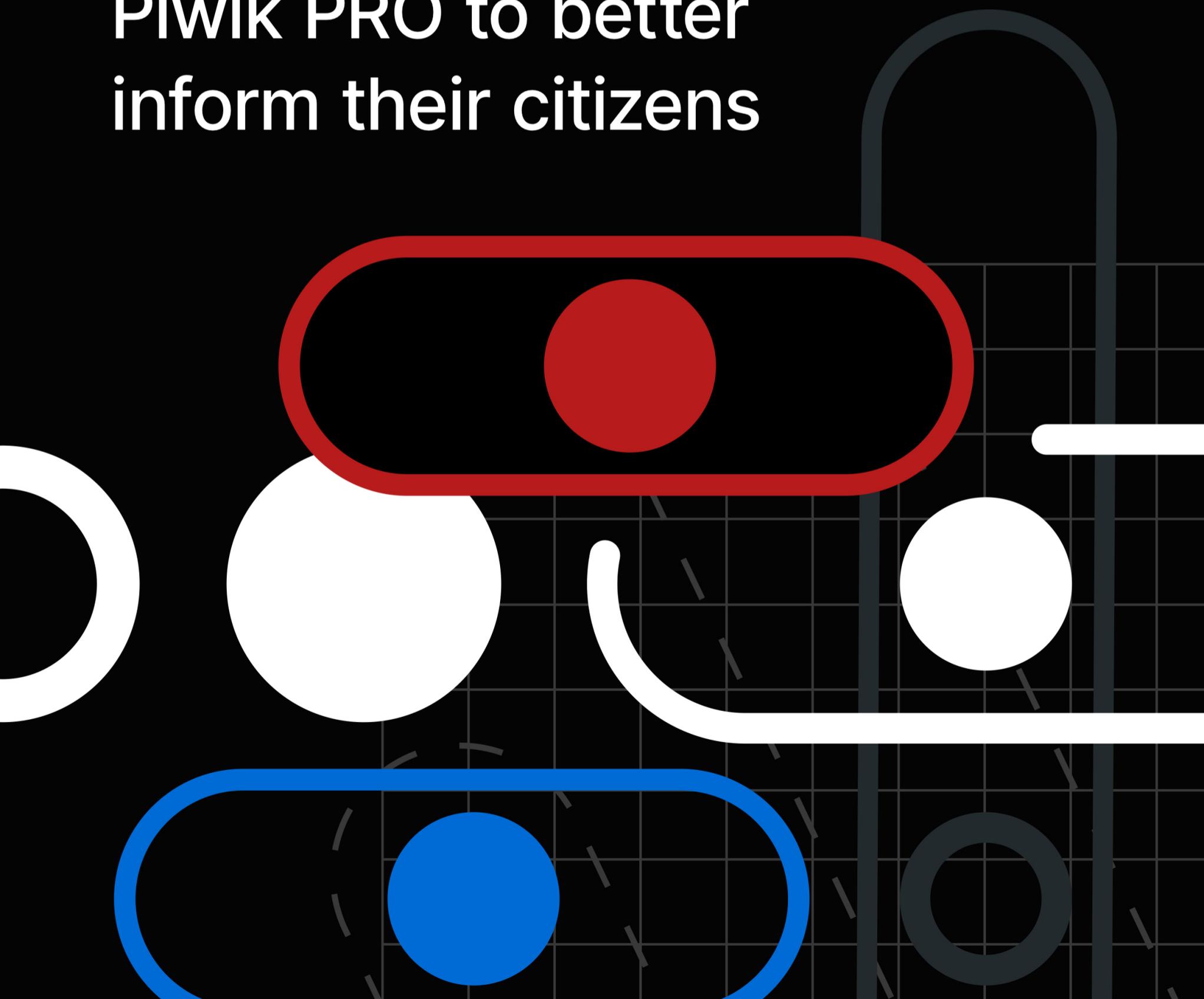


PIWIK **PRO**

# The Government of the Netherlands

How the Government  
of the Netherlands uses  
Piwik PRO to better  
inform their citizens



# How the Government of the Netherlands uses Piwik PRO to better inform their citizens

The Public Information and Communications Service (DPC) is an agency of the Ministry of General Affairs, part of **the Government of the Netherlands**.

DPC publishes governmental information on the website Rijksoverheid.nl (English version at: Government.nl) and coordinates national campaigns. It works on behalf of the Information Council, which comprises all of the central government's communications directors. These directors set central government communication policy and supervise its implementation by DPC.

The Public Information and Communications Service started using Piwik PRO in its early days, back in 2013. At first only for its own purposes, but it gradually evolved into a service for large government organizations, with as many as 600 websites using the platform now.



Government of the Netherlands

## Industry

Public sector

## Location

The Netherlands

## Highlights

- Complex analysis and optimization of content to maximize helpfulness for citizens, especially in the times of the coronavirus outbreak
- Smooth scaleup of the platform for COVID-19-related traffic spikes, approaching several million visits per day
- Certainty that data is stored safely and is only used for online analytics purposes
- Adopting a more analytical approach across the organization thanks to the easy-to-use platform



Government of the Netherlands

The screenshot shows the website's interface. At the top, there is a blue navigation bar with 'Home' on the left and 'Latest', 'Topics', 'Ministries', 'Government', and 'Documents' on the right. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image of a family walking in a park. Overlaid on the banner is a white search bar with a magnifying glass icon and a dropdown menu with two items: 'Information about coronavirus COVID-19' and 'Information in DUTCH on COVID-19'. Below the banner, there are eight category tiles arranged in two rows of four. Each tile has a title and a brief description of the category's content.

Category	Description
Building and housing	Housing, Infrastructure ...
Economy	Enterprise and innovation, Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in central government, Brexit ...
Education	School holidays, Gender equality, Freedom of education ...
Family, health and care	Drugs, Health insurance, Abortion, Mental health care, Family law ...
Government and democracy	
International cooperation	
Justice, security and defence	
Migration and travel	Visas, Dutch nationality, New in the ...

**One thing that is really important for the government is the privacy aspect of the data collection. Thanks to Piwik PRO and its privacy-oriented features, we're able to really anonymize the visits-level information. If I were to say what governments look for in an analytics platform, first and foremost it would be a solution that can be trusted by citizens. Only then come factors like usability, cost, support and a community of users.**

**We are the government, people have to be able to place their trust in us, and the privacy controls in Piwik PRO really help with that. We're sure that our data is stored safely and is only used for online analytics purposes.**

— **Martijn Warmoeskerken**, Senior Communication Research Advisor, Public Information and Communications Service of the Government of the Netherlands

## **First and foremost – a solution that citizens can trust**

The primary purpose of the Government.nl website is to provide citizens with a range of information in the most efficient and reader-friendly way. That's why it was important for the DPC to know **if visitors read the content** they created and **if they found it helpful**.

Of course, it was not only about monitoring the situation – the end goal was to **optimize the content to better inform the public**. Taking into account the number of tracked websites and their complex structure, specific to government organizations, that was going to be a challenge.

When the **COVID-19 outbreak** happened, **swiftly providing citizens with information** became even more crucial. The DPC needed to be able to **quickly analyze the website's overall performance and the effectiveness of selected content types**.

The board of directors expected regular updates. The number of visitors increased dramatically, so the platform had to be able to handle **huge traffic spikes**.

**As a governmental organization we don't have straightforward KPIs. Commercial organizations aim to generate more revenue and can check e.g. their goal conversions and costs. We publish information, and in our line of work the conversion is when someone reads the information and finds it helpful – when it answers their questions. We don't have common conversion goals on our pages, we have to do it in a different way.**

— **Martijn Warmoeskerken**, Senior Communication Research Advisor, Public Information and Communications Service of the Government of the Netherlands

## **Who uses Piwik PRO Analytics Suite?**

Piwik PRO Analytics Suite is used by employees of different departments and entities within the Government of the Netherlands. They've created an analytics community restricted to the government's employees – an online platform where they can share best Piwik PRO practices, help each other and exchange feedback on the software.

This community is also a valuable source of ideas on what could be improved within the platform. The Government of the Netherlands has used Piwik PRO for several years now, and they can see the progress that the platform has made in terms of usability and features, especially after migrating from the classic to the new version.

**We're seeing that the new Piwik PRO Analytics Suite brings forward a more analytical approach in our organization – looking into the numbers and performance. It's easy to use and we're able to analyze the data, instead of just reporting, which helps in adopting this data-driven culture. Dashboards we've created in the Analytics really try to convey if our visitors succeeded in finding answers to their questions. The migration process took some time, but we couldn't have done the things we can do now if we didn't switch to the new version.**

— **Martijn Warmoeskerken**, Senior Communication Research Advisor, Public Information and Communications Service of the Government of the Netherlands

# Making a real difference with Piwik PRO Analytics Suite

## Helping citizens to easily find the right information

To be able to analyze content performance, DPC had to find a way to organize it in their analytics platform first. There were about 10,000 content pages on the main government website at the time, and then thousands of PDF documents that originated from those.

They used custom variables to add additional metadata to page tracking. This allowed them to **divide the pages into those from a specific department or linked to a specific subject**, FAQ or news pages.

The government website was quite complex, with content on 300–400 different topics. That's one of the reasons why the segment feature is used extensively by the analysts at DPC. To cover each subject and each page type, they had to create about 1,000 segments. Now when editors want to work on a specific topic, like pages providing information on pensions or security, **they can easily filter them out from the rest.**

This was a base for even more complex analysis of their content performance. DPC ran a series of tests on the relation between the number of words on a page and the time that people spend on it. In search of the optimal ratio of time to number of words, they **identified the pages that needed optimization** – long ones that nobody read, and short ones that were read for far too long and needed simplifying.

Since the **accurate measurement of the time a given user spent on the page** was key, they had to introduce non-standard solutions, such as a heartbeat timer, which helps accurately measure the time of each visit. There are pages that citizens go to directly from search results, to quickly check for e.g. dates of school holidays, and leave right after. Without this solution, time spent on those pages would be shown as zero seconds, which would disrupt their analysis.

It wasn't enough to learn if the information they provide is being read – they still wanted to **know if citizens find it helpful**. They introduced short feedback forms with simple yes or no answers, collected with Piwik PRO's custom events. It was a great help for their editorial team in identifying the pages that need improvement.

## Swiftly scaling a platform up in times of crisis

The coronavirus outbreak was a demanding time for the Government of the Netherlands. Their mission to swiftly provide citizens with the right information became even more important, and the ability to analyze the results of their actions was essential.

Their website saw a major increase in daily visits – as many as **several million visits per day**. It was especially noticeable right after press conferences or announcements by the prime minister. The analytics platform was being pushed to its limits, but the **Piwik PRO team rose to the challenge and kept everything running smoothly**.

**In the first days of the outbreak we were concerned about the performance of the platform, but we're really happy that Emilia and her colleagues were on top of things, making sure that its health was in a good condition. They quickly scaled up where needed – on a data collection side – but they also made sure that we were able to analyze those huge amounts of data by keeping the platform running very smoothly. It was a great help for our own analysts and for other departments. We're really happy that the new platform is giving us the performance we need to get the valuable data.**

— **Martijn Warmoeskerken**, Senior Communication Research Advisor, Public Information and Communications Service of the Government of the Netherlands

The analytics platform was key to the work of many people. The **board of directors wanted to keep a closer eye on the website's performance**, which was possible thanks to weekly updates based on previously prepared reports. Using the metasites functionality, DPC created **aggregated reports for pages related to the coronavirus topic**, such as pages with public health information or travel restrictions. This gave editors easy access to data on content on the coronavirus. They also **optimized the website taking into account users' searches**, indicating information that was missing or difficult to find.

**Piwik PRO Analytics Suite is a good choice for governmental organizations. We have the confidence that the data we collect is really secure, with privacy controls properly set. The interface is straightforward, our analysts can quickly get all the data they need, and the API enables them to use the raw data to further deepen the analysis. The platform really allows us to grow into a more data-driven organization.**

— **Martijn Warmoeskerken**, Senior Communication Research Advisor, Public Information and Communications Service of the Government of the Netherlands