



**Expert evaluation network
delivering policy analysis on the
performance of Cohesion policy 2007-2013
Year 3 – 2013**

**Task 2: Country Report on Achievements of
Cohesion policy**

The Netherlands

Version: Final

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**A report to the European Commission
Directorate-General Regional Policy**

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List of abbreviations

- AIR Annual Implementation Report
- CBC Cross-border Cooperation
- CLLD Community Led Local Development
- EMR Euregio Meuse-Rhine
- FEI Financial Engineering Instrument
- FTE Full-time Equivalent
- MA Management Authority
- OP Operational Programme
- SDE Stimulerend Duurzame Energieproductie

Executive summary

GDP declined in 2012 by 1%. This can have several causes, such as the restrictions by the government to cut back its expenditures to fulfil the EU criteria regarding debt levels. The public sector balance again deteriorated in 2012 because government revenue decreased. Because of the government's reduction in expenditure and the caution of banks to give loans, the confidence of consumers and producers deteriorated.

The economic and financial crisis had a negative impact at the NUTS 2 level in 2012 (Table 2). In contrast to 2011, when there was positive economic growth in 10 of the 12 Dutch provinces, there was only minor positive economic growth in the province of Zeeland in 2012. Overall the economic growth for most provinces worsened in 2012 and that there was little difference between the periphery and more central regions in this regard in contrast to 2011 (Table 2). This shows that all regions have been hit by the economic crisis and that peripheral areas were no more vulnerable in 2012 than the central regions. Despite this, there was no change in ERDF project selection criteria. There were not any shifts in priorities or allocation of EU funding in 2012.

The implementation rate for the Netherlands increased for all priorities in 2012 compared to previous years (Table 3). After two-third of the programming period, the implementation rate (based on the certified expenditure) was 49%. This is an increase of almost 16 percentage points compared to 2011. Moreover, looking at both financial and indicators, it is noticeable that programmes are recovering from their initial delays since programmes succeeded in complying with the N+2 rule to avoid automatic de-commitment.

It remains hard to draw any conclusions when comparing ERDF indicators with national ones because there is still a lack of quantitative data and qualitative studies. Looking at the various AIRs we draw the conclusion that Managing Authorities (MAs) are becoming more aware of the need to show the regional impact of ERDF.

Although ERDF cannot have a very significant impact since it only comprises 0.1% of Dutch GDP, all regions certainly believe that ERDF has an effect. The monitoring of outputs, qualitative analyses in the AIRs and interviews show good achievements. An indirect effect is that ERDF functions as a basis for attracting further loans. ERDF is also effective because of its strict procedural conditions. Firstly, it can be seen as a learning experience as regards the reporting system. Secondly, we expect that this leads to better project requests. Besides, ERDF can also have a leverage effect in stimulating innovation, cooperation and creativity. However, more qualitative evaluations are necessary to determine the effect of the ERDF on the regions.

No changes have been made to the evaluation plans (schedule) since the previous report last year. Although all regions believe that more qualitative evaluations are necessary, none of the regions conducted any specific studies in 2012.

A challenge for the next period is to show that ERDF can really be effective. Since not many qualitative evaluations have been conducted, we can only show quantitative results. These are no good indicators to prove the effect of intervention in regions. Evaluations should, therefore, be more policy-related and specific instead of general.

1. The socio-economic context

Main points from the previous country report:

- The recovery of the Dutch economy lasted until mid-2011. However, in the Autumn of 2011 Dutch economy went into recession. The overall economy declined, caused by several factors such as: lower world trade, lower confidence of consumers and producers in the economy and increased uncertainty in the financial markets.
- Overall economic growth in the Netherlands in 2011 was around 1% although several sectors such as construction, retailing and real estate are experiencing difficulties. Proposed cutbacks from national government have reduced consumer confidence. Employment and purchasing power are under strain. This results in a reduction in demand. Moreover, producers reduced their investment which reduced GDP.
- The Dutch government tried to alleviate the effects of the crisis by allowing budgetary deficits and national debt to rise in 2010. In 2011 however, government borrowing was controlled more strictly. Moreover, the government aimed to cut back government expenditure in order to adapt to the new economic circumstances and new EU agreements over debt levels.
- There are fairly significant differences in regional economic growth between regions at NUTS 2 level. In particular the peripheral regions, such as Groningen, are lagging behind.

Developments since the 2012 report

Current policy of fiscal consolidation adopted at national level did not affect the funding available for regional development.

Table 1- Key figures for the Netherlands (annual % change)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
GDP growth (annual %)	1.8	-3.7	1.5	0.9	-1.0
Public sector balance (% GDP)	0.5	-5.6	-5.1	-4.5	-4.1
General Government investment	3.5	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.4
Productivity growth %	-0.2	-2.6			
Employment %	78.9	78.8	76.8	77	77.2
Unemployment rate %	3.1	3.7	4.5	4.4	5.3
Inflation	2.2	1	0.9	2.5	2.8

Source: Eurostat, Central Statistical Office, Estimations by ING Economic Office (GDP growth)¹.

Table 1 shows that GDP declined in 2012 by 1%. This can have several causes.

A main cause is the restrictions adopted by the government to cut back its expenditure to meet the EU limit on debt levels. Despite this, the public sector balance again deteriorated in 2012 because government revenue also declined.

¹ Different sources give different estimations with regard to GDP growth. Therefore, we used the ING Economic Office as source for the GDP growth.

Because of the reduction in government expenditure and the reluctance of banks to give loans, the confidence of consumers and producers deteriorated. This resulted in lower economic growth overall in the country.

Additionally, due to a higher unemployment in 2012, the government collected fewer taxes and had more expenditure. Higher unemployment also hinders economic growth by reducing purchasing power.

From October 2012 onwards inflation increased². The main reason for this could be the VAT increase from 19% to 21% for most products and services imposed in October.

Table 2- Regional economic growth in the Netherlands 2009-2012 (annual % change)

Region	2009	2010	2011	2012*
Groningen	-4.7	2.7	-3.0	-0.1
Friesland	-3.1	0.8	0.80	-1.3
Drenthe	-3.7	1.1	1.3	-1.0
Overijssel	-4.4	1.2	1.9	-1.5
Flevoland	-3.8	2.2	2.0	-0.8
Gelderland	-3.9	2.0	1.5	-1.3
Utrecht	-3.2	0.9	2.0	-1.0
Noord – Holland	-3.7	2.3	1.0	-0.9
Zuid – Holland	-3.2	1.1	1.5	-0.7
Zeeland	-2.7	2.2	-0.1	0.2
Noord – Brabant	-5.2	1.9	2.1	-1.5
Limburg	-4.4	1.7	1.0	-0.8
The Netherlands	-3.9	1.7	1.2	-1.0

Source: Central Statistical Office, Estimations by ING Economic Office. Note: (*) Estimations.

Table 2 shows that the economic and financial crisis had a negative impact at the NUTS 2 level in 2012. In contrast to 2011, when there was positive economic growth in 10 of the 12 Dutch provinces, there was only a minor growth in the province of Zeeland in 2012. Remarkably, Groningen was the only province in 2011 where GDP fell, but it performed relatively well compared to most other provinces in 2012.

Overall, the GDP is estimated to have declined by around 1% in 2012. Table 2 shows that economic growth for most provinces worsened in 2012 and that there was little difference between the periphery and more central regions in this regard in contrast to 2011. This shows that all regions have been hit by the economic crisis and that peripheral areas were no more vulnerable in 2012 than the central regions. This did not change Dutch economic policy, which is still focussed on strengthening regions and stimulating innovation.

² <http://nl.inflation.eu/inflatiecijfers/nederland/historische-inflatie/cpi-inflatie-nederland-2012.aspx>

2. The regional development policy pursued, the EU contribution to this and policy achievements over the period

The regional development policy pursued

Main points from the previous country report:

- The main focus in regionally-based programmes remains stimulating economic opportunities. The intention for each region is to focus on economic clusters in which they excel. The national aim of Cohesion policy is to strengthen national competitiveness (NSR, 2007).
- In total EUR 830 million of the ERDF was allocated for the period 2007-2013. Half of the ERDF budget is allocated to priority 1 - innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy, and a quarter to each of the other two priorities – ‘increasing attractiveness of regions’ (priority 2) and ‘urban development’ (priority 3). This division roughly applies to all the regions.
- Each region receives a budget according to its relative size in terms of population and the division of funding is in line with the overall emphasis on innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy half of it going to this priority in each programme. There are different emphases between regions in the division of funding between ‘increasing attractiveness of regions’ (priority 2) and ‘urban development’ (priority 3), though this largely reflects the degree of urbanisation of regions.
- The Netherlands participates in 4 Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) programmes, with a total budget of EUR 287 million from the ERDF. In these programmes the first priority as for other programmes, is economy, knowledge, technology and innovation.
- The economic and financial crisis did not lead to any change in ERDF project selection criteria. There were no shifts in priorities or in the allocation of EU funding in 2011. The programmes overcommitted the allocated budget to such an extent, that there is no room for further shifts. The ERDF co-financing rate remained unchanged.

Developments since the 2012 report

The economic and financial crisis did not lead to any change of ERDF project selection criteria. There have not been any shifts in priorities or in the allocation of EU funding in 2012.

Overall because of the financial and economic crisis, national and regional budgets are being cut back. Beneficiaries have therefore had to search more actively for financing and consequently have tried to obtain ERDF support. However, although it caused more interest, it did not lead to the financing of more projects, since most of the available budget was already committed.

The extent to which the support provided by the ERDF could have helped to offset national budget constraints and consequences of fiscal consolidation following the economic downturn cannot be significant since ERDF comprises only around 0.1% of total Dutch GDP. The ERDF is, therefore, not a means of supporting employment and social policy, but in many cases it is used to stimulate regional economic development.

ERDF support helped SME's to overcome constraints on finance resulting from the credit squeeze, since certain specific innovative regulations have been introduced to make the ERDF more accessible for SMEs.

Financial Engineering Instruments

In general we can note that there are 6 financial instruments in the Netherlands. In 2012 in particular no additional interventions were initiated and no extra funding was allocated to Financial Engineering Instruments (FEIs). Five of the FEIs report being on schedule and all the funding is expected to reach final recipients by the end of 2015. One FEI will be probably wound down (2013) due to lack of need. The funding not used by this FEI will be used for new projects in 2014 and 2015.

Policy implementation

Main points from the previous country report:

- In 2011 all programmes increased the number of approved projects. In total 206 projects were approved. The large number of approved projects in 2011 reflects the efforts made to commit allocated budgets. With regard to the CBC programmes, the number of approved projects increases by 41% in 2011.
- The overall implementation rate was still relatively low and more funding has to be certified, and therefore spent on projects. Certified expenditure in relation to the total funding available increased from 13% by end-2010 to 32% by end-2011.
- The implementation of priority 1 (economy, technology, innovation) was particularly rapid. The implementation rate increased by 22% percentage points between end-2010 and end-2011. The North and South regions performed particularly well in this regard (implementation rates of 52-53%).
- Overall, looking at the situation in 2011 the main conclusion is that the various ERDF programmes are on schedule and there was progress in implementing them with respect to both finance and content though the implementation rate in terms of certified eligible expenditure is still relatively low.
- About 90% of the ERDF and 137% of the total funding (national and ERDF) was committed by end-2011. Over-commitments relate essentially to national funding and not to the ERDF. The main reason for this is that the costs of previously commitment projects are expected to be lower than budgeted.
- The crisis has a negative impact on implementing the programmes and largely explains the relatively low implementation rate in terms of eligible expenditure. Because of budget cut backs, investment in the public and private sector has been postponed.
- Looking at other policy areas we noticed that:
 - The effect of ERDF on the human resource policy area at national level is very small. Only EUR 21.1 million is allocated via committed projects to transport (roads EUR 1 million, rail EUR 16.3 million and other EUR 3.8 million). All the EUR 16.3 million committed to rail is in the East region.

- The Dutch SDE³ budget going on energy was about EUR 8,500 million in the 2008-2011 period⁴. Compared with this, the overall ERDF budget on the environment and energy of EUR 66.8 million is very small, partly because of the strong focus on the knowledge economy, innovation support and general enterprise support.
- Territorial development is an important area for ERDF support, around 30% of the ERDF budget being committed to this under priorities 2 and 3. Within this broad policy area, planning and rehabilitation and tourism and culture were most important.

Developments since the 2012 report

Table 3 - Implementation rate (%) by priority, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012

Total	Total	North	West	South	East
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2009	6.2	8.4	6.2	4.3	6.0
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2010	13.0	14.0	13.0	15.0	10.0
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2011	33.5	38.6	23.6	43.5	28.4
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2012	49.1	57.2	48.4	46.1	46.3
Priority 1 Knowledge, Innovation & Entrepreneurship	Total	North	West	South	East
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2009	6.8	8.4	6.8	3.5	8.9
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2010	16.0	17.0	14.0	18.0	17.0
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2011	39.7	52.1	29.0	53.0	24.5
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2012	55.1	74.3	55.9	52.9	38.9
Priority 2 Attractive Regions	Total	North	West	South	East
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2009	1.8	6.2	0.4	1.7	0.0
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2010	6.0	8.0	5.0	12.0	0.0
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2011	24.8	23.5	7.5	33.3	35.0
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2012	43.4	42.7	29.3	43.3	63.1
Priority 3 The urban Dimension	Total	North	West	South	East
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2009	9.0	11.1	9.0	7.5	8.4
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2010	15.0	14.0	17.0	16.0	8.0
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2011	28.2	27.1	23.1	31.0	31.6
Implementation rate (Certified ex./Op. budget) 2012	42.6	40.4	47.9	31.4	43.6

Table 3 shows that the implementation rate for the Netherlands increased for all priorities in 2012 compared to previous years. After two-third of the programming period has elapsed, the implementation rate (based on the certified expenditure) was 49.1%. This is an increase of 15.6 percentage points compared to 2011.

- In total, the North region has a higher implementation rate than the other three regions, especially as regards priority 1. The North region has made a lot of progress this year and this can be explained by its progressive budgetary system. In contrast, priorities 2 and 3 entail more infrastructure projects, which need more time to start up. Additionally, there were spatial and judicial procedural problems that delayed these projects. Although the implementation rate is higher in comparison to the other regions,

³ SDE: Stimuleren Duurzame Energieproductie, a Dutch regulation that stimulates sustainable energy production.

⁴ Source: Annual Report 2010 SDE and MEP (Jaarbericht 2010 SDE en MEP), NL Agency, 2011.

it could have been even higher without uncertainties over the interpretation of the eligibility of expenditures. Uncertain reported costs have, therefore, not yet been included in payments claims.

- In contrast, the East region had a relatively low implementation rate as regards priority 1 but a higher rate than the other three regions as regards priority 2. However, this is in line with their planning.
- The implementation rate in 2012 in the West region increased a lot compared to 2011. Both the programme itself and individual projects needed time to start up. As in the North region, uncertainties over the interpretation of the eligibility of expenditures have led to some costs not yet being included in payment claims. This accordingly leads to a distorted picture being given of the progress made in 2012. The West region has a low implementation rate with regard to priority 2. Projects under priority 2 involve local development and allocation plans often change which causes delays.
- In contrast to the West region, the South region did not show much increase in its implementation rate in 2012 and for Priority 1 it declined.

A low implementation rate might be a consequence of the economic crisis, since it could be linked to the austerity measures at the regional and national level. Several investment projects have been postponed for several years because of uncertainty and risk avoidance. Overall, with regard to priority 1, the crisis might have delayed projects, many of which are financed by the private sector and financing became more difficult. The North region experienced this negative impact of the crisis. However, the East region did not face any problems relating to the economic crisis in 2012. The West region indicated that, due to the crisis, beneficiaries in the region were looking more intensively for financing and so approaching the ERDF. Although the West region indicated that private financing did not become a major problem, nevertheless, two projects went bankrupted.

However, it is noticeable that programmes are recovering from the initial delays since they have succeeded in complying with the N+2 rule to avoid automatic de-commitment, which shows that they did take action in this regard. The MAs took several initiatives to accelerate implementation: more contact with beneficiaries on a regular basis, tighter monitoring, managerial pressure, more stricter control over extensions and allowing changes in projects and carrying out risk analyses. The regions have also overcommitted budgets when there was more of a risk of decommitment.

Table 4 - Allocated ERDF budget on committed projects⁵ by policy area at end 2012 (EUR million)

	Total	North	West	South	East
ERDF-budget	830.0	169.4	310.6	185.9	164.1
Total ERDF-budget committed	815.9	188.1	301.0	179.3	147.5
Implementation rate (%)	98.3	111.0	96.9	96.4	89.9
Enterprise environment ¹ (%)	52.0	50.3	52.6	47.2	58.8
RTDI and linked activities	156.1	30.3	37.6	40.4	47.8
Innovation support in SMEs	235.7	62.5	104.3	32.8	36.1
ICT and related services	9.3	0.5	5.7	3.1	0.0
Other investment in firms	23.2	1.3	10.6	8.4	2.9
Human Resources ¹ (%)	3.6	2.8	3.4	6.4	1.8
Education and training	11.7	5.2	4.3	0.0	2.2
Labour market policies	17.9	0.0	6.0	11.4	0.5
Transport ¹ (%)	3.0	0.5	0.7	0.0	14.6
Rail	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Road	15.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.7
Other	7.8	0.0	2.0	0.0	5.8
Environment and energy ¹ (%)	9.0	10.4	10.6	6.7	7.0
Energy infrastructure	45.3	9.8	22.5	9.1	3.9
Environment and risk prevention	28.4	9.7	9.3	3.0	6.4
Territorial development ¹ (%)	28.7	32.5	28.7	35.5	15.4
Social infrastructure	7.1	0.3	5.1	0.0	1.7
Tourism and culture	97.8	44.2	39.7	0.0	13.9
Planning and rehabilitation	129.0	16.6	41.7	63.6	7.1
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Technical assistance (%)	3.7	3.6	4.1	4.1	2.4
Technical assistance	30.1	6.8	12.4	7.4	3.5

Source: Various annual reports of the Competitiveness and employment programmes 2012.

Table 4 shows that 52% of the total ERDF-budget is allocated to projects related to the **enterprise environment**. This is in line with priority 1 on innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy.

28.7% of the total budget is allocated to **territorial development**. Remarkably, the East region has allocated only 15.4% of its budget to this policy area, while the other three regions have allocated more than 28%. The North region has a relatively high proportion of its budget allocated to territorial development because it had focused on culture and tourism under priorities 1 and 2. The West region also has many projects relating to culture and tourism. The projects in this region are focused on the 'protection and development of natural heritage', 'other assistance to improve tourist services', and the 'protection and preservation of the cultural heritage'.

⁵ Committed projects are projects that are approved by the MA and still implementation, budget is reserved for these projects.

Table 4 shows that only 3% of the total ERDF-budget is allocated to **transport**. However, the East allocates 14.6% of the budget to transport and the other three regions less than 1%. All the transport projects in the East region are concerned with roads.

Cross-border cooperation⁶

Table 4A - Allocated ERDF budget in certified projects under the EMR programme by policy area by end 2012

Allocated ERDF budget	Total EMR*
ERDF-budget (EUR million)	72.0
Total ERDF-budget committed (EUR million)	72.0
Implementation rate (committed) (%)	100.0
Total ERDF-budget certified (EUR million)	28.2
Implementation rate (certified) (%)	39.2
Enterprise environment (%)	43.0
RTDI and linked activities (EUR million)	10.7
Innovation support in SMEs (EUR million)	0.0
ICT and related services (EUR million)	1.5
Other investment in firms	0.0
Human Resources (%)	8.3
Education and training (EUR million)	0.0
Labour market policies (EUR million)	2.3
Transport (%)	1.1
Rail (EUR million)	0.0
Road (EUR million)	0.0
Other (EUR million)	0.3
Environment and energy (%)	12.0
Energy infrastructure (EUR million)	1.8
Environment and risk prevention (EUR million)	1.6
Territorial development (%)	35.5%
Social infrastructure (EUR million)	10.0
Tourism and culture (EUR million)	0.0
Planning and rehabilitation (EUR million)	0.0
Other (EUR million)	0.0

Note (*): 'Total ERDF-budget certified' is taken as 100%.

The EMR programme is performing well. Despite some previous difficulties experienced in terms of management, the programme is making progress in the realisation of its financial targets. The entire available ERDF-budget has been already committed. However, the certified implementation (39%) is lower than the average certified implementation rate (49%) of the Dutch Objective 2 Programmes. Nevertheless, this seems common for CBC programmes.

⁶ The Netherlands is involved in a number of CBC programmes. However this report will make reference only to the Euregio Meuse-Rhin (EMR) programme as its MA is based in the country.

Achievements of the programmes so far

Main points from the previous country report:

- The main focus of regional-based programmes shifted from reducing economic deficiencies to stimulating economic opportunities for the period 2007-2013. This national strategy is being translated into policy at regional level. The intention is for each region to focus on economic clusters in which they excel. Half the ERDF budget is allocated to priority 1: innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy.
- 45.8% of the total budget of EUR 830 million is committed to the enterprise environment and support to RTDI. More specifically, this is committed to RTDI and linked activities (EUR 104.3 million) and Support for innovation in SMEs (EUR 170.2 million). In comparison with Dutch public and private R&D investments, this amount is very small. Public and private R&D investments are EUR 5,700 million and EUR 5,200 million⁷. Support for innovation in SMEs is particularly important. The mid-term review concluded that 60% of the budget was committed to the Lisbon goals (earmarking categories).
- Compared to the situation at the end of 2010, commitments to territorial development, the environment and energy and enterprise environment saw the highest increases in commitments. Within these policy areas, planning and rehabilitation, energy infrastructure and ICT and related services increased.

Developments since the 2012 report

⁷ Source: CBS (2010).

Table 5 - Aims and realizations in output indicators, by priority and region end 2012

	Total target	Total com.	Total realised	North			West			South			East		
				Target	Comm. output	Realised	Target	Comm. output	Realised	Target	Comm. output	Realised	Target	Comm. output	Realised
Priority 1															
No. of R&D projects	506	627	422	20	41	6	121	76	39	350	403	276	15	107	101
R&D investments (private) EUR million	178	533	205	20	98	31	48	136	30	100	168	105	10	132	39
R&D investments (public) EUR million	50	407	173	20	181	76				20	44	33	10	182	64
Induced private inv.(EUR million)	56	681	183		132	17	31	482	139				25	67	26
No. of start-ups supported	728	6,066	4,989	60	412	266	268	2,266	1,514	250	2,777	2,874	150	611	335
No. of SME's supported	4,735	22,327	8,709	1,000	5,450	3,541	535	11,738	419	1,200	3,981	3,429	2,000	1,158	1,320
No. of collaborations	469	522	363	6	72	66	88	88	58	275	266	130	100	96	109
Gross employment creation (FTE*)	6,030	24,344	10,069	1,500	7,395	2416	3,120	6,737	3,264	510	6,129	2,223	900	4,083	2,166
Priority 2															
Induced private inv.(EUR million)	0	25	8		25	8									
No. of start-ups supported	0	0	0												
No. of projects Nature/landscape	88	56	24	3	13	2	41	16	4	30	16	7	14	11	11
No. of projects Liveability	0	0	0												
No. of projects Tourism	91	59	25	6	15	3	35	18	0	40	12	9	10	14	13
No. of projects Accessibility	36	44	23	6	11	1				20	13	5	10	20	17
Restructuring industrial sites (ha.)	1,038	1,336	497	150	225	194	88	126	0	600	735	183	200	250	120
No. of projects environment	117	32	11	3	4	1	104	18	7	10	10	3			
No. of projects alternative transport	10	16	12										10	16	12
No. of projects renovation urban fac.	25	17	16										25	17	16
Gross employment creation (FTE)	3,340	4,966	982	500	2,163	156	1,340	1,272	75	250	1,090	672	1,250	441	79
Priority 3															
Support of start-ups (no.)	30	135	9										30	135	9
Support of SME (no.)	30	101	114										30	101	114
Induced private inv.(EUR million)	0	167	28		167	28									
No. of projects Tourism	0	0	0												
Restructuring industrial area's (ha.)	46	16	0							36	16	0	10	0	0
Restructuring industrial loc. (sq. m)	1,700,146	357,600	11,793	1,500,000	348,600	0	146	162	99				200,000	8,838	11,694
No. of project Entrepreneurship	110	77	35				35	47	24	50	23	6	25	7	5

	Total target	Total com.	Total realised	North			West			South			East		
				Target	Comm. output	Realised	Target	Comm. output	Realised	Target	Comm. output	Realised	Target	Comm. output	Realised
No. of projects Liveability	149	74	46				84	42	27	40	17	7	25	15	12
No. of projects renovation urban fac.	103	104	46	5	10	1	40	45	21	48	35	12	10	14	12
Gross employment creation (FTE)	3,165	3,724	1,445	500	457	17	2,420	2,608	1,176	220	571	135	25	88	117

Source: Various annual reports of the Competitiveness and employment programmes 2012.

Note: Only the indicators from the Competitiveness and Employment programmes were taken on board, because the CBC programmes do not report at the national level.

(*) FTE: Full-time Equivalent.

Overall in the Netherlands, the number of completed projects for most indicators as regards Priority 1 is much higher than targeted beforehand. However, many committed projects still have to be completed. In contrast, targets for priorities 2 and 3 have only been achieved for a few indicators. In general, there are two reasons why this is the case. First, it was difficult to make estimates beforehand. Second, the definitions of indicators used have changed during the programming period. MAs began by using their own definitions and then in 2010 they changed to using the European Commission's definitions. Therefore, comparing outcomes with targets set in the beginning is not meaningful.

Looking at the different regions, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The North region is making a lot of progress on priority 1, in particular with reference to R&D investment, support of start-ups and SMEs and the number of cases of collaboration. The amounts concerned will increase further in the coming years. The situation in priority 2 and 3 is completely different. Only the indicators 'induced private investments' and 'Restructuring industrial sites' are in line with the targets set. All others are lagging behind. However, comparing outcomes with targets is also not meaningful for the North region because it has focused on large projects instead of smaller ones, which has resulted in fewer of them.
- In the West region, the targets set for the priority 1 indicators of 'induced private investments', 'support of start-ups' and SMEs and 'gross employment creation' have already been achieved. Again, however, the situation as regards priorities 2 and 3 is different. In the South region the situation is the same. Here priority 1 is progressing well in terms of the outcomes in relation to the targets set at the beginning of the programming period. This might be due to many relatively small projects being undertaken. For priorities 2 and 3, progress remains slow.
- In the East region, many targets have been met as regards priorities 1, 2 and 3, which could be a result of them being set more cautiously than elsewhere.
- Each of the programmes chose the indicators and set the target by its own. This means that there has been little coordination until a national working group reviewed the indicators in 2009. For this reason the data concerning the realisations are reliable, but the targets set by the programmes at the beginning of the programming period were not adjusted after the review of the indicators. Therefore, it is not possible to carry out an in depth analysis comparing realisations with baselines.

Table 6 - Aims and realizations in output indicators, by priority, 2009 until 2012

	Total committed				Total target	Total achieved
	2009	2010	2011	2012		
Priority 1						
No. of R&D projects	765	670	563	627	506	422
R&D investments (private) EUR million	224	401	359	533	178	205
R&D investments (public) EUR million	146	304	379	407	50	173
Induced private inv.(EUR million)	338	454	495	681	56	183
Support of start-ups (No.)	3,296	5,626	5,336	6,066	728	4,989
Support of SME (No.)	10,256	19,377	20,542	22,327	4,735	8,709
No. of collaborations	894	961	368	522	469	363
Gross employment creation (FTE)	15,851	22,286	22,996	24,344	6,030	10,069
Priority 2						
Induced private inv.(EUR million)	21	24	25	25	0	8
Support of start-ups (No.)	318	288	0	0	0	0
No. of projects Nature/landscape	13	45	36	56	88	24
No. of projects Liveability	7		0	0	0	0
No. of projects Tourism	33	64	67	59	91	25
No. of projects Accessibility	158	244	38	44	36	23
Restructuring industrial sites (ha.)	670	985	1,118	1,336	1,038	497
No. of projects environment	15	32	15	32	117	11
No. of projects alternative transport	4	6	12	16	10	12
No. of projects renovation urban fac.	7	12	16	17	25	16
Gross employment creation (FTE)	3,121	4,270	4,218	4,966	3,340	982
Priority 3						
Support of start-ups (No.)	5	35	135	135	30	9
Support of SME (No.)	20	70	101	101	30	114
Induced private inv.(EUR million)	4.9	7	8.3	167	0	28
No. of projects Tourism	1		0	0	0	0
Restructuring industrial area's (ha.)	0	0	16	16	46	0
Restructuring industrial loc. (sq. m.)	15,800	253	86	357,600	1,700,146	11,793
No. of project Entrepreneurship	25	44	62	77	110	35
No. of projects Liveability	17	88	66	74	149	46
No. of projects renovation urban fac.	44	72	93	104	103	46
Gross employment creation (FTE)	359	2,556	3,501	3,724	3,165	1,445

Source: Various AIRs of the Competitiveness and employment programmes 2012.

Comparing the situation in 2012 with 2011 and earlier, it is evident that overall the regions made progress in committing funding. This is particular the case for priority 1. We expect that the regions will carry out the expenditure they have committed to undertaking. Outcomes in relation to the targets set at the beginning of the programming period suggest that regions are doing well with regard to priority 1. Most targets have already been exceeded. In the case of priorities 2 and 3, the situation is different. Most targets have not yet been met. Nevertheless, it is hard to draw any conclusions when comparing ERDF indicators with national ones because there is a lack of quantitative data. In view of the national amounts of public and private investment in R&D (EUR 5,700 million and EUR 5,200 million, respectively), the impact of the ERDF at national level is likely to be very limited. This is underlined by the total number of 134,000 start-ups registered in 2011 as compared with the 1,827 supported by the ERDF.

We cannot compare the outcomes under priorities 2 and 3 with national data because of there is no information on projects completed as regards tourism, culture, the natural environment and so on. The AIRs suggest that MAs are becoming more aware of the need to demonstrate what the regional impact of ERDF is. Improvements have therefore been made in the qualitative information provided in order to answer this question. Nevertheless at the same time all MAs refer to a lack of scientific evidence, both qualitative and quantitative. For example, a lack of baseline figures and relevant studies makes it hard to interpret indicators of outcome in a meaningful way.

Cross-border cooperation

Table 6A- Aims and realizations in output indicators, by priority in EMR by end 2012

Indicators	Target	Realised (until 2012)
Priority 1		
Nr. of organisations that are partners in collaborations	120	552
Nr. of enterprises involved in collaborations	25	2,673
Nr. of promotional activities aimed at attracting businesses	10	91
Nr. of newly developed touristic products	15	125
Nr. of cross-border studies and planning schedules	30	233
Induced private investments (EUR million)	4.6	0.4
Gross employment creation (FTE)	49	102.0
Nr. of participants in trainings and education	300	8,959
Priority 2		
Nr. of organisations that are partners in collaborations	75	127
Nr. of cross-border studies and planning schedules	20	32
Gross employment creation (FTE)	12.5	33.8
Nr. of hectares of protected nature and landscapes	30	15,621
Nr. of projects contributing to alternative transport	8	20
Nr. of projects contributing to the improvement of the quality of the environment	16	51
Nr. of activities related to the development of new sources of energy	5	16
Priority 3		
Nr. of organisations that are partners in collaborations	45	231
Nr. of cross-border studies and planning schedules	15	373
Nr. of new cross-border health care services	10	1
Nr. of new cross-border cultural products and events	15	51
Nr. of new cross-border emergency plans	3	2
Gross employment creation (FTE)	7.5	6.3
Nr. of collaborative projects in the field of quality of life in the cities	5	10

Source: AIR EMR 2012.

Almost all indicators are exceeding the targets set at the beginning of the programming period. Only few indicators have not yet met their targets: “induced private investments” (priority 1); “new health care services” and “new emergency plans”. The indicator “induced private investments” (priority 1) is particularly lagging behind, with a realisation rate of only 9%. It is expected that this indicator will mainly reach its target once the projects are finished, while other indicators are mostly directly realised on the basis of commitments.

3. Effects of intervention

Main points from the previous country report:

- The effects of ERDF on regional economic developments are very hard to measure from a scientific point of view. It is hard to determine whether increasing employment in a certain region is caused by ERDF programmes or by other factors. Nevertheless there is an increasing interest in the programme from both the public and private sectors, especially in times of economic and financial crisis. The projects in the various programmes have led to the development and expansion of knowledge clusters. While priority 1 is mainly aimed at improving the innovation climate in regions, priority 2 and 3 are focused on improving the preconditions for regional economic development.
- The indicators suggest that ERDF financing contributed to strengthening the economic potential of the, in particular in respect of RTDI and SMEs. The expectation is that this will result in the gross creation of 22,996 full-time equivalent jobs, the support of more than 20,000 SMEs and more than 5,000 business start-ups. In addition, it is estimated that it will induce private investment of EUR 494 million.
- Overall, the AIRs show a noticeable improvement in quality and increased awareness of the economic effects of ERDF on the regions. However, it remains impossible to determine the direct impact of the ERDF in quantitative terms as it is hard to isolate this from other relevant factors. Qualitative and quantitative studies are needed to enable programme achievements and effects to be assessed in a more meaningful way. Up to now, these kinds of study have not been undertaken either in the current programming period or in the previous one.

Developments since the 2012 report

Although the ERDF cannot have a major impact since it amounts to only 0.1% of GDP, all regions certainly believe that it has an effect. The North region is convinced that the ERDF gives incentives for projects to be initiated. It has a leverage effect: it stimulates innovation, cooperation and creativity. The East region pointed to projects initiated in poorer districts as an example. The fact that the EU invests in these districts makes them feel appreciated.

Additionally, an indirect effect is that ERDF functions as a basis for attracting further loans. An example in the West region is the construction of a business incubator in Leiden. The bank declined to finance the project because of the high risk involved. However, the ERDF made it possible to undertake the project and because the first incubator was successful, the bank provided support for the second one.

The ERDF also has effects as a result of its strict procedural conditions. First, it can be seen as a learning experience with regard to reporting. Secondly, it can be expected that this lead to better project proposal requests.

However, more qualitative evaluations are needed to determine the real effect of the ERDF on the regions, though all regions realise that it is difficult to measure this.

ERDF also has a leverage effect by stimulating innovation, cooperation and creativity.

Opinion

In general we can say that the Dutch programmes are performing well. Specific evidence cannot be given, because no adequate evaluations have been conducted (see chapter 4) and because ERDF comprises only 0.1% of the Dutch GDP. However, the programmes are reaching the financial targets and indicators, programme authorities are positive and the programmes are easily accessible for projects/beneficiaries.

The policy area RTDI is most successful and this is in line with the priorities set by national policies. When drafting the programmes in 2006, the choices were strictly structured in line with national and regional policies. During the implementation (2007-2013) less attention was paid to relations between achievements and policy areas.

The focus of results is very quantitative. This leads to a tendency that 'quantity goes before quality', since MAs prefer to select so-called 'safe' projects that are expected to achieve good results on the indicators. In this way chances for experimenting are low, while support to more risky projects could probably lead to more and new developments.

4. Evaluations and good practice in evaluation

Main points from the previous country report:

- The recommendations in the various evaluation reports have not been implemented for the 2007-2013 programming period. The recommendations were considered by the Dutch authorities but were not found relevant enough for immediate changes to be made. However, the recommendations will be used for the next programming period.
- In general, the evaluations carried out did not conform to best practice. The most relevant evaluation question was not included, which is whether the projects selected contributed to achieving the goals of the OP.

Developments since the 2012 report

No changes have been made to the evaluation plans (schedule) since the previous report.

In order to assess Cohesion policy performance, the West region planned a study on the regional impact of ERDF to be carried out in 2012 but it has been postponed to 2014. The general focus of the study is to collect qualitative evidence on the effects of the ERDF on the region. The methods to be used are desk research, a literature review and interviews. The aim of the study is to learn how to respond to the new focus on results of expenditure in the 2014-2020 period. It is, therefore, not intended to influence the policy of the programme but aimed the (future) implementation and reporting system.

Table 7 – Forthcoming evaluation

Title and date of completion	Policy area and scope	Main objectives	Main findings	Method	Full reference or link to publication
2014 – regional impact of ERDF	9	3	- to be obtained -	3	-

Note: (*) Legend:

Policy area and scope: 1. RTDI; 2. Enterprise support and ICT; 3. Human Resources (ERDF only); 4. Transport; 5. Environment; 6. Energy; 7. Territorial development (urban areas, tourism, rural development, cultural heritage, health, public security, local development); 8. Capacity and institution building; 9. Multi-area (e.g. evaluations of programmes, mid-term evaluations); 10. Transversal aspects (e.g. gender or equal opportunities, sustainable development, employment)

Main objective and focus: 1. assess the arrangements and procedures for managing or administering programmes; 2. support monitoring, or check the progress made in implementing programmes, such as many mid-term evaluations; 3. assess the outcome or effects of programmes in terms of the results achieved and their contribution to attaining socio-economic policy objectives

Method used: 1. Counterfactual; 2. Cost-benefit analysis; 3. Other quantitative; 4. Qualitative.

- There are no plans to carry out evaluations of particular policy areas.
- As no evaluations were undertaken in 2012, it is not possible to judge their quality or effects on policy.

The obligatory performance framework for the 2014-2020 period is driving the Dutch MAs to adopt a more coherent and evidence-based stance with a focus on the effects of interventions. Awareness of the need for good evaluations has grown significantly during the process of formulating the new OPs and the MAs will join forces to adopt a common approach in the coming period.

Although all regions believe that more qualitative evaluations are needed, none of them undertook any studies in 2012⁸.

How evaluation activity in the Netherlands could be improved

- More qualitative evaluations on the impact of the Funds should be implemented. Evaluations carried out so far are mainly quantitative and/or process-oriented.
- More connected analysis over the ERDF programmes could be useful, connection of the (small!) ERDF programmes to other policies and instruments should be very interesting. The evaluations carried out are aimed at the Funds on their own. ERDF evaluation for the four Dutch regional OPs together, but implemented partly as four regional studies.
- More EU funded evaluations are welcome. The Dutch Technical Assistance budgets do not provide the means for more studies.

⁸ An evaluation planned in the West region was not carried out, but the region took the initiative to assess the value for money of the ERDF in certain areas as reported in table B19 of the annual report.

Table 8 – Previous evaluations (referring to the current programming period)

EU Objective	Title of evaluation	Financed by Structural Funds? (Y/N)	Policy area (*)	Main objectives and focus (*)	Method(s) (*)	Main findings	Full reference or link to publication	Summary of programme/project objectives
Competitiveness	Midterm review ERDF Competitiveness and employment 2007-2013 in the Netherlands, Completed 14-02-2011 Based on data per October 2010. Year of completion of evaluation: 2011	N	09-Multi-area	2-Achievement oriented	4-Qualitative	Most output-indicators and outcome-indicators are being reached. Set values for targets and realisations are to be discussed, they seem to lack sound methodology. 60% of the budget is committed to the Lisbon-goals. Per October 2010 already 69% of the ERDF-budgets are committed to beneficiaries, Payment claims are at 9,77% of the budgets. Governance is functioning well, with some remarks to the selection processes. Audit procedures are to much and to strict. Communication is implemented well, good cooperation of the four programmes and the national MS-coordinator.	Report published on DG REGIO-site: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/evaluations/netherlands/files/1102_midterm_obj2_sum_nl.pdf	Examination of the progress made in implementing the programmes and results achieved, Examination of the financial progress, Examination of the governance, Examination of the communication plans.
CBC	Mid term evaluation Interreg IVA Programme Flanders – The Netherlands Year of completion of evaluation: 2011	Y	09-Multi-area	2-Achievement oriented	4-Qualitative	Projects contribute to the objectives of the programme. There is balance between maximizing funding for projects needed and legal certainty. Cooperation between the partners functions as described in the agreement. More attention is needed concerning for the result indicators at programme level	Mid term evaluation Interreg IVA Programme Flanders – The Netherlands, Ecorys, 2011.	Examination of the progress made in implementing the programme and results achieved.
Competitiveness	Evaluation of control- and management-system ERDF Year of completion of evaluation: 2011	N	09-Multi-area	1-Process oriented	4-Qualitative	The management and control system is efficient in relation to the amount of the inaccuracies.	Evaluation of control and managementsystem ERDF, Ecorys, 2011.	Examination of the governance and systems on programme level

Note: (*) Legend:

Policy area and scope: 1. RTDI; 2. Enterprise support and ICT; 3. Human Resources (ERDF only); 4. Transport; 5. Environment; 6. Energy; 7. Territorial development (urban areas, tourism, rural development, cultural heritage, health, public security, local development); 8. Capacity and institution building; 9. Multi-area (e.g. evaluations of programmes, mid-term evaluations); 10. Transversal aspects (e.g. gender or equal opportunities, sustainable development, employment)

Main objective and focus: 1. assess the arrangements and procedures for managing or administering programmes; 2. support monitoring, or check the progress made in implementing programmes, such as many mid-term evaluations; 3. assess the outcome or effects of programmes in terms of the results achieved and their contribution to attaining socio-economic policy objectives

Method used: 1. Counterfactual; 2. Cost-benefit analysis; 3. Other quantitative; 4. Qualitative.

5. Further Remarks - New challenges for policy

Main points from the previous country report:

- The MAs at present are in general more focussed on the future programming period than the current one. Day to day experience the knowledge gained from this programming period and the recommendation of the various evaluations which have been carried out will be used to develop a solid framework for the future period.

There were no major new developments in 2012. Attention is concentrated most on eligibility issues and system audits (2007-2013) and on preparing the new OPs (2014-2020).

As was foreseen, the Dutch ERDF-budget will be significantly lower in the next period than in the present one, a reduction on 38%. In general, future OPs will be focussed on innovation.

A challenge for the next period is to demonstrate that the ERDF can really be effective. Since relatively few qualitative evaluations have been undertaken it is not possible to interpret the quantitative findings in a meaningful way and there no good indicators of the effect in the regions. Evaluations, therefore, need to be more policy-related and specific instead of being general.

It should be mentioned is that the methodology for the next period is very tight. For instance, there will be less space for flexibility because each region has to decide on the target group beforehand. The MAs think that this might reduce the quality of ERDF, since it reduces the specific strength of ERDF compared to national regulations: working programmatically. Space for bottom-up initiatives will be probably reduced (except for the Community Led Local Development, the instrument that is not selected in the Dutch OPs).

Improving the project selection process is also an important challenge for the next period to prevent delays. A possible solution would be to appoint an expert group that, in addition to applying financial and judicial criteria, would assess the content of projects to improve their quality.

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AIRs from Competitiveness and employment programmes 2013 from the four regions: North, East, South, West.

Interviews

Managing Authorities – Objective 2 Programmes

- Ina Joosten, Paul Beeker, Province of Gelderland, MA region East
- Ruud van Raak, Adri Hartkoorn, Kansen voor West, MA region West
- Pieter Liebregts, Province of North-Brabant (Stimulus), MA region South
- Luc Hulsman SNN, MA region North

Annex 1 - Tables

See Excel Tables 1 -4:

Excel Table 1 – Regional disparities and trends

Excel Table 2 – Macro-economic developments

Excel Table 3 - Financial allocation by main policy area

Excel Table 3cbc - Financial allocation by main policy area – cross border cooperation

Excel Table 4 - Commitments by main policy area (by end-2012)

Excel Table 4cbc - Commitments by main policy area (by end-2012) – cross border cooperation

Annex Table A -Broad policy areas and correspondence with fields of intervention (FOI)

Policy area		Code	Priority themes
1. Enterprise environment	RTDI and linked activities	01	R&TD activities in research centres
		02	R&TD infrastructure and centres of competence in a specific technology
		05	Advanced support services for firms and groups of firms
		07	Investment in firms directly linked to research and innovation (...)
		74	Developing human potential in the field of research and innovation, in particular through post-graduate studies ...
	Innovation support for SMEs	03	Technology transfer and improvement of cooperation networks ...
		04	Assistance to R&TD, particularly in SMEs (including access to R&TD services in research centres)
		06	Assistance to SMEs for the promotion of environmentally-friendly products and production processes (...)

Policy area		Code	Priority themes	
		09	Other measures to stimulate research and innovation and entrepreneurship in SMEs	
		14	Services and applications for SMEs (e-commerce, education and training, networking, etc.)	
		15	Other measures for improving access to and efficient use of ICT by SMEs	
	ICT and related services	11	Information and communication technologies (...)	
		12	Information and communication technologies (TEN-ICT)	
		13	Services and applications for citizens (e-health, e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, etc.)	
	Other investment in firms	08	Other investment in firms	
	2. Human resources	Education and training	62	Development of life-long learning systems and strategies in firms; training and services for employees ...
			63	Design and dissemination of innovative and more productive ways of organising work
64			Development of special services for employment, training and support in connection with restructuring of sectors ...	
72			Design, introduction and implementing of reforms in education and training systems ...	
73			Measures to increase participation in education and training throughout the life-cycle ...	
Labour market policies		65	Modernisation and strengthening labour market institutions	
		66	Implementing active and preventive measures on the labour market	
		67	Measures encouraging active ageing and prolonging working lives	
		68	Support for self-employment and business start-up	
		69	Measures to improve access to employment and increase sustainable participation and progress of women ...	
		70	Specific action to increase migrants' participation in employment ...	
		71	Pathways to integration and re-entry into employment for disadvantaged people ...	
		80	Promoting the partnerships, pacts and initiatives through the networking of relevant stakeholders	
3. Transport	Rail	16	Railways	
		17	Railways (TEN-T)	
		18	Mobile rail assets	
		19	Mobile rail assets (TEN-T)	
	Road	20	Motorways	
		21	Motorways (TEN-T)	
		22	National roads	
		23	Regional/local roads	
	Other transport	24	Cycle tracks	
		25	Urban transport	
		26	Multimodal transport	
		27	Multimodal transport (TEN-T)	
		28	Intelligent transport systems	
		29	Airports	
		30	Ports	
31		Inland waterways (regional and local)		
32		Inland waterways (TEN-T)		

Policy area		Code	Priority themes
4. Environment and energy	Energy infrastructure	33	Electricity
		34	Electricity (TEN-E)
		35	Natural gas
		36	Natural gas (TEN-E)
		37	Petroleum products
		38	Petroleum products (TEN-E)
		39	Renewable energy: wind
		40	Renewable energy: solar
		41	Renewable energy: biomass
		42	Renewable energy: hydroelectric, geothermal and other
	43	Energy efficiency, co-generation, energy management	
	Environment and risk prevention	44	Management of household and industrial waste
		45	Management and distribution of water (drink water)
		46	Water treatment (waste water)
		47	Air quality
		48	Integrated prevention and pollution control
		49	Mitigation and adaption to climate change
		50	Rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land
		51	Promotion of biodiversity and nature protection (including Natura 2000)
52		Promotion of clean urban transport	
53		Risk prevention (...)	
5. Territorial development	Social Infrastructure	10	Telephone infrastructure (including broadband networks)
		75	Education infrastructure
		76	Health infrastructure
		77	Childcare infrastructure
		78	Housing infrastructure
		79	Other social infrastructure
	Tourism and culture	55	Promotion of natural assets
		56	Protection and development of natural heritage
		57	Other assistance to improve tourist services
		58	Protection and preservation of the cultural heritage
		59	Development of cultural infrastructure
		60	Other assistance to improve cultural services
	Planning and rehabilitation	61	Integrated projects for urban and rural regeneration
	Other	82	Compensation of any additional costs due to accessibility deficit and territorial fragmentation
		83	Specific action addressed to compensate additional costs due to size market factors
	6. Technical assistance		84
81			Mechanisms for improving good policy and programme design, monitoring and evaluation ...
85			Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection
86			Evaluation and studies; information and communication