

English summary

WODC Ministry of Justice has commissioned CSTM University of Twente to conduct an evaluation of the Action Program HoN, a program that was meant to strengthen enforcement. The action program has been implemented by the Steering Committee HoN, established by the Ministry of Justice on May 1, 2001. Below the main finding of the evaluation study are being summarized.

- **Action Program HoN**

The action program holds four ambitions:

- to strengthen the attention for enforcement on the political agenda;
- to stimulate collaboration in enforcement;
- to give a stimulus to more professionalism in enforcement;
- to increase the legitimacy of enforcement.

The action program consisted of three lines of activities:

1. the development of best practices on specific areas (prostitution, fire safety, coffeeshops, rural areas, compulsory education, quality of the living environment);
2. the development of so-called programmatic enforcement (cyclic, democratic integral and transparent enforcement);
3. supporting activities such as research, conferences and workshops.

The action program ended in 2005. The Steering Committee was responsible for the implementation of the program. A relatively small bureau within the ministry of Justice was established to support the Steering Committee. The total budget of HoN was 7,5 million Euros.

- **Research questions**

1. To what extent have the ambitions of the Steering Committee been realized?
2. What contributions did the three lines of activities have in this?
3. What can be said about the level of enforcement and compliance as a result of HoN? Do Water Boards, municipalities and provinces for instance steer on the basis of levels of compliance, and if so, with what results?

- **Research design**

The main research methods used were interviews (24), workshops (2 – 12 participants) and the analysis of existing data/research.

- **Results**

On the basis of the research data the research questions are answered as follows:

1. *To what extent have the ambitions of the Steering Committee been realized?*

Administrative attention grew quickly during the first years of the action program. This was mainly due to some disasters (fireworks explosion in Enschede 2000; fire in a pub in Volendam 2001) that caused in many deaths. The booming attention faded away though through the years. While HoN did not prevent this, it helped keeping the attention for enforcement somewhat longer on the political agenda. This enabled new practices in enforcement to get implemented. Nevertheless, the attention for enforcement is not guaranteed automatically. Continued stimuli for administrative attention are necessary.

Stimulation collaboration is seen by the respondents as one of the main merits of HoN. Collaboration, nevertheless, is still difficult due for instance to diverging enforcement styles.

Enforcement staff as well as administrators act more professionalized now than 5 years ago. There is clearly more attention for a more systematic approach to enforcement, but again the respondent stress that continued attention is needed to sustain this effect.

There is also a clear trend in the Dutch society to more repressive action and, therefore, enforcement. What specific influence HoN has had on this is hard to say, other than that HoN fitted the societal trend. One of the results, though, has been that through HoN the momentum could be used to strengthen enforcement.

2. *What contributions did the three lines of activities have in this?*

Programmatic enforcement was added later on to the action program, but has evolved as the heart of the program. The activities within this line and the resulting products are widely acknowledged as useful and valuable. The supporting activities that mostly took place in relation to programmatic enforcement clearly added to this success.

The second line of activities, the development of best practices, is met with much more reserve. There is criticism on the quality of the best practices and the distribution of them is sometimes not optimal. Their practical value is limited so far. The researchers do add that 5 years is a relatively short term to expect much more though.

Finally, the research concludes that the connection between programmatic enforcement and the best practices has been too weak.

3. *What can be said about the level of enforcement and compliance as a result of HoN? Do Water Boards, municipalities and provinces for instance steer on the basis of levels of compliance, and if so, with what results?*

This research project was not intended to gather data on this question but to use existing data. So far, there has been no wide research on the actual

development of enforcement and compliance. Although HoN has enabled positive steps to be taken towards higher levels of enforcement and compliance, it is not possible to draw clear conclusions on this question.

The overall judgement of HoN is rather positive. Although HoN was mainly following trends in the Dutch society, the action program has enabled to use the momentum to get new routines implemented, especially when it comes to programmatic enforcement.