



Vereniging van
Nederlandse Gemeenten

Connected Government Levels in The Netherlands

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Henri Rauch

1. Brief Introduction to The Netherlands
2. Connection between Government Levels
 - Vision and Structure
 - Cooperating on different government levels

1. 'Polder Model'

Netherlands - Formed
by the water...



- The Dutch polder model is consensus decision-making, based on consensus-based economic and social policy making
- The polder model means "a pragmatic recognition of pluriformity" and "cooperation despite differences".
- Mutual cooperation since the [Middle Ages](#) is a strategy preserving land ([polders](#)) reclaimed from the sea, which requires constant pumping and maintenance of the [dykes](#).
- Societies living in the same polder were forced to cooperate as unanimous agreement on shared responsibility, to preserve life & income

One of the most densely populated countries



Government tiers

- European Union
- Central government
- 12 Provinces
- 23 waterboards
- 355 Municipalities
- Overseas special municipalities Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius
Autonomous Countries: Curaçao, Aruba and St. Maarten

Central Government

- Structure:
 - Parliament (2 chambers)
 - Cabinet with prime minister
 - King (head of state)
- Tasks:
 - Foreign affairs, taxation, legal framework

Structure:

- Elected Council (provinciale staten)
- Executive Council (gedeputeerde staten)
- Kings commissioner (appointed by the Crown)

Tasks:

- Nature, management of provincial public transport, arts and culture
- Guiding spatial planning, provincial economy

Local government

- Elected Council
- Aldermen (vice mayors) appointed by the Council and not necessarily out of members of the Council
- Mayor appointed by the Crown on recommendation of the Council.

Local government structure

Mayor

- Chairs the board
- Ensures unity of policy
- Ensures safety and public order
- Ensures citizens participation

The Council

- Has legislative powers
- Specialized committees

Aldermen

- “Vice Mayors”
- implements policy
- >18.000 inhabitants : full time function

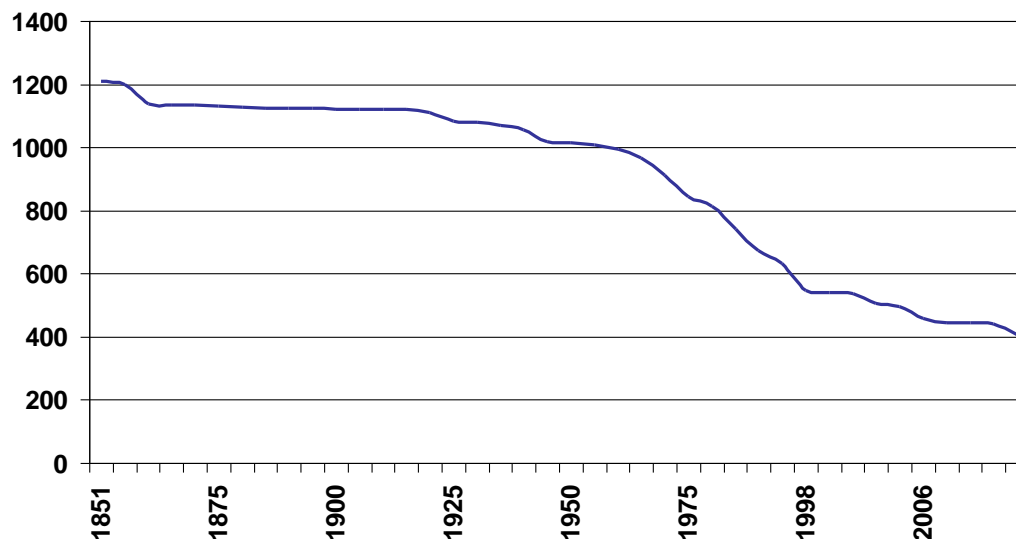
City Manager

- Attends all meetings of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen
- Central manager of all civil servants
- Chairs management team of municipality

Board of Mayor and Aldermen (Board) has executive powers

355 Municipalities

- Since 2019 there are 355 municipalities
- The last 60 years has seen a decrease in the number of municipalities of almost 600
- The Netherlands is the only country in Europe in which the number of municipalities has been decreasing yearly



Tasks of municipalities

- Housing & Spatial Planning
- Welfare
- Traffic and Mobility
- Environment
- Public Safety

Additional Decentralised since 2015:

- Youth Care
- General Healthcare
- Welfare

Decentralization of Social Domain

- For better servicing: Let the City Council decide upon social priorities – between legal boundaries
- As a budgetary measure: On a local level the social needs are better understood & dealt with
- As an organizational measure: Central Government should not deal with regulation on a personal level
- Resulted in doubling the Municipalities Budget
- Requested new Legislation & Regulation

Too early to give a final evaluation: some improvements have been reached, other still not...

Income sources of municipalities in 2016

	bln euro	%
General grant	27.3	48%
Specific grants	6.2	11%
Taxation & user charges	9.3	16%
Other income	14.2	25%
Total income	56.9	100%



VNG: Netherlands Association of Municipalities

- 1912: VNG established by 28 municipalities
- 1950: All municipalities voluntary member of the association

Focus remaining presentation

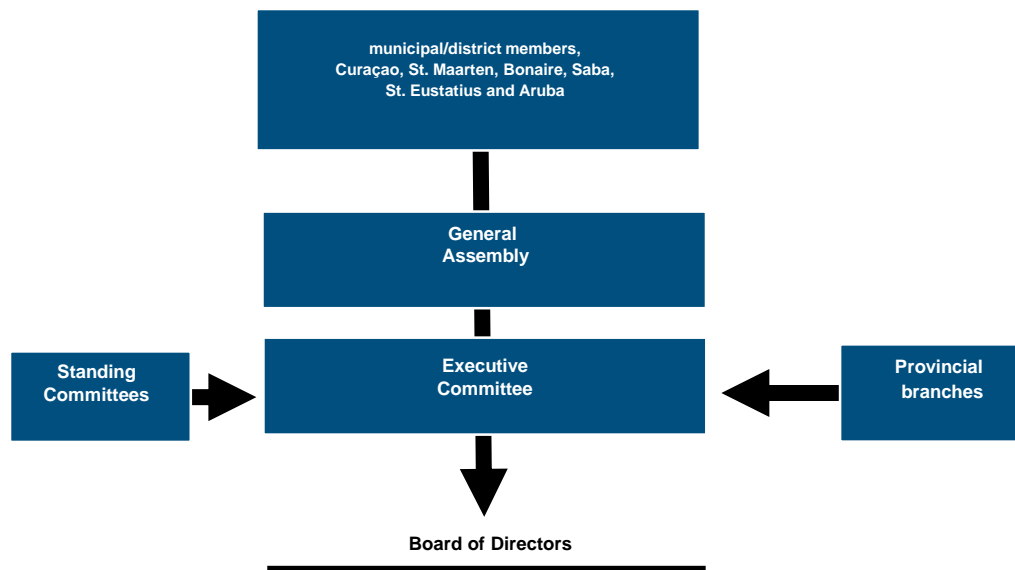
Estonia on the crossroad whether and what to centralize or decentralize due to migration from rural to urban areas, while the wish is to maintain the level of service across the country.

2. Connection between Government Levels

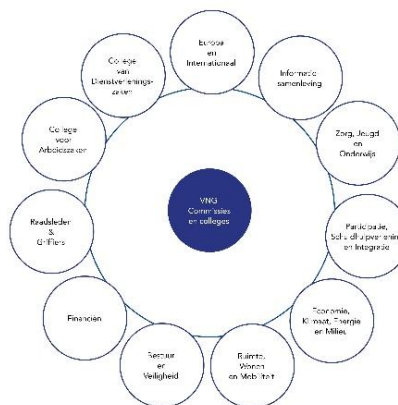
- The European Charter of Local Self-Government affirms the role of communities as the first level for the exercise of democracy. The principle of local self-government is embedded in domestic law.
- Legislation is based upon consensus model between Central & Local Government
- Incentives: Carrot & Stick



Organisation of VNG



VNG Organisation



Standing Committees

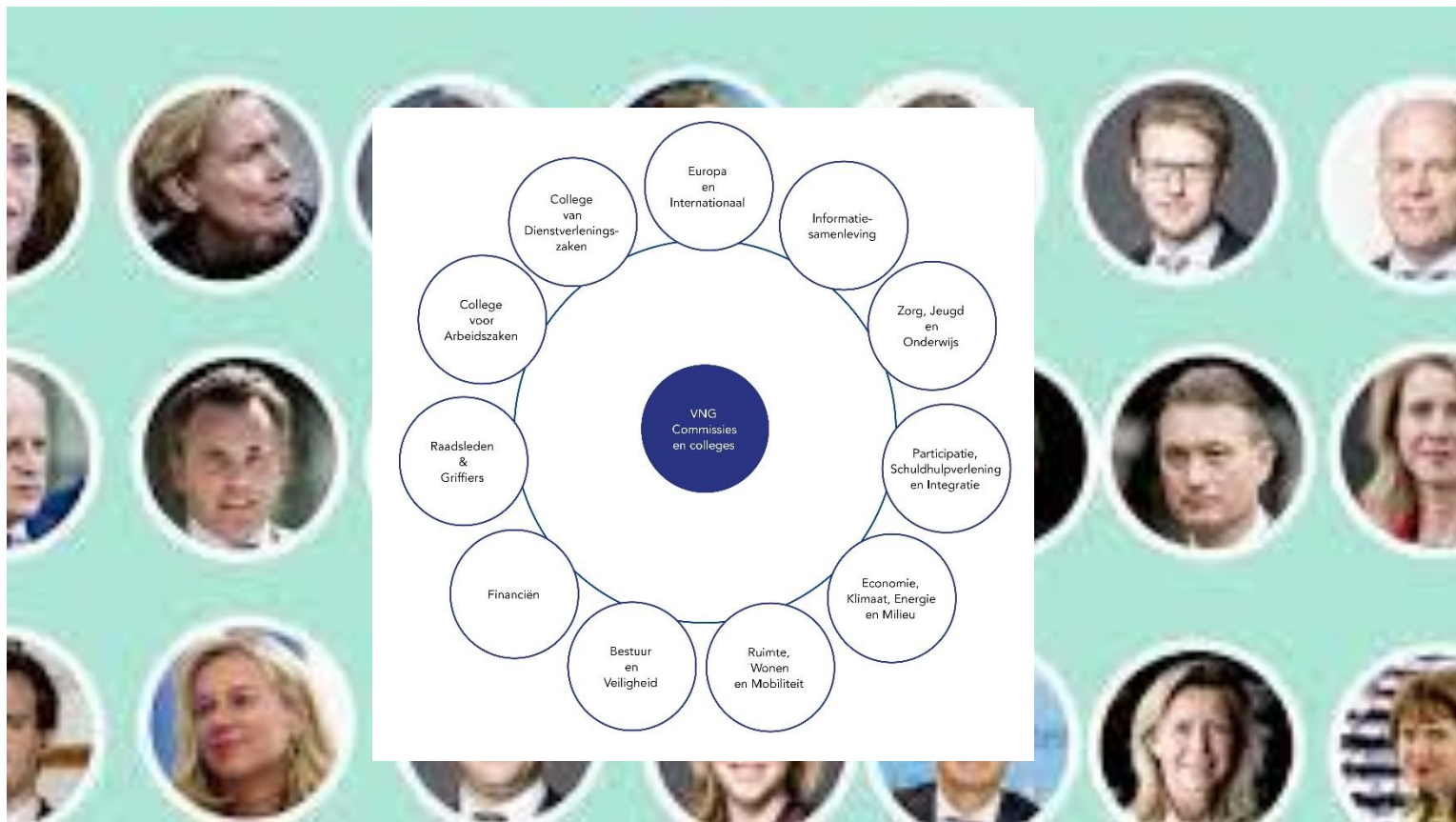
10 Standing Committees and Board of Local Government Employers

Specialised in various fields of policy

Well-balanced composition of local government officials in terms of:

- size and character of municipality
- region
- function
- political orientation
- gender

Implementing government strategies



VNG Governors negotiating directly with Ministers

Transparency through Monitoring

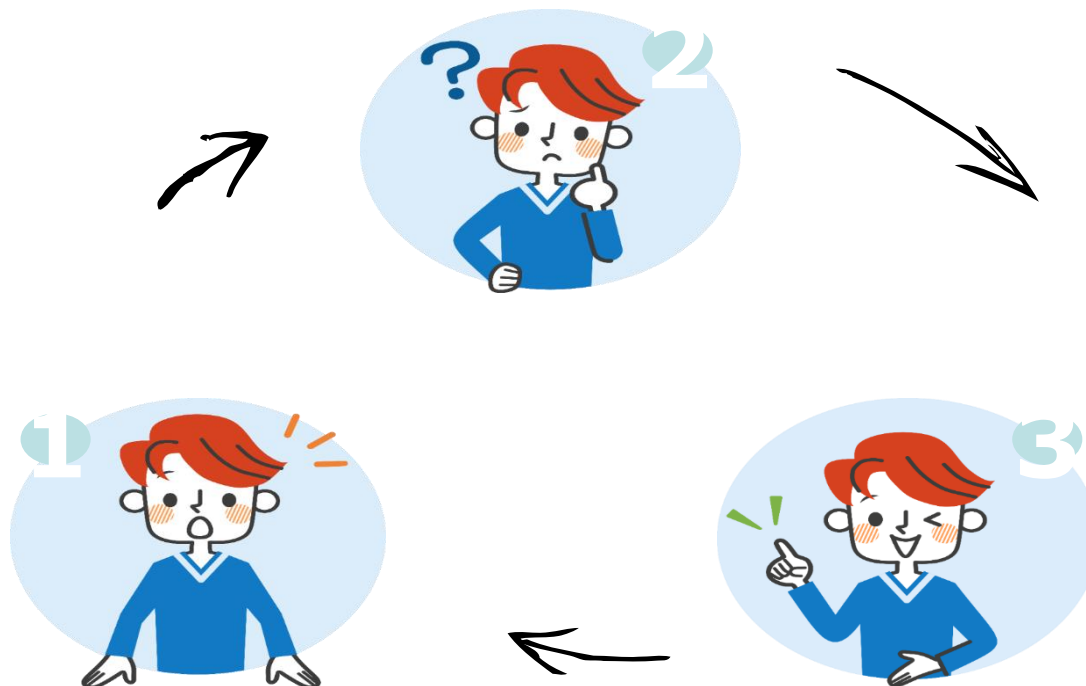
- Transparency in combination with Local Democracy stimulates willingness to improve on a local level.
- Data about 15 themes
- Sources most diverse: Municipalities, CBS etc...
- 'Managed by VNG Realisatie'



Waarstaatjegemeente.nl
WSJG

Benchmarks demonstrate level of implementation of
(Central) government policy objectives

Implementation of Benchmarking



Compare **wonder** **improve!**

Aim of Benchmarking is Benchlearning: Benefits are on a local level



What is the status of your Municipality (WSJG)?

WSJG

Dashboard

Rapporten

Database



- VNG disperses information from a variety of sources, which is then presented on the local level. This information is public in order to support municipal executives, civil servants, council members, the media and the public.
- The data give local insight and enables to compare municipal information with other (regions of) municipalities
- .
- WSJG builds on the national standards of municipal reporting
 - *Vertically*: to other levels of government, for instance annual budget indicators
 - *Horizontally*: accountability within the municipal political context

[https://www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl/
dashboard/Openbare-orde-en-
veiligheid/](https://www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl/dashboard/Openbare-orde-en-veiligheid/)

Other Benchmarks

- Vensters (“Windows”) is a Benchmark into Operational Management, Service Delivery and Integrity (www.venstersvoorbedrijfsvoering.nl)
- Vensters is an instrument that allows municipalities, provinces and water boards to gain an overview of the performance and functioning of their management. The information is not public.
- Vensters was nominated for the prestigious EPSA-award 2017 (<https://epsa2017.eu>)
- In the field of information security, VNG has developed a self assessing tool for municipalities ENSIA (<https://www.ensia.nl>) for the strengthening of horizontal accountability. .

With these instruments VNG ensures the use of political administrative and/or common sector-standards

Measures for good local government services across the country

- Benchmarks & Benchlarning
- Service standards through Municipal Service Catalogue
- Architecture Standards through Municipal Standards Catalogue
- Legal requirements, as for Web forms (Inclusion)
- Support and advice through VNG Realisatie

Central Government may intervene by “Article 12 Procedure”

- A Dutch municipality with an Article 12 status has been placed under financial restraints by central government because of a structurally bad financial situation.
- Article 12 municipalities must meet a number of conditions one of which being a strict financial supervision of the State or Province to receive extra money.
- One of the possibilities also being placed under preventive supervision until a balanced budget is presented.
- Number of article 12 municipalities in 2018: 2

Before things get worse a Mayor would contact Minister promptly, or vice-versa...

Cooperation Central & Local Government: through Inter Administrative Program (IBP)

To adress societal challenges:

- Mutual dependency between both levels
- Acting on a level of equivalence
- We aim to work as 1 authority: this unburdens citizens and speeds up procedures
- Every municipality can choose its own priorities
- IBP dos not include decentralization or the transfer of tasks to local governments

Societal challenges within IBP

1. Climate and energy
2. Housing
3. Regional economy
4. Living countryside
5. Social policy
6. Migrants well prepared
7. Avoid and solve problematic debts
8. Good governance
9. Suitable financial relations
10. Overall themes

The IBP-pledges

1. Societal challenges are the heart of our cooperation
2. Addressing Challenges collectively
3. It takes time to cooperate
4. Be good and tell it / Show don't tell
5. Arrange a mandate and margin for negotiations
6. Things will go wrong. Keep learning!
7. Code Inter Administrative Relationships
 - ☐ Before any legislation/regulation is definitive
 - ☐ Central Government has to know all consequences on a local level first
 - ☐ Impact Analysis is commissioned by Central Government, Involving Local Government



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IBP in Practice

- Cooperation between municipalities, national government, provinces and water boards intensified.
- Support from the IBP-program helps to tackle challenges and to distribute knowledge and good practices
- Less legislation
- The IBP helps to solve hick-ups in equivalent and reciprocal cooperation
- The challenges differ greatly
- Cooperation is hard when we don't agree on the framework/ negotiate
- Paradigm shift combined with actual challenges is hard sometimes
- Too many subjects

NL Trends

...with regard to centralising or decentralising due to migration from rural to urban areas & effect on the level of service across the country.

- ✓ *Migration wave to urban areas seems almost completed*
- ✓ *Strong Decentralisation (even Welfare since 2017)*
“Central what has to stay, Decentral what is possible”
- ✓ *Central Policies & Local Customisation (Polder Model)*
- ✓ *High Service level through eGovernment & extensive municipal network*