

The Netherlands

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Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, October 19, 2013
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Introduction –Key Issues

30 of the 788 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, 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). 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.beeldenvoordetoeekomst.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, 2011), there were 788 museums in the Netherlands in 2011 with 22.297 visits in that year. In 2012 there are 426 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 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 2012 426 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 NMV include the distribution of the annual *Museum Pass* (for adults 44,95 euros a year, for young people 22,50), 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 810 museums in 2009:

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

Strength through cooperation (2013)

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.¹
- 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 generations.

¹ CBS, Statline.

Existing Data – Basic Figures and Diagrams

Key Figures The Netherlands									
	unit	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009*	2011*
Number of museums	1	942	902	873	828	775	773	810	788
of which:									
Art	1	102	109	105	118	107	118	114	119
History	1	491	451	448	423	391	383	400	405
Science / Natural History	1	50	59	49	44	51	54	55	47
Industry and technology	1	260	255	246	217	196	190	195	182
Ethnology	1	20	18	17	17	18	17	21	14
Mixed	1	19	10	9	9	12	11	25	21
Visits	1.000	20.266	20.679	20.767	19.558	19.648	20.540	22.037	22.297
of which:									
free	%	14%	17%	18%	18%	19%	18%	24%	18%
with museum pass	%	14%	16%	12%	12%	12%	13%	15%	18%
paid	%	72%	68%	70%	70%	69%	69%	61%	65%
foreigners	%	-	19%	22%	22%	24%	26%	15%	30%
average visits per museum	1.000	22	23	23	24	25	27	27	28
visits per 100.000 inhabitants (including free entrance)	1.000	-	131	129	121	120	126	134	134
visits per 100.000 inhabitants (excl free entrance)	1.000	-	109	107	99	97	103	102	110
Staff									
number of persons	1	6.708	7.694	8.285	8.496	8.143	8.598	9.165	10.549
number of man-years	1	5.071	5.198	5.478	5.837	5.696	6.016	6.380	6.631
Volunteers									
number of persons	1	-	16.205	17.888	19.693	19.667	21.329	23.720	28.364
number of man-years	1	-	1.765	2.330	2.357	2.679	3.015	3.559	4.879
Finances									
total income	€ 1.000.000	285	357	407	475	525	604	704	756
of which entry fees	%	-	15%	15%	13%	14%	14%	13%	15%
of which public subsidies	%	63%	62%	64%	64%	65%	63%	62%	58%
of which other private income	%	-	23%	21%	23%	21%	23%	25%	27%
*) preliminary figures									

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

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

Digital Museale Collectie Nederland (DiMCoN) / Digital Museum Collection of the Netherlands

Part of: Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands

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

Cultuur in Beeld 2012 (Culture in the picture - only in Dutch) page 122-123 and Cultuur in Cijfers 2012 page 26-31 (Culture in Figures – only in Dutch) give some basic statistics about each of the 30 museums subsidised by the Dutch central government (visits, subsidies and other types of income)

<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2012/10/22/cultuur-in-beeld-2012.html>

<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2012/10/22/cultuur-in-cijfers-2012.html>