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Project Title: “Minimum standards for livelihood security” (Minimumstandaarden voor bestaanszekerheid)

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Keywords: *Insecurity of livelihood, material deprivation, poverty, income.*

Dutch society is under pressure in several ways. Concerns about inequality, social divisions, and the accumulation of disadvantages among certain groups raise questions about the security of livelihood of Dutch citizens. Two issues are central: what do people need to meet their basic needs, and why are some people more vulnerable than others? This project studies minimum standards for security of livelihood from two complementary perspectives.

The first perspective focuses on material deprivation. The main question is why people with similar incomes can experience very different levels of deprivation. Health problems, job insecurity, debt, high essential expenses, savings, and access to social support can all affect whether people can meet essential needs. We therefore examine how life circumstances shape the relationship between income and material deprivation. We also investigate whether income-based measures alone can adequately assess poverty, or whether other financial and life circumstances need to be considered.

The second perspective focuses on the social minimum. Here, we examine what citizens believe people should minimally be able to access in Dutch society, and why. We study the principles people use when judging who should receive support, including need, equality, fairness, reciprocity, and responsibility. We also examine which factors shape people’s willingness to contribute or give up resources today to preserve social security and public provisions for future generations.

Together, these perspectives build knowledge about minimum standards for security of livelihood. They address both the conditions under which people experience deprivation and the standards that citizens believe society should ensure.