

The **Nederlandse Taalunie** (*Dutch Language Union*) is an international treaty organization, providing a policy framework in which the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname cooperate in the areas of Dutch language and literature, education in Dutch and the teaching of Dutch. The main concern of the Nederlandse Taalunie is to enable all speakers of Dutch to use their language in all aspects of life, whether at home or at work, in school or on the street. The Taalunie ensures that practical tools can be developed to that end. These tools range from dictionaries and grammars to certificates in Dutch as a foreign language and internet resources.

### Spelling and grammar

The Nederlandse Taalunie is responsible for the official Dutch orthography. In 2005, the most recent version of the *Woordenlijst Nederlandse taal*, commonly known as the *Groene Boekje* ('Green booklet') appeared. Furthermore the Nederlandse Taalunie contributed to language reference works such as ANS, a comprehensive Grammar of Dutch.

### Education: the future of Dutch

Proper education in Dutch ensures that the language will remain an effective communication tool for new generations of users. The Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname each have their own educational policy but have many things in common. In the framework of the Taalunie they cooperate in drafting common policy principles, for example on integration, early second-language acquisition, and language competences for teachers. The social aspects of language are a priority for the Taalunie.

### Dutch abroad

Dutch is taught at more than two hundred universities in over forty countries. The students enroll because they are interested in the Dutch language and literature, but also because they see that studying Dutch offers them opportunities. Dutch opens a window to a different world. The Taalunie supports the teaching of Dutch abroad in many ways, for example by providing grants and courses. Teachers of Dutch as a foreign language can turn for advice on teaching methods and teaching materials to the *Steunpunt Nederlands als Vreemde Taal*.

### Literature knows no frontiers

A growing number of Flemish and Dutch authors are being translated into other languages (and vice versa). Literary translators can turn to the *Steunpunt Literair Vertalen* for support, training and information. The *Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren* (DBNL) is an important portal offering access to a growing number of digitalized literary texts and secondary sources.

### Babylon in Brussels

The Taalunie considers it a task to contribute to multilingualism in Europe. It has contributed to the development of machine translation modules for Dutch within the NL-Translex project. The Taalunie is also one of the 'founding fathers' of the European Federation of National Institutions for Language (EFNIL). EFNIL provides a forum for national language institutions to exchange information about their work and about language use and language policy within the European Union.

### Digital treasury: the Taalunieversum

The Taalunieversum [www.taalunieversum.org](http://www.taalunieversum.org) is a gateway to the Dutch language. It contains teaching materials, research results, reference works, research summaries, terminology lists, a list of geographical names in Dutch and many other information resources. One of the most popular sections of the site is the language advice service ([Taaladvies.net](http://Taaladvies.net)), where visitors can consult over 1200 FAQs about correct grammar or usage.

## The Nederlandse Taalunie and Human Language Technology

Human Language Technology (HLT) is the branch of information technology specialized in dealing with text and speech in human language. In the last decade, the Nederlandse Taalunie has taken a serious interest in digital language resources and HLT, because they are crucial for a language in order to survive in the information society. The IT industry is not always willing to invest in developing such resources and technologies for mid-sized languages with a relatively small market, such as Dutch. Therefore, government support is required.

### STEVIN

In 2004, a consortium of ministries and organizations in the Netherlands and Flanders launched the comprehensive Dutch-Flemish HLT programme STEVIN (a Dutch acronym for 'Essential Speech and Language Technology Resources'). The aim of STEVIN is to contribute to the further progress of HLT for the Dutch language, by (1) raising awareness of HLT results and stimulating the demand of HLT products, (2) promoting strategic research in HLT and developing HLT resources that are essential and are known to be missing, and (3) organizing the management, maintenance and distribution of HLT resources once they are developed.

The STEVIN programme is funded and supervised by the Dutch and Flemish governments and implemented under the auspices of the Dutch Language Union. The Dutch partners are the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research and the Dutch innovation agency SenterNovem. The Flemish partners are the Department of Economy, Science and Innovation, the Institute for the promotion of Innovation through Science and Technology in Flanders and the Research Foundation - Flanders.

### HLT Agency

All resources developed within the framework of STEVIN become property of the Taalunie. To ensure that HLT resources developed with public funding become available for interested users (academia and companies), the Nederlandse Taalunie took the initiative to set up the HLT Agency (TST-centrale) hosted by the Institute for Dutch Lexicology. The goal is to combine the infrastructures required for different projects, thus reducing the costs for equipment, data, software, licenses, experts, and personnel, and at the same time to ensure optimal visibility and accessibility by offering resources through a one-stop-shop supplier. The HLT Agency is responsible for IPR issues, and for the acquisition, management, maintenance and distribution of various HLT resources that have been developed for Dutch with the help of government funding. In this way, all these resources will be made available for the whole language community in the Netherlands and Flanders.

### Nederlandse Taalunie

e-mail: [info@taalunie.org](mailto:info@taalunie.org)  
internet: [www.taalunieversum.org](http://www.taalunieversum.org)

### STEVIN

e-mail: [stevin@taalunie.org](mailto:stevin@taalunie.org)  
internet: [www.stevin-tst.org](http://www.stevin-tst.org)

### HLT Agency

e-mail: [tst@inl.nl](mailto:tst@inl.nl)  
internet: [www.tst.inl.nl](http://www.tst.inl.nl)

