The Netherland’s experience with decentralisation

Iris de Graaff-Kamphof Msc.

Policy advisor
Department of Governance and Finance
Ministry of Interior affairs and Kingdom Relations
Introduction to the Dutch public sector

Three main layers over government:
- Central Government, located in The Hague
- 12 Provinces

And 388 municipalities
Introduction to the Dutch public sector

Also:
- 23 water boards (functional task)
- The European Union
- The Kingdom of the Netherlands
The principles of a decentralised unitary state

- Since 1848, the Netherlands has been a decentralised unitary state.

- The central government has trust in abilities of local and regional governments. More and more, the three layers of government work together as partners.

- The Minister of Interior affairs encourages decentralisation, especially with regard to local government, and is bound to that by the Municipalities Act (art. 117)

- The central government guarantees the unity of state
The development of social policy in the NL

• First social legislation dates back to the 19th century: a minor law setting down rules for employing young people and women.

• Today, the Netherlands have one of the most extensive bodies of social legislation in the world.

• The main principle of the social system is that all members of society must be able to play an equally active role in society.
Decentralisation in the Netherlands

- 2011: Agreement on decentralisation
- Goal: powerful, strong, service oriented form of government by decentralising policy- and decisionmaking responsibilities
- To reach that goal, substantial tasks and responsibilities were transferred to regional and local government
  - To the regional level:
    - Regional economic policy
    - Nature
    - Spatial planning
    - Traffic and Transport
  - To the local level:
    - Youth care
    - Long-term care
    - Income support
Decentralisation of social policy

Effective on January 1st, 2015

- Participation Act
- Youth Act
- (new) Social support Act

1. Self-reliance of the citizen
2. Organising services closer to the citizen
3. Integrated approach

- New and complex responsibilities for municipalities
- Impact on the current organisation of the municipalities
Participation Act

- Merger and decentralisation of the work for youth with disability act, Work and Social Assistance Act (WWB)

  note: municipalities are already responsible for the assistance budget and the joint sheltered employment

- Help citizens to stay employed
- Labour market for young and old people, with or without limitations
- Support their own power
- Active support where required
Youth Act

- Municipalities become responsible for all youth care services
- More efficient, coherent and cost-effective
- Focus on prevention

- Problems regarding the current youth care system:
  1. Imbalance in focus
  2. Fragmentation
  3. The prevailing practice of referring clients
  4. Increased use of care
  5. Unmanageability

  ➢ Revising the system
  ➢ A decentralised and transformed youth care system
(new) Social Support Act

- Municipalities become responsible for supporting the self-reliance of citizens and participation of people with limitations and mental health problems

- Everyday environment

- Domestic help

- Daytime activities
Role of the Ministry of Interior Affairs

- Cohesion proposed decentralisations
- Partnerships/good governance
- Transformation of the municipalities
- Support to the municipalities
Regional partnerships

- 35 labour market regions
- 42 youth care regions
- More than 50 social support-regions

Subregions and supra-regional partnerships
Local implementation method

- Social Teams in cities, towns and neighborhoods
- Comprehensive approach: bringing different fields of expertise together, close to the people
Effect on public service delivery

- New methods of implementation and execution lead to a new way of public service delivery
- Transformation of the way we work has short-term and long-term effects
Questions & Remarks