

COMPENDIUM SHORT PROFILE: THE NETHERLANDS

(Prepared by Jack van der Leden, October 2018)

1. Facts and figures

Political system:	Parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy
Year of membership to the Council of Europe:	1949
Year of membership to UNESCO:	1947
Population:	17.081.507 (2017)
Non-nationals of total population:	22.6% (2017)
Official language(s):	Dutch and Fries
Share of population using the Internet:	97.1% (2017)
Contribution cultural/creative sector to GPD:	EUR 14.5 billion (2.3%) (2016)

Ratification of Key Cultural Conventions

UNESCO

- *Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* (1954): 1954
- *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972): 1992
- *Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* (1999): 1999
- *UNESCO Convention to Combat the Illegal Traffic* (1970): 2009

Council of Europe

- *European Cultural Convention* (1954): 1956
- *Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe* (Granada 1985): 1994
- *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised)* (Valletta 1992): 2007
- *European Landscape Convention* (Florence 2000): 2005

More information: [Cultural Heritage Agency](#)

2. Historical perspective of cultural policy and recent changes

After private and local initiatives to establish museums, theatres and orchestras, the call for public support for cultural heritage and the arts by the national government followed at the end of the nineteenth century. In the Netherlands, arts and culture were introduced into the governmental portfolio in 1918, with the formation of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science (OKW), based on the premise that the state should distance itself from value judgements on art. There has been a department for arts and culture ever since, with a Minister and/or a State Secretary responsible for the cultural portfolio. In 1930, the government began to implement policy regarding the media.

In order to support as many different individual expressions of culture as possible, the government started to subsidise works based on artistic quality in 1960. The definition of 'quality' was left to advisory committees. In the 1970s, cultural policy increasingly became part of the government's welfare policy. The economic stagnation of the early 1980s was one of the reasons the government had to reconsider its public responsibilities and ambitions in various fields, including culture. The government still focused on high artistic quality and professionalism, but budget cuts had to be made and many cultural institutions were stimulated to acquire extra income in order to reduce their dependence on subsidies. In this period, the government committed itself to preparing a cultural policy plan every four years (*Wet op het Specifiek Cultuurbeleid*, [Cultural Policy Act], 1993).

In the 1990s, cultural organisations were privatised and encouraged to become more independent financially and organisationally and to focus on their market, i.e. their audiences. In addition to the contributions of the state, private initiatives and funding were welcomed. In 2010, the Rutte I government (2010-2012) reconsidered the government's role in cultural support. The aim was to open up the sector to the private market, to create an enabling environment for market forces in the cultural sector, and to stimulate cultural entrepreneurship. This, in combination with the economic crisis which began in 2008, led to budget cuts (about 21%) and targeted choices in awarding subsidies.

In September 2016, Minister Bussemaker (PvdA, Social Democratic Party) published the current cultural policy plan 2017-2020. Key themes are the development of talent, cultural education and public outreach, especially in the regions (*Besluiten culturele basisinfrastructuur periode 2017-2020*).

Since October 2017, Ingrid van Engelshoven (D66, progressive liberal democratic party) has been the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, which makes her responsible for culture (as well as higher education, science and emancipation). Arie Slob (ChristenUnie, small protestant party) is Minister for the Media (in addition to primary and secondary education, and archives) (see the Coalition Agreement *Confidence in the Future* and chapter 4).

In her letter *Cultuur in een open samenleving* [Culture in an open society] (2018), Minister Van Engelshoven sets out her cultural agenda. Her priorities are: encouraging openness and curiosity from a young age on, the development of new culture and makers; an inspiring environment (heritage and creative industries; culture without borders (international cultural policy); and a strong cultural sector. The Rutte III government invested EU 325 million in heritage, and EU 80 million in culture and historical-democratical awareness.

3. Overall description of the system

In order to understand the Dutch cultural policy system, four key issues are important:

- the relationship between state and other tiers of government;
- the role of advisory committees;
- the role of funding bodies in the arts;
- and law-based regulations for planning cultural policy.

In the Netherlands, public governance is organised as a three-tier system consisting of central, provincial and municipal government. In each tier, a system of dual responsibility prevails: parliament, provincial councils and local councils have the right to amend the financial and governmental recommendations of the cabinet, provincial deputies, and mayors and aldermen. All three tiers pursue their own cultural policy with their own funding and advisory streams.

Inter-administrative relations

All three tiers of government pursue relatively autonomous cultural policy objectives, reflecting the political priorities. Shared responsibility has been embodied in joint financing agreements (covenants) between the central government, the provinces and the municipalities for co-financed activities.

The division of tasks between the levels of government is based on agreements. The central government supports institutions of (inter)national significance through the national basic cultural infrastructure and the cultural funds. It holds responsibility for the preservation of the national collection and national monuments, cultural education, libraries and archives, and international cultural policy. Provinces are responsible for supra-municipal coordination at regional level and the financing of provincial collections. Sometimes, they also support the local availability of culture. Municipalities are responsible for the accommodation of cultural institutions and financing the upkeep of municipal collections. They subsidise local cultural production, libraries, music schools and finance the management of municipal museums (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, *Cultuur in beeld 2017* [Culture in focus 2017]).

The role of advisory committees

A basic principle of Dutch government policy is to remain neutral in assessing arts issues. The government leaves decision-making about the arts mainly to various committees of independent experts. The cultural institutions and the cultural funds, funded directly by the central government, are part of the basic cultural infrastructure. For the period 2017-2020, this infrastructure comprises 88 institutions and six public cultural funds. The Council for Culture [Raad voor Cultuur] is a separate body that advises the government on the principles and implementation of policy plans, both solicited and unsolicited. Advisory bodies also exist at municipal and provincial level.

The role of funding bodies in the arts

There are six government-subsidised cultural funds: Performing Arts Fund NL [Fonds Podiumkunsten], Dutch Foundation for Literature [Nederlands Letterenfonds], Mondriaan Fund [Mondriaanfonds: visual arts and cultural heritage], Cultural Participation Fund [Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie: cultural education, amateur arts and popular culture], Dutch Film Fund [Nederlands Filmfonds], and the Creative Industries Fund NL [Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie]. The responsibility of the central government is to distribute money to the funds and determine the conditions under which the funds must operate. Also, the Minister has to approve the regulations. The public cultural funds are evaluated every four years. In addition, there are several private foundations that support the arts. The media has its own funding bodies.

Law-based regulations for planning cultural policy

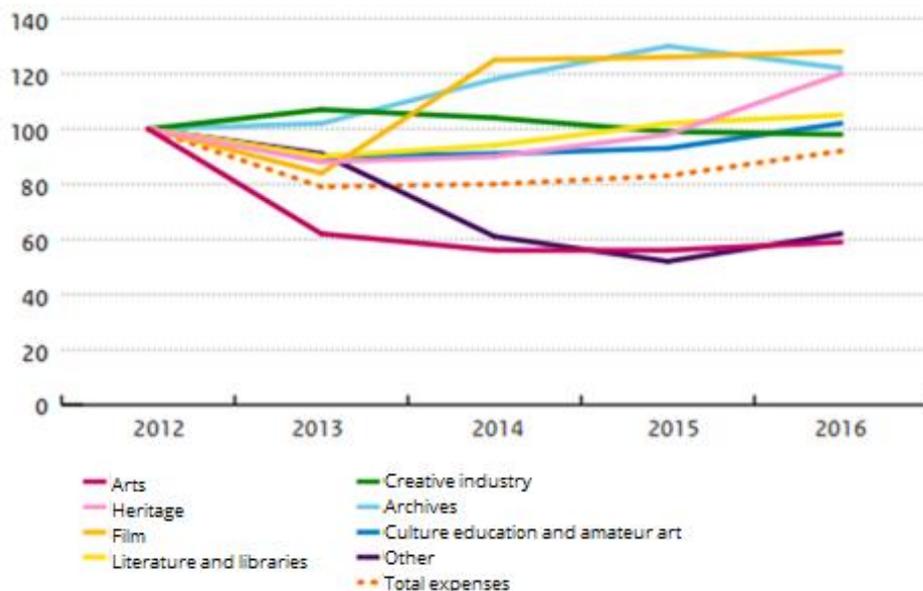
In 1993, the *Wet op het Specifiek Cultuurbeleid* [Cultural Policy Act] was introduced. This act determines aspects of cultural policy, such as the artistic quality, public outreach and the government's obligation to submit a cultural policy plan to parliament every four years. This four-year plan provides sustainable financial support and outlines activities for the coming period, as well as reviews achievements from the previous period. Furthermore, it regulates the government's ability to issue subsidies to provinces and municipalities. Since 2009, some smaller cultural institutions and companies are no longer part of the basic cultural infrastructure, but receive grants from the public cultural funds.

Financing of culture

Total annual government expenditure on culture was around 2.8 billion euros in 2017 (municipalities 61%, central government 29%, provinces 10%). In 2016, the contribution of the cultural and creative sector to GDP was 2,3%. In 2017, 285 institutions received a multi-year subsidy with a total budget of EUR 387.2 million.

Compared to the period 2013-2016, the amount of institutions has increased with almost 25% in 2017-2018, while the total subsidy budget has grown less (5%).

Expenditure on culture by the provinces was EUR 46.9 million in 2017; an average of EUR 14 per inhabitant (on cultural heritage and libraries). Municipalities jointly spend more than EUR 1.7 billion per year on culture; an average of EUR 101 per inhabitant (on cultural accommodation, collections, local availability, music schools and libraries). It is difficult to give a clear picture of how municipal and provincial expenditure has developed. In the past few years, there have been several changes to definitions, making it impossible to compare data (*Cultuur in beeld 2017* [Culture in focus 2017]).



Bron: Jaarverslag 2016 OCW, begrotingsartikel 14

Development of gross government expenditure on culture, 2012-2016 (indices 2012 = 100)

Source: [Rijksoverheid](#)

4. Main cultural policies and priorities

Vision

In spring 2018, current Minister Van Engelshoven published a vision statement, *Cultuur in een open samenleving* [Culture in an open society] in which she sets out her cultural agenda. She outlines the following policy themes, based on the Coalition Agreement: culture makes curious; space for new makers and culture; an inspiring environment; culture without borders; and a strong cultural sector. According to the vision statement: creative and artistic talent will be stimulated; everybody (irrespective of age, cultural background, income, place of residence) needs access to arts and culture; there should be a broad availability of known and unknown forms of art; and there will be a safe place for art as a reflexion on society and its citizens.

The government will increase its focus on new creators of culture instead of only providing funds for renowned companies, symphonic orchestras and museums. New art forms need the chance to be at the forefront as well, such as digital culture, virtual reality art, fashion and urban arts. Children must be encouraged to enjoy culture at a young age, which is why all children will be able to visit the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (or another museum) during their school years. The Coalition Agreement announced that every Dutch child should get the chance to see Rembrandts' *Nachtwacht* [Night Watch] in the Rijksmuseum.

The culture budget did not increase in recent years, but now there is room for growth. The government is investing EU 80 million in culture structurally. An additional EU 325 million will be made available for heritage and monuments in the coming years. In June 2018, the Minister confirmed the investments in heritage in the policy plan *Erfgoed telt : de betekenis van erfgoed voor de samenleving* [Heritage counts: the meaning of heritage for society].

Urban regions will get the opportunity to profile themselves with culture more than before in cooperation with the different governments. Further investments will be made in a fund for museum purchases, talent development and strengthening the Dutch international cultural profile.

Regions

The central government, the Council of Culture and the regional authorities are keen to increase coordination and cooperation between the various administrative levels. The municipalities and provinces emphasised the need to cooperate more and to have a closer look at the function and qualities of cultural institutions in the region. In cooperation with provinces, municipalities and the cultural sector, an inventory should be made of what is needed for culture and the associated resources.¹

In June 2018, the Minister invited the municipalities and provinces to draw up profiles, together with the cultural sector, setting out their vision on culture and arts in the region. With these profiles, the basic cultural infrastructure can better take into account the composition and the needs of the population, regional identity and the local climate for the makers and artists in the various disciplines

¹ The December 2017 letter from the organisation Interprovinciaal Overleg [Interprovincial Consultation] with recommendations for the Minister can be found here: *Bouwstenen voor cultuurbeleid vanaf 2021* [Building blocks for cultural policy from 2021].

(*Cultuurbeleid 2021-2024 Stedelijke en regionale profielen*) [Cultural policy 2021-2014 Urban and regional profiles].

Labour market in the cultural and creative sector

To strengthen the labour market position of artists and workers in the cultural and creative sector, the government made EUR 400.000 available in 2016. Commissioned by the Ministry, Kunsten '92 (the representative organisation for the arts, culture and heritage sector in the Netherlands) has drawn up, in collaboration with the cultural sector, the *Arbeidsmarktagenda culturele en creatieve sector 2017-2023* [Labour Market Agenda for the Cultural and Creative Sector 2017 – 2023] with recommendations and proposals for the Minister. Some important points are: improve the position of freelance artists and people in other creative professions; improve the working conditions; and strengthen sector-wide cooperation in order to conduct a social dialogue and to respond to the changes in the labour market. A special group of representatives of the arts and culture sector deals with the distribution of funds.

And further...

- In light of a possible review of the subsidy system after 2020, the Council for Culture published a number of sector-related recommendations in 2017 and 2018 with developments and trends per sector (visual art, literature and libraries, the audiovisual sector, monuments and archaeology, museums, the design sector (architecture, design, e-culture) and performing arts (dance, music, music theatre, theatre).
Source: [Council for Culture](#)
- December 2017: *The Act of the Fixed Book Price* will remain in force until 2019.
Source: [Rijksoverheid](#)
- May 2018: Minister Van Engelshoven made new agreements with the film industry to promote the production of Dutch films. In exchange for a low VAT rate on cinema tickets, the film distributors and cinema operators will make more money available for the production of Dutch public films.
- May 2018: Minister Van Engelshoven started a programme to stimulate the Dutch fashion industry to innovate and be more sustainable, in consultation with fashion colleges, institutes and funds.
- June 2018: In line with the increased budget for monuments, Minister Van Engelshoven announced that the Dutch government will invest an additional EU 34 million in monuments throughout the country, such as the Dom Church in Utrecht (EU 2.1 million), the Monastery of St. Anna in Venray (EU 3.5 million) and the Church of Our Lady in Breda (EU 4.9 million). 'Churches, windmills, farm houses and other monumental buildings tell the story of our past. Therefore, it is important to keep these places attractive for visitors and the local community,' the Minister stated.

5. International cooperation

The Netherlands participates in multilateral cultural relationships through its membership of the Benelux, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the United Nations (UNESCO) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

In addition to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a number of cultural funds and umbrella organisations are responsible for administering international cultural policy.

DutchCulture supports the implementation of Dutch international cultural policy and contributes to the foreign agenda and cultural image of the Netherlands. The organisation, funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, connects culture, economy, society and government policy by working together with artists, diplomats, designers, producers, researchers, consumers, promoters, funds and universities.

In May 2016, Minister Koenders (Foreign Affairs) and Minister Bussemaker (Education, Culture and Science) published their policy frame for international cultural policy 2017-2020 (*Beleidskader internationaal cultuurbeleid voor de periode 2017-2020*). The general objective of the Dutch international cultural policy is to represent Dutch culture within the international arena. The three main policy objectives are: a strong cultural sector that grows in quality through international exchange and sustainable cooperation and is seen and valued abroad; more room for culture as a contribution to a safe, just and future-proof world; and culture should be used effectively within modern diplomacy.

In June 2018, The Netherlands was selected to be a member of the Intergovernmental Comity of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Intangible Heritage, for a period of four years.

Source: Rijksoverheid