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Netherlands

Left progress, setback for government

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Setbacks for the Christian Democrats and the liberals of the VVD and D66, who have governed the country in coalition since 2002, progress for the social democrats; the European elections in the Netherlands followed the pattern of many other countries, with the government being punished and the opposition making progress.

The rate of participation was higher than in 1999 (39.1% as against 29.9%) but much lower than the norm for elections to the Dutch parliament (79.0% in 2002 and 79.9% in 2003).

The "Transparent Europe" list led by a former European civil servant, Paul Van Buiten, which denounced corruption in the European institutions, made a breakthrough and won two seats with 7.3% of the vote. In contrast to the reactionary list of Pim Fortuyn in 2002, this was not a right wing list and the two deputies elected had announced that they wish to join the European Green group.

The other notable event was the success of the Socialist Party, a radical left organization which has been making progress at every election in recent years. With 7% of the vote they elected two deputies who will join the GUE/NLG group in the European parliament.

The Green Left, squeezed between these two phenomena, fell back (7.4% as against 11.8% in 1999) and lost two of its four European deputies.