

**'BNO stimulates
the development
of designers and
their discipline'**



BNO Policy Plan 2017-2019

1. First of all

**‘To connect is the mechanism.
To strengthen and improve is the goal.’**

BNO supports designers in all stages of their career. As a community of fellow professionals that inspire and strengthen each other, and as a reliable knowledge institute with heaps of experience. As a service centre offering specific training courses, advice and other forms of support, and as promoter of the discipline that helps build and preserve the right conditions for the professional practice.

To connect is the mechanism: linking up people, knowledge and opportunities. To strengthen and improve is the goal: applied to designers, to the design discipline, and the world as a whole. In short: BNO stimulates the development of designers and their discipline.

Despite the continuing excitement regarding the creative industry, the world of design is not a world of wonders. Irreversible changes in the world and the discipline continue to cause a ‘shakeout’ among creative enterprises; but fortunately lots of opportunities remain. Consider, for instance, the possibilities created by the progressive digitisation, the developments in 3D printing, the Internet of Things, social and service design – also for the classic design disciplines. Steadily more businesses and organisations are waking up to the added value of design, and are eager to make use of it. Designers and design agencies that continue to learn, that remain socially aware and flexible, that are able to collaborate effectively with peers and other parties, that can formulate and prove their added value for commissioning clients – these entrepreneurs are not short of challenges and properly paid work.

This policy plan looks ahead to the next few years. But it makes sense to first cast a look back; hence the review offered in paragraph 2. Paragraph 3 sketches the crowded field in which BNO operates, and paragraph 4 describes the value of thinking in terms of future scenarios. Paragraph 5 examines the current position and tasks of BNO, and paragraph 6 describes the priorities for the years ahead, forming the core of this document. Paragraph 7 wraps up the policy plan.

2. Results of 'Via BNO'

'BNO scored well in terms of members' support.'

The social context outlined in *Via BNO/Policy Plan 2014-2016* still applies today, as do the consequences of this context for the design discipline and for BNO. Three years ago we formulated our mission as follows: 'BNO binds and represents a unique diversity of professional designers and design agencies in the Netherlands. BNO promotes their interests, works on the conditions favourable to the further development of the design discipline, and highlights the relevance of design for society.'

The BNO policy focused on members' support, on strengthening the collective, and on the further development and positioning of design. This was translated into seven priorities. Below is a brief review of what we did and what we achieved.

1 — Business and professional support

The business and professional support for member designers formed the core of our work and was perceived as professional and effective. Designers and design agencies were collectively served with General Terms and Conditions, sample contracts, guidelines, favourable insurances, and so on. Following the abolition of the VAR, BNO developed model agreements for design contracts, approved by the Tax Authority. Discussions with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations led to some welcome adjustments to the government's procurement conditions (Arvodi). Additionally, designers and design agencies were served with tailored business and/or legal advice. In fact, the need for solid advice was for many the most pressing reason to join BNO. As a new service, we published dossiers on our website on topics such as pitches, tendering, copyright, and so on. We regularly monitored the individual applications to the advice desk, and paid visits to a considerable number of member agencies to find out how they feel about BNO's services.

2 — Entrepreneurship and professional development

Entrepreneurship and professional development were stimulated through various informative and inspiring events, and through a more targeted range of training courses. Thanks to grants obtained from the so-called Asscher funds, BNO worked with partners to develop the *Sectorplan Cultuur*, while new BNO training courses were made more affordable. The talent development programme set up with ABN AMRO Bank and the Dutch Design Foundation, *Driving Dutch Design*, was given a strong boost of professionalism. After seven editions of the large annual *Vroaam!* event, we felt that it was time for fresh formulas, and as an alternative we offered the BNO *Summerclasses* and separate portfolio afternoons. In 2015 we joined our partners of the Dutch Creative Industries Federation in launching the portal *Creative Holland*, to guide and promote artists, designers and agencies on the international stage.

3 — Mutual member contact

Contact among members was stimulated and effectuated in various and often surprising ways, via eight regional platforms. The online communication about events and opportunities was given a considerable boost, and the redubbed BNO-platform BNO NEXTpack, consisting of agencies devoted to packaging design, intensified its activities. An HRM platform was established, as was a peer mentoring programme that BNO members can make use of at no charge, to the enthusiasm of many. Biannual *BNO Meet ups* for new members have been introduced, so that designers can discover more quickly how they can benefit from BNO and understand and start to use the (potential) of this professional network. We also surveyed the interest in organising a larger BNO party with the BNO summer meetup.

4 — Member recruitment

Partly with a view to member recruitment, starting in 2015, we also included a 'graduate special' in our magazine *Dude, Dutch Designers Magazine*. We created the brochure *Designers start here*, specifically for beginner designers. We expanded the list of education programmes that automatically qualify for membership; these are no longer just the design programmes of art academies and the universities of technology, but also the applied science programmes of communication and multimedia design and industrial product design. A large number of new designers and agencies joined BNO; however, due to membership cancellations the overall member body declined. Most cancellations were due to difficult financial circumstances. Yet too many designers remain unaware of BNO and its offer, and the value of what it offers is not necessarily evident to all.

5 — Profiling and positioning

We boosted the profile and position of the design discipline through numerous activities during the *Dutch Design Week* in Eindhoven, the *Graphic Design Festival Breda*, the *Illustratie Biënnale*, the congress *What Design Can Do*, the *Salone del Mobile* in Milan, the *Munich Creative Business Week*, the *Medica* in Düsseldorf, and so on. We often did so in collaboration with relevant parties to increase the volume and effectiveness. We were more selective in the activities organised in-house, and often chose to make our expertise, networks and communication channels available to other parties. We updated the BNO Piet Zwart Award, for designers of exceptional significance and achievement. Further, we appointed Tom Dorresteyn, Adrian van Hooijdonk, Ton Limburg, Renny Ramakers and Jeroen Verbrugge as honorary members; both for their contributions to the discipline and/or the association, and for how they continue to act as ambassadors for the design discipline.

6 — Projects and publications

Numerous projects and publications were devoted to the backgrounds and impact of the design discipline. Founded in mid-2014, each quarter we published the *Dude, Dutch Designers Magazine*, as the successor to the members' journal *Vormberichten*. On occasion we also published translated editions, thanks to grants by the Creative Industries Fund NL. We regularly communicated via the *Cross-over Works* series, in collaboration with a number of partners, and occasionally initiated projects and collaborated with other online and offline publications. Finally, we communicated through our own surveys in the sector and through research projects such as *The Battle of the Souls* and BREEAM-NL In-Use for museums.

7 — Lobbying

BNO pursued its lobbying work both explicitly and behind the screens, and both domestically and internationally. We regularly did so in collaboration with networks such as the Dutch Creative Industries Federation, Platform Makers, Kunsten '92, the BEDA/Bureau of European Design Associations, and others. We contributed our views and efforts to the design of suitable professional education programmes and to adequate rules and legislation, and to good clientship. The year 2015 finally saw the introduction of copyright contract law. We have intensified our contacts with parliament, and we managed to increase attention for labour market conditions for creative professionals.

Conclusions: BNO scored well in terms of 'member support'. The goal of 'strengthening the collective' is an urgent priority that requires more effective efforts. Strategically, the goal of 'further development and positioning of design' remains crucially important.

3. The creative industry and the design sector

‘Connecting together research, creativity and entrepreneurship and focus on talent development, scale enlargement and internationalisation to strengthen our competitive position.’

The notions of ‘designer’, ‘creative professional’ and ‘entrepreneur’ are closely related and often used interchangeably. The term ‘creative industry’ has both a narrow and a broad definition, which we will not discuss here. Since the design sector is part of the creative industry, we will briefly discuss the relevant government policy here.

‘Creativity is vital to building a prosperous, sustainable and innovative society’, ran the head of the government letter of end 2015, titled *Creative industrie in beeld* (‘Creative industry in the picture’). The letter focuses on the field where the ministries of Education, Culture and Science and of Economic Affairs collaborate to make policy, especially with regard to the various design disciplines. This involves a wide range of players; for instance the Topteam Creative Industry and the Dutch Creative Council, who advise the government and who seek to build links between the creative sector, the business community and knowledge institutes. The Dutch Creative Industries Federation, consisting of professional and sector associations who collaborate with regard to talent development, cross-overs and internationalisations, is another player. Further, there is CLICK NL, the Top Consortium for Knowledge and Innovation, and the Creative Industries Fund NL, which supports projects with a view to talent development, research and experimentation, and internationalisation. Finally, there are Het Nieuwe Instituut, which supports network building and knowledge sharing in the sector, and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland, RVO), which stimulates entrepreneurs with grants, links them up with business partners, and provides knowledge on rules and regulations.

According to the government letter, the creative industry stands out both for its innovative products and services with an artistic and/or economic value, and for its work procedures. Its dynamic nature is also mentioned as typical. This makes the sector a pioneer in the emerging network economy of medium and small-sized businesses, self-employed professionals and start-ups, next to and around a dwindling number of large companies. Thanks to its flexible and international networks, the sector is able to respond quickly to new trends and developments. There is much and close collaboration in the form of interdisciplinary and often internationally composed teams. However, this dynamism does come with certain risks and downsides. The number of creative businesses has grown much faster than the number of people employed in the sector. The diminishing scale of businesses results in a loss of productivity and added value. Not much time, capacity and financial resources remain for a future-proof development of product, business or employees. The size or nature of creative companies moreover rules them out from access to various forms of funding.

What to do? According to the government letter, three efforts are essential: to learn and develop, to pursue further internationalisation, and to perform research. BNO wholeheartedly agrees. It is essential to learn and to develop, because society needs flexible and responsive professionals with skills that are suited to the 21st century. Working in an interdisciplinary environment demands people that are open to collaborating across the boundaries of their own discipline; people with an entrepreneurial attitude, who understand technology and, above all, have a strong creative capacity. Internationalisation is important because of the artistic and professional exchange and with a view to finding new markets and customers. Research is urgently required to create and maintain the kind of knowledge infrastructure that a mature sector requires. This is a matter of collecting and collating information, and of performing experimental and fundamental scientific research.

The *Tweede Creatief Manifest* (Second Creative Manifesto) by the Dutch Creative Industries Federation has responded by indicating how the state can contribute to these efforts. The gist of it is: 'Connect together research, creativity and entrepreneurship and focus on talent development, scale enlargement and internationalisation to strengthen our competitive position.' Much remains to be done in terms of laws and regulations, incentive tools and so on, in order to arrive at a coherent policy that truly contributes to the ambitions of the Netherlands in terms of creativity and innovation.

BNO's activities and goals find a natural counterpart in the activities and goals of the following organisations: the BNA/Branchevereniging voor Nederlandse Architectenbureaus (association for architects), the BNI/Beroepsvereniging Nederlandse Interieurarchitecten (association for interior architects), the DDA/Dutch Digital Agencies and DGA/ Dutch Gaming Association. Relevant parties, for various reasons, include: the Dutch Design Foundation, the ADCN, the FNV Kunstbond, Pictoright, Platform Makers and Cultuur+Ondernemen (Culture+Entrepreneurship). Prominent annual events are the Dutch Design Week with the Dutch Design Awards and the annual congress What Design Can Do. Finally, there are galleries and other sorts of intermediaries, museums that explore and exhibit design, and the design heritage-oriented Wim Crouwel Instituut and Louis Kalff Instituut.

The goals and activities of the parties listed above are not only related, but they sometimes overlap or duplicate each other. However, people tend to focus on the differences between them rather than on the similarities and the bigger shared interests. This obviously relates to the need to promote a clear profile and to justify one's existence. BNO is alert to this, addresses this when necessary, and tirelessly continues to focus on joining forces and on common goals. See, for example, our efforts regarding the portal Creative Holland, for the FDCl, and for the effective promotion of Dutch design and designers on the international stage.

4. Scenarios for designers

'Although we cannot determine the future, it can be influenced through careful positioning.'

As a multi-disciplinary professional association, BNO is confronted daily by the diversity of ways in which and the ambitions with which people practice the design discipline. This diversity is a consequence of the range of disciplines, of how designers are organised, of the phase of designers' professional career, and of their specific talents and interests. There are opportunities to be found in the changed and changing landscape due to the progressive digitisation, in multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral practices, in participating in (alternating) teams, and in generating one's own customers and assignments. For some designers, opportunities can be found in extreme specialisation.

A viable design practice demands an ability to view and to position oneself within the larger picture, and for this, future scenarios can help. In his publication *Roem of doem* ('Fame or failure'), Mark Hoevenaars outlines four future scenarios, with a distinctly different role for the designer and/or the design agency, per scenario. The differences pertain to the role of the designer as a maker at the end of a chain or as a design thinker, to the extent to which customers can and want to make strategic use of design and designers, and to the overall economic climate.

Designers and agencies would do well to determine their position in relation to the different scenarios, and to consider the most appropriate strategies. For although we cannot determine the future, it can be influenced through careful positioning. And although not all designers will aspire to fulfil a strategic role on someone else's behalf, it is smart to think strategically about one's own role and possibilities. Here, too, BNO can lend a helping hand, for instance through workshops and mentors.

5. Positions and tasks of BNO

'The core task of BNO, which is to support the member designers and agencies, remains top priority.'

It was stated above that learning and developing, internationalisation and research are crucially important to achieving next levels. BNO has a (depending on the topic, variable) part to play in this, and sets its own priorities. BNO in any case faces the following core tasks:

- **Contributing to the professionalism of designers, in substantive and business respects.**
- **Informing and inspiring designers in various ways.**
- **Linking up designers to each other and with relevant parties, also outside the design discipline.**
- **Offering attractive forms of further and continued education.**
- **Striving for and safeguarding incentive measures and favourable laws and regulations.**

For other tasks, BNO is involved and active but other parties fulfil or should fulfil at least as great a role:

- Contributing to adequate professional education programmes of diverse nature.
- Stimulating good clientship and realistic working conditions.
- Promoting the design discipline and designers domestically and internationally.
- Increasing the general awareness of the potency and impact of the design discipline.
- Contributing to supportive and explorative research.

The degree to which BNO can be active and exert influence thus varies according to the subject. It is essential to specify our role, also because our capacity is limited. Virtually all of BNO's activities are made possible by the resources contributed by the member designers and agencies. BNO's core task, which is to support its members, therefore remains its top priority.

6. Priorities for the coming period

'The value of BNO in general and the benefits of membership must be obvious for every designer and design agency.'

The mission described under '*Via BNO*' results remains the same. To become more visible and thereby more effective for the member designers and design agencies, we will be shifting some priorities in the coming period. The value of the BNO in general and the benefits of membership must be obvious for every designer and design agency.

BNO also takes account of various future scenarios in order to remain as relevant as possible, both for members and non-member designers and agencies. The current strategy and offer are fairly well in line with current practices. This is borne out by the sample documents that BNO provides, the various guidelines we offer, and our business and legal advice services. Our further and continued education programmes are diverse in terms of content and methods, and are relevant to the different phases and types of practices. Our events and publications constantly connect to and report on developments in the discipline, and always centre on designers' actual practice of the discipline. Through a wide range of lobbying activities, we safeguard and promote the conditions that support the practice of the design discipline and enable it to have the strongest possible impact.

At the same time, we are aware that not all member designers and agencies are familiar with or use the full range of BNO services and facilities. Non-members often have no idea at all of what we offer. Add to this the question regarding what new services and facilities designers may develop a need for based on different future scenarios, and how we can supply these and what this requires of us, then we are looking at renewal and improvement in the areas described below.

1 — Further development and differentiation

The increasingly flexible work methods and work relationships in the design world demand a further development and differentiation in the range of BNO products and services, and in how and the conditions under which these are provided. The disparate interests of designers and design agencies is another reason: a young product designer needs a different kind of information and support than an agency that concentrates on corporate communication; and a mid-career designer will want different things from BNO than a large agency that is specialised in exhibition design and creating experiences. Although we have been familiar with this range of members and the differences, the need to cater to these members in recognisable ways is growing stronger. So we will seek to further develop our current products and services, to offer them in a more targeted way, and to standardise aspects that will improve their ease of use. We will also start to be more vocal and visible regarding our advisory role; by focusing on significant cases and legal and political statements, by compiling online dossiers on e.g. copyright, labour law and personnel, and through regular newsletters. We will also develop digital contracts.

In connection with these developments, there is a growing need to introduce more variety in the forms of membership and the fees; also, since membership of a professional association and contributing to a strong collective is no longer a matter of course for many people. BNO's contribution system is a vital but vulnerable factor, and therefore requires a very cautious approach.

2 — Communication and relations management

We need to pursue more targeted communication, more systematic relations management and a stronger sense of community, via all the channels available to BNO. We shall do so 'live', and through events of varying size and content. We shall also do so through a new and appealing office accommodation that will function as a real-time platform for encounter, that offers member designers new opportunities, and that is attractive to third parties. We will launch a new website in 2017, as an obvious and persuasive answer to the needs of designers and other stakeholders: accessible and user-friendly with respect to our core tasks, and attractive and inspiring as regards design and designers. We will create closer links between the content of our quarterly magazine *Dude* and the website, and where useful also with the platforms and publications of third parties. The new website is also linked to a new members' database that is easier to browse and to query. We will update the design of our newsletters and social media. In printed form, our means of communication is *Dude*, which we want to circulate much more widely both through subscriptions and through individual sales. We also intend to use it for more targeted communication toward (potential) customers.

Starting in 2017, we will work according to a communication schedule that is linked to our annual work schedule. Whenever relevant or obvious, we will connect our communication activities with our activities in terms of advice and projects. We will also seek to connect more emphatically to news and events outside the design sector.

3 — Profiling

We need to pursue a stronger profile as an authority and source of information and advice. As an experienced and well-staffed professional association, BNO has evolved into an indispensable hub, an authoritative source of information, and the obvious go-to guide. Our wealth of knowledge and experience is permanently updated through our contacts with member designers, design agencies, customers and other stakeholders. We are in a permanent dialogue with relevant professional parties domestically and internationally, and have a favourable reputation worldwide. The constant appeal directed at BNO underlines the value of our organisation and our unique professional network. But it also forces us to be selective. Based on considerations of urgency and professionalism, we sift out what is specifically of value to member designers and agencies, and focus on the opportunities to profile the design discipline in the most appropriate way.

4 — Recruitment

We will seek to increase membership through regular member recruitment campaigns, concentrating on different kinds of designers and agencies with their own questions and needs. We will specifically and more systematically aim to attract young designers through our involvement with education programmes, our own training courses, our regional platforms, our Meet-ups, Dude, the annual Dude graduate special, the talent development programme Driving Dutch Design, and so on.


5 — Focus on customers

We will focus more explicitly on (potential) customers, by adequately informing them about the design process, pitches and tenders, and by inspiring them with attractive examples. There is an important role here for showcasing through awards (BNO Piet Zwart Prize, BNO Infographics Jaarprijs, Dutch Design Awards, European Design Awards, iF) and through publications (Dude, the Crossover Works series). We should also help them in their decision-making (adequate selection processes, references to portfolios) and by guiding the process (suggestions, sample contracts). We will work more intensively with associate members who are active as design manager, consultant, and/or in another intermediary role. We will also make use of parties like the Design Management Network, VNO-NCW, MKB Nederland, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency/RVO, and so on.

7. Finally

'We believe in BNO as a tangible, accessible and extremely valuable club for designers, by designers.'

Over the past few years, the BNO office has been rejuvenated as a consequence of three changes in management. We are up-to-date as regards digital expertise. After ten years of having our office in Amsterdamse Houthavens, we will not renew the lease contract but are moving to another location. This new location should be easier to reach, should reflect the renewal taking place within BNO, and should reduce our housing costs. We will improve our collaboration with other parties, and be more consistent in balancing what BNO can and will do for other parties and vice versa. In the past period we have intensified the direct contact with and between member designers and agencies, in various ways. Today more than ever, we believe in BNO as a tangible, accessible and extremely valuable club for designers, by designers. We believe in the principle of getting ahead together. That is why we emphatically continue to challenge our member designers and agencies to remain active within their own community, in ways that are in step with the present time and with how the design discipline is developing.



'If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.'

(African proverb)