



Coordination practice

COORDINATING INNOVATION AND INNOVATION POLICY: THE INNOVATION PLATFORM IN THE NETHERLANDS

Mark van Twist, Martijn van der Steen and Arno van Wijk
Netherlands School of Public Administration

The innovation platform is a taskforce-like structure that was tasked with coordinating innovation and innovation policy in the Netherlands. Innovation policy was previously characterised by a great deal of fragmentation, with different ministries in charge of supporting innovation in business, and financing research and science. On top of that, many other ministries had their own innovation programmes. The mission of the Innovation Platform, first established in 2003, is to create conditions and connections, as well as to develop a vision to boost innovation in the Netherlands. With a network-style structure, and supported by a project office, experts and representatives from relevant sectors have been involved in various project teams. The Innovation Platform was mainly an informal organisation. It had the formal status of a committee of the Cabinet, but the consultation was mainly informal. Yet, there was high-level political ownership. The Platform was chaired by the Prime Minister, and the ministers of Education and Economic Affairs were members.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
European Research Area



SEVENTH FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME

Funded under Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities

Preface

This coordination practice is a result of research within COCOPS Work Package 5: The Governance of Social Cohesion: Innovative Coordination Practices in Public Management.

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme under grant agreement No. 266887 (Project COCOPS), Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities.

The COCOPS project (Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future) seeks to comparatively and quantitatively assess the impact of New Public Management style reforms in European countries, drawing on a team of European public administration scholars from 11 universities in 10 countries.

The specific objectives of Work Package 5 are:

- To search and identify emerging coordination practices and related steering instruments in public management in European public sectors.
- To compile a case study catalogue of such coordination practices with direct utility to public managers and the research community.
- To analyse the functioning of such coordination practices and to assess their value in countering public sector fragmentation and delivering public value.

Work Package leader:

Prof. Dr. Per Lægreid
University of Bergen
Department of Administration and Organization Theory
Norway

Please visit the COCOPS website: <http://www.cocops.eu/>

1. THE COORDINATION LANDSCAPE

Main country characteristics: THE NETHERLANDS

General political-administrative structure	<p>The Netherlands can be characterised as a decentralised unitary state. There are three tiers of government in the Netherlands: the central government, provinces and municipalities. The central government is the highest administrative level. The provinces and municipalities have their own independent powers and also implement policies of the central government.</p> <p>The ministers in the government and the state secretaries form the Cabinet. The Cabinet governs the country and carries out policy. In general a minister provides a particular ministry with political leadership. The Cabinet and the individual ministers must report to Parliament. They must also have the confidence of a majority of Parliament. The Parliament consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Members of the Parliament are elected by Dutch voters every four years. In 2012, the central government consists of eleven Ministries. A Ministry is headed by a Minister and the Minister is assisted by senior civil servants; the State Secretary, Directorate-Generals and Secretary Generals.</p> <p>The country has 12 provinces, each headed by a governor. They have an elected provincial assembly. One of the Province's tasks is to coordinate policies of municipalities and other actors within the province when it comes to policy areas such as refuse, nature, recreation, monuments, planning etc.</p> <p>Municipalities are governed by a mayor, the Council of Mayor and Aldermen (College van B&W), and the local council. They can make policy in all areas unless this competence has been explicitly allocated to other levels of government. Mayors are appointed for a six year period by the government. They are responsible for the general coordination and for public order and safety. There are 415 municipalities, yet this number changes frequently due to mergers to improve administrative capacities.</p>
Coordination discourse	<p>The central government has to deal with fragmentation and a lack of interdepartmental collaboration. In the last few years the preference of the Dutch governments changed from the agency model to a need for better integration. The central government strives to act as a single unit and to find benefits through standardisation and centrally designed processes. The Cabinet established the Directorate-General for Organization and Management. This unit is responsible for the central conduct of management of the central government (Steen et al. 2009).</p> <p>A substantial part of the reform policy discourse has focused on the excessive number of actors and government layers involved in policy and service delivery; and on extensive silos between government departments.</p>

	<p>The Netherlands are also characterised by a strong preference for the use of governance networks in policy-making, in which a variety of actors collaborates. Such networks follow a consensual model, and one sees a strong influence of corporatism in their composition. This means coordination is achieved through wide collaboration from a variety of stakeholders, both public and private.</p>
Policy area	<p>The Dutch innovation policy from 2000 until 2010 was based on two pillars. The first consisted of supporting innovation in business and was coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The second consisted of financing research and science and was coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. One challenge for the Netherlands was to incorporate knowledge from Science institutes into business concepts and thus catch up with innovations from countries with similar economies (WRR 2008). Besides those two pillars concerning innovation in the Netherlands in general, multiple ministries had their own innovation programmes until 2007. In that year, the programme Enterprising Innovating Netherlands was launched. It was the start of a collaboration between ten Dutch ministries on the topic of innovation. The programme was implemented by an interdepartmental directorate called <i>knowledge and innovation</i>, led by the ministries of Education, Culture and Science and Economic Affairs under the responsibility of the minister of Economic Affairs. This directorate worked in collaboration with The Innovation Platform in two ways. First, the Directorate used the information of The Innovation Platform and second, they aligned their agendas to avoid a duplication of effort (Van der Hoeven 2007). Three years later, in 2010, the programme ended after several projects had been realised. The programme's long-term innovation strategy, which was published in the form of the Multiannual Innovation and Knowledge Compass, was continued (Bartelse and Waasdorp 2010). Recently, innovation policy has been dominated by concentration on nine "top sectors", which are "geared towards providing a solid exchange between businesses, knowledge institutes and the government".</p>

2. COORDINATION PRACTICE: Coordinating innovation and innovation policy: The innovation platform in the Netherlands

2.1. Substance

Country	Netherlands
Area	Central government
Main characteristics of the practice	<p>The innovation platform is a taskforce-like structure that was tasked with coordinating innovation and innovation policy in the Netherlands. Innovation policy was previously characterised by a great deal of fragmentation, with different ministries in charge of supporting innovation in business, and financing research and science. On top of that, many other ministries had their own innovation programmes. The mission of the Innovation Platform, first established in 2003, is to create conditions and connections, as well as to develop a vision to boost innovation in the Netherlands. With a network-style structure, and supported by a project office, experts and representatives from relevant sectors have been involved in various project teams. The Innovation Platform was mainly an informal organisation. It had the formal status of a committee of the Cabinet, but the consultation was mainly informal. Yet, there was high-level political ownership. The Platform was chaired by the Prime Minister, and the ministers of Education and Economic Affairs were members.</p> <p>The mission of the Innovation Platform is to create conditions and connections, as well as to develop a vision to boost innovation in the Netherlands. The Prime Minister mentioned two important tasks for the platform. Firstly, acting as a catalyst and impetus to industry and knowledge centres. Secondly, advising the Cabinet about the production and transfer of knowledge. Ultimately, he saw innovation as an engine of productivity growth and economic development.</p> <p>By establishing the Innovation Platform the Cabinet wanted to stop the decline of innovative power in the Netherlands. The establishment of the Innovation Platform stems from the Cabinet's ambition to make the Netherlands belong to the "vanguard in the field of higher education, research and innovation". Studies on the competitiveness of the Netherlands in Europe show that the Netherlands has slowly been descending on the charts in the last few decades, specifically in the field of knowledge.</p> <p>There are three main points in the new Innovation policy (2003). Firstly, the innovation climate is not attractive enough; secondly, the Netherlands has a lack of innovating companies; and thirdly, there is insufficient focus on development studies. This is reflected in the weaknesses of the Dutch</p>

	<p>innovation system: There is a backlog in the Research and Development (R&D) activities of companies. The relative spending of Dutch companies on R&D is declining. Moreover, there is a growing shortage of knowledge, particularly of scientists, engineers and R&D engineers. There is also a lack of innovative entrepreneurship and utilisation of scientific research. Finally, the financing of innovation is a problem.</p> <p>The Prime Minister was head of the Innovation Platform, which gives the platform a high profile. In the first few years, the platform developed into a semi-permanent body in the Dutch public administration. In these years, many initiatives and projects were created, and the platform produces reported and advised the Cabinet. Eventually, the period of the first Innovation Platform (1.0) resulted in the release of version 2.0.</p> <p>The platform had to deal with high expectations. An important explanation is the heading position of the Prime Minister. Precisely these expectations encourage attention to the activities, but also make the platform vulnerable and a target of criticism.</p>
Background and initiation of the practice	<p>At the European Conference in Lisbon (2000) the ambition was pronounced to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in 2010. Following this, the Dutch government formulated the ambition to belong to the forefront of knowledge economies within Europe. In 2002, a sense of urgency grew among many organisations. In particular, universities, colleges, institutions in the research community, civil-society organisations and advisory bodies of the government insisted on steps to develop the innovative power of the Netherlands.</p> <p>The model of the Innovation Platform Netherlands is similar to the model of the Finnish Science and Technology Policy Council (STPC), whose chairman is the Prime Minister and in which the Cabinet, industry, education and research communities work closely together.</p> <p>Formally, the Dutch and the Finnish platforms differ on the criteria used in the selection of the members. In Finland, the members of the STPC are appointed on the basis of “representation”, they represent a constituency (for example, representatives of major political parties, employers, organisations and the director of the Finnish research institute for academic advice, research and innovation). But in the Netherlands the members of the Innovation Platform are appointed on the basis of their “expertise”. Therefore, the members are at the same time part of a certain organisation and have a certain background, stature and network.</p> <p>In August 2003, the Prime Minister met with high-level stakeholders to discuss the establishment of an Innovation Platform. The plans for this were already prepared to integrate it into the coalition agreement of the Cabinet Balkenende II. At that moment, even the initiative note for the establishment of the platform was ready.</p>
Time frame	The Innovation Platform 1.0 was formally established for the period

	<p>between 1 January 2004 and 1 July 2007. In early 2007, this first period ended with the publication <i>Handbook Innovation: Scientific Perspectives on the Process of the Innovation Platform</i>. In this publication, six scientists gave their views on the Innovation Platform, and a summary of the results was presented. The publication was edited by the Secretary of the Innovation Platform and two of his colleagues. The handbook was distributed to a wide audience.</p> <p>The Innovation Platform was followed up by the Innovation Platform 2.0. This platform existed until 2010. Compared with the first Innovation Platform, the scope of the second Innovation Platform was a little widened. The Innovation Platform 2.0 had, like Innovation Platform 1.0, the task to create the conditions, the connections and the vision needed to develop and to boost innovation and entrepreneurship in the Netherlands as an engine of productivity growth and economic development. But also the formal agreement was made that all members of the platform had the task to carry out the ideas and plans of the platform.</p> <p>Previous studies show that most committees complete their work within a year. The Innovation Platform 1.0 and 2.0 has existed for seven years and is one of the longer existing committees in the Dutch public administration.</p>
--	---

2.2. Structure and actors	
----------------------------------	--

<p>Basic features</p>	<p>The members of the Innovation Platform were appointed based on their expertise. The members were also members of one or more project teams, which address specific social themes. Beside members of the platform these teams included representatives of groups from the field, for instance from industry, research institutions and intermediary organisations. Employees of the project office of the Innovation Platform were the managers of the teams and ensured that projects which were formulated in the project teams were implemented. The project managers also ensured the reporting of the discussions in the teams. They also ensured that research was done that was necessary for the project teams.</p> <p>To create more visibility for its own work the Innovation Platform organised various types of meetings, including innovation lunches. A large number of interested parties were invited to the lunches. Twice a year the Innovation Platform informed the Parliament about the progress of their work. The reports contained reports of the meetings. The Innovation Platform met sixteen times in the period between 2003 and 2006. The project office of the Innovation Platform has made a comprehensive media analysis around these meetings and the various publications in the press. The Innovation Platform functioned with an annual work programme.</p> <p>In this case, the coordination of the activities was a task of the project office. However, the project office was primarily a technical support unit and there was no policy design from the top. The advice and the resulting</p>
-----------------------	---

	<p>policy came from deliberation and cooperation between the members of the Innovation Platform and the project teams. However, the Innovation Platform did not have the mandate to design legal policy. They only could advise the Cabinet and other organisations about policy.</p>
<p>Main tools</p>	<p>The Innovation Platform is facilitated by the project office. The project office is controlled by a secretary and belongs organisationally to the Ministry of General Affairs. The employees of the project office are seconded by public organisations and even private organisations.</p> <p>The Prime Minister reported on the results of the Innovation Platform on 5 February 2007 to the Parliament, which was at the end of the first period of the Innovation Platform. The Cabinet had serious plans for innovation, which is shown by the financial data. Beside the structural expenditure of 1.2 billion euros, the Cabinet invested 2.7 billion euros on innovation. Spending of these public funds also provided additional private spending. Industry also invested more in Research & Development. There was much support for the Innovation Platform. Stakeholders find that it should continue in the future. Finally, the Innovation Platform continued in the form of a second generation: the Innovation Platform 2.0.</p> <p>On 26 February 2004 the website of the Innovation Platform was online. Before, a few columnists ridiculed the fact that the Innovation Platform did not even own a website.</p> <p>The Innovation Platform was mainly an informal organisation. It had the formal status of committee of the Cabinet, but the consultation was mainly informal. The decisions and advice of the committee had no formal influence. The participant autonomy was high, and because members were not selected upon their political background, they could give advice independently. The Innovation Platform was centrally based, on the level of the central government, and was not accessible for citizens.</p>
<p>Main actors</p>	<p>There was much commotion surrounding the establishment and composition of the platform. Many stakeholders wanted to be represented in the platform. Other people gave their opinion on what tasks the platform should take over. Some organisations emphasised that the attention should be directed towards the development of specific regions in the Netherlands, such as regions around major cities. The Innovation Platform consisted of eighteen members, three ministers and experts from industry, science and education. The members were asked because they are seen as key players in the knowledge economy. The Prime Minister was chairman of the platform. This fact shows the political importance of the committee. The Minister of Education and the Minister of Economic Affairs were also members of the platform. The ministers did not only represent the Cabinet, but also the relevant portfolios with respect to the knowledge economy.</p> <p>The composition of the Innovation Platform had the unique component</p>

	<p>that three ministers committed to a process of which they did not know the outcome. Their vote was not decisive in the platform and because of the mutual agreements they had to defend the proposals of the platform in Parliament as much as possible. This was a difficult position for the ministers. If they did too little to propagate the ideas of the platform, they would lose the commitment of partners; doing it too much, they would lose much administrative autonomy. Therefore, the ministers offered a small piece of their power and gave substance to that power with partners from business, science and civil society. The other partners were also committed. It was expected that they would carry out the proposals from the Innovation Platform and implement them. There were no formal arrangements made by the Innovation Platform 1.0 about this, but those formal agreements were made at the Innovation Platform 2.0.</p> <p>The first year, the Innovation Platform gave lots of advice. Therefore, 2005 was the year of implementing the advice and plans. The title of the implementation programme was “Innovation in Progress”. The emphasis was not only on carrying out the advice and plans, but also on making the results visible. Therefore, a large “Innovation Event” was organised on 7 December 2005, where the results and progress were presented and where an impulse was given for interaction with stakeholders. The Parliament was not always entirely positive towards the work that is performed by the Innovation Platform and posed critical questions. At a General Meeting the Prime Minister inspired some of the MPs, but he was unable to convince the Parliament of the good implementation of the plans of the platform.</p> <p>As described the practice involved collaboration between public and private actors. The public actors need the private actors for the implementation of the plans and the private actors need the support of the public actors for implementation. There was mutual dependence between the actors and therefore there was a network structure which was designed mainly informally.</p>
<p>2.3. Impacts and effects</p>	
	<p>On 20 February 2004, the Prime Minister informed the Parliament about the progress of the Innovation Platform. At that moment, the platform had advised the distribution of 185 million Euros from the government budget according to a mix of four priorities. The platform suggested creating a scheme to stimulate the exchange between universities and industry. This scheme received national recognition as the “innovation vouchers”. Balkenende also announced several additional investigations of the Innovation Platform. The recommendation of the platform to increase the accessibility of the Netherlands for foreign knowledge workers, by means of a procedure, a desk and a document, was in his opinion a breakthrough that was achieved by the platform. At that moment, the Cabinet</p>

implemented the advice, which later resulted in an improved regime for foreign knowledge workers.

The National Innovation Event on 7 December 2005 with dozens of sub-programmes, workshops and booths and more than two thousand visitors was called a success by the Prime Minister. The event not only provided a sample of Innovation in the Netherlands, but also many contacts were made between entrepreneurs, universities, government and intermediaries.

The Innovation Platform has reached three major results. The first success was the existence of the platform in itself. Indeed the Innovation Platform was a kind of “green field” operation. There had not been a national platform that developed a joint strategy for innovation before at this high level. The parties came together, discussed innovation and jointly worked on the development of products. Through the platform, relations between the participating parties improved and led to changing positions. Afterwards, the strategic agenda of universities had other priorities than a few years before. They used to be mainly focused on internationalisation, but then there was more focus on application-oriented research and the socialisation of science. The Innovation Platform has contributed to these developments.

The second success was the creation of the Knowledge Investment Agenda 2006-2016. The Innovation Platform 2.0 had spoken with all signatories of the Knowledge Investment Agenda after the consultation and further implemented this agenda. Moreover, many research institutions, with the arrival of the new Cabinet in early 2007, had referred to the document to indicate that it is the common agenda for innovation and that the Cabinet should adopt the agenda.

Thirdly the Innovation Platform succeeded to identify key areas for innovation. The platform brought relevant parties together and created a common agenda. Therefore, a joint strategy for the development of knowledge and innovation was established.

The Innovation Platform also led to unintended results. During this period the Brabant Innovation Council, the Knowledge alliance Zuid-Holland, the Amsterdam Innovation Motor and the Nijmegen Innovation Platform arose, and there are more cities and regions where initiatives flourish.

Not all actions are performed within the period prescribed by the platform. That is mainly because it was also the task of the Innovation Platform to determine ambitious deadlines and motivate stakeholders to implement the appointments. In practice, this proved to be difficult. Schedules were adjusted in consultation with stakeholders and the Innovation Platform. This did not affect the commitment of the parties.

On the longer term, the practice resulted in more capacity for political leaders to put innovation on the political and social agenda. Through the

	<p>Innovation Platform, the government, business and social organisations jointly developed an innovation agenda. This generated input for the innovation policy of government. Through the common agenda, the Innovation Platform also created more coordination and collaboration between public and private actors.</p>
<p>2.4. Lessons learned and policy recommendations</p>	
	<p>The Innovation Platform can be seen as a combination of two types of committees which differ between the original intention and final elaboration. The Innovation Platform always was intended as a taskforce. Innovation is seen as an opportunity for the future or just a threat (when innovation is lacking), but in any event as something with great importance for the coming years. Representativeness of members for a specific audience always were an important criterion for selection. Another important criterion was expertise. Giving social impulses and acting as an icebreaker was referred to in the mission statement of the platform. However, in practice, the platform functioned particularly as a political committee. Because of the involvement of Ministers and the Prime Minister, the platform received much attention from the opposition parties in Parliament. The Parliament critically followed the functioning of the committee. Innovation was not only seen as a question of the future, but primarily a problem that must be solved quickly. This view fits very well with a political committee. The platform was trying to influence the political agenda, and many issues related to the platform were communicated through the media.</p> <p>The platform did not ensure a broad support for their plans among other parties in the society and in the Parliament. The first reason is that members of the committee were not formal representatives of the followers. They were a reflection of different groups and interests. Secondly, the platform was a frequent topic of discussion, making it difficult to create support. The platform also did not have the availability of resources to implement changes. This is important from the perspective of knowledge and policy. The implementation of the policy is easier if there are resources available. From the perspective of power and countervailing power, the platform did not contribute to changes in relationships between and in the position of the actors. The platform itself has suffered the effects of the political game. The platform was attacked regularly by opponents and had to fight for its position. It is apparently difficult to influence the political game, as the committee itself is subject of the political game.</p> <p>The action-oriented nature of this variant of a committee in the knowledge democracy can be strengthened by the composition of, and the involvement in, the committee. A committee similar to the Innovation</p>

	<p>Platform must communicate well to target groups in order to be able to implement plans. The members of the platform can be “used” more and are more targeted as “familiar faces” who are able to address the followers. It is important that a committee with such tasks is visible outside the political centre. The committee had a broadening, catalytic and enthusiastic role. There were high expectations of the Innovation Platform, but in the first weeks of existence, the platform was unavailable online. For a committee with such an appearance it is important that external and online communication is properly regulated. The interrelationship between the actions taken by the Innovation Platform were not always clear. Therefore, it is important that a committee has a clear vision and the resources to turn that vision into action.</p> <p>The lessons learned are useful for committees similar to the Innovation Platform in other policy areas and other countries. Action-oriented committees with a political nature can learn from the lessons of this case. This type of committees has to deal with the same tensions. On the one hand, the committee tried to reach specific goals, on the other hand there was much influence and attention by politics. The composition of such a committee is important. The members are ideally formal representatives of the followers, but with expertise as well. So, a balance must be found in the described tensions.</p>
<p>2.5. Further information</p>	
<p>Data and references</p>	<p>Bartelse, J. and P. Waasdorp. 2010. “Inleiding.” In <i>NOI Projectenboek</i>. Available at http://www.noiprojectenboek.nl/html/06-inleiding (last accessed 28 September 2012).</p> <p>Leijnse, F. (ed.). 2007. <i>Handboek Innovatieplatform: Wetenschappelijke visies op de werkwijze van het Innovatieplatform</i>. Den Haag: Ministerie van Algemene Zaken.</p> <p>Nauta, F. 2008. <i>Het Innovatieplatform: Innoveren in het centrum van de macht</i>. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers</p> <p>Van der Hoeven, M. 2007. Nederland Ondernemend Innovatieland. Available at http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/bestanden/documenten-en-publicaties/jaarplannen/2007/11/16/werkplan-nederland-ondernemend-innovatieland/ez-7654-noi6-interactive.pdf (last accessed 29 September 2012).</p> <p>van Twist, M., M. van der Steen, Ph. Karré, R. Peeters and M. van Ostaijen. 2009. <i>Vernieuwende verandering: continuïteit en discontinuïteit van vernieuwing van de rijksdienst: Definitief rapport</i>. Den Haag: NSOB.</p> <p>WRR. 2008. <i>Innovatie vernieuwd: Opening in viervoud</i>. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.</p>

Contact	<p>Prof. Dr. Mark van Twist Department of Public Administration Erasmus University Rotterdam Netherlands School of Public Administration vantwist@fsw.eur.nl</p> <p>Dr. Martijn van der Steen, Co-dean/Adjunct-director Netherlands School of Public Administration steen@nsob.nl</p> <p>Arno van Wijk Netherlands School of Public Administration vanwijk@nsob.nl</p>
---------	--