
X. THE NETHERLANDS

General Information

Although the Netherlands is a small nation measuring 41 473 km² (approximately the size of Vancouver Island), it is one of the world's most densely populated countries with 14.6 million inhabitants. As the country is only 370 km long and about 193 km wide, it is possible to reach any point in the Netherlands by automobile from Amsterdam in two and a half hours. More than half of the Dutch live in the western coastal area of the country which includes the three major cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, the latter being the country's administrative centre. All three cities are within an hour's drive of each other. Fast, efficient train and bus service link all Dutch commercial centres. A businessperson can make a morning appointment in Rotterdam and be back in Amsterdam for an afternoon meeting. Dutch businesspersons are generally scrupulous about honouring appointments and expect the same from visitors.

The Netherlands represents an ideally compact and concentrated market, which considerably reduces transportation and distribution costs for exporters.

Excluding agricultural products and natural gas, the Netherlands must import primary commodities and a high percentage of manufactured goods. If a Canadian exporter has a competitive product, the Netherlands is a good potential market.

An additional advantage of selling to the Netherlands is that Rotterdam is one of the world's largest ports and serves as a major entry point into the lucrative EEC countries, especially West Germany (Amsterdam is also one of Europe's busiest ports). In fact, there are more than 160 million people within a radius of 500 km of the major Dutch cities. Because of its strategic location, the Netherlands has taken over a great proportion of the transport business for the Common Market nations.

Doing Business with the Dutch

Doing business in the Netherlands is particularly easy for Canadians, as most of the Dutch speak English fluently,