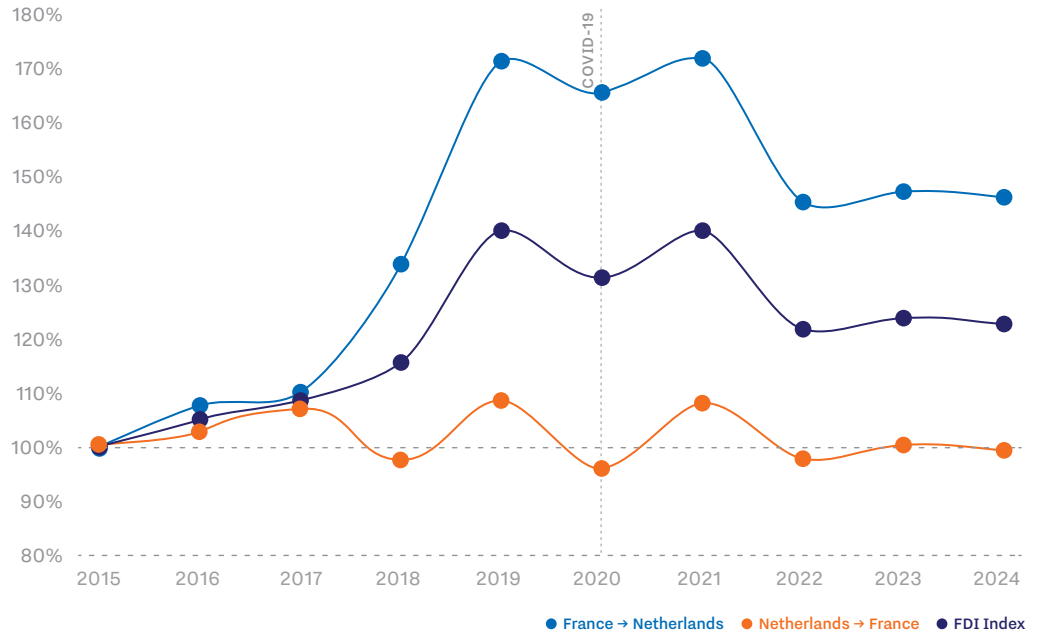
FDI index at 123 in 2024: bilateral investment enters a period of stabilisation

★ Recent developments

In 2024, the Franco-Dutch bilateral FDI index stood at 123, compared with 131 estimated for that same year in the previous edition. The difference mainly reflects retrospective revisions to historical FDI data by Dutch and French statistical authorities. FDI positions are revised as new information becomes available and statistical sources and methodologies are updated.

The index also reflects a shift in the investment environment since its 2019 peak of 140. French FDI in the Netherlands has remained well above its 2015 level, reaching 146 in 2024, while Dutch FDI in France stood at 100. The post-Brexit period of strong investment expansion was followed by a more uncertain environment, marked notably by the economic effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As noted by the Dutch central bank (DNB), the war pushed energy prices sharply higher, increased uncertainty and put pressure on global trade, feeding through into higher inflation and tighter financial conditions for European businesses.

FIGURE 6 — FDI Index, 2015–2024 (2015 = 100): French FDI in the Netherlands and Dutch FDI in France, in real terms



Source: Embassy of the Netherlands in France, based on CBS data provided by PwC (accessed in July 2026)

BOX 2 — METHODOLOGICAL NOTE ON THE INDEX

The Franco-Dutch Investment Index measures the evolution of bilateral FDI positions between France and the Netherlands since 2015. Outward FDI stocks in each direction, Dutch FDI in France and French FDI in the Netherlands, are indexed to a base year of 2015 (=100) and then averaged to obtain a single bilateral index. It is based on inflation-adjusted data to reflect real changes in the value of investment stocks. A value above 100 indicates an increase compared with 2015, while a value below 100 indicates a decrease compared to 2015. Different national GDP deflators are applied to French and Dutch investment positions to account for differences in price developments between the two economies.

The bilateral investment relationship nevertheless remains strong. In 2024, the Netherlands was France's largest FDI destination within the EU and second-largest worldwide behind the United States, with €206 billion of French FDI stock. France was in turn the Netherlands' second-largest investor with Dutch FDI stock in France reaching €128 billion. In both directions, the two countries accounted for around 14% of the respective FDI stock. In 2023, France and the Netherlands both ranked 5th for the number of multinational in each other's country.[1]

Bilateral investment relations

French FDI in the Netherlands

France is one of the Netherlands' most important investment partners, with a strong and diversified corporate presence across the Dutch economy. In 2023, 1,120 French-controlled subsidiaries operated in the Netherlands, employing around 193,000 people and generating €81 billion in turnover.[2] This represents an average of 172 employees per subsidiary, which highlight the significant scale of French corporate activity in the Netherlands. However, the importance of foreign investment for national ecosystems in both directions goes well beyond job creation and turnover. The OECD highlights, for instance, the significant contributions that foreign investors can make to productivity growth, innovation and regional development.

The Netherlands has become an increasingly important destination for French investment. Between 2015 and 2024, French FDI stock in the Netherlands increased by 67% in real terms, significantly outperforming the growth of French outward FDI worldwide (+9%).

Dutch FDI in France

Dutch companies have also built a significant presence in France. In 2023, 1,035 Dutch-controlled subsidiaries operated in the country, employing approximately 104,000 people and generating €105 billion in turnover. The number of Dutch subsidiaries in France increased by 17% between 2021 and 2023, reflecting the continued expansion of Dutch business activity in the French market. The share of the Netherlands in total France outward investment increased from 9.6% in 2006 to 13.8% in 2024.[3]

[1] Source: Investeringen en multinationals, Internationalisation Monitor France | Statistics Netherlands (CBS)

[2] Source: The geography of foreign investment in OECD member countries | OECD

[3] Source: Source: Executive summary, Internationalisation Monitor France | Statistics Netherlands (CBS)

Beyond these established activities, Dutch companies have increasingly diversified their presence in France, particularly in transport, professional services, ICT and other knowledge-intensive sectors. This broad presence reflects the strong integration of Dutch companies into the French economy and wider European value chains.

A closer look at 2025

French investment projects in the Netherlands in 2025

French companies continued to expand their footprint in the Netherlands, contributing to key sectors such as energy transition, the circular economy, digital infrastructure, and advanced technologies.

Air Liquide took the final investment decision for a large-scale electrolyser project supporting renewable hydrogen production in the Port of Rotterdam. This €500 million investment project represents a significant advancement in the decarbonization of European industrial needs.

In addition, Reju, the progressive textile-to-textile regeneration company owned by Technip Energies, announced the selection of its first industrial size recycling centre at the Chemelot industrial park, strengthening the Netherlands' circular economy ambitions.

Engie contributed to the Dutch grid stability by commissioning the largest operational battery farm in the Netherlands, in Lelystad, having a capacity of 35 MW and a storage capacity of 100 MW.

> "The Netherlands is not only an attractive market for French multinationals, but also offers opportunities for SMEs looking to grow."

The Netherlands is not only an attractive market for French multinationals, but also offers opportunities for SMEs looking to grow. Atawey, which supplies hydrogen refuelling stations and tube trailer filling centres, is a good example. Through its subsidiary in Eindhoven, the company benefits from access to partners across the Benelux, as well as local talent and expertise in sustainable mobility.

For 2026, French investments continue to contribute to the Dutch innovation ecosystem, with OVHcloud expanding its digital infrastructure presence in Amsterdam and TETMET establishing its first production facility in the Netherlands for advanced manufacturing technologies.

Dutch investment projects in France in 2025

Dutch companies remained active investors in France in 2025, with 113 investment projects announced during the year, representing 6% of all foreign investment projects and ranking the Netherlands 6th among foreign investors by number of projects. These projects were expected to create or maintain 1,359 jobs.[4]

The sectoral profile of Dutch investment highlights the diversity of the bilateral relationship. Consumer services represented 34% of announced projects, followed by retail activities at 33%, while manufacturing accounted for 12%. In terms of employment, logistics accounted for 47% of announced jobs, making the Netherlands the third-largest foreign investor in France in this sector. Dutch companies also accounted for 54% of all foreign investment projects announced in France's sport and leisure sector.[5]

Recent projects illustrate the diversity and strategic importance of Dutch investment in France. In AI, Dutch semiconductor equipment manufacturer ASML invested €1.3 billion in French AI company Mistral AI in September 2025, alongside a long-term partnership covering the use of AI models across ASML's products, research and operations. The deal further strengthened links between two key European technology ecosystems. In logistics, HES International expanded its presence in France by becoming the operator of the multi-bulk terminal in Fos-sur-Mer, supporting strategic industrial activities and the decarbonisation of sectors such as steel and cement. Other investments in retail, sustainable industry and energy transition further highlight the broad and evolving sectoral profile of Dutch companies investing in France.

Geographically, Dutch investment remained widely distributed, with Île-de-France (18%), Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (13%) and Grand Est (11%) as the leading destinations.[6]

Looking ahead, developments in 2026 already point to an expansion into new strategic areas: Dutch AI infrastructure company Nebius announced plans to invest more than €8 billion in France, targeting 240 MW of AI computing capacity at a new site in Béthune and marking a major step into high-performance computing and digital infrastructure and highlighting the country's growing attractiveness for next-generation technologies.

[4, 5, 6] Source: Country fact sheet : Netherlands |Annual Report 2025 | Business France

PwC

“The Netherlands' role as a gateway to (Northern) Europe, paired with France's scale and connectivity to Southern Europe and beyond, makes this bilateral corridor one of the most strategically valuable in the EU. The Netherlands' long-standing role as an international financial hub, underpinned by a stable legal system and well-regulated markets, continues to make it an attractive base for companies seeking access to European supply chains and capital markets.

Companies that structure their operations to take advantage of both the Netherlands' financial and logistical infrastructure and France's scale and industrial depth are best positioned to capture opportunities across the wider European market, rather than treating each country as a standalone destination.”

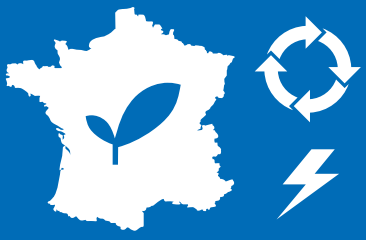
Barometer survey

3.2

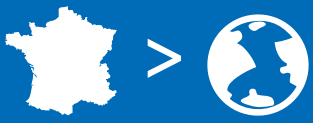
The overall company index scored 3.2 out of 5, illustrating a generally positive perception of the French business environment

3.4

Growth expectations remain strong at 3.4 out of 5, reflecting sustained confidence in France's long-term prospect



France's continued commitment to ecological transition such as decarbonised energy and circular economy policies is increasingly viewed as a source of opportunity



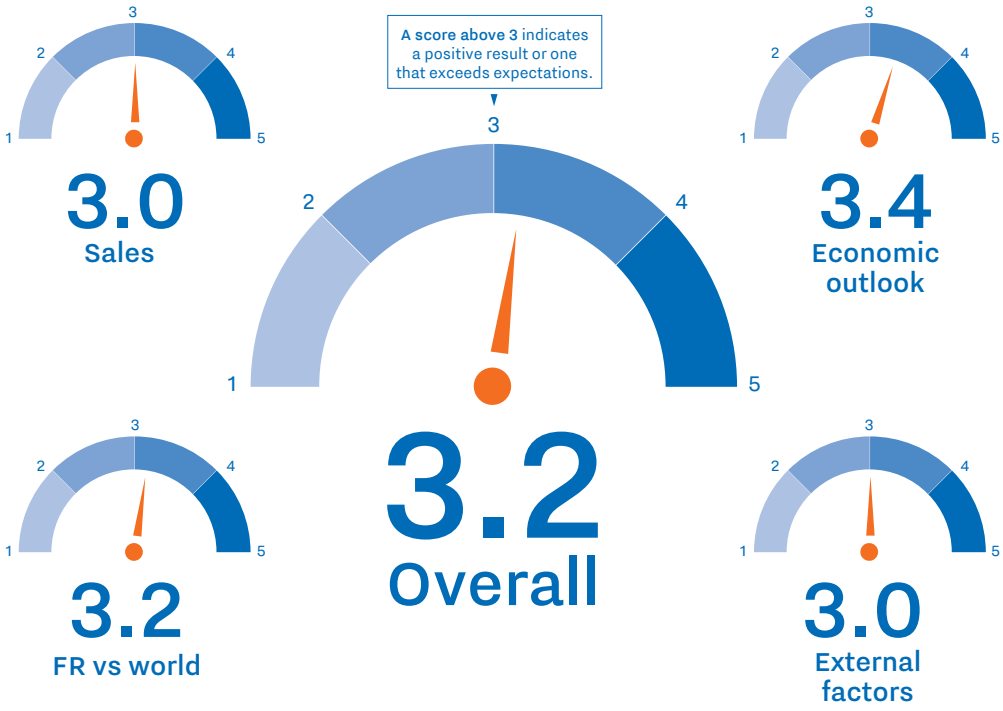
70%

France is still generally perceived as better than other countries in 12 out of 17 indicators (70%) similarly as in 2025

Barometer Survey of Dutch companies operating in France (2026 edition)

The overall company index scores 3.2 out of 5, reflecting a positive perception.

FIGURE 1 — The overall company index scores 3.2 on a 1 to 5 scale.



Source: Netherlands France Chamber of Commerce (NFCC), based on responses from 52 Dutch companies to the Barometer survey.

BOX 1 — METHODOLOGICAL NOTE ON THE BAROMETER INDEX

The barometer index is rated on a scale from 1 to 5 and reflects companies' satisfaction with the current and future state of their business in France. Respondents could assign a score from 1 to 5 each time. A score above 3 is considered positive or indicates that the respondent's expectations were exceeded. NFCC calculated the company index as a weighted average of four subindices, described in Table 1, based on quantitative questions from the Barometer Survey, sent by the NFCC and the Embassy of the Netherlands in France in April 2026 to over 250 Dutch companies active in France.

TABLE 1 — The four subindices measure the level of satisfaction by companies on four different dimensions.

Subindex	Weight	Description
Sales and Activity	1.5	Current economic activities and sales growth.
Economic outlook	1.5	Expectations on sectoral economic output and change in number of company's employees in the next 2-3 years.
France vs world	1.5	Comparison of France vs the rest of the world on seventeen factors (regarding workforce, quality of life, administrative procedures, etc).
External factors	0.5	Impact of key events on company's activities and investments in France.

Source: NFCC, based on questions from the Barometer Survey sent by the Embassy of the Netherlands in France.
The first three subindexes have a higher weight in the overall index calculation, due to the high number of questions they are composed of.

Overall index (score: 3.2 out of 5)

The overall company index scored 3.2 out of 5, reflecting a still positive perception of the French business environment, despite a slight decline compared to the 3.3 score recorded in the 2025 edition of the Barometer. Respondents remain broadly confident about their future activities in France, although current business conditions are perceived as more challenging than in 2024/2025. While a number of companies reported activity levels below their initial expectations, medium and long-term growth prospects remain favourable, particularly in sectors linked to the energy transition, sustainable mobility and innovation.

Several concerns were highlighted by respondents, including political uncertainty ahead of the 2027 presidential elections, ongoing geopolitical tensions, and broader macroeconomic pressures affecting investment decisions and market visibility. At the same time, companies continue to recognise France's key structural strengths, notably its strategic location within Europe, high-quality infrastructure, skilled workforce, and commitment to ecological transition. Support measures related to the circular economy and sustainability were also cited as important opportunities for business development.

Overall, the results suggest a normalisation of business sentiment rather than a deterioration in fundamentals. Dutch companies increasingly distinguish between short-term, temporary economic volatility and France's long-term attractiveness as a market for investment and growth. Despite persistent challenges related to administrative complexity, taxation, and labour costs, France continues to be viewed as a strategic and resilient market within Europe. The following paragraphs present the detailed scores and analysis of the four subindices.

Sales and activity (3.0 out of 5)

Among the four subindices, the sales and activity subindex showed the most notable adjustment, decreasing from 3.5 in 2025 to 3.0 in 2026. This result reflects a more challenging short-term business environment, with many companies reporting that current activity levels are below their initial expectations. The score for current activity reached 2.6 out of 5, indicating that demand conditions have been less favourable than anticipated across a number of sectors. These results are consistent with a broader environment characterised by persistent inflationary pressures, elevated household savings, and political uncertainty during the survey period, all of which may have weighed on business activity and consumer demand.

Despite this softer performance, respondents remain relatively optimistic about future developments. Growth expectations continue to score positively at 3.4 out of 5, suggesting that companies view current difficulties as temporary rather than structural. Most respondents do not expect the recent slowdown to significantly affect their long-term plans in France.

The survey also reveals increasing differences between sectors. Companies active in areas such as energy transition, electric mobility, and sustainable consumer products continue to report strong momentum, supported by favourable market trends and investment opportunities. By contrast, businesses operating in more traditional sectors, including automotive and retail, have experienced weaker demand and a more cautious commercial climate.

Overall, the results indicate that while business activity has moderated compared to the previous year, France continues to offer growth opportunities. However, performance is becoming increasingly dependent on sector-specific dynamics, with some industries benefiting more strongly from ongoing economic and societal transformations than others.

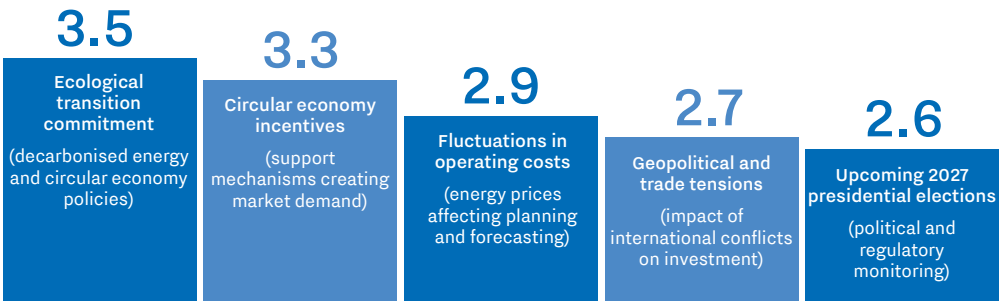
Economic outlook (3.4 out of 5)

Despite the challenging short-term economic situation, respondents expressed clear optimism about the economic outlook for their sector and the medium-term stability of their operations. This optimism is reflected in a score of 3.4 out of 5, unchanged from 2025, with only 10% of respondents expressing a negative sentiment about their prospects. While political uncertainties, domestic fiscal pressures and global trade tensions continue to pose risks to future developments, they have not translated into a deterioration in business confidence, with respondents remaining confident about their prospects in their targeted commercial market segments.

Noticeable differences persist among sectors: companies operating in electric mobility, green energy, and sustainable fashion express significantly greater confidence in their future performance than those in traditional segments like automotive and traditional retail, which are facing cyclical slowdowns. Respondents also highlighted their intention to capitalise on technological change and sustainability trends despite short-term fluctuations in sales. A large majority of respondents expect to stabilise or increase their workforce in France over the next 2–3 years, with 68% of companies explicitly anticipating an expansion of their employee base and only 11% forecasting a contraction.

Impact of external events (3.0 out of 5)

FIGURE 2 — Impact of 5 key external events.



Source: Netherlands France Chamber of Commerce (NFCC), based on responses from 52 Dutch companies to the Barometer survey.

The impact of external factors is perceived as mostly neutral by Dutch companies operating in France, with the subindex reaching 3.0 out of 5, slightly above the 2.9 recorded in 2025. While respondents acknowledge an increasingly uncertain international environment, most do not consider these factors to pose a significant threat to their long-term activities in France.

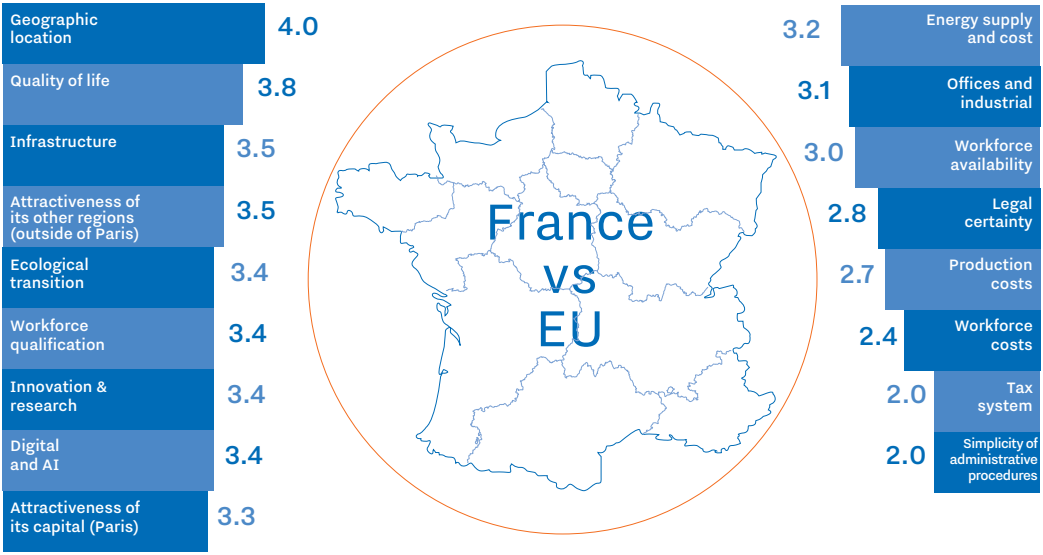
Several sources of uncertainty were nevertheless highlighted. Political and regulatory developments remain closely monitored, particularly in light of the upcoming 2027 presidential elections and the potential implications for the business environment. Companies also expressed concerns regarding broader macroeconomic and geopolitical developments, including ongoing international conflicts, trade tensions, and their potential impact on investment decisions and economic growth. In addition, fluctuations in energy prices and operating costs continue to affect planning and forecasting, especially for businesses with significant industrial activities.

At the same time, respondents identified a number of positive external developments. France's continued commitment to the ecological transition, including decarbonised energy and circular economy policies, is increasingly viewed as a source of opportunity, particularly for companies active in sustainability-related sectors. Several businesses noted that support mechanisms such as repair and reuse incentives contribute directly to market demand and business development.

Overall, the results suggest that Dutch companies in France are adapting to a more volatile global environment. While external risks remain present, they are largely balanced by emerging opportunities linked to France's economic and environmental policy priorities, resulting in an overall neutral assessment.

France's attractiveness compared with other EU countries (3.2 out of 5)

FIGURE 3 — Attractiveness of France compared to other EU countries.



Source: Netherlands France Chamber of Commerce (NFCC), based on responses from 52 Dutch companies to the Barometer survey.

> "France's high-quality infrastructure base and its leading role in the ecological transition agenda increasingly drive favourable investment decisions"

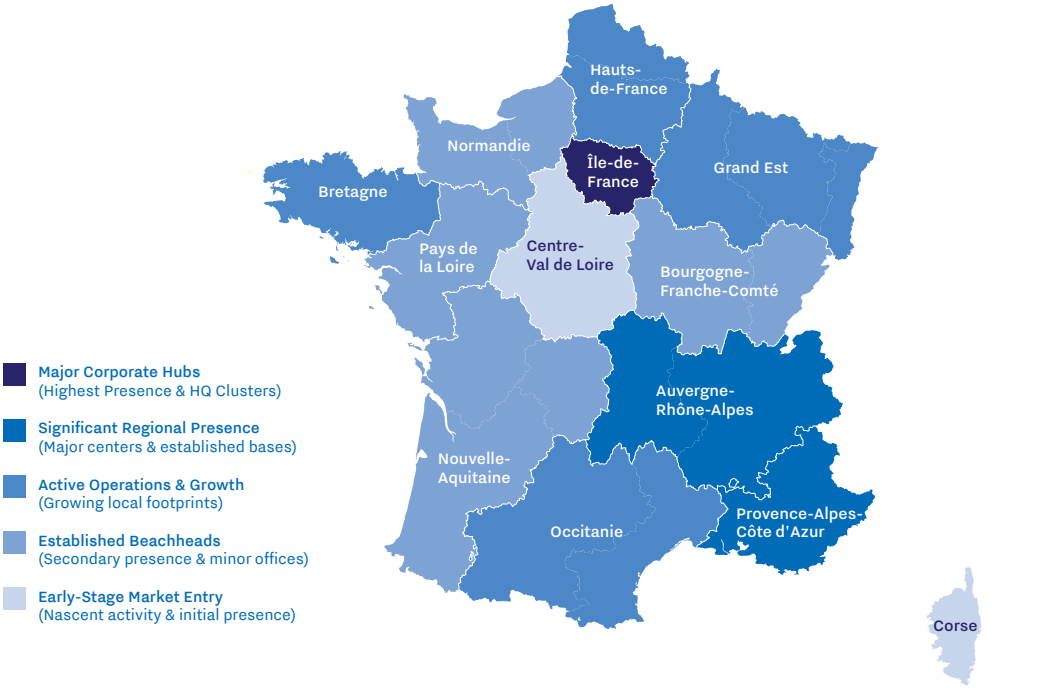
France is perceived more positively in many areas compared to other EU countries by Dutch businesses and entrepreneurs, with its overall attractiveness perception improving slightly to reach 3.2 out of 5 in 2026, up from 3.1 in 2025. The country's central location within the European market remains a clear, undisputed advantage, facilitating seamless regional operations and logistics efficiency for international companies. The quality of life in France was highly rated last year and maintained that strong position again this year, acting as a significant corporate asset in attracting and retaining top-tier talent. In addition, France's high-quality infrastructure base and its leading role in the ecological transition agenda increasingly drive favourable investment decisions. Respondents widely recognise these structural pillars as solid foundations for companies looking to innovate and expand. In the short term, political uncertainty is offset by continued confidence in France's strong political and legal institutions.

Some long-standing challenges continue to affect Dutch companies operating in France. Administrative complexity, the tax system, and labour costs are among the factors that are most often viewed as less attractive than in neighbouring countries. At the same time, the high level of qualifications, availability of skilled labour, and productivity of the French workforce are seen as important counterbalancing factors.

Overall, respondents continue to view France's business environment positively, notably in light of its infrastructure, strategic location, and role in the green transition. Despite the challenges identified, companies maintain a positive view of France's long-term strategic potential and its attractiveness for foreign investment.

Regional presence and expansion plans

FIGURE 4 — Dutch corporate presence in French Regions



Source: Netherlands France Chamber of Commerce (NFCC), based on responses from 52 Dutch companies to the Barometer survey.

While Île-de-France (Paris area) remains the primary hub for Dutch companies operating in France, the survey results indicate a growing interest in regional diversification. Companies planning to expand their activities increasingly identify regions such as **Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, and Grand Est** as attractive growth destinations. These regions benefit from strong industrial ecosystems, innovation clusters, international connectivity, and sector-specific opportunities. The findings suggest that Dutch companies increasingly view France not only through the lens of Paris, but as a network of dynamic regional markets offering complementary growth opportunities.

“Dutch companies planning to expand their activities increasingly identify regions such as Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Nouvelle-Aquitaine, and Grand Est as attractive growth destinations.”

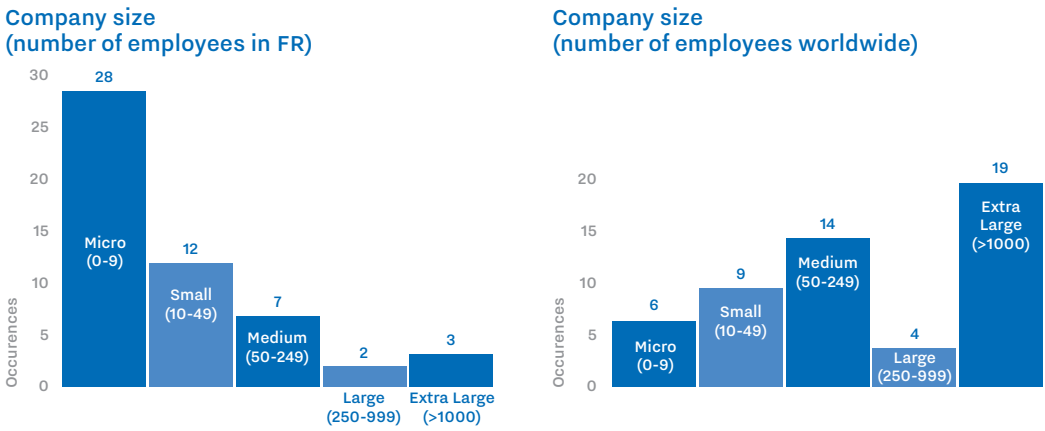
Descriptive statistics

- **Sample size and scale:** The 2026 Barometer is based on responses from 52 Dutch companies active in the French market. The sample includes a balanced mix of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large multinational corporations, collectively representing a substantial economic footprint and tens of thousands of employees in France. This diversity contributes to the robustness and representativeness of the survey results.

- **Sector distribution:** Participating companies operate across a wide range of sectors, reflecting the breadth of Dutch economic activity in France. Strong representation was recorded from industries such as IT and software, energy, transport and logistics, circular economy, and advanced manufacturing. This diversified sectoral composition ensures that the findings capture perspectives from both traditional industrial activities and rapidly growing innovation-driven sectors.

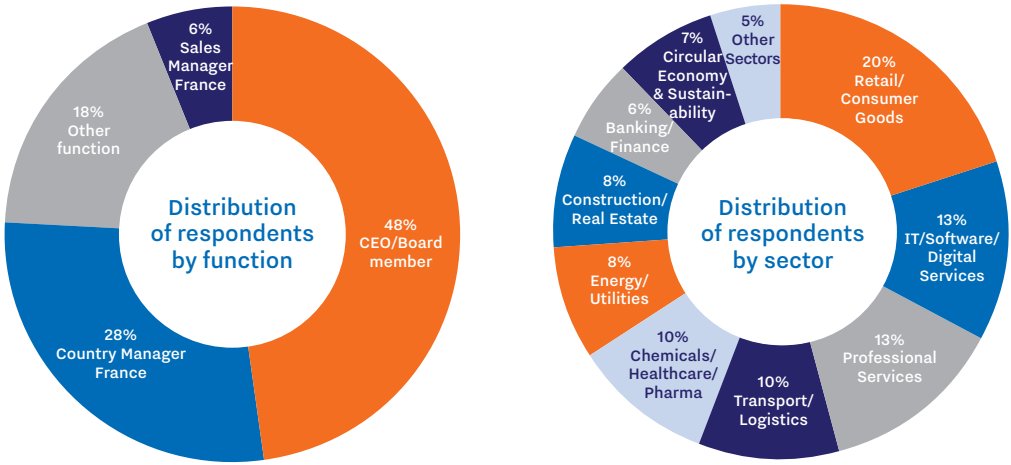
- **Respondent profiles:** The survey respondents predominantly occupy senior leadership and decision-making positions within their organizations, including CEOs, Managing Directors, Country Directors, and Board Members. As a result, the responses provide a strategic view of the French business environment and reflect the perspectives of individuals directly involved in shaping their companies’ operations, investments, and long-term development in France.

FIGURE 5 — Distribution of respondents by company size, in terms of number of employees in France (left) and worldwide (right).



Source: Netherlands France Chamber of Commerce (NFCC), based on responses from 52 Dutch companies to the Barometer survey.

FIGURE 6 — Distribution of respondents by respondent function (left) and company sector (right).



Source: Netherlands France Chamber of Commerce (NFCC), based on responses from 52 Dutch companies to the Barometer survey.

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"France offers significant opportunities for businesses that invest in digital transformation, sustainable growth and local partnerships. To fully unlock this potential, maintaining a predictable and proportionate regulatory environment, while continuing efforts to simplify administrative processes, will be key to supporting innovation and competitiveness.

We remain confident in the long-term potential of the French market and look forward to continuing to invest and innovate alongside our partners to support the sustainable growth of France's tourism economy."

Van Halteren

"France remains one of the most interesting markets in Europe for Dutch industrial suppliers. Investment in defence, maritime capabilities, energy infrastructure and water management is substantial and long-term, and French clients think in terms of decades rather than quarters. What we see clearly is that access to this market is earned through presence and patience. Technical excellence alone does not open doors.

A local partner, real command of the language and business ways, and the willingness to invest in the relationship before the first order do. For Dutch companies prepared to make that investment, the French market offers a depth, stability and long-term outlook that is increasingly rare elsewhere in Europe."

Economic Forecasts in 2027 by ING

Economic outlook: Resilient, but on different tracks

Europe has absorbed another energy shock without falling into recession, but resilience should not be confused with momentum. The Netherlands is benefiting from technology-led exports, while France is entering the 2027 electoral cycle with weak growth and little fiscal room. For bilateral trade and investment, this points to continued activity rather than a boom: trade should expand moderately, while French investment into the Netherlands is likely to remain more dynamic than flows in the opposite direction.

Written by Charlotte de Montpellier, Senior Economist ING

2026: growth resilience meets a renewed energy shock

The global economy has absorbed an unusual succession of shocks in 2026. The conflict involving Iran and disruption in the Strait of Hormuz pushed oil, gas and refined-product prices higher, while heatwaves, drought and persistent trade tensions added pressure to transport, agriculture and supply chains.

Activity nevertheless held up. The US economy continued to benefit from a resilient labour market, strong corporate orders and AI-related investment. In Asia, the same technology cycle supported production and intra-regional trade despite weak Chinese domestic demand. In the eurozone, GDP excluding volatile Irish data increased by around 0.3% quarter-on-quarter, with consumption, investment and industrial output proving more resilient than expected. But this is resilience rather than acceleration: European growth remains more modest than elsewhere and increasingly dependent on public infrastructure and defence spending.

> "This is resilience rather than acceleration: European growth remains more modest than elsewhere."

The energy shock is nevertheless leaving a clear mark. Europe is less exposed to an outright supply shortage than in 2022 because it has diversified its suppliers, but it remains highly sensitive to prices. In our base case, we expect oil prices to ease gradually over the coming quarters, while European gas prices remain elevated through the winter before falling more markedly in 2027. This should keep eurozone inflation above 3% around the turn of the year, before it falls below 2% in the second half of 2027. We expect inflation to average 3.0% in 2026 and 2.3% in 2027. Direct energy effects are the main driver, although higher fuel, transport and production costs will also pass through to food and some services with a lag. Underlying inflation and second-round effects remain relatively contained for now, but a prolonged energy shock could still generate broader pressure through wages, services and inflation expectations. Prolonged supply disruption, low gas inventories or refinery bottlenecks could keep inflation close to 4% or higher for longer, whereas faster normalisation in oil and gas prices would bring inflation back towards target sooner.

This combination of resilient activity and renewed inflation pressure has also led to a sharp reassessment of the monetary-policy outlook since the beginning of 2026. In the US, sustained demand and higher energy prices have shifted the debate from further Federal Reserve cuts towards the possibility of renewed tightening. The European Central Bank has already acted twice. After raising its deposit rate by 25 basis points to 2.25% in June, its first increase since 2023, it delivered another 25-basis-point increase in September, bringing the deposit rate to 2.5%. These moves reflected concern that the energy shock could become more persistent and feed into underlying inflation, wages and inflation expectations. We do not consider the tightening cycle necessarily complete: a further rate increase cannot be excluded if energy prices remain elevated, underlying inflation proves more persistent or second-round effects become more visible. The ECB is therefore likely to remain data-dependent, assessing not only the direct energy shock but also its transmission to services prices, wages and inflation expectations. Our base case does not imply an aggressive hiking cycle, but another rate increase remains possible.

2027: growth should improve but remains constrained

We expect the global expansion to continue in 2027, with US GDP still expanding by more than 2% and Chinese growth slowing gradually. In the eurozone, growth should rise from 0.8% in 2026 to 1.3% in 2027. German infrastructure and defence spending should increasingly reach the real economy, while a gradual improvement in manufacturing and lower inflation supporting investment and consumption. We nevertheless expect the recovery to remain uneven and constrained by persistent structural headwinds. Trade tensions and protectionist measures will continue to limit export opportunities and complicate supply chains, while geopolitical risks will weigh on confidence, energy security and investment decisions. At the same time, Chinese competition—particularly in sectors such as electric vehicles, machinery, chemicals and clean technologies—will continue to put further pressure on the competitiveness and margins of European manufacturers. Energy-intensive sectors will remain vulnerable, fiscal consolidation will weigh on activity in several countries, and higher financing costs will restrain construction and business investment. We expect a modest improvement in growth as public investment gains traction and energy prices gradually ease, but these factors will offset only part of the drag from restrictive financing conditions, weak external demand and a more fragmented global economy.

This uneven mix of modest growth, persistent inflation risks and greater public borrowing also matters through its impact on financing conditions. The recent rise in long-term bond yields is therefore an important downside risk. Higher yields transmit geopolitical and inflation uncertainty directly to households, companies and governments. They raise mortgage and corporate funding costs, weaken construction and investment, and increase sovereign interest expenditure.

For the eurozone, the trade outlook is less supportive than the headline resilience of activity might suggest. We expect exports to remain broadly subdued through the end of 2026 before recovering only gradually in 2027. AI-related capital spending, European defence procurement and the tentative improvement in manufacturing will support selected sectors, but weak foreign demand, persistent US trade barriers, a relatively strong euro and intensifying Chinese competition will constrain export growth. Imports should grow more strongly than exports. As a result, net trade is unlikely to be a major engine of growth, and the goods surplus is likely to remain volatile and below its pre-pandemic norm.

> “We expect a modest improvement in growth as public investment gains traction and energy prices gradually ease”

France: weaker growth and unusually high domestic uncertainty

France underperformed both the eurozone and the Netherlands in the first half of 2026. GDP contracted by 0.2% in the first quarter and stagnated in the second. Household consumption recovered slightly in the spring, but investment continued to fall. Employment has also started to weaken: private-sector employment has now declined for six consecutive quarters, unemployment is rising and households remain cautious. Business confidence improved during the summer, but from a low level, while higher long-term rates remain a serious constraint on investment and construction.

We expect French GDP to grow by only 0.5% in 2026, compared with close to 1% for the eurozone, before accelerating to 0.9% in 2027. This modest improvement would be supported by somewhat stronger European demand, a stabilisation and gradual improvement in investment and firmer industrial activity. It will nevertheless remain constrained by weak household confidence, a softening labour market and fiscal consolidation.

> "Fiscal policy is the principal domestic risk."

Fiscal policy is the principal domestic risk. With the 2027 presidential campaign already under way, consolidation measures are becoming harder to agree and implement in both this year's and next year's budgets. Additional measures would be needed merely to keep the 2026 deficit below 5% of GDP, after 5.1% in 2025; the former 4.6% target is no longer credible. Under unchanged policies, the European Commission projects a deficit of 5.7% of GDP in 2027 and public debt of 120.2% of GDP. There is a risk that the election again produces a parliament without a stable majority, which would make sustained consolidation more difficult and prolongs uncertainty over taxes, spending and regulation.

France nevertheless retains some relative advantages. Its largely decarbonised electricity system may support electricity-intensive industrial and digital investment, but its economic value will depend on delivered electricity prices, grid capacity, connection times and regulatory stability. The 2026 edition of the barometer also indicates that investors continue to value France's location, infrastructure, workforce and innovation capacity. These factors partly offset, but do not remove, the constraints created by weak growth, fiscal uncertainty, administrative complexity and high costs.

The Netherlands: stronger growth, but increasingly constrained by supply

The Dutch economy has again proved more resilient than many of its neighbours. We expect GDP growth of 1.4% in 2026 and 1.3% in 2027. However, the headline figures overstate the breadth of the expansion. Growth in 2026 has been driven to a large extent by exports, industrial production and a limited number of internationally oriented sectors, especially those linked to the global AI investment cycle and the semiconductor machinery cluster. This provides a powerful external impulse, but it is not necessarily evidence of a broad acceleration in the domestic economy. Household consumption has been less dynamic, while investment outside the technology-related sectors remains constrained by uncertainty, high financing costs and physical capacity limits.

In 2027, the composition of growth should shift rather than strengthen materially. Household consumption and public spending are likely to contribute less as purchasing-power gains moderate and fiscal policy becomes more restrictive. Exports and business investment should therefore account for a larger share of growth, assuming that global demand for advanced technology remains firm and that the manufacturing cycle continues to recover. This makes the outlook relatively sensitive to developments abroad: weaker technology investment, renewed trade frictions or slower European demand would have a disproportionate effect on Dutch activity.

> "The central issue is therefore not whether the economy can continue to grow in the short term, but whether investment, infrastructure and productivity can expand sufficiently to sustain that growth."

The Netherlands enters this period with sounder public finances than France, a highly open economy and strong logistical, financial and digital infrastructure. Yet the economy is increasingly running into supply-side constraints. Electricity-grid congestion, nitrogen restrictions, housing shortages, permitting delays and a tight labour market make it difficult for strong demand to translate into additional productive capacity. These bottlenecks can raise costs and delay investment even when order books are healthy. The central issue is therefore not whether the economy can continue to grow in the short term, but whether investment, infrastructure and productivity can expand sufficiently to sustain that growth. Political fragmentation makes rapid progress on these constraints more difficult.

Franco-Dutch trade outlook

We expect Franco-Dutch trade to expand moderately over the remainder of 2026 and in 2027. Dutch exports should benefit from the global technology cycle, a gradual recovery in European manufacturing and continued demand for logistics services. French exports should be supported by firmer European demand, defence-related orders and high-value services, while import-intensive Dutch defence investment may create additional opportunities for French suppliers. The upturn will nevertheless remain limited by weak French domestic demand and elevated energy and financing costs. The main downside risks are renewed trade tensions, a weaker global technology cycle and a delayed recovery in European industry.

Foreign direct investment outlook

The bilateral investment relationship starts from a sizeable and mature base, with established subsidiaries, production sites and distribution networks on both sides. Recent investment activity has been uneven as companies prioritised existing operations over large new projects amid high financing costs, energy-price volatility and policy uncertainty.

We expect bilateral investment to remain moderate and selective in 2026 and 2027, with French investment activity in the Netherlands likely to remain more dynamic than Dutch investment activity in France. The Netherlands is already a major destination for French outward FDI, supported by its role as a financial and logistical hub and by a sizeable French corporate presence. Recent project data also point to renewed French activity in the Dutch market after a weaker 2024.

> "In both directions, the expansion or repositioning of existing activities is likely to dominate new market entry."

Dutch investment into France is likely to remain more cautious given weak French growth and uncertainty surrounding the electoral and fiscal outlook. In both directions, the expansion or repositioning of existing activities is likely to dominate new market entry. Energy prices, long-term interest rates, European demand and policy uncertainty remain the principal downside risks.

Bilateral outlook: moderate growth

Our central scenario is one of moderate bilateral trade growth and asymmetric investment. Technology, defence and a gradual manufacturing recovery should support activity, but domestic constraints will determine the strength of both trade and investment.

Netherlands

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