

Manifesto for MERA25 in the Netherlands



FINAL VERSION FOR AMV TEXT

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MERA25 believes it is time to give democratic control to the people. We could be living in a world where we have a say about what goes on in politics and in our workplaces. A world in which we are able to speak up, and decide collectively how to deal with the challenges we are facing. Where you and I could decide how our economy is run, how our taxes are spent and how the businesses we work at operate, whilst being able to truly trust those meant to represent us and our interests. We could, in other words, be living in a *real* democracy.

At the moment, however, it seems that if there is one thing politicians fear, it is exactly this *real* democracy. They like to pretend that democracy is one of their core beliefs, but neglect it in practice constantly. Throughout Europe we see that, when important political decisions need to be made, politicians prefer to consult their army of lobbyists, “technocrats” and friends from the business world.

Usually, those decisions have already been made before the public has even been given the chance to state their opinion. It is no coincidence that these decisions happen to be favourable to these same lobbyists and multinational firms, often to the detriment of the interests and the rights of citizens.

MERA25 recognizes that this type of politics — the type we are living under now — is effectively ruled by **oligarchs**: a small group of people who subvert our democracy by using their massive influence to shape public policy to their advantage. It works according to a simple principle: “Much in the hands of a few.”

They own the corporations that own our homes, the banks that keep our money, the vaccines that save our lives, the apps we need to work, the data these apps collect about us, the oil and gas that heat up our planet — and, more importantly, they own the politicians who were supposed to defend us against them. They increase our energy prices when they can and reap huge profits while we struggle to pay our rents and monthly bills. They are the result of a terrible system in which the rich are allowed to do whatever they like, which common people pay for when “whatever they like” doesn’t work out.

We can’t live like this for much longer. We live in a time of crises, and our current politics seem utterly incapable of addressing these effectively:

- We are dealing with a climate crisis, which endangers the habitability of our planet
- Economic inequality has skyrocketed to disastrous levels in recent decades
- Cost of living has increased unacceptably
- Erosion in public trust over politics, combined with increasing influence of anti-democratic and intolerant movements, leading to acceptance of authoritarian politics — which also simultaneously increases threats to minority groups in the Netherlands (e.g. LGBTQ+ community; migrants and asylum seekers and all others facing discrimination)
- And our politicians, instead of working to resolve any of it, are compounding the issue by serving the 1%

Time and time again, we are told that there is no alternative, just as it is becoming increasingly clear that we **must** take another course. It has never been this clear: **We must find an alternative, now.**

These crises also require a European approach, as these drastic problems we are experiencing are not uniquely Dutch. This is no coincidence, but a clear consequence of the fact that the same failing, oligarchic structures have established themselves throughout all of Europe. Not only in national parliaments, but also in the European Union.

MERA25 aims to realise this much-needed alternative. We want to achieve this through a **democratic revolution in Europe**, to take back the power from the oligarchs, and hand it back to the European public. In this way, we can achieve a liveable, affordable and worthy life for all Europeans. **An alternative is not only possible, but necessary.**

How did we get here?

Europe is dealing with three crises: The first is an economic one, with declining living standards, increasing poverty and increasing inequality. We are also dealing with an ecological crisis, which threatens the livelihoods of everyone on our planet. Lastly, we are facing a democratic crisis, evident from the declining trust in politics, and institutions that turn people away from government and cooperative solutions and towards a politics of hate, suspicion and fear.

Many people are of the opinion that politicians have done nothing to prevent these crises, and that this proves politicians ultimately don't achieve anything. This is a misconception. Politicians have managed to enact change, but only for the richest and most powerful people in our society. This is how our politicians have governed for the last decades. Not only in The Netherlands, but across Europe. All three crises we are facing are in effect a result of this type of politics. We have seen how politicians have cut all forms of social welfare in the last decades; we have seen how they have delayed climate action to protect the profits of large corporations; and we have seen how these efforts have eroded trust in public institutions.

There are numerous other examples where the system of favouring oligarchs has resulted in unnecessary hardship for the many. Take the housing crisis: Let's not forget how VVD minister Stef Blok proudly sold off our social housing stock to rich foreign investors. As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of people have become dependent on private landlords, who squeeze as much money out of their tenants as possible. Instead, we could have invested in our public housing stock, providing affordable housing for the many

In addition to this, the childcare allowance scandal has shown the horrific consequences of politicians fundamentally distrusting the public. Politics of austerity and cruelly rigid budget-balancing have changed our tax office into a detective office, tasked with preventing benefit fraud of the poor, while allowing billions of the oligarch's euros to leave the country. They will persecute any citizen under the slightest suspicion of having wasted negligible amounts of tax money, ruining thousands of lives in the process, while legalising the greatest money heist in

Dutch history: oligarchs walking away with billions in tax benefits. Imagine what those billions could be used for in our societies, instead of sitting in the greedy offshore bank accounts of oligarchs.

Let us also not forget how in the financial crisis of 2008, we were able to raise billions of euros to bail out bankers, while normal citizens saw their living costs rise and employment opportunities vanish. Instead of helping those who needed help the most, we have paid the bill for irresponsible, corrupt bankers, who themselves had caused the crisis from which **we** – the taxpayers – then bailed them out. Here we also see what our public money is actually used for: Socialism for the rich, and brutal, rugged capitalism for everyone else.

This clear-as-day corruption, in which the rich are first in line, has led to crisis after crisis; each more severe than the previous. We can no longer wait, delay, or have endless meetings with CEOs. The clock is ticking.

What does MERA25 want to do about this?

While traditional green and left parties aim to gradually adjust our current system, MERA25 intends to radically change it.

Far-reaching democratisation of politics

In order to regain trust in politics, and ensure that our political system serves the public good instead of oligarchs, MERA25 will set up new layers of democracy, such as public councils attended by randomly selected members of the public. On a European level, we will set up democratic people's assemblies to create a new, democratic European constitution.

Democracy in the workplace

Many of us spend most of our adult lives in workplaces where we have nothing to say about how the workplace is run. While we pretend to live in a democratic society, we are employed in workplaces which look more like autocracies. In order to provide employees with their rightful say in the workplace, we suggest a simple system: One employee, one vote, one share in the firm. In this way, workers will no longer be dependent on the wishes of powerful shareholders. Instead, workers decide for themselves.

Radical approach to solving the climate crisis

Time is running out to save our planet, and our politicians' current plans to tackle climate change are almost laughably ineffective. MERA25 wants to tackle the climate crisis radically, as described in our Green New Deal for Europe: We don't look towards the self-defeating ideas of "green growth," but to an all-encompassing approach. MERA25 wants to tackle the climate crisis whilst simultaneously addressing crucial social issues: We can create many, dignifying

jobs, expand and modernise public housing and provide free and effective public transport for all.

Universal basic income

In order to provide a worthy life for everyone, MERA25 wants to provide a universal and unconditional basic income for all European citizens. This will guarantee that everyone is able to meet their basic needs, regardless of their income. By establishing a universal basic income, we can also get rid of the unjust system of many different, strictly conditional allowances.

A better world is possible — and we need it now.

The time has come to take back politics. It is the only way we can deal with the crises we are currently facing. In the past decades, many people have given up on politics. After all, it was abundantly clear that politicians were too busy helping their oligarch friends. *There is no alternative*, we were told.

But there is an alternative. One in which we do have a say, and one where a better way of life is possible. We can — and must — take another course.