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Rat und Politik

Councillors from Bocholt and Aalten are holding a joint meeting

Council meeting with the neighbouring Dutch municipality // Getting to know the newly constituted councils // Town planning, neighbourhood development and emergency services as examples of cooperation

Councillors from the town of Bocholt and the Dutch municipality of Aalten gathered on Wednesday, 25 November 2026, in the canteen of Bocholt Comprehensive School for their annual council meeting. The focus was on getting to know one another and discussing issues of mutual interest on both sides of the border.

Mayor Christian Mangen welcomed the guests from the neighbouring municipality, including Aalten's mayor, Anton Stapelkamp. Bocholt's first deputy mayor, Gudrun Koppers, then took over as chair of the meeting. Stapelkamp recalled the long-standing and increasingly close cooperation between the two municipalities. He said that regular meetings were important for maintaining this bond.

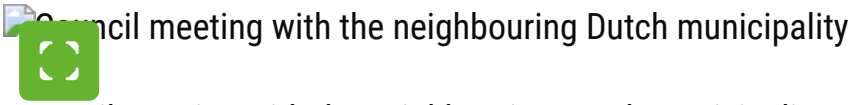
"Good neighbourliness requires interaction", emphasised Bocholt's Mayor Christian Mangen as well, "people who know each other personally find solutions more quickly across the border. Whether it's urban planning, climate protection or emergency services: many issues are the same on both sides of the border. It is worth seeking the answers together."

The councils of both municipalities meet once a year. In April 2024, councillors from Aalten were guests in Bocholt, followed by a return visit to Bredevoort in February 2025. Following the local elections in North Rhine-Westphalia in September 2025 and in the Netherlands in March 2026, both councils were reconstituted. For many participants, this was therefore the first meeting of its kind.

Consequently, the evening began with an opportunity to get to know one another. First, there was a quiz on the differences between Germany and the Netherlands in terms of administration and local government. There are quite a few: for instance, citizens in North Rhine-Westphalia elect their mayor directly, whereas in the Netherlands the mayor is appointed by royal decree. Afterwards, the councillors introduced themselves to one another in a creative session.

The second part focused on cross-border cooperation using selected examples. One topic was cross-border urban planning. Since 2020, the municipality of Aalten has been working on the so-called 'Centrumsvisie' for the town centre of Dinxperlo. The town of Bocholt is building on this with its town centre development concept for Suderwick. Aalten also presented the FutureBEEing pilot project. This German-Dutch Interreg project focuses on the sustainable development of existing residential neighbourhoods. The third key area was the cooperation between the emergency services of both countries, which support one another during operations in the border region.

The session concluded with a preview of cross-border events scheduled for 2027. Afterwards, the councillors continued their discussions in a more informal setting. The next opportunity for a cross-border meeting is coming up soon: on 2 December 2026, the city of Bocholt will host the 8th German-Dutch Border Region Conference.



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Bocholt's mayor at the cross-border council meeting with the municipality of Aalten.



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Anton Stapelkamp, Mayor of Aalten, at the cross-border council meeting.