

The Netherlands

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Introduction –Key Issues

25 of the 773 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 te weeg 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, ethnic 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.

National historic 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). 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. The new secretary of state Halbe Zijlstra, however, decided at the end of 2010 that the government would not provide the money for the building.

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). 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. In addition, some museums provided free access to young people until 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.

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, 2007), there were 773 museums in the Netherlands in 2007. As 395 museums do not have paid staff, the number of professionally run museums was 380 (2005)

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.

The activities of the Netherlands Museum Association (Nederlandse Museum Vereniging, NMV) are aimed at development and improvement of professional museum standards. In 2010 480 museums were member of the NMV, among which approximately 40 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 2010 more than 400 museums are registered. This means that practically all professionally run museums are incorporated in the Netherlands Museum Register.

Other activities of NMV include the distribution of the annual *Museum Pass* (for adults 39,95 euros a year, for young people 19,95), holders of which have free admission to some 400 museums in the country. The NMV 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

The Dutch Statistical Office (CBS) distinguishes the following categories: visual arts, history, science/natural history, ethnography, business and technology, mixed collection.

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.

With regard to their legal status, out of 773 museums in 2007:

- 93 were part of central, provincial or municipal administration
- 618 were foundations or associations, among which 25 financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science;
- 62 had another legal status (private, limited companies etc).

Existing Data – Basic Figures and Diagrams

Key Figures The Netherlands							
	unit	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007
Number of museums	1	942	902	873	828	775	773
of which:							
Art	1	102	109	105	118	107	118
History	1	491	451	448	423	391	383
Science / Natural History	1	50	59	49	44	51	54
Industry and technology	1	260	255	246	217	196	190
Ethnology	1	20	18	17	17	18	17
Mixed	1	19	10	9	9	12	11
Visits	1.000	20.266	20.679	20.767	19.558	19.648	20.540
of which:							
free	%	14%	17%	18%	18%	19%	18%
with museum pass	%	14%	16%	12%	12%	12%	13%
paid	%	72%	68%	70%	70%	69%	69%
foreigners	%	-	19%	22%	22%	24%	26%
average visits per museum	1.000	22	23	23	24	25	27
visits per 100.000 inhabitants (including free entrance)	1	-	131	129	121	120	126
visits per 100.000 inhabitants (excl free entrance)	1	-	89	91	84	83	87
Staff							
number of persons	1	6.708	7.694	8.285	8.496	8.143	8.598
number of man-years	1	5.071	5.198	5.478	5.837	5.696	6.016
Volunteers							
number of persons	1	-	16.205	17.888	19.693	19.667	21.329
number of man-years	1	-	1.765	2.330	2.357	2.679	3.015
Finances							

	€						
total income	1.000.000	285	358	411	476	527	611
of which entry fees	%	-	15%	15%	13%	14%	13%
of which public subsidies	%	63%	62%	64%	64%	65%	62%
of which other private income	%	-	23%	22%	22%	22%	25%

References

For a concise outline of the museum policy in the Netherlands see: *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague/Amsterdam: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science/ Boekmanstudies, 2009. Available at Boekmanstichting: <http://www.boekman.nl>

The 2006-edition is also available on the web: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2007/01/17/cultural-policy-in-the-netherlands-2006.html>

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

www.museumserver.nl

Is the platform for Dutch museums on the Internet. Currently 582 websites of the Dutch museums are included in Dutch and most of those also in English.

www.museumvereniging.nl

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

www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ocw

Is the website of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in Dutch and English. Extensive information on cultural policy, including policy documents is available online.

www.cbs.nl / www.statline.nl

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.scp.nl

Is the website of the Netherlands Institute of Social Research (SCP) in Dutch and English. 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