

ifa ECP Monitor Country Report

Netherlands

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1. External cultural policy objectives in geopolitical context

The Dutch government describes international cultural policy as a “pillar of the Kingdom’s diplomacy” and views ECP as a “unifying link between political, economic and social topics in cultural and foreign policy” (Government of the Netherlands, 2020). Every four years, the government articulates a new international cultural policy strategy, joining together the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ), the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) as well as some arm’s-length institutions to define objectives in the coming years.¹ The government views ECP in a multi-faceted way: it explicitly uses the language of “soft power” (a term more commonly associated with the United States), but also stresses the economic and reputational benefits of cultural links, as well as supporting culture and the arts for their own sake.

Table 1: Economy of the Netherlands

	2019	% change since 2015
Population (millions)	17,282/68 th	1
GDP/ranking	810,247 million/17 th	17.4
GDP per capita	€46,710	14.7
Cultural economy (%GDP)	0.4 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾	0
Education economy (%GDP)	5.1 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾	-0.1
R&D economy (%GDP) ²	1.99 ^{3 (2018)}	0
Media economy (%GDP)	0.2 ⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾	0

The Netherlands is a small but wealthy country, ranking 68th in population but 17th in aggregate output, and 13th in (nominal) GDP per capita. As a prosperous nation, it can invest heavily in education, arts, and culture, yet without a large geographic footprint or clearly stated goals, it lacks a truly global ECP strategy.

¹ The current strategy covers 2021-24 and was formulated in 2020.

² Expressed as Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD) (Eurostat).

³ The government has a goal of increasing this figure to 2.5%, “Curious and committed: The value of science” OCW (2019).

Table 2: Geopolitical and geo-economic position of the Netherlands

	2019	2015
Hard power rank ⁴	36 th	>25
World trade rank ⁵	7 th	7 th
Soft power rank ⁶	10 (72.03)	10 (65.21)
Diplomacy rank ⁷	16	17 ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾

The Netherlands is highly integrated into the global economy, ranking 7th in world trade. Its hard power score trails its aggregate output substantially, but its diplomatic ranking is more in line with economic size (16th versus 17th). Soft power is a strength of the Netherlands, where it ranks 10th worldwide. Portland's 2019 Soft Power 30 finds that the Netherlands' "attractive economic model, high-performing government, capacity for innovation, world-class universities, and solid contribution on global issues like climate change" contribute to this high ranking (Portland, 2019).

Table 3: Government funding as percent of total government outlays, by selected fields

	2019	% change since 2015
Culture	1.1	0.2
Education	11.8	0.1
R & D	1.66	0.07
Media	0.4	0

As a percentage of government outlays, the Netherlands spends fairly generously on budget areas relevant to ECP. The 1.1% devoted to culture outstrips the UK and Germany and is equal to that of France. The Dutch Government also allocates a substantial amount to education and R&D, likely contributing to its well-regarded universities. On media, it spends a smaller share than other western governments, perhaps as a result of lacking a dedicated international broadcaster.

The Dutch ECP strategy (referred to as International Cultural Policy, or ICP in government documents⁸) is fairly well-integrated into the rest of the Netherlands' foreign and economic policy. This is apparent in government documents, as the 2021-24 ICP strategy states both that "culture is 'soft power'" and that "economically speaking...culture is significant" (Government of the Netherlands, 2020). In these statements, a mix of a typically American (geo-

⁴ 2019 Military Strength Ranking. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2020, from <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp>.

⁵ Share of world trade expressed as Export market shares by items - % of world total (Eurostat).

⁶ Soft Power 30. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2020, from <https://softpower30.com/>.

⁷ Global Diplomacy Index. (2020). Retrieved 2 September 2020, from <https://globaldiplomacyindex.lowyinstitute.org/>.

⁸ In the text, ICP will refer to what the Netherlands describes its strategy as, which will be compared to the ECP definition used in the glossary.

political) and British (commercial/economic) views of cultural policy is apparent. The Netherlands also cites increasing geopolitical competition and the need to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as core tenets of its ECP approach. Geographically, the Netherlands pursues a relatively limited approach, using local partnerships in lieu of substantial foreign “brick and mortar” presence and targeting only a core group of 23 countries for its ECP.

While the Netherlands does have a large number of ECP priority countries, they are well distributed around the world, with many of them corresponding with the Netherlands’ former colonial holdings, such as South Africa, Indonesia, and Suriname. We can contrast this approach with a more neighborhood-centric one, like that of Turkey. Despite the Netherlands’ global presence, it has been refocusing its efforts on Europe in recent years, likely as a result of the perceived challenges to democratic norms within the EU (Government of the Netherlands, 2020).

2. External cultural policy: an overview

Table 4: Key ECP statistics for the Netherlands

	2019
Number of countries with ECP activities	23 target countries ⁹
Total number of institutions abroad	Limited, works mostly with local partners
Total number of FTE staff engaged in ECP activities	Min. 1200
Financial scale of all ECP activities	€22,470,000, up from €18,300,000 in 2015 (Funding combined from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ), the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW))
Comparative ECP ranking	medium

Sources: Dutch International Cultural Policy Framework 2021–2024

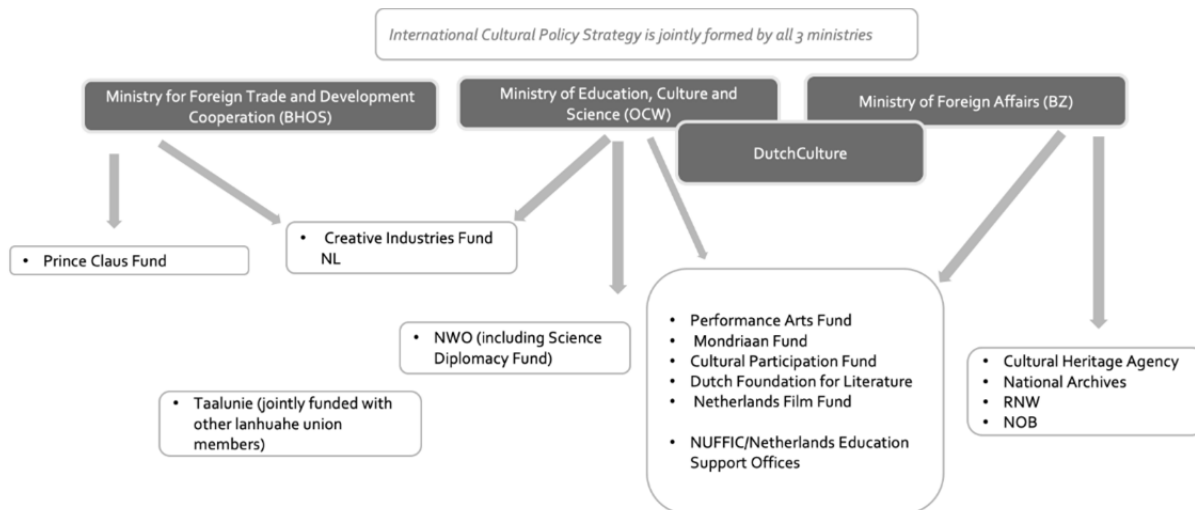
The Netherlands mostly uses an arm’s length approach to ECP that largely avoids direct government control. The 2017 Cultural Policy Framework (Government of the Netherlands, 2017) identifies the role of the state in a market-correcting fashion: “government intervention is needed if cultural offerings cannot bear sufficient fruit or opportunities are not fully grasped...the role of central government is mainly to create enabling conditions and act as facilitator.”

This relatively limited geographic and strategic approach is partially the result of budget cuts to international cultural policy that were enacted in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent decision to pursue austerity policies. Earmarked funds to ECP fields were cut by nearly 27% in the years from 2009-2014, which the ICP strategy describes as having had

⁹ Source: Dutch International Cultural Policy Framework 2017-2020.

“serious consequences for the actors in the field,” necessitating a targeted approach” (ibid.). Funding has been increased in recent years, with the 2021-24 annual contribution set to equal €22,470,000, up from €18,300,000 during the previous cycle (Government of the Netherlands, 2020).

Figure 1: Institutional Map of ECP in the Netherlands



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ), the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) all collaborate to shape the Netherlands’ strategy, with extra input provided from Dutch Culture. In addition to the Prince Claus Fund, which is state-funded, the government has established six other arm’s length cultural funds (Performance Arts Fund, Mondriaan Fund, Cultural Participation Fund, Dutch Foundation for Literature, Netherlands Film Fund, and Creative Industries Fund) to carry out ECP. Organizations like the Cultural Heritage Agency and the National Archives are also active.

3. Fields of ECP

3.1. Culture and the arts

Table 5: Statistics on Culture & the Arts Promotion in the Netherlands

	2019	2015
Number of countries present	23 target countries	19 target countries
Number of institutes	Dutch Culture: 9 global partners	Dutch Culture: 8 main partners
Number of FTE staff	DC: 19.83 PC: 19.83	DC: 23 PC: 16.62

	2019	2015
Number of artists in exchange programs	Dutch Culture: 40 visitors; database of residencies 150 covered by Prince Claus mobility fund	Dutch Culture: Unchanged Prince Claus: 114 mobility grants
Budget	Dutch Culture: €2,959,288 Prince Claus Fund: €6,727,600	Dutch Culture: €2,942,637 Prince Claus Fund: €5,446,960
Government Support	DC: €3,109,081 PC: €3 million	DC: €2,906,906 ¹⁰ PC: €3.21 million (BZ); .5 million from lottery ¹¹

The Netherlands has few on-the-ground institutions that could be considered analogous to the Goethe Institute or British Council. With the exception of the Erasmus Huis in Jakarta, in-country Dutch ICP efforts are conducted via embassies. The two major organizations funded by the Dutch Government include the Prince Claus Fund and Dutch Culture. Each are funded with about €3 million from the state, with the rest of the Prince Claus Fund's €6.7 million budget coming from the Dutch lottery, project funding, and incidental sources (Prince Claus, 2020).

Dutch Culture was founded in 2013 as a merger of MEDIA Desk Nederland, SICA and Trans Artists. Its main predecessor, SICA (Centre for International Cultural Activities) was set up in 1999 to coordinate international activities of other cultural organizations (TransArtists, 2013). Hurkmans (2008) describes Dutch Culture (SICA) as “the ‘nerve centre’ and the liaison officer between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its cultural attachés at the missions and the arts sector.” It is also closely involved with forming the government’s ICP strategy. It has 35 employees in total, which represent about 19 FTE (Dutch Culture, 2020). It is also active in international organizations and networks such as IETM, On the Move, IFACCA and EUNIC (where Dutch Culture represents the Netherlands). It has 9 partner institutions worldwide, contributes to activities in the government’s 23 ECP target countries, and receives €3.1 million from the government each year.

The Prince Claus Fund was established in 1996 “as a tribute to HRH Prince Claus’s dedication to culture and development” (Prince Claus, n.d.). It has presented the Prince Claus Awards every year since 1997, which honor both organizations and individuals that contribute to culture worldwide. It focuses primarily on the Global South and Eastern Europe (ibid.). Roughly half of its nearly €7 million budget comes from the government, with the rest coming from project/incidental funding and the lottery. It has 19 FTE and covers 150 artist exchanges through its mobility fund. It is also active with dozens of partner organizations worldwide.

Other important government-backed cultural players include several arm’s length cultural promotion funds. The Performance Arts Fund (€1,713,411 in annual government support),

¹⁰ DC Annual Report 2016.

¹¹ PC Annual Report 2015.

Mondriaan Fund (€1,139,541), Cultural Participation Fund (€200,000), Dutch Foundation for Literature (€644,645), Netherlands Film Fund (€860,250), and Creative Industries Fund (€2,396,250)¹² are all significant. Central government agencies include the Cultural Heritage Agency (topic discussed further in the following section) and National Archives, which are each funded with €500,000 per year (Government of the Netherlands, 2020). The Netherlands has also conducted the “Creative Twinning Programme,” which provides grants to culturally-oriented NGOs and companies that foster social cohesion in countries bordering the European Union. It was provided with 2.5 million EUR over the three-year period of 2017-20, but is currently no longer accepting applications (Netherlands Enterprise Agency, 2020). Many in-country activities are also carried out through embassies, although the lack of a dedicated cultural organization has been found to limit visibility (IOB, 2016, p.77).

3.2. Language

Table 6: Language promotion statistics of the Netherlands

	2019	2015
Number of members	-	3
Number of language teachers	-	~6500
Budget	-	€10,231,163

Language plays almost no explicit role in the Netherlands’ ECP, with many Dutch universities and even Dutch schools abroad using English as their primary language of instruction. Hamans (2016) argues that “language and language policy appear not be a priority in the Netherlands.” Indeed, the word “language” does not appear once in either the 2021-24 ICP strategy or the 2017-20 document (Government of the Netherlands, 2020; 2017). However, due to the colonial ties with countries around the world, the Dutch language plays a small role in the euphemistically-named “shared cultural heritage” activities. Countries targeted for heritage-related activities include ten partner countries include Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Suriname, and the United States (Dutch Culture, n.d.).

Dutch language cooperation is conducted officially through the Taalunie¹³ (Union for the Dutch Language). Official members include only the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname, with some Caribbean islands acting as additional partners (Taalunie, n.d.a.). The language union provides small grants (in the thousands of euros) to university departments, scholarships to interested foreign students, and promotion of Dutch literature. The union estimates that 500 instructors teach Dutch as a foreign language at 130 universities in 40 countries. Below the university level, an additional 6,000 teachers teach Dutch to 400,000 students (Taalunie, n.d.a.). The Taalunie cooperates with the Center for Language and Education at KU Leuven and the Radboud University Nijmegen to offer the Certificate Dutch as a Foreign Language (CNaVT) (CNaVT, n.d.) and offers summer schools for both students and teachers

¹² Although the budget of Creative Industries Fund NL is substantial, the Fund is not discussed at length due to its primary function as an economic promotion actor, rather than a tool of traditional ECP.

¹³ Taalunie had a 2019 budget of €10,231,163, of which €6,917,184 came from the Dutch government, € 3,743,084 from the Flemish government and €20,895 from its own income (Taalunie, 2019).

of Dutch. Due to former colonial ties, and some ongoing linguistic links, Taalunie works to promote Dutch in South Africa and Indonesia as well (Taalunie, n.d.b.). It has no physical locations, but aims to promote the Dutch language through networks and local partnerships.

For the most part, Dutch language policy is defensive. Although the country derives important economic benefits from the widespread use of English, there is anxiety in the country regarding the erosion of the use of Dutch. For example, a 2019 government document states that the Netherlands “wants to introduce stricter rules on the language of instruction, raise fees for students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) and make it possible to restrict the intake on courses taught in a language other than Dutch” (Government of the Netherlands, 2019). As a response to the growing popularity of English and other foreign languages, Dutch was enshrined in the constitution as the *lingua franca*, with minority language Frisian also officially recognized (Woermsem, 2014).

3.3. Primary and secondary education

Table 7: Statistics on Dutch foreign education

	2019	2015
Number of countries	115	120
Number of schools	197	200
Number of students	13,840 (12,229 students attend education via a school or organization affiliated with NOB for distance learning. The remaining 1611 pupils attend one of the European schools)	14,698 ¹⁴
Number of staff / teachers	966 teachers, 189 school leaders	-
Budget	€12,003,952	€13,755,640 (2018)
Government Subsidies	€11,828,168 (BZ) ¹⁵	€12,926,223 (2018) 2016: 250 per pupil per year, later eliminated (OCW)

Education is not explicitly discussed in the Netherlands ICP strategy, but it does play a role in Dutch ECP more broadly. The Foundation for Dutch Education Abroad (Stichting Netherlands Onderwijs In Het Buitenland, or NOB) was established in 1980 to coordinate Dutch international schools (NOB, n.d.). Currently, 13,840 students study at 197 NOB schools in 120 countries (NOB, 2020). This is a slight decline from 2015, when 14,698 students attended 200 NOB schools (NOB, 2015). NOB is funded with €11,828,168 from the government, also

¹⁴ NOB 35 Year Report.

¹⁵ NOB 2019 Annual Report.

a slight decline from earlier years, when the state subsidized Dutch schools abroad with €250 per student, a program that was eliminated in 2016 (ibid.).

Nearly half (98) of all NOB schools are located in Europe, with 33 in Asia, 26 in Africa, 25 in South America, 15 in North America, and 4 in Oceania (NOB, 2020). Depending on the type of school, most lessons are conducted in English, with students divided by Dutch language level. Because many Dutch schools teach in English, they offer a quality education option for expatriates or non-Dutch parents seeking a European education for their children. However, almost all students are given instruction in Dutch language and culture in addition to standard lessons (NOB, 2015).

3.4. Tertiary education and science

Table 8: International tertiary education and science in the Netherlands

	2019	2015
Number of countries	170	-
Number of universities/colleges	20 (over 80% have internationalization plans)	19
Number of students	89,555 (2018)	62,653
Number of students in exchange programs	"reduced" ¹⁶	768
Budget	€5,000 per student	€5,000 per student

<i>Science Diplomacy Fund</i>	2019 (year of founding)
Number of countries	7: Turkey and Russia are primary focus, others include Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa. Limited to non-EU countries
Number of institutes	-
Number of staff	-
Number scientists in exchange programs	Calls currently open (34 teams won previously)
Budget	€150,000

¹⁶ OCW (2019) <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2019/09/06/more-balanced-internationalisation-in-higher-education>.

The Dutch university sector is highly internationalized, with NUFIC (Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation) having been established in 1952 to promote English education and draw students from former colonies to the Netherlands (NUFFIC, n.d.a.). In recent years, Dutch education has become increasingly popular internationally, with 12.3% of university students hailing from abroad in 2019, up from 8.9% in 2015 (NUFIC, 2020). Over 80% of Dutch universities have internationalization plans.

The Netherlands' efforts at internationalizing its education sector have even been *too* successful for some Dutch citizens, however. There has been a growing backlash to the large numbers of foreign students, which some critics say limits the spaces for Dutch students (supports say these claims are unfounded) (DutchNews.nl, 2019). This prompted a 2019 government decision to strive for more “balance” in the internationalization of universities by limiting English-language courses, creating stricter rules about learning Dutch while studying in the Netherlands, and reducing scholarships for foreign students (Government of the Netherlands, 2019). It is unclear how well these efforts can be squared with ongoing internationalization: NUFIC's first reason under a “why study in Holland” FAQ is a “wide range of English-taught programmes” (NUFIC, n.d.c).

Like other aspects of Dutch ECP, NUFIC has faced budget cuts¹⁷ that affect its international footprint. In 2021, it will be forced to close its Netherlands Education Support Offices in Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, Russia, China, South Africa, Turkey, South Korea, India, and Vietnam, countries from where a total of 14,000 international students hail (ICEF Monitor, 2019). These locations were originally set up as educational embassies in strategically important countries for Dutch higher education (NUFFIC, n.d.b.). It is clear that NUFIC has been a victim of its own success. In 2019, the government stated that “now that the need to attract foreign students has declined, the government has other plans for the funding previously channeled to the Netherlands Education Support Offices (NESO)...money will now be spent on strengthening knowledge diplomacy at Dutch embassies” (Government of the Netherlands, 2019).

Science diplomacy also plays a role of the Netherlands ECP. The Dutch Research Council (NWO) coordinates scientific policy (though only a fraction is international) and has a yearly budget of roughly €1 billion (NWO, 2019, p. 13). Under the umbrella of the NWO, the Science Diplomacy Fund was established in 2020 to “strengthen [the Netherlands'] international profile as a knowledge economy where world-class science is conducted” (SDF, 2020). Acceptance of grant proposals was set to take place in early 2021 but has been delayed due to COVID-19. The program will only be open to non-EU countries, with Turkey and Russia the primary focus. Others include Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa (ibid.). The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences also coordinates the funding schemes on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, such as a decades-long partnership with China (KNAW, n.d.).

¹⁷ At €21 million, its 2020 budget is set up to slightly higher than the 2015 level, but it is unclear how much the budget will drop in future years (NUFIC, 2020).

3.5. Foreign Media

Table 10: Key figures on foreign broadcasting, including social media statistics

	2019	2015
TV: BVN ("Best of the Flanders and the Netherlands")		
Number of countries broadcasted to	8 (plus worldwide satellite)	8
Number of languages	2	2
Number of channels	Part of Dutch and Flemish channels	Part of Dutch and Flemish channels
Audience	700,000 per week	-
Government support	€1.5 million from MFA in 2019 ¹⁸	Approx. €1.5 million
RNW Media		
Number of countries broadcasted to	13	13
Number of languages	2	Same, used to have radio broadcasts in Indonesian, Dutch, Spanish, English
Number of channels	2 major projects	-
Audience	21.2 million users	20 million web users
Budget	€14.777 million	€18.411 million
New Media		
Social networks following	<u>Dutch Culture</u> Facebook: 7986 Twitter: 5046 YouTube: 21 <u>Prince Claus</u> Facebook: 16,645 Twitter: 4832 YouTube: 822	<u>Prince Claus:</u> 6,345 Facebook page likes 2,492 Twitter followers 10,898 views on YouTube

¹⁸ Letter to parliament 2019 <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2018/11/16/kamerbrief-media-begroting-2019-ocw>.

As a relatively small country, the Netherlands has no major foreign broadcaster equivalent to the BBC or RT. It used to have a foreign radio station, Radio Netherlands Worldwide (RNW) that has been active from 1947 onwards and at its height broadcast in 6 languages. However, this time-honoured institution was eliminated in 2012-13 due to budget cuts of over 70% (Wardany, 2012; RNW, 2011). Now, RNW is an online-only platform which seeks to support social movements, particularly for “young people aged 15 to 30 who live in fragile or socio-politically repressive countries.” This supports the Netherlands’ stated ICP strategy of supporting liberal values and democracy. RNW is active in about 13 countries and has a budget of nearly €15 million (RNW, 2020).

The Dutch government also cooperates with the Flemish government on the broadcaster BVN (het beste van Vlaanderen en Nederland, or “the best of Flanders and the Netherlands”) which aims to make Dutch and Flemish language programming available to viewers worldwide (BVN, 2020). It was supported with over 1.5 million euro from the Dutch MFA in 2019 and has about 700,000 weekly viewers (OCW, 2018).

4. Challenges and future outlook

For a country of its size, the Netherlands is in a remarkably strong international position. It is generally well-perceived abroad (Portland, 2019) and is an attractive destination for international business and education. Still, this success comes at a cost. Rather than imprint its culture around the globe, Dutch ECP has been more successful at making the Netherlands a global entrepôt in which foreign capital, students, scientists, and businesspeople interact, often in English. There has been some backlash to this process, as the pushback against foreign students—and the general strengthening of right-wing populist politics—suggests.

This leaves Dutch ECP in a bind: should it continue to harness its strengths, which often rely on the use of foreign languages? Or should it stress the Dutch language, perhaps increasing its use slightly, but knowing that this could make the Netherlands a less attractive destination overall? This tension between ECP as a tool to promote culture and the national image versus a method to increase economic attractiveness strikes at the very core of competing aims in the Dutch ICP strategy.

Another hurdle to the effective exercise of cultural power is the lack of funding. Dutch ECP experts describe a “defensive” posture¹⁹, a feeling that is backed up numerically by the repeated budget cuts over the past decade. From dismantling broadcaster RNW’s worldwide operations to cuts in subsidies for foreign schools to removing offices for university internationalization, key components of Dutch ECP have felt the brunt of post-2008 austerity politics. In the wake of the economic downturn from COVID-19, further cuts could be introduced, causing more damage to the Netherlands’ ability to craft and execute a comprehensive cultural strategy.

These cuts come just as the Netherlands is increasingly viewing ECP as a way to better navigate a tense geopolitical climate. The 2021-24 strategy cites shrinking space for cultural expression, threats to liberal values, and an increased need to emphasize ties and shared heritage with allies

¹⁹ Based on private correspondence.

and partners (Government of the Netherlands, 2020). It also wants to boost innovation and digitalization and promote the SDGs. These lofty goals will be difficult to achieve with pared-down budgets.

The greatest challenge the Netherlands faces is therefore the fundamental question of how it wants to use its external cultural policy. If it is to serve a narrower economic agenda, then the current path may suffice. However, if the Netherlands is serious about using ECP to assert its values in the highly-contested international cultural space, greater investment and a more holistic approach—such as formally incorporating education, science, and media into the rest of its strategy—will be needed.

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