

RRI Policies in The Netherlands, a brief characterization

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Based on the summaries of 10 important documents which exemplify RRI policy in The Netherlands over the last 10 years, we can answer the 1st round MoRRI investigation questions:

What Characterizes national policies towards RRI in your Country?

- A high degree of institutionalized governance;
- Top-down orientation;
- The linkage with overarching programs aimed at economic growth and innovation;
- Often technology oriented, with a 'subordinate' and supportive role for the social sciences.

What are the most prominent dimensions of RRI that materializes in these documents? Which are the aspects of RRI addressed?

- Increasing sustainability;
- Engaging stakeholders;
- Increasing public participation;
- Transparency: public information and increasing public awareness;
- Increasing social robustness of innovation by means of public debate of social and ethical aspects/effects of innovation.

What major mechanisms exist to support national goals related to RRI?

- Governmental funding, including funding via the National Research Council NWO (research funding schemes);
- Co-funding by Government, firms and social organizations;
- Research programs and initiatives of institutes funded by the national government.

These answers are based on a number of characteristics and trends we distilled from the 10 reports we selected:

- The governance of RRI related activities (both policies and research) in the Netherlands is for an important part institutionalized. Important institutes are the Dutch Research Council NWO (and with respect to RRI, NWO-MVI), The Health Council (Gezondheidsraad), the Rathenau Institute, the Center for Society and Genomics (CSG) and NanoNextNL.
- A large number of RRI initiatives and programs are linked to economic growth and at stimulating (national) innovation. This can be seen by the important role of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (MEA) in the multi-ministerial Top-Sector policy, comprising a multitude of actors and objectives, in which knowledge institutes are expected to ‘help’ and to cooperate with firms and societal organizations. The top sector policy, initiated by MEA, constitutes an overarching research structure that categorizes and links technology and economic sectors. Nearly everything related to RRI is linked to this top sector policy. The role of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) is ‘only’ visible in the National research Council NWO.
- Within the RRI ‘program’ of NWO, closely linked to the top-sector policy, the emphasis seems to be on social sciences. While NWO, and other knowledge institutes, use the concepts ‘societal embedding’ and ‘tackling societal issues’ to delineate RRI, although a nice development in itself, these concepts seem to have a specific meaning. The role of Social Sciences in RRI related (top sector related) programs is defined as ‘supportive’ to innovation. Their main function seems to be to inform, to raise awareness, and to analyze. This ‘secondary’ role is also visible in the innovation-contract NWO established with the Dutch top sectors. On average, less than 4% of the total top sector budget is spent on Socially Responsible Innovation (MVI), i.e. RRI.¹

¹ Compared to other European countries this 4% is rather high. We mainly present this percentage as an illustrative indication. We thus neither mean to say that this percentage should be higher, nor that the percentage in our view illustrates the quality and the relevance of the MVI-projects!

Table 1: Share of MVI (%) in relation to the general budget per top sector

Top sector MVI	NWO share (%)	Private share (%)
Agriculture & Food	1.29	0.50
Chemistry	2.04	0.55
Creative Industry	No MVI at all	No MVI at all
Energy	3.88	4-5
HTSM	0.58	0.16
Logistics	No MVI at all	No MVI at all
Life Sciences & Health	2.14	10-40
Horticulture	1.52	0.69
Water	1.86	15.63
ICT	No MVI at all	No MVI at all
Agenda Social Infrastructure	20.19	?

In addition, RRI is represented quite poorly in the institutional documents we've chosen as pivotal in the Netherlands. This subordinate role of social sciences fits the current political climate, inside and outside government and Universities, in which technology and technical sciences are considered to be useful and meaningful, while social sciences, and especially the humanities, are considered to be nice, but luxurious and over-represented in the Dutch Educational system.

The supportive role of social sciences in innovation and innovation policies has a history that is rooted in the societal debates on nuclear power (1980s) and GMO (1990s and early 2000s). As a result, for policy makers the issue became how to forecast and how to cope with fierce and influential social debates. As a result, the role of intermediary and consultancy actors increased, and concepts as (Constructive) Technology Assessment, ELSI - a concept picked up in the US but reframed ELSA (Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects) -, Social Aspects of Technology, Social Dialogue, and Socially Responsible Innovation (MVI) developed.

Comments on selection criterion 'policy documents' and sources used

By selecting reports based on the criterion that they exemplify national policies on RRI in the Netherlands, a large part of RRI activities and initiatives outside the realm of formal policy remains hidden. RRI in The Netherlands comprises a more complex and lively world than described in the summary report on The Netherlands. Societal debates on nuclear power, GMO's and food production since the 1980s boosted the number and activities of intermediary actors, consultancy firms (sometimes with close links to Universities) and collaborative civil society

projects. Contrary to the 1970s and 1980s the Dutch are now (very) lukewarm to participate in public protests, but seemed to have switched to a constructive working mode by a hands-on approach to tackle social problems. Many small (technological) firms with clear social responsibility goals are active and influential, in the sense of making and accomplishing things by means of (policy and technology) consultancy, training and (research) projects. Also in this sense the Netherlands currently is in a transition phase from a state regulated welfare state to a liberal society of responsible, committed and active citizens who take initiatives by (temporarily) linking up to accomplish (small/local) socio-technical changes. In this development a shift (and potential rivalry) can be seen in the conceptualization of R&D, from a (state-financed) public good to a (privately/corporate financed) private good.

Examples of relevant social actors/institutes in the field of RRI in the Netherlands are: *De Proeffabriek* (<http://www.proeffabriek.nl>), a consultancy agency focusing on realizing socially responsible innovation), the CSG academy (firm with strong university bonds that trains CSG (Center for Genomics and Society) -researchers with the aim to convert their knowledge into a concrete product or service), *Deining Societal Communication & Governance* (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23885054>), *Lis Consult* (Life Science, Innovation and Society, <http://www.lisconsult.nl>), *Malsch TechnoValuation* (<http://www.malsch.demon.nl/>), RATA NanoNextNL (<http://www.nanonextnl.nl/themes/risk-analysis-and-technology-assessment.html#P1C>)