

International Tax

Netherlands Highlights

In Plain English



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Investment basics:

Currency – Euro (EUR)

Foreign exchange control – No

Accounting principles/financial statements

– IAS/IFRS/Dutch GAAP. Financial statements must be filed annually.

Principal business entities – These are the public company (naamloze vennootschap or NV), private limited liability company (besloten vennootschap or BV), partnership (commanditaire vennootschap or CV, vennootschap onder firma or VOF, etc.), cooperative and branch of a foreign company.

Corporate taxation:

Residence – Companies that have their management in the Netherlands and, in principle, all companies incorporated according to Dutch civil law, are regarded as resident.

Basis – Residents are liable to tax on their worldwide income; nonresidents are taxed only on Netherlands- source income. Exemptions may apply for certain income from shareholdings, permanent establishments (PEs) and innovative activities (see under “Participation exemption” and “Incentives”). Branches of foreign companies and subsidiaries are treated the same way in determining corporate income tax, although branches usually are exempt from withholding tax on profit remittances to their foreign head offices.

Taxable income – Corporate income tax is due on all profits derived from conducting a business, including trading income, foreign-source income, passive income and capital gains. In principle, all costs relating to the business are deductible.

Taxation of dividends – Dividends received by a Dutch resident company are exempt

if the participation exemption applies (see “Participation exemption”). If the participation exemption does not apply, either because the holding requirement is not met or because one of the three tests is not met and the subsidiary has not been subject to any form of corporate income tax, any profit derived from the shares will be taxed at the normal corporate rate without a credit. If the participation exemption does not apply because one of the three tests is not met, but the subsidiary has been subject to corporate income tax, a tax credit will be granted. The amount of the credit varies: the maximum credit is 5%, and for EU subsidiaries, a credit is granted for the actual amount of corporate income tax, up to the Dutch corporate income tax levied on the dividends.

Capital gains – Capital gains derived from the sale of a participation are exempt if the participation exemption applies (see “Participation exemption”). Other capital gains are taxed at the normal corporate rate. Gains arising on a (de-)merger may be exempt if certain requirements are met.

Losses – Losses arising in fiscal years beginning on or after 1 January 2019 may be carried forward for only six years and carried back for one year. For losses incurred prior to 2019, the carryforward period remains nine years. The limitation on the set-off of tax losses for holding and financing companies has been abolished for losses arising in fiscal years beginning on or after 1 January 2019.

Rate – The corporate tax rates for 2019 are 19% on the first EUR 200,000 of taxable profits (reduced from 20% as from 1 January 2019), and 25% on taxable profits exceeding EUR 200,000. Further rate reductions will take place for 2020, and by 2021 a 15% rate for the first EUR 200,000 and a 20.5% top rate will apply.

Surtax – No

Alternative minimum tax – No

Foreign tax credit – Foreign withholding taxes can be credited under tax treaties. If there is no tax treaty, the foreign withholding taxes can be credited only if the income comes from developing countries. Where a PE of a Dutch company is engaged in low-taxed portfolio activities, a credit will be granted for foreign tax paid on such activities.

Participation exemption – The participation exemption applies to dividends and capital gains derived from shareholdings of at least 5%, provided: (1) the subsidiary is not held as a mere portfolio investment; (2) the subsidiary is subject to a reasonable effective tax rate based on Dutch tax principles (“subject to tax test”); or (3) less than 50% of the assets of the subsidiary consist of “passive” assets, based on the fair market value of the assets (“asset test”). If the participation exemption is not applicable, a credit for the underlying tax may be obtained.

Group financing/licensing activities generally are deemed to be portfolio investment activities, i.e. participations predominantly engaged in these activities must meet test (2) or (3) for the participation exemption to apply.

Even if the participation exemption applies, dividends and interest payments received are taxable if the payment is tax deductible in the country of the payer.

Holding company regime – See “Participation exemption.”

Incentives – Various investment deductions and reliefs are available.

Under the “innovation box” regime, income derived from self-developed intellectual property (R&D) is effectively taxed at a rate of 7%. The OECD modified nexus approach applies, with the result that R&D expenses incurred by an affiliated entity are disregarded and more stringent conditions are imposed on the type of R&D activities that qualify for the innovation box.

A special tonnage tax regime applies to shipping companies.

A 0% tax liability or an exemption is provided for qualifying investment funds.

Withholding tax:

Dividends – A 15% withholding tax generally is levied on

dividends paid to resident or nonresident shareholders, unless the rate is reduced under an applicable tax treaty or the participation qualifies for an exemption under the EU parent-subsidiary directive or domestic law. Dutch holding cooperatives are required to withhold tax from dividends in certain cases.

In domestic situations, dividends are exempt from withholding tax if the participation exemption applies or if a fiscal unity for corporate income tax purposes exists between the dividend payer and the recipient.

Domestic rules implementing the EU parent-subsidiary directive provide for an exemption from withholding tax on dividends paid to EU/EEA parent companies under the same conditions as for distributions to a Dutch parent. The exemption from withholding tax also applies to dividends paid to a parent company in a third country that has concluded a tax treaty with the Netherlands that contains “qualifying provisions” relating to dividend withholding tax.

Tax withheld on dividends paid to nonresident individuals and companies may be refunded, provided the recipient is a resident of another EU/EEA member state and is the beneficial owner of the dividends. The refund will be equal to the amount of tax withheld that exceeds the (corporate) income tax that would have been due had the recipient been a Dutch resident. A similar refund also is available, in certain cases, to a resident of a third country that exchanges information with the

Netherlands.

The Dividend Withholding Tax Act contains various anti-abuse rules.

Interest – The Netherlands does not levy withholding tax on interest. Interest on a hybrid loan can qualify as a dividend for tax purposes, in which case the rules for dividends apply. However, a withholding tax on interest is planned to be introduced in 2021 to apply in cases of abuse.

Royalties – The Netherlands does not levy withholding tax on royalties. However, a withholding tax on royalties is planned to be introduced in 2021 for cases where abuse is involved.

Technical service fees – The Netherlands does not levy withholding tax on technical service fees.

Branch remittance tax – No

Other taxes on corporations:

Capital duty – No

Payroll tax – Companies are required to withhold tax on wages paid to employees. A “30% facility” (providing a tax-free allowance of 30% of the employee’s gross remuneration subject to Dutch wage tax, including the allowance granted for extraterritorial costs) applies for extraterritorial employees. However, the term during which this facility may be applied has been reduced from eight to five years as from 1 January 2019. A transitional scheme applies for existing cases.

Real property tax – Municipalities impose an annual tax at varying rates on owners of real property related to the value of the immovable property. Real estate tax is deductible for corporate income tax purposes.

Social security – Social security contributions on employment income are payable by both the employer and the employee. The contributions are calculated

on gross salary, less pension premiums withheld from the salary.

An income-dependent health insurance contribution, disability insurance contribution and unemployment insurance contribution also are levied.

Stamp duty – No

Transfer tax – A 6% real estate transfer tax is payable on the acquisition of real property in the Netherlands, or certain related rights. A reduced rate of 2% applies to the transfer of a residence.

Anti-avoidance rules:

Transfer pricing – Intracompany pricing for goods and services must be at arm’s length, and documentation must be maintained on intragroup transactions. Acceptable transfer pricing methods include the comparable uncontrolled price, resale price, cost plus, profit split and transactional net margin methods, with transaction-based methods preferred over profit-based methods. It is possible to enter into an advance pricing agreement for the use of a certain transfer pricing method.

Thin capitalization – There is no thin capitalization rule, but an earnings stripping rule has been introduced as from 1 January 2019. The interest deduction limitation applies to the difference between interest expenses and interest income from third party and group loans. This balance of interest is deductible up to a maximum of 30% of taxpayer’s EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization), although all interest is deductible up to a net amount payable of EUR 1 million (even if the 30% threshold is exceeded). Any surplus is nondeductible, but may be carried forward indefinitely to a subsequent year. No group exception will be introduced, so the interest deduction limitation, in principle, should be applied at an entity level. The 30% EBITDA rule, however, may be applied at a fiscal unity level. Both new and existing loans are subject to the earnings

stripping rule, regardless of whether the loans were obtained before 1 January 2019.

Controlled foreign companies. As from 1 January 2019, CFC rules apply for entities in which a Dutch taxpayer holds a shareholding of more than 50% and that are established in low-tax or noncooperative jurisdictions (“blacklisted jurisdictions”). A low-tax jurisdiction is defined as one where the statutory profit tax rate is not at least 9%, while a noncooperative jurisdiction is one on the EU list of noncooperative jurisdictions. The Dutch government has issued a list of blacklisted jurisdictions for tax purposes. Certain categories of undistributed (passive) income of such CFCs will be allocated to the taxpayer/parent company. An exception applies to CFCs carrying out a “substantial economic activity.”

Disclosure requirements – As a result of the OECD BEPS project, CbC reporting requirements are in effect that require information to be provided to the tax authorities on revenue, income, tax paid and accrued, employment, capital, retained earnings, tangible assets and activities of a multinational group.

Rules apply for the automatic exchange of cross-border rulings, CbC reports and transfer pricing agreements between the tax authorities of EU member states.

Other – The abuse of law doctrine applies where the purpose of a transaction or series of transactions is the avoidance of tax.

In addition to the restrictions on the deductibility of interest discussed above, various other rules can result in the (partial) disallowance of a deduction for interest expense incurred by a Dutch taxpayer. These include: (1) anti-base erosion rules that essentially cover the conversion of equity into intragroup debt without a valid business purpose; (2) rules on the acquisition of shares against debt from a related party without meeting a business

purpose test or an effective tax rate test; and (3) rules on debt-funded acquisitions of Dutch companies that limit an interest deduction for acquisition holdings.

Compliance for corporations:

Tax year – The tax year generally corresponds to the calendar year, although a deviating year may be used if so provided in the company’s articles of association. The tax year usually is 12 months, but shorter or longer periods are permitted in the year of incorporation.

Consolidated returns – Provided certain conditions are satisfied, a parent company may form a fiscal unity with one or more of its subsidiaries, under which the losses of one company may be offset against the profits of another company and fixed assets of one company may be transferred to another company without corporate income tax consequences. To qualify for fiscal unity status, the parent company must own at least 95% of the economic and legal ownership of the shares of the subsidiary and the parent company and the subsidiaries must have the same financial year. In certain cases, a Dutch PE of a foreign company may be included in a fiscal unity.

A fiscal unity may be formed via a company based in another EU member state, and it is possible to form a fiscal unity, in certain cases, with an EU/EEA-resident parent company.

Remedial legislation (not yet officially enacted) will take effect with retroactive force from 1 January 2018 as a result of the decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in two cases relating to the Dutch fiscal unity regime. The CJEU held that the Netherlands may not favor domestic situations by allowing a benefit that is not open to cross-border groups. As a consequence, some corporate income tax and dividend withholding tax rules will have to be applied as if no fiscal unity exists.

Filing requirements – A provisional assessment, generally based on information from the previous two years, usually is issued in the first month of the taxpayer's financial year. This assessment is payable in monthly installments for the remaining months of the year.

Corporate income tax returns must be filed annually, within five months of the end of the fiscal year. However, extension of this deadline is possible. Businesses are expected to file all returns electronically. The tax return must be accompanied by all information required to determine taxable profits, including the balance sheet and profit-and-loss account and any other information requested by the tax inspector. If a company does not meet these obligations or does not file a proper tax return, the inspector may issue an estimated assessment.

Penalties – Administrative penalties may be imposed for late filing or failure to file a Dutch return, or for the late payment or nonpayment of tax. Criminal penalties may be imposed if the Dutch authorities can prove fraud or gross negligence.

Rulings – A taxpayer may request an advance ruling from the tax authorities on the application of the participation exemption to holding companies in international structures; the use of hybrid financing instruments and hybrid entities; the existence of a PE in the Netherlands; or the classification of activities, i.e. group services or shareholder activities.

Other – See “Disclosure requirements,” above.

Personal taxation:

Basis – Residents are taxed on their worldwide income.

Nonresidents are taxed only on Netherlands-source income. In certain cases, nonresident individuals with Dutch-source income are treated as a limited

national taxpayer, in which case they are taxed on foreign-source income but are entitled to some credits.

Residence – Residence is based on factors, such as employment, family circumstances, etc.

Filing status – Married couples must file a joint assessment unless a petition for a divorce has been filed. Unmarried couples must file a joint assessment if certain conditions are satisfied.

Taxable income – Income is categorized and taxed under one of three “boxes.” Box 1 is income from an enterprise, employment and housing. Box 2 is income from substantial interests (5% or more). Box 3 is income from savings and investments.

Capital gains – In principle, capital gains are taxed at progressive rates in Box 1. If the gains are related to a substantial interest, a 25% rate applies in Box 2. If the gain relates to an investment, the gains are not taxed as such in Box 3. There is no capital gains tax on gains from the sale of a dwelling.

Deductions and allowances – All expenses incurred that are necessary to obtain taxable income in Box 1 generally are deductible, except expenses related to employment. Certain expenses of a mixed character are not deductible or are deductible subject to certain limits. From 2020 onwards, the maximum rate of deductible items in Box 1 will be reduced by three percentage points annually until a base rate of 37.05% is reached in 2023. Expenses that are necessary to obtain taxable income in Box 2 generally also are deductible. In relation to Box 3, liabilities are deductible from the taxable base.

Rates – Box 1 income is subject to progressive rates of 36.65% up to 51.75%, with a 14% base deduction for entrepreneurs; Box 2 income is taxed at a rate of 25%; and under Box 3, a fixed presumed gain (of the market value of the Box 3 assets minus debt) is taxed at a flat

rate of 30%. The fixed presumed gain in Box 3 is based on the average distribution of the Box 3 assets on savings and investments (the capital mix). The calculation of the actual presumed gains for each year are based on past market returns realized.

As from 2021, a two-bracket system will apply in Box 1, with a base rate of 37.05% for Box 1 income up to EUR 68,507, and a top rate of 49.5% for higher income. The rate for taxable income in Box 2 will be raised gradually to avoid the corporate income tax rate reduction affecting the overall balance of the tax burden between entrepreneurs for income tax purposes and entrepreneurs in private limited liability companies (to 26.25% in 2020 and to 26.9% in 2021).

Other taxes on individuals:

Capital duty – No

Stamp duty – No

Capital acquisitions tax – A 6% real estate transfer tax is payable on the acquisition of real property in the Netherlands, or certain related rights. A reduced rate of 2% applies on the acquisition of a residence.

Real property tax – Municipalities impose tax at varying rates on owners of real property in their municipality on an annual basis. Real property tax is not deductible for individual income tax purposes.

Inheritance/estate tax – Inheritance tax is due on inheritances received from Dutch residents. Dutch nationals who emigrate from the Netherlands still are considered residents during a 10-year period. Rates vary between 10% and 40%.

Net wealth/net worth tax – No

Social security – State social security contributions are payable by all individuals resident in the Netherlands. Additional social security contributions are payable by employees and the self-employed.

Other – An insurance premium tax is levied

at a rate of 21%. Landlords in the regulated sector that rent out more than 50 houses are subject to a landlord tax, charged on the average value of the houses. The taxable base consists of the total value of the houses minus 50 times the average value. The tax rate is 0.561% for 2019.

Compliance for individuals:

Tax year – Calendar year

Filing and payment – In principle, the tax return must be filed before 1 May of the following calendar year. Payment must be made upon assessment.

Penalties – Administrative penalties may be imposed for late filing or failure to file a Dutch return, or the late payment or nonpayment of tax. Criminal penalties are imposed if the Dutch authorities can prove fraud or gross negligence.

Value added tax:

Taxable transactions – VAT is levied at each stage in the chain of production and distribution of goods and services. VAT applies on the supply of goods, the rendering of services, the acquisition of goods by businesses and the import of goods.

Rates – The standard VAT rate is 21%, with a reduced rate of 9% (increased from 6% as from 1 January 2019) applying for certain goods and services. The reduced VAT rate applies to goods like foodstuffs, medicines and books.

Registration – There is no registration threshold in the Netherlands; all VAT payers are required to register.

Filing and payment – Depending on the amount of VAT payable, VAT returns are filed monthly, quarterly or annually.

Source of tax law: Grondwet voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands), as specified in various tax acts

Tax treaties: The Netherlands has concluded more than 100 tax treaties. The Netherlands signed the OECD MLI on 7 June 2017.

Tax authorities: Belastingdienst (Tax revenue)

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