

| Reaping the rewards:
building lasting relationships
through visitors programmes



Introduction

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“For us, the Dutch experience has been very important,” says Ihor Poshyvailo, director of the Maidan Museum and co-founder of HERI (Heritage Emergency Response Initiative) in Kyiv, Ukraine. “During the Second World War, similar events took place when Holland was occupied by Nazi troops. We learned a great deal from speaking with our colleagues in Dutch museums during the visitors programme. How can we document damaged objects and collect evidence to present to the criminal courts? What can be done to make our cultural sector more resilient? How can contested history be presented today? We also spoke about traumatic issues, and how museums can be places for dialogue and art therapy. For building communities and inspiring people with hope for a better future.”

It is perhaps a lesser-known service of DutchCulture, at least to the general public: the international visitors programme. A programme that helps connect cultural professionals from different countries and organisations. Participants exchange knowledge and ideas, learn about each other’s culture, and, above all, forge lasting relationships.

Among the many activities DutchCulture organises, the international visitors programme is a firm favourite. On average, every year some 40 foreign

cultural professionals participate (in 2022 there were even 109). People from key cultural organisations are invited to visit the Netherlands with the purpose of meeting Dutch cultural experts, becoming acquainted with different Dutch cultural professionals and organisations and experiencing Dutch cultural activities. Likewise, the Dutch cultural field profits from coming into contact with their international counterparts, becoming inspired by professionals who bring new and different ideas, and seeing their familiar world through the eyes of people from another culture. In times of social and political unrest – such as the war in Ukraine and the earthquake in Turkey – cultural mobility and access to a solid international network do not only offer support; they can literally be a lifeline to protect and save heritage, cultural structures and even cultural identity. And so, these visits have shown to benefit everyone involved, often in unexpected ways.

Marcel Feil, DutchCulture’s head of the International Cultural Policy & Coordination Team, explains: “Our international visitors programme really is a unique tool for collaboration and international cooperation. It’s absolutely an equal exchange. We learn as much about our visitors as they do about us. Which is essential for maintaining a healthy cultural landscape. And more importantly: it helps build lasting

relationships, which in turn have produced a multitude of fantastic shared activities, both in the Netherlands and abroad. Because, let’s face it: it’s so much easier, when you actually know each other, to simply pick up the phone and say: hey, let’s work together on this!”

The role of DutchCulture is crucial to these visitors programmes, because of the unique skillset of the organisation, says Feil. “Instead of specialising in one particular discipline, such as film or theatre, our expertise is promoting international cultural collaboration. Working with people from other countries is our core business. Each of our advisors is specialised in a different region, so we have a lot of knowledge of the international cultural landscape, with extensive networks in the Netherlands and abroad. Still, putting together a successful programme can be challenging. You really need to take into account what works for the visitors *and* for the locals. How can both benefit equally? What can they learn from one another? Can we produce something that is meaningful, lasting and relevant for all involved? A successful programme often leads to beautiful results. With long-term relationships between cultural professionals, who are at the ready to help each other. Together, they form a true international network. And ultimately, this helps make the world a better place.”

International cultural policy

Visitors have included artists, policy makers, journalists and managing directors of cultural centres and umbrella organisations. The majority of participants are from countries that are prioritised in the Dutch international cultural policy. This is outlined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – which also provides some of the funding – together with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The aim of the Dutch government is to strengthen international cultural exchange and cooperation, and showcase what the Netherlands is about: a country with an open outlook, keen to forge partnerships and find innovative solutions. Culture also serves Dutch political and economic interests. Many international cultural partnerships are forged without government intervention. However, if opportunities are not fully grasped, the government can play a supportive role, by helping to bring people together in the cultural domain.

“It is our experience that these type of visitor programmes always end up creating connections

that lead to something interesting. It can be six months or even a few years later, but it almost always happens,” says Dewi van de Weerd, Ambassador for International Cultural Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Priority countries

Countries eligible to participate are prioritised on a yearly basis. Rick Busscher, who works as a producer for DutchCulture’s international visitors programme, explains: “There are different interests at play. With some countries, it’s about showing the Netherlands in all its variety. Then there are countries the Netherlands has a cultural heritage connection to, such as Indonesia, a former Dutch colony. And of course, we have our neighbouring countries within the EU. Hungary and Poland, for instance, were added in the 2021–2024 policy.” Advisor Central and Eastern Europe Tijana Stepanovic adds: “Although the political relations with these countries are complicated, culture offers a means to keep exchanging ideas and build long-lasting relationships.”

According to Busscher, politics often plays a part, especially when human rights are concerned. But it is never the main topic. “Culture is always a safe way to meet in the middle. It’s easy to have an

open conversation with someone when you share experiences and have similar interests. These international visitors programmes are a great way to steer clear of politics, find partners for new projects and focus on forging connections. It’s the power of culture; a form of soft diplomacy.”

Soft diplomacy

An interesting example is Morocco. The relationship between Morocco and the Netherlands is complex, and for many years, any form of collaboration was virtually non-existent. But this is now beginning to change. “Naturally, the political element is significant here as well,” says Busscher. “But more importantly, our visitors programme has helped establish the first Moroccan residency for Dutch artists. The focus lies on a constructive exchange between Morocco and the Netherlands. And interestingly, this has become one of the best tools to foster the relationship we currently have.”

Until 2022, Ukraine was not a focus of the Dutch international cultural policy. But, says Busscher, the war has changed this as well. “During the months following the Russian full-scale invasion, our desire grew to strengthen ties with Ukraine and get to know each other better. The Dutch government has added

Ukraine to the list of focus countries for the current policy period and DutchCulture came up with the idea for a visitors programme. It's the perfect tool for an intensive exchange."

Categories

Besides DutchCulture, there are several other cultural expertise institutions and public funds in the Netherlands that organise visitors programmes, each in specific categories:

- Performing Arts Fund NL for international programmers and other professionals in music, theatre and dance
- Mondriaan Fund for curators, critics and other professionals in the field of contemporary visual arts
- Dutch Foundation for Literature for foreign editors and publishers
- Nieuwe Instituut for international professionals working in the fields of architecture, design, fashion and e-culture
- EYE International for the international marketing and promotion of Dutch film

DutchCulture organises two different categories of international visitors programmes: a cultural heritage programme and a cross-sectoral programme.

The former is primarily intended for visitors from countries the Netherlands shares a past with (such as former Dutch colonies), but can also be tailored to visitors from Europe. Its aim is to deepen and improve international cultural collaboration with these countries.

The cross-sectoral programme is often produced in collaboration with one of the aforementioned organisations, and can be any cultural discipline that does not specifically fit one of the listed categories or a combination thereof. For example, journalism, or multilingualism. "We're certainly not competitors," stresses Rick Busscher, when asked about the other organisations. "On the contrary: we often join forces. So, anyone with questions should absolutely approach any one of us. The programme is always customised to the visitor, with their background and interests in mind, and the Dutch cultural field as a focal point. In our line of work, disciplines aren't always clear-cut, and interests can vary widely. But we always do our best to make it work!"



Selected highlights

| Ukraine (2023): Care & Resilience - Ukrainian Museums in Times of War

7 February-3 March
Initiated by: DutchCulture

Outcome: it is still too early for
concrete results (this programme took
place recently)

In late February, around the time that marked a year since the start of Russia's full-scale military attack on Ukraine, seven Ukrainian directors of museums and heritage protection networks visited the Netherlands to share their stories with the cultural sector, meet with Dutch museum professionals and have their voices heard. Looting and destroying cultural objects with the intention of obliterating Ukraine's cultural identity has been an essential part of the Kremlin strategy since the start of the war.

According to the American Smithsonian Institution, an estimated 1,600 culturally significant sites have been damaged or destroyed by war so far, including not just museums, but also archives, libraries, galleries, art centres, monuments, churches and archaeological sites. Tens of thousands of artefacts have also been stolen from museums and private collections. Human rights organisation Human Rights Watch documented a large, organised art heist in the eastern city of Kherson and labelled it a

war crime. During the visitors programme, Oksana Barshynova of the National Art Museum of Ukraine spoke of 'cultural genocide'.

But as the visiting museum directors explained, Ukraine's cultural sector has been quick to respond to the threat. Through remarkable self-organisation they have joined forces to protect cultural heritage, immediately thinking about how to rebuild the sector when the war is over. Some of this includes organising exhibitions abroad, to help safeguard important works of art.

According to DutchCulture advisor Central and Eastern Europe Tijana Stepanovic, who organised the programme, "Ukraine's cultural heritage is being erased. And this programme was an opportunity to exchange their views on heritage protection, contested history, digitalisation and curatorial practices." The programme saw the participants visiting various museums and organisations, speaking

at a public event, and attending expert meetings to explore how the Dutch cultural sector can help.

"This edition of the visitors programme was something completely different," says Stepanovic. "Never before did we have visitors from an acute war zone. It was very emotional. We are not just fellow professionals – we are also human beings. And we saw so much pain and vulnerability... This group is incredibly close, and has so much energy. You could feel it at every meeting. It was beautiful, but also very painful."

This unique visit by Ukrainian cultural professionals generated a great deal of publicity, with several stories being published in national newspaper De Volkskrant and broadcast on Dutch television and radio.

"For us, the Dutch experience has been very important," says Ihor Poshyvailo, director of the Maidan Museum and co-founder of HERI (Heritage

Emergency Response Initiative), from Kyiv. “During the Second World War similar events took place when Holland was occupied by Nazi troops. We learned a great deal from speaking with our colleagues in Dutch museums. How can we document damaged objects and collect evidence to present to the criminal courts? What can be done to make our cultural sector more resilient? How can contested history be presented today? We also spoke about traumatic issues, and how museums can be places for dialogue and art therapy. For building communities and inspiring people with hope for a better future.”

Yulia Vaganova, director of the Bohdan & Varvara Khanenko National Museum of Arts, from Kyiv, says the international visitors programme gave her many new insights: “One of the best things in the Netherlands is how everything is so people centric. Celebrating diversity and focusing on personal stories. The programme has also shown me that Dutch institutions have a lot of experience in working with a difficult past. And the way Dutch museums and cultural institutions work together, on an inclusive, horizontal level with both smaller and larger organisations, sets a great example. It’s something we can learn from, that will be especially valuable when the war ends.”

This visitors programme is the prelude to a more structural support of the Ukrainian field, with a second visitors programme scheduled to take place later in September 2023.



← Expedition of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War (the War Museum) in the newly de-occupied Peremoha (Chernihiv) region. Ukraine, April 2022.

Photo: Courtesy of Milena Chorna

↙ A fuel tank of a fighter jet found in the de-occupied Kharkiv region by the team of the War Museum in Kyiv. Ukraine, 2022.

Photo: Viktor Byshev

↓ Expert meeting at DutchCulture, Amsterdam. March 2023.

Photo: Cem Altınöz



| Morocco (2022): Museum Knowledge Exchange Programme

5-9 December
Initiated by: DutchCulture

Outcome: ongoing cultural exchange and collaboration with various museums, visual arts and heritage organisations in Morocco and the Netherlands (such as Cobra Museum Amstelveen, Reinwardt Academy, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, la Fondation Nationale des Musées du Maroc, Mohammed VI Museum Maroc, DutchCulture); installation of the first Moroccan residency for Dutch Artists

2022 saw a series of exchanges between museum professionals in Morocco and the Netherlands, facilitated by DutchCulture's international visitors programme. Despite a long-standing relationship between the two countries, cultural cooperation was virtually non-existent for a long time. There were simply no funds or training programmes to stimulate and support cultural exchange. However, this changed in 2017 when Morocco became one of the focus countries of Dutch international cultural policy, and DutchCulture developed a programme aimed at stimulating cultural exchange between the Netherlands and Morocco in the field of cultural heritage and the museum sector.

Morocco has been working to internationalise its museum and cultural sectors since 2014, with

the establishment of La Fondation Nationale des Musées, which aims to create a museum that meets international standards in every Moroccan city. The Netherlands, which has a large Dutch-Moroccan community, sees this ambition as essential for encouraging the younger generations to (re)discover their cultural identity.

Myriam Sahraoui, advisor Morocco at DutchCulture: "In the Netherlands there is often a very traditional and folkloristic image and perception of Moroccan art and culture. An exhibition such as *The Other Story*, at the Cobra Museum, was a fantastic opportunity to present Moroccan modernism. It's incredibly important to display these elements of Morocco's cultural heritage and modernity to the Dutch-Moroccan public. And the exchanges between cultural

professionals in both countries – passing knowledge and experiences back and forth, and debating issues from different perspectives – bring a wealth of ideas to the cultural table."



Visit of CCNL Amersfoort. December 2022.

Photo: Lonneke Bär / DutchCulture



In March 2022, the first exploratory trip by the Reinwardt Academy, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands and DutchCulture to Morocco took place, aimed at registering what Moroccan museums need, what the best ways would be to get to know each other, and exchange knowledge and experience. Then, in April 2022, the chair of the Fondation Nationale des Musées and the director of the Mohammed VI Museum travelled to the Netherlands, to help prepare a Dutch training programme for Moroccan museum professionals.

The programme has led to an extremely productive and ongoing alliance, which includes a group of eight Moroccan curators visiting the Netherlands to meet their Dutch counterparts; Dutch museum professionals traveling to Morocco, accompanied by students of the Reinwardt Academy; and a successful and important collaboration between the Cobra Museum for Modern Art in Amstelveen, the Mohammed VI Museum in Rabat and DutchCulture. After decades of frosty relations between the two countries, there is a renewed interest in each other which has proven highly significant.

“It’s always a give and take,” said Hanae Jerjou, deputy curator of the Jemaa el Fna Museum of Intangible and Tangible Heritage in Marrakech during the visitors programme in December. “Whatever the subject may be, we share the Moroccan point of view, the Dutch share their point of view, and often this leads to debate. And the debate is where it all happens.”



↑ Workshop at the Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam. December 2022.

Photo: David Stegenga



← Visit of CCNL Amersfoort. December 2022.

Photo: Lonneke Bär / DutchCulture

| Japan (2022): LGBTQI+ Rights/Pride Programme

30 July-8 August
Initiated by: the Japanese
cultural field / the Dutch embassy
in Tokyo

Outcome: multiple online publications;
mutual learnings; upcoming exhibition

LGBTQI+ rights are one of several Dutch values that is actively promoted in Japan as part of the Dutch embassy's public diplomacy. Two journalists from the online lifestyle magazine The New Tokyo expressed an interest in reporting on gay life in Amsterdam. And activists and researchers from three different organisations wanted to find out more about Amsterdam's Pride festival. This led to a specially curated visit, an example of a cross-sectoral programme, which focuses on much more than just Dutch culture.

Ian Yang, DutchCulture's advisor for cultural cooperation with China, Japan and South Korea: "In Japan, and Asia in general, homosexuality is still quite taboo. And of course, there is this idea that the Netherlands is a gay paradise. But things aren't that straightforward. Yes, we have more acceptance, better civil rights, and gay marriage. But the attitude towards the LGBTQI+ community isn't always positive. There are ongoing heated debates, for instance about

trans rights, or how the Pride festival is dominated by white cisgender men. It's good to be able to offer people from other countries different perspectives, and show them how the Netherlands deals with these issues."

During the week of their stay, the journalists conducted numerous interviews, which led to the publication of eleven different articles online. As a group, the participants learned about how the subject of homosexuality is approached by parents and discussed in Dutch schools; visited the IHLIA LGBTI Heritage archives; and experienced how the Dutch government tackled a sudden outbreak of monkey pox. And of course, they attended the celebrations surrounding Canal Pride.

"The main purpose was to broaden their horizons," says Yang. "But it was eye-opening for us as well. By meeting with each other, person to person, and discussing important life matters, DutchCulture and the other organisations learned a lot about life in

Japan, a very closed society. Sometimes, when you see yourself through someone else's eyes, it teaches you a thing or two. An exchange like this can be incredibly meaningful and inspiring. For the visitor, and also for the host."



↑
Presentation at DutchCulture by master's student in Sociology Iline Ceelen, who researched the position of the annual Canal Parade in Amsterdam Pride for her thesis.

Photo: EISUKE

| Turkey (2022): Spaces of Culture Mobility Programme

26-30 September
Initiated by: Spaces of Culture
/ Dutch consulate in Istanbul

Outcome: connecting creators from Turkey with
co-working spaces in Amsterdam, such as NDSM
and Noor Images, for ongoing collaboration

The Netherlands is home to over 400,000 Dutch citizens with Turkish roots, and has a long history of cultural and artistic cooperation with Turkey, dating back to the 17th century. The cultural sector in Turkey is young, ambitious, and constantly developing, with a high demand for cultural activities. Interdisciplinary collaborations are common, and culture plays an important role in sparking conversation, challenging existing views, and building bridges in a diverse society.

In recent years, the Dutch international cultural policy has focused on improving bilateral relations between the two countries, and strengthening the position of the Dutch cultural sector in Turkey through increased visibility, exchange, and sustainable collaboration.



Spaces of Culture Mobility Programme, Amsterdam, 2022.

Photo: Cem Altınöz



This includes supporting projects that contribute to a dialogue about principles and values, such as LGBTQI+ rights and women's rights.

September 2022 saw the second edition of the Spaces of Culture Mobility programme: an exchange that first took place in 2018. Collaborating with different organisations, including the Goethe Institute Istanbul, a group of twenty Turkish professionals from a wide variety of disciplines was invited to visit the Netherlands. For many of them, this was their first time travelling and working internationally. Such as Gökhan Özdemir of the Batman Foundation for Arts and Culture. "Because this was my first time abroad, it was primarily an experience about travelling, before anything else," he says. "But it was even better that this was a professional trip, rather than just visiting as a tourist. Through this experience, I gained perspectives on how we can make broader connections and reach a larger audience. I was able to expand my network, and even arranged a potential screening of European films at our location in Turkey. We built strong ties, not only with the people we met in the Netherlands, but also within our own group. From now on, we can collaborate on projects together."



Spaces of Culture Mobility Programme, Amsterdam, 2022.

Photos: Cem Altınöz

| Italy (2022): Multilingualism; Creative Aging

10-14 April & 22-26 May
Initiated by: the Dutch
embassy in Rome / Dutch consulate
in Milan

Outcome: publication of Frisian books in Ladin;
production of Frisian play in Friulian; performance
by Frisian poet at Sardinian festival; ongoing
collaboration between Dutch and Italian theatre
troupes; ongoing collaboration between Dutch dementia
organisation and Tuscan museum network



In April and May 2022, the Dutch embassy in Rome and the Consulate-General in Milan teamed up with DutchCulture and local partners to organise two visitors programmes to the Netherlands. Until recently, exchanges between Italian and Dutch culture focused mainly on design, literature and architecture, with limited funding for other disciplines, such as performing arts. However, feeling the need to be less restrictive and play into more current trends, the focus of the 2021–2024 policy was expanded to include six additional areas: ageing, multilingualism, child and youth culture, identity and inclusion, cooperation with Flanders and digitisation.



Journalist Paolo Alfieri (Milan) playing on a hand made guitar by Fort van de Verbeelding. May 2022.

Photo: Alessandro Manzella

“Multilingualism and aging were two relatively new areas for us,” says the Dutch embassy’s cultural attaché Bas Ernst. “Not many people know that there are twelve officially acknowledged minority languages in Italy. We invited representatives of Ladin, Friulian and Sardinian to visit the northern Dutch province of Friesland. The people there speak Frisian, and are actively involved in promoting their culture and language. They have their own national radio and television network, there are Frisian festivals and archives, as well as literature and poetry. The Frisians participate in international networks that connect them with other minority language groups, such as Welsh and Basque. In Italy, many regions lack the infrastructure to enable cultural projects from a language policy perspective. Which is why we focused on the cultural policy perspective, by supporting language professionals who promote contemporary art forms and topical issues in their regional languages.



← Meeting at the Drachtster Lyceum secondary school in Drachten, where Frisian is taught as a final exam subject. April 2022.

Photo: Ypie Boersma

↓ Participants of the Multilingualism programme visit Schouwburg de Lawei, Drachten. April 2022.

Photo: Ypie Boersma



This has led to an incredibly fruitful exchange, with theatre companies collaborating back and forth, a Frisian poet performing at a Sardinian festival and two Frisian children's books set to be published in Ladin."

May 2022 saw another Italian visitors programme, this time about creative aging. With rapidly aging populations in Italy and the Netherlands, this is a hot topic in both countries. Italy currently has the third oldest population in the world, and the country is aging at a much faster rate than any other nation in the EU. "This poses unique challenges, both culturally and for society in general," cultural attaché Ernst explains. "It's important to exchange knowledge. Each country has their own, unique approach to aging. And both offer creative solutions."

The visitors programme has led to multiple productive collaborations. Fort van de Verbeelding (fortress of the imagination), a community of musicians and other artists, joined forces with intergenerational community theatre Compagnie Malviste for an ongoing partnership, participating in workshops, creating musical instruments and producing shows. And Tuscan museum network MTA was coupled with the Dutch Unforgettable network. Both work with a successful methodology developed by the MoMA in New York, aimed at improving the lives of people with dementia and their loved ones.

"These programmes have been so incredibly productive," says Ernst. "We're still reaping the rewards. And there are already new visitors programmes in the making. It's a fantastic tool to build lasting relationships with."



↑ Participants of the Multilingualism programme at Omrop Fryslân (Frisian Broadcasting), Leeuwarden. April 2022.

Photo: Ypie Boersma

Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network (2022)

5-8 December

Initiated by: DutchCulture,
National Archives of the
Netherlands, Cultural Heritage
Agency of the Netherlands

Outcome: strengthening of
international relationships,
creating and expanding networks

The Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network visitors programme is a unique programme that was organised for the annual meeting of the Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network (DTPHN): an international network of Asian public and private institutions that work with heritage related to the Dutch East India Company. During its colonial past, the Netherlands founded numerous trading posts throughout the world – many in former colonies, such as Suriname and Brazil, as well as throughout South-East Asia, which provided the Netherlands with a wealth of spices and other valuable resources. Some of these old trading posts, despite being wry symbols and reminders of that sore history, are beautifully restored fortresses. Others are in desperate need of work. To this end, experts in various countries have formed a network to address the Dutch history and open new doors for cultural heritage cooperation.”

“It’s a painful issue,” says DutchCulture’s head of International Cultural Policy & Coordination, Marcel Feil, “because this relates directly to our colonial

past. We need to be extremely sensitive to how our shared history and cultural heritage are dealt with in each specific country. Because of this, it’s incredibly important to build steady relationships with local experts. This is also why we have an advisor specialised in international heritage cooperation.” For this event, eleven participants from seven different countries – Taiwan, China, Japan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Thailand – gathered in the Netherlands to exchange knowledge about maintaining the trading posts, and to meet with key figures from the Dutch cultural sector. There were excursions to various museums, the Amsterdam archives and City Conservation Society (StadsHerstel), and a public symposium.



Participants at the public Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network Symposium in Amsterdam. December 2022.

Photos: Almicheal Fraay





Participants at the public Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network in Amsterdam. December 2022.

Photos: Almicheal Fraay



Remco Vrolijk, secretary of the Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network: "The Cultural Heritage Agency, the Dutch National Archives and DutchCulture invited the Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network to organise our annual meeting in the Netherlands. We were able to meet many experts from all key institutions in the Netherlands as well as individual specialists like historians. I believe the greatest value of this meeting was in connecting with these people and institutions. Our network is different from other networks in the sense that we are a collection of international specialists from different fields, such as architecture, historians, museum managers and curators who all work with heritage related to the Dutch East India Company. This combination makes our network

interesting, since there is a lot of knowledge to share. But it also makes it difficult to create focus and depth. This formed a challenge for our annual meeting in the Netherlands, as not all programme activities were relevant to all members. But we believe that DutchCulture and their partners did their utmost to accommodate the wide range of requests regarding the programme content. In the end, I think the programme offered something for everyone, and many of the participants were inspired by the museum visits. We are still working on developing ideas that were conceived during the meeting and remain in contact with some of the specialists we met. DutchCulture also organised the Dutch Trading Post Heritage Network Symposium, which was very well organised

with a lot of interesting experts. Many members were able to (re)connect with specialists from different fields, and it was also a rare opportunity to exchange information with the Dutch field. This sharing is very important to our members. All and all it has been very well executed."

Long-term investments

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Exchanging knowledge and ideas, learning about each other's culture, and forging lasting relationships are ultimately what make the international visitors programme so worthwhile. However, DutchCulture's head of international cultural policy & coordination Marcel Feil warns that the results are not always immediately apparent. "It's important to bear in mind that the impact isn't always measurable. And sometimes it only becomes clear over time: after a year, or maybe even longer. With international cooperation, you're in it for the long haul. Like with any relationship, it's important to get to know each other first. Give it time, so that these long-term relationships really have a chance to mature. Meeting each other face-to-face, having dinner together and participating in activities – it all helps build trust. And eventually, this always pays off. The international visitors programme is just a starting point, establishing cultural networks that allow international relationships to flourish. It's a very hands-on approach, crucial to future cooperation."

Bas Ernst, cultural attaché of the Dutch embassy in Italy, agrees that the visitors programme is a worthwhile investment. Currently, he is preparing for several new cultural exchanges. "It's such an effective tool!", he exclaims enthusiastically. "Of course, you need to be realistic. Not everything works out. And it's a big investment. Not so much in terms of money, but putting a good programme together certainly takes time. Luckily, we have a solid partner in DutchCulture. And of course, we're also blessed to have a country where something interesting is always happening, with a lot of talented creators. The international visitors programme is the perfect way to implement our international cultural policy. It's a tried and tested, very successful tool."

"It's important to bear in mind that the impact isn't always measurable. And sometimes it only becomes clear over time: after a year, or maybe even longer. With international cooperation, you're in it for the long haul"

Marcel Feil, head of international cultural policy & coordination, DutchCulture

DutchCu|ture

Colophon

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