



Cultural Policy

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Cultural policy in the Netherlands

The government wants to contribute to a strong cultural sector, which is becoming increasingly less dependent on the government, through the current cultural policy. At the same time, the government continues to feel responsible for guaranteeing high-quality cultural offerings throughout the country. Arts and culture are seen as a collective good that have positive effects on the society. General accessibility is therefore important, just like the preservation of art and heritage for future generations. The general opinions about what should or should not be subsidised change with the times:

- The 1950s and 1960s: the beauty of the art product is the key element.
- The 1970s: the extent to which the welfare of the general public is promoted is an important benchmark. Innovation and social and geographical distribution also play an important role.
- The 1980s: quality is the central criterion in the evaluation of art by advisers.
- End of the 1990s: audience reach, expressed in profitability and target group reach, comes into play. In other words: the extent to which art generates its own revenues and reaches specific target groups, such as young people and ethnic minorities.
- From approximately 2000, the focal points were market forces, audience reach and multiformity.
- In the year 2017, there are also political parties that believe that no (or hardly any) money should go to arts and culture.

From 2013, there have been major cuts to the arts and culture budget, by both the government and municipalities and provinces. The first Rutte cabinet reduced central government spending on culture by 21% between 2012 and 2013. Entrepreneurship, internationalisation, cultural education and innovation and talent were the focal points of the cultural policy in the period 2013-2016.

There are no major changes to the new cultural system as of 2017 compared to the previous period. Calm and stability are desired and necessary following the culture cuts. The government has formulated the following guiding principles for this period: quality is paramount, room for innovation, and profiling and cooperation as second nature. Important themes are cultural education, talent development, social value, digitisation and international cultural policy.

For the period 2021-2024 the principles apply: broadening and renewal, a strong cultural sector, culture for everyone and culture is boundless. In addition, the endorsement of the Fair Practice Code, the Governance Code Culture and the Cultural Diversity Code becomes a subsidy condition.

The following general criteria will become leading:

- Quality: from (inter) national level.
- Renewal: of all institutions with financing from the government.
- Fair reward.
- Promotion of education and participation.
- Geographical spread.



Creation

Following the elections for the House of Representatives of the Netherlands, a government is formed on the basis of a coalition agreement. The cultural plans are very briefly included in this agreement. On the basis of the Act governing cultural policy, the state secretary or the minister of Education, Culture and Science is charged with creating conditions for the: preservation, development and social and geographical distribution of cultural expressions. It is therefore the responsibility of the state secretary or the minister to come up with plans. They are assisted by civil servants from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and by the Council for Culture.

The guiding principles of the cultural policy are presented every four years. If the House of Representatives agrees with these guiding principles, they serve as reference points in the evaluation of subsidy requests. On the basis of the qualitative assessment by the Council for Culture, and on the basis of personal priorities, the minister decides whether or not to subsidise organisations.

Council for Culture

The Council for Culture is the independent legal advisory body of the government and the parliament in the fields of arts, culture and media. The Council for Culture offers advice on three levels: strategic policy advice, subsidy advice and implementation advice on the (protected) status of heritage. Within the context of subsidy advice, the Council for Culture provides advice every four years on the granting of government subsidies to cultural institutions, sectoral bodies and funds.

The Council consists of seven members who come from the cultural sector, media and science. There are four committees within the Council, each with five to seven members, for the following sectors: heritage, media, the performing arts, and the visual arts, design and architecture.

Allocation of duties between central government, province and municipality

The government has three layers: central government, province and municipality. The allocation of duties in the field of culture is roughly as follows: the central government is responsible for the production of high-quality national offerings; the municipalities are responsible for the facilities; the provinces have a coordinating and complementary role. This allocation of duties was devised on the basis of the following guiding principles: striving for an effective use of subsidies; ensuring the parties that are directly involved to be paid where possible; avoiding bureaucracy and consideration of an art world that is continually evolving.

The role of the central government may evoke most discussion, but the central government is not the largest provider of subsidies. Research by the Dutch consulting firm Berenschot on the development of the central government subsidies to art and culture (2015) revealed that the total revenues from the subsidised cultural sector in 2013 were estimated to be approximately €4.7 billion. Approximately 15% came from central government, 6% from the provinces, 39% from the municipalities, 1% from arrangements, 18% from admission fees, 13% other (catering, rental etc.), 9% private. From 2017, municipalities are expected to make more cuts to art and culture, because less money is available.

Basic infrastructure

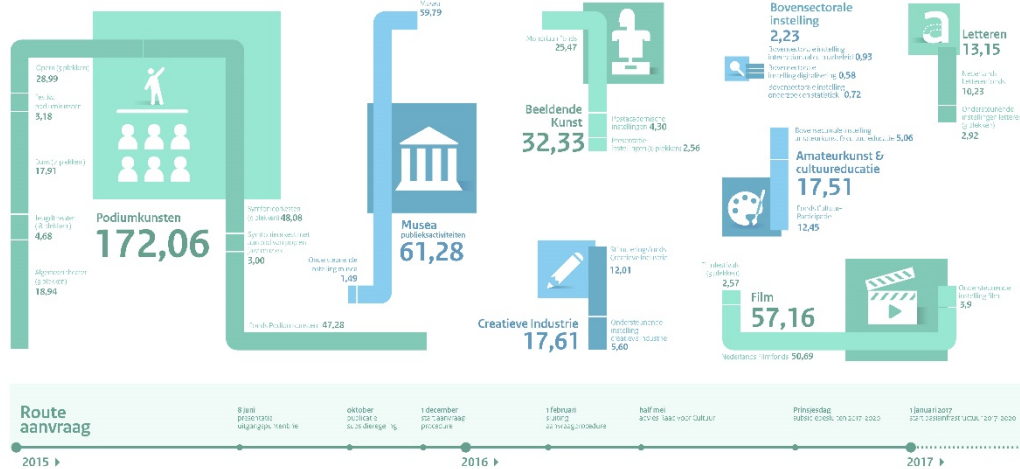
At central government level, a distinction is made between institutions that are part of the cultural basic infrastructure (BIS) and those that are not. The BIS is directly financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and includes the cultural funds, sectoral bodies and institutions that are of national importance according to the government. They all receive a four-year subsidy. In 2017, approximately €373 million was available for these institutions. That was €325 million in 2013.



Culturele basisinfrastructuur

Het totale jaarlijkse bedrag voor de culturele basisinfrastructuur (incl. fondsen) bedraagt € 373,33 miljoen.

Er wordt een bedrag van € 373,33 miljoen beschikbaar gesteld voor de culturele basisinfrastructuur.



National cultural funds

The government has established six cultural funds to enable the allocation of subsidies to run efficiently and at arm's length from politics. The objectives and budgets of these cultural funds are set by politics. The responsibility for the ins and outs of a fund lies with the fund's board. The assessment of the subsidy requests is in the hands of advisory committees with independent advisers who are appointed by the fund's board. All subsidy requests are described in the annual reports of these funds and the amounts requested and granted are specified.

- **Fonds Podiumkunsten** (Performing Arts Fund NL) supports all forms of professional performing arts. In 2017, they will receive €44.51 million.
- **Mondriaan Fonds** (Mondriaan Fund) supports the visual arts and cultural heritage. In 2017, they will receive €25.02 million.
- **Nederlands Letterenfonds** (Dutch Foundation for Literature) stimulates literature by providing writers, translators, publishers and festivals with grants and subsidies. In 2017, they will receive €10.01 million.
- **Nederlands Filmfonds** (Netherlands Film Fund) stimulates the development, production and distribution of a diverse and high-quality range of films in the Netherlands. In 2017, they will receive €49.45 million.
- **Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie** (Creative Industries Fund NL) supports projects in the fields of architecture, design, e-culture, games, landscape architecture, interior architecture and video clips. In 2017, they will receive €11.46 million.
- **Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie** (Cultural Participation Fund) supports innovative initiatives in the fields of the amateur arts, cultural education and popular culture. In 2017, they will receive €12.22 million.

Sectoral bodies

Sectoral bodies fulfil supporting core tasks. There are four cross-sector support institutions and three sectoral bodies:

- **Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis** (RKD/ Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) (support institution for museums) manages and provides access to knowledge and information about Western art from the late Middle Ages up until the present day.
- **Digitaal Erfgoed Nederland** (Digital Heritage Netherlands, cross-sector support institution) supports heritage institutions with their digitisation policy and Digital Heritage Netherlands has also, in practice, supported culture-producing institutions.



- [Landelijk Kennisinstituut Cultuureducatie en Amateurkunst](#) (LKCA / National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts, cross-sector support institution) aims to stimulate and support the cultural life of children, young people and adults.
- [EYE](#) (support institution for film) promotes Dutch film culture by means of collection development, presentation, promotion, research, education and knowledge transfer for a broad public and professionals.
- [Het Nieuwe Instituut](#) (HNI) is the sectoral body for the creative industry.
- [Boekmanstichting](#) (Boekman Foundation, cross-sector support institution) is an independent knowledge centre for arts and cultural policy in the Netherlands.
- [DutchCulture](#) (cross-sector support institution) is a support institution, which focuses on the promotion of international cultural collaboration.

In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science finances the organisation Cultuur+Ondernemen (Culture+Entrepreneurship) on the basis of project subsidies in order to execute the programme Ondernemerschap in Cultuur (Entrepreneurship in Culture). This falls outside the basic infrastructure.

Provincial cultural policy

After the elections for the Provincial Council, a coalition is formed per province. The participating parties together provide the members of the Provincial Executive, the provincial 'ministers'. One of them has culture in his or her portfolio. The province acts as partner, as coordinator of local interests and as advocate thereof in The Hague.

The culture portfolio is often a matter of minor importance for a member of the Provincial Executive, who mostly has a small budget for this. The actual arrangements, but also forming and promoting visions, are often left to civil servants. This vision can be found in a provincial policy document on culture, or in specific policy documents about, for example, the performing arts or cultural heritage.

Special attention from the province is dedicated to issues that are not dealt with by the central government or by the municipalities. For example, supporting museums in villages, companies with a regional function and arts education teachers. The province also arranges a support infrastructure by means of consultants and acts as organiser of a wide range of cultural events. The 'pots' of money available differ per province.

Fourteen active provincial cultural institutions join forces within the Raad van twaalf (Council of twelve). They share their expertise among each other and strive to achieve an optimal arts and culture environment in the Netherlands, together with other institutions, governments and initiatives.

Municipal cultural policy

After the municipal elections, a coalition is formed within municipalities. The participating parties together provide the councillors. The available budget for arts and culture differs per municipality. This is dependent on the size of the municipality and the importance attached thereto. It may be several hundred thousand or tens of millions of euros per year. Municipalities mostly devote finances to the facilities in their municipality and, in addition, stimulate cultural activities by providing project subsidies to creators, organisers and amateurs.

An increasing number of cities are taking the initiative to write policy documents on culture in which the policy is mapped out for a number of years. The reason for this is often large investments that are being made, such as a new theatre or concert hall, a new pop music venue or museum.

Just like members of the Provincial Executive, councillors often leave the actual arrangements, but also the formation and promotion of visions, to civil servants. The civil servants for culture often work



together in a Culture Department, which mostly falls under the Welfare Department. In general, these civil servants are very closely involved in the cultural activities within their municipality.

Municipal subsidies

As is the case with the provinces, the money that is available for project subsidies is rarely placed in funds. This is due to the small size of these 'pots' of money available. Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague are the major exceptions; they finance more than the facilities. That is because the size of their cultural facilities package: the most important companies and museums are located here, and this is where most artists live and there is the biggest audience.

Amsterdam has copied the structure of the central government level. For example, there is the Amsterdam Arts Council ([Amsterdamse Kunstraad](#)) and the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts ([Amsterdamse Fonds voor de Kunsten](#)) and a policy document for the arts is published every four years. Since 2017, Amsterdam even has an A-Bis, an basic infrastructure for Amsterdam made up of 21 'excellent' arts and cultural institutions, including four houses of culture spread throughout the city. In Rotterdam, the Rotterdam Council for Arts and Culture ([Rotterdamse Raad voor Kunst en Cultuur](#)) provides advice. In Utrecht, the advisory committee on the Dutch system of cultural subsidies ([Commissie Cultuurnota](#)) does that.

Internationalisation

The Netherlands is a trading nation. Culture acts as a lubricating oil. When a trade delegation goes to a faraway country, a cultural delegation often travels along with them. Dutch orchestras, dance companies and visual artists receive an export subsidy in that case, in the hope that their innovative spirit will rub off on the business sector and profitable contracts will automatically follow.

As of 2017, the international cultural policy will concentrate on eight focus countries: Belgium/Flanders, China, Germany, France, Indonesia, Turkey, the United States and the United Kingdom. DutchCulture is the most important implementing organisation of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The European Union is also occupied with cultural policy. The Creative Europe programme runs from 2014 up to an including 2020 and has a budget of approximately €1.46 billion. It consists of two sub-programmes: culture and media. Objectives are:

- Reveal and protect the most important European cultural heritage.
- Stimulate cross-border collaborations in the cultural sector.
- Promote the international traffic of artworks and cultural projects.
- Stimulate intercultural dialogue.

More information

- Check BeroepKunstenaar.nl/en for texts about the granting of subsidies, trends in cultural funding and a step-by-step plan on applying for subsidies.
- Website of the Dutch central government: [Rijksoverheid](#).
- Website of the Council for Culture: [Raad voor Cultuur](#).
- Website of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science ([Ministerie van OCW](#)) includes the [main elements of the cultural policy](#) and links to relevant policy papers.
- The Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP publishes ([Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau](#)) among other things, figures for arts and culture: number of productions, visitors, venues, etc.
- Website of the [Raad van twaalf](#).