

EU Mini Benchmark — Coordination with the 2nd Line

Results and findings | The Netherlands in European perspective

Introduction

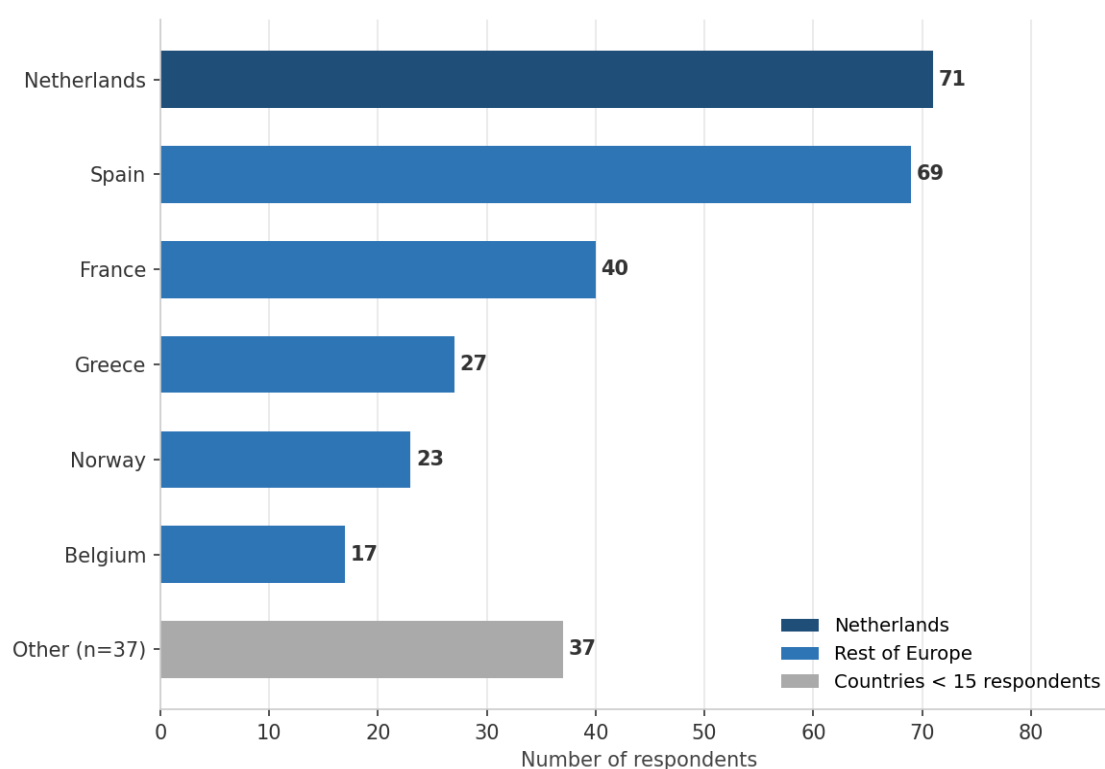
Effective collaboration between internal audit (the third line) and the second line (risk management, compliance, cybersecurity and other control-related functions) is an essential element of a well-functioning governance and risk control system. The Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) emphasise in Standard 9.5 Coordination and Reliance the importance of coordinated assurance activities aimed at risk coverage and avoidance of overlap. The IIA is developing a Statement of Position on the role of internal audit in ERM, setting out how coordination and integrated assurance enhance the credibility of internal audit, provided independence and objectivity are explicitly safeguarded.

In May 2026, a short poll was conducted amongst members of various European IIA institutes to gain insight into the current state of coordination between internal audit and the second line. A total of 285 respondents participated (after quality filtering), of whom 71 were from the Netherlands. For the comparison between the Netherlands and Europe, Dutch respondents have been excluded from the European total, so that both groups are compared independently (NL n=71, rest of Europe n=214). Dutch respondents are distributed across three sectors: Financial (profit) (n=28), Non-financial (profit) (n=27) and Public/not-for-profit (n=16). The results provide insight into the state of coordination with the second line in the Netherlands, as a starting point for further strengthening internal audit practice.

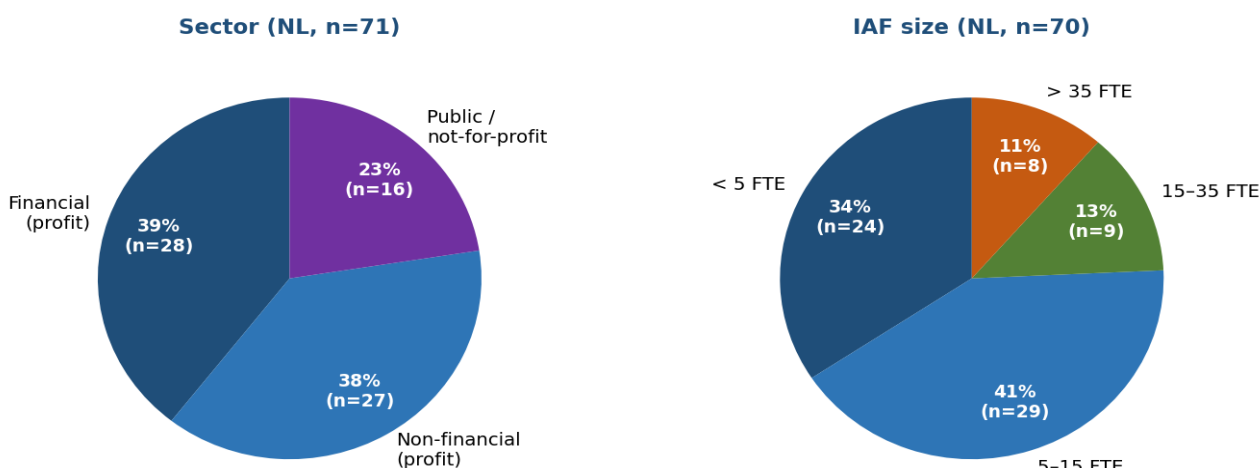
How to read this report. The comparison between the Netherlands (n=71) and the rest of Europe (n=214) is the most robust comparison in this report. Figures at the level of Dutch sectors rest on considerably smaller groups and should be read as indicative. Not all respondents answered every question, so the number of responses per question is somewhat lower than the totals stated above. Differences have not been tested for statistical significance. Where this report describes patterns, these are observations from the data, intended to support reflection and discussion; readers are invited to weigh them against their own context and to draw their own conclusions.

Composition of respondents

Respondents from 13 countries participated in the poll. The chart shows the countries with the most participants; countries with fewer than 15 respondents have been grouped under 'Other'.

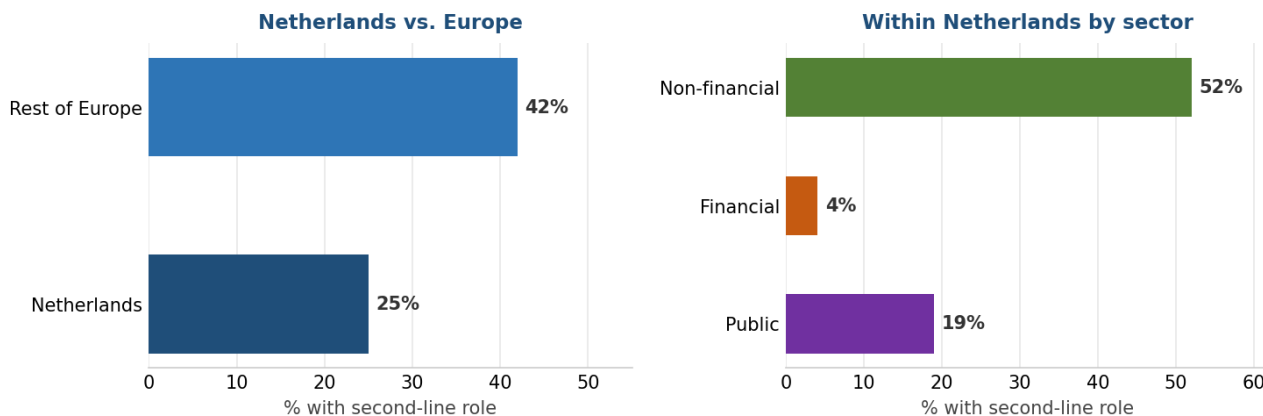


Dutch respondents are relatively evenly distributed across the financial and non-financial profit sectors, with a smaller public sector. Most Dutch IAFs are small to medium-sized.



Q4 — Role combination: does the CAE also hold second-line responsibilities?

A first distinguishing characteristic concerns whether the CAE holds formal responsibilities in the second line in addition to the internal audit function. This is not inherently problematic, but does require explicit attention to independence and objectivity: the GIAS requires appropriate safeguards when the IAF assesses activities in which it has itself been involved.

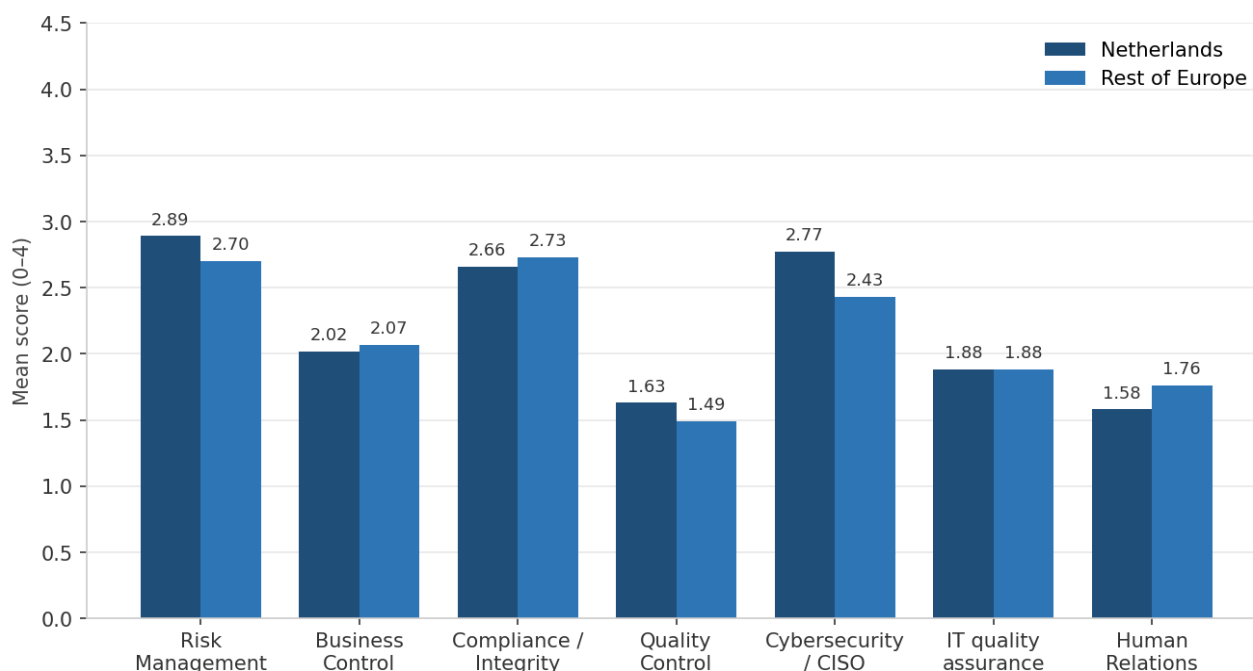


In the Netherlands, 25% of respondents hold second-line responsibilities alongside the CAE role, compared with 42% in the rest of Europe; separation of roles is thus considerably more common in Dutch practice. This difference is most pronounced in the financial sector, where role combination is rare in the Netherlands (1 of 28 respondents) against 22% in the rest of Europe. This is consistent with a regulatory environment that encourages separation of roles, although the data do not allow this to be identified as a cause. In the non-financial sector, more than half of Dutch CAEs hold second-line responsibilities (52%), closer to the picture in the rest of Europe (61%). Across all respondents, role combination is more common in smaller IAFs: 46% in functions below 5 FTE, against 22% in functions above 35 FTE.

Respondents were also able to specify other second-line functions. Internal control was mentioned most frequently (16 times), spread across the Netherlands and several other countries; this function was not included as a fixed answer option. Whistleblowing, speak-up channels and fraud investigations also feature broadly. This suggests that the scope of second-line responsibilities in practice is wider than the standard categories capture.

Q5 — Extent of coordination per second-line function

The extent of coordination was measured on a five-point scale (0 = function not present, 4 = intensive coordination).



Across most functions, Dutch and European scores are close to one another. The most pronounced difference concerns Cybersecurity/CISO, where the Netherlands scores higher than the rest of Europe (2.77 against 2.43). Compliance and Human Relations score slightly lower in the Netherlands than in the rest of Europe. Human Relations has the lowest coordination intensity across all groups.

Within the Netherlands, the sector figures rest on small numbers (between 15 and 24 respondents per function) and are best read as indicative. The financial sector records its highest coordination score with Compliance (3.04), and the non-financial sector with Risk Management (3.04) and Business Control (2.50). The public sector records the lowest scores of the three sectors on most functions.

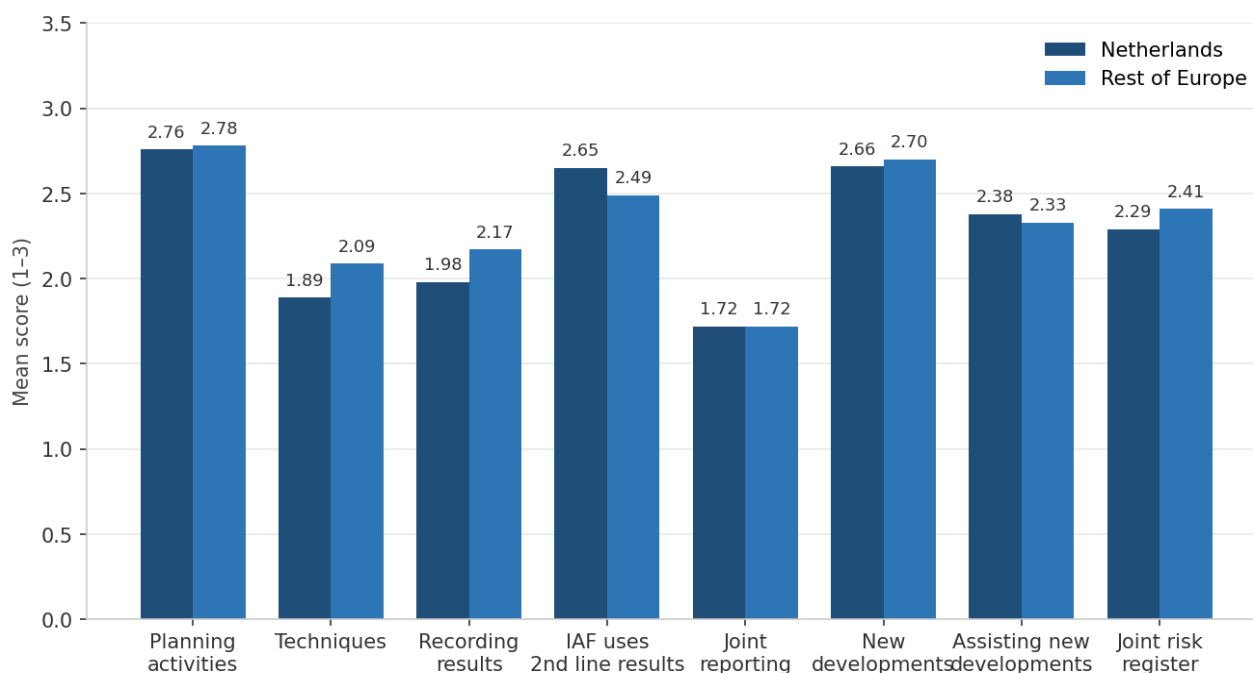
Beyond the seven functions included in the poll, respondents mention a diverse range of additional functions with which they coordinate intensively: DPO, HSE, sustainability/ESG, legal, TPRM, actuarial function, and internal control for SOX purposes. The spread across countries and sectors illustrates that the coordination landscape is organisation-specific in practice and difficult to capture in fixed categories.

Breakdown by sector (mean score 0–4)

2nd line function	NL	EU	NL-Fin.	NL-Non-fin.	NL-Pub.
Risk Management	2.89	2.70	2.88	3.04	2.67
Business Control	2.02	2.07	1.62	2.50	1.87
Compliance / Integrity / Privacy	2.66	2.73	3.04	2.43	2.40
Quality Control on primary process	1.63	1.49	1.50	1.75	1.67
Cybersecurity / CISO	2.77	2.43	2.83	2.88	2.53
IT (quality assurance)	1.88	1.88	1.87	2.14	1.53
Human Relations	1.58	1.76	1.67	1.65	1.33

Q6 — Importance of coordination areas

Respondents were asked to indicate which forms of coordination they consider most valuable (scale 1–3).



The clearest difference between the Netherlands and the rest of Europe concerns the methodological dimension: aligning techniques and recording results is considered somewhat less important in the Netherlands (respectively 1.89 against 2.09, and 1.98 against 2.17). The Netherlands places somewhat greater importance on the IAF using the results of 2nd line monitoring (2.65 against 2.49).

Within the Netherlands, the sector figures rest on small numbers and are best read as indicative. The use of 2nd line monitoring results is valued most in the non-financial sector (2.83). The financial sector attaches the least importance to joint reporting of the three sectors (1.50). The public sector records higher scores on techniques and recording of results than the other two sectors (both 2.27).

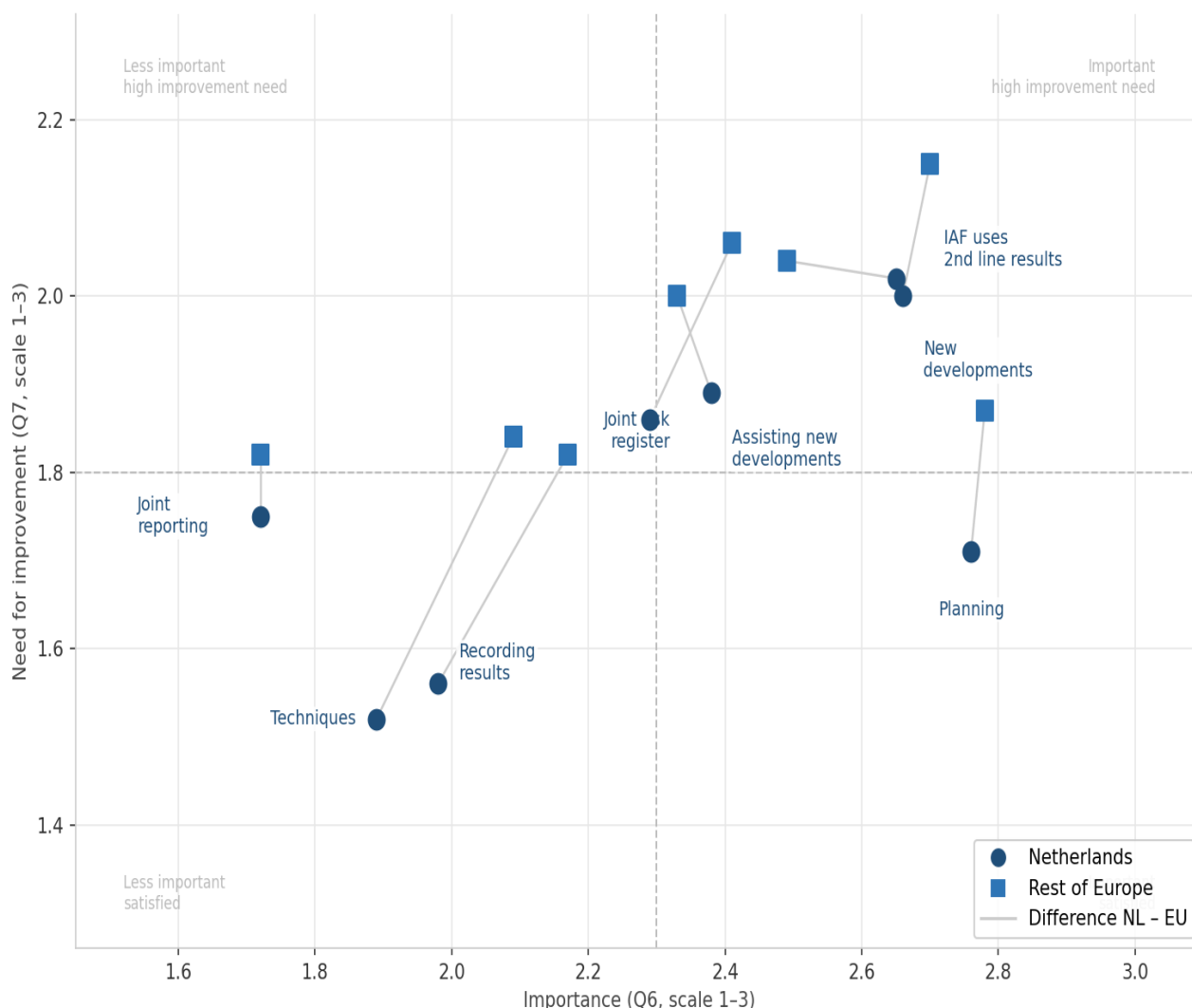
Several respondents mention additional coordination areas. Assurance, including the role of external providers, and contact with regulators are put forward from the Netherlands. From Spain and Norway, follow-up of recommendations and reporting to senior management and the board are mentioned.

Breakdown by sector (mean score 1–3)

Coordination area	NL	EU	NL-Fin.	NL-Non-fin.	NL-Pub.
Planning of audit/monitoring activities	2.76	2.78	2.83	2.62	2.87
Techniques for audit/monitoring activities	1.89	2.09	1.75	1.79	2.27
Method of recording results	1.98	2.17	1.88	1.92	2.27
IAF uses results of 2nd line monitoring	2.65	2.49	2.67	2.83	2.33
Joint reporting	1.72	1.72	1.50	1.92	1.77
Identifying new developments in the risk area	2.66	2.70	2.78	2.67	2.47
Assisting the organisation with new developments	2.38	2.33	2.38	2.38	2.40
A joint risk register	2.29	2.41	2.30	2.25	2.33

Q7 — Areas requiring improvement in coordination

In addition to the importance of coordination areas, respondents were asked to what extent improvement is needed (scale 1 = no improvement needed, 3 = a lot of improvement needed). The chart combines importance (Q6) and need for improvement (Q7) for the Netherlands and Europe in a single view.



Each point represents one coordination area. Bottom right: important, little improvement needed. Top right: important but improvement needed.

Across almost all areas, the Netherlands records lower improvement-need scores than the rest of Europe. The largest differences occur in techniques (1.52 against 1.84), the recording of results (1.56 against 1.82) and a joint risk register (1.86 against 2.06), the same methodological areas on which the Netherlands also reports lower importance in Q6. The use of 2nd line monitoring results is the only area where the Netherlands and the rest of Europe score almost identically (2.02 against 2.04).

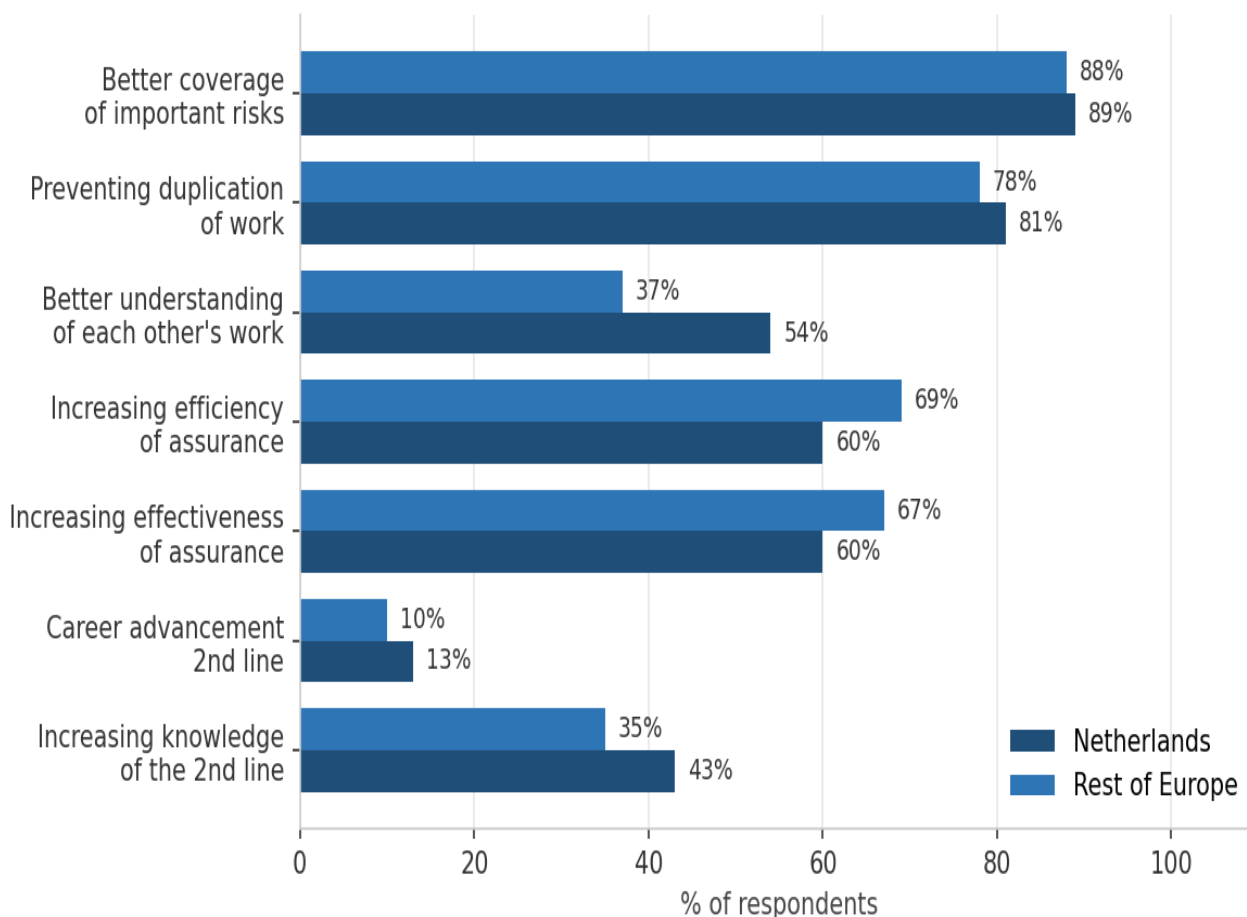
Within the Netherlands, the sector figures rest on small numbers and are best read as indicative. The financial sector records the lowest improvement-need scores of the three sectors on most areas. The non-financial sector records the highest scores on a joint risk register (2.17) and joint reporting (1.92). The public sector shows a moderate profile without pronounced outliers.

Breakdown by sector (mean score 1–3)

Coordination area	NL	EU	NL-Fin.	NL-Non-fin.	NL-Pub.
Planning of audit/monitoring activities	1.71	1.87	1.67	1.58	2.00
Techniques	1.52	1.84	1.46	1.50	1.67
Method of recording results	1.56	1.82	1.42	1.54	1.80
IAF uses results of 2nd line monitoring	2.02	2.04	1.96	2.04	2.07
Joint reporting	1.75	1.82	1.58	1.92	1.73
Identifying new developments	2.00	2.15	1.96	2.08	1.93
Assisting with new developments	1.89	2.00	1.75	1.92	2.07
A joint risk register	1.86	2.06	1.62	2.17	1.73
Clarifying division of tasks/responsibilities	1.71	1.89	1.48	1.88	1.80

Q8 — Goals pursued through coordination

Respondents could select multiple goals they pursue through coordination with the second line.



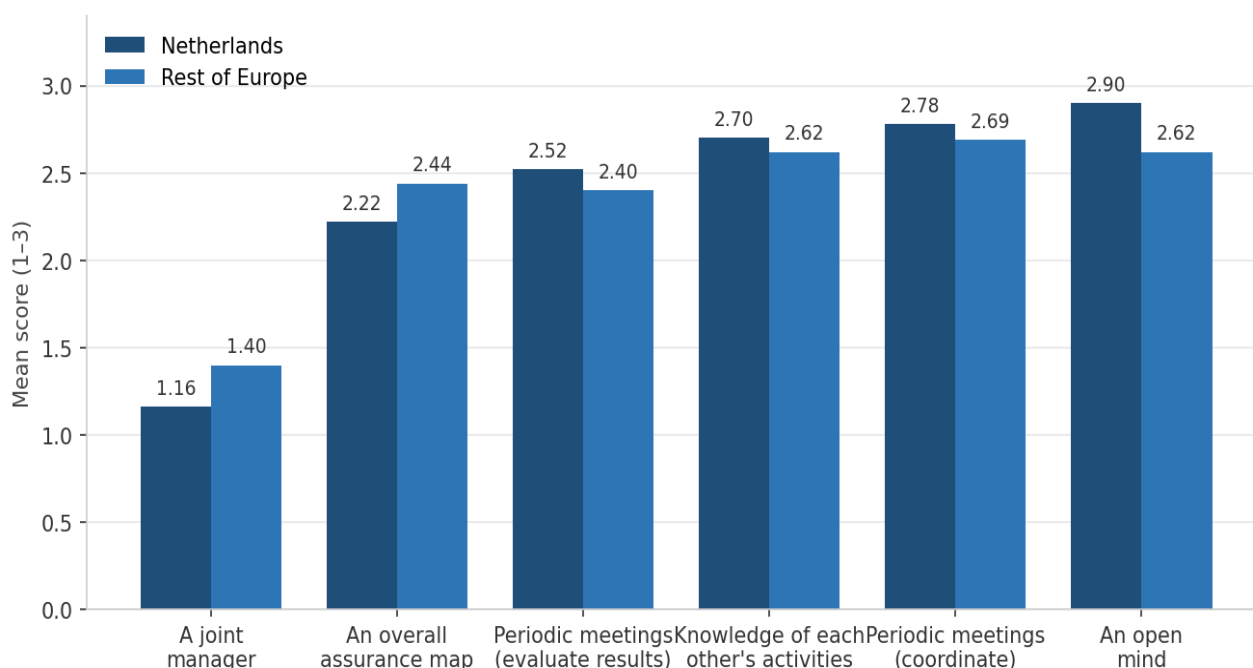
'Better coverage of important risks' is the most frequently selected goal across all groups. The clearest difference between the Netherlands and the rest of Europe concerns 'better understanding of each other's work', selected by 54% of Dutch respondents against 37% in the rest of Europe. Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of assurance are selected somewhat less frequently in the Netherlands (60% each, against 69% and 67% respectively in the rest of Europe).

Increasing the knowledge of the second line is selected more often in the Netherlands than in the rest of Europe (43% against 35%). Within the Netherlands these sector figures rest on small numbers; the goal is selected somewhat more in the public (47%) and non-financial (46%) sectors than in the financial sector (38%).

Breakdown by sector (% of respondents)

Goal	NL%	EU%	NL-Fin.%	NL-Non-fin.%	NL-Pub.%
Preventing duplication of work	81%	78%	83%	75%	87%
Better coverage of important risks	89%	88%	83%	92%	93%
Better understanding of each other's work	54%	37%	50%	58%	53%
Increasing the efficiency of assurance	60%	69%	62%	62%	53%
Increasing the effectiveness of assurance	60%	67%	62%	62%	53%
Offering career advancement opportunities to the 2nd line	13%	10%	12%	12%	13%
Increasing the knowledge of the second line	43%	35%	38%	46%	47%

Q9 — Tools and conditions for good coordination



An open mind is the most highly valued condition in the Netherlands (2.90 against 2.62 in the rest of Europe), and is rated 'really important' by all financial-sector respondents who answered (24 of 24). Periodic meetings to coordinate also score consistently high.

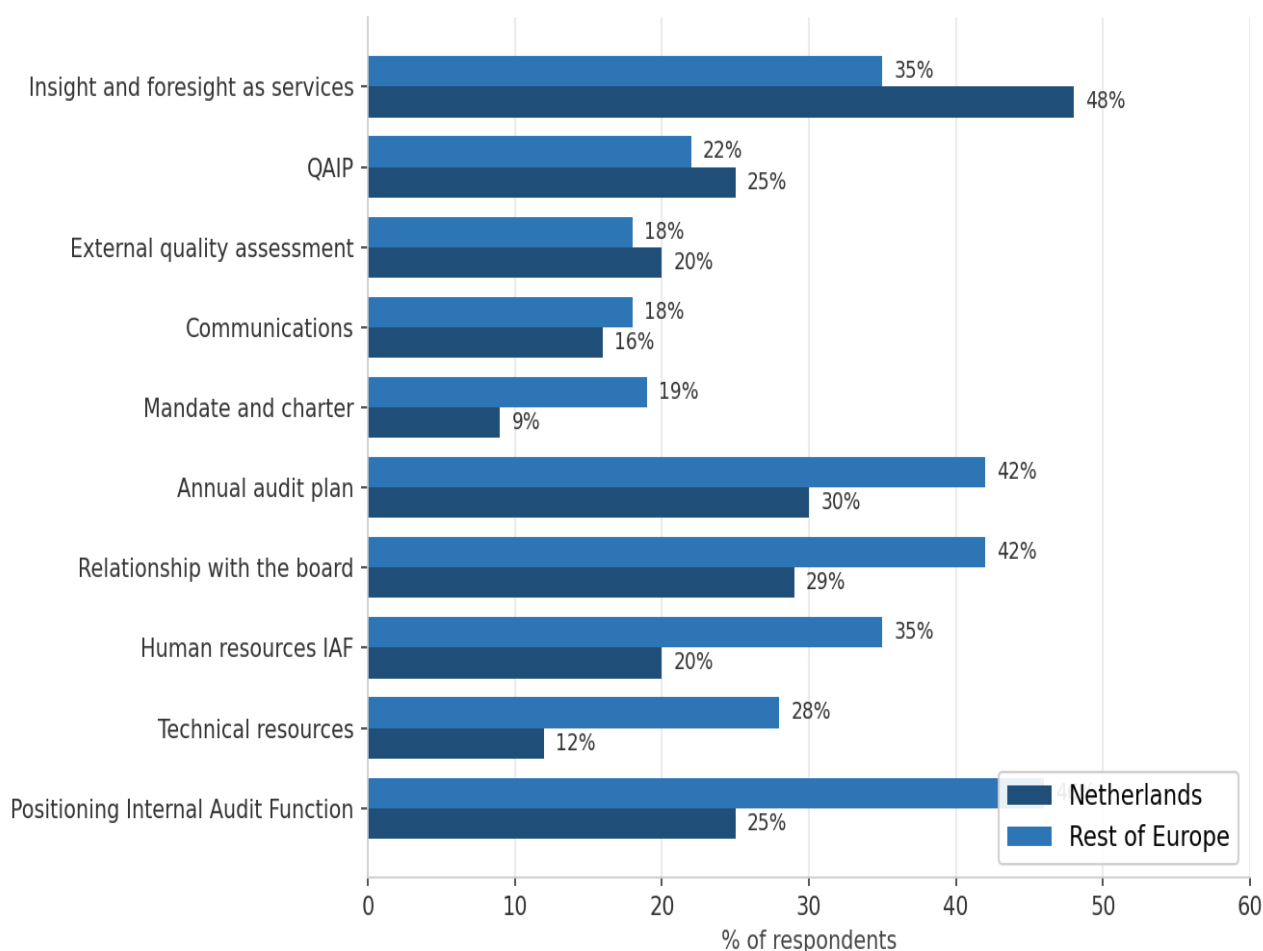
An overall assurance map is considered somewhat less important in the Netherlands than in the rest of Europe (2.22 against 2.44), though differences between groups are limited. A joint manager above the second and third lines is considered almost unanimously unimportant across all sectors (1.16 in the Netherlands).

Breakdown by sector (mean score 1–3)

Condition	NL	EU	NL-Fin.	NL-Non-fin.	NL-Pub.
An overall assurance map	2.22	2.44	2.12	2.21	2.40
Periodic meetings to coordinate	2.78	2.69	2.83	2.79	2.67
Periodic meetings to evaluate results	2.52	2.40	2.50	2.62	2.40
An open mind	2.90	2.62	3.00	2.83	2.87
Knowledge of each other's purpose and activities	2.70	2.62	2.79	2.54	2.80
A joint manager	1.16	1.40	1.00	1.39	1.07

Q10 — Topics for the next mini poll

At the close of the survey, respondents were invited to suggest topics for a future poll. The chart is sorted by the difference between the Netherlands and Europe.



The clearest difference concerns 'insight and foresight as services', the most requested topic in the Netherlands (48%) and more often selected than in the rest of Europe (35%). Conversely, 'positioning the Internal Audit Function' is selected more often in the rest of Europe (45% against 25%), as are 'relationship with the board' (42% against 29%), 'annual audit plan' (42% against 30%) and 'technical resources' (28% against 12%). QAIP and external quality assessment are selected somewhat more often in the Netherlands than in the rest of Europe, particularly in the financial sector (both 30%, on 23 respondents).

Among the additional topics suggested, AI/artificial intelligence stands out: mentioned seven times, exclusively by respondents from outside the Netherlands. Topical Requirements is put forward from both the Netherlands and the UK & Ireland.

Conclusions

This report compares internal audit practice in the Netherlands with the rest of Europe. On several points the Dutch figures differ from the European picture. Role combination between the CAE and second-line responsibilities is less common in the Netherlands, most markedly in the financial sector. On the importance and the improvement needs reported for coordination, the Dutch scores are lower on the methodological areas, namely techniques and the recording of results, and close to the European picture on the use of second-line monitoring results. Among the goals of coordination, 'better understanding of each other's work' is selected more often in the Netherlands than elsewhere; among conditions, an open mind scores highest. These are observations from the data, offered for reflection rather than as established differences; readers are invited to weigh them against their own context.

The sector figures within the Netherlands rest on small numbers and are best read as indicative. Subject to that caution, the financial sector reports the least need for improvement, the non-financial sector the highest scores on a joint risk register and joint reporting, and the public sector a moderate profile across the areas measured.

For future development, the topic most often requested by Dutch respondents is insight and foresight as services. IIA Netherlands will shortly publish the practice guide Insight & Foresight.

About this poll

The European IIA institutes conduct regular short polls to gather current insights from practice. The results serve as a basis for knowledge sharing, practice guides and further professional development. The next poll will be determined on the basis of the topics mentioned in Q10.