

A separate Cultural Programme was set up in 1991 for the purpose of enhancing the cultural dimension of development cooperation, which it can assist by identifying developing countries' need for assistance in this area and by providing support for specific activities. It is aimed first and foremost at providing immediate support for projects that can later be incorporated in the bilateral development programme or can be continued on their own.

The Cultural Programme is based on two principal points of departure.

a. Enhancement of the cultural identity and self-confidence of communities in developing countries. Projects relate to the preservation and management of culture, and to activities enabling communities themselves to influence the processes of social and cultural change. The need for assistance must be clearly expressed by the individual communities. If a cultural project forming part of a development process is considered to be of national importance, it may be placed on the agenda for bilateral consultations and financed under the official programme.

b. Promotion of understanding between different cultures.

A major element here is the exchange of knowledge and skills connected with present-day forms of cultural expression. Assistance is provided for cultural cooperation and exchange between North and South and South and South in various fields. This can help the communities concerned to cope with the problems of social change.

In appraising requests for financial aid no distinction is made between the two points of departure. Proposals may contain elements of both, for cultural exchange on the basis of equality between the parties promotes cultural self-confidence. Regular inter- and intra-departmental consultations are held on development-related cultural projects.

In view of the importance of education for development, it is accorded special attention by the Minister for Development Cooperation. The social and cultural functions of education are a central element of the cultural dimension of development cooperation. An education system anchored in the culture of the country provides a basis for its citizens to exercise some influence on their changing circumstances and thus to develop their potential in a changing society. Greater participation in primary education, literacy projects and improved vocational education are given priority. This policy is elaborated in a policy document on education scheduled to appear shortly.

The promotion of participation in sport forms part of the health and welfare dimension of development cooperation. Ways in which it can be incorporated more effectively in development are currently being considered.

8. Institutes

8.1 Cultural institutes abroad

Though the government sympathises with those who would like to see the establishment of new institutes such as a Dutch-Flemish cultural institute in Brussels and a Dutch-German institute in Cologne, it takes the view that this would impose a heavy strain on the limited funds available for cultural activities, as it indicated in its response to the recommendations put forward by the Advisory Council on Government Policy (Proceedings of the Lower House of the States General 20 530, 1987-1988, No. 2, p.7). An institutional infrastructure requires a