

Introduction by Her Majesty's Governor, Mrs J.R.H. Maij-Weggen, at the roundtable session 'STR and national agencies' on Friday 24 October 2008.  
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Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to this second roundtable discussion this morning on 'State territorial representatives and national agencies'.

During the previous roundtable session, we focused on the relationship between the State Territorial Representatives and regional agencies. At this one, we are to examine more closely our commitment and responsibilities with regard to national agencies.

This morning, the intention is that we look into our role in 'national agencies' on the basis of several introductions. Three speakers are therefore to provide you with examples of usual practice in their countries and regions and I myself will also give an introduction.

I am pleased to introduce the other 3 speakers to you:

- **Dominique Dubois**, Director-General of the French agency '*L'Agence Nationale pour la Cohésion Sociale et L'Égalité des Chances*'. This is an agency that plays a significant role in migration and integration issues in France.

- **Graham Garbutt**, Chief Executive of the English Commission for Rural Communities. This commission interprets the voice of people living in rural communities in such a manner that it might be heeded by the British government.

- **Viktoria Zöld-Nagy**, Deputy Head of Department of the Hungarian Ministry for Local Self-Government. Mrs Zöld is to address the matter of setting up public administration in Hungary, focusing sharply on the National Development Agency's role in this respect.

I propose that you should be given a brief opportunity to pose questions after each speaker.

There will be a further opportunity for debate after the final introductions and then we shall go for lunch.

Before handing over to Mr Dominique Dubois, I should like to share with you a little of my own experience acquired in the Dutch context.

The Netherlands can be characterised as a decentralised unified state. Her Majesty's twelve Governors serve as the Chair of the Provincial Executive and the provincial

parliament but being appointed by the national government, they also form the '*trait d'union*' between the state and the region. It is a 50/50 situation.

A decree comprising our official instructions lays down the duties that Governors perform according to the Dutch Constitution.

The Governor promotes cooperation between government officials working within the province on the one hand, and the provincial administration, the municipal executives and the water board authorities on the other. In cases of conflict we are responsible for solutions.

In practice, relations between the central and local authorities in the decentralised state of the Netherlands are highly friendly. National agencies or ministerial services often work hand in hand with regional and local government bodies throughout the region.

This Dutch 'polder model' guarantees a smooth cooperation, so that the Governor need only provide a little additional impetus to ensure a harmonised approach to the mutual challenges faced. And wherever necessary, this also applies to cooperation with the decentralised Civil Service bodies, which I shall now list for the sake of clarity.

The Ministry of Transport Public Works and Water Management has a regional body for the 3 southern provinces, based in my province, which is responsible for the maintenance, management and construction of national waterways and roads. In addition, the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment monitors legislation and regulation in the areas of housing, spatial planning and environment in two of the three southern provinces and is also based in Noord-Brabant.

The Public Lands Administration is in charge of the management of state-owned property. (Ministry of Finance). Furthermore, there is the southern division of the so called General Inspectorate (AID Zuid), which monitors compliance with legislation and regulations in the field of agriculture, fisheries and nature conservation. It is an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture. There is also a regional Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority which, as its name suggests, monitors the safety of food and consumer products. And finally, my province has a Regional Military Command for the Dutch armed forces (80% located in my province with 4 military airports).

So I have regular contacts with all the directors and generals who are heading all these administrations and offices.

Other major challenges we face lie in the field of regional economic development.

The Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs has therefore established an agency which accumulates knowledge of innovation, energy, climate, the physical environment and human environment.

This agency, known as SenterNovem, strives to achieve both a stronger position for regional businesscommunity and a more sustainable society. They offer businesses consultancy and implement grants or subsidy-schemes, SenterNovem contributes considerably to the pursuit of the Lisbon objectives on a regional level.

The Province of Noord-Brabant also have its own regional economic development agency for over twenty five years.

This Noord-Brabant Development Agency (BOM) was born of an alliance between the provincial authorities and employers' and employees' associations in Noord-Brabant.

In cooperation with SenterNovem, the BOM makes a significant contribution to furthering the interests of Brabant in *Brainport*, as we call the area surrounding the city of Eindhoven, which is also the home of Philips. Brainport accounts for some 45% of all private investment in Research & Development in the Netherlands. This area of my province spends 8% of its gross regional product on R&D, which is far above the target set by the European Union.

So, during the past decade, Brabant has developed into a leading region in the field of high innovative technology, which is known as the second driver for the Dutch economy.

Increased globalisation has also obliged our province to adopt a more international climate. We are therefore involved in various cross-border partnerships, while we also cooperate with other regions both within and beyond Europe.

For instance, I regularly speak to my foreign colleagues in a network of leading innovative European regions; 'the Innovation Alliance'. Within this alliance, I strive together with regions such as Stockholm and Helsinki, Munich and Budapest, to establish a representative network of innovative European regions, which cooperate on joint projects.

In closing, I am obliged to conclude that while the State Territorial Representative increasingly serves as a linking pin between regions and regional and national agencies, a significant role is also set aside for us in opening up the doors to offer the regions a better perspective of the world beyond.

I thank you for your attention, and shall now hand over to our first speaker;  
Mr Dominique Dubois.