



National Institute for Public Health
and the Environment
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

Better prepared for the future

Global Risk Assessment for Public Health in the Netherlands



This risk assessment maps out the international threats that could affect public health in the Netherlands: what is coming to the Netherlands from the world around us? Both the European and Caribbean Netherlands were considered. It is important for the Netherlands to be better prepared for these threats.

Key findings

- Today's world is characterised by rapid and far-reaching changes. The international risk landscape for Dutch public health is changing considerably.
- The risks posed by international threats such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR), infectious diseases and climate change remain high.
- New threats have also emerged, such as the rise of disinformation and misinformation and the increasing pressure on international cooperation. These new threats can also increase the urgency of the already known threats.
- Many threats are interrelated. The greatest risk therefore arises from the combination of threats. The interconnectedness requires a coherent approach.
- With strong international health organisations and a coordinated global approach to threats, health risks for the Netherlands will be reduced.

Main risks to Dutch public health

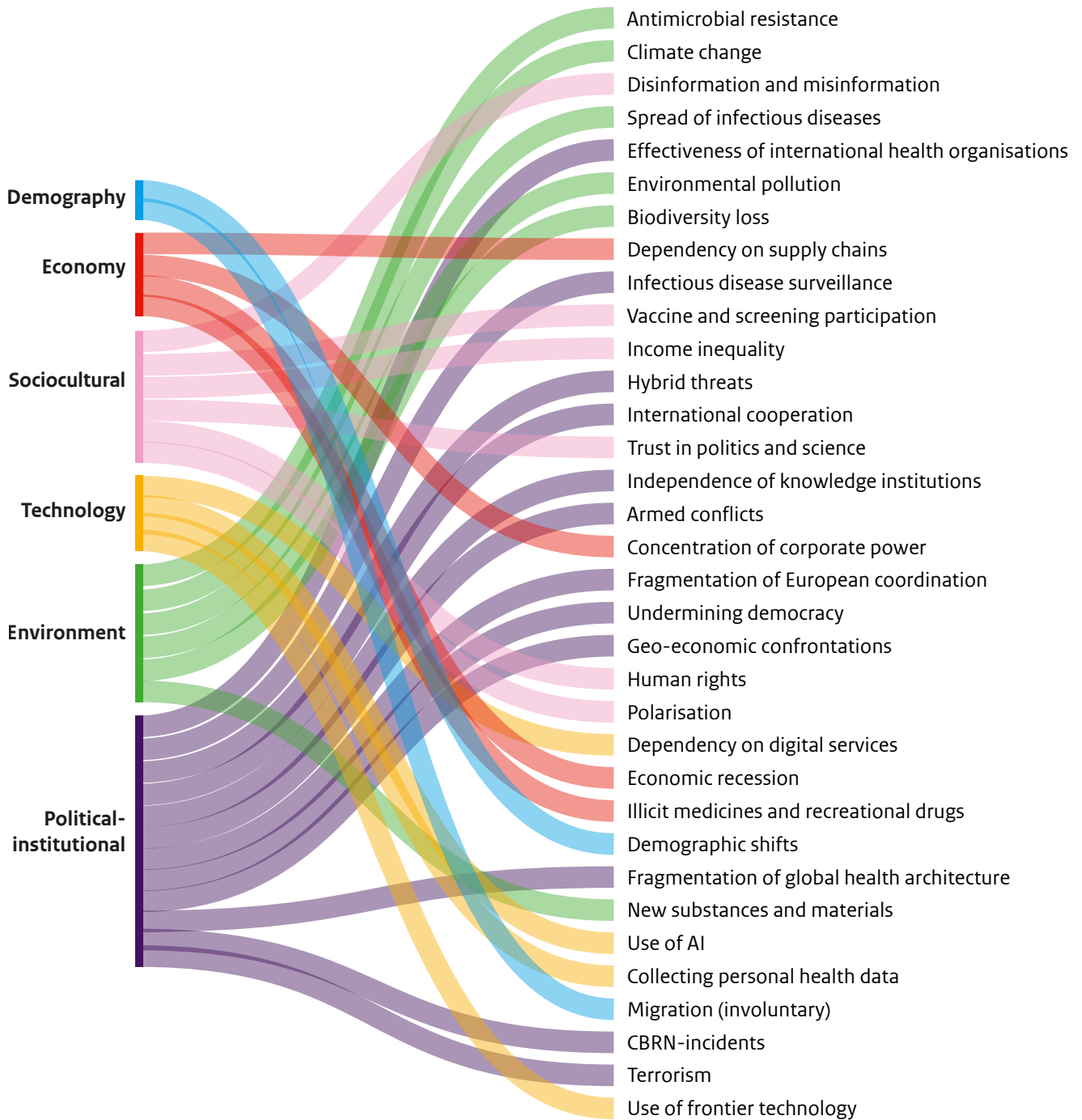
Risks for the Netherlands

- Environmental risks score high: antimicrobial resistance (AMR), climate change, spread of infectious diseases and environmental pollution.
- Disinformation and misinformation are the biggest socio-cultural risk.
- Political-institutional risks also score high. For example, the decline in the effectiveness of international health organisations.

Risks for the Caribbean Netherlands (not shown in figure)

- For the Caribbean Netherlands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, known as the BES islands), a separate prioritisation has been made.
- The BES islands are more prone to risks such as natural disasters, climate change, brain drain (outflow of skilled workers) and dependence on supply chains.
- Strengthening the basic (care) infrastructure is essential, both for daily care and for greater resilience to threats.

Figure 1. The most important international risks to Dutch public health



Methodology

To map the international risks, a horizon scan was carried out according to the DESTEP method. Extensive desk research of Dutch and international literature revealed the most important demographic, economic, socio-cultural, technological, environmental and political-institutional risks. The risks were prioritised through a survey of more than 100 experts. Based on interviews with experts and literature research, options for action have been formulated.

Implications and options for action

Dutch public health is threatened by international developments, which are often interrelated and can reinforce each other. The risks must therefore not only be tackled separately, but also through an overarching approach that considers them in conjunction.



Building on strengths, reinforcing where needed

The Netherlands has a frontrunner position on, among other things, the One Health approach and the National Heat Wave Plan. The good international position is an opportunity to raise the profile of the Netherlands. However, the Netherlands cannot become complacent and must continue to invest in these approaches. In addition, broad knowledge development on new topics such as disinformation and misinformation is essential.



Cooperation between different ministries is essential

Health risks are not only tasks for the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. Other policy areas, such as climate, security, trade and defence, also touch on the identified risks. Focusing on cooperation between ministries (horizontal policy integration) is therefore crucial. Health in All Policies (HiAP) is an excellent approach for this. The appointment of special envoys, who work interdepartmentally on topics such as AMR, strengthens horizontal policy integration.



International interconnectedness requires a response at different levels

Most risks cross national borders. Investing in a global health architecture that fits in well with the European and national level, and defending that architecture, should therefore remain important policy priorities for the Netherlands (vertical policy integration). A strong global approach to health risks also reduces these risks for the Netherlands.



Resilience over efficiency

Focusing exclusively on the efficiency of (healthcare) systems leads to vulnerability, for example during a polycrisis involving multiple simultaneous shocks. Investments in buffer capacity, strategic stocks and governance that can anticipate change more quickly are prerequisites for greater resilience.



From reactive to proactive

The speed with which new international risks emerge and the interconnectedness of risks require a more flexible and integrated approach. Structurally linking foresight studies and scenario approaches to the policy process allows policy to be developed proactively rather than reactively.

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P.O. Box 1 | 3720 BA Bilthoven
The Netherlands
www.rivm.nl

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This fact sheet briefly presents the results of the Global Risk Assessment for Public Health Netherlands (GRASPH).

In addition to the factsheet, a report is also available.

The study was carried out by the RIVM, commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. More information can be found at www.rivm.nl/en/public-health-foresight/grasph

Contact: Henk Hilderink - henk.hilderink@rivm.nl