

Put Citizens First

Children's Summary Annual Report 2024
of the Ombudsman for Children

The National Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Children and the Ombudsman for Veterans are there to help people, children and veterans, when things go wrong between them and the government. We challenge governments and other authorities to safeguard the standpoint of citizens in everything they do and to ensure that children's rights are observed.

The full 2024 Annual Report can be found at nationaleombudsman.nl/de-nationale-ombudsman/jaarverslagen



Message from Margrite

It doesn't matter how old you are or where you're from: everyone has rights. You do, too! That's why there are laws and rules to protect you. As Ombudswoman for Children, I check whether the government and other organisations that work with children observe these. I look at what really helps children.

And therefore I give the government and other organisations the following assignment:

- The government must contact children and young people more and listen to them. And then actually do what is needed.
- Organisations must learn from what has gone wrong before.
- If you are a child or young person who needs help, it should be made easier to get that help. Organisations must therefore make it clear how you can ask them for help.

In addition, I help children and young people up to the age of 18 to stand up for their rights. I do this together with my team. Suppose you have a problem with an organisation, such as your municipality, your school, youth care or the police. For example, because you feel that they are not dealing with your children's rights properly. Then you can contact us about this. We can then give you advice, talk to the organisation or start an investigation.

But we also take action if we ourselves see that something is wrong in the Netherlands in the field of children's rights. We let politicians know what they can improve on. And we show how laws and regulations can be used to better protect children and young people. All the advice that we give takes into account as much as possible what children and young people need or think is important.

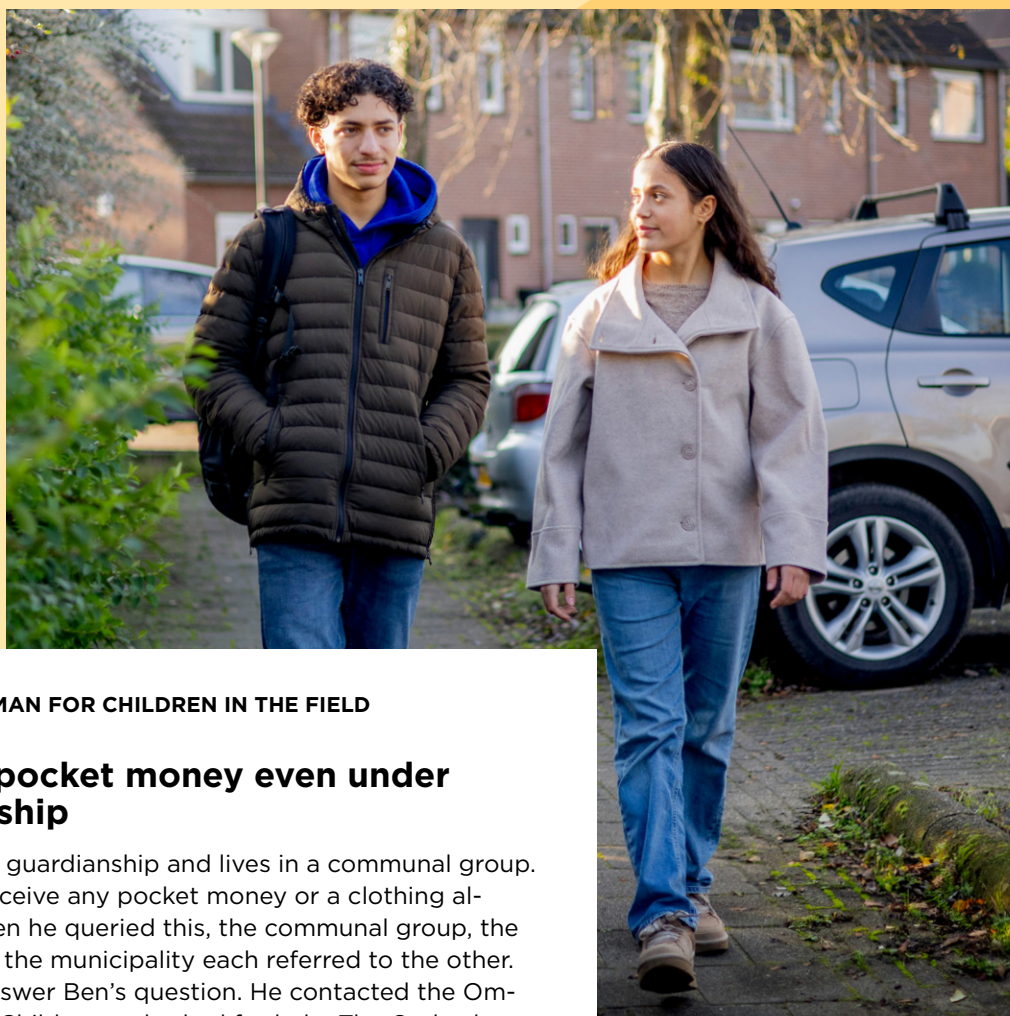
To do this, I, as Ombudswoman for Children, travel throughout the Netherlands and to the Caribbean part of our country. Everywhere I go, I listen to what children find important and what they need. In 2024, we helped more than 1,785 children and their parents and carers, when things went wrong between them and the government.

This is how I give power and influence to the voice of children.

Margrite Kalverboer
Ombudswoman for Children



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THE OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN IN THE FIELD

Right to pocket money even under guardianship

Ben* is under guardianship and lives in a communal group. He doesn't receive any pocket money or a clothing allowance. When he queried this, the communal group, the guardian and the municipality each referred to the other. This didn't answer Ben's question. He contacted the Ombudsman for Children and asked for help. The Ombudsman for Children contacted the guardian and explained that Ben is entitled to this and that he should not be the victim of uncertainty about who should pay the pocket money and clothing allowance. This is not in Ben's best interests. The authorities agreed with this standpoint and the outcome was positive. Ben now receives pocket money and a clothing allowance.

Children have the right to adequate money to live on (Art. 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Minors residing in youth welfare support institutions are entitled to have their living expenses covered (including pocket money and clothing allowance), just like any other child. As such, this is the responsibility of the parents. However, there are circumstances in which children cannot receive pocket money or a clothing allowance from their parents. For example, because they are unable or unwilling to pay. In such cases, the municipality is responsible for your care. That is what the Child and Youth Act says. The Ombudsman for Children has already made recommendations on this in the reports **Mag ik mijn zakgeld** (Can I have my pocket money?) (2017) and en **Wie geeft mij(n) zak- en kleedgeld?** (Who gives me my pocket money and clothing allowance?)(2021).

* Not his real name



About the Ombudswoman for Children

Do all children in the Netherlands have the same rights?

Yes, they do. For example, as a child you have a right to education and healthy food. You must also be protected from abuse and child labour. All these rights have been included in a treaty on children's rights, and they apply to all children in the Netherlands. Almost all the countries in the world have promised to observe this treaty. This is also the case for the Netherlands.

What does the Ombudswoman for Children do?

The Ombudswoman for Children oversees these children's rights. Margrite Kalverboer does this in the Netherlands. She can help children and their parents (everywhere in the text this also means carers), if they have problems with school, a hospital or the government, for example. This is also true for children and parents living on the islands of Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba. Margrite Kalverboer is the Ombudswoman for Children, but her organization is called the Ombudsman for Children.

Why is it important that children and young people have a say?

When adults make decisions, they also affect children. New laws and rules are constantly being introduced. The Ombudswoman for Children sees to it that the impact of these new laws and rules for children are also considered. After all, it is important that you as a child or young person can influence the decisions that affect you.

What did we do in 2024?

The Ombudswoman for Children was appointed by the House of Representatives. Every year, she writes an Annual Report on what she and her team have done. The major activities in 2024 are summarised below.

2024

Standing up for children's rights



The Ombudsman for Children developed a **Child Rights Impact Assessment** in 2024. This allows us to assess in advance the impact of new and existing laws and regulations on children. The Ombudsman for Children wants everyone involved in making laws and regulations to use this tool. We proudly presented our Child Rights Impact Assessment on 10 December. There were also children present that day. The Ombudswoman for Children spoke to them.

"Children still get overlooked too often. The Child Rights Impact Assessment and the Best Decision step-by-step plan can help professionals and policy-makers put the interests and rights of children into working practice. Both tools are meant to be a framework for reflection to critically examine for which children the intended policy and legislation have an unintended negative effect. This can then be adjusted so that all children's rights are observed and their voices really count!"

Margrite Kalverboer
Ombudswoman for Children

Youth care



The Ombudsman for Children closely monitors how things are going in youth care. We check whether the scaling down of secure youth care facilities is going well. We also draw the attention of the House of Representatives to the fact that young people with the most serious problems do not always receive the most appropriate help. And we confront municipalities with the fact that some municipalities provide more youth welfare support and facilities than others do.

School



Too many children in the Netherlands do not go to school, despite the fact that they have a right to education. The Ombudsman for Children has asked the Minister for Primary and Secondary Education to take action. Adequate assistance must be provided in classrooms to offer additional support to children who need it. Furthermore, conventional schools must also continue to provide education to children who are on the waiting list for special educational needs schools.

And children must feel safe when they are at school. Too many children are being bullied. We have expressed our concerns in a letter to the House of Representatives.

Investigations



We sometimes conduct our own investigations. This takes place, for example, if we receive many reports about a particular issue.

'Als je het ons vraagt'
(If you ask us)

2,729

Children and young people completed the questionnaire

The Ombudsman for Children conducts a major study on the quality of life of children (8-12 year olds) and young people (13-18 year olds) every two years. We want to know what is relevant in the lives of children and young people in the Netherlands. In 2024, 2,729 children and young people completed the questionnaire. Children and young people generally rated their lives as satisfactory. It is interesting to see that they are happier with their offline than their online lives. And that girls aged 13-18 were significantly less happy than boys of the same age or younger children. Furthermore, these girls reported experiencing the most unsafe situations online. Children and young people who do not identify as either boy or girl were the least happy about their offline life, but were more positive about their online life.

The Ombudsman for Children is seriously concerned about these differences and therefore called on the government to take age and gender differences into account.

'Ouders zijn onvervangbaar'
(Parents are irreplaceable)

Every year, about 40,000 children are told that their parents are going to separate. If parents argue a lot during such a divorce, we call it a complex divorce. In 2024, the Ombudsman for Children again received many reports concerning complex divorces. We investigated what impact this has on how children feel. It emerged that children of divorced parents are more negative about the attention and love they receive from their parents, about the atmosphere at home and about the example set by their parents. We called on parents to think carefully about their children in all decisions and to put their interests first.

'Als je je huis moet verlaten'
(If you have to leave your home)

Sometimes a home needs to be renovated to make it more comfortable to live in. Together with the National Ombudsman, we investigated what the effect is on children if they are forced to leave their home during such renovations. We believe that housing associations should make more allowances for children.

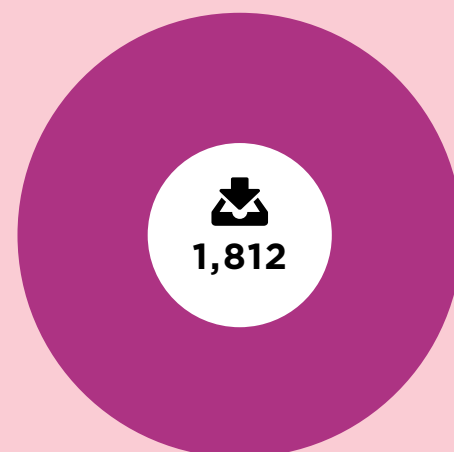
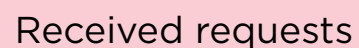


Children's rights online

The life of children increasingly takes place online. Their problems also occur in their online world. This can include bullying or harmful content. The fact that not all children have good access to the digital world also has a negative impact on equal opportunities. The Ombudsman for Children raised this issue with the House of Representatives. And we called the government to also protect children's rights online.

Facts and figures

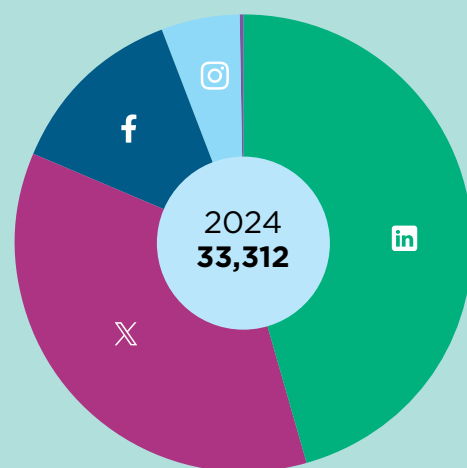
In 2024, the Ombudswoman for Children received 1,812 requests. These were complaints, reports and questions from children, their parents and professionals. The requests were about education, youth welfare support, responsibility and contact, poverty, family law, and law enforcement authorities.



Website kinderombudsman.nl



We are in contact with children, young people, parents and professionals through our website and social media. We also share our information and views on these platforms. Below is an overview of 2024 in figures:



Followers of the Ombudsman for Children on social media

	Social media	2024	2023
●	LinkedIn	18,631	17,523
●	X	14,575	15,114
●	Facebook	5,251	5,263
●	Instagram	2,160	1,900
●	YouTube	106	104

Photo ANP - Arie Kievit



THE OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN IN THE FIELD

Municipality launches investigation into school transport

Jaïro* uses school transport. For health reasons, he has to be transported as quickly as possible. This is done according to the LIFO principle (last in, first out). Due to staff shortages, Jaïro can no longer be transported according to the LIFO system for the remainder of the school year. As a result, he spends more time in the taxi and is often too late for medical treatment, which means they have stopped. The Ombudsman for Children took action and asked the municipality to solve this problem so that Jaïro's travel time could be reduced and his medical treatment resumed. The municipality indicated that it would investigate the matter. A suitable solution is now being sought in consultation with his mother.

* *Not his real name*

How can the Ombudswoman for Children help you?

Do you have a question about children's rights? Do you feel that your rights are not being protected? Or do you wish to make a complaint? We're here to help you.

How can you find us?



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Margrite and her Ombudsman for Children team can be found on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and LinkedIn under the name Kinderombudsman.



Our website is
kinderombudsman.nl

How can you reach us?



Email

You can email us on ombudswerk@kinderombudsman.nl. You may do this anonymously or using another name.

Phone

You can also call us. You can do this free of charge from Mondays to Fridays from 12 am to 5 pm on 0800-8765432. From the Caribbean Netherlands you can call us between 6 am and 11 am on +31-708506995.

Letter

You can also send a letter to the Ombudsman for Children, Antwoord-nummer 10870, 2501 WB The Hague. You don't need to use a stamp. Don't forget to tell us how we can reach you.





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Giving power and influence to the voice of children