

# Egmus: country report The Netherlands, 2016

Report by the late Vladimír Bína, Robert Oosterhuis, Robert Verhoogt (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science) and Nico Heerschap (Statistics Netherlands), October 22, 2016 Contact: [r.e.j.a.oosterhuis@minocw.nl](mailto:r.e.j.a.oosterhuis@minocw.nl)

## Policy issues

### Introduction –Key Issues

19 of the 685 museums in the Netherlands are subsidised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. This group includes the biggest and the most visited museums in the country, as the Van Gogh Museum and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam or the Netherlands' Open Air Museum in Arnhem. Until 2008 the financing of the museums was largely similar to other subsidised cultural institutions, such as orchestras or theatre companies. All subsidised cultural organization received grants from the Ministry for the duration of four years, the so called "Cultural Plan Period". From 2009 on this situation is changed. This is a consequence of a policy paper on museums: *The Future of the Past (Bewaren om teweeg te brengen)* presented to Parliament by the former State Secretary for Culture Medy van der Laan in November 2005 and new regulations for financing cultural institutions in general. Museums that are subsidised by the Ministry are leaving the 4 year funding system. Instead, the Ministry settles management contracts with the museums, stipulating the conditions for long-term funding (30 years). The grants cover the running costs of the museums, such as staff, housing, upkeep of the collections, new acquisitions and exhibitions. Management contracts also include a periodical assessment of performance of the museums by a visiting committee of (inter)national experts. Not counting the running costs, additional funding will be available for specific activities of the museums aiming at, *inter alia*, increasing participation of target groups (youth, ethnical minorities), upkeep and presentation of the cultural heritage of minorities, heritage education programmes for school children and additional programmes for improving museum collection. An earmarked budget for such activities will be transferred to the public cultural Fund Mondriaan Foundation [*Mondriaan Stichting*]. All museums in the country, and thus not only museums subsidised by the Ministry qualify for grants from this budget.

This development can be considered as the next step along the line of the privatisation of national museums. The privatisation of museum started in 1993 with which accommodated all national museums in foundations. Although the buildings and the collections remain the property of the state, the museums enjoy a high degree of independence as far as their functioning and policy are concerned. The *Deltaplan for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage (1990-2000)* introduced the project of *Collectie Nederland (Collection Netherlands)*, that takes the whole cultural heritage of the country, rather than the collections of individual museums, as the base for museum policy. A separate government agency, *The Cultural Heritage Inspectorate (Inspectie Cultuurbezit)* supervises the preservation and upkeep of this national collection.

In 2010 the newly elected minority government of Christian Democrats (CDA) and Liberals (VVD), supported in parliament by the anti-Islam party (PVV), started an unprecedented series of budget cuts on culture mounting up to 22% in 2014. However, the Coalition Agreement stated that libraries, heritage and the *National Archive* should be relatively spared. The budget cuts forced the current government (Liberals (VVD) and Social Democrats PvdA) to re adapt the national system for subsidising cultural institutions again and to return to the Cultural Plan Period for all kind of cultural institutions, including museums and other major cultural organizations. In the summer of 2013 Minister of Education, Culture and Science, dr. Jet Bussemaker (PvdA), presented her vision on the museumsector (*Strength through Cooperation*) and her cultural policy in general (*Culture moves*). Keys issues are the improvement of cooperation between

cultural institutions, public access, and education. See for more details below under *Strength through Cooperation*.

#### *National History museum*

To improve the historic and cultural knowledge of the population, a temporary advisory committee, established by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, advised (2006) on the shape and content which this cultural canon should have. It was proposed to introduce a *Canon of the Netherlands* consisting of 50 key facts and key collection items of Dutch history and culture, to be presented in an appealing and inspiring educational setting. The Canon can be accessed digitally; 50 "windows" open to short stories that illustrate the significance of the relevant component of the canon (see [www.entoen.nu](http://www.entoen.nu)). Examples of other canons can be found on this website too, for instance canons restricted to the arts and culture sector (books, literature, writers, architecture, theatre, children and youth movies etc.). The *Canon of the Netherlands* is part of the 10 point cultural participation plan Minister Plasterk introduced in his policy memorandum *Art for Life's Sake (Kunst van leven, 2007)*.

At the same time, the government, following the example of *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, decided to create a *National History Museum*. Three municipalities – Amsterdam, Arnhem and The Hague – were invited to develop plans for such a museum that - based on the canon - should give all inhabitants of the country an overview of the Dutch history. The *Netherlands Open Air Museum (Nederlands Openluchtmuseum)* in Arnhem won the competition. Subsequently the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Ronald Plasterk chose to erect the *National History Museum* in that city. Its successor, secretary of state Halbe Zijlstra, however, decided at the end of 2010 that the government would not provide the money for the building. Then the government decided to stop financing the project completely due to increasing budget cuts. Some special tasks concerning the (virtual) presentation of national history were shifted to other cultural institutions in order to guarantee their public value.

#### *Digitization of audiovisual heritage*

In 2007 the government decided to spend 154 million euros from the so called Fund for the Reinforcement of Economic Structure (FES) for the digitization of the Netherlands' audiovisual heritage. This project, called *Images for the Future (Beelden voor de toekomst)*, will run for 7 years and aims at restoration, preservation and digitization of 137.000 hours of video, 22.510 hours of film, 123.900 hours of audio and 2.9 million photos from audiovisual archives. This material should be easily accessible for target groups such as schools and other educational institutions, as well as for the general public and the creative sector. Innovative service and applications are used to realize maximum accessibility (see also [www.beeldenvoortekomst.nl](http://www.beeldenvoortekomst.nl)). The main participants in this project are the *Filmmuseum* in Amsterdam, the *Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid)* in Hilversum, which is in fact the museum and the archive of the national public broadcasting service, and the *National Archive (Nationaal Archief)* in The Hague.

#### *Youth*

As in other countries, most Dutch primary school organise visits to the museum. Such visits are expected to become more important, when the *Canon of the Netherlands* will become part of the curriculum in primary schools in the school year 2009/2010. In the fall of 2008, the Dutch parliament agreed on free entrance to all museums in the country for children up to 12 years old. It is hoped that this step will stimulate visits to the museums, especially by children from underprivileged social strata. Due to government changes free entrance is no longer prescribed to museums. Museums have freedom of choice regarding their entrance fees. A lot of museums provided free access to young people until 12 or 18 years of age.

### *Cultural diversity*

Besides the youth, (non-western) ethnic minorities, which make up about 10 % of the population, are a target group in museum policy. In this context, the Netherlands Museum Association (*Nederlandse Museumvereniging*) developed an *Intercultural Museum Programme* to introduce more variety into the presentations of Dutch museums as well as introducing the museums to a wider public. Fostering of cultural diversity is also a priority of the Mondriaan Foundation.

### *Returning work of arts*

A special committee of independent experts was set up in 2004 to survey some 4000 work of arts that were returned to the Netherlands after World War II. The works were in custody of the state. This committee tried to trace the original owners and consequently advised the government on the return of cultural property from the war. The most important case until now was the return of 202 paintings of old masters to the heirs of Jacques Goudstikker (1897-1940) in 2006. Although this matter has been legally settled after the war, the government decided to return the paintings not on judicial but on moral grounds.

### *Intangible heritage / UNESCO*

The Dutch government recently ratified the UNESCO Convention for safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. Museums and other cultural organisations are now starting up the process to implement the convention.

### *Museum system in the Netherlands*

In march 2012 the Dutch Government asked the Council for Culture to advice about the Dutch system of museums in general. Key issues are cultural entrepreneurship, cooperation between museums concerning collections and public participation. The report of the Council for Culture was published in 2012. Recently, the Netherlands Museum Association too presented his rapport *Musea voor Morgen* (Museums for tomorrow) with recommendations to museums and public authorities to improve the cooperation between museums and the system of museums in general.

### **Definition of Museum**

The ICOM definition of museums is generally accepted in The Netherlands. Zoological gardens, exhibition spaces, planetariums, science centres and nature reserves are excluded from museums statistics. According to the most recent statistics (CBS, 2016), there were 685 museums in the Netherlands in 2015. In 2015 there are 481 registered museums in the Netherlands.

### **Existence of Museum –related Laws**

There is no museum law in the Netherlands. Self –regulation is an important starting point in Dutch cultural policy regarding museums. However, there are some general rules considering museums and their collections, for example the *Cultural Heritage Preservation Act* (1985). This act prevents the export of objects that are important for the cultural history of the Netherlands. Private individuals and businesses, who donate to museums, are exempt from gift and inheritance tax and are eligible for a reduction in income or corporate tax. Due to the museum policy of the current Minister of Education, Culture and Science, one of the new measures is to draft a Cultural Heritage Act, that includes the field of museums and collections. (see further below)

The activities of Museum Association in the Netherlands (Museum Vereniging, MV) are aimed at development and improvement of professional museum standards. In 2015 425 museums were member of the MV, among which some associated members. These are non-museum institutions that play an important role in de the field of Dutch museums. The members of the NMV have to observe the Code of Professional Ethics for Museums in the Netherlands. This Code, based on the ICOM Code of Professional Ethics, was introduced in 1989 and revised in 1999.

### *Netherlands Museum Register*

The NMV introduced a national registration scheme for museums in 1997: the Netherlands Museum Register. This register, inspired by the national Registration Scheme in the United Kingdom, is founded on a number of basic requirements drawn up by the museum sector itself. Authoritative representatives of the sector subsequently assess the performance of the museums. Museums wanting to be incorporated in the Museum Register have to meet the following basic requirements:

- Having an institutional basis
- Having a stable financial basic
- Having a written policy plan
- Having a collection
- Having a registration of its collection
- Taking care of the preservation of the collection
- Having the collection researched
- Having basic public amenities
- Having qualified museum staff

Until 2015 481 museums are registered. This means that practically all professionally run museums are incorporated in the Netherlands Museum Register. Recently, the Netherlands Museum Register is further improved and professionalized.

Other activities of MV include the distribution of the annual *Museum Pass* (in 2014 for adults 54,95 euros a year, for young people 27,95), holders of which have free admission to some 400 museums in the country. In 2014 there were 1.1 million holders. The MV also maintains a network of museum consultants in the provinces. These consultants support and facilitate the work of small museums in their province, usually run by volunteers.

### **Categories used regarding Type of Collection**

Statistics Netherlands (CBS) distinguishes the following categories: visual arts, history, natural history, ethnography, business and technology.

### **Categories used regarding Type of Ownership**

In 1993, the Privatisation of National Museums Act was passed by the Netherlands Parliament. After completion of the privatisation project, 24 National Museums were all accommodated into foundations. These museums are still subsidised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Other Ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Defence fund 11 other museums. The buildings and collections remained State property. Some retained the predicate Rijksmuseum (national museum) after completion of the privatisation project, while others decided to drop it.

Together, the museums depend on government subsidies for more than 70% of their total budget. In order to guarantee continuity of ministerial responsibility in the future, the articles of incorporation of all the foundations stipulate that they cannot be amended without the Minister's permission. Even after completion of the privatisation process, the Minister will continue to assume responsibility for:

- the mission of the institute
- the administrative structure according to the supervisory board model
- termination of the foundation (when applicable)
- the appointment of the members of the supervisory board.

Although appointed by the Minister, the members of the supervisory board are by no means supposed to receive instructions from the Minister. The articles of the association of the museum foundations expressly stipulate that the supervisory board, in the execution of its duties, should promote the interests of the foundation.

In the Privatisation Act, the idea that the State should purchase separate museum services was abandoned. The main reason for this is that the museums were likely to incur sales tax liability with respect to those services. It was decided to fund the museums on the basis of a four-year lump sum subsidy scheme instead. Just like other

government-subsidised cultural institutions, each museum submits a policy plan and long-term budget proposal every four years. After seeking the Council of Culture's advice, the State Secretary of Education, Culture and Science uses these proposals to decide on the subsidy levels to be granted. As of 2009 the system changed again: the national museums, like some other big institutions in the performing arts, got a long term financial arrangement. This was part of the restructuring of the subsidised cultural infrastructure in the Netherlands. The museums are subject to very specific rules regarding this funding system, laid down in the Ministry's Manual on the Financial Accountability of Subsidies to Cultural Institutions.

### **Strength through cooperation (2013-2016)**

In the summer 2013 Minister of Education, Culture and Science, dr Jet Bussemaker, presented her plans concerning museums and cultural policy in general to the Parliament stating the key issues of our national museum policy today in the Netherlands. The leading principle of her approach is to promote the cooperation of museums in order to improve the understanding, conservation, organisation and public access of public collections. Basically, this approach is based on two notions. Firstly, our ambition to improve cooperation to be profitable for museums, the public and society in general. Secondly, the conviction that museums themselves know the best way how to achieve this. Museums play an important role of the Dutch arts and culture sector. They provide a valuable contribution to knowledge generation, raise historical awareness, and shape our identity. Nevertheless, despite their dynamic nature and their successes, there are several challenges that led to this memorandum.

- There is still too little cooperation among museums and among museums and other institutions (heritage or otherwise) with respect to either their collections or their business operations.
- A major part of the collections is kept in storage, with public access being limited.
- Fifty-nine per cent of Dutch people take little or no interest in our cultural heritage; they seldom, if ever, go to a museum.<sup>1</sup>
- Museums are not yet making the most of the digital revolution.
- The public budgets available to our museums are under pressure; at the same time, the economic crisis has led to a drop in sponsorship. As competition in the leisure market increases, museums will have to do everything possible to maintain their position in the decades ahead.
- Collections are not protected sufficiently, which became clear in recent discussions concerning the deaccessioning of collections from the World Museum [*Wereldmuseum*] and the Gouda Museum.

It is important that museums can respond adequately to these issues to retain and increase the value they share with society. In order to achieve and guarantee this for the future, the primary measures of Strength through cooperation are:

1. The budgets furnished to state-funded museums will depend more on their results, with cooperation, education and outreach to new groups of visitors being important factors.
2. To stimulate talent development and academic research, I will award a number of grants to PhD candidates every year based on a common research agenda for museums.
3. There will be an additional annual budget of € 2 million to stimulate cooperation between the museums in such areas as education, visibility of collections, public outreach, research, and the use of digital tools.
4. We will draft a Heritage Act intended to protect collections of national significance. I will also consider how to offer museums more financial security with respect to their maintenance and management tasks.

These measures will ensure our museums continue to flourish today and to future

---

<sup>1</sup> CBS, Statline.

generations.

Based on minister Bussemaker's plan the mentioned topics are implemented in our cultural policies during 2014-2016. A new Cultural Heritage Act (see References for English translation) was drafted and implemented in our national legislation and in force since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016. From a Cultural heritage perspective in general this Act regulates the national public responsibility for museums and collections. More specifically this Act provides rules concerning:

- Conservation and registration of public collections,
- financial relations with state financed museums,
- De-assessing of objects from public collections,
- Protection of public monuments and archaeology
- Restitution of looted art
- Finance and governance
- Cultural Heritage Inspection

Besides this Cultural Heritage Act new measures were taken to stimulate the collaboration between museums and other institutions, education, the housing of museums and digitization.

In this new legal context state financed museums are financed concerning the collection and housing based on the Cultural Heritage Act. This financial basis is supplemented by subsidies for the public activities like exhibitions regulated by the four year subsidy cycle in the national cultural political level (the cultuurnotasytematiek). The coming financial term for state financed institutions (including museums, orchestra's, opera, and ballet organisations will start from 1-1-2017.

In the meantime some of our major museums re-opened again after years of reconstruction. For example the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Rijksmuseum, but also several regional oriented museums in Leeuwarden, Den Bosch, and Zwolle. These re-openings museums stimulated also the number of visits in the Netherlands in the last years. In 2014 museums in the Netherlands welcomed 25,9 million visits, including 28% by tourists from abroad. This resulted in a growth of more than 2,7 million visits compared to the total number of visits in 2013.

Finally, we are facing new elections for the Dutch Parliament in march 2017.

## **Statistical issues**

Until 2015 the situation in the Netherlands was as follows:

- There were different figures about the number of museums in the Netherlands. With the result: different figures on visits, collections, turnover, income, expenditure, staff etc.
- The data collection was done partly by the Museums Association (their own members) and Statistics Netherlands (non-members of the Museums Association). Comparable data was also collected by among others the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (subsidised museums) and the Cultural Heritage Agency.
- Separate analysis was done by Statistics Netherlands (total population, including the members of the Museums Association) and the Museums Association (members)
- Statistics Netherlands and the Museums Association used comparable but slightly different questionnaires.

Due to a process of further co-operation between the main parties, the statistics on museums in the Netherlands have changed considerably in 2015 and 2016. It was agreed that both the population of museums and the questionnaires should be aligned with each other. This resulted in one new population of museums in the Netherlands and one common questionnaire. In this process the general museums statistics also changed from a two yearly to a yearly statistic.

To determine which institutions are or are not a museum in the Netherlands, the criteria of the ICOM-definition were further operationalized. For example the criteria "open to the public" was defined as "open for at least 28 weeks". This resulted in a decision tree. The decision tree with new criteria was applied to the existing population of museums and a group of new museums. This was mainly done by the Cultural Heritage Agency. This resulted in a decrease of the number of museums in the Netherlands from 799 in 2014 to 685 in 2015. This included all the registered members of the Museum Association. Mainly smaller museums were dropped from the list. Also some exceptions were made for big institutions which did not fall within the ICOM-definition, but which are clearly seen as a museum by the public. An example is the Kunsthal in Rotterdam which does not have their own collection, but is clearly seen as a museum by the public. The discussion about what is a museum and what not is however still going on. A point of discussion is if zoos and botanical gardens should be included.

Another issue which is still open is the typology of museums. The question is if we follow the way museums classify themselves or are there objective rules to classify museums? Lately Statistics Netherlands used the typology of museums of the Cultural Heritage Agency (their own assessment). But, for example, the Association for Art museums could not identify themselves in the museums which were included as 'art'. Important for statistics is that there is some continuity in the classification of museums. Otherwise there are constantly unreal changes in the figures.

Another major change for 2015 compared to 2014 is that the somewhat different questionnaires of Statistics Netherlands and the Museum Association were aligned with each other. Eventually it was decided that for 2015 the questionnaire of the Museums Association should be used. For the museums that are approached by Statistics Netherlands (non-members of the Museums Association) this meant that the number of questions was considerably expanded. Despite the fact that there were concerns about the response, the number of questionnaires that was returned was not much different than in 2014: around 85-90 percent of the population of non-members. Nonetheless it is important to review the questionnaire in 2016 again. For example, it is not necessary to ask all the questions every year again. The ideal situation would be to work with a smaller core questionnaire and a rotating block of questions, which are related to a major topic.

This all means that there is a major break in the figures between 2014 and 2015. Statistics Netherlands is working on a method to clarify the break as good as possible. In that case it will still be possible to look at developments over a longer period.

However the alignment between the main parties must be carried further and will take the necessary effort in the coming years. Not only the population and questionnaires should be aligned and discussed, also there is a need to work to a common typology, shared publicity, shared publication and the further alignment with customers, like the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

## Key figures of the Netherlands

	Unit	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011**	2013	2015*
<b>Numer of museums</b>	1	873	828	775	773	810	788	799	685
of which:									
Art	x 1	105	118	107	118	114	62	66	83
History	x 1	448	423	391	383	400	472	463	406
Science / Natural History	x 1	49	44	51	54	55	34	28	40
Industry and technology	x 1	245	217	196	190	195	196	217	138
Ethnology	x 1	17	17	18	17	21	24	25	18
Mixed	x 1	9	9	12	11	25	0	0	0
<b>Number of visits</b>	x 1 000	20.488	19.558	19.648	20.540	22.037	23.138	26.484	33.110
of which:									
Paid (full ticket price)	%	53,3	52,3	49,0	49,5	43,1	46,8	40,5	40,7
Paid (reduced ticket price)	%	16,9	17,2	19,9	19,7	17,9	17,7	16,9	17,7
With museum pass	%	11,9	12,5	11,8	12,9	15,1	18,1	23,2	25,0
Free	%	17,8	18,0	19,3	18,0	23,9	17,3	19,4	16,7
Foreign visits	%	22,5	21,6	24,0	26,5	15,0	22,3	26,4	28,2
Average visits per museum***	x 1000	23,5	23,6	25,4	26,6	27,2	29,4	33,1	48,3
Average visits per 1000 inhabitants****	x 1	994	947	916	923	1136	1079	1162	1406
<b>Staff</b>									
Persons employed (including hired)	x 1	8.285	8.496	8.143	8.598	9.146	11.580	12.010	14.759
Fulltime equivalent	x 1	5.478	5.837	5.696	6.016	6.380	6.779	6.810	8.165
Volunteers	x 1	17.888	19.693	19.667	21.329	23.720	29.205	31.019	32.615
Fulltime equivalent	x 1	2.330	2.357	2.679	3.015	3.559	4.669	4.884	5.743
<b>Finances</b>									
<b>Total receipts</b>	x million	407	475	525	604	704	821	878	961
of which									
Income from entry fees	%	15,0	13,5	13,7	13,6	13,5	15,6	18,3	20,1
Income from subsidies	%	64,9	65,9	65,9	63,6	62,5	57,4	55,6	46,7
Other income	%	20,1	20,6	20,4	22,8	24,0	27,0	26,1	33,2
<b>Total expenditure</b>	x million	414	502	562	687	702	856	882	954

\* 2015 preliminary figures / break in figures / includes two zoos

\*\* Change in the classification of museums

\*\*\* Numer of visits / number of museums

\*\*\*\* Number of Dutch visits / Dutch population

## References / further reading

Autonomy for the national museums in the Netherlands, W. Bloemberg, 1993  
<http://catalogus.boekman.nl/pub/95-349.pdf>

Culture at a Glance 2014

This publication gives some basic statistics about each of the 30 museums subsidised by the Dutch central government (visits, subsidies and other types of income)

<http://www.government.nl/files/documents-and-publications/reports/2015/03/02/culture-at-a-glance-2014/culture-at-a-glance-2014-web.pdf>

Different aspects of museum policy are also included in the Netherlands chapter of *Compendium on Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*:

<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/netherlands.php>

Digital Museum Collection of the Netherlands

<http://dimcon.delving.org/>

Heritage Act 2016 in The Netherlands

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws> or

<http://cultureelerfgoed.nl/publicaties/heritage-act-2016>

Heritage Monitor <http://erfgoedmonitor.nl/en>

Made by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands

<http://www.cultureelerfgoed.nl/en>

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

<https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-education-culture-and-science>

Museum Association

[www.museumvereniging.nl](http://www.museumvereniging.nl)

Is the website of the Netherlands Museum Association in Dutch and English.

Statistics Netherlands (CBS)

Is the website of the Statistics Netherlands in Dutch and English. This website includes the central electronic database, called StatLine. At present, however, the English version of StatLine contains only a few matrices; it is to be expanded in the near future.

[www.cbs.nl](http://www.cbs.nl) / [www.statline.nl](http://www.statline.nl)

Netherlands Institute of Social Research (SCP)

The SCP conducts an ongoing survey on cultural participation in The Netherlands.

Museums visits are included in the survey. Practically all publications of the SCP are available online [www.scp.nl](http://www.scp.nl)

Culture at a Glance 2014

This publication gives some basic statistics about each of the 30 museums subsidised by the Dutch central government (visits, subsidies and other types of income)

<http://www.government.nl/files/documents-and-publications/reports/2015/03/02/culture-at-a-glance-2014/culture-at-a-glance-2014-web.pdf>

The Dutch Cultural System (Brochure, 2013)

A short overview of the Dutch cultural policy

<https://www.government.nl/documents/leaflets/2013/06/17/the-dutch-cultural-system>