The Netherlands - country profile

1 General background and who’s who. The implementation of SDGs in the Netherlands is clearly pictured in a Questionnaire sent out by The Royal Library in the period August-October 2021, distributed to all 140 public libraries with a response rate of 41%.

The results of this study show that the theme has not yet been widely embraced and that only 20% of libraries have structurally incorporated SDGs into their programmes, with other libraries (28%) having set SDGs in their vision or annual plan and 15% being linked to a theme or linking their action to a theme in the near future. In spite of the fact that almost all libraries (90%) acknowledge its importance, the majority of them (46%) is not currently implementing the Agenda 2030.

The Royal Library has no coordinating role for SDG implementation but it contributes through careful monitoring, to awareness-raising and research. An agency which is fully committed to SDGs is Expedition Public Libraries.

In general, it can be said that in spite of no overall SDG-related strategy, organisations getting provincial support and individual libraries are starting to make their choices in the SDG field.

2 SDG priorities and policies in Dutch libraries. Within the sustainability theme, several domains can be distinguished. In the past year, respondents paid attention to green lifestyle and consumption (40%), climate and energy (40%) and a sustainable city, safety and mobility (31%). There is also a relatively high level of attention for social inequality, discrimination and gender inequality (25%), particularly in large libraries. This also applies to the domain of the sustainable city. In reality, libraries are consciously or unconsciously working on separating waste (94%) and printing less (89%); saving energy and water is also regularly mentioned (85% and 76% respectively). Respondents are less busy with sustainable purchasing (18% consciously, 44% unconsciously) and creating awareness of sustainability among library visitors library visitors (15% conscious, 32% unconscious).

Within Expedition — Public libraries priorities are to be found in:

— debates on SDGs with citizens,
— library collections, Library exhibitions,
— projects in co-creation with partners/citizens (digital inclusion; digital citizenship),
— pursuing green library objectives (such as energy saving infrastructure, waste management, SDG policy with staff).

When looking at the seventeen SDGs, the following are pursued in Dutch public libraries:

SDG 1: No poverty, in particular for Expeditie — Public libraries,
SDG 3: Good health and well-being,
SDG 4: Quality education,
SDG 10: Reducing inequalities.

3 SDG-oriented projects

1. Ouderen in de wijk (Elderly in the neighbourhood) — by the libraries of Utrecht, Den Haag, Rotterdam, Amsterdam (ESF) (SDG 1, 4, 10). The project is supported by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and carried out by the public libraries in Utrecht, The Hague, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, in cooperation with Mira Media.

1 https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=1.+Ouderen+in+de+wijk
The overarching goal of the OP is “to reduce the social exclusion of older people in the Netherlands with low disposable income.” Material assistance needs to go hand in hand with social inclusion measures, such as guidance and support to lift people out of poverty and to improve the integration of the most deprived people into Dutch society.

Three specific objectives have been set up: a) to make the target group aware of local support; b) to strengthen the social network of the target group; and to c) strengthen the competences of the target group. The target value is associated with the following indicators:

- 65% of the elderly should still be in the picture with aid organisations and/or municipalities after their participation organisation and/or municipality after participation,
- 40% of the elderly should indicate having a strengthened social network after participating,
- 40% of the elderly must indicate having a strengthened social network at their disposal;
- 60% of the older people must indicate that they have strengthened competences at their disposal.

2. ProActive — by FlevoMeer Bibliotheek (AMIF-project) (SDG 3, 4, 10). The FlevoMeer Library project ProActive has focused on 5 municipalities in the Dutch province Flevoland. Municipalities where libraries take an active role in the integration of people from non-western countries and their relatives in the Dutch society. Despite corona measures, good results have been achieved and new follow-up routes have been developed. From practice, it is demonstrated that participation quality and integration can be achieved through non-formal education. The activities were organised in close cooperation with volunteers and the library as a central meeting point. The project has resulted in the empowerment of more than 400 migrants and the development of interesting methods and instruments. Some examples are online training tools to learn basic skills (language-, social- & digital- competencies, see www.flevowijzer.info), impact monitoring and summer schools with the combination of theatre and learning Dutch.

4 Funding sources and evaluation. For most respondents, municipalities are the most important cooperation partner in the field of sustainability (62%). They are followed by local non-profit organisations and social entrepreneurs (44%). A fairly large group also indicated that they are working together with citizens’ initiatives (36%) and cultural institutions (26%). Far fewer collaborations were entered into with organisations such as education, social entrepreneurs and commercial parties. Some 13% of respondents indicated that they had no cooperation partners at all and another 8% do not know whether these partners exist. Larger libraries often cooperate with both local and national non-profit organisations. Citizens’ initiatives are mentioned by both the smallest and the very largest libraries.