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# IOB Evaluation

## Policy Review Public diplomacy 2010-2014

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# *IOB Evaluation*

## **Policy Review Public diplomacy 2010-2014**

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## List of abbreviations

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
BZ	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
CdP	Head of mission
CG	Consulate-general / consul-general
CIVET	Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt and Turkey
COM	Communications Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DG	Director-General
DVP	Dutch Visitors Programme
EU	European Union
EVD	Agency for International Business and Cooperation
FCO	Foreign & Commonwealth Office
HGIS	Homogeneous Budget for International Cooperation
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department
IP	Influentials Programme
LGTB	Lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MJSP	Multi Annual Strategic Plan
NBSO	Netherlands Business Support Offices
NBTC	Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions
NFIA	Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NWP	Netherlands Water Partnership
PD	Public diplomacy
PV	Permanent Representation / Permanent Representative
RPE	Order on Periodic Evaluation and Policy Information
RVO	Netherlands Enterprise Agency
SG	Secretary-General
UVN	Visitors' programme for journalists
UN	United Nations
WRR	Scientific Council for Government Policy
ZBO	Autonomous administrative authority

*The Netherlands supports*



*Equality and Dignity for all  
Let Love Rule*

**Management summary**

Public diplomacy (PD) is a form of diplomacy aimed at fostering cooperation and dialogue with non-state actors abroad. Dutch PD has a dual purpose: (1) promoting a positive image of the Netherlands abroad; and (2) helping to achieve the aims of Dutch foreign policy. Various instruments and players are deployed for this purpose, including Dutch missions abroad, implementing organisations, and centralised and decentralised programmes. The Netherlands is actively pursuing PD in the 39 countries it has designated as 'focus countries'. Dutch PD policy focuses on three overarching themes (Europe, development cooperation and trade) and four priority themes (water, climate and energy, agri-food, peace and justice, and culture and creative industries). The policy falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Communications Department (COM).

This policy review by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) is based on a range of information sources: a literature and dossier review, an independently commissioned preliminary study on PD, interviews with relevant stakeholders,<sup>1</sup> a survey among the Dutch missions in the PD priority countries, and a social media analysis in selected countries. In order to evaluate policy, an evaluation framework was drawn up. It is partly based on the reconstruction, concepts and basic principles of the policy itself, and partly on insights from the literature into factors that influence the effectiveness and coherence of PD.

## Findings

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In this policy review, IOB evaluates the motivation, design, set-up and implementation of the government's PD policy, and the results it achieved between 2009 and 2014. IOB also assesses the policy's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence. The main findings are summarised below.

### *1) BZ is responding effectively to the changing context of public diplomacy.*

Diplomacy needs to continually adapt to changing circumstances. With the proliferation of non-state actors, the upsurge of new and real-time technologies and the erosion of boundaries between domestic and foreign politics, diplomatic interaction in the public arena with non-state actors (e.g. businesses, NGOs, civil society and academia) is playing an increasingly prominent role. PD engages with these processes of change. More and more countries are developing their own PD strategies and tools, in accordance with their ambitions and objectives.

<sup>1</sup> During field research, in-depth interviews were conducted with senior management and staff at the missions in Belgium, France, Germany, France, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey and the US. Other interviewees included people working in local networks in these countries, such as representatives of foreign missions, civil society organisations, business and academia. Interviews were also conducted with individuals who are involved in PD policy or implementation in the Netherlands. The research questions and research method are described in chapter 1.

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has devised a range of initiatives to chart the changing role and impact of diplomacy. Examples include the Modernising the Diplomatic Service and iDiplomacy project groups and various communication initiatives (including the Newsroom and social media manuals). In addition, the Ministry is exploring options for practical cooperation with non-state actors in a wide range of fields, is focusing more on thematic priorities through the central objectives of the Homogenous Budget for International Cooperation (HGIS), and has launched initiatives to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the Netherlands is perceived abroad. The Law and Justice and Holland Branding programmes are key examples.

2) *BZ is gradually transitioning from a reactive and intuitive approach to PD to a more proactive strategy, but still has some way to go.*

In recent years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made great strides in public diplomacy, from a passive style of press release and reactive public relations at the start of this century to the more structured and differentiated approach it follows today. A great deal of energy has been devoted to highlighting the importance of working with non-state actors – for instance through new media – and professionalising public diplomacy, notably by developing a PD policy framework, organising PD training courses for Ministry staff, and providing ready-to-use tool kits. As a result, the Ministry's PD policy is now well developed, more professional and more embedded in the organisation as a whole.

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Despite this positive trend, the Ministry and its missions abroad still have some way to go. PD interventions are still far from consistently structured. In some countries they resemble project programmes, and are not fully integrated in the overall country strategy. In addition, the identification of relevant target groups and stakeholders is not always based on systematic frames of reference, such as analyses of the balance of forces, target group scans or stakeholder surveys. Efforts are often intuitive and dependent on personal knowledge, experience and preferences rather than on a targeted and strategic policy topic.

3) *PD needs to be more effectively embedded within BZ as a fundamental diplomatic instrument for effective policy implementation.*

PD can serve a range of objectives. It can be geared to influencing and enhancing the image of the Netherlands abroad and to boosting mutual trust. Whether the approach is proactive or reactive, it is vital that same message be communicated consistently in the long term. With the right skills, PD is an instrument that can be deployed to help the missions abroad shape and implement BZ's policy.

However, the policy logic of PD is insufficiently embedded in BZ as an organisation. At both centralised and decentralised level, it is not sufficiently clear whether PD is regarded as an instrument, a programme or a policy field in its own right. Currently, BZ lacks a clear, central concept of how PD relates to foreign policy as a whole. There is no definition of PD policy logic or how it is implemented. While many BZ staff regard it as a specific aspect of strategic communication, others see it as a broader instrument for influencing opinion. Since BZ as an organisation lacks a coherent policy on this issue, there is not always a clear



link with the activities implemented at the missions. The policy impact of PD planning tends to be limited, and plans are insufficiently operationalised as work programmes.

The geographical and thematic priorities of PD do not always tie in effectively with the broader priorities of foreign policy. On this point there is insufficient systematic and periodic interaction between the Communications Department (COM) and the thematic and regional departments involved. Furthermore, in addition to the centrally identified PD priorities, the missions work with multiple PD themes of their own. These are based on their own policy objectives and tend to be more specific than the generic themes. So the introduction of central PD themes has not produced greater uniformity or focus.

*4) BZ needs to focus more on steering and coordinating PD internally.*

In recent years, COM's efforts have mainly focused on formulating PD policy, deploying supporting instruments and allocating scarce financial resources. Partly as a result of severe staff shortages, insufficient attention has been paid to the department's steering and coordinating role, including highlighting the importance of PD, streamlining PD efforts within the Ministry as a whole, and providing tailor-made advice and coaching for the missions.

Procedural and policy responsibilities for the implementation of PD are currently spread across the organisation. In this respect, COM does not play a sufficiently effective role in coordinating other departments. Implementing PD effectively at the missions requires a clear link between COM on the one hand, and the thematic and regional departments on the other. (This does not apply to the PD hub for the MENA region or informal support and cooperation within the mission network). In this setting, substantive steering by COM adds relatively little value, whereas advice and coaching on using PD as an instrument are beneficial.

The same problems are found at decentralised level. All mission staff need to have PD skills. As the Netherlands' prime representative, the ambassador is not only the number one public diplomat, but is also responsible for embedding PD in the mission's strategy and ensuring that the strategy is implemented. However, not all missions are equally clear on the need to share responsibility for PD mission-wide. Especially at missions with a designated PD section or office, there seems to be an inclination to give this section or individual sole responsibility for PD. Consequently, mission staff tend to assume that PD has been adequately 'covered', and other sections take less interest in it.

*5) In recent years, missions have deployed PD more frequently and explicitly to achieve generic and specific objectives, but there is still room for improvement.*

Because of their formal position and knowledge of local issues, the missions establish connections between Dutch interests and 'demand' in the host country. Missions generally provide clear insights regarding the background to selected themes, tailor their programmes to their own policy objectives and tend to tie in their efforts with the priorities of the host country. Although good examples are being set, clear and explicit deployment of a PD strategy or instruments at country level is generally lacking. In practice this leads to

differences of interpretation on how to approach and apply PD. Most missions do not plan their activities in relation to a specific objective, or only incidentally.

Missions organise numerous activities and maintain networks in a variety of ways. They like to involve influential individuals, Dutch celebrities and other people in the public eye. This enhances the image of the Netherlands and creates opportunities for a substantive discussion on a range of subjects, including sensitive ones. Nevertheless, in the majority of cases it is not clear how the added value of collaboration (networking opportunities, indirect promotion of the Netherlands, a neutral platform, agenda-setting capacity and network management) is assessed and how spin-off from this work helps to influence policy or improve access to decision-makers.

In addition, little attention is paid to recording and monitoring activities within the broader framework of policy objectives. There is no feedback mechanism for the result achieved in the policy process, and little is known of the external factors that influence policy outcomes.

## Recommendations

In chapter 6, IOB presents its main recommendations, based on this policy review. The main three are summarised below.

1) *Incorporate PD fully in the multi-annual strategy at the missions, without imposing central PD themes.*

Extend the reach and boost the effectiveness of policy through a tailor-made approach, country-specific efforts and coherent links between the various online and offline instruments. This requires a consistent, multi-year vision of PD policy to combat amateur, ad-hoc practices. Drop the central PD themes and allow the missions to decide for themselves, based on their Strategic Plans and Multi-Annual Strategic Plans, what their thematic priorities are and how, when and for what purpose they will deploy PD as an instrument. However, this is conditional on paying more explicit attention to PD in the plans than is currently the case.

2) *Strengthen COM's steering and coordinating role in PD and involve the thematic and regional departments.*

Strengthen COM's facilitating, coaching and advisory role in steering and coordinating PD within the organisation. Besides COM, also involve the regional departments in coordinating policy content and acting as a sparring partner for the missions, for instance in regard to planned PD interventions and to liaise with the policy theme departments. Better use can also be made of existing knowledge and expertise (e.g. at line ministries and in countries and policy theme departments) when devising country strategies. It may be worth reconsidering setting up regional PD hubs for this. Facilitate teamwork in The Hague by involving central government-wide players at the early stages of compiling an overarching vision, policy and manuals. Central coordination will remain necessary when PD is linked to major efforts like large-scale events, conferences and crisis communication .

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3) *Strengthen the learning function of PD through adequate monitoring and evaluation.*

Periodic monitoring should take account of the nature and complexity of PD, and be linked to the implementation of the strategic plans. Strengthen capacity to monitor activities. Assess the degree to which the BZ Newsroom can systematically support missions in monitoring and evaluating the use of digital media. This will promote a better understanding of global developments in this field and create a capacity advantage for the missions.



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# Introduction, research method and scope

## 1.1 Introduction

Public diplomacy (PD) is a form of diplomacy aimed at fostering cooperation and dialogue with non-state actors abroad in order to influence decision-making in policy areas that are potentially relevant for a particular country. Dutch public diplomacy seeks to strengthen the image of the Netherlands by portraying it in a realistic but positive way and thus support Dutch foreign policy.

## 1.2 Main question

*To what extent does BZ's strategy, in combination with the players, instruments and activities it finances in the field of PD, contribute to a positive perception of the Netherlands and promote Dutch policy aims abroad?*

This question encompasses the following sub-questions:

1. What is the background to and motivation for Dutch PD policy and what are its aims?
2. What is the responsibility of central government, and in particular of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?
3. What does the policy field consist of? What objectives, strategy, players, instruments, activities and timing are deployed for the purpose of PD and how are these elements connected?
4. How is the policy funded and underpinned?
5. What evaluations have been conducted, how and why? Which evaluations have not been conducted, and why not?
6. What basic principles about the effectiveness of PD can be found in the PD policy reconstruction and literature? How do these basic principles serve as an assessment framework for the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the policy pursued to date?
7. When assessed in terms of this framework, how effective, efficient and coherent has this PD policy been?
8. What measures could increase its effectiveness and efficiency?
9. If available policy funding is significantly reduced (i.e. 20% of the budget for the policy objective), what policy options are available?

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### *Reservations about measuring effectiveness*

Monitoring and evaluating PD entails numerous challenges, as a range of national and international studies show.<sup>2</sup> The first has to do with the terminology used. Many concepts and terms are not defined, or their definitions are insufficiently clear, resulting in a lack of suitable, reliable and valid indicators. The second concerns the object of the evaluation. Exactly what is to be measured and within what timeframe? PD usually involves diverse players, programmes and activities, operating within different timeframes, at different levels (including in regard to policy) and with different instruments. They can all exert influence in a variety of ways. A third challenge concerns the difficulty of determining

<sup>2</sup> Gonesh & Melissen (2005). Besides noting a number of challenges, they also conclude that PD evaluation is still in its infancy (p. 20). Other studies include: Banks (2011); Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2005 and 2008); Lane (2006); NATO (2013).

whether efforts to achieve 'soft' results (such as a better image, greater trust and greater acceptance) are actually successful, because the effects are usually only measurable in the middle and long term. Finally, as many studies on the impact of policy show, PD is a field in which it is difficult to map the causal relationships between deployed policy instruments and their impact on society, since numerous external factors also influence the outcomes.

In this policy review, IOB seeks to address these challenges by using an assessment framework. This derives partly from the concepts and basic principles of the policy itself, and partly from the literature on PD, regarding factors that can influence the effectiveness of policy to a greater or lesser degree.

### 1.3 Research method

This policy review is based on a number of studies:

#### *Literature review and comparison of the Dutch approach with that of other countries*

To get a clear picture of what PD entails and how like-minded countries deploy it, IOB commissioned a preliminary study by an external researcher from SPAN Consult. It also carried out its own literature review. Together, these studies provide an overview of the literature and an understanding of the background, theory design, nature and deployment of PD in relation to other forms of 'soft power'. They also offer insight into the connection between PD and Dutch foreign policy, and the way in which central government seeks to deploy PD.

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#### *Policy reconstruction and analysis*

The outcomes of the preliminary study were tested in interviews with diplomats, policy officers, institutions and organisations abroad which could potentially be involved with PD. To supplement the preliminary study, IOB consulted existing policy documents, policy frameworks and policy reviews, recommendations (including recommendations by the Advisory Committee on Public Diplomacy), parliamentary papers, annual plans, multi-annual plans and communication plans. For the policy reconstruction, particular attention was paid to:

1. policymaking and decision-making at various levels (central and decentralised);
2. underpinning arguments for deploying various instruments, PD themes and channels;
3. the relationship and interplay between strategic policy communication, cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy and Holland Branding.

#### *Policy implementation: synthesis and case studies by country*

During the implementation of the policy review, the policy reconstruction served as a working document. Where necessary, it has been adapted to incorporate new findings from the supplementary case study for this policy review. This supplementary study was conducted in a number of countries where the Netherlands deploys PD.<sup>3</sup> The selection of countries for the case studies was based on the following criteria:

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of research efficiency, this field study was conducted simultaneously with the case study for the policy review on international cultural policy. The same countries featured in both studies.

- key trading partners;
- NATO allies;
- neighbouring countries in Europe;
- Southern European countries;
- prospective and new EU member states;
- strategic partners;
- BRICS<sup>4</sup> / CIVET<sup>5</sup>; and
- partner countries in development cooperation (OS).

These countries are listed below with the relevant and PD theme featured in the study:

**Table 1.1** PD focus, by priority country studied

Countries	Focus	PD theme
All countries listed below:	1. Priority country for PD 2. Political / economic interest 3. Priority country for International Cultural Policy (ICB)	Culture and creative industries
Germany	Geographical neighbour and long-standing essential partner in economic and trade relations. Largest market for exports. One of the top five countries where Dutch cultural institutions stage most of their cultural activities. Cross-border cooperation and relations with Dutch non-state actors.	Economy / Europe
Egypt	Presence of PD hub for the MENA region.	Peace and justice
France and Belgium	Focus on spin-off from the decision to close the <i>Institut Néerlandais</i> and relaunch it as the <i>Atelier Néerlandais</i> . <sup>6</sup> Possibility of multilateral PD with Flanders, e.g. on language, host country activities, trade fairs and the Dutch-Flemish centre deBuren. Cross-border cooperation.	Culture
Indonesia	Selected because of shared colonial history and key development cooperation relationship. Special focus on Erasmus House activities.	Peace and justice
Turkey	A candidate country for the EU and economic and political transition country, where the PD strategy not only promotes the presentation and dissemination of culture and the expansion of the market for culture, but also focuses on ethical issues (a priority theme in PD policy).	Europe / Economy
US	Key partner in economic and trade relations and security matters. Selected because of the large number of exhibitions and special events, including the state visit in 2015. The deployment of water diplomacy in the aftermath of hurricanes Sandy and Katrina was also studied.	Water, climate and energy
South Africa	Selected because of the policy correlation between PD and ICB. Counts as a transition country, moving from development cooperation towards trade and business ties. Also important for theme of peace and justice, partly because of its colonial past.	Peace and justice / Economy

<sup>4</sup> Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

<sup>5</sup> Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt and Turkey.

<sup>6</sup> See IOB report q11, *Cultuur als kans*, for the findings on this point.

For the case studies IOB visited a number of Dutch missions (embassies and consulates) in the countries listed in the table and conducted a survey among PD focus countries. The respondents were staff working in political affairs, press and communications, and cultural affairs (PCZ) in the PD focus countries.<sup>7</sup> In-depth interviews were also conducted with PD implementers and their partners. During the visits, IOB also studied the selection of policy instruments, their internal coherence and relevance to the local situation, and the linking of PD efforts to operational policy objectives.

To make a comprehensive overview, IOB used an assessment framework (chapter 3) to evaluate PD activities, at both central level (The Hague) and operational level (the missions). Each item in the assessment framework received a general score: + (satisfactory), +/- (variable/average) and - (unsatisfactory). The findings are included in chapters 4 and 5 of this report.

#### *Media study (including social media)*

Two subsidiary studies were conducted into the way in which and the extent to which Dutch missions use social media for PD. In addition, IOB looked at whether and how, when the occasion arose, policy implementation was reflected in the local media. This was done during and after the country visits, by checking whether efforts were tailored and geared both to the target group and policy, what use was made of social media, what information was transmitted, what follow-up took place and what the response was. A distinction was made between the use of Facebook pages and Twitter accounts by the missions ('corporate accounts') and by individual users such as ambassadors. These studies were conducted for both this policy review and the review of international cultural policy.

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#### *Changes to the research method set out in the Terms of Reference*

The research method described in the Terms of Reference (ToR) differed in various respects from the one ultimately followed in the study. The main challenge was the sparseness of the evaluation material on which policy reviews are normally based. The study therefore relied more on primary data collection and on information from interviews, the survey and media analysis (including social media). These changes to the ToR's approach were made by IOB in consultation with the other readers of this policy review. The modifications were both substantive and methodological in character:

Substantive changes:

- changes made to the assessment model by focusing it more on the basic principles of PD, in order to judge the extent to which these were followed;
- postponement of the follow-up study on perceptions of the Netherlands abroad, due to lack of a suitable baseline measurement and insight into Dutch efforts in this area. The policy review is a building block for a possible future follow-up study (to be carried out by an external body) into perceptions of the Netherlands;
- only an approximation of the number of full-time equivalent positions dedicated to PD.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> PD currently falls under the sections responsible for political, press and cultural affairs (PCZ). In some instances, a different name is used.

<sup>8</sup> Further details in section 2.3.



Methodological changes:

- a decision not to include the country studies as an integral part of the policy review, because they offered too little prospect for comparison; conversely, inclusion of the relevant PD case studies in order to illustrate the scope of the policy field;
- the use of triangulation (Instead of the originally envisaged 'spider' approach)<sup>9</sup> to assess policy against the outcomes of interviews with various participants, experts, cooperation partners and secondary sources.

## 1.4 Scope of the policy field

Article 4 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget governs policy on 'Consular services and promoting Dutch values and interests internationally'. PD is included in paragraph 4.4, regarding 'the deployment of public diplomacy by the mission network to enhance the image of the Netherlands abroad in a positive and realistic way'. In particular, the two first paragraphs of this policy objective are relevant to the application and implementation of PD:

- "Through strategic policy communication, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs targets groups that are important for developing, attaining and promoting policy objectives in the field of foreign policy. In this, the media play a significant role [...]. Social media channels such as Facebook are also deployed [...]."<sup>10</sup>
- "Contributing to public diplomacy, whereby Dutch embassies can support or start up activities in the field of strategic policy communication, the image of the Netherlands, or international cultural policy, is also an objective."

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These two elements reflect the essence of PD: exerting influence to support Dutch foreign policy and enhance the Netherlands' image. The other paragraphs of article 4.4 bear no relation to PD.<sup>11</sup>

However, PD is definitely far more than the sum of the budget figures. In a more general sense, it encompasses the efforts of diplomats, civil servants and other players who in one way or another contribute to the way the Netherlands is perceived abroad. Accordingly, this policy review covers not only policy as defined in paragraph 4.4, along with the attendant expenditure from 2010 to the end of 2014,<sup>12</sup> but also the visible PD efforts for which there was no direct financial expenditure.

<sup>9</sup> See Terms of Reference, 2015, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Parliamentary Papers, 2015-2016, 34300 V, no. 2, article 4.4, first bullet point.

<sup>11</sup> They concern: 'Visits by dignitaries and publications by the Diplomatic Corps and international organisations', 'incoming and outgoing state visits', the Advisory Council on International Affairs, 'special events and grants to the Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael"'; and the Foreign Policy Support Programme (POBB).

<sup>12</sup> The researchers did not stop at 31 December 2014. Since most of the interviews for this study were conducted in 2015, the policy implemented in that year was included, as far as possible.



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## Policy reconstruction and organisational reconstruction

## 2.1 Developments in PD policy at BZ

For many years, passive public relations and strategic press lines were at the heart of Dutch PD policy on internationally politically sensitive subjects and issues such as euthanasia, drugs and prostitution. Information tended only to be provided in response to questions, and was used to adjust foreign perceptions of Dutch policy or improve its image abroad. This form of PD changed due to various developments.

In 2004, PD activities at the Ministry in The Hague were stepped up when the Information and Communication Department (DVL)<sup>13</sup> was instructed to adopt a more strategic and proactive approach to PD and increase institutional awareness of its impact. Emphasis was placed on the importance of PD as a strategic communications tool in line with the digital revolution, a more assertive public and society and the interests of the Netherlands' public image abroad.<sup>14</sup> At the time, PD was defined as follows:

*'a way to get support for Dutch policy objectives from unofficial target groups and to cultivate understanding of Dutch views and positions. Like traditional forms of diplomacy, it seeks to strengthen and improve bilateral relations'.*

In 2005, after a short period of orientation and knowledge building, the first PD policy framework was presented and PD was included in the central government budget.<sup>15</sup> This policy framework set out the strategic, substantive, operational and financial frameworks for implementing the PD programme. The concept of 'unofficial target groups abroad' was narrowed down to 'media, NGOs, opinion leaders, think-tanks etc'.<sup>16</sup>

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Since then, Dutch PD policy has evolved. In line with international trends and increasing academic interest in PD, from 2008 onwards (under foreign ministers Maxime Verhagen and Uri Rosenthal) economic diplomacy came to occupy a more prominent position in foreign policy. In terms of PD, this meant expanding the number of focus countries, where BZ carried out studies into the Netherlands' image and reputation. It also resulted in PD activities being more strongly oriented to themes from which the Netherlands could profit economically, and which related to the nine top sectors targeted by NL Agency (now the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO.nl)).<sup>17</sup> The Information Council also set up a working group (*Holland Imago Overleg*) to examine public image issues.

<sup>13</sup> Now the Communications Department (COM).

<sup>14</sup> Internal messaging system, 3 May 2004, Public Diplomacy.

<sup>15</sup> The first reference to public diplomacy is in policy theme VIII, *Raising the Netherlands' cultural profile and creating a positive image in the Netherlands and abroad*, in the 2005 Homogenous Budget for International Cooperation (HGIS) budget: To present Dutch policy properly abroad, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is investing in public diplomacy. We also work to ensure that foreign countries have a positive, realistic image of the Netherlands, through public information and active use of communication tools. See also House of Representatives 2004-2005, 29800 V, 27 September 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005). *Public Diplomacy Policy Framework*.

<sup>17</sup> The use of focus countries and priority themes is examined in greater detail in the next section.

Since 2010, particular attention has been focused on developing long-term PD policy. In 2010, 2012 and 2015, definition, policy and strategy were further fine-tuned in various internal memorandums. PD was positioned ever more explicitly within BZ as a strategic communications tool, with the establishment of dedicated PD divisions at Dutch embassies abroad (previously known as the Press Division, Communications Division, etc.), instructions to ambassadors and missions to create an online presence, and the creation of working groups, e.g. on the modernisation of the diplomatic service and iDiplomacy.

Thanks to this renewed strategy, in recent years there has been a shift in policy from nation branding to a broader, more contextualised, differentiated and tailor-made approach. Previous policy had only limited effect, as it prevented missions from responding to local dynamics, and inhibited the Netherlands in presenting itself abroad in a wide range of ways. Consequently, in recent years the emphasis has shifted from organising one-off projects and events to PD activities that support missions' long-term visions.

## 2.2 Objectives and rationale of PD policy

### 2.2.1 Objectives

| 20 | The policy reconstruction shows that PD is primarily seen as integrated part of strategic communication within BZ, and as an essential support tool for general foreign policy.<sup>18</sup> Current PD policy is anchored in two objectives:

1. promoting a positive image of the Netherlands abroad;
2. helping to achieve foreign policy objectives.

These two objectives are closely related and support one another. A good reputation is a precondition for garnering support for foreign policy objectives. The assumption is that if the political, social, economic and cultural values with which the Netherlands identifies are made appealing to the general public and specific target groups (e.g. decision-makers, young professionals and influential people), this can have a positive effect on behaviour and decision-making in areas affecting Dutch interests.<sup>19</sup> This means engaging in meaningful dialogues with a range of players; one-way traffic and one-sided messages are not enough.

Thematic and geographical policy priorities have been identified to help achieve these objectives (see below).

#### *Thematic priorities*

In addition to focus countries, in 2004 priority themes were identified as a means of more closely targeting issues on which the Netherlands receives many questions or to which it attaches great importance, or areas in which the Netherlands sees itself as unique and/or a major market player and/or has added value.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, limiting the number of themes

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013). Public Diplomacy Policy and Strategy.

<sup>19</sup> BZ messaging system, 7 August 2008.

<sup>20</sup> House of Representatives 2010-2011, 32 605 no. 2; House of Representatives 2012-2013, 32 734, no. 15.

was seen as a way of helping the missions to strengthen policy focus and to use the themes as a loose framework for targeted, multiannual and consistent policy efforts designed to attract public attention and promote possible involvement. Since 2004, these PD themes have been repeatedly modified and narrowed down.

The current seven themes comprise four priority themes and three overarching themes. Instructions issued by the Communications Department (COM) state that the missions should in principle choose two or three themes and develop them into a PD strategy tailored to the country in question.

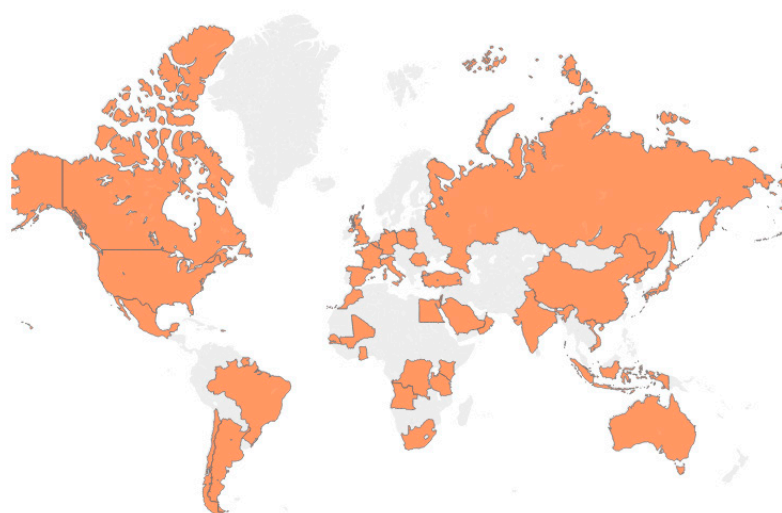
**Table 2.1** *PD themes (from 2014)*

Overarching themes	Priority themes
Economy and trade	Peace and justice
Development cooperation	Water, climate and energy
Europe	Culture and creative industries
	Agrifood

*Geographical priorities*

Since 2005, PD policy has worked with focus countries and non-focus countries. Missions in focus countries are usually allocated additional funding for implementing PD and sometimes have extra local staff or staff posted from The Hague. This applies especially to priority missions (large missions) which have more staff and more complex policy. In the last 10 years there has been a sharp increase in the number of focus countries. There were nine in 2005, 15 in 2010, and 39 in 2014. The current 39 focus countries are listed in figure 2.1.

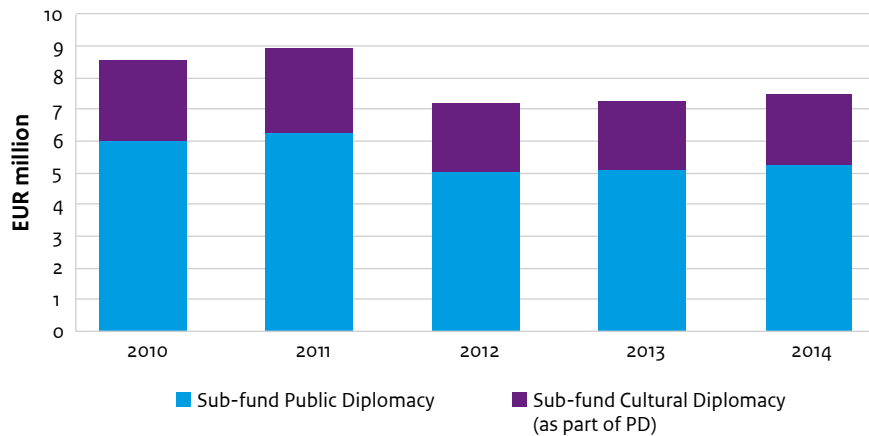
**Figure 2.1** *Current PD focus countries*



*How PD funding is used*

The total funding earmarked for PD<sup>21</sup> in the ministry budget determines COM’s scope in budget allocation. In the period under review, this PD funding – delegated from the Small Programmes Fund, non-ODA, article V-04.04<sup>22</sup> – was reduced from EUR 9 million to EUR 7 million.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 2.2** Actual figures for the PD budget 2009-2014<sup>24</sup>



The annual allocation from BZ for the PD programme in focus countries varies between EUR 10,000 and EUR 480,000, depending on the missions’ capacity and scope. Non-focus countries are classified in three categories and can apply for a maximum of EUR 5,000, EUR 10,000 or EUR 15,000 respectively each year.

Most PD budget funding (59%) goes to the focus countries. BZ departments in The Hague account for 25% of the funding, while non-focus countries account for 16%.

The Dutch mission network in the United States and countries within the EU together receive an average of EUR 168,000. BRICS<sup>25</sup> missions receive considerably less: an average of EUR 85,000 a year. As no agreements have been made on how to clearly track expenditure in these countries, it is not possible to say exactly how such funding is spent.

<sup>21</sup> Up to and including 2015, this also included the allocation for funding international cultural policy. As of 2016, this funding fell under article 4.3. See IOB report 411, *Cultuur als kans*, for more details.

<sup>22</sup> House of Representatives 2015-2016, 34 300 V, no. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Budget allocation follows the guidelines published in the document *Applying for Financing from the Public Diplomacy Sub-fund | Small Non-ODA Activities Programme*. In the evaluation period 2010-2014, COM applied an informal allocation formula of 70%-30% for dividing funding between the Public Diplomacy Sub-fund and the Internal Cultural Policy Unit (ICE) Culture Sub-fund. This division is reflected in the actual figures for the Small Non-ODA Activities Programme in the period 2009-2014.

<sup>24</sup> Source: Financial and Economic Affairs Department, MFA.

<sup>25</sup> Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

### *Staff deployment*

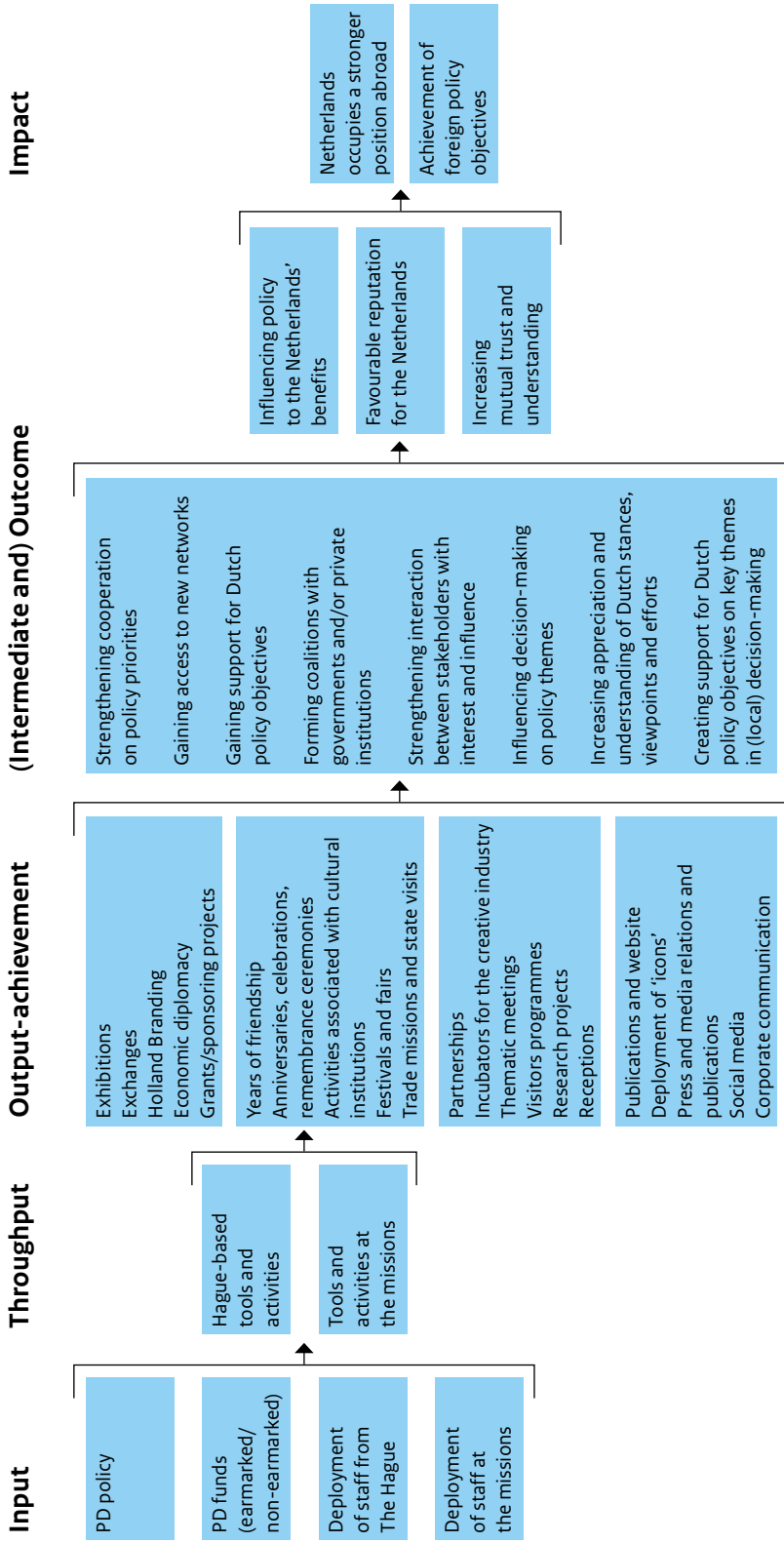
At the ministry, approximately 3 FTEs are available for directing and coordinating PD policy and providing coaching. It is not possible to determine the exact FTE deployment at the missions. After all, all staff are involved with PD in one way or another. In the focus countries, PD efforts sometimes fall under the activities of a PD officer, PD/communications officer or a similar staff member. Section 2.3 looks in greater detail at the roles and responsibilities of these staff.

#### **2.2.2 Rationale**

Together with the deployment of staff and resources, the three-part PD approach – PD policy, a PD manual and a financial framework – forms the input for the intended results. The objectives of PD policy are achieved using the set of tools devised by the ministry and the missions, and by implementing activities. These objectives include strengthening partnership between different actors associated with policy priorities, gaining access to new networks, garnering support for Dutch policy objectives and forming coalitions with a view to influencing policy that will benefit the Netherlands, also in the long term, for instance by boosting its reputation and creating greater mutual trust and understanding.

The rationale of current PD policy is expressed in a results chain (figure 2.3). The individual elements of this chain are described in greater detail in chapters 4 and 5, based on the assessment framework from chapter 3.

Figure 2.3 PD policy rationale





## 2.3 Organisation of PD policy

The policy falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Communications Department. Its main task is to develop frameworks and guidelines for PD policy – including an online presence<sup>26</sup> – and agreements on implementing that policy. The department also develops the strategy and methods for supporting the missions abroad in implementing communication activities, programme and projects. In addition, it ensures that international developments and trends in PD that are relevant to BZ are translated into Dutch PD policy and operationalised in methods and techniques. Besides these more formal tasks, COM also advises and coaches the missions, acts as a PD knowledge centre and responds to questions within BZ. It thus stimulates the professionalisation of PD in The Hague and the missions by maintaining contacts with policy departments, participating in or chairing working groups on PD, and organising training and courses for ambassadors and policymakers at the missions and within departments. Exchanging experiences and best practices is central to this.

The missions are the main implementers of PD policy in the countries in question. They are responsible for developing and implementing tailored strategies by translating centrally-set policy priorities into operational objectives and communication strategies. Policy departments (policy theme departments and regional departments) are tasked with supporting specific policy themes or regions both practically and substantively, thus giving the missions deeper insight into the priorities for PD in their country and the background that should shape it.

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However, PD is not outlined, directed and implemented by BZ alone. Other ministries are also involved in PD at the missions, to a greater or lesser degree. Sometimes, for instance, a specialist attaché from another ministry is appointed to a mission where there is a connection between BZ policy and the policy of the other ministry. Other ministries can also be involved in implementing specific programmes or in various working groups. For example, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency is responsible for implementing the Holland Branding programme and three Visitors Programmes. Countless other players are also involved, including large municipalities, the Dutch business community and the cultural, sports and science sectors.

<sup>26</sup> In May 2012, the Senior Management Board of the Secretary-General and Directors-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved the guidelines and standards for the use of social media. Manuals were drawn up for the use of Twitter and Facebook. These manuals are currently being reviewed.

**Table 2.2** *List of Dutch PD actors*

Location	Component
BZ	Communications Department Mission network PD hubs Country and policy theme departments
Line ministries	Ministry of Economic Affairs (and Netherlands Enterprise Agency), Ministry of General Affairs
Municipalities	Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, EUREGIO
Other governmental organisations	Nuffic, Netherlands Water Partnership, international organisations in The Hague, UNICEF
Business community	Shell, Philips, Heineken, Deltares
NGOs	Partos, SNV, CORDAID, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch
Individuals	Well-known sports personalities, performers, artists etc.

While this table is not exhaustive, it does indicate the broad scale of actors potentially involved in PD policymaking and implementation.





3

## Assessment framework

*This chapter describes the assessment framework used in this policy review.<sup>27</sup> It consists of general guiding principles for BZ-wide policy (section 3.1) and the guiding principles derived from the literature on the effective elaboration and implementation of the PD strategy via the mission network (policy implementation at local level, section 3.2).*

Policy reconstruction and findings derived from the literature indicate that there are different approaches to implementing PD most effectively. For the purposes of this policy review, these approaches have been divided into elements relating to BZ-wide policy and elements relating to implementation at mission level. They form the basis for the assessment framework for this policy review. IOB has used them to analyse how effectively, efficiently, cohesively and strategically PD has been implemented. In the assessment framework, each principle is briefly explained and linked to one of the assessment questions.

### 3.1 Guiding principles – BZ-wide PD policy

To be successful and effective, PD policy firstly requires BZ to be able to respond flexibly to a changing context in which partnerships with non-state actors, targeted strategic communication geared to a positive image and the ability to move within and between fluid networks is increasingly important. Secondly, it requires actors at the ministry to make an effort to influence other actors in the Netherlands' interests, to promote a positive image of the Netherlands abroad and to strengthen mutual trust and understanding. Lastly, it requires a strategy with a storyline reflecting clear choices and priorities, and should be anchored within the ministry and within all policy departments.

<sup>27</sup> The assessment framework is based on a synthesis of the most recent Public Diplomacy Policy Framework, policy documents (including the Public Diplomacy Manual), an independent preliminary study on PD (2012), academic literature and interviews with policy officers from the Communications Department. The elements of the assessment framework are derived from BZ policy and form the guiding principles for the assessment. The assessors also drew on document analysis and a scan of the leading literature on PD, namely: Leonard (2002), Gonesh & Melissen (2005), Gilboa (2008), Cull (2009), Brown (2011), Anholt (2012), Melissen, Hocking, Riordan & Sharp (2012), and Wang (2012).

**Table 3.1** *Assessment framework – PD BZ-wide*

Guiding principles for BZ-wide PD policy		Assessment questions
Contextual factors	Increasingly, non-state actors have a role in or influence the formulation and communication of policy and related decision-making. The Netherlands' image is shaped in part by and via public actors. As well as a tool for implementing policy, PD can also be a source of input for policy development itself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What evidence is there of the involvement of non-state actors in developing and carrying out Dutch policy?</li> <li>• Are these actors taken sufficiently into account in policy formulation and implementation?</li> </ul>
Objectives	Together with mutual trust and understanding, a positive reputation is a building block for a strong Dutch presence abroad. The wider objectives for foreign policy are the main guiding principle for implementing PD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does policy focus on the various approaches and objectives that PD can serve?</li> <li>• What evidence is there that the PD tool is aligned with foreign policy?</li> <li>• Has it been formulated in SMART terms, and is an integrated assessment framework in place?</li> </ul>
Strategy	<p>The Netherlands benefits from a distinct identity, based on a credible and realistic image. PD should be deployed according to a storyline. PD can only be effective and efficient if choices are made and priorities set.</p> <p>PD strategy must be based on the following intervention logic: 'listen' to what's happening → identify common denominators/interests/challenges → seek dialogue → attune tools to this → embark on strong, long-term partnerships → build lasting relationships → strengthen the Netherlands' reputation and develop trust and mutual understanding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does strategic communication geared to a positive image influence policymaking, and does it form a starting point for policy choices made in The Hague?</li> <li>• To what extent is the policy logic of PD based on an underlying analysis?</li> <li>• Are decision-makers aware of this approach, and do they use it?</li> <li>• To what extent does the ministry in The Hague support the guiding principle of requiring a PD story line?</li> <li>• Are choices prioritised and focused in the strategic development of PD?</li> </ul>
Organisation	The deployment of PD is a joint effort by all policy actors. PD should be embedded within the ministry in The Hague and within all policy divisions, and needs to be supported by central management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent is PD deployment a joint effort by all policy actors?</li> <li>• Is there enough support from central management?</li> <li>• Do the missions receive enough support to carry out the assignments they are tasked with?</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Guiding principles – PD policy implementation at mission level

At mission level, effective deployment of PD is informed by the following guiding principles: a tailored approach, knowledge and use of the right actors and networks, timing, the use of appropriate tools and the planning and application of monitoring.

**Table 3.2** *Assessment framework – PD at mission level*

Guiding principles - PD policy at mission level		Assessment questions
Organisation	The deployment of PD is a joint effort by all policy actors. PD should be embedded within all policy divisions, and needs to be supported by management. The missions are best placed to match supply and demand, and can tailor their policy focus to the requirements of the host country and groups within it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent is the policy focus a joint effort by mission staff?</li> <li>• Does the mission have sufficient capacity to implement the PD strategy?</li> <li>• What role does the designated PD officer fulfil?</li> </ul>
A tailored approach	There is no PD blueprint; each mission needs to tailor strategy to the local context. The chosen policy themes and PD interventions should be aligned with both the Dutch policy agenda and the policy of the host country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent is the policy logic of PD put into practice?</li> <li>• To what extent is the deployment of PD linked to BZ policy priorities? Are these plans actually implemented?</li> <li>• To what extent does this reflect the Dutch policy agenda and local demand?</li> <li>• Are BZ's central priorities adequate for missions developing a tailored strategy with PD?</li> <li>• To what extent can sensitive social or ethical subjects be discussed openly in the society in question? To what extent are the missions able to work with independent partners?</li> </ul>
Actors	The effective deployment of PD calls for knowledge of the local balance of forces and target groups. Partnerships with non-state actors bring added value by taking advantage of their capacity, their networks (or access to them) and their knowledge of the local situation. For this to work, partners must be trusted by their supporters or by the target group in question.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent is PD based on an analysis of the target groups and balance of forces?</li> <li>• To what extent do missions work with influentials, VIPs and figures who serve as magnets?</li> <li>• Is the mission able to maintain and develop contacts with relevant public actors?</li> <li>• Which negotiating position do missions occupy?</li> <li>• Has PD created better access to decision makers?</li> </ul>

Guiding principles - PD policy at mission level		Assessment questions
Timetable	PD efforts should be linked with short-term, mid-term and long-term interventions. A consistent story needs to be developed by re-emphasising the same policy themes (the power of repetition). The long-term sustainable partnership that is achieved should ultimately result in greater involvement of, and with, local actors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are PD efforts linked with short-term, mid-term and long-term interventions?</li> <li>• Do missions seek to link PD interventions to relevant developments, events and actors?</li> <li>• Is PD consistently deployed over a longer period?</li> <li>• Is sufficient follow-up given to the activities carried out?</li> </ul>
Tools	Creating partnerships between Dutch actors and actors abroad requires a cohesive but differentiated use of tools that tie in with the nature and style of the partnership. The right communication tools need to be identified to reach each target group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are tools used logically and coherently? To what extent are they aligned with policy objectives?</li> <li>• Do the communication tools used tie in with the intended objectives and target groups?</li> <li>• To what extent have interventions by the missions resulted in mutually positive experiences and partnerships on key policy themes between Dutch and local stakeholders?</li> <li>• To what extent do the activities help create sustainable networks?</li> </ul>
Monitoring and evaluation	The right indicators must be used to ascertain results. In turn, results can be used as a basis for developing and launching new PD initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are interventions monitored and evaluated to gain insight into their outcomes?</li> <li>• Is the method by which outcomes are measured adequate?</li> <li>• To what extent is the spin-off of PD interventions used for their further development, or to initiate new activities?</li> </ul>







4

## Central implementation of PD policy

## 4.1 Conclusions

Besides the general opinions and the concerns highlighted in each section, the following conclusions can be drawn.

- In recent years, BZ has made great strides in PD development: from passive press lines and reactive public relations at the start of the millennium to today's more long-term, differentiated approach. A great deal of energy has gone into highlighting the importance of partnerships with non-state actors – for example via new media – and into professionalising PD, e.g. by developing the PD policy framework, setting up PD courses for BZ staff and providing ready-made tool kits.
- At an organisation-wide level, it is not clear enough whether BZ sees PD as a tool, a programme or a stand-alone policy area. There is no clear, central vision of the place PD occupies within wider foreign policy. Although many of those who work with PD regard it predominantly as a specific aspect of strategic communication, others see it primarily as a broader tool for influencing opinion. BZ as a whole does not pursue a cohesive policy.
- As yet, there is no overarching ambition or vision on how to shape perceptions of the Netherlands, nor has a storyline been developed. Some sub-themes that are significant for the Netherlands have taken on clearer shape in recent years. These include the peace and justice theme, in partnership with the municipality of The Hague, and the interministerial partnership on water. The policies pursued in the interests of PD do not however always tie in effectively with the broader priorities of foreign policy. On this point there has been insufficient systematic and periodic interaction between COM and the thematic and regional departments involved.
- COM's efforts have mainly focused on formulating PD policy, deploying supporting tools and allocating scarce financial resources via the zero budget rather than via targeted support tailored to the missions. Partly as a result of severe staff shortages, insufficient attention has been paid to promoting the importance of PD and streamlining PD efforts within the Ministry as a whole, and providing tailor-made advice and coaching for the missions.
- Successful policy implementation at internal organisational level has involved good use of formal and informal regional PD hubs for support and advice in drawing up and/or implementing joint PD strategy. Examples include the PD hub in Cairo for the Middle East, the PD officer at the embassy in Berlin for the German mission network, and the Digital Communications Officer in the US.



# Local implementation at the missions

## 5.1 Conclusions

The main conclusions drawn in this chapter are:

- While the impact of PD is difficult to measure and track, positive examples and results were found. Impact assessment is a complex matter; external influences cannot be taken into account and the results of PD can only be measured once it has been deployed consistently and in the long term. There is currently insufficient material available. Moreover, there is no feedback mechanism for the result achieved in the policy process, and little is known of the external factors that influence policy outcomes.
- In recent years, time and energy has gone into shifting from a reactive and intuitive approach to a more proactive and strategic PD approach. BZ and the missions have had mixed success in achieving this. Missions have incorporated PD in their strategic plans and applied it in practice in varying ways. PD interventions are not always made in a structured way. In some countries they resemble project programmes, without being integrated in the overall country strategy. In addition, PD efforts are often intuitive and dependent on personal knowledge, experience and preferences rather than on a targeted and strategic policy topic. In practice this leads to differences of interpretation on how to approach and apply PD. When it comes to cultural policy, PD strategies are generally fleshed out in more detail, because how the Netherlands is presented and its visibility and image are central elements in international cultural policy.
- All mission staff need to have PD skills. As the Netherlands' prime representative, the ambassador is not only the number one public diplomat, but is also responsible for embedding PD in the mission's strategy and ensuring that the strategy is implemented. However, not all missions are equally clear on the need to share responsibility for PD mission-wide. Especially at missions with a designated PD section or officer, there seems to be an inclination to give this section or individual sole responsibility for PD, and less interest in other sections in taking up PD.
- Analyses of PD target groups and the balance of forces are rarely if ever carried out, and are usually implicit or incidental. As a result, potential partners are sometimes overlooked, the logic of long-term deployment is poorly substantiated, and shifts in the local balance of forces cannot be followed properly. Nonetheless, the missions are generally well aware of the local situation.
- In addition to the centrally identified PD priorities, the missions work with multiple PD themes of their own. These are based on their own policy objectives and are much more specific than the generic themes. This shows that the introduction of central PD themes has not produced greater uniformity or focus.

- To maximise efficiency, some missions work closely with other countries' missions on PD. This approach can make it easier to reach local stakeholders, access new networks, mobilise greater capability and improve the negotiating position on relevant policy themes. It can also make it easier to implement joint activities and strengthen commitment to and support for policy themes.





# 6

## Conclusions and recommendations



## 6.1 Conclusions

### **PD mirrors processes of change within diplomacy and has grown in significance over the last 20 years.**

The dynamics of modern-day diplomacy are predominantly governed by the interaction between four major trends: (1) the emergence of new, cheaper communications technology and, thus, (2) globalisation; (3) the increase in the number and influence of non-state actors in the international domain; and (4) the increasing blurring of the lines between national and international politics. In an ever-changing world, diplomacy needs to constantly adapt to changing circumstances. More and more countries are developing their own strategies and tools, in accordance with their ambitions and objectives.

### **PD is a form of diplomacy that aims to foster cooperation and dialogue with non-state actors abroad who can influence decision-making in policy areas that are significant to the Netherlands.**

BZ works with many institutions in this field, for example civil society organisations, knowledge institutions, companies, international organisations and the media. Nonetheless, there is still insufficient clarity about the position of PD as an integral component of foreign policy. In the past, PD policy choices and policy efforts have not always been consistent or cohesive. One reason for this is that policy theme departments and country departments are unfamiliar with the policy approach and with ways of steering and guiding the missions.

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### **BZ is gradually transitioning from a reactive and intuitive approach to PD to a more proactive strategy.**

The development of tools for deploying PD has been given a great deal of attention, with the emphasis on using PD for strategic communication, supported by digital media. Attempts are also being made to align BZ's PD policy better with foreign policy. Various other policy support tools have been further developed and priority themes and focus countries have been introduced. PD's function as an instrument for influencing opinion may have been recognised, but as yet missions have done little or nothing to translate this into specific policies.

### **PD is not yet sufficiently embedded within BZ as a fundamental diplomatic instrument for effective policy implementation.**

At ministerial level, various initiatives have been developed over the years to better embed PD in BZ and the missions' primary processes. The Communications Department has responded to this by developing various policy support tools, varying from the three-part PD approach to visitors programmes and from setting up a PD site to the annual plan instructions. Not all initiatives were able to get off the ground, due in part to capacity problems; some were even prematurely terminated. Proportionally, a great deal of time was spent allocating limited funding rather than focusing on targeted policy harmonised with the missions. However, shared mission-wide responsibility for PD is not recognised at all the missions. Establishing a dedicated PD section and PD officer at the mission is often counterproductive, as this undermines the mission-wide character of PD, with other sections feeling they do not share responsibility.

**It is not clear enough who is responsible for steering and coordinating PD.**

BZ should centrally supervise Dutch PD across the civil service, but in practice it tends to be fragmented. At the same time, steering and coordination focuses insufficiently on involving other Dutch parties in interministerial policy and PD. Coordination is also hampered by the fact that the budgets available for PD objectives are dispersed across various programmes and other sources.

In recent years, missions have deployed PD more frequently and explicitly than before to achieve generic and specific objectives, but there is still room for improvement.

Missions have incorporated PD in their strategic plans and applied in it practice in varying ways. Because of their formal position and knowledge of local issues, they are able to establish connections between Dutch interests and 'demand' in the host country. Although good examples are being set, clear and explicit deployment of a PD strategy or tools at country level is generally lacking. In practice, this leads to different interpretations of how to approach and apply PD.

## 6.2 Recommendations

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**Adopt a consistent, long-term approach to PD and determine a storyline for each country and policy theme.**

Where possible, try to join forces with other players. Be aware of the differing starting points for PD, determined by historical, political, cultural and economic relations. Extend the reach and boost the effectiveness of policy through a tailor-made approach, country-specific efforts and coherent links between the various online and offline tools. This requires a consistent, multi-year vision of PD policy to combat amateur, ad-hoc PD practices.

**Promote PD as a fundamental part of the mission's strategy, and conduct analyses of PD target groups and the balance of forces.**

Properly mapping target groups and the balance of forces can create added value by identifying opportunities and risks. This will also facilitate monitoring progress in the policy fields in question. Other experts (line ministries, local stakeholders, etc.) can also be involved in the analyses. To this end, integrate PD efforts in all sections at priority missions. After all, PD is more than a Communications Department project programme: the implementation and deployment of PD should be part of the day-to-day work of all sections and staff.

**Strengthen PD's functioning by improving steering and coordination and encouraging partnerships.**

In agreeing policy content, involve country and policy theme departments as well as COM, with its facilitating, coaching and advisory role. Country and policy theme departments can contribute knowledge and act as a sounding board for the missions, for example on proposed PD interventions (especially when it comes to exerting influence) and on content.

Make better use of existing knowledge and expertise (e.g. at line ministries and in country and policy theme departments) when devising country strategies. It may be worth reconsidering setting up regional PD hubs. The BZ Newsroom can assist in monitoring, for example commissioning analyses of the use and impact of digital tools. Facilitate teamwork in The Hague by involving the various policy theme departments and interministerial working groups at the early stages of compiling PD manuals and policy. Moreover, central coordination is vital when PD is linked to major international efforts, such as the promotion of candidacies, campaigns for the membership of bodies like the UN Security Council, major conferences (Nuclear Security Summit, Global Conference on CyberSpace) and crisis communication.

### **Don't impose central PD themes on the missions.**

Imposing central PD priorities on missions will not make PD any more efficient and brings little added value to existing HGIS objectives. Missions must decide themselves how, when and for which objective they wish to deploy PD as a tool, based on their strategic plans. However, PD does need to be a more explicit element of these plans.

### **Strengthen the learning function of PD through competent monitoring and evaluation.**

This is important for COM, so they can learn from policy implementation and be able to account for measures taken. Periodic monitoring should take account of the nature and complexity of PD – tools and activities are deployed as part of a larger whole, together with other forms of diplomacy – and should be linked to the implementation of the strategic plans (instead of monitoring at micro level or pursuing isolated activities). Assess the degree to which the BZ Newsroom can systematically support missions in monitoring and evaluating the use of digital media, designing searches, choosing online channels and drawing up specific analyses and trends. This will promote a better understanding of global developments in this field and create a capacity advantage for the missions.

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Public diplomacy (PD) is a form of diplomacy aimed at fostering cooperation and dialogue with non-state actors abroad. Dutch PD has a dual purpose: (1) promoting a positive image of the Netherlands abroad; and (2) helping to achieve the aims of Dutch foreign policy. Since 2004, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made great strides in public diplomacy policy through which the cooperation with non-state actors,

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