

SHORT PROFILE

THE NETHERLANDS

Boekman Foundation

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1. Fact and figures

Political system:	Constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy
Population:	17 282 163 (2019)
GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU-27=100):	130 (2018)
General government expenditure (in % of GDP):	41.9 (provisional) (2019)
Official languages:	Dutch and Frisian

2. Cultural policy system

Objectives

In the Netherlands, cultural policy is based on the premise that the state should distance itself from judgements regarding the value of art. Hence, the government acts as a moderator of cultural activities and the largest patron of public art and culture, while the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science creates conditions conducive to maintaining, developing and disseminating cultural expressions.

From 2011 onwards, Dutch cultural policy primarily focused on participation, entrepreneurship and philanthropy. The priority areas announced for the period 2021-2024 are: fair pay in the cultural sector; accessibility of culture for as wide a variety of Dutch inhabitants as possible; cooperation between the different tiers of government; and a broad and diverse range of cultural offerings.

Main features

In the Netherlands, public governance is organised as a three-tier system consisting of a central, provincial and municipal government that pursue their own cultural policy with their own funding and advisory streams. The main role of the 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, i.e. those of (inter)national importance. The regional and local authorities are responsible for the implementation of their own cultural policies and distribution of funds. Their role is to support amateur arts and the accessibility of amateur arts, and maintain cultural facilities. Moreover, the cooperation between the three tiers is accomplished through the framework based upon consultation between the Association of Provinces of the Netherlands (IPO), the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and the central government.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for providing conditions for the preservation, development and (social and geographical) distribution of cultural expressions of national significance. Every four years, the Minister is obliged to present a policy memorandum intended to review the past policy cycle, recognise developments that impact the execution of cultural policy and give guidelines for cultural policy in the years to come, including the budget plan for public spending on the cultural sector.

Direct state funding is distributed based upon the national basic infrastructure (BIS), i.e. the register of cultural institutions and funds receiving direct state subsidies. With the recommendations from the Council for Culture, the BIS is redefined every four years in order to provide support for high-quality art and culture (see chapters 1.1. and 1.2. of the country profile).

Background

1930s

Media policy started to be implemented with a resolution to abandon a single national broadcasting company scheme in favour of a system reflecting the "pillarisation" (*verzuiling*) of the Dutch society. Hence, different social groups, or "pillars" — liberals, socialists, Catholics, Protestants — expressed their ideology via their own specialised media. Pillarisation lasted until the 1970s, but its impact is still visible in Dutch public broadcasting today.

1945-1960

In the post-war years, the government extended its financial support to new areas such as film, theatre and literature, with an intention to repair a disrupted relationship between the artists and society. In the early 1950s, the Dutch Arts Council (now Council for Culture) was established.

1960-1970

The influence of pillarisation decreased, while the importance of diversity in artistic expression grew. It led to a more structural support for the arts and culture, aiming to achieve a nationwide infrastructure to provide cultural supply of a standardized quality.

1970-1980

Cultural policy became increasingly important in the government's welfare policy. The benefits and relevance of culture to society as a whole was recognised as a priority, notably in terms of cultural participation and access to all.

1980-1990

The economic stagnation, followed by budget cuts, prompted cultural institutions into reducing their dependence on subsidies. Furthermore, the systematic four-year Arts Plan (adopted in 1988) required the Council for Culture to assess the quality of the state-funded institutes.

1990-2000

Cultural organisations were privatised and encouraged to become more independent and increase the focus on their markets and audiences, with particular attention to a younger audience and the increasing population of ethnic minorities. The *Cultural Policy Act* (1993) established the four-year renewal of the cultural policy plan.

2000-2010

In the period 2007-2010, cultural policy was focused on participation and better facilities for and guidance of outstanding talent. The 2008 economic crisis ceased the relatively long period of gradual growth in the state budget for culture and media. In 2009, the national basic infrastructure (BIS, large cultural institutions and funds receiving direct four-year subsidies) was introduced. Since then, smaller cultural institutions and companies should apply directly for subsidies from the public cultural funds, which increased the funds' responsibilities.

2010-present

The 2010-2012 government determined the outlines for major budget cuts and separated media affairs from the cultural portfolio. Minister of Culture Jet Bussemaker envisioned her plans in the policy letter *Culture moves* (2013), stressing the social value of culture and creativity in a changing society. Her plan for the period 2017-2020 was presented in the letter *Space for culture* (2015). The division of subsidies among the institutions in the national infrastructure for that period was endorsed in the document *Decisions on the Cultural Infrastructure*.

The current Minister, Ingrid van Engelshoven, presented her cultural agenda in the letter *Culture in an open society* (2018), which sets as priorities: encouraging openness and curiosity from a young age onward as well as the development of new culture and -makers; and a strong and inspiring cultural environment (in relation to heritage, the creative industries and international cultural policy) (see chapter 1.1. of the country profile).

3. Current cultural affairs

Key developments and themes

Societal features

The policy memorandum for the period 2013-2016, *Culture moves*, stressed the importance of arts and culture for society and their added value for both the society and the economy. Thus, the priority areas set by Minister Jet Bussemaker were: cultural education, talent development, creative industries, digitalisation and social dialogue.

An important development in Dutch cultural policy is achieving a balance between the intrinsic value of culture and its instrumental benefits for social and economic processes. In 2018, the current Minister of Culture, Ingrid van Engelshoven, published the vision statement *Culture in an open society*, which envisages: stimulation of creative and artistic talent; access to arts and culture for everybody; a broad availability of known and unknown forms of art; and a safe place for art as a reflection on society and its citizens. Moreover, instead of only providing funds for renowned institutions, the government will increase its focus on creators of new forms of culture (see [chapter 2.1. of the country profile](#)).

The role of the artist

Another significant development can be recognised in how cultural policy interprets artists' position. The previous Minister, Bussemaker, set out her plans for talent development in the policy documents *Room for talent* (2014) and *Vision on talent development* (2014), which were further developed in her policy letter *Space for Culture* (2015). After the cuts in the cultural sector in 2012, Bussemaker increased the budget for the development of young talents, innovation and cooperation.

In her policy plans, the current Minister of Culture, Ingrid van Engelshoven, refers to the increasingly precarious position of workers in arts and culture. In order to strengthen artists' and cultural workers' labour position, the Ministry commissioned drafting the *Labour Market Agenda for the Cultural and Creative Sector 2017 - 2023*. The Agenda was prepared by *Kunsten '92* (the representative organisation for the arts, culture and heritage sector in the Netherlands) in collaboration with the cultural sector. Some of its proposals are: to improve the position of freelance artists and other creative professionals; to improve the working conditions; and to strengthen sector-wide cooperation in order to conduct a social dialogue and to respond to the changes in the labour market. The Agenda also presented the Fair Practice Code, a normative framework with guidelines for sustainable, fair and transparent employment and practices in the cultural and creative sector (see [chapters 2.1. and 2.3. of the country profile](#)).

Regional harmonisation

In 2017, with an aim to achieve harmonisation between national and regional authorities, the Council for Culture advised Minister Van Engelshoven to add a third cultural policy component to

the basic cultural infrastructure (BIS) and the cultural funds: a regional cultural infrastructure (RIS). Although Minister Van Engelshoven does not opt for constructing a RIS, she does stress the importance of a stronger cooperation and synchronisation between national and regional policy. In her letter *Culture in an open society* (2018), the Minister invited the Dutch provinces, municipalities and regional institutions to collaborate on the creation of regional cultural profiles (*Cultural policy 2021-2024: Urban and regional profiles*), including a SWOT-analysis of the regional cultural ecosystem as well as suggestions for programmes and funding. This way, the BIS can better take into account the composition and the needs of the population, regional identity and the local climate for the makers and artists. The regional profiles were submitted to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science late 2018 and will be assessed for the country's cultural policy priorities in the 2021-2024 period (see [chapters 2.1. and 1.2.3. of the country profile](#)).

Cultural governance

Good governance in the cultural sector has been an issue of growing interest since 2000, when a special commission published a report on cultural governance. This report was followed by a code of conduct for the cultural sector in 2003, which was replaced by the first Governance Code Culture in 2006. [The latest version of the Code](#) was published in 2019 and offers a normative framework for good management and supervision in cultural organisations.

Cultural diversity and inclusion

This decade, one of the most prevalent and important themes within Dutch cultural policy has been diversity and inclusion. Although several measures, initiatives and codes have been implemented for the past twenty years, cultural venues are still predominantly visited by a white (and aging) audience. For example, the share of visitors with a migration background usually does not exceed five percent in the theatres and museums of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, while half of the inhabitants of those cities have a migration background. Apart from the public, most cultural venues and institutions have a predominantly white staff, with some exceptions.

In order to make the cultural sector more diverse, the [Code Cultural Diversity](#) was developed by the sector itself, which launched in 2011. In 2019, it was updated and converted into the Code Cultural Diversity and Inclusion, with a focus on other forms of diversity as well, such as gender, sexual orientation, disability and socio-economic class. The Code gives cultural institutions guidelines on how to embed diversity and inclusion in their practices, by means of the four pillars audience, programme, staff and partners. Minister Van Engelshoven decided that cultural institutions and funds within the national basic infrastructure must endorse the Code (along with the Fair Practice Code and the Governance Code Culture) in order to receive their subsidies. This criterion will take effect in the period 2021-2024.

National identity

The value of culture for the Dutch identity is emphasised in the coalition agreement for 2017-2021 (*Confidence in the Future*). The knowledge on shared history, values and liberties should be increased and actively propagated, especially in schools. Young people who reach the

age of 18 and people who acquire Dutch nationality will receive the Canon of the Netherlands (an overview of important events, people, texts, artworks and objects from the Dutch history, established in 2006). The Canon is currently being redeveloped by an independent commission and will include 'the darker sides' of Dutch history and more diverse perspectives, as requested by Minister Van Engelshoven. The new canon is expected to be presented in spring 2020 (see chapter 2.9. of the country profile).

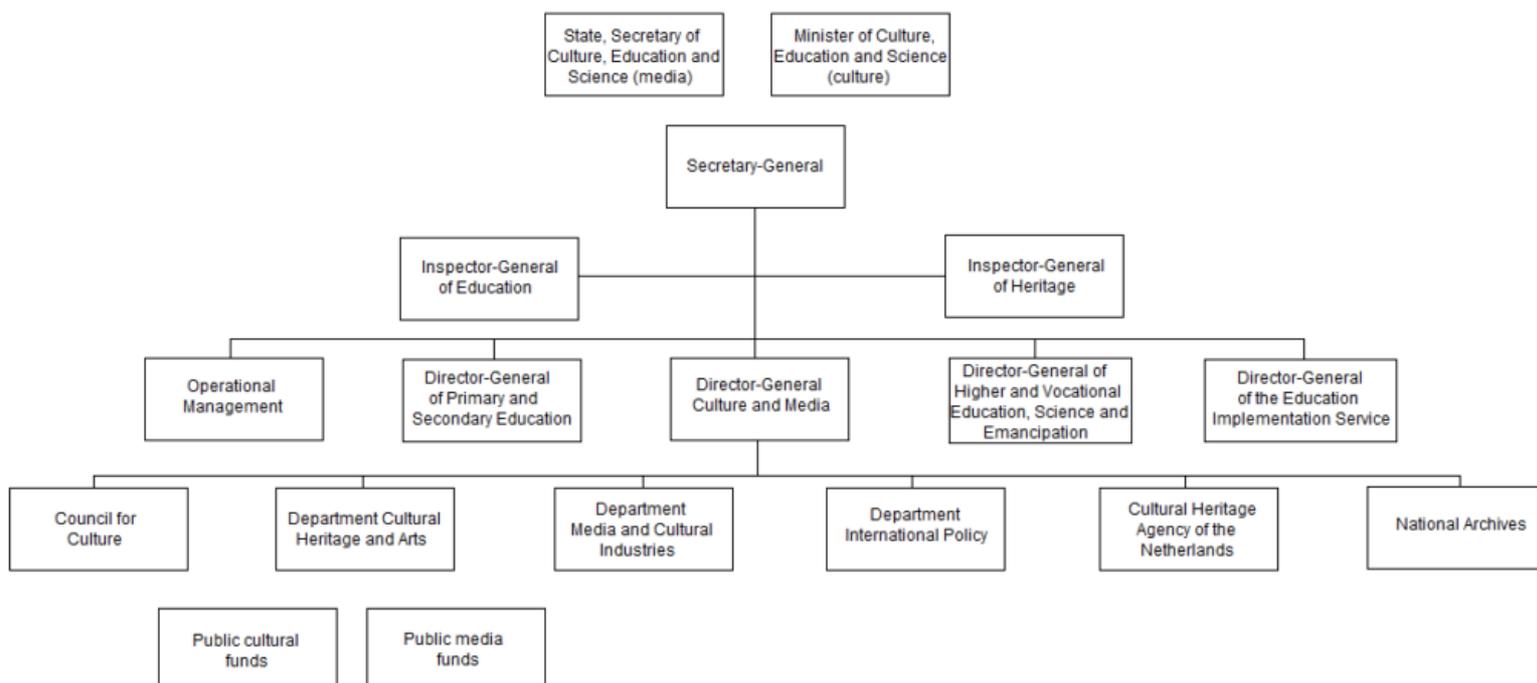
Heritage

In 2018, Minister Van Engelshoven announced that the heritage sector will receive an additional EUR 325 million over the coming years: "It is time for the next step by giving new life to buildings, making monuments sustainable and increasing the accessibility of historical sights. With these extra investments, we can pass our monuments on to future generations." The corresponding policy focuses on conservation and repurposing, the living environment and the connecting force of heritage.

On February 21st, 2019, the Minister also signed the Heritage Deal, a partnership between different Ministries, municipalities, provinces and governmental organisations related to monuments, forestry, real estate and landscape. Special budget is allocated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, municipalities and provinces in order to execute the agreements that focus primarily on: climate adaptation; energy transition and sustainability; and urban growth and contraction (see chapter 3.1. of the country profile).

ANNEX

I. Organigram



II. Governmental expenditure on culture

Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2017

Level of government	Total expenditure in EUR	% share of total
State (central, federal)	801 560 000	27%
Regional (provincial, Länder, etc.)	301 503 000	10%
Local (municipal, incl. counties)	1 836 053 000	64%
TOTAL	2 875 971 000	100%

Source: Statistics Netherlands (2018) - [Expenditures on culture by municipalities and provinces](#); Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (several years) - [Annual Reports](#)