



European Structural and Investment Funds

Description of the discussion during the event

The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and the Association of Dutch Provinces (IPO) organized on 9 November 2017 together with the Ministries of Economic Affairs and Climate (EZK) and Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) a 'dialogue' on the added value of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) in Nieuwspoor, the Congress Center of the Dutch National Parliament in The Hague. The event's subject was the added value of ESIF for developed Member States as the Netherlands.

René de Heer, Spokesman of VNG and Member of the Executive Council of Zwolle, stated: 'The way the European Structural and Investment Funds operate and the by the funds generated cooperation between government, business and other partners is unique and can't be replaced by national funds.'

In the first part of the event, five project managers presented their ESIF projects which were funded with European grants. In these five presentations the added value of the European funds which goes beyond funding was emphasized.

Jim Wiese, director of Lens Energy, stressed: 'European Structural Funds are essential because we can devote more attention and time to the quality of the concept, the progress and the resources that we develop'.

Between the five presentations and the debate, Lewis Dijkstra, Deputy Head of the Economic Analysis Unit in the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission, presented the current regional development in the EU on the basis of the 7th Cohesion Report. Dijkstra explicitly pointed out the EU climate targets of 2030, whereas in particular the Netherlands is lagging behind its own objectives.

Subsequently, there was a debate with Anne Mulder, Member of Parliament (VVD), René de Heer, Bert Pauli, Deputy Kings Commissioner of North Brabant and spokesman of IPO, Lewis Dijkstra and Wilbert van de Griendt, Director of the SZW Agency. The debate was conducted on the basis of the following three questions:

1. The methodology of ESIF meets a need that national funds can't meet.
2. Working together, learning together: made possible by the ESIF. Also across national borders. Europe: is desperately needed!
3. The reporting and accountability pressure of the European funds is too high, the rules need to be adjusted.

Anne Mulder took a critical view of the European funds. However, he also underlined the importance of the funds for cross border cooperation: 'Those matters which can't be dealt with by the Member States, must be done at EU level. For those matters European funding should be available'. The other panel

members shared the opinion that certain developments and investments will never get off the ground without a financial contribution from the EU.

More information:

- [Video report](#)
- [Presentations of the event](#)