

Netherlands

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Introduction - Key Issues

The origins of museum policy go back to nationalisation and funding of museum collections early in the 19th century. As the number of museums grew – over a hundred museums were established during the first half of the 20th century – the government set up a museum system, creating administrative and advisory bodies. Until the 1980's museums were jointly subsidized by various tiers of government to cover their operating losses. The Museum Policy Document, published in 1985 put an end to this system. The State became responsible for a limited number of 'national' museums. The responsibility for – and the funding of – other museums were transferred to provincial and municipal authorities.

Two issues dominated museums policy in The Netherlands in the 1990's: conservation and preservation of museum collections and transformation of state museums, which were part of the central government administration until that time, into self-governing foundation.

An ambitious programme – the Delta Plan for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage was launched in 1990. The Delta Plan was aimed at resolving the backlogs in the registration and conservation of museum objects, historic buildings and archives. Between 1990 and 2000, an extra sum of some 28 millions guilders (13 millions Euros) has been spent annually on preserving the cultural heritage

In 1993 the national museums were privatised (see paragraph 5 below).

The Delta Plan introduced the concept of *Collectie Nederland* (*Collection Netherlands*) that takes the whole national cultural heritage as the basis of museums policy. This means that objects and collections that are considered to be of national importance as well as buildings remain in state ownership, while the national museums themselves have been altered into foundations and operate independently from their main subsidizer: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. This Ministry is responsible for the infrastructure; the so called 'museum system' which consists of all museums, supporting, granting and advisory bodies, that collect, upkeep and study the cultural heritage and present it to the public at national, regional and local level. The main aims of the museums policy are to preserve cultural heritage, to improve access (among other things through the Internet), encourage public participation (especially of youth and ethnic minorities) and to increase the visibility and the movement of museum collections, not only at national but also at European level.

During the Dutch presidency of the EU in the second half of 2004, the Cultural Heritage Department of the Ministry has host a conference on 'Mobility of collections'. This mobility – exchange of cultural and historical object from museum's collections in the European Union – should enable audiences everywhere in Europe to enjoy the common European heritage.

Policy on target groups is aimed mainly at young people and ethnic minorities. Most Dutch museums provide admission to young people under the age of 18 free of charge. Many museums organize special programmes for children from primary and secondary schools. The Netherlands Museum Association has developed Intercultural Museum Programmes, which have introduced more colours into the presentations and the public of the Dutch museums.

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 last statistics, there were 873 museums in the Netherlands in 2001. As 308 museums do not have a permanent staff, the number of professionally run museums is 565.

Existence of Museum-related Laws

There is no museum law in the Netherlands. In the absence of a Museums Act, the activities of the Netherlands Museum Association (Nederlandse Museum Vereniging -NMV) are aimed at development and improvement of professional museum standards. The vast majority of the professionally run museums (393) is a member of NMV.

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. 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. A museum wanting to be incorporated into 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

253 museums were registered until the end of 2001. The registration should be completed in 2004. It is expected that eventually more than 300 museums will be incorporated in the Netherlands Museum Register.

Categories used regarding Type of Collection

Museums are grouped into five categories: art, history, science, industry and technology, ethnology and mixed. As for their number, history museums are the biggest category (448), followed by industry and technology (246), art (105), science (49), ethnology (17) and mixed (9). In 1999, a number of museums with a substantial art collection were reclassified from the “mixed” into the “art” category.

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. 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 873 museums in 2001:

- 25 were financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
- 148 were part of central, provincial or municipal administration
- 638 were foundations or associations¹
- 87 had another legal status (private, limited companies etc).

Existing Data - Basic Figures and Diagrams

Key Figures				
	Unit	1997	1999	2001
Number of museums	1	942	902	873
of which:				
open whole year	%	76	63	62
otherwise	%	24	37	38
Visits				
free	1000	2883	3441	3676
free with museum pass	1000	2804	3225	2479
paid	1000	14578	14012	14612
total	1000	20266	20679	20767
Access				
free	%	19	21	13
free with museum pass	%	43	42	50
paid	%	38	37	37

	Unit	1997	1999	2001
Average admission price (paid museums)				
adults	€	2	2,1	2,2
children	€	1,1	1,3	1,5
Staff				
number of persons	1	6708	7694	8935
number of man-years	1	5071	5198	5524
Volunteers				
number of persons	1	,	160205	17923
number of man-years	1	.	1765	2695
Finances				
total income	millions €	285	382	415
total expenditure	millions €	288	378	408
Public expenditures for museums				
total	millions €	179	221	263
per capita	€	11,3	14,1	16,2

¹ This includes 25 museums subsidised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Museums by the kind of collection				
Art	1	102	109	105
History	1	491	451	448
Science	1	50	59	49
Industry and technology	1	260	255	246
Ethnology	1	20	18	17
Mixed	1	19	10	9
	Unit	1997	1999	2001
Temporary exhibitions				
total	1	2299	2250	2135
of which:				
exhibitions in the museums	1	2032	2249	1725
exhibitions organised by museums:				
in another venue in the Netherlands (not museums)	1	157	246	346
abroad	1	110	55	64
			<i>Source: Statistics Netherlands</i>	

List of References

www.museumserver.nl is the platform for Dutch museums on the Internet.

Currently, 515 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.minocw.nl 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 is the website of 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 Social and Cultural Planning Office in Dutch and English. The SCP conducts an ongoing survey on cultural participation in the Netherlands. Museums visits are included in the survey. Most publications of the SCP are available online.