

# Cultural policy in the Netherlands

## Executive summary, January 2007

### 1. Basic principles, recent orientations, current objectives

In the Netherlands, *quality and diversity* are the principal considerations to legitimise national cultural policy. In this perspective the first concern of public administration is to create favourable conditions for the production, maintenance and equal distribution of cultural expressions. Subsidies to organisations and institutions are given in the expectation that cultural life will flourish. The *Ministry of Education, Science and Culture*<sup>1</sup> lays down general and specific terms for subsidies, relating to the quantity and quality of output, distribution and audience reach, as well as the quality of financial management and financial and general reporting, so as to ensure that the recipients meet its cultural policy objectives. In content oriented matters, the Ministry normally consults the Council for Culture<sup>2</sup>.

The last Cabinet in power intended to stimulate innovative intercultural programming, whereby makers from different backgrounds decide themselves in which manner they interconnect and cooperate. It stressed the urgency to intensify the dialogue between groups of 'old' and 'new' Dutch citizens. To this end, it was – and still is – considered to be important to provide a platform where citizens can learn more about each other's culture, background and values. This also implies that established institutions should have an open attitude towards intercultural activities and programming and that the multicultural institutions should attempt to interconnect with the established circuit. Next to this, the Cabinet wanted more connection between artistic and economic processes (*c.f. inter ministerial cooperation*).

The Minister of Education asked the Van Oostrom Commission<sup>3</sup> to indicate how best to convey information about the most important events and figures in Dutch national history to school pupils in primary and secondary education. The Commission's advice, published in October 2006, concerned the so-called 'canon', comprising those pieces of knowledge that every Dutchman should know about the history of this country. At the same time the Cabinet decided to create a Museum for National History. The Cabinet's plan is to model this museum on the example of the German "*Haus der Geschichte*" in Bonn.

### 2. Regulation and funding

Government arts funding has its legislative base in a number of laws, including specific laws such as the *Specific Cultural Policy Act*, which regulates the subsidies based on cultural policy decisions, as well as the *Monuments and Archaeological Sites Act*, the *Public Records Act* and the *Media Act*. The subsidy laws deal with three main lines of funding: multi-annual subsidies to institutions, project subsidies and specific subsidies. The largest of these is the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.minocw.nl](http://www.minocw.nl)

<sup>2</sup> [www.cultuur.nl](http://www.cultuur.nl)

<sup>3</sup> Named after Frits van Oostrom, professor of Dutch history at the University of Utrecht

first – the multi-annual subsidies to institutions. These funds are distributed every four years, on the basis of evaluated subsidy requests under the Cultural Policy Document system. Apart from the subsidies directly granted to institutions, the Ministry also has the possibility to award grants to individual artists or arts bodies through a vast array of funds. (*cf.* ‘sectors’)

A breakdown of central government spending on culture in 2005 is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Ministry spending and income for culture, 2005,<sup>4</sup>

(x 1 million euro)	2005
Total expenditure	1.732
Expenditure on the arts	303
Expenditure libraries, literature, language	42
Expenditure media	845
Expenditure cultural heritage	371
Funds	81
Other expenditure	17
Apparatus	71
Total income culture	354
Income cultural heritage	111
Income media	239
Other income	4

### 3. Division of tasks between state, provinces and municipalities

In 2004, the levels of Dutch government (state, provinces, municipalities) spent €3.657 million on arts and culture all together. Table 2 gives an overview of expenditure by central, provincial and municipal government on culture.

Table 2: Gross Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2004<sup>5</sup>

(x 1 million euro)	Total	State	Provinces	Municipalities	Joint Funding
<b>Arts</b>	1340	358	91	860	31
<b>Cult heritage</b>	769	316	68	369	16
<b>Libraries</b>	552	69	48	424	10
<b>Media</b>	996	867	119	10	0
<b>Total</b>	3657	1610	326	1663	57

In the four large cities, and in some larger municipalities, cultural institutions receive funding from both the state and the local authority, through a linked subsidy system. Agreements concerning the funding system are laid down in *covenants* with the three large cities and with five clusters of the twelve provinces and thirty large and medium-sized cities.

Consultation with the Inter-provincial Consultative Council and the Union of Netherlands Municipalities has resulted in the agreement that each of the forty-two covenant holders

<sup>4</sup> Source: *Kerncijfers 2005* [OCW]

<sup>5</sup> Source: *Statistics Netherlands* (CBS)

should develop a cultural profile, characteristic of its own situation and context. This should include a description of the actual state of affairs, as well as an inventory of the requirements for the coming cultural policy document period.

In 1999 the *Cultural Outreach Action Plan*, was launched in order to attract new audiences to arts and culture, especially immigrants and young people. The Cabinet has spent an annual Euro 13.7 million subsidy for its implementation (2006), which is matched by the twelve provinces and thirty municipalities. Thus the regional and local authorities contribute to implementing special programmes

#### 4. Interdepartmental and interministerial cooperation

Within the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, a steady relationship has been developed between the Department of Education and the Department of Culture. Since 1996 the policy programme 'Culture and School' stimulates more orientation on cultural activities in the school curriculum by granting visits to museums, theatres and cinemas.

Cultural policy is not only taken care of by the *Ministry of Education, Culture and Science*, but also by other Ministries. The *Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment*<sup>6</sup> has a grant scheme known as the 'percentage scheme', which aims to spend 1.5% of the construction costs of government buildings and 1% of those of school buildings on commissions or purchases of art works to furnish and adorn them. In the area of heritage conservation and architecture policy the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science works together closely with the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the *Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management*<sup>7</sup>. The Housing Ministry and the *Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality*<sup>8</sup> work together in the field of heritage preservation. The programme Culture and Economy, carried out by the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and *The Ministry of Economic Affairs*<sup>9</sup> aims to strengthen the economic scope of culture and creativity, by giving an impulse to the Netherlands' creative potential. The fruits of this endeavour are that the business sector gets more insight in the possibilities offered by the creative industries, which can lead to a new source of ideas for the development and use of new technologies and products. At the same time, the cultural sector is made more aware of its market potential. The *Ministry of Justice*<sup>10</sup> takes care of the implementation of the Copyright Act and other law related policy instrument. *The Ministry of Finance*<sup>11</sup> sets out policy in the field of tax exemption regulations.

The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*<sup>12</sup> shares responsibility for international cultural relations and pays a 50% contribution to the Culture Fund<sup>13</sup> for the presentation of Dutch culture abroad. On a European (EU) level, the Netherlands is currently striving to create more synergy between the European Commission's cultural programmes and its own policy. The Council of Europe's standpoint, that freedom of expression is paramount as a fundamental right, plays an important role in Dutch media policy. UNESCO has programmes to update legal instruments to protect cultural heritage in the world, to which the Netherlands

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<sup>6</sup> [www.vrom.nl](http://www.vrom.nl)

<sup>7</sup> [www.verkeerenwaterstaat.nl](http://www.verkeerenwaterstaat.nl)

<sup>8</sup> [www.minlnv.nl](http://www.minlnv.nl)

<sup>9</sup> [www.minez.nl](http://www.minez.nl)

<sup>10</sup> [www.justitie.nl](http://www.justitie.nl)

<sup>11</sup> [www.minfin.nl](http://www.minfin.nl)

<sup>12</sup> [www.minbuza.nl](http://www.minbuza.nl)

<sup>13</sup> *HGIS (Homogene Groep Internationale Samenwerking)*. Total budget Euro 10 million per year. Share Ministry of Foreign Affairs = Euro 5 million.

contributes financially. In a recent policy document *Setting Course. More cohesion in international cultural policy* more space is given to international cultural activities, whereas at the same time government claims more autonomy in mobilising cultural activities for strategic international policy objectives.

## 5. Sectors

### *a. Cultural heritage policy*

Cultural heritage policy not only supports the *traditional museums, heritage sites, archaeology and archives* sectors, but also includes 'cultural planning'. This essentially involves working together with other interested parties and a development-oriented rather than conservation-oriented approach. Cultural heritage policy accordingly focuses more on the public and the possible uses of artefacts, rather than the artefacts themselves. Different kinds of heritage are presented to the public alongside one another or used to improve the quality of the environment. In this new approach to heritage policy the opportunities afforded by the new digital media are proving very useful.

Over the course of time, the Netherlands has maintained intensive relationships with a number of countries in the context of a shared cultural heritage. A number of stages in history gave birth to intangible and tangible memories that are still referred to as common cultural heritage.

Through cultural policy programmes, the cohesion that already exists with other cultural and social sectors will increase. Specific policy frameworks and structural activity plans will be developed, in which present-day themes can be profiled within the wider scope of cross-border shared cultural heritage, such as the history of slavery, water, fortifications and strongholds.

The Mondriaan Foundation<sup>14</sup> carries out different governmental subsidy schemes in order to support museum collections and policy development.

### *b. Media policy*

The starting point for media policy is freedom of expression and the important role media have in a democratic society. The media shape public agendas and citizens' information about, and views on, issues. As a consequence, independence, diversity and access are the main principles guiding media policy. Quality is an issue too, but not so prominent as in arts policy, for instance.

The Dutch public service *broadcasting system* is funded by an index-linked government grant to public broadcasting funded from taxation. The government also makes the net proceeds from advertising on the national public networks available. Government policy is concerned mainly with national public service broadcasting, although it also covers local, regional and international broadcasting. Media diversity has been ensured by the recent establishment of the production company MTNL (Multicultural Television the Netherlands) and the radio station FunX, which targets a youth audience. The Dutch Cultural Broadcasting Promotion Fund<sup>15</sup> stimulates high quality and art oriented radio and TV programmes.

Dutch government *policy on the press* aims at informing the general public and helping them form their opinions. In practice, this policy is limited to the daily and non-daily

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<sup>14</sup> [www.mondriaanstichting.nl](http://www.mondriaanstichting.nl)

<sup>15</sup> [www.stimuleringsfonds.nl](http://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl)

newspapers and news magazines. Two funds are active in this field: The Press Fund<sup>16</sup>, and the Special Journalistic Projects Fund<sup>17</sup>.

*Literature policy* encompasses the position of books as culture carrier in general, the stimulation of reading, and the promotion of the quality and diversity in Dutch and Frisian language and literature. This last category focuses on literary writers and translators, and publishers of literary works. Other areas of literature policy cover the conservation of, and access to, literary collections and the dissemination and promotion of Dutch literature abroad. Two funds play a key role in literary policy: the Literary Fund<sup>18</sup> and the Dutch Literary Production and Translation Fund<sup>19</sup>,

The *public library system* belongs mainly to the responsibility of the provinces and municipalities. The Ministry funds the umbrella organisation of public libraries, the Netherlands Public Library Association<sup>20</sup>. Subsidy schemes now running stimulate digitisation and the further development of a virtual library in the public library sector.

At the same time, the innovative nature of E-Culture has been acknowledged. It is not only valuable for the exploitation of cultural potential in libraries and heritage depots, but also for other forms of knowledge distribution and to reach new audiences. A special fund takes care of the financing of libraries for the visually impaired.

### ***c. Arts policy***

Brought together in the framework of arts policy, The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture develops financial support schemes related to arts institutions in the areas of visual arts, design, architecture, film, new media, performing arts, amateur arts and arts education. The main pillars of arts policy are the funds for creative and performing arts, the support for infrastructural facilities and the subsidy instrument for a manifold of arts producing, presenting and distributing institutes.

In the *visual arts* sector The 'Artists' Work and Income Scheme Act' (WWIK)<sup>21</sup>, stimulates the development of the artist's professional abilities, whereby a combination of work on one's artistic career and work in employment elsewhere is stimulated. Government policy towards *design* is shifting from the supply to the demand side. Design per se remains under the wings of the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture<sup>22</sup>. Visual Arts and Design Funding<sup>23</sup> is allocated through targeted funding in twelve provinces and fourteen municipalities. Strengthening regional dynamics has the most chance of success in areas that can independently attract both artists and public (audience, buyers and commissioners). Nine cities<sup>24</sup> have been selected on the grounds of this potential. These are home to art education institutions, galleries, art lending centres, museums and studios, etc. They have established positions in national and international networks. Besides these cities, five municipalities<sup>25</sup> are eligible for funds that are specifically linked to the development and growth of artists and designers.

From an *architectural policy* perspective, government initiates schemes of all sizes, ranging from railways, roads, and waterways to landscaping projects and government buildings, enabling it to influence the planning quality of pioneering and eye-catching projects. In its ongoing role of commissioning body or contract partner, it is able to monitor

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<sup>16</sup> [www.bedrijfsfondspers.nl](http://www.bedrijfsfondspers.nl)

<sup>17</sup> [www.fondsbbp.nl](http://www.fondsbbp.nl)

<sup>18</sup> [www.fondsvoordeletteren.nl](http://www.fondsvoordeletteren.nl)

<sup>19</sup> [www.nlpvf.nl](http://www.nlpvf.nl)

<sup>20</sup> [www.debibliotheken.nl](http://www.debibliotheken.nl)

<sup>21</sup> *Wet Werk en Inkomen Kunstenaars (WWIK)*

<sup>22</sup> [www.fondsbbkvb.nl](http://www.fondsbbkvb.nl)

<sup>23</sup> *Geldstroom Beeldende Kunst en Vormgeving*

<sup>24</sup> Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag, Utrecht, Eindhoven, Groningen, Enschede, Arnhem, Maastricht

<sup>25</sup> Den Bosch, Tilburg, Breda, Zwolle, Leeuwarden

quality systematically. Central government has traditionally been responsible for the buildings occupied by ministries, the national police, employment exchanges, embassies in foreign countries and royal palaces. These are managed by the National Buildings Service<sup>26</sup>, headed by the Chief Government Architect, who is involved in the selection of architects and designers of government buildings. The Architecture Promotion Fund<sup>27</sup> subsidises projects in order to highlight the subject of architecture in society.

Dutch *film policy* aims to: increase the output and improve the quality of Dutch films, including international co-productions; improve the distribution of non-commercial films of artistic merit; expand the market for Dutch films; foster cooperation between the film sector and broadcasting; create better conditions for the selection and training of young talent; manage the cinematic heritage properly and make it available to the public; and protect young people. These goals are supported by the Dutch Film Fund<sup>28</sup>.

Government policy on the *performing arts* is to guarantee quality performances while ensuring a certain degree of variety and geographical distribution. Innovation and outreach are also important policy considerations. The main tool used is grant aid. Subsidy flows are regulated through a number of funds: the Creative Music Fund<sup>29</sup>, the Performing Arts Programming and Marketing Fund<sup>30</sup>, and the Amateur Arts and Performing Arts Fund<sup>31</sup>. A merger of these funds is about to be realised. Central government is responsible for variety and continuity in the performing arts nationwide. Municipalities are responsible for venues (theatres, concert halls, etc.), and provinces for the range of events available at provincial level and their distribution within the province.

*Arts education policy* with the aim of finding a proper place for cultural education in schools, offers a starting point for extensive cooperation. The main tool the government has at its disposal is subsidising national organisations that support the various *amateur arts*. The function of these institutions is to improve overall quality in the sector by developing and offering courses (e.g. in management skills), organising top-level national events, disseminating information, broadening repertoires and acting as a go-between. The aims of the national art education organisations are similar, e.g. quality assurance, providing information, acting as a go-between, and developing art education in collaboration with provincial and local institutions.

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<sup>26</sup> [www.vrom.nl.rijksgebouwendienst](http://www.vrom.nl.rijksgebouwendienst)

<sup>27</sup> [www.archfonds.nl](http://www.archfonds.nl)

<sup>28</sup> [www.filmfund.nl](http://www.filmfund.nl)

<sup>29</sup> [www.fondsscheppendetoonkunst.nl](http://www.fondsscheppendetoonkunst.nl)

<sup>30</sup> [www.fppm.nl](http://www.fppm.nl)

<sup>31</sup> [www.fapk.nl](http://www.fapk.nl)