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**Development and implementation
of the NAP 2001**

**An evaluation of the National Action Plan the
Netherlands for the prevention of poverty and social
exclusion**

July 2003

Contents

1	Introduction	5
1.1	Background	5
1.2	Key questions	6
1.3	Research methods	6
1.4	Set-up of the report	7
2	The development	9
2.1	Four steps	9
2.2	Actors and organizations	10
2.3	The procedure and its internal bottlenecks	10
2.4	The indicators and objectives	12
2.5	Scope for support on various levels	13
2.6	A collective action plan?	14
3	The implementation	15
3.1	Introduction	15
3.2	Social activation	15
3.3	Supplementary benefit	19
3.4	Old- and newcomers	23
3.5	Conclusions	25
4	Summary of findings	27
4.1	Introduction	27
4.2	The development	27
4.3	The implementation	27
4.4	Integral policy	28
4.5	Attention paid to vulnerable groups	28
4.6	Factors for success and failure	29
4.7	NAP 2003	30
	Bibliography	31
	Appendix 1 Topic lists	35
1.1	Topic list for the Ministries for Social Affairs and Employment and Health, Welfare and Sports	35
1.2	Topic list for organizations	36
	Appendix 2 List of interviewed persons	39

1 Introduction

The first National Action Plan The Netherlands for the prevention of poverty and social exclusion (NAP) was published in June 2001. This NAP was established through the efforts of an interdepartmental work group that was co-ordinated by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment (SZW). The NAP 2001 matched the Dutch tradition of poverty prevention, as it existed at the time. In the Netherlands of the 1990s, the government acknowledged poverty and social exclusion as social problems. The publication of the report *The other side of the Netherlands* (SZW, 1995) formed the point of departure. Subsequently, a succession of measures was developed to combat poverty. In addition to this, an annual poverty conference was organized for five years from 1996 onwards. This led to income support and activating policy, among other things.

Despite these policy measures, it became increasingly clear at the end of the 1990s that there remained a large group of households that depended on a low income, with all its consequences of social exclusion. The poverty issue in all its aspects keeps asking for political attention and new initiatives. The initiative of the European Commission to develop national action plans fits the aspiration to fight poverty well. It is of great importance to keep track of the set-up and results of national action plans.

The European Commission has asked the Verwey-Jonker Institute to evaluate the development and implementation of the NAP, in order to examine whether the main objective of the NAP – encouraging social cohesion and employment – is realized in the Netherlands. Part of the process consists of a biannual report that states the progress and development of the NAP. This report is the first paper of the Verwey-Jonker Institute and is solely related to the development and implementation of the NAP 2001.

1.1 Background

During the European Summit in Lisbon in the spring of 2000, the European Council set the encouragement of social integration as one of its main objectives. It was established that sustainable economic growth and social cohesion were to be combined. Subsequently, during the European Summit in Nice in December 2000, the four key objectives for the prevention of poverty and social exclusion were launched. In addition to this, the member states agreed on preparing a national action plan for the prevention of poverty and social exclusion before 1 June 2001. This action plan would be developed following the four key objectives of Nice.

In the following years, social cohesion in European member states will be encouraged by means of the so-called method of open policy co-ordination. One of the purposes of the process of open co-ordination is the formulation of objectives that enable the various member states to learn from the best practices in Europe. In the Dutch NAP, objectives have been formulated that fall within the following four pillars:

1. encouraging *social participation* by means of paid employment, or – in case of a great distance to the labour market – by means of social activation;
2. vouching for the *income security* of people who are not capable of independently supporting themselves;
3. encouraging the *accessibility of facilities* in the areas of housing, education, care, ICT, public transport, legal aid, naturalization, social support and solidarity within the family;
4. stimulating an active contribution from and closer collaboration between *all parties involved* in the prevention of poverty and social exclusion (integrality).

Looking at these four pillars, it becomes clear that poverty has a wider definition than merely applying to income, both in European and Dutch policy. Income is of course a crucial aspect – it is significant that people can get by – but other aspects, such as labour market perspectives, social activation and the accessibility of facilities, play a role as well. The aim of this evaluation is to find out to what extent these objectives have been realized in the NAP or are being executed. In addition to this, it was examined whether the objectives as such turned out to be feasible in practice.

1.2 Key Questions

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the development and implementation of the NAP 2001. This will be done by means of the following key question: How was the NAP/inclusion 2001 established, and how was the NAP implemented in the Netherlands?

This key question will be worked out by means of the following five questions:

1. How was the NAP established, and to what extent have local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) been taken into consideration in this process?
2. How was the NAP implemented, and were the objectives met in the areas of social activation, supplementary benefit and facilities for old- and newcomers?
3. Does the NAP 2001 have an integral policy in the area of poverty and social exclusion?
4. Has enough attention been paid to the position of vulnerable groups, such as single parents, elderly women and migrants?
5. What factors for success and failure can be distinguished with regard to the implementation of the NAP 2001?

The research on the key questions two, three and five, is based on a limited set of items of the NAP 2001: social activation, supplementary benefit and facilities for old- and newcomers. Conclusions of the research apply mainly to these three items.

1.3 Research methods

The prevention of poverty and social exclusion in the Netherlands is a collective effort of various actors. The national government works together with local and provincial governments. In addition to this, social partners and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) traditionally play an important role in poverty prevention, and a lot of cooperation exists between public and private initiatives. Various local governments and NGOs were involved in the realization and execution of the first Dutch NAP in 2001. In order to answer the research question, in-depth interviews have been held with various actors.

The actors were questioned by means of a topic list containing questions about the establishment and implementation of the NAP 2001. In the interviews, separate topic lists were used for the ministries and the NGOs (appendix 1). With regard to the implementation phase, a lot of attention was paid to the objectives. After all, the NAP gives an overview of the objectives for the three pillars of social participation, income security and access to facilities. Considering the extensive list of objectives in the NAP 2001, the interviewees were only questioned about a limited

number of objectives: social activation (within the pillar of social participation), supplementary benefit (within the pillar of income security), and facilities for old- and newcomers (within the pillar of facilities).

The fact that these subjects have been chosen can be traced back to the key question of this study. Integrality plays an important role in the execution of policy in the area of social activation. Supplementary benefit is a subject that mainly moves on a local level. As a result, the relation between national and local level of execution can become visible and apparent. The attention paid to the position of migrants belongs to the subdivision of facilities for old- and newcomers.

Among the interviewees are representatives of the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment (in the Netherlands, this is the ministry that co-ordinates the development and execution of the NAP), the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, and representatives of various NGOs. A list of the interviewees and the institutions they represent can be found in appendix 2.

The outcome of the interviews with the various actors will be supplemented with a limited study of literature. The contents of this study are based on the NAP 2001 and literature relating to the NAP, among which are studies into indicators and the annual reports for poverty and social exclusion. In addition to this, the relevant writings of the Dutch Lower Chamber were used. An overview of the used literature and government documents is listed in the bibliography of this study.

1.4 Set-up of the report

This research report reflects the results of the literature study and the in-depth interviews. Chapter 2 addresses the question regarding the establishment of the NAP, and to what extent local governments and NGOs were taken into consideration in this process. An assessment will be made of the organizations that were (and were not) involved in the establishment of the NAP, of how much time organizations were given to contribute to the NAP, and whether there was a large enough scope for support and sufficient means to contribute to the NAP within organizations.

Chapter 3 goes into the way in which the NAP 2001 has been implemented. This will be done by means of the topics of social activation, supplementary benefit and facilities for old- and newcomers, all of which fall into one of the three pillars (social participation, income security and access to facilities). Of each topic, the following aspects were researched: In what way were social organizations involved in the execution, what scope for support was there, what falls under national and what falls under local policy, was there an integral policy, and to what extent has the position of vulnerable groups been taken into consideration?

Chapter 4 will give an overview of the most important outcomes of the research. The main factors for success and failure will be described by means of the following themes: scope for support, municipal versus national policy, integrality and vulnerable groups. Finally, Chapter 4 offers a short preview of the development of the NAP 2003.

2 The development

This chapter examines the question of how the NAP has been established. What will be examined is how the procedure surrounding the establishment went, and to what extent the position and contribution of local governments and NGOs have been taken into consideration. This chapter also deals with the questions of what organizations have been involved in the development of the NAP (and what organization have not), how much time organizations were offered to contribute to the NAP, and whether there was enough scope for support and sufficient means within organizations to be able to contribute to the NAP.

2.1 Four steps

The development of the NAP 2001 took place by means of the following steps: preparation, writing a concept, contribution of NGOs, rounding off and publishing the NAP, and organizing a follow-up meeting.

The first step, the preparation of the NAP, was carried out by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) at the beginning of 2001. Initially, this was an internal affair that took place within the government apparatus: the interdepartmental commission for poverty policy was converted into a commission that was to address the NAP. This commission consisted of ministry representatives. The support was broadened to the local governments by appointing a representative of the VNG (Association of Dutch Municipalities) as an adviser for the commission. The intention to involve the social midfield from the very start in developing the NAP 2001 became apparent when a starting conference was organized in March 2001 for social organizations and a representative of the European Commission. At this meeting, the how and why of the action plan were discussed.

The second step was the writing of a concept text by an interdepartmental commission, a step that took seven weeks. The Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment was responsible for the co-ordination of the process. The four objectives for the prevention of poverty and social exclusion were presented to all ministries. The co-ordinator of the interdepartmental commission then wrote a first concept. This concept was discussed and elaborated by the members of the interdepartmental commission in a number of meetings.

The contribution of social organizations was the third step to be taken. The concept was sent to the organizations involved with the request for a written response. After this, an oral consultation of the same organizations followed at the end of April 2001.

The fourth step consisted of incorporating the comments of these organizations and rounding off internal procedures. The NAP was adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Dutch national government. The NAP was published at the beginning of June 2001.

In October of the same year, a theme meeting that was aptly named 'follow-up NAP 2001' was held with the social organizations that had been involved in the planning process. At this meeting, the NGOs could contribute to high-profile themes and questions regarding the feasibility of the objectives of the NAP. Workshops were organized around the themes of socio-economic health differences, children and poverty, problematic debts, and the European dimension of poverty prevention.

2.2 Actors and organizations

A large number of actors and social organizations were involved in the development of the NAP. By means of the interdepartmental commission, the majority of ministries were involved in the planning process as well. In addition to this, the policymaking level of local governments was also involved in the planning process, as an additional significant actor for the prevention of poverty and social exclusion. A representative of the VNG took part in the interdepartmental commission in the role of adviser. Her advice concerned the effects of policy measures on the scope for policymaking and the autonomy of municipalities.

Over fifty Dutch social organizations that deal with the prevention of poverty and social exclusion take part in the Alliance for Social Justice. The Alliance representatives, primarily those of the major unions FNV and CNV, the Board of Churches, the Humanist Society, Humanitas, the Board for the Chronically Ill and Disabled, Sjakuus, and the National Consultation Board for Minorities, have taken part in the NAP 2001 meetings. According to a spokesperson of the Alliance, there was a good representation of vulnerable groups at the deliberations with the ministries.

An interviewee, the senior advisor international politics of the National Institute for Care and Welfare (NIZW), is less satisfied. Only organisations from the sector of social security (the unions and associations for benefits recipients) were initially involved in the establishment of the NAP. As a result of this representative's complaints, organizations from the welfare sector were invited as well, be it at a later stage. However, this did not lead to an active input from these organizations. Since welfare work tends to be organized on a local level, there is no national information desk. In addition to this, the representative claims that the subject matter is not attractive for welfare organizations, due to the way the NAP has been formulated.

2.3 The procedure and its internal bottlenecks

A major point of criticism vented by the majority of respondents was the fact that there was a limited amount of time to come to proper planning. Furthermore, there were several other factors that stood in the way of establishing a good plan during the procedure. In addition to pressure of time, the civil servants of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports named four other restrictive factors that affected the followed procedure. The first factor was the rule that no new policy could be developed in any way. No financial means were reserved for the plan itself. However, on different policy measures which were incorporated in the plan such as reintegration policy and municipal income support, extra financial means were spent. Furthermore, people had to work with another structure and system than they were used to. Formulating objectives was new for that time, and, consequently, regarded as quite a task. At a certain point during the planning phase, the interdepartmental commission decided that only topics for which clear objectives could be formulated could become part of the plan. The fourth restriction regarding content was the fact that the European Commission had added the pillar of access to facilities. The result of this was that too many policy areas were involved in the plan development. This resulted in a complex discussion mainly dealing with the question of what policy areas had to be involved in the plan and what not. This went at the expense of a discussion on internal policy integration. The result is a plan consisting of a summary of already existing policy measures.

Reflecting on the procedure, the adviser of the VNG recalls that the NAP mainly lived with the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment. The representatives of other ministries visited the meetings rather irregularly. This was partly due to the fact that 'they were only involved in the development every now and again'. At a certain point in time, the interdepartmental commission stopped meeting. With regard to contents, no effort was made to formulate coherent policy, according to the current adviser. The meetings mainly dealt with the presentation of already existing policy. He also names the absence of extra financial means from the European Commission as a restrictive factor to formulate a good plan. He calls the result an 'atomic plan', consisting of several policy measures from various ministries put together.

The representative of Divosa is of the opinion that poverty prevention should mainly take place on a local level, provided that municipalities are equipped for this and have the proper means. According to Divosa, this point of departure is underexposed in the NAP.

Criticism from welfare organizations mainly addresses the procedure, since these organizations were addressed at a later stage. With regard to content, the problem exists that the subject matter of the NAP is not very appealing to welfare organizations, since these aim mainly at local policy.

Humanitas is not negative about the result in relation to its applicability to local level. The representative of this organization tells that Humanitas mainly uses the NAP as a strategic heading. As a result of the NAP, the existing activities of Humanitas are more clearly positioned in the framework of preventing social exclusion. This way, the organization can get its activities under the attention of municipalities with the argument of it being European policy, and, therefore, municipalities have to do their share. All in all, the representative found the procedure easy to swallow. There was also the possibility of joining in and contributing to the planning process, but Humanitas has not been very active in this respect. The organization did not give a written response to the concept, because the organization is part of the Alliance and can operate under that header. The representative did have some comments on the meetings regarding the development of the NAP. This way of working is not easily accessible. Civil servant from the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment and the European Commission give global information that is not always easy to swallow for outsiders. Furthermore, there was not enough time for those present to make comments or ask questions, especially in case of more complex and detailed subject matters.

Other social organizations still have a lot of criticism with regard to the limited amount of time for giving written and oral response. The staff member of trade union FNV, for instance, is not satisfied with the proceedings regarding the establishment of the NAP. The first meeting where social organizations could be present was primarily a kind of lecture where matters were explained. Those present only had the opportunity to ask questions. In the conceptual phase, there was no possibility to make contributions. There suddenly was a concept report that had to be commented on the next day.

The spokesperson of the Alliance also has some comments on both the lack of time and the procedure. After the initial meeting, things remained silent for too long. The spokesperson claims this is due to a long and difficult interdepartmental process. As a result, it was impossible to give input in the important phase of composing the first concept. To make things worse, the concept was presented to the Alliance too late, making it impossible for the Alliance to involve the backing of its member organizations in giving their views on the NAP. The result is a measure memorandum without a proper vision. There has been no debate with the social organizations on a vision on poverty and social exclusion, there was too little scope for defining

problems, and too much emphasis was put on defending existing policy. The Alliance concludes that the NAP is not a coherent entity, but merely a chain consisting of the efforts of the various ministries. The representatives of FNV and CNV came to the same conclusions.

The representatives of the NGOs say that there was far too little time for responding. In addition to this, the representative from the Alliance criticises the absence of a possibility to contribute in the initial phase.

The persons involved from the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment are less negative about the tight schedule. They are of the opinion that time pressure kept the various actors attentive, and that in a relatively short time a coherent and strong NAP has been developed.

2.4 The indicators and objectives

As its point of departure, the NAP employs the following definition of poverty: 'Poverty is a complex, multi-dimensional issue into which insight must be provided by means of various indicators'. It has been indicated that a lot of reflection on indicators and objectives took place during the initial phase of formulating the NAP. However, there was little experience with this way of working. The NAP states the intention to report on the experiences with working with indicators and objectives in the next NAP. In addition to this, data collection will be expanded to include the indicators that have not yet been measured. With regard to the indicators themselves, the NAP pleads for a further refinement of 'structural indicators' in the areas of income, employment, health care, housing and education. In addition to this, a wide set of financial and non-financial indicators must be developed in order to follow the various dimensions of poverty and social exclusion over longer periods of time. An important focal point would be the long-term lack of future perspectives.

In order to establish the indicators of the NAP, the interdepartmental work group employed a whole range of studies and monitors into the manifestations and causes of poverty. The indicators were incorporated in a description of the current situation in the Netherlands. It is noticeable that many parts of this description are not geared toward the situation of population groups that cope with poverty or are likely to be affected by poverty and social exclusion. The descriptions tend to give a more general and quantitative description of the most important policy measures for the various low-income groups on the most important aspects of social policy in the Netherlands. As a result, the indicators fail to give a problem definition of poverty and social exclusion.

According to the civil servants of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, the indicators are based on those formulated at the Laken-summit, which were expanded by piling up the policy intentions. Research carried out by the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands (SCP) employs more indicators for poverty. However, representatives of the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment indicate that on a European level a collective set of 17 indicators was available in the autumn of 2001, while the first NAP was finished in June of that year. The development of the collective indicators ran parallel to the establishment of the NAP itself. According to the adviser of the VNG, the interdepartmental commission tried to find good indicators, but this process was regarded as 'a lot of fuss'. As an example, he mentions the amount of rental subsidy. Is the amount of rental subsidy an example of good policy in the area of poverty prevention, or is it an indicator for the dimension of poverty? The commission soon took the point of departure that in the Netherlands minimum wage earners were doing

quite well compared to other European countries. The discussion only dealt with non-material subject matters.

The social organizations have several points of criticism with regard to the indicators. The representative of the CNV finds that the indicators have indeed been formulated more sharply after the reaction of the NGOs, but are still too broad. Furthermore, there should be a clearer formulation of the definition of social exclusion. Humanitas pleads for the necessity of a broader definition. For instance, a certain amount of social incapability could also lead to social exclusion. The representative of the Alliance claims that there are no collective indicators. At most, they contain the numeral translation of existing policy: 'The cult of measuring leads to factors only being included in the NAP if the results can be measured'.

The objectives are also attacked with regard to the emphasis that is put on quantitative data, and the lack of qualitative information. The representative of FNV argues that quantitative data are comprehensible only when there is an explanation in the form of qualitative data. The NAP does not contain such information. The senior advisor international politics of the NIZW also finds that objectives should be formulated in more qualitative terms regarding the desired results. This form would be much more appealing to professionals of local welfare organizations.

A different sound comes from the representative of Divosa, who supports quantitative objectives. Only then can municipalities formulate aims that can be measured and lived by.

2.5 Scope for support on various levels

The civil servants from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports argue that, as a result of the way in which the NAP was developed, the scope for support for policy concerning the prevention of poverty and social exclusion diminished. Before the start of the procedure surrounding the NAP, the ministry had a good infrastructure in the area of poverty prevention. Since 1995, poverty prevention had received priority in the government. This had a positive influence on the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. An interdepartmental commission was founded in which all departments were represented. This way, the necessary support was established for developing coherent policy within the ministry. Due to the procedure, and, primarily, the time pressure surrounding the foundation of the NAP, this infrastructure fell apart. The civil servants involved could no longer count on a constructive contribution from other departments.

As a result of the time pressure, the scope for support at other ministries was also put under strain. This was the case for the ministries that were already involved in the policy concerning poverty prevention. According to the representatives of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, the representatives from the other ministries regarded the NAP as something belonging solely to the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment. This played a negative role. People felt the plan development was concentrated around Social Affairs and Employment, instead of the NAP becoming a collective product. As a result, the representatives of other ministries failed to join the meetings of the interdepartmental commissions. This made it difficult to gather contributions for the plan from the other ministries, as they were absent. The formulation of a plan was mainly carried out by Social Affairs and Employment, and, to a lesser extent, Health, Welfare and Sports. At a later stage, the co-ordinator of the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment did his utmost to gather contributions from other ministries and social organizations.

On local policy level, the formation of support primarily involved the question of who is responsible for what regarding the policy in the area of the prevention of poverty and social exclusion. According to the adviser of the VNG, municipalities strongly support the various aspects of poverty prevention, but medium-sized and smaller municipalities are not familiar with the NAP. This is possibly due to the fact that the NAP was established by means of a top-down procedure (first national, then local).

The social organizations do feel involved in the NAP. The unions FNV and CNV indicate that the contents of the NAP connect to their working field. They are well equipped with regard to three important parts of the plan, namely social exclusion, income security and employment mediation. The representative of Humanitas indicates that the subject of social exclusion matches the objectives and activities of the organization, but that it is difficult to find points in common on a more detailed level. However, it does work as a means for convincing municipalities to participate in certain projects.

2.6 A collective action plan?

Did the procedure lead to an action plan in which the various actors and organizations have been sufficiently involved? In other words, can it be said that there is a collectively carried national action plan?

There is not one univocal answer to this question. The interviewees from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, local governments, and the representatives of NGO's name the lack of time as the most important restrictive factor for making a substantial contribution. The people involved from the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment also found there was little time, but found it sufficient to come up with a good plan. The majority of interviewees are only moderately positive about the plan itself. The majority of actors see the NAP as an accumulation of existing policy, and are of the opinion that no clear vision on social exclusion has been formulated. As a result, there is no coherence between the various policy areas and policy measures. In addition to this, actors argue that the NAP fails to pay enough attention to vulnerable groups. By failing to involve welfare organizations, certain groups have not been addressed sufficiently. These are for instance refugees and migrants, and other groups that fall outside the working field of pressure groups that work in areas such as social security.

3 Implementation of the NAP

3.1 Introduction

In the introduction of the report it was stated that the Dutch NAP is based on four pillars. Three of the four pillars refer to contents and deal with the following topics:

1. Social participation.
2. Income security.
3. Access to facilities.

Within each pillar, the NAP formulates a number of objectives with regard to implementation. The total number of objectives per pillar is so large that not all objectives can be studied in this evaluation. We have opted for questioning the actors about the objectives that belong to one area within each of the three pillars. In Chapter 1, this choice has been justified. The following topics will be addressed in the ensuing paragraphs: social activation (social participation), supplementary benefit (income security) and facilities for old- and newcomers (access to facilities).

This chapter will not only examine whether the objectives belonging to these areas are achieved, but also how local governments and NGOs assessed working with the objectives, to what extent the formulated objectives were feasible, whether they were in keeping with existing policy, and whether objectives and indicators could be attuned. This way, the most important bottlenecks of the implementation of the NAP will become apparent. The chapter closes off with a short summary and some concluding remarks.

3.2 Social activation

One of the four pillars on which the prevention of poverty and social exclusion in the Netherlands is based is the encouragement of social participation. This takes place in the form of paid employment, or, in case of a large distance to the labour market, by means of social activation. In the National Action Plan, objectives are formulated for the following areas: participation in labour process, social activation and participation in voluntary work (pillar of social participation). This paragraph will focus on the area of social activation.

The general definition of social activation is 'the prevention of exclusion and social isolation by encouraging social participation, possibly implying a step toward paid employment'. In practice, social activation is related to guiding and supporting clients in the areas of employment, voluntary work, education and care. Clients in need of care tend to have multiple problems. For them, paid employment or social participation is not (yet) an option. The NAP gives a broad definition of social activation. The question is whether this objective is filled in as broadly in actual practice. This question was posed to various actors. Before turning to their reactions, the formulation of objectives in the NAP will be examined and commented on.

Objectives and indicators of social activation in the NAP

With regard to social activation, six objectives have been formulated that relate to the long-term unemployed, labour-disabled people and the instrument for social activation.

Long-term unemployed

1. Municipalities will try to have established a completely balanced approach for new inflow by 2001.
2. Municipalities will make an effort to screen current clients, and, if possible, offer them guidance by 2002 at the latest.
3. In 2003, at least two thirds of all municipalities will have organized its work processes in such a way that they form a closed chain of reintegration, also for persons not entitled to social benefit.
4. People with a large distance to the labour market will receive an offer for social activation.

Labour-disabled people

5. Steps will be taken to evaluate whether social activation can be adequately applied to labour-disabled people.

Set of instruments for social activation

6. Encouraging the commitment of municipalities toward social activation, by distributing successful approaches and methods, among other things.

Attuning objectives and indicators

The ultimate aim of social activation is a higher degree of social participation. As an indicator of social participation, the NAP 2001 names participation in social organizations and voluntary work. It remains unclear to what extent social activation makes a contribution to this. In the NAP 2001, hardly any connection is established between the indicator for social participation and the objective of social activation. This was partly due to the fact that the indicators on a European level were still being developed. In addition to the absence of a connection, it is not formulated why it can be difficult to measure the effects of social activation on the level of social participation. This is a great lack because this could have been a big step toward measuring the effects of social activation.

A link that is made is the one between voluntary work and the way to paid employment. However, the figures concerning voluntary work in the NAP relate to the total amount of voluntary work carried out by the entire population of 15 years of age and older, and is not restricted to voluntary work carried out by, for instance, the long-term unemployed. Furthermore, table 1.5 of the NAP gives figures on memberships of a large variety of organizations, among which are also sports clubs. According to the NAP, the extent to which people organize themselves and participate in voluntary work is an important indicator of the level of participation of the Dutch population. This may be the case, but stating clear definitions for terms such as voluntary work and level of organization is essential in this respect.

Contents of objectives

A second bottleneck can be found in the contents of the objectives. The first three objectives of social activation are related to the activities of municipalities, and not to the clients themselves. Municipalities may indeed organize their work processes in such a way that a fitting approach can be arranged for a major part of the clients. However, this does not automatically imply that clients will actually participate. Another objection is that objective five remains rather vague in stating merely that steps will be taken to investigate whether social activation can adequately be applied to labour-disabled people. The NAP 2001 does not elaborate on the question of what steps have to be taken.

Progress execution NAP

In December 2002, the State Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment published the Progress Report NAP, in which the state of affairs was drawn up for all objectives. As a note on the objective of social activation, the State Secretary mentioned that the objective of new influx was mistakenly taken up in the NAP, since this objective does not reach the group of the long-term unemployed. Another thing that was mentioned is that some progress was booked in the way municipalities organize their work processes toward a fitting approach of integration. This turned out to be 10 per cent more by July 2002. As mentioned previously, this does not yet say very much about the progress on the actual reintegration of persons entitled to social benefit. The report states that the achieved amount of progress on this particular aspect is not known. However, it is indicated that steps will be taken with regard to methodology development and the improvement of professionalism. It remains unclear what the effects of these steps would be for benefits recipients who qualify for social activation.

Reactions to objectives and indicators

Several actors have been asked to give a response to the content of the objectives and its relation to the indicators. The most significant reactions are assembled in this paragraph.

Definition of social activation

The various actors stress that social activation should have a broad interpretation, not only consisting of employment guidance and counselling. Some actors explicitly mention that the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment puts too much emphasis on employment mediation instead of forms of activation without employment. A fundamental difference of opinions is observed between the dominant ideology and the representatives of the sectors. FNV, CNV and the umbrella organization Alliance stress the importance of a broad definition of social activation for social justice. In addition to employment mediation, they also address other forms of participation, such as voluntary work and care labour. The two unions and the Alliance for Social Justice are not satisfied with the way social activation is interpreted in the NAP by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment. They claim too much emphasis is put on social activation as a tool for encouraging participation on the labour market.

Criticism on objectives and indicators

The criticism expressed by the various NGOs on the objectives concerning social activation is mainly directed at the fact that it is difficult to turn the aim of social activation into quantitative data. Even though the steps taken by municipalities and professionals can be measured, the effects on people, for instance more autonomy, remain difficult to measure. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports and the VNG add another point to this. Both are of the opinion that because of the process of deregulation and decentralization there is no national overview of what happens in the area of social activation. As a result, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports fails to gain insight into the effects. Figures on separate municipalities are available, but not on the country as a whole.

Reactions to the policy measures of the NAP

The National Action Plan translates objectives into policy measures. With regard to social activation, the following five policy measures are mentioned:

1. Establishing a temporary national Information and Service Desk Social Activation (ISSA).
2. Introducing an Encouragement Measure for Social Activation.
3. Introducing a temporary exemption from the job-search requirement for participants of social activation activities.
4. Making agreements with the VNG about a finite chain in the offer of activation trajectories.
5. Expanding the regulations for nursery and after-school care for single parents on social security.

According to the NGOs, the objectives for social activation as formulated in the NAP 2001 are rather general, making it difficult to attune policy to them. The majority of NGOs underline the fact that in actual practice the implementation of the objectives of social activation was of little use to them. This becomes clear from topics such as vulnerable groups and an integral approach. This will be elaborated in the following sections.

Vulnerable groups

Only a few measures are aimed at people with multiple problems and labour-disabled persons. According to the NGOs, this is due to the dominant ideology that looks upon social activation as a step toward paid employment. In the NAP, social activation is primarily regarded as a tool for employment guidance, since policy is completely geared toward this point of view. According to the Alliance for Social Justice, the road leading to social participation is obstructed for various groups, such as people receiving disablement insurance benefits, handicapped people and women on social security. CNV does not support the target group policy with regard to disadvantaged population groups. Nevertheless, it wants to formulate the reasons for the large distance to the labour market and come up with tailored solutions. This way, there can be a better connection to the problem situation of these people. At the moment, this happens insufficiently because of the emphasis the topic of social activation puts on participation on the labour market.

An integral approach

The actors agree that social activation is a topic in which the various policy fields come together, and is therefore an area in which integral policy could actually be developed. After all, it does not only comprise the policy field of work and income, but also welfare, care networks for the homeless, debt restructuring and other related issues. According to the NGOs, the measures in the area of social activation as formulated in the NAP 2001 merely give a summary of already existing policy in the area, instead of constituting an integral approach. In order to be capable of giving sufficient support to vulnerable groups such as labour-disabled people and people with multiple problems, the NIZW claims it is necessary to pay attention to adjacent policy fields, such as the welfare sector. After all, welfare is an important component of social activation. For an integral approach, it is therefore essential to involve this component more extensively in the policy concerning social activation, according to the NIZW.

Reactions on the policy framework

Social activation is pre-eminently an area that stretches over the competences of various ministries, and in which both national and local governments are involved. Cooperation and transparency seem to be the key words for social activation to become a success. The following paragraphs contain the reactions of the NGOs on the attuning between ministries and the process of decentralization.

Level of attuning between the two ministries

CNV observes a difference in approach between the two ministries with regard to the subject matter of social activation. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports employs a wider point of departure than the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment. However, the differences do not lead to a collective vision on poverty prevention by social activation. This is due to the following two elements. In the first place, there has been little policy translation with regard to social exclusion within the Ministry for Social Affairs over the last couple of years. The topic is mentioned, but the solution for poverty and exclusion tends to be found in participation in the paid labour market. Secondly, CNV claims that vision and policy are too limited with regard to people with a too large distance to the labour market. These are people who have received social security benefits for years, such as single mothers, disabled people and migrants.

A decentralized approach

According to several actors, poverty prevention has to be addressed on a local level. The theme of social activation in particular is suitable for an approach on a local level, but the NAP is not geared toward such an approach. As a result, the distance between the NAP and local organizations is too large. According to the NIZW, this is certainly the case for welfare institutions. A few NGOs support regional or local plans for action. This makes it easier to reach citizens and makes it possible to create more support on a local level.

Due to deregulation and decentralization, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports has little insight into the effects of local policy. There is no overview of all local initiatives in the area of social activation, and it is not possible for the national government to get such an overview. The only possibility would be for all municipalities to annually send their policy plans to the ministry. However, in this case it would still only be the plans and not the actual realization. The new Act Work and Social Security that is about to take effect places deregulation and decentralization in an ever more central position. This way, the national government becomes completely unable to direct local governments, and will not be able to test the efficiency of municipalities. For instance, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports has no data on how many people have been activated from groups three and four, because the municipalities have the direct responsibility for social activation. There are figures about the results of the separate municipalities, but not about the country as a whole. In order to establish a connection between policy and effects, it is essential to carry out effect measurements and monitors. Monitoring poverty policy would have to be carried out on a national level, for instance by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports.

3.3 Supplementary benefit

Regulations concerning supplementary benefit comprise individual and categorical income support. These are part of the income support programme of local governments for people with an income at the social minimum level. This paragraph will address this kind of income support. The municipal support policy is one of the three divisions of income policy for minimum wage earners that are distinguished in the NAP.

The most important part is the generic income policy of the national government. This policy establishes the sum of the legal minimum wage, social benefits and the tax and insurance rates. The social minimum is differentiated on the basis of household types: 100 per cent for married couples, 90 per cent for single parents and 70 per cent for singles. The NAP states that the Netherlands guarantees its inhabitants an adequate and relatively high social minimum. The other part of government policy comprises specific income facilities to cover specific expenses, such as rental subsidies, child allowance and educational costs.

Local governments have created several regulations to cover expenses for which generic and specific income support do not provide. Examples of such expenses are supplementary benefit (individual and categorical supply), remission of municipal charges and taxes, debt restructuring, and financial support of social participation. These regulations fall under the responsibility of local governments and can differ per municipality. For benefit recipients it can make a difference to live in one municipality or the other with regard to extra income support. The total amount of non-usage of these regulations is estimated to be 30 per cent.

An assessment carried out by the Dutch National Audit Office on the policy concerning supplementary benefit (2002) shows that the costs of supplementary benefit have risen considerably in the period of 1995-2000. At the same time, little was known about the effectiveness of the measure, since the means for supplementary benefit are not earmarked, but integrated in the municipal fund. It is a so-called fictive budget. The question that needs to be answered is how this form of income support, which is often seen as tailor-made, or adjusted to the personal living situation of the minimum wage earners, is taken up in the NAP.

Objectives supplementary benefit

Guaranteeing income security for people who are not able to support themselves is one of the four pillars of the Dutch policy for the prevention of poverty and social exclusion. The NAP claims that this guarantee is expressed in a balanced, three-fold system of income facilities.

Looking at the indicators and their translation into objectives, it immediately becomes apparent that no objective has been formulated for the part dealing with supplementary benefit. Other parts of the municipal support policy are absent as well. The objectives relating to income only deal with guaranteeing the generic and specific income policy of the national government. The following objectives are distinguished:

1. Keeping the social minimum coverage at 100 per cent.
2. Linking social benefits to the general income development based on the Linking with Deviation Possibility Act (WKA).
3. Increasing the activating effects of social security by increasing income rise in case employment is accepted (decreasing poverty trap).

The objectives only deal with the generic and specific policy of the national government. The question why other policy is omitted had been posed to the respondents.

Reactions to objectives and indicators

The civil servants from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports indicate that in the years prior to the NAP the ministry was not engaged in income policy. There was a clear division in the policy concerning poverty prevention: the policy of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports dealt with an activating welfare policy, while that of the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment aimed at income policy. This division continued to exist during the establishment of the NAP. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports was not involved in setting up objectives concerning income guarantees. The ministry did become increasingly involved through the NAP, but this tended to be on the sideline, by means of issues such as public health care. An example is the issue of the allowance of people in intramural institutions. These people received very little money, while their health care costs were very high. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports has provided for a rise in their allowance.

The Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment argues that, as a result of decentralization, the support policy has become the responsibility of municipalities. This is one of the reasons why the NAP does not formulate objectives in this area. The NAP does contain a monitor for municipal poverty policy, but this only gives a global overview of the situation. Besides, this monitor only covers the period 1999-2000.

The representative of CNV finds it obvious that no objectives are formulated, since the national government is not able to intervene in decentralized income policy. However, CNV finds it essential for adjacent municipalities to collectively formulate some kind of attuned policy. At the moment, income differences can exist between people living only a few miles apart, simply because the municipalities have different income policies. The representative of FNV finds it inaccurate that the differences in municipal policy are not mentioned in the NAP. She argues that this could have been done in the form of a description of good and bad practices with regard to applying supplementary benefit.

The representative of Divosa mentions the significance of a measuring instrument to establish an objective concerning municipal income security policy. It is essential to measure and compare the state of affairs. Furthermore, there are also people who are not entitled to social benefits, but do require supplementary benefit. Attention should be paid to these people as well, for instance by means of 'observers' (general practitioners or other professionals).

Attuning of objective and policy

Despite the absence of an objective in the area of the application of supplementary support by local governments, a number of policy resolutions in the area of municipal income support have been taken up in the NAP. They are stated below:

- In order to make an inventory of the tools of municipal income policy (such as supplementary benefit and remission of debt) an extra sum of 182 million euros has been set aside for the period of 1998-2002. Because of this, the total amount assigned to supplementary support and poverty prevention adds up to 364 million euros.
- In 2001, national and local governments want to create a new framework for municipal income support policy. One of the topics that are discussed is the distinction between the generic national policy and the specific municipal policy. Another topic is diminishing the poverty trap.

- Supplementary support is related to the clusters of Social Services/Social Security and Care in the municipal funds. It is being examined whether a possible reordering of municipal tasks is necessary for the two clusters. This will be followed by a redistribution of means between municipalities.

In addition to increasing the financial means for local support policy, the measures relate to attuning the national and local policy level, and the division of means between municipalities. As none of the three policy measures are translated into an objective, the progress report does not clearly indicate how much of the measures have been realized. In order to do so, it is necessary to examine the progress the policy has booked in the area of the Social Security Act.

Reactions to the policy

In their reactions, the interviewees often referred to the oncoming amendments. In that sense, the following responses already anticipate the NAP 2003 that is currently under preparation.

Over the previous years, the tendency of decentralizing responsibilities from a national to a local level has continued. In 2002, the final attempt to partly turn municipal income policy into a general measure died a silent death because of the resolutions made by the new government (Balkenende II). This was the so-called 'long-low' regulation (an initiative proposed by the PvdA) that granted all people who had received the minimum amount of benefit for a long period of time an annual extra sum of money. Due to changes in the Dutch political climate, the current situation seems to be one of increasing decentralization. This happens in the form of the new Employment and Benefit Act. According to the interviewees, this new law primarily means a substantial cut in the resources that were available for supplementary support up to now. Under the header of combating the poverty trap (the phenomenon that people who turn from benefits to paid employment are faced with a decrease in income) the budget for categorical benefit has been dropped. All that is left is the residual for individual supplementary benefits and an extra benefit for long-term unemployed.

Financial recession

The adviser of the VNG is of the opinion that the Dutch situation is back to square one as a result of the announced policy plans of the new government. With this statement, he aims at the year 1995, when the Dutch government started developing its poverty prevention policy. Local governments have not yet given much response to the new plans. The adviser claims this is due to the fact that not many people realize the consequences of the plans. This is not surprising, as they are hidden in a note in the proposition for the new law. The (fictive) budget for supplementary benefit was quite large in the first NAP, because policy could still live on the policy of the Minister for Social Affairs of the 'purple cabinets' in the period of 1995-2000.

Local action plans

The senior advisor international politics of the NIZW approaches the law amendment with a plea for decentralizing the NAP in the sense of making local action plans. This way, it would become far more attractive for local welfare organizations to participate. A local action plan makes it much easier to respond to the local situation and adjust the objectives accordingly. In addition to this, the new law prescribes that implementation has to take place on a local level. At a local level it is easier to establish an integral policy. The senior advisor international politics of the NIZW suggests starting this off in the form of a number of pilots. The national government could facilitate this process.

Preserving categorical benefits

The CNV pleads for the preservation of categorical benefits. The battle for generic policy has been lost due to the loss of the long-low regulation. The representative of the Alliance also argues for preserving the means for individual and categorical benefits. In essence, the Alliance disagrees with the formula of supplementary benefits, because the minimum income should be high enough for people to sustain themselves. However, now that it is estimated that the budget may decrease with some 40 per cent, the Alliance clings to the possibility that municipalities will be able to carry out effective policy as a result of decentralization.

3.4 Old- and newcomers

The third pillar of the NAP is concerned with the access to facilities. These are facilities in areas such as housing, education, care, ICT, public transport, legal support, naturalization, social support and 'solidarity within the family'. Considering the broad area the third pillar encompasses, this study will concentrate on only one of the subject matters, namely facilities for old- and newcomers. This section will examine the objectives regarding old- and newcomers in the NAP, the proposed policy measures in the NAP and the reactions from the sector.

Objectives and indicators old- and newcomers in the NAP

With regard to facilities for old- and newcomers, the NAP formulates two things. First of all, it is stated that the government wants to reach newcomers by means of a naturalization programme. Secondly, in the light of a fitting approach, unemployed 'oldcomers' should be offered counselling and guidance that is aimed at finding employment. For the group for which employment mediation is not yet possible, an activation trajectory will be realized. This aim is translated into objectives in the following way:

Newcomers

1. Every newcomer to whom the objective applies will be reached with a naturalization programme.

Unemployed oldcomers

2. All unemployed oldcomers will be offered suitable guidance and counselling.

Oldcomers raising children

3. Every oldcomer raising children to whom the objective applies will be offered a Dutch language course and information on child raising, education and health care.

The NAP states that a substantial part of the oldcomers lives in a disadvantaged situation. This is due to the high level of social benefit dependency and an educational level that is, on average, low. The NAP elaborates on the statement by mentioning the great differences that exist between the various groups of oldcomers. The participation level on the labour market of Surinam people is much higher than the participation level of Turkish people and Moroccans. The labour participation level of Surinam women is even higher than that of native Dutch women (SCP, *Report Minorities*).

Another point of criticism is that the second objective only aims at unemployed people without paying attention to employment mediation or the social activation of labour-disabled people. This omission is striking, because in the objectives of social activation, the NAP formulates a separate objective aimed at labour-disabled people. Furthermore, it is a known fact that migrants, particularly those with a Turkish or Moroccan background, receive disablement insurance benefits (WAO) relatively more often than native Dutch people (Snel, Stavenuiter and Duyvendak, *In de Fuik*, 2002).

In addition to this, it can be observed that the report *In de Fuik* ('trapped') shows that not only oldcomers end up with disablement insurance benefits (this is the group of poorly-educated migrants with a labour past in the heavy industries), but also the younger generations. This problem is specifically urgent considering the relatively young age of the people involved, the dead-end situation of living on social security and the wasting of talents.

Progress of objectives

Trying to establish how much progress is booked, it becomes once again apparent that a good system to monitor local policy is absent. In the Progress Report of December 2002, the State Secretary mentions that a large number of newcomers are reached, but he fails to mention exact figures. What is mentioned is a dropout percentage of 15 to 20 per cent. This is an extremely relevant piece of information for the NAP, as it is this group that runs high risks with regard to social exclusion. However, no attention is paid to this matter and it remains nothing more than a statement.

For the other two objectives it is indicated that 54 municipalities (with a relatively large number of ethnic groups among its inhabitants) receive a budget for oldcomer policy. Once again, this information contains few indicators by which progress can be assessed. It remains unclear what this budget consists of and what the municipalities intend to achieve. The State Secretary indicates that municipalities will bi-annually come up with data concerning several achievement indicators, but fails to mention when such data can be expected.

Policy measures in the NAP

With regard to facilities for old- and newcomers, the NAP formulates the following measures:

- For the *newcomers*, pilots have been launched in the shape of dual trajectories that aim at combining the naturalization programme with education or employment.
- In accordance with the closed-chain approach, *oldcomers* are offered a suitable trajectory. This is aimed at both benefits recipients and people who do not receive benefits. Language courses are an important part of the reintegration guidance.
- A third policy measure is related to pension build-up, and, more specifically, the possibly insufficient Old Age Pension (AOW) build-up. Clients of the National Insurance Institute will be informed about the fact that they are possibly entitled to supplementary benefit.

A fact worth mentioning is that the third policy measure is not related to the previously mentioned objectives of the NAP. Note that the insufficient build-up of Old Age Pension of migrants forms a substantial part of poverty policy. In that sense it is regrettable that this topic did not receive more attention in the NAP.

A second noticeable aspect is the emphasis put on language courses. The NAP seems to assume that among unemployed people with a foreign background the majority copes with

language arrears. However, research carried out into Turkish and Moroccan people receiving disablement insurance benefits (WAO) shows that this is only one of the determining factors. Other crucial factors include level of education, branch of industry, discrimination on the work floor and inadequate reintegration. The executives turned out to be less than flawless themselves: particularly the mechanism of skimming off (where clients with the highest chances of finding employment are helped first) worked to the disadvantage of migrant clients. Breakdowns in communication played a role as well, but language problems were only a part of this. The one-sided emphasis on language courses in the policy aimed at oldcomers unfortunately fails to address the complex problems of these groups.

Reactions to objectives and policy measures

The VNG describes the objectives in the area of old- and newcomers as 'empty shells'. This is mainly due to the fact that based on the NAP no integral policy is developed in this area, but that policy development is completely in the hands of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Urban Policy). Staff members of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports add that they used to have a budget for naturalization (110 million euros) as well, and that this budget was mainly aimed at the social side of the naturalization process, instead of aiming primarily at language courses.

The CNV is of the opinion that the objectives in this area are worked out poorly. More effort should have been made into monitoring policy measures and measuring the effect of the policy itself. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The FNV adds to this that the various policies were piled up (consider the case of insufficient pension build-up), making policy development difficult. It has to be said that this is not only due to policy development, but also to concrete policy contents. Sjakus emphasizes that the plans to offer all old- and newcomers language courses and reintegration counselling are not feasible, because of the long waiting lists that exist.

According to Divosa, it is obvious that facilities have to be accessible. The question is much more one of how to appeal to people. Divosa supports the idea of municipalities establishing a social infrastructure (preferably obligatory), in which all neighbourhood facilities are listed (such as broad schools, child care and welfare institutions, community work, and a digital centre where people can find information on income support and regulations for oldcomers).

The representative of the NIZW emphasizes that it is of little use to tar all migrants with the same brush. It would be much better to base measures on the various risk groups. It is not objective to consider all migrants as belonging to a disadvantaged group. After all, so many differences exist between migrants. By working with risk factors, disadvantaged groups can be reached in a more objective manner. Groups that are socially excluded can change over the course of time, while new disadvantaged groups may come into existence.

3.5 Conclusions

This chapter addressed the objectives in the areas of social activation, supplementary benefit and facilities for old- and newcomers. The bottlenecks regarding implementation differ per objective, but there were also a number of impediments that stretched over the separate objectives. The first bottleneck is related to the process of deregulation and decentralization. Policy development in the areas of social activation and supplementary benefit is the responsibility of local governments. As a result, it is not possible for the central government to

gain proper insight into the activities in these areas and its possible effects. Various NGOs have suggested solutions for this problem. Almost all actors agree that the central government, for instance the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, should monitor policy in these areas, and gain and keep insight into policy effects. A number of NGOs have proposed to set up action plans on a municipal level, which can provide input for the National Action Plan.

A second bottleneck can be found in the area of integral policy. Most actors are of the opinion that the NAP is an accumulation of existing policy, and that this is insufficient considering the three discussed topics. In addition to this, policy concerning vulnerable groups is worked out insufficiently in the NAP. The next chapter will come back to this issue.

4 Summary of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will give an overview of the most important findings regarding the examination of the first National Action Plan the Netherlands, which was carried out on the basis of the following question: How was the NAP 2001 developed, and how was it implemented? This central question was divided into five parts, the answers to which can be found in the following five paragraphs.

4.2 The development

In order to trace the development of the NAP, the following question was employed: How was the NAP established, and how were local governments and NGOs taken into consideration during this phase?

During the preparation of the NAP, there already existed a reasonable amount of support. This was the result of five years of policy concerning poverty prevention. The Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment used a broad set-up with regard to involving actors: all ministries, municipal governments and organizations in the area of social security were approached. At a later stage, welfare organizations were invited as well.

In the subsequent planning phase and procedure it turned out to be difficult to take into consideration the large number of actors. The NGOs felt that they were involved at far too late a stage, receiving an almost ready-made concept. As a result, these organizations hardly had the opportunity to contribute to the NAP. There was not enough time to involve the backing of the organization in responding to the plans. Concluding, it can be stated that due to the followed procedure, too little scope for support could be developed.

The plan shows a vision on social exclusion that is too one-sided, due to the quantitative approach. Representatives of the NGOs indicated that qualitative data on the living situation of people coping with poverty or social exclusion are essential as well. In addition to this, the NAP does not give a future scenario that could direct policy aimed at preventing poverty and social exclusion. This omission may have consequences for support development on a local level, particularly with regard to the involvement of local welfare organizations.

4.3 The implementation

The second question of this study was the following: How was the NAP implemented and were the objectives met in the areas of social activation, supplementary benefit and facilities for old- and newcomers? Social activation was chosen because of its relation to the issue of integrality. Supplementary benefit is a topic that primarily operates on a local level, shedding light on the relation between the national and local level of execution. The focus on the position of migrants comes back in the facilities for old- and newcomers.

The NAP only gives a general formulation of the objectives relating to the three previously mentioned areas. Furthermore, objectives and policy measures are insufficiently attuned. As a result of this, the effects of the policy on the three mentioned areas cannot be adequately

measured. This is the reason why the progress report fails to give a clear overview of what parts of the policy measures have been realized in the three areas.

The majority of NGOs have no objections to working with objectives. However, there was a general dissatisfaction about the quantitative nature of the objectives. Setting quantitative objectives may be useful in certain areas and for certain topics, but there are also topics in which some qualitative input is required, at least as an addition. Even though the steps taken by municipalities and professionals can be measured, the effects on citizens, for instance a higher degree of autonomy, are difficult to measure.

As a result of the process of deregulation and decentralization, the central government has little insight into the effects of local policy. Figures are available on separate municipalities, but not on the country as a whole. Better monitoring of implementation and policy effects in all three areas is essential in order to investigate whether poverty prevention and the prevention of social exclusion actually have the desired effect. Monitoring poverty policy should take place on a national level.

Although the representatives of the NGO's think the objectives in the areas of social activation, supplementary benefit and facilities for old- and newcomers have not been met, in our opinion working with objectives as such can be a suitable policy instrument. However, working with objectives is useful only when the policy measures that result from it can be measured and monitored. This requires two things. First of all, objectives and policy measures have to be attuned. Secondly, data on poverty policy must be available so that the effects can be monitored on a national level. In order to gain more insight into the background variables that are necessary to carry out effective policy, attention must be paid to the qualitative evaluation of the policy.

4.4 Integral policy

In order to find out whether coherence was established between the various policy areas and the various layers of government, the following question was asked: Does the NAP contain integral policy in the area of poverty prevention and social exclusion?

From interviews with representatives of the NGO's it became apparent that within the procedure there was insufficient space to attune the policy contents for subjects that went beyond the boundaries of the working fields of the ministries. For instance, this was the case for the subject of social activation, for which both the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports and the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment develop policies. "This view is not shared by the national government".

Furthermore, there turns out to be little coherence between the different policies: most interviewees mention an accumulation of separate policy measures.

4.5 Attention paid to vulnerable groups

The fourth question of the research was formulated as follows: Has enough attention been paid to the position of vulnerable groups, such as single parents, elderly women, and migrants?

In the NAP 2001, both the aspect of gender and the influence of the cultural background on poverty are not or hardly incorporated in the plan. The various NGOs, and the Social Alliance in particular, vent strong criticism regarding the lack of emphasis on migrants and the gender issue in the NAP 2001. The absence of the aspects of gender and cultural diversity is partly due to the fact that central to the NAP are the policy areas and the policy itself, and not the living situation and impeding factors for participation.

Most actors agree that not enough attention is paid to vulnerable groups in the NAP. This is partly due to the fact that people seem to be unable to give a proper definition of vulnerable groups. On the various policy levels, target group policy is considered to be outmoded. The NGOs have suggested that more attention should be paid to vulnerable groups. One of the proposals was to consider risk factors in the living and working circumstances instead of target groups, in order for policy to be able to act timely upon the appearance of new vulnerable groups and the disappearance of old ones. Furthermore, a number of NGOs suggest to stimulate local action plans, which can approach the risk factors from a more local and regional point of view. In addition to this, interactive policy can be developed in this way, resulting in risk groups becoming increasingly involved in the subject of poverty policy.

4.6 Factors for success and failure

The final question that was asked regarding the development and implementation of the NAP is the following: What factors for success and failure can be distinguished with regard to the implementation of the NAP 2001? Especially for the three items of the NAP 2001 which are investigated in this report?

Below we discuss how the factors for failure primarily relate to the conditions-creating elements of the policy process and how the success factor is related to the embedding of the policy.

From the start of the development of the NAP 2001, it was made clear that existing policy had to be taken as the point of departure. No financial means were reserved for the plan itself. However on different policy measures which were incorporated in the plan, extra financial means were spent. Furthermore, according to the representatives of the NGO's, VNG and Divosa, obscurity about the cooperation between and attuning of national and local governments and the relation between the national government and the NGOs played a role.

The support for the NAP between and within ministries often depends on the contact person that has a seat in the interdepartmental commission. For a ministry representative it is difficult to stimulate staff members to dedicate themselves to the NAP if people do not see the use or value of the NAP.

Decentralization has led to a great distance between the policy of central and local governments. As a result, there is no insight into and overview of the execution of the policy regarding the prevention of poverty and social exclusion. The autonomy of local governments will become increasingly large in the near future, the possibility to examine whether municipalities allocate the available means in the right manner becoming even smaller. Several NGOs therefore support regional or local action plans, which make it easier to approach citizens directly and make it possible to create more support on a local level. To make a connection between local policy and effects, it is essential to carry out effect measurements and monitors. Monitoring poverty policy should take place on a national level, for instance by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports.

A final factor is the way in which NGOs depend upon the planning of the co-ordinating Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment. The NAP 2001 primarily lacked the proper amount of space and time for NGOs to involve their backing (members of the vulnerable groups for whom the policy in question is developed) in responding to the plans. A set-up based on interactive policymaking leads to more involvement from the NGOs.

A success factor is the fact that in the previous five years a lot of attention has been paid to the prevention of poverty in the Netherlands. As a result, the necessary support was available at the ministries when the planning process started. Furthermore, the contact with NGOs was good, and in many areas the already existing policy could be 'stacked', resulting in a voluminous NAP 2001.

4.7 NAP 2003

Finally, a short preview of the NAP 2003, which is currently in the preparation phase. According to the interviewees, there is the encouraging development toward more concrete figures on the objectives. This information provides hope for a more positive sequel to policy formulation in the areas of creating integral policy and paying attention to vulnerable groups. At the same time, there is a general feeling of concern regarding the consequences of the current economic developments. The question is whether these consequences are being foreseen during the preparation of the NAP 2003.

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Appendix 1 Topic lists

1.1 Topic list for the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (VWS)

Process of policy formation

In the first section of the report, the process leading to the establishment of the NAP 2001 will be described.

1. What steps have been taken: when was the interdepartmental commission established?
2. Was there enough scope for support within the ministries for the NAP?
3. Political scope for support: connection with poverty reports?
4. Role Social and Cultural Planning Office?
5. Connection to Welfare Memorandum?
6. How often did the interdepartmental work group meet?
7. When was the first progress report? How many sub-reports?
8. How does cooperation between ministries go? (SZW co-ordinates: implying what?)
9. Degree of integration of policy measures?
10. How and when were social organizations approached, how was choice made?
11. Do all representatives of vulnerable groups get their say? Which ones do not?
12. How are the contributions of organizations incorporated in the NAP?
13. How are budgetary affairs arranged, both between ministries and toward local governments and organizations?

Implementation

NAP gives an overview of objectives based on three pillars: social participation, income security and access to facilities. For each of these three pillars, one objective will be examined, namely social activation (pillar of social participation), supplementary benefit (pillar of income security) and facilities for old- and newcomers (pillar of access to facilities).

14. How are these three objectives approached, who co-ordinates?
15. Is NAP part of existing policy in these three areas or is it complementary? In what areas is it complementary?
16. What do governments do regarding the three policy areas?
17. What do social organizations do regarding the three policy areas?
18. What concrete task division is there between ministry and organizations?
19. How is NAP integrated in existing policy in the area of preventing social exclusion?
20. Has enough attention been paid to the contributions of organizations for vulnerable groups in the NAP?
21. Has enough attention been paid to the contributions of municipal and regional governments in the NAP?
22. Has specific attention been paid to migrants?
23. Has specific attention been paid to women (gender issues)?
24. How can organizations for vulnerable groups that are not yet approached be involved in the NAP?
25. How are contents measured and evaluated?

Indicators

The indicators in the Dutch NAP are broadly defined and consist of both monetary and non-monetary indicators of poverty (social participation, income and purchasing power, housing, education, care, ICT, public transport, legal aid, integration and facilities for the homeless).

26. How was this choice made? (Did the ministry base this choice on Laken-indicators?)
27. Have the indicators been adjusted, and, if so, in what sense?
28. Have the social organization been invited to think along with regard to the choice of indicators, or were the indicators established previously?
29. Have the indicators themselves been evaluated? If so, how?

1.2 Topic list for organizations

Process of policy formation

In the first part of the report, the process leading to the establishment of the NAP 2001 is described.

1. How did you know about the intention of developing the NAP?
2. At what point was your organization involved for the first time?
3. What role did your organization play in the establishment of the NAP?
4. Was there enough time to make a contribution?
5. Are you satisfied with the way your organization's input has been incorporated in the final report of the NAP?
6. Does your organization see it as its duty to collaborate in establishing the NAP?
7. Is your organization equipped for this task (enough man power, financial means)?
8. What support did local governments offer?
9. Do you think all representatives of vulnerable groups are sufficiently heard? If not, which ones are not?

Implementation

NAP gives an overview of its objectives based on three pillars: social participation, income security and access to facilities. From each of these pillars, one objective will be examined, namely social activation (pillar of social participation), supplementary benefit (pillar of income security) and facilities for old- and newcomers (pillar of access to facilities).

10. Did your organization have any influence on the establishment of these three objectives, and, if so, how?
11. What does your organization's execution do with regard to the three mentioned objectives?
12. Does this execution fit the existing policy of your organization in the area of preventing social exclusion or is this a new task?
13. Is your organization equipped for this (enough man power, financial means)?
14. How are tasks divided between SZW as the co-ordinating ministry and your organization?
15. Do all contacts run through SZW or is there also contact between organizations?
16. Has your contribution been sufficiently incorporated in the policy development in the NAP? If so, in what way? If not, why not?
17. Has specific attention been paid to migrants?
18. Has specific attention been paid to women (gender issues)?

Indicators

The indicators in the Dutch NAP are broadly defined and consist of both monetary and non-monetary indicators of poverty (social participation, income and purchasing power, housing, education, care, ICT, public transport, legal aid, integration and facilities for the homeless).

19. Did your organization have any influence on the choice of indicators? If so, how?

20. Have the indicators been adjusted? If so, how?

Appendix 2 List of interviewed persons

Name	Organization
Mr G.L.M. van Rienen	Management Social Policy, Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports
Mr R.A. Bachofner	Management Social Policy, Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports
Mr J. Botter	Management Social Policy, Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports
Ms P.A. van Golen	Management Social Security & Municipal Activation Policy, Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment
Mr J. Bloem	Management Social Security & Municipal Activation Policy, Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment
Mr A.P. Paardekooper	Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Science
Mr G. Koster	VNG (Association of Dutch Municipalities)
Mr T. Thissen	Divosa
Mr R. Janssen	Sjakuus
Ms M. Bulk	FNV
Ms A. Westerbeek-Huitink	CNV
Mr M. Kerkhof	Humanitas
Ms Th. Meinema	International Centre, NIZW

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