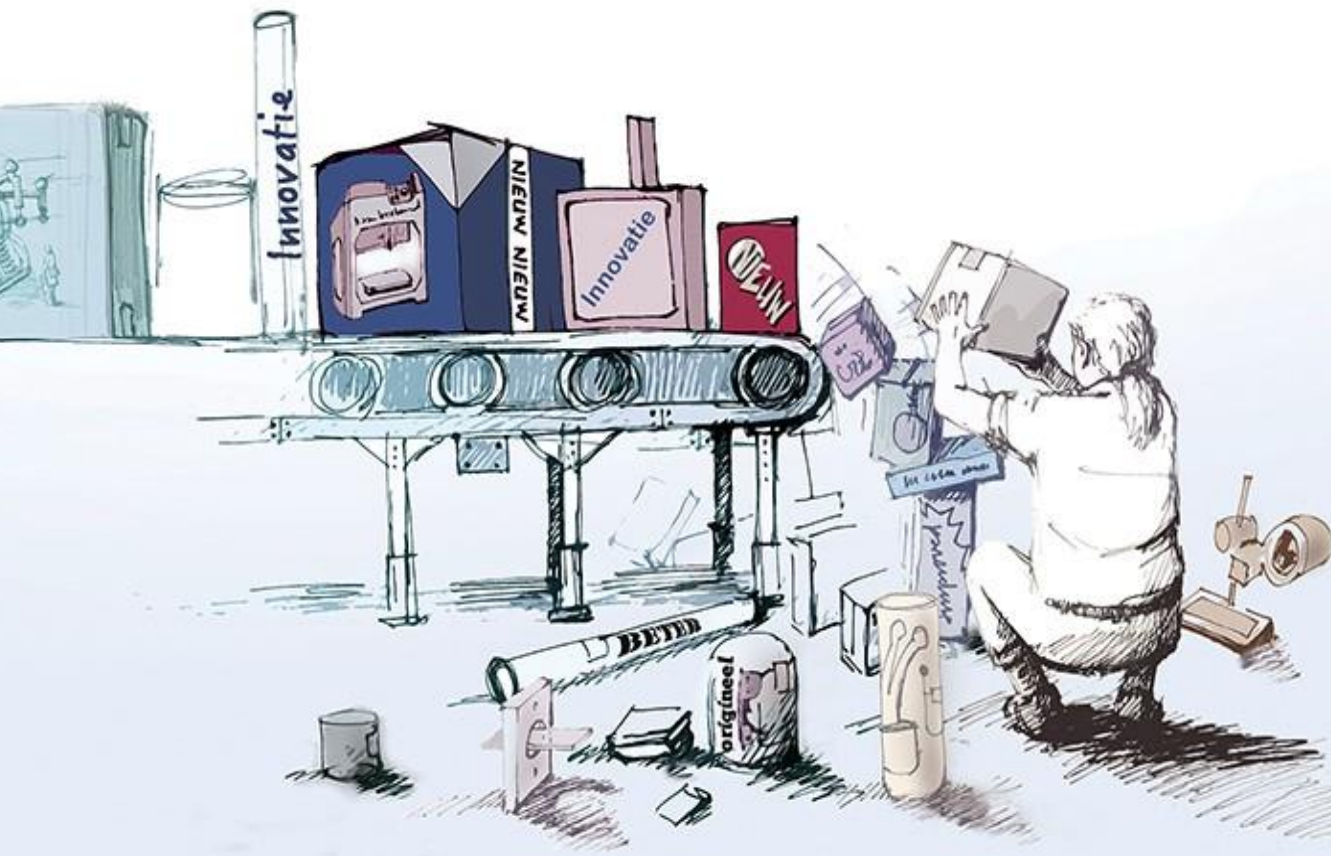


Spread of innovation

THE UNDEREXPOSED SIDE OF INNOVATION POLICY





The Advisory council for science, technology and innovation (AWTI) advises the Dutch government and parliament on policy in the areas of scientific research, technological development and innovation. The AWTI provides advice when it is applied for or when the council deems it necessary. It enjoys an independent position towards the Ministers and their Departments, as well as towards other parties involved. The advisory council consists of a maximum of 10 members, each originating from different sectors of society, such as research institutes and trade and industry. The members do not represent any special interests.

The Advisory council for science, technology and innovation consists of the following members:

Prof. Dr. U. Rosenthal (Chairman)
Prof. J. Benschop
Prof. Dr. D.H.A. Blank
Ms. Prof. Dr. R. Cools
Prof. Dr. K. Debackere
Prof. Dr. T.H.J.J. van der Hagen
Ms. Dr. S. Heimovaara
Prof. Dr. E.M. Meijer
Ms. Drs. N. Meijer
Dr. A.J.G.M. Peels
Ms. J.J.G. Bovens, LL.M. (Secretary)

The office is located in the Netherlands:
Prins Willem-Alexanderhof 20
NL-2595 BE The Hague
t. +31 (0)70 3110920
e. secretariaat@awti.nl
w. www.awti.nl

Spread of innovation

The underexposed side of innovation policy

september 2018

Summary

The Netherlands has a long tradition of innovation; past innovations have made a visible contribution to the wealth of the country; and today one of the great strengths of the Dutch is still the ability to develop new products, services and processes. In order to be of genuine value for the economy and society, however, innovations must also be able to spread readily and widely, so they can be used by lots of people and organisations. That is the focus of this report.

Do innovations spread easily in the Netherlands? Are the conditions right for innovations to spread? What role can central, regional and local government play in this process?

Spread of innovation enables innovative companies to earn back the money they have invested and reinvest it in other projects. It also generates benefits of scale, making it possible to offer innovations, which have been improved along the way, at a lower price, so that they can in turn be spread further. A degree of spread is often a precondition for the usability of an innovation – a fact that will have been clear to the owner of the first telephone. Innovation spread also has public value, for example contributing to more efficient public services in care or education, thus leading to lower public costs. And as innovations reach and benefit more people, it becomes easier to defend the investment of public time and resources in innovation.

Despite the great importance of spreading innovation, there is little systematic knowledge of how innovations actually spread in practice in the Netherlands. It is known from the literature that innovations almost by definition encounter practical obstacles and resistance to change. Case studies were compiled for this report and practical examples gathered which show that innovations in the Netherlands regularly stay small or spread inadequately, sometimes even after a great deal of time and – sometimes public – money has been invested.

In the light of this situation, the Dutch government is advised to work towards creating better conditions for spreading innovations in several areas and in relation to various issues, in addition to the activities undertaken by innovators themselves. This approach will ultimately enable the government to achieve more with the same investments. The government needs to be more active on two fronts: stimulating the demand for innovations and eliminating obstacles to the spread of innovation.

The Dutch Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (AWTI) translates this advice into three recommendations for the government.

- ▶ Stimulate demand for innovations with societal value.
- ▶ Ask ministries to devote policy attention to the spread of innovation and strive for interdepartmental collaboration on this point.
- ▶ Make spread of innovation an explicit part of the innovation policy of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate.