# Evaluation brief: *The effectiveness of the Innovation Voucher 2004 and 2005: effect on innovative inputs and innovative output of companies* (The Netherlands)

*Key words: innovation vouchers, SMEs, knowledge institutes, behavioural change, national policy evaluation, quasi experimental methodology*

## 1. Introductory information

- Innovation Vouchers was a national measure in the Netherlands.
- The evaluation is presented in a published Dutch-language report the title of which, in English, is: *The effectiveness of the Innovation Voucher 2004 and 2005: effect on innovative inputs and innovative output of companies.*[1]
- This was an interim evaluation to test the effectiveness of innovation vouchers, commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, in the Netherlands.
- The evaluation was carried out by Maarten Cornet, Marc van der Steeg and Björn from the CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis.[2]
- The duration of the study was 24 months with a total budget of some €250,000.

## 2. Summary

Innovation Vouchers were designed to stimulate increased interaction between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and public research institutes.

The evaluation sought to answer two questions: the effect of the Innovation Vouchers on businesses' innovativeness; and the effect on their willingness to commission support from and otherwise partner with knowledge institutes.

The evaluation used an experimental methodology that exploited the scheme's process of awarding vouchers by lottery and the resultant creation of a matched treatment and control group. It comprised four main activities: (1) desk research, (2) a questionnaire survey directed to a sample of voucher holders (the treatment group), (3) a questionnaire survey directed to a sample of SMEs that applied for vouchers but were not selected to receive an award (the control group), and (4) an interview round with stakeholders in order to better understand the results.

The evaluation found clear evidence for a strongly positive effect on SMEs' willingness to commission work from public-research institutes, where the very great majority had not entered into such relationships previously. The review found no evidence of a positive or negative effect on innovation outcomes, however that may have been a result of the timing of the evaluation (just two years after the launch of the scheme) and the fact that a single €7,500 voucher was unlikely to immediately transform an entire firm.

[1] De effectiviteit van de innovatievoucher 2004 en 2005: Effect op innovatieve input en innovatieve output van bedrijven, by Maarten Cornet, Marc van der Steeg en Björn Vroomen, CPB Document No 140, February 2007. The report is available to download at www.cpb.nl/publicatie/de-effectiviteit-van-de-innovatievoucher-2004-en-2005-effect-op-innovatieve-input-en-inno

[2] www.cpb.nl/eng

The evaluation was scientifically rigorous, however, as it is rare to have access to good control groups, this kind of experimental methodology has not been used since.

The ministry did derive some insights of course, and in particular they realised just how sensitive findings can be to the timing of an evaluation within the lifecycle of a scheme. In the innovation arena, time lags are a real factor.

## 3. Further information

- The full case study may be found at: (url)
- Link to the evaluation study:

  http://www.cpb.nl/en/publication/effectiviness-innovation-voucher-2004
- Link to the Managing Authority that commissioned the evaluation:

  http://www.agentschapnl.nl/.