

KEY QUESTION

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What are important decision-making opportunities in the Dutch annual budget process?

Ministerial budget ceilings are set in April/May; allocation decisions are made between May and July

- Ministries develop initial budget proposal:** From February to March, the ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, develop their initial budget proposals for the coming year and decide on spending increases or decreases for the main policy areas (e.g., food security). The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and the Minister of Foreign Affairs are the main decision-makers during this process, and the thematic departments of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) are also important stakeholders as they are responsible for designing and coordinating the implementation of Dutch development policy.
- Ministries update their current budgets:** During the spring, ministers update the budgets of the current year to reflect any changes that have occurred since the draft budget was presented in the previous fall. This is known as the 'spring budget'. While the Parliament has the right to amend the budget, changes are rarely made. The 'spring budget' is published on 1 June at the latest every year.
- Cabinet decides on ministerial budgets:** In August, the cabinet decides on ministerial budgets for the following budget year. ODA allocations can be influenced at this time. Important decision-makers are the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Finance.
- Draft budget presented to Parliament:** In September, the government presents its budget bill to the Parliament. The ODA budget is debated and amended by the Committee on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the House of Representatives.
- Parliament debates and approves budget:** Parliamentary debates in November/December can lead to significant changes to the draft budget. In 2015, for example, Parliament amended the budget in order to increase the Dutch contribution to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, by €50 million.

Unless a government coalition is formed very quickly, it is unlikely that the March 15, 2017 elections result in large changes in budget volumes, as the ministries are already far into the budget development process.

