



Full Country Profile

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The Netherlands

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1 Cultural policy system

1.1 Objectives, main features and background

Objectives:

Dutch cultural policy is guided by the arm's-length principle, meaning the state does not make judgments about artistic quality, but instead focuses on creating the structural conditions for cultural expressions through cultural policy and funding. Through this form of government intervention, the objective is to reinforce the autonomy of the cultural sector, allowing artistic development to be largely driven by artists, citizens, and independent cultural foundations. Over the years, priority areas have been guaranteeing the production of high artistic quality, participation, education, innovation, talent development and entrepreneurship. Another priority area is the preservation of cultural heritage (museums, archaeology, monuments and intangible heritage) on the basis of the Heritage Act (see chapters 3.1 and 4.2.2).

In addition to cultural policy, the central government also develops policy concerning media. Dutch media operate on the basis of freedom of speech and independence of journalism. The government is not allowed to interfere in media expressions. The Dutch government sees it as its responsibility to provide a good climate for media pluralism and access to free, pluralistic, independent and reliable information of high quality. For that purpose, the government enables an independent representative public broadcasting system (national, regional and local) with the obligation to offer high-quality, varied and balanced content. The principles governing the organisation, funding and tasks of these public broadcasters are laid down in the *Media Act* ([Mediawet](#), 2008) (see chapters 2.5.3 and 3.5.3).

Main features:

According to the *Cultural Policy Act* (*Wet op het specifiek cultuurbeleid*, 1993), the Minister of Education, Culture and Science presents a policy memorandum every four years. These policy plans review the past policy cycle, name relevant developments and give the guidelines for cultural policy in the next four years. The aim of this cyclical process is to provide the cultural sector with stability while allowing for adaptability.

The responsibilities that are assigned to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science are mainly found in providing conditions for the preservation, development, and social and geographical distribution of cultural expressions of national significance. To do so, the Minister is tasked to follow the principles of quality and diversity (in disciplines). As of 2 July 2024, the position of Minister of Education, Culture and Science is held by Eppo Bruins, representing the New Social Contract (NSC) party, in the Schoof cabinet. As of 22 September 2025 his successor was Gouke Moes representing the Farmer Citizen

Movement (BBB) in the then caretaking cabinet Schoof. On the 23th of February 2026, the new Cabinet led by Prime Minister Rob Jetten was installed. Rianne Letschert was appointed as the new Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

In order to provide a structure for a supply of high-quality art and culture, a national basic infrastructure (Basis Infrastructuur (BIS) – in Dutch) is determined every four years, listing the cultural institutions that are to receive direct state subsidy. The Dutch [Council for Culture](#) – an independent advisory body composed of experts from the cultural field – is tasked with evaluating the subsidy applications for the BIS. Artists and smaller cultural organisations are supported by the state indirectly, through six public cultural funds (see chapter 7.1). In addition to these subsidies, provinces and municipalities also award grants (see chapters 1.2.3 and 1.2.4).

Background:

The arts and culture were introduced into the governmental portfolio in 1918, with the formation of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science (then: OKW). There has been a department for arts and culture ever since, with a minister and/or a state secretary responsible for the cultural portfolio.

1930: The start of media policy. With an allocation on broadcasting time, plans for a single national broadcasting company were abandoned in favour of a system that reflected the “pillarised” (in Dutch: *verzuilde*) society of liberals, socialists, Catholics and Protestants.

1945-1960: Post-war, the government extended its financial support to new areas such as film, theatre and literature. At that time, it was generally assumed that state aid to art and culture should be temporary. In the early 1950s, the Dutch Arts Council (now Council for Culture) was established.

1960-1970: The influence of the “pillars” decreased in Dutch society, while the importance of diversity in artistic expression grew. Nationwide support of the arts and culture became more structural as part of a growing welfare state. The *Broadcasting Act (Omroepwet)* was created, which made it possible for public broadcasters to enter the media sector, but here the “pillarisation” still remained the guiding principle.

1970s-1980: Cultural policy became increasingly important in the government's welfare policy. The benefits and relevance of culture to society at large were recognised as a priority, notably in terms of cultural participation and accessibility.

1980-1990: Due to the economic stagnation of the early 1980s, budget cuts were made, and cultural institutions were stimulated to reduce their dependence on subsidies. In 1988, the systematic (four year) Arts Plan was adopted, in which the Council for Culture

assesses the quality of the institutes that receive direct state funding. From 1988, commercial broadcasters were allowed to enter the media market of The Netherlands.

1990-2000: National Museums (in Dutch: Rijksmusea) acquired more organisational independence. Cultural organisations were encouraged to become less dependent on subsidies and increase focus on their own markets and audiences (especially younger audience and ethnic minorities). The *Cultural Policy Act* of 1993 (*Wet op het Specifiek Cultuurbeleid*) prescribed the renewal of the cultural policy plan every four years.

2000-2010: Cultural policy was – again – focused on encouraging cultural organisations to become more independent and increase their attention on markets and audiences. There was emphasis on participation and better facilities for and guidance of outstanding talent. In this same period, economic crisis ceased the relatively long period of gradual growth in the state budget for culture and media. Plans were made to recalibrate the cultural policy system, which led to the introduction of the BIS in 2009. Since then, smaller cultural institutions and companies should apply directly for subsidies from the public cultural funds (see chapter 7.2.2), which increased the funds' responsibilities.

2010-2020: The Rutte I Cabinet (2010-2012) determined the outlines for subsequent substantial budget cuts, aimed primarily to modern forms of culture (visual arts, performing arts) and the national public broadcaster, but mainly sparing cultural heritage. It was the first time in years that budget cuts were guided by ideological motives, which was a shock to the cultural and media sector in the Netherlands. Minister Jet Bussemaker (2012-2017, Social-Democrat Party) had a more supportive vision on culture and could reverse part of the budget cuts. The socio-economic position of artists was put on the agenda again.

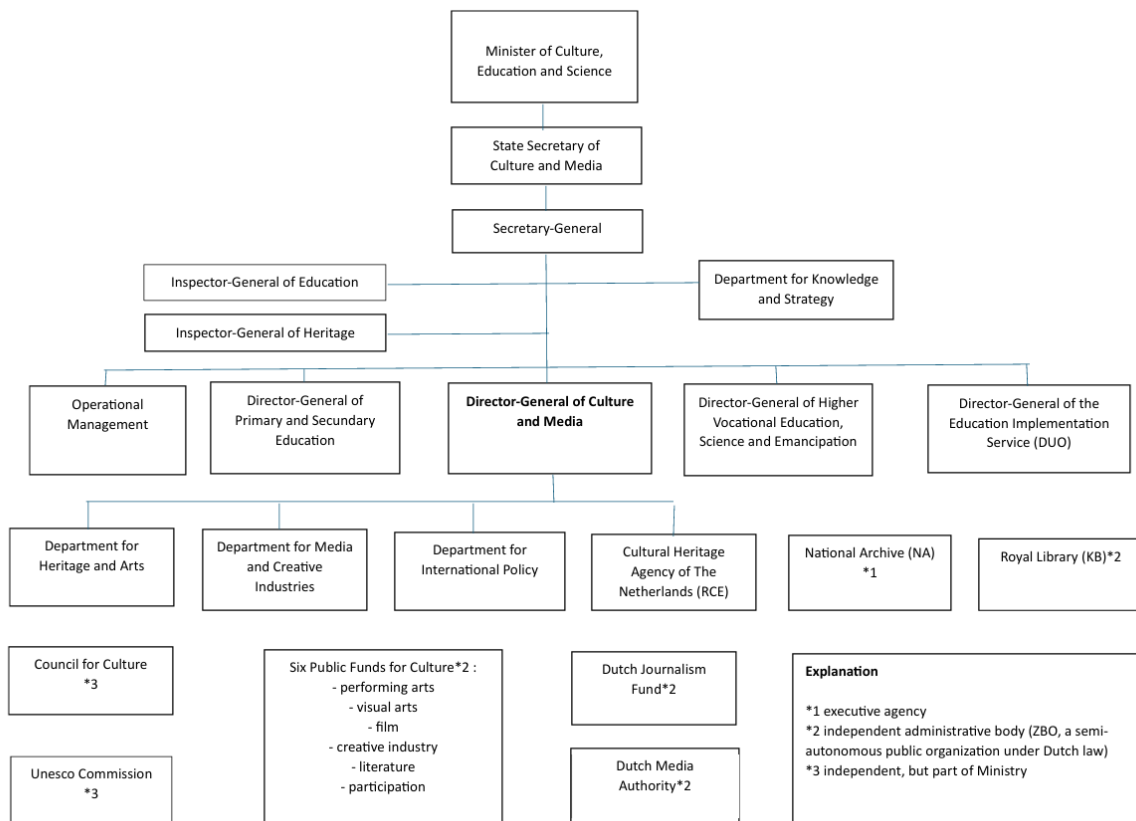
2020-present: The Government, confronted by the Covid-19 pandemic, introduced different forms of general support, and additional substantial funds for the cultural sector. State Secretary Gunay Uslu (2022-2023) had an extra structural budget for culture (170 million euro). She announced that no structural changes would be implemented in the next policy period (2025-2028), allowing the sector to restore from Covid. She did however request the Council for Culture to critically review the existing subsidy system. Codes of conduct for cultural governance, diversity and inclusion and fair practice (see chapter 2.5) became mandatory for cultural organisations seeking state funding.

In July 2024, the centre-right Cabinet Schoof started. For the first time the radical-right populist party PVV became part of in government. Budget cuts on culture were relatively moderate (culture was not even mentioned in the Coalition Agreement); budget cuts on media were more substantial: a reduction of the budget of the Dutch Public Broadcaster (NPO) with 150 million euros and changes in the structure of the national public

broadcaster were announced (see chapter 2.1). The initially planned increase of the VAT rate for culture has been reversed by parliament. Since June 2025, the Cabinet Schoof has been a caretaker government, new elections were held in October 2025.¹

1.2 Domestic governance system

1.2.1 Organisational organigram



1.2.2 National authorities

In the Netherlands, public governance is organised as a three-tier system consisting of a central, provincial and municipal government. In each tier, the parliament, provincial councils or local councils have the right to amend the financial and governmental recommendations of the cabinet, provincial deputies, mayors and aldermen. All three tiers pursue their own cultural policy. Collaboratively, they attempt to create an effective cultural environment throughout the country.

The central government has the task of creating conditions in which the other levels of government and the cultural organisations can function optimally. The cultural policy

¹ For a more extensive discussion of the objectives, main features and background of the Dutch cultural policy system, refer to 'An Introduction to Cultural Policy in the Polder' by Edwin van Meerkerk and Quirijn van den Hoogen in Cultural Policy in the Polder: 25 Years Dutch Cultural Policy Act (2018).

memorandum that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science formulates every four years, also includes the distribution of certain subsidies to provinces and municipalities.

In preparing and fixing regulations, laws and cultural policy programmes, the central government takes an important position and often sets the tone. However, they cover only one-third of all public expenses related to art and culture and must therefore often deliberate with regional and local governments and motivate them to get behind a shared policy agenda. The main role of central government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, is to take responsibility for the availability of high-quality subsidised arts, cultural institutes and companies. The central government therefore subsidises organisations that host collections or performances of (inter)national importance, such as museums, symphonic orchestras, opera, theatre and dance companies, among others.

The central government is also responsible for the National Archive, the National Library of the Netherlands (KB), the national digital library, national monuments and the national and regional public broadcasting system. Another important task is the drafting of laws concerning cultural and media-related issues. Examples of these laws are the *Heritage Act*, *Library Act (WSOB)*, *Archives Act*, *Copyright Act*, the *Media Act* and the *Fixed Book Prices Act* (see chapter 4.2 for an overview of the legislation on culture).

Council for Culture

Because it is a basic principle of the Dutch government to remain neutral in assessing arts issues, it leaves decision-making about the arts mainly to various committees of independent experts (arm's length principle). The Council for Culture is the most important body to advise the government on the principles and implementation of policy plans. Its recommendations are not binding; the Minister has the final decision about the State's cultural policy and subsidy allocations.

National Basic Infrastructure Culture

The cultural institutions and the cultural funds directly supported by the central government through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, are part of the so-called 'national basic infrastructure' (BIS). This infrastructure consists of selected institutions and six public funds that are to receive subsidy from the central government on a quadrennial basis. The Council for Culture acts as the government's advisory body with regard to the BIS.

In the latest *Recommendations for the national basic infrastructure* ([Advies culturele basisinfrastructuur 2025-2028](#)), the Council qualified 117 BIS-institutions for a subsidy of approximately €250 million. In January 2024, the Council published its advice [Access to](#)

[culture](#) - towards a new system in 2029, proposing the merging of the BIS and the six public funds into an integrated, decentral system (see chapter 2.1).

National, Regional and Local Public Broadcasters

The Netherlands has a dual broadcasting system that includes commercial and public broadcasters. The [Dutch Public Broadcaster](#) (NPO) functions as the umbrella organisation for national public broadcasters and is financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Dutch public broadcasting organisations are to date member-based associations. This arrangement has its origins in the “pillarisation” of Dutch society in the previous century: different social, religious and political streams all had their own separate associations, newspapers, sports clubs, educational institutions and broadcasting organisations.

The [Regional Public Broadcasting Foundation](#) (RPO) is the umbrella organisation of regional public broadcasters in the Netherlands. It is tasked with the coordination between regional broadcasters and represents their interests on a national and international level. The thirteen regional public broadcasters are subsidised by the Ministry of Culture, Education and Science. Since 2017, this subsidy is allocated through the RPO.

On a local level, public broadcasters also exist. The Netherlands includes approximately 220 local public broadcasters that receive subsidy from the local government. The common interests of these broadcasters are served by the [Foundation of Dutch Local Public Broadcasters](#) (NLPO).

Appointments to key positions in the cultural and media sector

There is no role for the Minister of culture in appointments of artistic and executive positions at cultural organisations (theatre companies, concert halls, festivals etc.) or (public) broadcaster organisations responsible for making programmes. For museums the Minister is consulted on the appointment of members of the Supervisory Board after nomination by the museum.

The minister’s involvement is limited to an indirect capacity in the following situations. The Executive Board of the National Public Broadcasting (NPO) is appointed by a Supervisory Board. This Supervisory Board is appointed by the Minister, based on a weighty recommendation by an independent appointments advisory committee, following an open selection procedure. The same procedure is followed in the case of the members of the Council for Culture.

In the case of the public funds for culture, a member of the Supervisory Board shall be appointed by the Minister, upon the recommendation of the Supervisory Board and in

accordance with a profile description. The Chair of the Supervisory Board shall be appointed to the position. The Executive Board shall be appointed by the Minister, upon the recommendation of the Supervisory Board and in accordance with a profile description. To date, the Ministers have always followed the recommendations.

1.2.3 Regional authorities

In the Netherlands, provinces as well as municipalities are responsible for the implementation of their own cultural policies. The central government is responsible for the financial and the legislative framework and the support of cultural institutions of national importance, while the provinces take responsibility for regional distribution and the maintenance of institutions beyond municipal borders. They are also responsible for the accessibility of arts education facilities in the provincial regions, cultural heritage and spatial planning.

National and regional synchronisation

The policy coordination among the three government tiers is outlined in the *General Framework for Intergovernmental Relations concerning Culture* ([Algemeen kader interbestuurlijke verhoudingen cultuur](#), 2012). The (non-legal) framework, still in force, is based upon consultation between the [Association of Provinces of the Netherlands](#) (IPO), the [Association of Netherlands Municipalities](#) (VNG) and the central government.

The framework includes policy priorities and the distribution of finances over the cultural sectors, funds and programmes. It forms the basis for the development of the cultural covenants between the partners involved and elaborates on the division of tasks between the three governmental tiers. All matters that deal with linking central government policy to the policies of the provinces and municipalities are discussed on an annual basis. Minister Eppo Bruins has signed nine cultural covenants with provinces, municipalities and cultural regions for the 2025–2028 period. For the first time, all twelve provinces are part of the agreements. This makes the covenants align more closely with the administrative structure of the Netherlands than the previous ones.

There is a long tradition in discussing the importance of a stronger cooperation and synchronisation between national and regional cultural policy. In its advice *Access to culture - towards a new system in 2029* the Council of Culture proposed the creation of a single, overarching culture fund with an extended regional role (see chapter 2.1). Another recent element in the discussion is the so-called ‘duty of care for culture’ for local and regional authorities, which was argued for in parliament. Following the example of the Public Library Act, which will be expanded to include a duty of care for municipalities to

provide a public library (see chapter 4.2.4). Shortly after the elections in 2025, the new parliament voted for this new Public Library Act.

1.2.4 Local authorities

Within the *General Framework*, the municipalities have the responsibility for accommodations for performing arts and the financial management of municipal museum collections.

Dependent on their size, municipalities care for provision of education in the arts within and outside of schools, support of (associations of) amateur arts and heritage activities, their own archives and public libraries (including recent duty of care by law) and local broadcasters (see chapter 2.5.3). Municipalities are also the executioners of the *Heritage Act* (see chapter 4.2.2), that includes legislation on museums, archaeology, and monuments.

In the Netherlands, municipalities are the largest providers of subsidies, accounting for approximately 60 percent of all public expenditure on culture. Cultural funds and bodies that advise on subsidy matters exist at municipal level, like they do at provincial and national level. Examples are the Arts Councils of Amsterdam, Eindhoven and Groningen (for municipality and province). Other municipalities use advising committees.

Particularly at the municipal administrative level, more and more practices of citizen involvement in policy are visible. In cultural policy, for example, in the form of participatory budgets, where a predetermined budget can be spent on citizens' initiatives, which are then voted on (see, for example, [Oost-Begroot](#)).

1.2.5 Main non-governmental actors

Artists are mainly organised in a labour union, the [Kunstenbond](#) (translated: Artist's Union), which lobbies for labour conditions, collective bargaining and copyright interests. A lot of subsidised companies and institutions are united in the advocacy association for the arts and cultural heritage, [Kunsten '92](#). Furthermore, most sectors have their own labour unions (such as the [Auteursbond](#) - Writer's Union) and a professional membership organization, aiming to represent the interests of all institutions within their specific sectors. An important player is also the [Creatieve Coalitie](#): an umbrella organization for and by professionals in the creative and cultural sector (CCS). They represent many self-employed professionals (zfp'ers). Affiliated members include professional associations, trade unions, and industry organizations. In recent years, these organizations have taken a stronger position in lobbying. Other key players in this field are:

- [Museums Association](#) (Museums)
- [VNPF](#) (Association for Dutch stages and festivals dedicated to popular music)
- [VSCD](#) (Association of boards of theatres and concert halls)
- [NAPK](#) (Dutch association for producers in performing arts)
- [NVBE](#) (Dutch exhibitors associations for cinema's, arthouses and movie houses)
- [VOB](#) (Association for public libraries)
- [Cultuurconnectie](#) (Organisation for institutions for cultural education and amateur arts)
- [Netherlands Gallery Association](#) (Organisation for Dutch galleries for contemporary art)
- [Platform BK](#) (researches the role of art in society and promotes a better art policy)
- [Federation Dutch Creative Industries](#) (Uniting membership organizations of (interior) architects, designers, photographers, game developers, audiovisual producers, content producers and film distributors and music producers).

Apart from participating in friends associations, citizens are not yet organised as advocacy groups for culture. However, some leading friends associations try to influence the political arena. The Rembrandt Association, for instance, holds approximately 16 000 members who financially support the acquisition of new pieces of art to enrich museum collections, and who at the same time act as defenders of the Dutch public collection of sculpture, paintings and applied arts. Additionally, [We Are Public](#) is a membership platform with a selection of performances, concerts, films, exhibitions and festivals, "off the beaten track and with a focus on new creators" at more than 400 theatres, cinemas and museums in The Netherlands. This platform is also engaged in advocacy.

Many NGOs are active in the cultural sector. Next to private art funds and private lottery organisations, larger banks like ABN AMRO and Rabobank purchase art on a regular basis for their private collections. The Dutch Municipal Bank (BNG) funds all kinds of projects. The [NVBA](#) is an Organisation of Corporate Art Collections in The Netherlands.

1.2.6 Transversal co-operation

In the development and implementation of cultural and media policy, the ministry of Education, Culture and Science collaborates with other government ministries. In the first place, ongoing consultations with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economic Affairs are essential to safeguard the interests of arts and culture. In some cases, committees for interdepartmental cooperation are installed – the duration of their existence may vary. Some examples of inter-ministerial or intergovernmental cooperation are:

- The Ministry of Economic Affairs implemented the “top sector”-policy in 2011. The creative industries were one of the nine top sectors. This policy, aimed at stimulating the economic potential of these sectors, evolved into the *Missiegedreven innovatiebeleid* (mission-driven innovation policy). This is a collaboration between a large group of Ministries (see chapter 2.5.1).
- The Ministry of Justice and Security, Finance initiated a *Gift Inheritance Tax Act (Geefwet)* to stimulate philanthropy, including culture, by making it fiscally more attractive (see chapter 4.1.4).
- The Ministry of Justice and Security is responsible for copyright legislation. The *Copyright Act* and the *Neighbouring Rights Act* protect literary, scientific and artistic works, and the creative achievements of artists. The Ministry of Justice implements these acts (see chapter 4.1.6).
- The Central Government Real Estate Agency (Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning) administers the *Percentageregeling voor beeldende kunst* by which a certain percentage of the construction and renovation costs of government projects is to be spent on works of art (see chapter 4.2.4).
- The Ministry of Infrastructure cooperates with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on cultural heritage and spatial planning. The government aims to ensure that heritage is duly considered in the spatial development of the Netherlands. The Environment and Plannings act (*Omgevingswet*), implemented in 2024, is one of the instruments (see chapter 4.2.2).
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science share the responsibility for international cultural relations. (see chapter 1.4).
- In media policy, collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Economic Affairs is important, since the government support of the Public Broadcaster implies intervention in media markets.
- The revision of the Archives Act implies an intense collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of the Interior (see chapter 4.2.2).

1.3 Cultural institutions

1.3.1 Overview of cultural institutions

In accordance with the *Cultural Policy Act (1993)*, the Dutch government guarantees a financial contribution to a selection of cultural institutions and six public funds (see chapter 1.1). These cultural institutions form the so-called national basic infrastructure (BIS) and can be seen as the organisations that ensure the supply and development of

high-quality cultural output. The BIS 2025-2028 contains the following group of 117 cultural institutions.

Table 1a: Cultural Basic Infrastructure 2025–2028

Theatre, dance & youth performing companies	27
Symphony Orchestras, opera companies, Ensembles, Choirs	19
Festivals (performing arts, film, literature, etc.)	18
Regional Museums	10
Presentation Institutions visual arts	6
Post-academic Institutions (visual arts)	4
Supporting Institutions (Film, literature, design, collections)	8
Future Lab for Design and Technology	2
Development Institutions (performing arts)	16
Supra-sectoral / supporting institutions	7

Source: *Prinsjesdagbrief cultuursubsidies 2025-2028*, [annex 2](#)

In addition to the BIS institutions, a group of over 300 organisations receives multi-annual funding through one of the public cultural funds. See [here](#) for a total overview.

Since the implementation of the *Heritage Act* in 2016, the preservation of the state collection is ensured and no longer plays a role in selecting museums for the BIS (see chapters 3.1 and 4.2.2). Thirty museums and heritage institutions (such as the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum) are funded on the basis of the *Heritage Act*.

Table 1b (in the next paragraph) gives an overview of the available data on cultural institutions in the Netherlands. These numbers do not represent all the institutions and venues. In a more informal infrastructure, cultural capacity is much broader. Numbers on the solely private institutions are scarcely available; therefore, a clear view on the ratio between public and private institutions cannot be provided currently.

Table 1b is also limited tot cultural institutions that create and present cultural expressions, and does not include the supporting cultural infrastructure, like mostly provincial institutions focusing on cultural education and participation (joined in the [Council of Twelve](#)), the provincial Heritage Houses (joined in [OPEN](#)) or the provincial support organisations for libraries (joined in [SPN](#)).

1.3.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

Table 1b: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

(often times no clear distinction between the amount of public and private institutions could be made, so the number is given in the sector that is prevalent)

Domain	Cultural institutions (subdomains)	Public sector		Private sector	
		Number 2024	Trend last 5 years (In %)	Number 2024	Trend last 5 years (In %)
Cultural heritage(1)	Cultural heritage sites	472			
	Archaeological sites	1 464	+0,3%		
Archives	NA				
Museums (2)	Museum institutions	628 (2023)	+1,9%		
Visual arts (3)	Art galleries and exhibition spaces	825	+5%		
Performing arts (4)	Organisations managing one or more stages*	338 (2023)	+0,9%		
Libraries (5)	Public libraries	912	-1%		
Audiovisual	Cinemas and movie theatres (6)			294	+7,3%
	Broadcasting organisations** (7)	247	-7,5%		
Interdisciplinary	NA				
Other (please explain)	Obviously, these numbers do not represent all the available institutions and venues. In a more informal infrastructure, cultural capacity is much broader.				

Source: (1) [Erfgoedmonitor](#), (2) [Statistics Netherlands](#), (3) [Statistics Netherlands](#), (4) [Statistics Netherlands](#) (*no differentiation can be made in the background of companies and organisations within the performing arts (theatre, music, dance, etc., this is only possible in the amount of performances), (5) [Bnetwerk](#), (6) [NVBE](#), (7) [Rijksoverheid](#), [NLPO](#) (**sum of the number of national (10), regional (13) and local (224) public broadcasters).

Notes: NA: not available

1.3.3 Public cultural institutions: trends and strategies

Development of composition and criteria of the Cultural Basic Infrastructure (BIS)

The basic idea of the BIS was that its composition should not alter very much from one policy period to another. The six public funds were meant for innovation and for supporting smaller groups and individual artists. In the first period 2009-2012, 172 cultural institutions and seven public funds were part of the BIS. In the period 2017-2020, this number fell to 85 cultural institutions and six public funds, as result of government budget cuts mounting to €200 million (one fifth of the budget for culture).²

In the current period (2025-2028) the number is 117. As in 2021, to join the BIS, a cultural institution had to subscribe to three codes of conduct: Fair Practice Code (fair payments), Governance Code Culture and the Code for Diversity and Inclusion.

The assessment criteria for the BIS 2025–2028 period were:

- Artistic quality, by (inter)national standards.
- Social significance: the cultural sector has long expressed a desire to make its social significance more visible. Institutions are expected to explain in what ways they engage with society. This may concern the value an institution provides to its immediate community or its concrete contribution to broader societal challenges.
- Accessibility, including activities related to education and participation, physical accessibility, geographical reach, affordability, and innovative plans for digital access.
- Sound business operations: realistic, entrepreneurial plans and budgets, including innovation and sustainability.
- Geographic distribution, fitting to the activities that subsidies are requested for.

The visibility of social significance and attention to geographic distribution were relatively new as assessment criteria. The other criteria were constant, although the wording varied. The rules for a minimum own income percentage in the first periods of the BIS were abolished from 2021, in part as result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A problematic side of the BIS that has been expressed by institutions that are not part of it, is the somewhat rigid character that favours the more canonical arts. In their recent advice [Access to culture - towards a new system in 2029](#) the Council of Culture has addressed this issue by arguing “for a new system with a more open and varied funding methodology that can effectively respond to diversity, differences and dynamism within the sector. Including a separate regime for a limited number of large or unique cultural organisations

² See for more detail about the development of the BIS : [Boekman Extra #25: Ontstaan en ontwikkeling culturele Basisinfrastructuur - Boekmanstichting](#)

within the national portfolio (...) with funding for eight years." (see also chapter 2.1 key developments)

Social safety

In recent years there has been growing attention for the social *safety* in cultural and broadcast organisations, referring to issues of misconduct in the work environment, such as harassment, discrimination and intimidation. This was fuelled by several incidents that came to light through journalist research. In 2018 support service [Mores](#) was founded, providing a safety net for workers in the cultural, creative, and media sectors who are dealing with transgressive behaviour. In 2022 the Council for Culture published an [advise](#) on the subject. For that reason, a Commission of Inquiry into Behaviour and Culture of Broadcasters, led by former Minister Martin van Rijn, was installed. The resulting report *[Nothing seen, nothing heard, nothing done: the lost responsibility](#)* (published in January 2024) critiqued the lack of social safety at broadcast organisations.

In response to the report, the umbrella organisation Dutch Public Broadcaster (NPO) has drawn up an action plan. Former Minister Eppo Bruins sent a [progress report](#) to the House of Representatives in November 2024. He concludes: "(...) the broadcasters have made an energetic start with the follow-up to the recommendations from the report, but at the same time paint a worrying picture when it comes to the actions which are necessary to actually initiate change. This requires continued efforts and critical self-reflection from all broadcasters". Bruins announced several measures, including extra money to activate the necessary culture change and a tightening of the Code of Conduct for the integrity of public broadcasting.

1.4 International cooperation

1.4.1 Public actors and cultural diplomacy

The most recent policy on international cultural cooperation by the Dutch government is the [International Cultural Policy 2025–2028](#), published in January 2024. The policy is a collaborative effort involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Implementation is supported by various cultural funds and institutions.

Key objectives are:

- A strong position of the Dutch cultural sector abroad through sustainable cooperation, exchange, and visibility.

- Supporting bilateral relations with other countries through Dutch cultural expressions.
- Leveraging the strength of the cultural and creative sector to promote sustainable development, with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the guiding framework.

The policy identifies 24 focal countries where efforts will be concentrated. These countries are selected based on strategic interests and the potential for meaningful cultural collaboration. For each, specific agreements and implementation plans are developed in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

DutchCulture functions as a centre for international cooperation and has a coordinating, advisory and informative role. The Dutch diplomatic posts have a central role in implementing the policy. Together with the Dutch public funds for culture and several institutions that work in international cultural cooperation, they implement multiyear strategies. The country specific strategies can be found on the website of DutchCulture.

1.4.2 European / international actors and programmes

The Netherlands participates in multilateral cultural relationships through its membership of, for example, the Council of Europe and the United Nations (UNESCO). The public funds for culture offer subsidies for trans-national exchange and many cultural institutions participate in international networks.

The Netherlands is also part of the trans-national organisation the Dutch Language Union (see chapters 2.5.4 and 4.1.8)

Council of Europe

The Netherlands has been an active member of the Council of Europe since 1949, as one of its ten founding countries. The Netherlands ratified the European Cultural Convention, and as a result takes part in projects like the Heritage Open Days and the Cultural Routes. The Netherlands has ratified the Granada Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, the Valletta Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, the Florence Convention on European Landscape and the Faro Convention on the Value for Cultural Heritage for Society.

Since the start of the programme in 1988, the Netherlands participates in Eurimages, the Council of Europe Fund for the co-production, distribution and exhibition of European cinematographic works. The Netherlands also participates in the European Audiovisual Observatory. The observatory's task is to improve the transfer of, and access to, information on the four areas of film, television, video/DVD and new media.

European Union

The Netherlands currently takes part in the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union (2021-2027). The Dutch Creative Europe Desk, part of DutchCulture, is responsible for promoting and facilitating participation in Creative Europe. It offers advice for organisations that want to apply for the programme. The Netherlands took a leading role in developing new programmes within the Creative Europe scheme, like [Music Moves Europe](#). Leeuwarden (Friesland) was the most recent Cultural Capital of Europe in 2018.

UNESCO

The [Dutch National Commission](#) for UNESCO was established in 1947 and is part of a worldwide network of nearly 200 commissions. Its primary objective is to raise awareness about the mission of UNESCO and to advise the Dutch government. In 1954 The Netherlands adopted the UNESCO Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Netherlands played an important part in the establishment of this convention. From 1992 on other conventions followed (see table 2).

The Netherlands has thirteen natural and cultural sites on the [World Heritage List](#) (World Heritage Treaty (1972)). The Eisinga Planetarium in Franeker is the most recent site, added in 2023.

The [Information and Heritage Inspectorate](#) co-operates with both customs and police to fight illicit traffic in cultural goods (based on the Convention on the Prohibiting of the Illegal Traffic of Cultural Property). With regards to stolen cultural goods, the Dutch police works with the Interpol network.

The Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage ([Kenniscentrum Immaterieel Erfgoed Nederland](#)), coordinates the national inventory of the Dutch intangible heritage (based on the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage) The most recent Dutch inscription on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity was the Traditional Grassland Irrigation (2023).

In 2005, UNESCO introduced the [Convention](#) on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and was ratified by the Netherlands in 2010. The Netherlands currently has 16 registrations in UNESCO's [Memory of the World Register](#), for example the *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and the VOC/WIC archives.

Table 2: International legal instruments implemented by the Netherlands in the cultural field

Title of the act	Year of adoption
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
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)	2012
COUNCIL OF EUROPE	
European Cultural Convention (1954)	1956
Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada 1985)	1994
European Landscape Convention (Florence 2000)	2005
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) (Valletta 1992)	2007
Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society	2024
OTHER	
Directive 2012/28/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on certain permitted uses of orphan works	2014

1.4.3 NGO's and direct professional cooperation

There are several international networks in which the Netherlands plays a role, such as IETM, ICOM, EGMUS or On the Move to name only a few examples.

The Council of Culture is a member of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA). The National Knowledge Institute for Culture Education and Amateur Art (LKCA) is a member of the European Network of Observatories in the Field of Arts and Cultural Education (ENO) and in the European Network to Promote and Advocate for Active Participation in Arts & Culture (Amateo).

The Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Foreign Affairs mostly do not support these networks directly. Instead, the national cultural funds and cross-disciplinary institutions funded by the Ministries take part in these networks where they deem necessary.

The Netherlands hosts different non-profit organizations that are involved in international cultural collaboration, such as the European Cultural Foundation (ECF), an independent NGO providing funds for European cultural projects.

2. Current cultural affairs

2.1 Key developments

Covid-19 and its aftermath

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, the state government introduced different forms of support. Part of this support was leniency towards the goals organisations were supposed to achieve around their activities. Soon after, as result of a successful lobby by the cultural sector, more special support was secured for the cultural sector, in addition to the general support funds for Dutch enterprises. Approximately €3.3 billion in general support and €2 billion in targeted national support reached the cultural and creative sector. These are substantial amounts, considering that the government's total annual expenditure on culture is just over €1 billion (see table 6a). These funds helped to keep almost all subsidised cultural organizations from falling into financial distress. Commercial cultural organisations and self-employed cultural workers had more problems surviving the Covid-crisis.³

Discussion about the subsidy system

In 2023, State Secretary Gunay Uslu (2022-2023) requested the Council for Culture to critically review the existing subsidy system, since it was no longer deemed suitable.

One of the issues is the apparent concentration of BIS-subsidies in the Randstad (the western more urbanised part of the Netherlands). It is fair to say that the differences between the centre (Randstad) and the region in the Netherlands in terms of access to culture are relatively small compared to most other European countries. But the subject remains important in the policy debate. Other points of discussion included the assumed lack of access to the system of newer cultural expressions and the administrative burden and a lack of trust of the system.

The Council published its advice Access to culture - towards a new system in 2029 in January 2024. In its advice, the Council proposed a duty of care for culture on the part of the central, provincial and municipal governments and the creation of one big culture fund with an extended regional role. Additionally, the Council argued that the subsidy system should be accessible to a broader range of artists, cultural organisations and types of culture. The Council proposed a more open and varied funding methodology that can effectively respond to the diversity and dynamism within the sector, including funding for eight years for a limited number of large or unique cultural organisations within the national portfolio.

³ For more details about the evaluation of the Corona-support in the Netherlands see: Evaluatie Coronasteun cultuursector. [Een synthesestudie](#)

On October 3, 2025, the caretaker cabinet, at the proposal of Minister Gouke Moes, decided that national subsidies may be granted for a maximum of 8 years starting in 2029, instead of the current maximum of 4 years. A change in the law is required for this. After the elections in October 2025, the new government and the new parliament must decide what will be realised of this proposal.

Reform of the Public Broadcasting System

In his [letter](#) to Parliament of 4 April 2025, former Minister Eppo Bruins outlined reform plans for the national public broadcasting system. The key points include:

- Reducing the number of broadcasting organizations from thirteen to four or five as of 2029, to reduce administrative complexity.
- Abolition of the current membership requirement, as membership figures have steadily declined.
- External pluralism (through distinct, competing member organizations) will be replaced by a statutory obligation for the new broadcasting organizations to reflect societal diversity.

In October 2024, Minister Bruins outlined [a reform plan](#) for the Dutch local public broadcasters, aimed at strengthening their role as a local guardian of democracy. Many local broadcasters face financial fragility, with some in unsustainable positions according to the Dutch Media Authority (Dutch: Commissariaat voor de Media). The reforms aim for:

- Transferring the funding of local public broadcasters from the Municipal Fund to the national government.
- Increased professionalism through an additional annual investment of €18 million.
- Greater resilience through scaling up operations
- Improved coordination by assigning a coordinating role to the Dutch Local Public Broadcasting Foundation (NLPO).

Cultural labour market

The precarious labour position of those working in arts and culture continues to be a theme in the Dutch cultural policy. A study from the Social and Economic Council (SER) showed that the labour position of people in the cultural sector is concerning. This knowledge led to development of the 'the [Netherlands Labor Market Agenda](#)' by Kunsten '92 (the association for cultural organisations) with recommendations for the Minister. Some important points are improving the position of freelance creative professions; improving the working conditions; and strengthening sector-wide cooperation to conduct a social dialogue, and the introduction of a 'fair practice code'.

To further develop this Labour Market Agenda, [Platform ACCT](#) was established to to initiate and foster discussion about employment conditions and social issues in the cultural sector. In the period 2025-2028 this organisation will have a place within the Cultural Basic Infrastructure (BIS). As of that date, Fair Pay is mandatory for all BIS institutions; the Fair Practice Code is a code of conduct to stimulate this. During the 2025–2028 BIS period, an additional €38,2 million per year has been structurally allocated to help ensure fair remuneration within the State-subsidised cultural sector.

Social significance

The cultural sector has long expressed a desire to make its social significance more visible. This may concern the value an institution provides to its immediate community or its concrete contribution to broader societal challenges. Discussions with the sector have resulted in the inclusion of the criterion “social significance” in the BIS subsidy requirements (see also chapter 2.6 Social inclusion).

2.2 Cultural rights and ethics

The Dutch constitution protects the freedom of speech and states that the central government is obliged to create adequate conditions for the cultural development of all citizens (see chapter 4.1.1). This is elaborated in the *Cultural Policy Act* (1993), which states that the Minister of Culture is responsible for preserving, developing and disseminating cultural expressions, to be elaborated by each Minister or State Secretary (see chapter 1.1). In line with these legal foundations is the ratification of the UNESCO [Convention](#) on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (see chapter 1.4.2) and the Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (chapter 2.6).

In 2019, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research ([SCP](#)) published a study about the Dutch identity: [Thinking of The Netherlands](#). In this study, the Dutch language is identified as a key carrier of national identity (see chapter 2.5.4 for policies concerning language). The study also describes how debates about culture, migration and religion have become part of broader identity discussions.

The current debate on identity is taking place in a society that includes people whose ancestors experienced colonialism and slavery from a different perspective than the dominant Dutch historical narrative. As part of ongoing processes of emancipation, there is a call for greater recognition of this history, and this perspective can raise important, though sometimes challenging, questions. Municipalities are increasingly engaging with public debates about statues and street names connected to the colonial past, as well as the annual celebration of Sinterklaas. Museums and the media are involved in similar

debates. (See also chapter 3.1 for policies on [The National Museum of Slavery and Repatriation of cultural heritage](#) from a colonial context).

The Council for Culture has published the advice on the freedom of artistic expression (Maken (z)onder druk). In recent years, concerns have grown in the arts sector about the actual freedom artists have to create and present their work. While artistic freedom is legally protected, artists increasingly face practical barriers. Topics in youth performances, book readings and public events increasingly trigger unease or protest among audiences. Religious sensitivities and geopolitical tensions also cause programmers to reconsider certain works, sometimes raising safety concerns and leading to self-censorship. The Council states that freedom of expression is one of the central pillars of democracy.

2.3 Role of artists and cultural professionals

See chapter 2.1: Key Developments: Labor Market.

2.4 Digital policy and developments

Digital policy

The letter [Uitgangspunten cultuursubsidie 2025-2028](#) (Principles for Cultural Subsidies 2025-2028 June 2023) includes the most recent policy on digital transformation:

- Cultural institutions are asked to outline their digital strategy for the next four years in their activity plans.
- DEN will receive a structural increase in its budget, partly to promote better collaboration and a more proactive attitude within the cultural sector.
- DEN will receive an additional budget (€0.5 million) for the collection and use of audience data in the cultural sector.

Since 2017, [DEN](#) has been part of the BIS as the national knowledge institute for digitalisation in the cultural sector, focusing on artistic creation processes, education, public outreach and heritage.

Digital culture is supported through several national subsidy schemes. Since 2023, the [Immerse\Interact scheme](#), a collaboration between the Creative Industries Fund NL and the Netherlands Film Fund, was created to stimulate the development of Extended Reality (XR), among which Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR). Additionally, the [Creative Industries Immersive Impact Coalition](#) (CIIC) program was launched in 2025 to support the knowledge, application and valorization of these immersive technologies.

Between 2025 and 2030, a total of €275 million will be made available from the National Growth Fund for this programme to put the immersive field in the Netherlands on the map as a frontrunner.

An example of a public-private partnership is [DigitAL Culture Desk](#). This is a counter for cultural institutions that want to strengthen their public offer or contact with the public through the use of digital technology. This is done through the provision of donations, but also through knowledge sharing.

Digital consumption

Digitisation predominantly impacts the way culture is consumed in the Netherlands. In the cases of music, audiovisual content, and games, over 80% of annual revenue is generated through digital distribution, by means of streaming and downloading (see [NVPI](#), [Filmfonds](#) and [Newzoo](#)). The book market shows a more hybrid consumption pattern, with 44% of book being sold online and 43% of the population occasionally reading e-books (see [KVB Boekwerk](#)). The national population survey on cultural participation (VTO) shows a slight increase in the share of Dutch people of 6 years and older that visit performances, exhibitions and visual arts online between 2020 and 2022, probably as result of the Covid pandemic. (see chapter 6.2, or [Cultuurmonitor – Participatie](#)). VTO shows that gaming is a popular form of leisure activity – in 2022, 52 percent of Dutch people aged 6 and over said they played video games sometimes (see [Cultuurmonitor – Games](#)).

Digital archiving

In 2014 the Digital Heritage Network was launched, with the aim to strengthen the cooperation between different heritage sectors regarding the digitisation of collections and archives. Key supporting partners are large, national institutions (the National Library, the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, the Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency, the Humanities Cluster of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the National Archive) that strive to professionally preserve and manage digital data. Heritage organisations and portals were encouraged to take part in the network. In March 2015, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science presented the first edition of National Digital Heritage Strategy together with the Digital Heritage Network. The current edition is the [strategy for 2025-2028](#). The Network is funded by the Ministry.

The Netherlands engages in international cooperation, including through [Europeana](#), a platform that provides enthusiasts and professionals with access to material on European cultural heritage and is funded by the European Union. Europeana is headquartered in the Netherlands. In 2019, extra subsidy (12,4 million euros) was invested to intensify digital heritage activities. Some conclusions from the evaluation report *Stand van het*

Nederlands Digitaal erfgoed 2021 (State of the Dutch Digital Heritage 2021) give an idea of the state of digital heritage in The Netherlands. 90% of all interested Dutch citizens is digitally reached with heritage content. The "participatory use" among young adults is 26%, in the general public this is 12%.⁴

The new *Libraries Act (Wet stelsel openbare bibliotheken, Wsob)* that was implemented in January 2015 introduced the creation of a national digital library to make knowledge and information more accessible (see chapter 4.2.5).

For more information, see: [Culture monitor Boekman Foundation](#) : [Digital Transformation](#).

2.5 Cultural diversity

2.5.1 National / international intercultural dialogue

In the Netherlands, [policy debates](#) on diversity and inclusion have evolved significantly. In the 1980s, cultural policy framed "migrant culture" around integration alongside identity preservation. By the late 1990s, Rick van der Ploeg shifted this focus to "cultural diversity", promoting diversity in programming, audiences, governance and the inclusion of migrant cultural expressions. Between 2007-2010, Ronald Plasterk introduced an "inclusive policy" approach, alongside the Code Cultural Diversity, which offered a four-P framework (Programme, Public, Personnel and Partners).

In November 2019, the Code Cultural Diversity was replaced by the Code of Diversity & Inclusion (Code D&I), which expands the focus from diversity to inclusion and safe organizational cultures. It provides five guiding principles and practical tools, including [scans](#) to help cultural organizations assess their position and identify areas for improvements. In 2022, State Secretary Gunay Uslu reaffirmed diversity and inclusion as policy priorities for [2023-2025](#). Institutions were required to endorse the Code D&I. In [2024](#) the Parliament maintained the Code as a guideline rather than a binding requirement.

Over the years, various initiatives from within the cultural sector have aimed to promote and improve multicultural diversity and inclusion within the sector. For example, New Dutch Connections supports Dutch citizens, and in particular refugees, to become participants in the multicultural and religious society. They aim to create a society in which people with a non-Dutch nationality feel at home by means of art, theatre and training. Another example is STUDIO i, which was established by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and the Van Abbemuseum. The organisation characterises itself as "a cultural platform that wants to share inspiring ideas and inclusive initiatives, organise events for museum workers and offer training programmes around diversity, inclusion and equity".

⁴ The researchers make the remark that it is not entirely clear what is meant by active and/or participatory use.

The Prince Claus Fund, set up in 1996 by the late Royal Highness Prince Claus, operates on an intercontinental scale and aims at increasing cultural awareness and promoting the exchange between culture and development, focusing especially on developing countries. The fund grants subsidies and gives awards to mainly non-European artists and intellectuals. It also creates a platform for debate and stimulates creative processes and artistic productions.

Representation in Dutch cultural boards and staff

In 2025, The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) published the most recent monitor on representation in the composition of staff, board members and supervisors, and advisors of Dutch cultural institutions, including an analysis in terms of background. The data collected for this study is based on CBS microdata and an additional survey.

As such, this study shows a gradual increase in the representation of people with a migration background in the work force of Dutch subsidized cultural institutions between 2017 and 2023. This could be a positive result of the before-mentioned Code Diversity and Inclusion. It should be noted that this analysis focuses specifically on migration background as an indicator of diversity, while other dimensions such as gender, age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, religion, and disability are not included. In addition, the figures describe presentation, but do not in themselves indicate levels of inclusion. Despite the growing representation, studies show that discrimination, inappropriate behavior, and a lack of safety remain ongoing issues within the labor market and workplace.

For the results regarding gender diversity in cultural board members, employees and advisors, see chapter 2.5.5.

2.5.2 Diversity Education

Education in 'citizenship' is a crucial initiative aimed at addressing and embracing diversity in education. Since 2006, citizenship has been a compulsory subject in primary, secondary, and special needs education (as laid down in *Article 8.3 of the Primary Education Act*, *Article 17 of the Secondary Education Act*, and *Article 11.3 of the Expertise Centres Act*). Citizenship is not a separate subject in many schools and is often integrated into other subjects, such as social studies and religious education. Due to the considerable autonomy of schools, the way in which citizenship (and thereby diversity) is addressed varies. However, since 2021, new legal requirements have been introduced for the promotion of citizenship in primary education, secondary education, and special needs education, which provides more structure. This legal mandate states that schools must promote 'active citizenship and social cohesion'. Schools must teach all pupils about the fundamental values of the Dutch constitutional state and democracy, such as freedom,

equality, and solidarity. In upper secondary vocational education (mbo), there have been statutory requirements in place for a longer time, as set out in the citizenship qualification requirements, which include topics such as democracy, tolerance, and freedom of speech.

How diversity is addressed in (citizenship) education, both separately and in an integrated manner, is not clearly defined. It is a theme in the broadest sense of the word, encompassing cultural, ethnic, and sexual diversity. However, themes such as slavery, religion, looted art, and (de)colonialism are increasingly receiving attention in education. It is also strongly advised to include these themes in the curriculum. For example, a 2023 [advisory report](#) recommended giving information about the former colony of the Dutch East Indies a place in the curriculum, and to include it in the core objectives and attainment targets in upper secondary vocational education for the subject citizenship. [Research from 2018](#) suggests that most schools regard cultural diversity as beneficial and therefore address the subject in the classroom. This is especially the case when a large proportion of pupils have a migration background.

There is also increasing attention to diversity and variety in Dutch informal (out-of-school) arts education. Students can learn about world music and international dance, or more modern dance styles such as hip-hop and breakdance. In some music schools, foreign instruments such as the bağlama (saz) are increasingly becoming part of the curriculum. In out-of-school music education, developments are taking place in both the content and the way music lessons are delivered.

2.5.3 Media pluralism and content diversity

Central in the Dutch media policy are freedom of speech and the independence of journalism. The constitution offers independence of all media. Journalists, writers and broadcasters are free to publish and broadcast as they wish, without any interference from government ([Article 7](#)). Public and commercial broadcasters are obliged to take measures to ensure editorial independency of their journalists.

Media ownership

As a result of emerging commercial broadcasters in 1988 and to ensure pluralistic media content, the *Media Act* was adjusted from 1991 with rules about media concentration and limitations for cross-media ownership. From 2011 onwards, this issue is part of the general rules concerning competition.

In the annual [Media Monitor](#) the Dutch Media Authority reports on media developments in the Netherlands with a special focus on news and information, including media concentration. This Monitor is one of the key sources of the [Media Pluralism Monitor Report 2025](#), which concludes about market plurality (the year 2024):

“In line with previous years, the highest risk for the Netherlands is found in the area of *Market Plurality*. This holds a medium-high risk, mainly because of a growing market concentration in the hands of fewer players. There are no formal rules against this specifically for the media market, but when mergers are proposed, the independent market regulator ACM looks into the appropriateness of them from a market competition perspective (however not so much from a content pluralism perspective). While a recent merger (Talpa and RTL) was still blocked, it remains to be seen what will be decided about the latest proposed merger, between RTL and DPG Media largest (news)media company in the Netherlands), which could have serious consequences for pluralism, and for the Dutch news agency ANP.” (page 9).

In 2025 ACM gave permission for the acquisition of RTL Netherlands by DPG Media. To safeguard media plurality and editorial independence, the ACM imposed several conditions including independent editorial statutes and guarantees that all titles within DPG Media should retain their own identity, budgets, and editorial teams.

Policies to promote the diversity of cultural expression

The public broadcasting mandate is defined the Dutch Media Act 2008 (Article 2.1) as follows: they “(...) must align with public values and meet the democratic, social, and cultural needs of Dutch society. To this end, they provide media content that:

- a. is balanced, pluralistic, diverse, and of high quality, and is also characterized by a wide variety in form and content;
- b. provides a balanced representation of society and reflects the diversity of beliefs, views, and interests that exist among the population in social, cultural, and ideological domains;
- c. is aimed at and reaches both a broad general audience and population and age groups of various sizes and compositions, with particular attention to smaller target groups.”

Every year, the Dutch Public Broadcaster (NPO) reports on the programming in detail in the NPO Terugblik. Commercial broadcasters do not receive financial contributions from the government, but the *Media Act 2008* imposes several requirements on them as well. They are not allowed to broadcast sponsored news, and at least 40 percent of the programmes must be produced in the Dutch or Frisian language. The Performance Agreement between the Ministry and the NPO Dutch Public Broadcasting states that at least 75% of the total airtime of the NPO’s television programming must consist of original Dutch-language productions.

In general, according to the report *Het culturele leven* (*The cultural life*, SCP p32), public broadcasting organisations spent more time on culture (7.1%) than commercial broadcasters (3.4%) in 2017.

The reform plans proposed by minister Eppo Bruins (see chapter 2.1) are prepared through decennia long media-political discussions on the rather complex system of *external pluralism* of the Dutch national media system through member-based broadcaster organisations. The basic idea for renewal is: a less complex (and more efficient) system, while keeping pluralism and content diversity *within* one broadcasting organisation (the BBC-model). But a lot of details must be elaborated. As the Cabinet Schoof is preparing the reform plans, and new elections will be in October 2025, it is not yet clear what the new Parliament will think of these plans.

Share of domestic vs. imported media programmes

Despite the availability of detailed information about the public broadcasters' range of programmes, a complete overview of the full audiovisual landscape in the Netherlands is currently lacking. In November 2024, this led Minister Eppo Bruins to [announce](#) an independent cross-sector monitor on the audiovisual sector, when he presented his *Agenda Audiovisual Supply* to the Parliament. The [Media Monitor 2024](#) from the Dutch Media authority also indicates a lack of transparency regarding media consumption and media diversity via social media and streaming services.

This is not to say that there is no relevant information. We know that NPO Dutch Public Broadcaster is still market leader (online and offline) in news consumption: 64% of the news consumers used NPO in 2025, followed by the commercial broadcasters RTL (37%) and SBS (25%). (Dutch Media Authority, *Digital News Report 2025*, p 23). But the Media Monitor 2024 indicates that linear television use continues to decline in favour of social media and streaming services, especially by the younger generations. The use of these services plays a major role in the decline in the use of traditional media, putting pressure on Dutch media markets. The big and growing role of international platforms is a threat to the visibility of Dutch (news)media.

The market share of Dutch titles in Dutch cinemas is only 14 percent (2024), with a domination of American films. The use of Video on Demand is grown, with – again – a dominant position of international (American) companies.

Within the audiovisual market, all indications point to the growing power of foreign—mostly American—streaming platforms and social media companies, in the areas of news and information, culture, and Dutch audiovisual productions. (See for more information on the Audiovisual Sector: [Cultuurmonitor Audiovisueel](#)). For that reason the *Act on the Investment Obligation for Audiovisual Content* came into effect in 2024 (see chapter 4.2.6).

Press freedom

In two international monitors, the World Press Index and the Media Pluralism Monitor, The Netherlands gets a comparably good judgement on press freedom. This is due, among other things to the a legal framework to protect the work of journalists, including an anti-SLAPP bill intended to implement EU-Directive 2024/1069, the Open Government Act (Woo), effective since 2022 and the Whistleblower Protection Act, 2023), which transposes the EU Directive and extends safeguards to a broad group, including employees and volunteers). The media sector, the police and the Prosecutors Office took steps in 2019 against violence and aggression against journalists. This resulted in the platform PersVeilig. In 2025 the Netherlands was ranked 3rd in the World Press Freedom Index. Despite the relatively positive assessment, the Media Pluralism Monitor Report 2025 highlights several points of concern (see page 9 for a summary).

2.5.4 Language

There are two official languages in the European part of The Netherlands: Dutch and Frisian. In the Caribbean parts of the Netherlands, Dutch, Papiamentu and English are official languages.

Dutch

The Dutch language is principally spoken in the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname. The Dutch language policy is managed by the Committee of Ministers (*Comité van Ministers*), comprising the Dutch and Flemish culture and education ministers and a representative from Suriname. The Interparliamentary Committee (*Interparlementaire Commissie*) monitors the policy while the Dutch Language and Literature Council (*Raad voor de Nederlandse Taal en Letteren*) advises policymakers. Dutch language policy is developed and implemented by the Dutch Language Union (Nederlandse Taalunie), founded by the Dutch and Flemish governments. To emphasise their mutual cultural interests, a cultural treaty was signed in 1995. In 2004, the Flemish-Dutch House (*Vlaams-Nederlands Huis deBuren*) opened in Brussels to promote Flemish-Dutch culture in Europe.

Suriname joined the Dutch Language Union as an associate member in 2004. The union also cooperates with the Caribbean islands that have Dutch as an official language: Aruba, Curaçao, Saint Martin (countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands), Bonaire, Saint-Eustache and Saba (municipalities within the Kingdom of the Netherlands).

In 1996, the Flemish and a Dutch public broadcasters founded the channel the Best of Flanders and the Netherlands (BVN).

Starting from 1 January 2024 the Act on the Investment Obligation for (Dutch) Audiovisual Content takes effect for big (international) streaming platforms (see chapter 4.2.6).

Frisian

The Frisian language is recognised as the second official language in the province of Fryslân, both in Dutch law and through the European Charter for Regional Minority Languages. The province of Fryslân and the central government made agreements on the development of the Frisian language and culture: *Bestjoersôfspraak Fryske Taal en Kultuer 2024–2028*, (Administrative Agreement on Frisian Language and Culture- in Dutch and Frisian). The *Fryske Akademy*, a research institute to the Frisian language, determines the spelling in the Frisian language and preserves the cultural and literary value of the language-related Frisian heritage.

Other languages

The Netherlands has recognised Limburgish (since 1997), Low Saxon (since 1996), Romani/Sinti and Yiddish (since 1996) as regional or non-territorial languages under the European Charter for Regional Minority Languages. This recognition enables provinces and municipalities to create policies for these languages. The Limburgish and Low Saxon languages are recently recognized as official regional languages. The government has made objectives in collaboration with the representatives of the Limburgish and Low Saxon language by means of covenants.

Language Policy in the Caribbean Parts of the Kingdom

Within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Papiamentu (on Bonaire, Aruba, and Curaçao) and English (on Sint Eustatius and Saba) hold official status alongside Dutch. as languages in administration, education, and the courts. The Dutch government co-finances bilingual education programmes, teacher training and cultural and heritage projects that promote local language use.

Support of the libraries on the islands is included in the Culture Covenant 2022 – 2025, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science – Public Entities of the Caribbean Netherlands.

These measures ensure that local languages are safeguarded, taught, and promoted, while Dutch remains the shared administrative and legal language within the Kingdom.

2.5.5 Gender

Since 2007, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has coordinated emancipation policies for women and the LGBTQIA+ community, focusing on employment, combating violence, and equal rights. The 2017-2021 coalition agreement included the *Rainbow Agreement*, which set measures to combat discrimination, including an amendment to Article 1 of the Constitution prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and disability. It also aimed to reduce gender registration without a specific goal and improve

the position of LGBTQIA+ individuals in education. In 2019, the Equal Treatment Act was amended to explicitly protect transgender and intersex people from discrimination.

In the [OCW agenda against discrimination and racism](#) (2022), the ministry includes gender within broader emancipation policy. The Emancipation Directorate, under the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, promotes equal rights, opportunities, freedoms, and responsibilities regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

The ambitions regarding emancipation are further elaborated in the Emancipation Memorandum (“Emancipatienota”). The [2022–2025 emancipation policy memorandum](#), which was drafted under Robbert Dijkgraaf, opens with a vision stating that while all individuals are legally equal, in practice not everyone has the same opportunities or feels safe to be themselves. It sets out the government’s approach to advancing the rights and equality of women and LGBTQIA+ people. Emancipation is presented not as a standalone goal, but as an integral part of broader government policy. The emancipation memorandum addresses a broad range of emancipation-related themes (such as employment, safety, education, healthcare, equal treatment, and the international context) but contains no separate section on the cultural sector in relation to gender equality.

In the [same 2025 report mentioned before](#) in chapter 2.5.1, OCW published numbers on the representation of gender in employees, board members and supervisors, and advisors within Dutch cultural institutions:

- In 2023, 63 percent of employees in subsidized cultural institutions were women, compared to 59 percent in 2017.
- In 2023, 51 percent of board members and supervisors of subsidized cultural institutions were women, compared to 40 percent in 2017.
- In 2023, 56 percent of advisory committee members of funding bodies were women, compared to 46 percent in 2017.

Altogether, the study shows an increase in the representation of women in different roles within Dutch subsidized cultural institutions between 2017 and 2023. It is important to mention again that while the figures presented here provide some insight into the representation of gender (albeit in a narrow sense) within cultural organizations, this does not necessarily indicate that these organizations are inclusive. Several studies show that gender inequality, differentiation, and discrimination remain persistent issues in the cultural sector (see chapter 8 on the page [Diversity, inclusion and equality](#) on the Culture Monitor).

There are various initiatives in the cultural and media sector aimed at raising awareness of gender inequality. For example, there is the Manifesto on Gender Equality and

Intersectionality in the Art World (“Gendergelijkheid en intersectionaliteit in de kunstwereld”), which brings together intentions, recommendations, and concrete objectives regarding gender equality and intersectional representation. An example of recent research on gender in the Dutch media sector is [Monitor Representation 2023](#), the third study on representation in non-fiction television carried out by the Dutch Media Authority (Commissariaat voor de media). Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and conducted in collaboration with the University of Amsterdam, the study provides data to inform public debate on representation, diversity, and gender in the media.

2.5.6 Disability

In the Netherlands, several foundations focus on the improvement of the position of citizens with disabilities in the cultural sector. Examples of these foundations are [Special Arts](#) (which aims to improve the artistic participation of people with disabilities) and [5D](#) (which tries to enhance the position of people with disabilities in the performing arts sector). In addition, initiatives such as Creative Access (focused on sign language or subtitles) and Disabled Led Theatre are used to improve the accessibility of performing arts, particularly for citizens with vision problems.⁵

National legislation includes the [Participation Act](#), which focuses on the improvement of inclusivity in the labour market. One of the goals of the law is to stimulate cultural organisations to hire people with disabilities. The Netherlands ratified the UN-declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016. The convention ensures people with disabilities to have equal rights in society regarding, for example, housing-, education- and cultural facilities. A plan was constructed in 2017 by the Ministry of Public Health, Well-Being and Sport to implement the guidelines of the convention in the Netherlands.

In [the policy letter](#) of 10 November 2022, then-State Secretary Uslu outlined plans to improve accessibility in the cultural and creative sector for people with disabilities should. The government applies the social model of disability, which focuses not on the impairment itself but on the barriers present in the environment. Since the ratification of the UN Convention in 2016, cultural institutions have been legally required to make their offerings accessible. In her policy letter for 2023–2025 (“[Meerjarenbrief 2023-2025](#)”), Uslu also highlighted additional investments in accessibility to remove both visible and invisible barriers.

As stated in the policy notes, there are several initiatives within the cultural sector that promote accessibility, such as the [Multisensory tour](#) at the Van Abbemuseum and initiatives by [Stichting Komt Het Zien](#). However, in practice, accessibility often still falls short, and institutions do not always know how to take effective action. Therefore, Uslu calls for baseline measurements and the use of existing tools such as the Codes. She also

⁵ Keulemans, Chris. 2018. “De segregatie die niemand wil en die niet nodig is.” Boekman 115: 44-47.
Oosterhuis, Robert and Heinonen, Heidi (2026): Cultural Policy Profile Netherlands.
Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends (ed.), Bonn, 24.03.2026, DOI:
10.69813/YKfV3193

emphasizes the importance of cooperation between cultural institutions, people with lived experience, support organizations, and governments, which ideally leads to concrete policies and course of action.

In 2025, [a report](#) was published concerning the Knowledge Hub for Accessible Culture (“Kennispunt Toegankelijke Cultuur”), in which the Minister of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), Eppo Bruins, describes how the ministry has worked on a proposal to improve accessibility in the cultural sector. The knowledge hub is intended to support cultural institutions in becoming more inclusive, especially for people with disabilities. The proposal includes, among other things, a digital toolbox offering practical training, an online platform for connecting stakeholders, and an “accessibility radar” to help people with disabilities identify accessible venues within the cultural and creative sector. A budget of €500,000 has been reserved for the implementation of these plans.

2.6 Culture and social inclusion

The idea that culture can be instrumental in fostering social inclusion or social cohesion is relevant in Dutch cultural policy. As Ingrid van Engelshoven (Minister 2017-2022) wrote in her policy letter *Culture in an open society* ([Cultuur in een open samenleving](#)): “Heritage is (...) a powerful example of how culture can serve as a unifying force in our society. At a time when social bonds seem increasingly fragile and societal divisions are growing, that is a value not to be underestimated.” Moreover, the letter states: “Culture also has the power to connect. (...) That does not mean every cultural expression is inherently unifying or harmonious. People also have individual cultural preferences that distinguish them from others. These preferences can coexist, contrast with, or even conflict with one another. That tension is a hallmark of a dynamic society.”

Gunay Uslu (State Secretary 2022-2023) connected the effect of social cohesion to active participation in culture. In her policy letter *The Power of Creativity* ([De kracht van creativiteit](#)) she wrote: “Creating culture together connects people, strengthens their resilience, and supports their personal development. (...) Collective cultural participation benefits both the individual and society as a whole.”

In The Netherlands there is substantial engagement in culture (arts and heritage): in 2022, 64 percent of Dutch people aged 6 and older have practiced a form of art or culture, or heritage. 7 percent is member of a friends association, 10 percent is volunteer and 17 percent donates to culture (see chapter 6.2 and [Culture Monitor – Participation](#) for more details).

Specific policy programmes that are (also) aimed to social cohesion include:

- [Programme Culture Participation](#) , executed by Fund for Culture Participation (see chapter 5 for details);
- The Netherlands ratified the Faro Convention on the Value for Cultural Heritage for Society. Dutch Heritage Agency coordinates a [program](#) that focus on heritage as a carrier of memories and identities, and as a contributor to social cohesion, well-being, and health.

2.7 Societal impacts of arts

Up to now, it has been somewhat of a challenge to conceptualise and demonstrate societal significance in a convincing way. In the cultural policy discourse, the term ‘impact’—which carries a rather broad meaning—has frequently been used in this context in recent years. The [Impact Centre](#) (Erasmus University Rotterdam) is one of the research institutions on this subject. Discussions with the sector have resulted in the inclusion of the criterion “social significance” in the BIS subsidy requirements. Institutions are expected to explain in what ways they engage with society (see chapter 1.3.3)

In many domains the social significance of the cultural activities and policy is fairly self-evident. This can be concluded from the enjoyment and significance people experience when visiting performances or exhibitions, or actively engaging in arts or heritage (see chapter 6.2). Cultural heritage, such as museums, archaeological sites, monuments and intangible heritage (see chapter 3.1) and languages (see chapter 2.5.4) are the bearers of the identity of a country or (regional) communities.

An explicit societal ambition is included in the [Kennis- en Innovatieconvenant \(KIC\) 2024–2027](#) (Knowledge and Innovation Agreement – in Dutch), in which agreements have been made between the national government, businesses, knowledge institutions, and other partners on joint investments in research and innovation. The creative industries policy focuses on the contribution of design disciplines to solving urgent societal challenges (see chapter 3.5.5).

Also relevant is the social mission of the public library in promoting reading and developing digital skills (see chapter 3.2). Independent journalism in general, and public media in particular, have an important role in ensuring the proper functioning of democracy (see chapter 2.5.3), the importance of media-literacy and Viewing Indicator (see chapter 4.2.6). Through the Cultural Participation Program, efforts are made to encourage cooperation between the cultural sector and the social domain (including mental healthcare). As a knowledge institute, LKCA contributes to this [program](#) (see

chapter 5). Finally, the policy on diversity, equity and inclusion has societal relevance (chapter 2.5).

2.8 Cultural sustainability

Policies regarding sustainability in the cultural and creative sectors focus primarily on ecological sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of organisations and their broader impact on the environment. Additionally, there is attention for the climate handprint of cultural organisations: the impact of artistic expression on awareness about climate change and harnessing the creative power of the cultural sector to advance the climate transition in general.

Following the Paris Agreement in 2015 the Dutch government reached an agreement on the national level in 2019 aiming for a carbon reduction of -55% in 2030 (compared to 1990) and climate neutrality in 2050. These goals have been formalized in a Climate Act ([Klimaatwet](#)).

In June 2023 the Council for Culture presented an advisory report [Cultuur Natuurlijk](#) about strategies towards a sustainable cultural sector and a prominent role for culture in the climate transition. The advice provides recommendations for both governmental bodies as well as cultural organisations pertaining to baseline measurements, an open and widely shared knowledge base, collective learning through workshops, a roadmap for municipal cultural real estate, modified regulations and subsidy obligations, additional funding and cooperation between government departments. The response of the government in December 2024 referred to existing sustainability schemes for small and medium enterprises, in addition to support of initiatives from within the sector to create shared knowledge platforms, no additional culture specific regulations or funds were put in place.

Several initiatives in the cultural sector are aimed at making the sector more sustainable. The Dutch association for the performing arts ([NAPK](#)) is currently working on a [Dutch translation](#) of the Theatre Green Book, a collective initiative by theaters for making the performing arts more sustainable. In 2024, the Museum Association published a [roadmap for museums](#) that want to become more sustainable. Moreover, theatre company [Silbersee](#) has committed themselves to a climate-positive production house by 2027 and has organized a series of debates on art and climate in collaboration with partners such as Oerol and The Dutch National Opera. The Dutch institute for digital heritage ([DEN](#)) deals with sustainability regarding digital information, ensuring the long-term usability of digital files.

In an effort to bind together the plethora of initiatives in the cultural sector Kunsten'92 (the advocacy organisation for the cultural and creative sector) launched the [Platform sustainable Cultural Sector](#) ("Platform duurzame cultuursector"), facilitating knowledge exchange with partners across cultural disciplines. Together with the national, regional and local governments, they initiated the development of the [Roadmap for Sustainable Culture](#) ("[Routekaart Verduurzaming Cultuur](#)"), an initiative that aims to create a structure for monitoring, exchanging knowledge, standardized data collection and a central information base. This should bridge the knowledge gap, especially for smaller organizations with a limited capacity or know-how on the topic.

Simultaneously, the ministry of Culture and Education has asked the organization Green Events to develop the "Duurzaamheidsladder Cultuur", inspired by the European Green Deal Circular Festivals, to aid cultural organizations in their transition to sustainable practices. Similar to the GDCF Model, the "Duurzaamheidsladder Cultuur" is a hierarchical guide providing organizations with tools and information for different stages and ambition levels in the transition to sustainable operations.

2.9 Other main cultural policy issues

Cultural governance

Good governance in the cultural sector has been an issue of growing interest since 2000. The first Code Cultural Governance was published in 2006, prepared by a special commission. The [latest version of the Code](#) was published in 2019 and offers a normative framework for good management and supervision in cultural organisations. To join the BIS 2025-2028, cultural institutions had to subscribe to the Governance Code Culture. In september 2025 the Council for Culture published an [advise](#) on the subject. It recommended, among other things, updating the Code of Cultural Governance.

3 Cultural and creative sectors

3.1 Heritage

The care for heritage is a complex interplay of owners, businesses, heritage organizations, national, provincial, and local governments, and a great many volunteers. The Netherlands has committed itself to various international agreements on the preservation and protection of heritage (see table 2, chapter 4.2.1). These have been incorporated into national legislation, the most important is the *Heritage Act*.

Table 3: Facts about Dutch Heritage

Archaeological national monuments (2025)	1465
Nationally protected town and village views (2025)	472
National monuments (2025)	61.635
Museums (2024)	621
Visitors for museums (2024)	31.970.000

Source: RCE van 2025 ([Erfgoedmonitor - Kerncijfers - Kerncijfers - Nederland](#))

The *Heritage Act* (*Erfgoedwet*) was installed in July 2016 to merge various regulations and laws on national collection, museums, monuments, archaeology and intangible heritage (see chapter 4.2.2). The main measures based on the Heritage Act are the 'Regulation on the Management of the National Collection and Subsidization of Museum Institutions' (Rbr), the 'Subsidy Scheme for the Preservation of Monuments' (SIM), and the 'Heritage Act Archaeology Decree' (BEa). The Heritage Act was [evaluated](#) in 2023.

The *Environment and Planning Act* (*Omgevingswet*) (2024) is the second important law that regulates cultural heritage in the physical living environment, complimenting the *Heritage Act*. The following elements are included in the *Environment and Planning Act*: permits for (archaeological) national monuments; the protection and preservation of the specific historic character of a village, town or city; the appointment of a monument committee; the need to take cultural heritage into account in environmental plans; and the designation of provincial and municipal monuments (see also chapter 4.2.2).

The Cultural Heritage Agency (Rijksdienst voor het Cultuur Erfgoed, RCE) is part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and connects policy, practice and science. The RCE is part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, awards grants for

monuments, historic buildings, archaeology and cultural landscapes, and implements the *Heritage Act*. The RCE is also a centre of expertise concerning the conservation and registration of museum collections. It manages part of the art collection of the government and supports the collection managers with knowledge, research and advice. The RCE also takes care of the online Collection Netherlands (*Collectie Nederland*) and is responsible for the Heritage Monitor (Erfgoedmonitor) which presents facts and figures about cultural heritage in the Netherlands (basic facts in English: Heritage Data 2024).

The Mondriaan Fund gives grants for innovative projects, participation-projects, international collaboration in cultural heritage. The Fund for Cultural Participation also has programs for heritage volunteers.

The Information and Heritage Inspectorate, is an independent body, and ensures compliance with the law and promotes improvements to the care of cultural heritage. The Inspectorate takes action in the event of incidents and calamities, and advises the Minister of Culture on the quality and effectiveness of the legislation.

In his policy letter (2024) Minister Eppo Bruins gave his reaction on the Policy Evaluation Heritage. The evaluation concluded that, generally speaking, Dutch historic and cultural heritage was in fairly good condition. However, the research pointed to series of improvements addressed in in the letter. Some were more or less technical improvements of the Act (like definitions, clarifications), others included research on the improvement of some policy measures. Examples are the threat posed by spatial challenges (climate, energy, housing development) to significant cultural landscapes, and the limited capacity and expertise in the field of heritage within municipalities and provinces.

The importance of heritage for national identity is a returning focus in Dutch cultural policy. In 2006 after intense public and political discussions about its necessity, the Canon of the Netherlands was developed: an overview of important events, people, texts, artworks and objects from the Dutch history. Another example is the development of a new National Historical Museum, initiated by the parliament years ago, and incorporated into the coalition agreement of the Cabinet Balkenende IV (2007-2010). Due to budget cuts on culture in 2012 the realisation of the museum was abandoned. In the Coalition agreement of the Cabinet Rutte IV (2022-2024), the idea re-appeared in the form of the intention “to contribute to a National Historical Museum”. In developing the idea, this time the starting point was not to construct a new building, but rather to undertake activities aimed at increasing interest in Dutch history. (policy letter 2023 State Secretary Gunay Uslu).

Reconsidering the Dutch colonial past lead to a contribution of the national government to [The National Museum of Slavery](#), to be developed in Amsterdam. Another policy includes the [Repatriation of cultural heritage](#) from a colonial context, that started in 2022, after an advice of the Council for Culture. In February 2025, [the Colonial Collections Commission](#) advised on the restitution of 113 'Benin Bronzes' to Nigeria. The [Colonial Collections Consortium](#) supports institutions administering collections in provenance research by sharing knowledge.

The Netherlands ratified the Faro Convention on the Value for Cultural Heritage for Society. Dutch Heritage Agency coordinates a [program](#) (in Dutch) that focus on heritage as a medium for memories and identities, and as a contributor to social cohesion, well-being, and health.

Since 2019, the ministers of education, culture, and science from Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, and the Netherlands have held annual consultations. In this context, a [joint working group](#) on intangible heritage was established in 2023.

More information on heritage and heritage policy: [Cultuurmonitor – Heritage and Heritage Data 2024](#))

3.2 Archives and libraries

Archives

The Dutch archival system consists of the archives of the larger municipalities, the Regional Historical Centres, which manage the archives of provinces, water boards, and smaller municipalities. [The National Archives](#) manages the state archives and serves as a knowledge centre for digital sustainability. It works together with the National Archives of Suriname and the archives in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. Key themes in recent years have included digitisation—such as the creation of e-depot facilities—the shift from archiving after the fact to archiving at the source, open data, and information security.

A new Archives Act was passed by the House of Representatives on 18 February 2025. This Act replaces the 1995 Archives Act and is designed to better align with the government's digital information management. Key changes include shortening the transfer period for permanently preserved government information from 20 to 10 years, and clarifying responsibilities for digital information management (see for more details on the new act chapter 4.2.2).

Libraries

The Dutch library network consists of 133 public libraries and 3.6 million members in 2023. In 2015 a new libraries act (Library Service Act) aimed to create a comprehensive network of libraries, both physical and digital. The law described five social functions of the public library: making knowledge and information available; providing opportunities for development and education; promoting reading and introducing people to literature; organising meetings and debates; and introducing people to art and culture. The evaluation of the law in 2020 showed that the physical library network had declined. There are municipalities and neighbourhoods without a public library, and too many situations where a library is present but insufficiently equipped (building, staff, collection, opening hours, activities). The Rutte IV Cabinet (2022–2024) therefore decided to include a duty of care in the law. From 2026 onwards, municipalities and provinces must ensure there are sufficient, fully functioning libraries. Funding for this duty of care will be provided through the Municipal Fund. In 2023 and 2024, the Cabinet allocated additional funds for municipalities without a public library. The special municipalities that make up the Caribbean Netherlands also received extra funding for their libraries. There is broad political consensus on these measures. At the time of writing this Compendium Profile, the law is in the consultation phase.

The KB is the *National Library* of the Netherlands. Since the foundation in 1798 the aim has been to collect as many publications as possible that were written in or about the Netherlands. The repository stores over 120 kilometres of written – and increasingly digital – heritage. The e-Depot contains some 40 million digital newspapers, books, magazines, e-books and websites. Together with the public libraries the KB promotes reading, digital inclusion and lifelong development, including the library for people with a reading disability. The KB hosts services such as the Online Public Library, *Delpher* (digital database of historical newspapers and books) and *DBNL* (*the Digital Library for Dutch Literature*).

For more information, see the Library Monitor (*Bibliotheekmonitor*) and the [Culture Monitor](https://www.cultuurmonitor.nl/en/domein/letteren/). <https://www.cultuurmonitor.nl/en/domein/letteren/>

3.3 Performing arts

A group of performing arts organisations receive direct state funding via the national basic infrastructure (BIS). In 2025-2028 these included: 9 theatre companies, 5 dance companies, 3 opera companies, 9 festivals, 7 choirs and music ensembles (including one

rock band), 9 symphony orchestras and 13 youth performing arts companies (see also chapter 1.1).

The Performing Arts Fund NL supports other individuals and cultural institutions in performing arts. There are grants for text and composition, producing (including new talents), programming of venues and festivals, international activities (including coproductions and presentations abroad). A group of festivals and institutions gets multi-year grants. Each subsidy has its own rules and criteria. In recent years, there has been more focus on the geographical distribution of the grants.

The maintenance and management of theatre, music and opera buildings is the responsibility of the local government (see chapter 1.2.4), but the performing arts funds gives specific programming support to stimulate talent and innovation.

Over the years, the government's support-system in the performing arts has become more open to non-mainstream music forms and the classical canon. In the BIS-period 2021-2024, the band The Staat became the first rock group to be part of the BIS. The performing Arts Fund has for example grants for Music hubs (for pop, hip hop_and dance).

For more information, see Culture Monitor – performing arts.

3.4 Visual arts and crafts

A group of visual arts organisations receive direct state funding via the national basic infrastructure (BIS). In 2025-2028, these included 6 *presentatie-instellingen* (non-profit art venues without an own collection) and 4 post-academic institutions (institutions where talented artists are supported in developing their art practice after finishing art school) (see also chapter 1.1).

There are 61 museums specialized in visual arts, of which some are funded based on the Heritage Act (such as the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam), and some are funded by a local government (like Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam).

The Mondriaan Fund aims to stimulate the development and visibility of the visual arts and cultural heritage in the Netherlands. It provides financial support in areas where a profitable market does not exist (yet). Many of the Mondriaan Fund's grants are aimed at encouraging cooperation between organisations, artists, mediators, clients and/or other private or public parties. It grants funding for various target groups and areas including visual artists, institutions, mediators of clients in the visual arts and/or cultural heritage fields. Furthermore, it organises development programmes for promotion and innovation

in the visual arts, such as the Prix de Rome. The Mondriaan Fund is also responsible for the Dutch entries for the Venice Biennale.

There are 451 galleries (2025) in The Netherlands, including 9 that only work online. A group of around 100 galleries participated in a private arts buyers' scheme (*Kunst Koop*) executed by The Mondriaan Fund. Through the latter, people can buy art on credit without interest.

The Mondriaan Fund also manages the National Acquisition Fund for Museums (*Nationaal aankoopfonds*). These investments are meant for museums to purchase artworks of national interest.

The Indemnity Scheme is a government arrangement, established in 2005, whereby the State guarantees compensation for damage of artworks on loan. Instead of the lending museum or institution taking out insurance themselves, the State provides a guarantee (indemnity) that covers the financial risks. This makes it more attractive for museums to lend valuable objects for exhibitions, both nationally and internationally. In 2022, the insurable volume was increased from €150 million to €450 million.

The Decentralization Grant for Visual Arts and Design has been renewed for the period 2025–2028. The scheme is administered by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and is intended to support municipalities in promoting visual arts and design at the local level. An amount of €13.5 million has been allocated, and municipalities are expected to match this funding.

Through the Percentage Scheme for Visual Arts (*Percentageregeling* – in Dutch), the Dutch Government Real Estate Agency is the largest commissioner of visual art in the Netherlands. This scheme means that when building, renovating, or purchasing real estate, a percentage of the budget is allocated to art. The percentage is linked to the size of the budget. The scheme applies when the construction or renovation budget exceeds €1,000,000. The Percentage Scheme has resulted in an extensive collection of more than 5,000 artworks. The collection includes sculptures, photographs, paintings, installations, and other forms of art in and around government buildings.

For more details, see Culture Monitor – [Visual Arts](#) and [Collectieve Selfie #5](#).

3.5 Cultural and creative industries

3.5.1 General developments

In The Netherlands there are roughly two approaches to “culture and/or creative industries”. Both are used, depending on the users aim, and on the methodological choices:

1. the broadest one including all cultural and creative activities, subsidised or not (“cultural and creative sector” or “culture and media sector”)
2. a specific commercial part of the sector, where creativity is used as the most important production factor (“creative industries”)

The basic tripartition is: creative business services (e.g. enterprises of product designers, architects, fashion designers, digital designers, graphic designers and photographers), media and entertainment (e.g. enterprises of publishers, game developers, film-, television- and radio makers, DJ's and VJ's) and arts and cultural heritage (e.g. enterprises of museums, monuments, performing and visual arts, writers). The “cultural and creative sector” includes all three, whereas “creative industries” includes more or less creative business services and media and entertainment. The Monitor Creative Industries (Monitor Creatieve Industrie), a series of studies 2014-2023, used this tripartition to describe detailed information on the development of the creative industries in the Netherlands. The edition 2023 concludes: “from 2012 through 2022, job growth in the creative industries averaged 2.7 percent per year. In that same period, the number of jobs in the overall economy grew by an average of 1.2 percent per year. (...) The strongest job growth within the creative industries is attributable to creative business services, particularly in design.”

Statistics Netherlands (CBS) used in the Satellite Account a comparable broad demarcation of the sector, but used another methodology based on *goods and services* as used in the National Accounts. One of the advantages is the possibility to estimate the creative work of professionals outside the cultural and creative sector (e.g. the designer in the car industry). With this methodology a better estimation can be made of the economic significance of the sector. The gross value added from the production of cultural and media products and services amounted to €33 billion in 2022 (3.3 percent of GDP). The labor input for this production was 4.1 percent of total employment in the Netherlands (see for more details [Satellite Account 2022](#) – in Dutch, and [Satellite Account 2018 – English version](#)).

In 2011, the central government marked the Dutch creative industry as one of the nine top sectors and these sectors were all accompanied by specific top sector policy and a so-

called Top Consortium for Knowledge and Innovation (TKI). For the creative industry this was [CLICKNL](#). The creative industry was supported by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The aim of the creative top sector was to develop innovative services and products by collaborating with creative professionals and research institutions. The government argued that the flexible and out-of-the-box way of thinking of the creative industry is of importance for challenging social issues.

With the establishment of the creative industry as a top sector, the [Creative Industries Fund NL](#) started operating in 2013, as the national cultural fund for design, architecture and digital culture. The fund aims to “enhance the quality of design practice, strengthen the creative sector as a whole and connect design talent to other disciplines and sectors” by offering professionals scope to experiment, research and make.

In 2013, three creative industry institutes merged into [Het Nieuwe Instituut](#) ([The New Institute](#)) as a platform for the creative industry and a museum for the design sector. It organises exhibitions, lectures and fellowships and carries out research and development programmes.

The Top Sectors have evolved into a “Mission-Driven Innovation Policy,” with Knowledge and Innovation Agendas (KIAs) linked to specific missions. Current policy is set out in the Knowledge and Innovation Covenant (KIC) 2024–2027 ([Kennis- en Innovatieconvenant \(KIC\) 2024–2027](#)) which contains agreements between the national government, businesses, knowledge institutions, and other partners on joint investments in research and innovation. For the creative industries, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science focuses on the design disciplines through the following activities: (1) schemes via The Creative Industries Fund; (2) the Power of design Agenda 2024–2027 (Agenda Ontwerpkracht); (3) the Spatial Design Action Program (Actieagenda Ruimtelijk Ontwerp 2024-2027); and (4) the Public Design Practice Program (PONT).

3.5.2 Books and press

A group of literature organisations receive direct state funding via the national basic infrastructure (BIS). In 2025-2028 these included: 1 festival, 2 institutions for literature promotion and one knowledge institution on reading and reading promotion (see also chapter 1.1).

The [Dutch Foundation for Literature](#) supports writers and translators, and promotes Dutch literature abroad. It invests in the quality and diversity of Dutch literature through grants for writers, translators, publishers and festivals, and contributes to the production and distribution of Dutch and Frisian literature both at home and abroad. It aims to

promote a thriving literary climate, embedded in literary history and attuned to the latest developments in the publishing industry.

Dutch Reading Foundation (Stichting Lezen) promotes reading, both in Dutch and in Friesian, with priority to the age group up to 18. It aligns existing activities and encourages the development of new and original initiatives, methods and tools that are instrumental in reading and reading promotion. This includes the promotion of scientific research in this particular field. Since 1998 the foundation has a chair in Reading Behaviour, which is associated with the VU University Amsterdam.

Literatuurmuseum (Literature Museum) focuses on the literary heritage of the Netherlands. It is one of the museums funded on the basis of the *Heritage Act*.

Since 2016 KVB Boekwerk is knowledge and innovation centre for the Dutch book trade, encompassing publishers, booksellers, distributors, and related organizations. It originated through an agreement between the KVB (Royal Dutch Booksellers and Publishers Association), CPNB (Collective Promotion for the Dutch Book), Stichting Lezen, the Dutch Foundation for Literature and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The main aim is to combine all the available (market) data, thereby improving the sector's ability to position itself quantitatively, economically, socially and culturally.

The Netherlands is also an active participant in the annual Frankfurt Book Fair, which is considered an important event for putting Dutch literature on the map internationally.

Dutch policy on literature includes policies on a public library network and National Library (KB) (see chapter 3.2).

The Netherlands has an *Act on Fixed Booked Prices* (Wet op de Vaste Boekenprijis). A recent evaluation concludes that the aims of the act have been achieved. The Minister has decided to continue the Act (see chapter 4.2.5).

To promote (literary) reading, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) launched the *Kunst van Lezen* (*Art of Reading*) program in 2008, which is still in operation. It consists of four components: 1) BoekStart, a method to familiarise very young children with books and reading; (2) the Library at School, aimed at primary, secondary and secondary vocational education, teacher education programs; (3) network development for reading promotion; (4) reading promotion activities for people who are not fluent in Dutch.

Kunst van Lezen was incorporated in 2016 into the *Tel mee met Taal* (*Go Along with Language*, 2016–2024) programme, through which the ministries of Education, Culture and Science; Health, Welfare and Sport; Social Affairs and Employment; and the Interior and Kingdom Relations combined their policies in the field of language proficiency.

The Netherlands performs comparatively well internationally when it comes to basic skills (literacy, numeracy, problem-solving skills), ranking in the top five on average scores. Nevertheless, about 3 million Dutch people still struggle with these skills ([PIAAC 2023](#)). In her [letter](#) to Parliament of 11 July 2025, *Strengthening Basic Skills for Adults from 2025*, State Secretary Mariëlle Paul outlined the current policy. The main elements are the continuation and structural embedding of the *Tel mee met Taal* approach, with greater attention to working adults. Libraries also play an important role in strengthening basic skills for adults, while the preventive approach of the *Kunst van Lezen* program will be continued.

See for press chapter 3.5.3 audiovisual and interactive media and chapter 2.5.3 Media pluralism and content diversity

See for more information: Culture Monitor - literature

3.5.3 Audiovisual and interactive media

For information on broadcasting and audiovisual policy, see chapters 1 cultural policy system; chapter 2.5.3 media pluralism and chapter 4.2.6 audiovisual legislation.

Media funds

[Dutch Journalism Fund](#) (Stimuleringsfonds voor de Journalistiek) encourages the quality, diversity and independence of journalism by promoting the renewal of journalistic infrastructure in the Netherlands through funding programs, sharing knowledge, conducting research and hosting events. The Dutch Journalism Fund is an independent administrative body (ZBO) and receives an annual contribution from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The Co-production Fund for Domestic Broadcasting Foundation (Co-productiefonds Binnenlandse Om CoBO) is tasked with collecting and distributing funds that the national public broadcasters receive for the broadcasting of their programmes, as well as funds originating from other sources. The funds collected are used to co-finance audiovisual co-production projects of the national public broadcasters. In this way CoBO is an internal allocation mechanism of the NPO.

The Fonds Bijzondere Journalistieke Projecten ([BJP Fund](#)) was established in 1990 by and for journalists. The fund supports journalists with grants and fellowships for talent development and for special, in-depth journalistic projects. The fund is part of the cultural basic infrastructure (BIS.)

Games

There is limited cultural policy for games in the Netherlands, with an emphasis on artistic, educational, and experimental games within the creative industries. However, there is (still) no comprehensive or structural policy that supports games as full-fledged cultural heritage in the same way as film or the performing arts.

Several Universities of Applied Sciences train game designers: HKU Utrecht, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Hogeschool Rotterdam and Breda University of applied sciences.

Creative Industries Fund NL regularly supports game-related projects, particularly those with an artistic or social focus. In the past, a dedicated Game Fund (2008–2012) stimulated game development, especially at the intersection of art, culture, and innovation. While that fund was discontinued, the Film Fund has supported a number of game projects again since 2022 through the “Digital Culture” scheme.

See for more information: Culture Monitor - [games](#)

Film industry

A group of film organisations receive direct state funding via the national basic infrastructure (BIS). In 2025-2028 these included: 4 festivals, 1 supporting institution /film museum (see also chapter 1.1).

EYE Film Museum is part of the BIS as supporting institution for the film sector. In this role, Eye assists film professionals with a wide range of services and products. Programmers, researchers, filmmakers, and film restorers can turn to Eye for research, rentals, and expertise in the field of promotion. Eye established a Chair in Film Heritage and Digital Film Culture at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and collaborates with the UvA in professional education, (international) research projects, the annual Eye International Conference and public lectures. Eye offers educational programs for all levels of education. With the Network Film education knowledge is shared about film education and media literacy with professionals in education. For its museum function, Eye is supported on the basis of the Heritage Act.

The Netherlands Film Fund is the national cultural fund for the professional, independent film sector in the Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. It provides financial support for the development, production and distribution of film productions and film-related activities. The fund offers various support schemes for the production of feature films, documentaries, animation and shorts, and The Netherlands Film Production Incentive for cinema or television/VOD broadcast.

The Netherlands Film Commission, a division of the Netherlands Film Fund, “is the official liaison between the Dutch creative media industries and foreign producers and

production companies.” (...) the general resource for all film related inquiries such as locations, permits and Dutch incentive production companies. The commissioner is matchmaker and can advise on financing possibilities of the Film Fund, including the cash rebate.”

The Dutch government has a special agreement with the film industry to promote the production of Dutch films (*btw-convenant Film 2018*). In exchange for a lower VAT rate on cinema tickets, Dutch film distributors and cinema operators will make more money available for the production of Dutch film through the Abraham Tuschinski Fonds (see also 4.1.4. tax laws)

A recent policy to counterbalance the dominance of the big commercial American streaming services is the *Act on the Investment Obligation for Audiovisual Content*, starting from 1 January 2024. (see chapter 4.2.6)

See for more information: Culture Monitor – [audiovisual](#) and [Film Facts & Figures \(Filmfund\)](#)

3.5.4 Music

A group of music organisations receive direct state funding via the national basic infrastructure (BIS) (see chapter 3.1 performing arts)

The Performing Arts Fund NL supports other individuals and cultural institutions in performing arts, including music. There are grants for text and composition, producing (including new talents), programming of venues and festivals, international activities (including coproductions and presentations abroad). A group of festivals and institutions gets multi-year grants. Each subsidy has its own rules and criteria. Last year, there was more focus on the geographical distribution of the grants.

An example is the pop music project [Upstream](#), which is a collaboration with [Sena](#) (the organisation that manages the rights of performers and producers), intended for artists who have been active for some time and have established a solid foundation. The grant can be used to make a leap towards a larger audience and increased income.

The Popcoalitie (Pop Coalition) is a collaboration between a large number of organisations in the Dutch pop music industry. Since 2014, pop music, as part of the Dutch creative industry, has been part of the top sector policy. In this sector, the Netherlands is an innovative producer and a successful export country, with a high chance of further success in the future. [Dutch Music Export](#) is an initiative of the Popcoalitie, the Performing Arts Fund and Buma Cultuur, and aims to strengthen the international position of Dutch

pop music within the global music sector. Its activities include information, marketing and financial support.

In parliament, attention has been drawn to profiteering in the resale of admission tickets. A request was made to examine the possibility of introducing a ban on resales. In March 2025, Minister Eppo Bruins reported his findings and concluded that he did not wish to proceed with national legislation. Research had shown that the scale of the problem was relatively limited, that little insight could be gained into the effectiveness (enforceability) of legal measures, and that it was unclear whether measures elsewhere in Europe had been effective. Moreover, the issue of resale is cross-border in nature, making national legislation ineffective.

See for more information: Culture Monitor – music

3.5.5 Design and creative services

Design and creative services include fashion design, graphic design, interior design, landscape design, architectural services and advertising services. Most of these services operate in the market without cultural policy. Government policy focuses on innovation and talent development, and on the contribution of design disciplines to solving urgent societal challenges.

A group of organisations receive direct state funding via the national basic infrastructure (BIS).

- Festivals, including a festival for design (the Dutch Design Week), a festival for architecture (International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam) and festival/platform for fashion (State of Fashion).
- Two research institutions “Future lab design and technology” (next Nature Network and Waag Future Lab).
- A supporting institution for the design sector: Het Nieuwe Instituut (The New Institute). Het Nieuwe Instituut also organises exhibitions, lectures, fellowships and carries out research and development programmes. It also functions as a museum for architecture, design and digital culture and is funded on the basis of the Heritage Act.

The contribution of creative industries to the mission driven innovation policy focus on the contribution of design disciplines to solving urgent societal challenges. In the Kennis- en Innovatieconvenant (KIC) 2024–2027 (Knowledge and Innovation Agreement – in Dutch) agreements have been made between the national government, businesses, knowledge institutions, and other partners on joint investments in research and innovation. (see chapter 3.5.1)

The Creative Industries Fund NL is the national cultural fund for design, architecture and digital culture. It finances innovative design projects of makers and cultural institutions in the creative industry. (see chapter 3.5.1)

The professional titles of architect, urban planner, interior architect and garden and landscape architect have been protected by the Architects' Title Act (WAT) since 1988. The Architects' Register, supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, implements the law and manages the official registration of architects.

For more information, see Culture Monitor Architecture and Design

3.5.6 Cultural and creative tourism

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy supervises the Department of Tourism and Recreation. The promotion of The Netherlands is managed by NBTC Holland Marketing.

The government currently does not particularly promote creative tourism, but it's well known that many creative events and cultural institutions attract thousands of tourists. Of the 31.3 million visitors to Dutch museums in 2023, 27 percent came from abroad. Other examples are the Dutch Design Week, International Film Festival Rotterdam and Pinkpop.

4 Law and legislation

4.1 General legislation

4.1.1 Constitution

The first Constitution of the Netherlands (*Staatsregeling voor het Bataafsche Volk*) came into force in 1798. It included the thought that the government should foster the civilisation, enlightenment and health of its citizens. Enlightenment and civilisation should be ensured by means of culture, arts and education. The Constitution of 1798 mentioned the freedom of press for the first time. In the current version of the constitution, this is regulated by Article 7:

1. No one shall require prior permission to publish thoughts or opinions through the press, without prejudice to the responsibility of every person under the law.
2. Rules concerning radio and television shall be laid down by Act of Parliament. There shall be no prior supervision of the content of a radio or television broadcast.
3. No one shall be required to submit thoughts or opinions for prior approval in order to disseminate them by means other than those mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, without prejudice to the responsibility of every person under the law. The holding of performances open to persons younger than sixteen years of age may be regulated by Act of Parliament in order to protect good morals.
4. The preceding paragraphs do not apply to commercial advertising.

In 1983, the cultural aspect was added to Article 22: “The authorities shall promote social and cultural development and leisure activities.”

The *Cultural Policy Act* (1993) includes the financial contribution of the Dutch government to provide “a wide-ranging and varied cultural offering for all of its citizens and in all parts of the country by funding institutions and establishing policy programmes.” This act is concerned with Article 79 of the constitution, which states:

Permanent bodies to advise on matters relating to legislation and administration of the State shall be established by or pursuant to Act of Parliament.

The organisation, composition and powers of such bodies shall be regulated by Act of Parliament.

Duties in addition to advisory ones may be assigned to such bodies by or pursuant to Act of Parliament.

4.1.2 Allocation of public funds

The *Cultural Policy Act* (1993) regulates the subsidies based on cultural policy decisions and enables the Minister to create funds to finance the arts and culture. (see chapter 1.1, chapter 2.1 and chapter 4.2.1). Subsidy decisions are based on advice by the national Council for Culture. The Minister or Secretary of Culture, however, makes the final decisions. Deviations from the advice need to be substantiated as a consequence of the *General Administrative Law Act*. As a rule, the Minister or Secretary follows the advice by the Council.

Other funds from the state are running through six state culture funds. These funds are operated at arm's length. The Minister decides the quantity of money reserved for them and has to approve all arrangements. As of 2013, the *Law for Autonomous Administrative Bodies* applies to cultural funds subsidised by central government. Autonomous administrative bodies are part of central government, but they are not part of the Ministry. Although they are autonomous, their tasks are laid down by law and the Minister has authority over these organisations. In principle, the Minister is accountable to parliament for the Ministry's decisions. Furthermore, the funds' policies and criteria are subject to advice from the Council for Culture.

Municipalities and provinces receive their budget through the Municipal Fund and the Provincial Fund. In determining the amount of these funds a distribution key is used. The municipality and provinces are then autonomous in the decisions they make about cultural policy (see also chapter 1.2.4 local authorities). The central government can have municipalities or provinces implement part of the national policy and make money available for this through a specific grant (the so-called SPUK). The regulations on payments to municipalities and provinces are included in the Financial Relations Act (Wet financiële verhoudingen).

4.1.3 Social security frameworks

The *Participation Act* regards Dutch citizens that need support on the labour market. The purpose of the act is to increase labour participation. In this act, the Social Assistance Benefit is included as well, which financially supports citizens who have little or no income. The application process for this specific benefit is arranged by the municipalities. An amended Participation Act in Balance was approved in the House of Representatives on 22 April 2025 and will be discussed in the Senate in September 2025. The changes relate to more customisation per municipality, more confidence in implementation within a municipality, and a simplification of the rules.

Employees made redundant can apply for financial support from the Employee Insurance Agency. If they have worked 26 out of 36 weeks before being unemployed, it is possible

to receive unemployment insurance. The labour market agenda for culture (*Arbeidsmarktagenda voor de culturele en creatieve sector 2017-2023*) highlights this criterion as a problem, since work in the cultural sector can be irregular.

Self-employed professionals can create their own social security frameworks through, for example, *Broodfondsen* (Bread funds – in Dutch) and the *Arbeidsongeschiktheidsregeling* (Occupational Disability Regulation). Bread funds are collective initiatives of the self-employed to provide each other with temporary sick leave. The Occupational Disability Regulation can be arranged through insurance companies. A monthly payment ensures financial aid when self-employed are unable to work. In contrast to employees in the cultural sector, self-employed artists are required to arrange their own pension via, for example, insurance companies or banks.

When self-employed and pregnant, a Dutch citizen can apply for the *Maternity Benefit Scheme for the Self-Employed*, which consists of financial support for a minimum of 16 weeks. The financial aid is not higher than the gross minimum wage. New regulations have been implemented in 2019 for paternity leave, but these regulations do not apply to self-employed citizens.

4.1.4 Tax laws

Gift and Inheritance Tax Act

In order to encourage charitable giving the *Gift and Inheritance Tax Act 2012 (Geefwet)* was implemented. Donations for culture were part of this Act. The act covers several aspects of fiscal law to make "giving to culture" fiscally attractive. Cultural institutions that wish to profit from this ruling have to qualify as a Public Benefit Organisation, or PBO (*Algemeen Nut Beogende Instellingen, ANBI*). For donations to cultural ANBIs, there is an additional deduction of 25% up to € 1,250 in income tax and 50% in the corporation tax up to €2,500 to further support the raising of private financing. The gift deduction in income tax makes a distinction between periodic donations and other gifts. Periodic donations are per 1 January 2023 deductible up to €250,000 per year if they are recorded in a deed of gift for at least five years.

In 2024, the Gift and Inheritance Tax Act was evaluated. The evaluation concluded that the gift deduction is effective in stimulating giving behaviour, but not efficient. The increase in donations due to the deduction is smaller than the tax credit associated with it. A significant part of the costs will benefit the donor rather than the receiver. The practicability of the gift deduction is problematic for the Tax and Customs Administration, which leads to inefficiencies and a high percentage of non-use. The researchers suggest converting the gift deduction into a donation subsidy, in which the government contributes a percentage of the gift directly to the receiving institution. This system would

improve practicability and ensure that the benefit goes directly to the receiver. After the elections in October 2025, a new cabinet must decide on the future of the donation deduction.

Monuments

Until 1 January 2021, the costs for the maintenance of monuments and gardens were tax-deductible for 80 percent. This applied to buildings listed in the Register of Monuments (*Monumentenregister*). In September 2016, Minister Bussemaker announced in the Budget Memorandum 2017 (*Miljoennota 2017*) that this tax arrangement would be abolished from 2017, but this plan has been postponed. From 2021 the tax-deduction was abolished and replaced with other forms of support for the maintenance of monuments, including subsidy schemes. An example is de Woonhuissubsidie (in Dutch).

Volunteers

Volunteers may earn a tax-free extra income of €210 a month maximum, up to €2100 maximum a year (National Expenses Arrangement - *Landelijke Regeling Onkostenvergoeding Vrijwilligers*). Additional compensation is possible, provided that the organisation reports the compensation to the tax inspector on a yearly basis.

VAT

The VAT system is divided into three rates: a high rate of 21 percent, a low rate of 9 percent and a 0 percent rate. EU legislation allows the member states to charge the low VAT rate on tickets for shows, theatres, circuses, funfairs, amusement parks, concerts, museums, zoos, cinemas, exhibitions and similar cultural events and venues. This was done in The Netherlands. Creative professionals who work on commission (such as visual artists, architects and designers) were charged the higher VAT rate. The work of writers, composers, journalists and cartoonists is not charged.

The Dutch government has a special agreement with the film industry to promote the production of Dutch films (*btw-convenant Film 2018*). In exchange for a lower VAT rate on cinema tickets, Dutch film distributors and cinema operators will make more money available for the production of Dutch films through the Abraham Tuschinski Fonds (see also 4.1.4. tax laws)

In 2023, the reduced VAT rate for all goods and services was evaluated (in Dutch) for the first time. The evaluation was rather critical on the effectiveness and efficiency of the reduced rate for some cultural goods and services, sometimes because of very general or vague criteria. The Schoof Cabinet (2024-2025, caretaking from June 2025) initially planned the increase of the VAT rate for culture (with the exception of film). This has been

reversed by parliament, causing the reduced VAT rate for culture in the Netherlands to remain unchanged.

4.1.5 Labour laws

Collective bargaining agreements

There are many collective labour agreements (*collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst*, or CAO) in the performing arts, and more generally in the cultural sector. CAOs are labour agreements between employers and employees. This means that a CAO only applies to employees who are working for an employer. When this is not the case, the national legal agreements are enforced. The existing CAOs are mostly found in architecture, arts education, media (broadcasting, journalism, publishing houses), museums and exhibition halls, performing arts (dance, orchestras, theatre companies, and venues), public libraries, retail musical instruments and sheet music. Special trade unions exist to enforce or monitor these agreements.

Almost all art and cultural labour areas are organised in the Culture Federation (*Federatie Cultuur*), an umbrella employers' organisation which monitors the results of annual collective bargaining between the large Dutch unions, the central government and the employers' organisations, with respect to work and related conditions.

Platform ACCT

To develop fair labour market relations in the culture sector, Platform ACCT was established, and this organisation will have a place within the Cultural Basic Infrastructure (BIS) 2025-2028. As of that date Fair Pay is mandatory for all BIS institutions; the Fair Practice Code is a code of conduct to stimulate this. This implies, among other things, the using of existing Collective Labor Agreements in the sector.

Platform ACCT, together with other representatives of the cultural sector, draws attention to the effects of the generic policy for the labour market and social security for the cultural sector. Due to the specific characteristics of that sector, these sometimes have unintended or undesirable consequences. Examples are the plans for a mandatory basic disability insurance for self-employed professionals, the prevention of false self-employment and the effects of the Clarification of Assessment of Employment Relationships and Legal Suspicion Bill (VBAR) in the event of a low self-employed rate. The VBAR will likely come into force in July 2026.

4.1.6 Copyright provisions

In the Netherlands, the *Copyright Act 1912* and the *Neighbouring Rights Act 1993* protect literary, scientific or artistic works. Because the European *Directive 2006/116/EC* on the term of protection of copyright and related rights was replaced by the European *Directive*

2011/77/EU in 2011, both Dutch acts were amended in 2013. In line with this directive, copyright accrues to the creator of a work until 70 years after the creator's death while neighbouring rights are in place for 70 years from the moment a work is introduced. Previously, the *Copyright Act*, the *Neighbouring Rights Act* and the *Database Act 1999* (which is based on the European *Database Directive 96/9/EG*) were amended in 2004 to implement the European *Directive 2001/29/EG* on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society. Since 2014, The Netherlands also acts in accordance with the EU directive on certain permitted uses of orphan works. In 2015, the *Copyright Contract Act* was implemented, providing cultural producers with a stronger negotiating position against those using their work.

In 2021, the Netherlands implemented the EU Copyright Directive in the Digital Single Market (DSM Directive), which led to amendments to the Copyright Act, the Neighbouring Rights Act and the Database Act. In 2024, amendments were made to the Copyright Act, the Neighbouring Rights Act and the Copyright Contract Law Act with the aim of strengthening the position of the creator and the performer in agreements concerning copyright and neighbouring rights. (Wet versterking auteurscontractenrecht Copyright Contract Law Strengthening Act – in Dutch)

Copy rights and neighbouring rights are collected and distributed by Collective Rights Management Organizations like Norma (rights for performing artists on tv), Sena (neighbouring rights of performers and producers), Buma/Stemra (copyright composers, lyricists and publicists) and Pictoright Fonds (rights visual creators)

Since 1996, when an actual public lending right was first incorporated in the Dutch Copyright Act (Auteurswet) and the Dutch Neighbouring Rights Act (Wet op de naburige rechten), this has been the responsibility of Stichting Leenrecht (Dutch Public Lending Right Office). Schools that have a library and collaborate with a public library were exempt from this rule. This exemption will be abolished. The compensation obligation will be borne by the ministry. This is intended to prevent education from experiencing administrative and financial burdens. To do so the Copy Right Act will be changed. The amendment of the law coincides with the amendment of the Public Library Act, which is scheduled for July 2026.

4.1.7 Data protection laws

The *Data Registration Act* (Wet Persoonsregistraties) was approved in 1989 and became the first act that was concerned with data protection. Dutch institutions or businesses needed the permission of their clients to make use of the clients' personal data for other purposes. A renewed act, the *Personal Data Protection Act* (Wet Bescherming Persoonsgegevens Wbp), based on the European *Data Protection Directive (95/46/EC)*, was

developed in 2000 and came into force in 2001. This act emphasises the protection of personal data when technological developments affect information processes. The [Data Protection Authority](#) arranges supervision and compliance with both acts.

The [General Data Protection Regulation](#) was implemented by the European Union in May 2016 to protect personal data of European citizens in the digital age. European organisations were obliged to implement the new act by 2018. The Data Protection Authority has been appointed to supervise compliance with the act in the Netherlands.

The first data protection act in Saba, Sint Eustatius and Bonaire (Caribbean Netherlands) came into force in 2010, which is the *Personal Data Protection Act (Wet Bescherming Persoonsgegevens Wbp BES)*. The act is based on the European *Data Protection Directive (95/46/EC)* and the Dutch *Personal Data Protection Act*.

4.1.8 Language laws

Dutch and Frisian (spoken mostly in the province Friesland) are the official languages in the Netherlands. For the three special municipalities in the Caribbean part of The Netherlands, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, English and Papiamentu are official languages as well. The spelling of the Dutch language is laid down in the *Spelling Act (Spellingwet)* (see chapter 2.5.4 for a description of policies and regulations on language).

4.1.9 Other areas of general legislation

4.2 Legislation on culture

4.2.1 General legislation on culture

The *Cultural Policy Act (Wet op het specifiek cultuurbeleid, 1993)* was considered a milestone in the legal basis of Dutch cultural policy.⁶ It regulates the subsidies based on cultural policy decisions and enables the Minister to create funds to finance the arts and culture. Part of the funds can be allocated directly by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (for consecutive four-year periods) to uphold the national basic infrastructure. Furthermore, it regulates the government's option of issuing subsidies to provinces and municipalities. As dictated by the *Cultural Policy Act*, subsidy decisions are based on advice by the national Council for Culture. The Minister or Secretary of Culture, however, makes the final decisions. Deviations from the advice need to be substantiated as a consequence of the *General Administrative Law Act*. As a rule, the Minister or Secretary follows the advice by the Council.

(See for recent developments 1.1, 1.2.2 and 2.1; See for broadcasting and its regulation chapter 1.2.2 and 2.1)

⁶ Edwin van Meerkerk and Quirijn Lennert van den Hoogen (eds.) *Cultural Policy in the Polder. 25 years Dutch Cultural Policy Act*. Amsterdam University Press / Boekman Foundation 2018.

Oosterhuis, Robert and Heinonen, Heidi (2026): *Cultural Policy Profile Netherlands*.

Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends (ed.), Bonn, 24.03.2026, DOI:

10.69813/YKFV3193

4.2.2 Legislation on cultural heritage and archives

Several laws on cultural heritage exist. The most important ones are the following:

The *Heritage Act*, installed on July 1st, 2016, replaced six laws and regulations in the field of cultural heritage. The *Heritage Act* (in Dutch) describes what cultural heritage is, how the Netherlands deals with movable cultural heritage, who is responsible for what and how the Netherlands monitors this. More specifically, the act provides rules regarding the following: conservation and registration of public collections; financial relations with state-financed museums; assessing objects from public collections; protection of public monuments and archaeology; restitution of looted art; intangible heritage; finance and governance; and cultural heritage inspection. The act is evaluated in 2023 (see chapter 3.1).

In 2024, the *Environment and Planning Act (Omgevingswet)* came into effect. Much like the *Heritage Act*, the *Environment and Planning Act* will replace and modernise multiple existing laws regarding water, air, soil, nature, infrastructure, buildings and cultural heritage in the living environment: “The new act will result in fewer regulations and will reduce the burden of conducting studies. At the same time, decisions on projects and activities can be made better and more quickly. Moreover, the act is more in line with European regulations and allows more room for private initiatives.” The *Monuments and Historic Buildings Act* is one of the laws that is partly absorbed in the *Environment and Planning Act*. Components of the *Monuments and Historic Buildings Act* that are not related to the living environment are included in the above mentioned *Heritage Act*. Thus, the *Environment and Planning Act* will regulate cultural heritage in the physical living environment while the *Heritage Act* contains the interpretation of heritage and the care of cultural property in government ownership. The following elements will be included in the *Environment and Planning Act*: permits for (archaeological) national monuments; the protection and preservation of the specific historic character of a village, town or city; the appointment of a monument committee; the need to take cultural heritage into account in environmental plans; and the designation of provincial and municipal monuments.

A new *Archives Act* was passed by the House of Representatives on 18 February 2025. This Act replaces the 1995 Archives Act and is designed to better align with the government’s digital information management. Since the previous version of the Act (from 1995), the amount of digital information has increased enormously. In addition to paper documents, governments now also have countless emails, websites, and databases full of information. Over time, it becomes more difficult to organise and keep all this digital information accessible. The new Act therefore encourages government organisations to ensure proper archiving from the outset and to destroy files in a timely manner when they no

longer need to be kept. Key changes include shortening the transfer period for permanently preserved government information from 20 to 10 years, and clarifying responsibilities for digital information management. At the time of compiling this Compendium Profile, the Act is under consideration in the Senate.

4.2.3 Legislation on performance and celebration

To safeguard the rights of performing artists, the *Neighbouring Rights Act* came into force in 1993. Neighbouring rights are created automatically and are valid for 70 years (see chapter 4.1.6). General legislation on the (governmental funding of) performing arts and festivals is included in the *Cultural Policy Act* (see chapter 4.2.1).

Anyone who organizes a (cultural) event usually has to have permission from the local government in connection with public order and traffic.

4.2.4 Legislation on visual arts and crafts

See chapter 3.4 visual arts; chapter 4.1.6 copy right provisions.

4.2.5 Legislation on books and press

In January 2015, a new *Libraries Act* was implemented (*Wet stelsel openbare bibliotheekvoorzieningen* – in Dutch). This new act defined the five core functions of public libraries as: to promote reading and a taste for literature; facilitate learning; make knowledge and information available; promote art and culture; and organise social encounters and debate. The act also addresses the digitisation of the sector, which started in the late 1990s. To streamline and co-ordinate this process, the Dutch public libraries set up the foundation Bibliotheek.nl (2009). They built a digital infrastructure to create one Dutch national digital library by connecting all (digital systems of the) Dutch public libraries. This digitisation project is coordinated by the Royal Library of the Netherlands.

The evaluation of the law in 2020 showed that the physical library network had declined. There are municipalities and neighbourhoods without a public library, and too many situations where a library is present but insufficiently equipped (building, staff, collection, opening hours, activities). The Rutte IV Cabinet (2022–2024) therefore decided to include a duty of care in the law. From 2026 onwards, municipalities and provinces must ensure there are sufficient, fully functioning libraries. Funding for this duty of care will be provided through the Municipal Fund. In 2023 and 2024, the Cabinet allocated additional funds for municipalities without a public library. The special municipalities that make up the Caribbean Netherlands also received extra funding for their libraries. There is broad political consensus on these measures. At the time of writing this Compendium Profile, the law is in the consultation phase.

In the Netherlands, there is a voluntary deposit: the Depot of Dutch Publications. In

consultation with the Dutch Media Federation, it has been agreed that all publishers submit one copy of each publication issued in the Netherlands to one of the depot libraries: the Royal Library of the Netherlands or the libraries of the Technical University Delft and Wageningen University for works related to exact sciences and agriculture respectively. In the Dutch Bibliography Online (in Dutch), there is a record of every submitted publication, including first issues of magazines.

Naturally, copy right and lending rights are relevant for the book sector (see chapter 6.1.6. copy right provisions).

The government implemented the *Act on Fixed Book Prices (Wet op de Vaste Boekenprijis)* in 2005. The act aims at maintaining a broad and diverse range of books and an extensive, geographically well-distributed network of bookshops. It does so by preventing price competition by regulating the pricing of Dutch and Frisian book- and music publications, with the exception of electronic publications and audio-books. Bookstores must apply a publisher-determined price for new releases for at least one year. The stable sales price allows publishers to invest in a diverse range of books. In addition, the law ensures that smaller regional bookstores do not have to compete on price with larger physical or online retailers.

The Dutch Media Authority supervises compliance with the act. The act is evaluated for the fourth time over the period 2019-2023). The evaluation concludes that the aims of the act have been achieved. The Minister has decided to continue the Act.

4.2.6 Legislation on audiovisual and interactive media

The Media Act (2008) describes the public media mission: "the provision of public media services at national, regional and local level by offering media offerings that aim to provide a broad and diverse audience with information, including journalistic content, culture and education, through all available supply channels" (Article 2.1) and then describes the organisational structure, funding principles and operational scope of the Dutch national, regional and local public broadcasting system;

- basic requirements for commercial broadcasters
- obligations for providers of television and radio packages (like cable operators).
- regulations Video platform services
- regulations for the protection of minors
- the existence of an expertise centre for media education
- the broadcasting of events of particular social, cultural or sporting
- airtime for political parties and government
- establishment of an independent Dutch Media Authority.

- the establishment of a Dutch Journalism Fund (Stimuleringsfonds voor de Journalistiek) that encourages diversity of journalism through funding and conducting research.

Minster Eppo Bruins has proposed reform proposals for public media services to parliament (see chapter 2.1 key developments). See for a basic description of the system chapter 1.2.2. See for Dutch Journalism Fund chapter 3.5.3).

In 1997, in order to protect minors from harmful content, a system of self-regulation was developed by the Dutch Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media. The *Kijkwijzer* (Viewing Indicator) warns parents and educators if a television program or film can be harmful to children. There is an age indication (all ages, 6+, 9+, 12+ and 16+) and pictograms that signify the reason for this indication (violence, fear, sex, discrimination, drug and/or alcohol abuse and foul language). These indicators are also used for music videos, computer games and websites. On the basis of Article 4 of the *Media Act* (2008), public and commercial broadcasters are obliged to apply the Kijkwijzer if they want to broadcast programmes that are potentially harmful to children. The age indicators are meant as an advisory tool for parents and educators in the private sphere. However, for public spaces such as the cinema, the government has decided to attach legal consequences to the age limits of Kijkwijzer. The cinema admission policy is based on Article 240a of the *Criminal Code*.

The Media Act prescribes an expertise centre for media education. This role is performed by the Netwerk mediawijsheid (Dutch Media Literacy Network). The network consists of over a thousand organizations committed to media literacy. These include libraries, cultural institutions, media coaches, developers of teaching material, educational publishers, research institutes, IT companies, media producers and platforms, educational institutions and care and welfare organizations. The network was established as a program in 2008 as an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and managed by five core partners Dutch Institute for Sound and Vision, Kennisnet (expertise centre for ICT in education), ECP (an information society platform), HUMAN (Dutch public broadcaster), KB (National Library of the Netherlands). Its activities focus on three target groups: adolescents, adults and vulnerable groups.

Act on the Investment Obligation for Audiovisual Content

A recent policy to counterbalance the dominance of the big commercial American streaming services is the *Act on the Investment Obligation for Audiovisual Content*. Starting from 1 January 2024, big (international) streaming platforms (with a turnover more than 10 mlo) working in The Netherlands, are required to invest 5% of their annual turnover in Dutch audiovisual productions, like series, films and documentaries. A minimum of 75%

must be Dutch or Friesian spoken. This will increase the availability of Dutch stories on streaming services and provide more opportunities for Dutch creators. The Dutch Media Authority supervises the obligation.

4.2.7 Legislation on design and creative services

The Dutch Advertising Code (Stichting Reclame Code SRC) is a self-regulatory organisation that formulates the rules with which advertising must comply. SRC is a member of the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) in Brussels.

Legislation regarding landscape design will be integrated in the *Environment and Planning Act*, which came into effect in 2024 (see chapter 4.2.2).

The professional titles of architect, town planner, landscape architect and interior architect are protected by the *Architects Title Act* (1987). Only those who are registered in the Architects' Register may use one of these titles. The aesthetic aspect of the architectural environment is protected by the *Dutch Housing Act* (1992), which regulates and controls the aesthetic standard of building activities.

Design and creative services are also part of the Dutch creative industry. For more information on the creative industry and specific regulations and measures, see chapter 3.5.1 and 3.5.5.

5. Arts and cultural education

5.1 Policy and institutional overview

At the national level, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science is responsible for arts and cultural education in formal education through legislation, funding, sharing of knowledge and communication. Arts education in [primary](#) and [secondary](#) schools is laid down in national legislation, defined through attainment targets.

Typical of the Dutch education system is the considerable freedom schools have in designing and delivering their education. In the Netherlands, there is no government-mandated curriculum. Schools must adhere to legal attainment targets for various subject areas, but they have the freedom to determine how to achieve these targets. Targets for the arts are few, formulated broadly, and monitored to a limited extent, leading to large differences between schools. Therefore, in addition to the legislation above, the Department of Culture of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has since the 1980s been developing non-statutory policies, consisting of incentive programmes and subsidy schemes to encourage and help schools to invest more in cultural education.

Since two decades the emphasis lays on arts education in schools, with the most prominent program being 'Cultural Education with Quality' (in Dutch, '*Cultuureducatie met Kwaliteit*'), in which more than half of all primary schools participated in 2023. The programme started in primary school, and has been expanded to include also secondary education, special education, and upper secondary vocational education. Cultural Education with Quality is by far the largest stimulus programme for in-school arts education, with an annual subsidy ceiling of approximately EUR 15 million in the period 2025–2028. The program focuses on cooperation between schools and cultural institutions, teacher quality, and continuous learning pathways. There are also programs for specific disciplines: for film ([Film Hubs](#)), for dance ([DAMU scheme](#)) and for linking in- and out-of-school education (*School & Omgeving*). Within these policy programmes, the Ministry works closely with municipal and provincial authorities. The total spending on all these additional national policies for cultural education increased from EUR 44.6 million in 2013 to EUR 57.7 million in 2022.

Another policy instrument used by the Ministry is the agreement 'Administrative Arrangements for Cultural Practice (2025–2028)' ([Bestuurlijke Afspraken Cultuurbeoefening](#)), which succeeds the 'Administrative Framework for Culture and Education (2023)' signed by the Ministry, the Association of Provincial Authorities (IPO), and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). The core idea of these administrative arrangements for cultural practice is that municipalities, provinces and the national government jointly

commit to cultural engagement (including arts education) for everyone in the Netherlands.

Non-formal, extracurricular arts and cultural education is partly, to a diminishing extent, funded by local authorities and partly privately funded (by consumers). Extracurricular lessons are provided by private professionals, associations, and local arts centres. Recent policies focus on making extracurricular arts education more accessible and supporting the amateur arts sector.

[The Fund for Cultural Participation](#) is responsible for the distribution of national funding for arts education and cultural participation. [The National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts](#) (LKCA) collects, develops, and disseminates knowledge about arts and cultural education and amateur arts. In addition, there is a national discipline-specific support infrastructure comprising amateur arts umbrella organisations and associations, as well as provincial support institutions.

5.2 Arts in schools

Cultural education is compulsory subject area with three legal attainment targets, the so called kerndoelen: expressive skills, reflective ability and Knowledge and Appreciation of Cultural Heritage. Almost every primary school offers its pupils arts, culture, and heritage education. On average, pupils receive about two hours of arts and cultural education per week. At most schools, nearly all art disciplines are covered in some form. Most time is spent on drawing and crafts, followed by music. The least amount of time is spent on heritage, media and film. Some schools employ specialised (external) arts teachers, mainly for music education. This is increasing in the last years, but at over 30 per cent of primary schools, the classroom teacher is still solely responsible for arts education. Around 90 per cent of primary schools have a teacher trained as an 'internal cultural coordinator', who is responsible for the policy and content of cultural education within the school.

As with primary schools, secondary schools are autonomous in shaping their curriculum and their cultural education. However, in secondary education, there are examination requirements for arts subjects in place. Since 1999, the subject Cultural and Artistic Education (CKV) has been compulsory for all pupils in the upper classes in secondary education (aged 15–18). In the 2017–2018 school year, the CKV subject was revised to place greater emphasis on active engagement with the arts and to allow schools more flexibility in how the subject is delivered. In addition to CKV, secondary schools offer arts subjects as optional subjects. In upper general secondary education (HAVO) and pre-

university education (VWO), there are traditional arts subjects (music, drawing, crafts and textile design) and newer arts subjects (general arts, visual arts, drama and dance). Examination requirements have been established for all these subjects, with both practical and theoretical components. Since 2016–2017, the vocational examination programmes in pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) have been replaced by vocational profile subjects, creating more opportunities to focus on arts and culture. However, the number of students taking a subject in arts and cultural education as part of their programme remains low.

In 2024, an [evaluation of the national cultural education policy](#) (2013–2023) concluded that progress had been made when it comes to cultural education in schools. There have been positive results in promoting cultural participation, professionalisation, attention to music education in teacher training colleges (PABO), and the development of continuous learning pathways. On the other hand, it was also concluded that the mix of policy instruments is complex and lacks coherence, that the temporary nature of measures reduces effectiveness, and that the non-binding nature does not contribute to a stronger foundation for cultural education in schools. As a result, the Ministry is seeking greater coherence among the various schemes and more structural embedding of the central governments Cultural Education with Quality. In this context, the expansion of the number of policy measures has not always been beneficial, as schemes that are specific to disciplines such as dance, music, and film education tend to compete with each other. Ultimately, schools often choose to participate in only one of these schemes. Recommendations therefore include: introducing more guidance toward schools so that cultural education is less optional, developing an integrated vision on cultural education from both an educational and cultural perspective within the Ministry, and strengthening the position of the specialist arts teacher within the school.

In 2015, the Ministry launched a process to revise the curriculum in primary and secondary education. The aim is to adapt education to the knowledge and skills people will need in the near future. [New curricula are currently being designed](#) and tested for nine subject areas, including one for arts and culture. In November 2025 the new [curriculum for arts and culture](#) is published.

5.3 Higher arts and cultural education

Dutch art academies or schools of the arts are institutions for upper secondary and higher professional education (for example, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam, the HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, and the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam). They offer programmes in architecture, visual arts, media, film, photography, heritage, design,

music, dance, and theatre, to train students for a profession as a professional artist, arts educator, or entrepreneur in the arts.

Programs are mainly offered at the bachelor's level, though the number of master's programmes has increased in recent years. Several academies also have research professorships that stimulate research within the various artistic disciplines. There are also professorships specifically focused on arts education at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen and the Amsterdam University of the Arts.

In order to improve the alignment between arts education and the labour market in the cultural and creative sector, the Dutch Association of Universities of Applied Sciences developed a sector plan in 2011, featuring various performance-based indicators. This plan led to tightened admission requirements and the restructuring of numerous programs in order to enhance the efficiency and quality of arts education in higher education. An additional goal was to improve facilities for young and top-level talent. Universities also offer theoretical and research-oriented programmes related to the arts at bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Technical universities offer programmes in industrial design and architecture (such as Eindhoven University of Technology).

5.4 Out-of-school arts and cultural education

Approximately [55 per cent](#) of the Dutch population aged six and older engage in amateur art. Around 18 per cent occasionally or regularly take art classes, courses or workshops as a leisure activity, and 4 per cent practice or rehears in an amateur arts association or other group under the supervision of an artistic director or art teacher.

Extracurricular (out-of-school) arts education is offered by professional arts and cultural institutions (such as museums, theatre companies, etc.), local arts education centres and music schools, amateur arts associations, and by private/self-employed arts teachers and artists. These providers also often offer activities for, and sometimes directly in, schools. Music is the most frequently offered artistic discipline. Over the past twenty years, there has been a strong trend towards market liberalisation in out-of-school cultural education. In 2022, [94.6 per cent](#) of registered extracurricular arts providers were self-employed entrepreneurs without staff. This trend can partly be explained by increasing labour market flexibilization and the municipal budget cuts to non-formal arts education in subsidised arts centres and music schools. As a result, these schools and arts education centres were forced to reduce their offerings or even close altogether.

[Due to the declining number of subsidised arts education institutions](#), there are concerns about the availability and quality of provision, as well as about the recruitment of new

teachers. A second concern, related to the first, is the affordability of arts lessons. Private courses are generally more expensive than subsidised options. Nevertheless, many independent arts teachers and artistic facilitators charge too low an hourly rate and report that their fees do not realistically reflect the costs they incur and the investments they make. Therefore, there are widespread concerns about their position in the labour market, similar to concerns for all self-employed workers in the cultural sector. (see chapter 2.1 Cultural Labour Market).

Amateur arts associations are an important part of the extracurricular cultural education and participation landscape. [20 per cent](#) of the Dutch population is member of an amateur arts association or other amateur arts group. In 2024, there were around 10.000 formal associations active, alongside many informal groups. There are also thousands of heritage associations actively engaged in preserving, maintaining and practising heritage. After years of declining membership numbers in amateur arts associations and the closure of associations, this decline appears to have stalled in recent years (since the end of the Covid pandemic). Nevertheless, membership recruitment remains a challenge, because many associations are facing ageing populations. Additionally, fewer associations now offer their members the opportunity to take lessons, courses or workshops. Since 2015, libraries have played an increasingly important role in facilitating and promoting cultural participation (see chapter 4.2.5).

Cultuurconnectie is the sector organisation for employers in non-formal cultural education, amateur arts and adult education (Volksuniversiteiten). Its members include local centres for arts education, music schools, and local support institutions for arts and culture. These members are usually municipally subsidised centres for the arts and music schools, but a logical consequence of municipal budget cuts to these institutions is that membership has declined over the past decades. There are also organisations for individual arts teachers and artistic facilitators working in education, in leisure contexts, or both, for example, the Association for Education, Art and Culture (VONKC), the Union of Orchestra Conductors and Instructors (BvOI), and the Dutch Professional Association of Dance Artists (DBDK).

5.5 Vocational and professional training

Art academies and universities of the arts offer teacher training programmes in art subjects taught in secondary education, such as visual arts, music, dance, and drama. Upon completion of these programmes, graduates are qualified to teach in formal education. Some arts programmes include smaller modules on teaching, aimed at the

non-formal out-of-school sector, where no formal teaching qualification is required. This is particularly common in music education, but also occurs in other arts disciplines. Universities offer teacher training programmes in theoretical areas, specifically for visual arts and music, which lead to a qualification to teach in the upper years of secondary education.

General teacher training programmes also include modules in various art subjects as part of their curriculum. The primary teacher training colleges (PABO) train generalist classroom teachers for primary education, and students are required to take arts courses during their studies. At the same time, PABO institutions have considerable autonomy, which has led to significant variation in how students are trained. As a result, the knowledge and skills of newly qualified teachers can vary widely. Since 2002, various schemes have been introduced to promote cultural education in PABO programmes.

6. Cultural participation and consumption

6.1 Policies and programmes

Active cultural participation is primarily (financially) supported by local governments. Most municipalities subsidise amateur arts associations, such as choirs, theatre groups and orchestras, as well as the facilities these associations use. [Nearly seventy per cent](#) of municipalities have a dedicated fund for children and young people growing up in poverty, enabling them to participate in cultural or sporting activities (Youth Fund for Sport and Culture). At the same time, in the past decades, there have been municipal budget cuts affecting (active) cultural participation. Provincial authorities also play a (smaller) role in cultural participation, through provincial institutions supporting cultural education and participation (joined in the [Council of Twelve](#)), the provincial Heritage Houses (joined in [OPEN](#))

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the associations of municipalities (VNG) and provinces (IPO) have signed the [Bestuurlijke Afspraken Cultuurbeoefening 2025-2028](#) (administrative agreements on cultural participation). The core principle of the administrative agreements is that municipalities, provinces, and the national government work together to promote active cultural participation for everyone in the Netherlands. Cultural practice encompasses the domains of cultural education, cultural participation, amateur arts, intangible heritage, heritage participation, and talent development.

Successive national cabinets focused primarily on investing in school-based cultural education, but recent years attention to active cultural participation in amateur arts and heritage practices grows. The Covid pandemic played a stimulating role in this. The **Cultural Participation Fund** (*Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie*) operates since 2009 as a public cultural fund subsidised by the national government. It promotes active cultural participation with programmes in cultural education (such as Cultural Education with Quality and Music Education Impulse), amateur arts, and talent development (Multi-Year Talent Development Scheme). Also, the fund has a [Cultural Participation Programme](#) A subsidy scheme where the social and cultural domains work together to create culture for everyone, for example culture and healthcare. Concerning this domain, the Netherlands was involved with in the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) Group on Culture and Health. This EU OMC group recently posted a [report](#) with strategic recommendations.

In the field of cultural heritage participation, the Netherlands signed the ratification of the European Faro Convention in 2024. This treaty calls for cultural heritage to serve society and includes several key principles: broad participation, openness to alternative conceptions of heritage, and placing heritage at the heart of community life.

In the area of *receptive* cultural participation (i.e. cultural consumption), all three levels of government share responsibilities., Municipalities making the largest investment, by subsidising local cultural institutions (like concert halls, museums or public libraries), or through a City Pass for people with low incomes that provides discounts on admissions fees. The national government expects the cultural institutions subsidised in the BIS (see chapters 1.2.2 and 1.3.1) to engage with the widest and most varied audience possible.

Other national policies and programmes focus – at least partly – on receptive cultural participation. An evaluation of this policy over the years 2001-2021 ([Beleidsdoorlichting cultuurdeelname 2001-2020](#)) concludes: the national government's cultural policy instruments are broad, stable, and transparent, with expert-driven assessments and a strong focus on artistic quality. The weaknesses are that there is too little focus on participation, existing habits make renewal difficult, and inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility still need improvement.

Instruments to promote receptive culture participation are cultural 'cards' or 'passes'. Subsidized cards are the **Culture Card** (Cultural Youth Passport) for secondary school pupils and the MBO Card for students in upper secondary vocational education (MBO). In 2023, over 700,000 pupils held a Culture Card and approximately 80 per cent of primary schools took part. Nearly 80 per cent of MBO institutions currently participate in the scheme, reaching 263,000 students. The budget on the cards can be spent on cultural activities. In addition, the private initiative the **Museum Pass** (Museumkaart) gives cardholders free access to more than 400 museums in the Netherlands. In 2023, 1.5 million people held a Museum Pass. Several institutions also offer their own discount cards.

6.2 Trends and figures in cultural participation

In the Netherlands, one of the monitors regarding cultural participation is a nationally representative survey that is carried out every two years since 2012 (*de Vrijetijdsomnibus*, or VTO). The goal of this survey is to measure participation in both sports and culture. The fieldwork is undertaken by the Statistics Netherlands (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS) and the analysis for the data related to culture is carried out by the Boekman Foundation since 2018. The sample consists of people 6 years and older that are living in the Netherlands. Each year approximately 3000 respondents fill out the questionnaire, leading up to a total of 18702 respondents in the period of 2012-2022.

Findings show that nine out of ten people in the Netherlands visited at least one cultural activity in 2022. More so than more active forms of participation, which we will further describe below, visiting culture was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The

percentage of Dutch people that visited culture decreased for all cultural forms, and in 2022 has only bounced back for a few forms (including for example visiting dance and house parties). Moreover, visiting culture is not equally divided across the population., Culture is mostly visited by younger people, those with higher educational levels and higher household income.

In the Netherlands, 64% of the population is actively engaged in cultural activities. The performing arts are the most popular, with 39,7% of the Dutch population participating in 2022. This is followed by the visual arts (29,3%), heritage (28,2%) and media art (20,5%) (table 4) Especially kids and youngsters (below 19 years old) are culturally active. Additionally, women and those with a higher educational degree participate more in cultural hobbies

Table 4: Percentage of the Dutch population (6 years and older) that participated or attended a cultural activity at least once in the last 12 months in the Netherlands

Activities heavily subsidised by the state	2018	2020	2022
Theatre performance	25	13	19
Opera performances & concerts of classical music	18	8	12
Classical ballet & modern dance	9	4	6
Libraries	40	31	34
Museums	57	42	52
Monuments*	60	43	60
Cultural centres	-	-	-
Activities without large public subsidies			
Cinema	68	46	57
Concerts of popular music	42	20	36
To read books not related to the profession or studies	80	79	78
<i>In paper format (Usually use)</i>	77	75	73
<i>As ebook (Usually use)</i>	27	28	28
Audiobooks	-	-	15
To listen to music		88	88
<i>Radio</i>		88	87
<i>Streaming</i>		64	68

Own collection (CD/Vinyl etc.)		52	45
To watch television (Usually watch)**		89	89
TV	-	91	90
Streaming		73	76
Digital offer		30	34
To play games (Usually play)			52
To use computer for entertainment or leisure (Usually use)	-	-	-
Internet for entertainment or leisure (Usually use)	-	-	-

Notes: *Historical city, village or building

Table 5: People who have carried out artistic activities in the Netherlands in the last 12 months by type of activity, in % of total population (6 years and older), period 2018-2022.

	2018	2020	2022
Writing	15	12	13
Painting or drawing	23	23	26
Other visual arts	12	12	12
Making films, videos, digital design	23	20	21
Theatre	7	5	6
Classical ballet and modern dance	3	3	3
Folk dance, ballroom and other types of dance	6	6	6
Playing an instrument	20	20	21
Singing	27	25	29

Source: Swartjes, B and T. de Hoog (2024). *Cultuur en Participatie*. See: <https://www.cultuurmonitor.nl/thema/cultuur-en-participatie/>.

6.3 Trends and figures in household expenditure

Table 6: Household cultural expenditure by expenditure purpose, 2022

Items (Field/Domain)	Household expenditure (in million EUR)	Average per capita expenditure (EUR)
	2022	2022
I. Books and Press	2900	164,86
Literature	1430	81,29
Newspapers and magazines	1470	83,57
II. Cultural Services	10060	571,89
Performing arts	2710	154,06
Visual arts	1050	59,69
Photography	380	21,60
Audiovisual	1540	87,55
Radio and tv	4380	249,00
III. Audiovisual equipment and accessories	2340	133,03
Audiovisual equipment	2190	124,50
Musical instruments	150	8,53
IV. Subscriptions of television, information processing*	NA	

Source: Statistics Netherlands – *Satellite account on culture and media 2022*.

Notes: *Subscriptions and online services are included in the categories above.

6.4 Culture and civil society

The cultural participation landscape in the Netherlands is highly diverse and, to a certain degree, also fragmented. Cities and larger villages in the Netherlands have cultural centres, centres for the arts, libraries and/or civic recreation centres where cultural activities take place. Municipalities are the main source of funding. Some of the cultural and recreation centres are dedicated to specific groups in society, for example students, children or people from a particular cultural background. In rural areas some smaller villages have a multifunctional building (or ‘Kulturhus’ (culture house)) which facilitates cultural, educational, sports and other leisure activities. On a regular basis, a library bus offers the inhabitants of these villages the opportunity to borrow books.

Some cities have a ‘centre for the arts’ as well, which provides, for example, music lessons and painting workshops (mainly non-formal arts learning). But the amount of centres for the arts has decreased drastically from 237 in 2005 to 130 in 2015 because of cuts in culture

budgets. The impact of these developments has been subject to debate (see also chapter 5.4). The centres for the arts were important employers for arts teachers. As half of these organisations disappeared, many arts teachers had to find new ways to employ themselves and find pupils. Most of them started to work as a one-person business, without funding. Some of them decided to cooperate in a collective business. It is not clear yet how these developments have influenced cultural participation rates, the accessibility, quality and diversity of out-of-school arts education, or the amount of teachers working in the field.

Governments do seem to have a growing interest in arts and cultural projects that aim to improve social wellbeing, societal participation and/or health of citizens. These projects are often funded by a combination of governmental bodies, public or private funds, third sector associations and/or banking foundations. In most cases these projects arise 'bottom-up', as government policy stimulates citizens and organisations to come up with ideas and initiatives.

An example is the programme Age Friendly Cultural Cities, which promotes active cultural participation among the elderly. There are also national and local programmes and measures for community arts projects that aim to improve the viability of neighbourhoods and artistic projects targeted at the inclusion of refugees, people with disabilities or migrant communities. In the past ten years, the number of cultural interventions in health care and long-term care has increased as well.

Over the past years, there has also been a growing interest in urban arts, often regarded as a subculture that specifically appeals to young adults. In 2015, the Cultural Participation Fund launched the programme Urban Arts Talent to stimulate the professional development of talented urban artists. Urban arts have also become part of the curriculum of some institutions for vocational or higher education. An advisory report from the Dutch UNESCO Commission, titled "[Irreplaceable: The Innovative Power of Culture](#)," has generated widespread attention for urban arts in the cultural and policy sectors. 'The Culture' is a cultural ecosystem rooted in the (Afro)diasporic world. Whether it's music, dance, or visual arts.

7 Financing and support

7.1 Public funding

7.1.1 Indicators

In the Netherlands, approximately two-thirds of public cultural expenditure comes from the municipalities, spending EUR 127 per capita on average in 2023. Average spending by the provinces in 2023 is EUR 21 per capita, and the central government spends EUR 72 per capita. The gross cultural expenditure per capita in 2023 was EUR 220 when using the data from [Statistics Netherlands](#) and the annual reports of the Central Government. This includes expenditures made by provinces and municipalities on media, but excludes expenditures on media from the national government which fall into a different category.

Public expenditure on culture in percentage of the GDP in 2023 was 0.6 percent. This figure has remained stable around 0.5 percent in the last twenty five years, according to figures from Statline Statistics Netherlands. However, public expenditure on culture as a percentage of the total government expenditures has decreased over the years. In 2023 it is 7.6% lower than in 2015 and 26% lower than in 2005. In 2023, the central governments' expenditure on culture was still higher than on average because of temporary financial support measures related to COVID-19.

7.1.2 Expenditure on government level

Table 7a: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2017 and 2023

Level of government	2017			2023		
	Total expenditure in EUR	% share of total*	Per capita	Total expenditure in EUR	% share of total	Per capita
State (central)	738.415.000	26	43	1.285.438.000	33	72
Regional (provincial)	301.502.267	10	179	368.284.000	9	202
Local (municipal)	1.844.593.000	65	1079	2.269.570.000	58	127
TOTAL	2.884.510.267	100	1690	3.923.292.000	100	220

Source: Verwey, de Hoog, Struijke (2025); Rijksoverheid (2024); CBS (2024).

Note: Due to rounding-off of the percentages, the sum may exceed 100%.

7.1.3 Expenditure per sector

Table 7b: Direct national cultural expenditure and transfers: by sector, 2023, in 1000 EUR

Field/Domain/Sub-domain	Central level	
	in 1000	in %
I. Cultural basis infrastructure	518.380	40.3
<i>Cultural institutes</i>	242.093	
<i>National culture funds</i>	276.287	
II. Heritage law	396.057	30.8
<i>Museums</i>	249.509	
<i>Heritage preservation</i>	146.548	
III. Other national cultural expenditures	371.001	28.9
TOTAL	1.285.438	100

Source: Verwey, de Hoog, Struijke (2025); Rijksoverheid (2024).

Table 7c: Direct local (provincial and municipal level) cultural expenditure and transfers: by sector, 2023, in 1000 EUR

Field/Domain/Sub-domain	Provincial level		Municipal level	
	in 1000	in %	in 1000	in %
I. Cultural presentation, production and participation	72.886	19.8	1.245.601	54.9
<i>Performing arts</i>	43.386		649.270	
<i>Visual arts & design</i>	5.928		92.921	
<i>Art & cultural education</i>	18.825		202.313	
<i>Film & video</i>	4.748		23.875	
<i>Other</i>			276.773	
II. Museums	58.064	15.7	348.450	15.4
<i>Museums</i>	42.947		269.922	
<i>Historical archives</i>	15.116		78.528	
III. Cultural heritage	139.848	38.0	139.187	6.1
IV. Media	97.487	26.5	536.331	23.6
<i>Libraries</i>	49.939		502.272	
<i>Local press & broadcasters</i>	2.480		23.192	
<i>Other</i>	45.068		10.866	
TOTAL	368.284	100	2.269.570	100

Source: Verwey, de Hoog, Struijke (2025); CBS (2024).

7.2 Support programmes

7.2.1 Strategies, programmes and other forms of support

Strategies and Programmes

Programmes for both financial support and advisory help are employed at different levels of the Dutch government.

The government funded organisation [Cultuur + Ondernemen](#) (Culture and Entrepreneurship) develops programmes and training courses to stimulate entrepreneurship of cultural organisations and individual artists. Within these programmes the organisations or artists are connected with experts, advisors or mentors that can develop and share knowledge for specific topics that need guidance, such as finding funds for transition periods, growing your business or a research project.

The organisation also advocates for better policies and conditions for the entrepreneurship of cultural organisations and artists. And the organisation is responsible for managing and updating the code of Governance within the sector, guiding cultural organisations in their governance structures.

Similarly [Platform ACCT](#) (Platform for the labour market in the cultural and creative branches) advocates for better working conditions in the cultural and creative sector, strengthening the durable employability and increasing the income for workers. To this end they continuously seek dialogue between workers, employers, contractors and the government. Platform ACCT is, in collaboration with Kunsten '92, the administrative and advisory body for the Fair Practice Code, which is created by the sector itself to promote the implementation of better working standards. For the many small entrepreneurs or self-employed persons (ZZP'ers) in the sector some small government funded grants are made available through platform ACCT to stimulate their entrepreneurship and professional development.

Other forms of support

In addition to the direct subsidies extensively described in the preceding chapters, some forms of support in the Netherlands promote the production and distribution of culture in an indirect way. One of these regulations ([Percentageregeling](#)) obliges the Dutch central government to spend 0.5 to 2 percent of the construction costs in government-initiated construction projects on commissioned artworks (see chapter 3.4 visual arts and crafts).

Another form of legislative support for the arts can be seen in the Wet op de vaste Boekenprijs (Act on fixed book prices), (see chapter 4.2.5 laws on books and press).

7.2.2 Artists' funds

The central government in the Netherlands has several ways to support cultural organisations and artists. The most direct form of support is through the Basis Infrastructure for Culture (BIS). Within this programme there is a direct support of 119 cultural organisations (between 2025 and 2028) and six public culture funds, each focused on specific subdomains within the cultural field.

The culture funds are independent administrative bodies within the central government, executing the national cultural policy through the distribution of structural or project-based subsidies.

Performing arts

The domain of performing arts is by far the biggest recipient of funding within the BIS infrastructure, with a yearly budget of 273,4 million euros between 2025-2028. The Performing Arts Fund NL supports organizations and artists within the performing arts field, such as music, music theatre, dance, theatre and related festivals. The fund distributes a large part of the performing arts budget with 86 million euros a year (2025-2028). (see chapter 3.4)

Film and audiovisual arts

The second largest domain within the BIS is film and audiovisual arts, with a budget of 98,2 million euros on a yearly basis between 2025 and 2028.

The Netherlands Film Fund distributes a major part of these funds (89,8 million per year between 2025-2028), mostly to projects for the development, production and distribution of feature films, documentaries, short film, animation and experimental films. (see chapter 3.5.3)

Visual Arts

Between 2025 and 2028 the visual arts is the domain with the third largest budget in the BIS: a total of 55,6 million euros a year is spent on the production and presentation of visual arts.

Within this domain the Mondriaan Fund distributes most of the funding to individual artists and organizations for the collection and presentation of visual arts. The fund has a yearly budget of 43,8 million euros between 2025-2028. (see chapter 3.3)

Cultural education and participation

There is no direct funding of cultural organisations that produce activities for cultural education or participation, except for a knowledge and research centre for cultural education and amateur arts (LKCA).

Most of the cultural organisations and makers of projects for cultural participation are funded through the Cultural Participation Fund. This fund has a yearly budget of 48,9 million euros per year, between 2025-2028. (see chapter 5)

Design and digital arts

The central government also stimulates research and development of creative industries and digital arts. This is done through several festivals and some innovation labs. A total budget of 26,4 million euros is allocated on a yearly basis between 2025-2028.

The Creative Industries Fund NL distributes a large part of this budget (19,7 million euros on a yearly basis), mainly through the project-based grants or Open Calls around a specific topic. The fund focuses on three main areas of expertise (and their crossovers): design, architecture and digital culture. (see chapter 3.5.1 and 3.5.5)

Literature

Literature is another notable domain within the BIS infrastructure. A yearly budget of 23,8 million euros is spent on Literature between 2025-2028. Of this amount 17,3 million euros is distributed by the Dutch Foundation for Literature to authors and translators in the form of grants and residencies. This fund also promotes Dutch literature abroad. (see chapter 3.5.2)

Funds of Collective Rights Management Organizations

Collective Rights Management Organizations in the Netherlands reserve annually a small percentage for (Social)-Cultural projects. These include:

- [Norma Fund](#) (rights for performing artists on tv) distributes grants among performing artists
- [Sena's Performers](#) Fund (neighbouring rights of performers and producers) fosters talent and promote a decent living wage for performers
- [Buma Cultuurfonds](#) (copyright) composers, lyricists and publicists) supports and promotes Dutch music (copyright) in both The Netherlands and key export markets through music events and prizes (Buma Awards).
- [Pictoright Fonds](#) (rights visual creators) supports with a social, cultural or educational purpose, intended for professional visual creators in one or more of the disciplines design/illustration, photography and visual art.

Public media funds

There are three public funds regarding media affairs: the [Co-productiefonds Binnenlandse Omroep](#) (Co-production Fund National Broadcasting), the [Dutch Journalism Fund](#) and the Fonds Bijzondere Journalistieke Projecten ([BJP Fund](#)). (see for more information 3.5.3 media)

7.2.3 Grants, scholarships, awards

Cultural grants and scholarships are mostly awarded through the national cultural funds and through private institutions. Both the government and private institutions also award prizes to cultural professionals in various fields. In the last decades, there has been a marked growth in the number of a variety of prizes, which has a significant impact on cultural production and consumption. Currently, there are hundreds of awards and for 121 of these, the government is the main financier. In 61 of these awards the government is also involved in establishing the award criteria (Hardy 2020).

Some important government funded and supported awards are the [Johannes Vermeer Award](#) for exceptional talent in the arts, the [Prix de Rome](#), for exceptional artists and architects under 40. The [PC Hooft Award](#) is for accomplishments in literature, just like the [Dutch Literature Prize](#), which is for both Flanders and the Netherlands. The [Royal Award for Modern Painting](#) is annually presented to encourage talented young painters active in the Netherlands. The [Dutch Music Award](#) is the highest national award for musicians.

7.2.4 Support to professional artists' associations or unions

In the Netherlands, there is no direct support from the government to artists' associations or unions. Artists' unions are financed by their members. There is no official negotiation mechanism between the professional artists' trade unions and the government. Artists and their organisations make themselves heard in public, but their direct influence is modest. Governmental support, financially and otherwise, is indirectly channelled through the six national culture funds and their activities.

7.3 Private funding

In 2022, Dutch citizens and businesses contributed at least **€389 million** to the national cultural sector through private funding. Although the absolute amount of private funding has hovered around €400 million since 2015, the actual value has declined due to inflation. Adjusted for inflation, the €400 million in 2015 would be equivalent to €512 million in 2023, indicating a substantial loss in the worth of private funding (table 8.1)

The Dutch government aims to support private cultural funding through fiscal and policy measures (see chapter 4.1.4). One key instrument is the *Geefwet*, which offers additional tax deductions for donations to cultural non-profit organizations. However, there is no evidence that the tax act has actually increased private donations (Bekkers et al. 2021).

Sources of private funding:

- **Private funds:** In 2022, private funds donated an estimated €244 million to cultural causes. Accounting for a sixth of this amount is the Cultuurfonds, the largest private fund focusing on the cultural sector. From the total of €244 million, €59 million stems from investment returns; the remaining stems from donations by companies and citizens. Therefore, to avoid double counting, we only count the revenue from investment returns.
- **Households:** In 2022, Dutch households donated €58 million to culture, making up a small portion of the €2.2 billion total given to charitable causes. Around 15% of households reported donating to cultural organizations, with an average donation of €86 per household. Most often, people donate through the website of a charity. However, crowdfunding plays an increasingly important role in household donations. 40% of all crowdfunding donations go to culture, via platforms such as Voordekunst.nl.
- **Inheritances:** In 2022, at least €29 million was inherited by cultural causes. This amount is likely an underestimation due to limited public data on inheritances. With the aging and relatively wealthy post-WWII generation approaching the stage of wealth transfer, significant increases are expected in the coming decade.
- **Businesses:** Dutch businesses contributed approximately €150 million to cultural causes in 2022, mostly via sponsorships (€115 million) and to a lesser extent through direct donations (€35 million). Around 5% of companies reported sponsoring cultural causes and 3% reported support through donations. Over the past twenty years, there appears to have been a gradual decline in corporate contributions to culture, with sponsorship clearly decreasing.
- **Lotteries:** Dutch lotteries are required to donate part of their revenue to good causes. In 2022, the six licensed national lotteries contributed €576 million in total, of which €93 million went to cultural organizations. Of them, the VriendenLoterij is the largest cultural donor, providing €87 million in 2022. Lottery contributions to culture have risen steadily, from €51 million in 2009 to €93 million in 2022. However, the gambling tax increase (from 30,5 to 37,8 percent) that was implemented in 2023, may impact future contributions.

In addition to financial support, **volunteer work** is a major contributor to the cultural sector. In 2022, one in ten Dutch citizens of twelve year and older volunteered for a cultural organization (VTO 2024). These efforts are difficult to express in monetary terms, but they are essential to the functioning of many cultural institutions.

Table 8: Private financial contributions to arts and culture in the period 2015-2022 (in EUR million)

	2015	2018	2020	2022
Households	36	78*	75**	58**
Inheritances	8	33	26	29
Funds	64	46	66	59
Businesses	219	174	145	150
Lotteries	59	80	89	93
Total donations to culture	384	411	401	389

Source: Bekkers, R., S. Koolen-Maas and T. Schuyt (2024) Geven in Nederland 2024: maatschappelijke betrokkenheid in kaart gebracht.

* Using an improved method, including wealthy households.

** Using an improved method, including wealthy households and households with a migrant background.