Cultural policy

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Cultural policy in the Netherlands

With the help of cultural policy, the government wants to contribute to a high standard of quality and diversity in cultural presentation to as wide a range of audiences as possible, actively and passively. Four considerations are mentioned to subsidize art and culture:

- They are collective property;
- It has positive external effects on, for instance, the economy;
- It is a merit good: general accessibility is favorably regarded;
- The conservation argument: preserving art and heritage for future generations.

Most political parties agree on the main lines of cultural policy. Successive cabinets of varying political colours have continued the current cultural policy; changes do take place through ministers stressing their own points, however. Also general views on what should and should not be subsidized, change over time:

- The 50's and 60's: aesthetics of the art product is fundamental.
- The 70's: the measure in which the welfare of society is promoted becomes a key point. Renewal and social and geographic distribution also play an important role.
- The 80's: quality is the essential criterion in the assessment of art by advisors.
- Late 90's: reaching the community, expressed in; profitability and reaching target groups are added. In other words: the measure in which art generates its own income, and reaches specific target groups such as youth and the multicultural society.
- From 2000 the pointers are marketing, reaching the audience and pluralism.

The Dutch government has formulated the following spearheads for the new cultural policy to be implemented as of 2013:

- Internationalisation: the cultural sector must profile itself internationally.
- Cultural education: children and young people must be brought into contact with culture.
- Renewal and talent: the development of promising initiatives that are not yet familiar to a broad public.
- Giving to culture: encouraging the private sector to finance culture.

The Dutch government does not itself want to pass judgement on the quality of art; experts must assess its quality. However, politicians do decide how much of the total budget goes to art, culture and the media. The question of who is to receive those funds is settled after experts have made their recommendation.

Cultural policy of the national government

After the elections for the Second Chamber, a government is formed on the basis of a coalition agreement. The cultural plans are included in this agreement in a very summary
fashion. The Law on the Specific Cultural Policy entrusts the minister or his deputy with the task of creating conditions for the maintenance, development and social and geographical diffusion of cultural expressions. It is up to the minister of culture or his deputy to come up with plans himself, assisted by civil servants from the ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Council for Culture. The principles of the cultural policy are presented once every four years. If the Second Chamber approves these principles, they serve as the touchstone in assessing requests for funding.

The minister decides on whether or not to subsidise organisations on the basis of the qualitative verdict of the Council for Culture and on the basis of his own priorities. In 2013 the department of OCenW is spending around € 34 billion (the total government budget is € 182 billion). The basic infrastructure (BIS) concerns the culture funds, institutions with structural subsidy and institutions that receive a four-year subsidy, like orchestras, museums, companies etc. Over the period from 2013 – 2016 € 325 million will be spent yearly on 83 institutions. The six funds receive € 133 million in 2013.

The role of political parties
Today all (larger) political parties agree that any self respecting country should have a decent level of supply in the cultural plane. This includes that the various parties have more or less the same goals regarding culture. There is not much difference of opinion on the desired level of the cultural budget.

More important than the political color, are the political lobbying some organizations are able to organize when they are threatened to become extinct. It is not surprising that many groups and museums have politicians in their committees. Since the introduction of the basic infrastructure, fewer institutions receive government grants. Many more institutions have become dependent on grants from a cultural fund, where politicians have little influence.

The Council for Culture
The Raad voor Cultuur (Culture Council) is the independent legal advisory council of the government for culture- and media policies. The Council advises on three levels; strategic policy advice, subsidiary advice and implementation advice about the (protected) status of heritage. In the context of subsidiary advice the Council advises once every four years on giving a four yearly government grant to cultural institutions, sector institutions and funds. In April 2011 the Culture Council released the Advies Bezuiniging Cultuur 2013 – 2016. Noodgedwongen keuzen.

The Council consists of nine members appointed by minister or secretary of the OCenW. The Council comprises committees per sector, for dance, music, theatre, visual art and design, film, amateur art, architecture, monuments, media, museums, among others. Additional committee members are appointed for these committees. Besides those there are performance visitors, in particular for the performing arts, since it is impossible for the committee members to visit sufficient performances.

National cultural funds
The State has set up funds so that the granting process may be efficient and take place at some distance from politics. The goals and budgets of the cultural funds are determined by politics; however, the responsibility for the day-to-day affairs of a fund lies with the fund directors. The assessment of the policy applications is in the hands of advisory committees of independent experts, appointed by the board of a fund. Every year, each government fund presents a report in which all the subsidy applications are outlined and the subsidies requested and granted are mentioned.

The following funds will together share a total of at least € 133 million in 2013:

- Fonds Podiumkunsten: € 43,8 mln
- Mondriaan Fonds: € 25,9 miljoen.
- Nederlands Letterenfonds: € 10,1 miljoen.
- Nederlands Filmfonds: € 29,2 miljoen
Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie: € 11,5 mln.
Fonds cultuurparticipatie: € 12,4 mln

The media are promoted through three funds:

- **Media Fund** (MediaFonds): supports cultural production for the public broadcasting channels and cooperation between broadcasting channels and cultural institutions. The fund receives an annual donation from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) which is at least equivalent to one-sixteenth of the revenue of the Ether Advertising Foundation for that year. In the last few years that has amounted to around € 16 million a year.

- **Co-production Fund** (CoBo-fonds): encourages co-productions of films and documentaries by different public broadcasting channels and with independent producers. The available budget comes from the copyright fees that are paid for cable transmission and from the ministry's media budget. The fund spent around € 7.4 million in 2011.

- **Press incentive fund** (Stimuleringsfonds voor de Pers): targets certain print media whose continuity is at risk, as well as supporting the launching of new daily newspapers or opinion magazines. The fund also has a system of grants for press innovation, minority publications and talent development. In 2011 the fund received around € 4.3 million from the ministry.

**Sectoral institutes**

Sectoral institutes carry out auxiliary tasks within the system such as national and international representation and promotion; education, information, reflection; the cataloguing, evaluating and making available of heritage; documentation and archiving; harmonisation and coordination. In the period 2009-2012 the government subsidised nine institutes via the basic infrastructure. After a number of mergers, there are three sectoral institutes left in 2013:

- **NIADEC/AVE** (Creative industry sectoral institute) will start in 2013 on the basis of a merger of the Netherlands Architecture Institute, Virtual Platform, and Premsela.
- **Cultural Education and Amateur Arts Knowledge Institute**. As of 1 January this is the name of the institute resulting from the merger of Kunstfactor and Cultuurnetwerk. Objective: to encourage and support the cultural life-cycle of children, adolescents and adults.
- **EYE Netherlands Film Institute**. This institute was created in 2012 on the basis of a merger of the Filmmuseum, Holland Film, Filmbank and the Netherlands Institute for Film Education. EYE promotes Dutch film culture by means of collection forming, presentation, promotion, research, education and outreach to a broad public and to professionals.

Erfgoed Nederland (Dutch Heritage), The Netherlands Music Centre were abolished in 2012. The Netherlands Theatre Institute continues as Theater in Nederland in 2013. The future of the Netherlands Music Institute is also at risk. Some activities will be taken over by other institutions, others will disappear. You can find the present state of affairs on the websites of these organisations.

**Cultural policy of the provincial governments**

After the Provincial Council elections, a coalition is formed for each province. The contributing parties and the deputies together supply the provincial 'ministers'. One of these deputies has culture in his portfolio (among other things). Although formally, each province has its own cultural policy, the differences between the provinces are not very great. The provinces serve as partners, as coordinators of local interests and as advocates of those interests in The Hague.

The cultural portfolio is mostly a side issue for the deputy in question, who usually has only a small budget to spend on this. Not just all the arrangements, but often also the formation
and projection of visions are left to the officials in charge. Those visions are reflected in a provincial document on culture, or in partial memoranda about, for example, performing arts or the cultural heritage.

The provinces’ special focus is on the matters that threaten to fall between two stools; things that neither the government, nor the municipalities pay attention to: support for village museums, art companies with a regional function, art education lecturers, to name but a few examples. The provinces also maintain a support structure with the help of consultants, and act as organisers of very various cultural events.

Part of the provincial money for culture is spent on structural subsidies for provincial museums and companies and on consultants. The provinces have not started forming funds for incidental subsidies. This means that the distributable subsidy monies fall directly under the deputy’s portfolio and are managed by provincial officials. The various ‘nest eggs’ vary for each province.

Cultural policy of the municipalities
On a municipal level a coalition is formed after the city council elections. The participating parties together supply the aldermen. Usually one of the aldermen takes on culture in addition to his other tasks; this is often the alderman for finance. On a municipal level culture rarely constitutes an important topic in the coalition negotiations. The extent in which a municipality is willing to spend money on culture is mainly determined by its availability. The structural financial support of new initiatives is always a difficult issue. Nowadays, the competition between cities is an important motive to start doing this.

Art and culture are very unequally divided among the various municipalities, as is the available budget, which may amount to several hundreds of thousands or to tens of millions of Euros a year. Financially, the municipalities are principally responsible for the accommodations. In addition to this they promote cultural activities by giving subsidies to producers, organisers and amateurs of culture. The municipalities often serve as organisers and facilitators.

The alderman and his officials
Like the deputies, the alderman not only leaves the arrangements but also the formation and projection of visions to his officials. More and more cities have started writing policy documents for culture in which the policy for a number of years to come is outlined. These are often inspired by large investments being made for a new theatre or concert hall, pop stage or museum. Where their numbers allow this the officials for culture work together in a Cultural Department, usually under the Welfare Services. In general, these officials are very directly involved with culture in their municipality. Many organisers and artists try to arrange things through direct contacts with them.

Municipal subsidies
As with the provinces, the monies available for project subsidies are rarely categorised under funds. This has to do with the modest size of these ‘nest eggs’. Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague are the big exceptions, since they finance more than just accommodations, as a result of the volume of their cultural facilities package. The main companies and museums are established there, most artists live in these cities, and the audiences are largest. The financial efforts of these three cities correspond to that. They are the only three cities in the Netherlands to subsidise the larger art companies for symphonic music, theatre and dance in their cities.

Amsterdam has copied the structure that exists on a central government level. There is the Amsterdamse Kunstraad (Amsterdam art council) and the Amsterdamse Fonds voor de Kunsten (Amsterdam art fund), and an art policy document is published every four years. In Rotterdam the Rotterdam Council for Art and Culture advises the Rotterdam local authority. The Culture Memorandum Commission does the same for Utrecht.
Division of tasks between the government, the provinces and the municipalities

The government has three layers: national, provincial and municipal. The division of their cultural tasks is as follows: the national government is in charge of the production of a high-quality national cultural offer; the municipalities are responsible for the accommodations; the provinces have a coordinating and supplementary role. This division was created based on the following principle objectives: to strive for an effective use of subsidies; to let the directly interested parties pay wherever this is possible; to avoid bureaucracy; to take into account a world of art in constant movement.

The role of the national government is the most obvious and the most controversial. However the central government is not the main subsidiser. Research by Bureau Berenschot into the development of the government subsidies to art and culture (2012) shows that the total income of the subsidized cultural sector is around € 4.7 billion. Approximately 16% comes from the government, 5% from the provinces, 38% from local governments, 1% arrangements, 18% entry fees, 13% other (hospitality, hire etc.) 9% private.

Theatres and concert halls

The subsidised stages, whether in the theatres or for pop concerts, are almost exclusively subsidised by the local government, the municipalities, with the exception of the ‘theaterwerkplaatsen’ and ‘productiehuizen’, which receive government subsidies for their production activities. In as far as they function as theatres the municipalities pay for them. For special projects, theatres may apply to the Nederlands Fonds voor de Podiumkunsten for a subsidy. The number of commercial concert halls, pop stages and theatres is growing; think of the Heineken Music Hall and the Circustheater at Scheveningen, for example. They are private and receive no subsidies!

Festivals

If they are subsidised, festivals are supported by the municipality in which they take place, perhaps with an additional provincial subsidy. Only festivals of national significance (like the Holland Festival, the International Film Festival at Rotterdam and the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam) receive subsidies from the central government. The Performance Art Fund supports 13 festivals.

Orchestras and opera

A total of seven orchestras are funded via the basic infrastructure: four symphony orchestras in the North, East, South and Rotterdam-The Hague areas; the International Top Orchestra that services the Amsterdam area; an opera company; and one exclusively ballet orchestra. In addition there is scope for one opera production core. You can find a survey on BeroepKunstenaar. A total of six music theatre companies are subsidised via the Performing Arts Fund.

Companies

The Dutch government subsidises companies that are considered to be of national stature in the field of the performing arts. From 2013, eight municipal companies (four large and four medium-sized ones) and eight youth theatre companies will be funded via the basic infrastructure; the corresponding figure for the period 2009-2012 was thirteen youth companies. Companies can also receive subsidies from provincial and local government bodies, sometimes in addition to a subsidy from the national government.

The Performing Arts Fund, to which companies who are not covered by the basic infrastructure can apply, will support the activities of twenty-eight theatre companies with a structural subsidy for the period 2013-2016. You can find a survey on BeroepKunstenaar.

The Dutch government subsidises four dance companies via the basic infrastructure: two large dance companies with an international status, one ballet company, and one modern dance company. The Performing Arts Fund supports a total of fourteen dance companies.
**Broadcasting system**

Dutch public broadcasting is funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The Administrative Board of the public broadcasting corporation is responsible for the total programme policy and programming for a total of approx. € 800 million a year. A new Law on the Media came into force in 2009. An important change is that websites, digital channels and services offered via mobile platforms are now formally considered to be among the tasks of the Dutch public broadcasting corporation. Another important change is that programmes can be distributed more flexibly among the different channels. For instance, all kinds of digital thematic channels such as Humortv, 101TV, Cultura and Best24 have sprung up.

In connection with spending cuts, the number of broadcasting channels will be reduced from 21 to 8 in the period 2013-2016. The two that will remain at any event are the NOS and the NTR. The other six places will be allocated to broadcasting channels on the basis of their membership figures.

**Abroad**

Holland is a trading nation, with culture as a lubricant. Whenever a trade delegation visits a distant country, a cultural delegation goes along. Dutch orchestras, dance companies and visual artists are given export subsidies in hopes that their innovative spirit will reflect on the industries to naturally result in profitable contracts. This is not a new approach, but one which has been used increasingly deliberately in the past years, among other things as a result of the European unification. In this expanding arena it is becoming more important to project an image of one’s own.

The Dutch government allocates extra funds to give an additional boost to international culture policy. The reserve for this consists of the Homogeneous International Culture Cooperation Group (HGIS) fund (HGIS-Cultuurgelden). Applications for grants from this fund can be made via the various cultural funds (cultuurfondsen). As of 2013 the ministry of Education, Culture and Science will put the HGIS money (€ 4,6 million) in strategic international policy.

The European Union has an active cultural policy as well. The Culture programme runs from 2007 up to and including 2013 and has a budget of about € 400 million. The Media programme, designed to strengthen the European audiovisual sector, has a budget of € 755 million for the same period. The goals are the following:

- Expose and protect the most important European cultural heritage.
- Stimulate cross-border activities in the cultural sector.
- Promote the international traffic of art work and cultural projects.
- Stimulate intercultural dialog.

**More information**

- The subsidy & sponsoring section on BeroepKunstenaar.nl, which includes texts about the granting of subsidies, trends in cultural financing.
- Music world, Theater world en Dance world on BeroepKunstenaar.nl on subsidized companies in the performing arts.
- Raad voor Cultuur (Culture Council)
- On the site of the Ministerie van OCW you will find hoofdlijnen van het cultuurbeleid and left to relevant notes such as ‘Meer dan kwaliteit: een nieuwe visie op cultuurbeleid’, over het cultuur-beleid 2013-2016.
- The Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau (Social and Cultural Planning Office) publishes figures about art and culture (among other things), regarding numbers of productions, visitors, theatres, etc. The figures are always a number of years old.