# The Dutch Risk and Responsibility Programme

*Jan van Tol**

*The Dutch Risk and Responsibility programme (DRRP), which builds on the pioneering work that the BRC and RRAC carried out in Britain, is nearing completion. This article describes the background and course of the programme and offers a glimpse of the preliminary results. DRRP has created awareness of the 'risk regulation reflex' among a wide array of people and organisations. That term originated during the Day of Risk, a landmark conference that took place in The Hague marking the start of a fertile international network.*

## I. Start and position of the programme

### 1. Introduction

This article describes the genesis, evolution and preliminary results of the DRRP that is taking place between 2011–2012 and the project preceding it in 2010. Descriptions of the results and effect are nevertheless incomplete. Not only does the programme have five more months before it produces its results, but much of its impact will depend on the government's willingness to incorporate the results (both at a political and a bureaucratic level). Decisions about finishing the vision and implementation will have to wait for the formation of a new Cabinet following the general elections on 12 September.

### 2. Context

Over the past decade or so, several critical analyses have pointed out an increasing tendency of the Dutch government to regulate away undesirable occurrences, and for political decisions to be driven by public incidents – particularly as a result of the symbiotic relationship between government and the media.

In 2004 Herman Tjeenk Willink, then vice-president of the *Raad van State* (Council of State), criticized the prevalence of 'incidentalism', the excessive attention given to sensational incidents. Because MPs rely too much on the media and its priorities, they focus on identifying the guilty party following an incident rather than looking for proper solutions. Around the same time the *Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling* (Council for Social Development) argued that the public debate is increasingly directed by 'media logic' with its own possibilities and limitations. The Noordzij Commission suggested that risk is something we must learn to live with, and added that detailed over-regulation discourages businesses and citizens from bearing their own responsibilities. Academics, such as Ferdinand Mertens, ironically characterize the unrealistic safety measures which citizens apparently demand as a 'down with bad luck' attitude. Professor Willem Trommel describes a 'greedy government' which promises greater safety than it can deliver, precisely as a reaction to the declining importance of government guidance within society.[1]

In response to these and other reports, several Dutch Cabinets have emphasised the importance of society – and not just government – in taking responsibility with regard to safety, and a number of initiatives were taken. The first Cabinet under PM Jan-Peter Balkende declared in 2002 that its main objective was to determine afresh the distribution of responsibilities in society: "The Cabinet will not give a central position to government and regulation, but rather to the responsibility of citizens and social or-

* Jan van Tol is manager of the Dutch Risk and Responsibility programme (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations), and he also managed the previous exploratory project. This article reflects his personal views.

1 Raad van State, *Jaarverslag*, 2004 [Council of State, Annual Report, 2004]; RMO, *Medialogica. Over het krachtenveld tussen burgers, media en politiek*, 2003 [Council for Social Development, Medialogic. On the forces between citizens, media and politics, 2003]; Commissie Fundamentele Verkenning Transportbelemmeringen (Commissie Noordzij), *Weg belemmeringen, van red tape naar red carpet* (advies aan het kabinet, 2008) (advice to the Cabinet on administrative burden reduction); F.J.H. Mertens, R. Pieterman, Kees Schuyt, Gerard de Vries (2003). *Pech moet weg*, Amsterdam: AUP Salomé ('Down with Bad Luck'); W. Trommel, *Gulzig bestuur*, 2009 [Greedy Government].

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ganisations."[2] A 2006 government position statement *Nuchter omgaan met risico's* described an approach to engage with social actors in order to reach measured rational policy concerning uncertain risks. The same year saw the publication of 'Hectic times in The Hague. A strategy to deal with incidents for the Ministry of Justice'.[3] The same Ministry also launched a programme to tackle inadequacies in legislation, to hold back on regulation and to explore other venues for influencing behaviour in order to reduce the number of disputes brought to the courts.[4]

In 2008, both the WRR and the *Gezondheidsraad* (Health Council) published reports dealing with the precautionary principle.[5] The WRR took that principle quite far, for instance by proposing that it be included in the constitution. The Cabinet's response to both reports in 2009 remains the most recent overarching government statement on risk to date. It declares that the classic risk-based policy has ensured a high level of safety, but that uncertain risks associated with new technology will create anxiety in society that will have to be taken into account.

In spite of these valuable initiatives, an enduring change away from overreaction to risks and incidents has not been achieved. Recent costly Dutch examples range from plans to buy the homes of all owners living under high voltage lines (in response to an unproven health threat)[6] to raising the fire safety standards in office buildings without any apparent need.[7]

## 3. Evolution of the remit

The DRRP originates from the movement of administrative burden reduction, specifically the branch concerning inspection burden. Nevertheless, it quickly established itself as a broad based initiative in its own right as it latched on to the wider discussion referred to above, and particularly as it picked up inspiration from the UK 'Risk report' right from the start.[8]

In January 2008, Guusje ter Horst, the Dutch Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, laid out the Inspection Reform programme. Its aim was to improve the quality of central government inspectorates and reduce burden, particularly by improving cooperation among inspectorates and with local and regional authorities. A small part of the programme focused on overreaction to risk: 'In the wake of disasters, calls for tighter enforcement are generally heard from the public and from politicians, unfortunately without considering the effectiveness and disregarding increased burdens. [ ] Society will need to accept that the government cannot be responsible for protection against all risks. Adequate attention must be paid to the communication of this policy.'[9]

This element was actually rather out of place in the Inspection Reform programme. It was ignored by the inspectorates as they considered it beyond their influence, and policy makers did not take it up either. This changed in September 2009 when the Parliament discussed the programme's progress. Dutch Labour MP Pierre Heijnen inquired after the progress on the 'inspection reflex after incidents,' and the Minister then promised 'a paper on the desirable scope of inspection, with reference to the inspection reflex.'

This promise became the basis for a project within the Central Government Reform programme, the 'Inspection for the Future: Risk and Responsibility' project, which started in November 2009. The latter part of the name was originally not included, but reflected the scope of the remit: 'to initiate debate between policy makers, central government inspectorates and communications officers, politicians, journalists, the public, and entrepreneurs about a more balanced approach to risk.'

The project resulted in the 'Day of Risk', a landmark conference in May 2010. By that time Ernst Hirsch Ballin was the Interior Minister, and, in his closing speech, he expressed the need to rethink the government's role in guaranteeing safety and to reflect on the discrepancies between acceptable and unacceptable risks.

2 Regeringsverklaring 2002 [Policy Statement Dutch Cabinet, 2002].

3 *Hectic times in The Hague. A strategy to deal with incidents for the Ministry of Justice*. Summary in English.

4 Ministerie van Justitie, *Bruikbare rechtsorde,* 2004 (Ministry of Justice, *Practical Legal Order*). A summary is available in English translation.

5 WRR, *Uncertain Safety. Allocating Responsibilities for Safety* (2009); Gezondheidsraad: *Voorzorg met rede* (2008) (Precaution with Reason).

6 Peter de Jonge, *Wonen onder hoogspanningsleidingen* in VNG Magazine 14 september 2011 [Living under high voltage lines].

7 The case of the office buildings was a late reaction to a lethal fire in the Schiphol airport detention centre, although this was constructed from metal sea containers and the people inside of course being restricted in their movements in contrast to office workers. Mark den Hollander analyses this case in *Brand Cellencomplex Schiphol-Oost. Onderzoek naar het verschijnsel van de risico-regelreflex* (Fire at detention centre Schiphol-Oost. Exploring the risk regulation reflex), a master's thesis at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2011.

8 Better Regulation Commission, *Risk, Responsibility and Reghulation – Whose risk is it anyway?* (2006).

9 Letter to the Chairperson of the Dutch Lower House of Parliament, The Hague, 25 January 2008.

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In November 2010, the DRRP's remit stated that it would 'develop a vision on government's role in regard to risks, as well as a set of principles for a well-considered central government risk policy, together with principles and tools for an adequate government response to incidents.'

The ensuing plan of approach specified the following objectives:

- to provide greater insight into the way in which government responds to the various reflexes and into the nature and scope of the problem;
- to promote a perspective and repertoire for government organisations and public administrators which will facilitate a proportionate and well-balanced management of risks and incidents;
- to encourage public support of well-balanced government responses to risks and incidents;
- to develop a Cabinet vision on the role of government in regard to risks and distribution of responsibility, possibly including risk policy principles.

## 4. Scope

DRRP's remit had a proviso to restrict its scope to central government and to the subject of physical safety, i.e., protecting the public against accidents with a natural or technological cause rather than the consequences of criminal activity.

There were recurring comments about narrowing down a subject that seemed applicable to so many other domains. DRRP initially adopted a pragmatic position, stating that 'the premises on which the Cabinet vision on physical safety will be founded are up to a point applicable to other fields, such as healthcare, combating terrorism, and youth services.' A very recent development was to widen the scope after all and work along the lines of 'public risk', a term introduced in the UK and broadly defined as 'the full range of social, environmental, economic, technical, health and other threats for which Government is considered to have some overarching responsibility'.[10] This perspective shifts the focus from interpreting reactions to risk in the context of the hazard in question to understanding risk rather as a socially and politically constructed phenomenon.[11] From this new perspective, physical safety will provide many illustrations of the theme rather than serve as the main focus of DRRP.

## 5. Positioning and staffing

DRRP was part of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The programme was commissioned by Olav Welling, director of the Department of Organisation and Personnel Policy for Central Government. DRRP also had connections to other policy areas within the Ministry.

No less than four Ministers have successively commanded DRRP and at least one more is likely to follow. Guusje ter Horst, Interior Minister in the fourth Cabinet led by Peter-Jan Balkenende, originally promised Parliament a vision on the role of government regarding risks in September 2009. By the Day of Risk in May 2010, she and the other Dutch Labour Ministers had left the Cabinet and Ernst Hirsch Ballin, the Minister of Justice, had taken charge of the Interior Ministry until the general elections. Piet Hein Donner served as the Minister in the next Cabinet, which was installed in July 2010 with Mark Rutte as PM. When Donner was appointed vice-president of the Dutch Council of State in December 2011, Liesbeth Spies became his successor. The Ministers have all contributed to enhancing the programme by partaking in a number of activities. The Rutte Cabinet fell in April 2012, and general elections will be held in September 2012.

Although the programme originated from the administrative burden reduction programme, DRRP did not latch onto that established profile because its founders intended the programme to look at a wider range of effects which includes the restriction of civil liberties, invisible costs for the tax payer, a questionable impact on safety, and a negative impact on the government's image. DRRP therefore needed its own position to invite people to take a fresh look at issues of risk and responsibility.

The main Ministries concerned with physical safety were all involved at several levels. They are the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Inno-

10 The term public risk is used both in BRC's final report *Public Risk – the Next Frontier for Better Regulation* (2008) and in RRAC's final report *Response with responsibility* (2009). Curiously, a definition is only found in other RRAC reports such as *Experts and Public Risk* (2009) and *Standards Setters and Public Risk* (2009).

11 Adam Burgess and Donald Macrae, 'An Experimental Offensive against the Mishandling of Risk in Society: Reflecting on the Pioneering Work of the Risk Regulation Advisory Council in the UK', 3(3) *EJRR* (2012), this issue.

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vation, Ministry of Security and Justice, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

The DRRP core team consisted of a full time programme manager, a programme secretary (3–4 days) and three project managers (all one day per week), including specialist adviser Ira Helsloot, professor of Safety Governance[12]. A larger but less frequently involved team, which included several colleagues from four different Ministries and professor Michel van Eeten of Delft TU, investigated specific themes. Donald Macrae participated as the international adviser. There were always one or two masters students assisting in various ways.[13]

There were a few meetings of a reflection group ('River Group'), which consisted of twelve top civil servants from six Ministries, including inspectorates and executive agencies. Members joined on a personal basis. The meetings were mainly aimed at exchanging experiences, often inviting an external guest to provide extra food for thought.

## II. Results so far

### 1. Identifying the problem

In the remit of January 2010, the problem was defined as the apparent attitude of zero-tolerance to risk and ensuing over-regulation. In May 2010, guest author Margo Trappenburg introduced the term *risico-regelreflex* ('risk regulation reflex') in one of the essays commissioned for the Day of Risk. This new term struck a chord with many people and was quickly adopted as a signature phrase of the project. It proved excellent for initiating discussions, but it had not been clearly defined.

The Interior Minister asked the Scientific Council (WRR) to reflect on the risk regulation reflex to provide input for DRRP. The WRR deemed 'incident reflex' a more appropriate term and added that a mechanism of overreaction had not been empirically proven to exist in the Netherlands, but would certainly warrant systematic research.[14]

DRRP has found that public administrators, such as mayors, and top civil servants generally recognize the phenomenon of 'risk regulation reflex' instantly. MPs recognize it but hold differing opinions as to whether it is a problem. Policy makers and scientists tend to agree on the pitfall immediately following incidents, but are not unanimous about the existence of an undesirable precautionary trend. Some think it applies mainly to domains other than their own.[15]

Greater clarity on the subject was needed. DRRP specified the underlying meaning on several occasions, for instance in 2011: 'the term 'risk regulation reflex' refers to the mechanism which leads to disproportionate government interventions surrounding a risk or following an incident. A corollary of the risk regulation reflex is that preventing, avoiding or compensating for risks is often seen as a government responsibility by default'.

A study into the scope of the phenomenon led to the provisional conclusion that most newsworthy incidents do not lead to overreaction. Nevertheless, four out of twelve cases that were picked up by Parliament led to disproportionate government measures. The study accounted for any incidents which appeared in the newspapers over a period of three months and which might have caused a stir.[16] A more focused study into the response to large incidents that have created major turbulence could show up a stronger occurrence of the risk regulation reflex.[17]

12 Author of a critical overview of Dutch risk policy: I. Helsloot, R. Pieterman and J. Hanekamp, *Risico's en redelijkheid. Verkenning van een rijksbreed beoordelingskader voor de toelaatbaarheid van risico's*, The Hague 2010 (Risk and reason. Study for a central government framework for the tolerability of risks). This study elaborated on Helsloot's first inaugural lecture *Voorbij de symboliek. Over de noodzaak van een rationeel perspectief op fysiek veiligheidsbeleid*, oratie Vrije Universiteit 2007 (Beyond Symbolism. On the necessity of a rational perspective on safety policy, inaugural lecture Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam).

13 The team for the 2010 project was considerably smaller.

14 WRR, *Evenwichtskunst. Over de verdeling van verantwoordelijkheid voor fysieke veiligheid*, 2011, p. 12 (The art of Balancing. On the Distribution of Responsibilities for Physical Safety).

15 Sources: DRRP meetings and conferences, some 200 interviews. Research of MP's opinion: USBO Advies, Universiteit Utrecht, Margo Trappenburg, Marie-Jeanne Schiffelers, Gerolf Pikker and Lieke van de Camp, *De risico-regelreflex vanuit politiek perspectief: Verkennend onderzoek naar de meningen van Kamerleden over risico's en verantwoordelijkheden* [A political perspective on the risk regulation reflex. Exploratory inquiry into the opinions of Members of Parliament on risks and responsibilities, report commissioned by the Home Office], Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, February 2012.

16 Remco Roos, *Reflexen of reflectie?: Een onderzoek naar de omvang van de risico-regelreflex* [Reflexes or reflection? An inquiry into the size of the phenomenon of the risk regulation reflex (MA thesis on file at Utrecht University, 2011). This thesis was written for DRRP. See also the article by Margo Trappenburg and Marie-Jeanne Schiffelers in this special issue.

17 In the UK, Simon Webb's study of the way crises over more than two decades were managed by the UK government shows that a significant number of cases has led to disproportionate measures. See <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/51/1/46338139.pdf> (last accessed on 28 August 2012).

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Whether or not the reflex exists, the instinct to look to government for risk protection remains stubbornly in place. Philosopher Marjolijn Februari identified a circular pattern: 'Government points to politicians, politicians point to the media, the media points to the reader and the reader points to government'.[18]

In respect to these reactions and findings, DRRP decided to further analyse the problem and now applies the term 'risk regulation reflex' to two phenomenons: a trend towards ever more far-reaching preventive safety measures which carry the chance of imbalance between the gain in safety and the costs and side effects of the measure, and the pitfall of a hasty response following an incident leading to disproportionate measures. Disproportionality may afflict not only legislation but also regulation, norm-setting, implementation and the responsibility attributed to government.

When the balance is disturbed, it can hinder society's self-reliance and resilience, restrict the freedom of citizens and businesses, diminish the government's authority as a result of promising too much, stagnate the intended slimming down of government, or introduce safety measures which are unnecessarily costly for government or society.

## 2. Activities and output

Awareness of overreaction needs time to sink in. Once the mechanisms of the way risk is dealt with by government, the media and politics are understood, the extent of the tendency towards overreaction will become more evident. However, simply stating these insights can evoke varying reactions, including the feeling of being criticised about the way one is doing one's work. For this reason, a lot of attention has been paid to open discussion within all sorts of groups.

Conferences primarily aimed at the Ministries were held in June and December 2011. In between, six workshops were organised at the associated Ministries and a seventh workshop was organised for the inspectorates.

DRRP launched a book of essays on the risk regulation reflex at a symposium in April 2011 before a small audience of invited guests. The launch was specifically presented to the Minister of the Interior, Piet Hein Donner. An even more select audience attended the international seminar in June 2012, opened by Interior Minister Liesbeth Spies. The foreign guests included Labour MP Andrew Miller and heavyweights from academia, the civil service and various executive agencies.

In association with the WRR, a meeting was held between some Dutch MPs and academics. During another meeting, organised jointly with the *Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur* (Council for Public Administration, ROB), a dozen mayors and regional public administrators discussed the dilemmas that arise when their governments face risks and incidents.

All meetings and conferences were extensively documented. Three were also made into a video documentary. To start the discussions, a short 'mockumentary' called Killer Trees was made, based on the 2008 case of tree regulation in the UK and transposed to the Dutch context.[19] Another film was the short documentary about citizen's safety acceptance in the Amsterdam metro.[20]

Parallel to organising these dialogues, DRRP researched several aspects of the phenomenon which were not described or explained in literature. A number of its findings have been published or will be published by the end of 2012:

- Seven essays were commissioned on the causes and effects of the risk regulation reflex and subsequently published as a book. Shorter versions of two essays appeared previously in the leading newspapers, *NRC Handelsblad* and *Trouw*.
- Twenty-one MPs were asked about the risk regulation reflex and their role in it.[21]
- A research project was set up to discover more about citizens' attitudes towards risk and the role they expect government to take. The approach is a number of closed web communities, focus groups and web surveys. This project concludes in September 2012.
- An analysis of the surprisingly wide repertoire of moral arguments that people use when dealing with risk.[22]

18 Remark during the symposium 'The Risk Regulation Reflex in Public Administration' 13 April 2011 (article available in English).

19 The real case is described by Adam Burgess and Donald Macrae in their article elsewhere in this issue.

20 Subtitled versions of both films are available on You Tube. Killer Trees: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3pSHQlNo-I>. Subway safety: <www.youtube.com/watch?v=heiWTT7WDWY>.

21 Margo Trappenburg et al., *De risico-regelreflex vanuit politiek perspectief*.

22 By Michel van Eeten et al.; the essay is an extension of the article which is included in this special.

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– So far, five master's theses have been written on subjects pertaining to DRRP (and two more are in the pipeline). Subjects include a comparison of how the French, Belgian and Dutch governments handled the Mexican flu; comparison of three Ministries' attitudes toward risk; the frequency of newsworthy incidents leading to disproportionate interventions; media coverage of train accidents; the safety discourse in politics and the media.
– Several Dutch case studies were sketched, and many more were collected for further analysis.
– Good practice and good examples of preventing an overreaction are being gathered and developed.
– A comparative analysis was made between Ministries' attitudes to a wide variety of risks.

Several of the documents produced by or for DRRP are available in English translation, such as the *Summary analysis of the risk-regulation reflex. Entrenched beliefs and six possible avenues for solutions*[23], *The Risk Regulation Reflex in public administration*[24], *Proceedings international seminar on risk and responsibility*[25], *Day of Risk conference proceedings,* and workshops and speeches by Ministers.

The Cabinet will incorporate input from all these activities into its vision, which is gradually taking shape. The first draft version was written in June 2012.

One of the insights DRRP offers is, that citizens are more reasonable than politicians often suppose, and that they expect government to act sensibly. Citizens do not demand 100% safety, and they appreciate it when government tells them clearly which risks exist and what they themselves can do about them. Perhaps most surprisingly, when citizens consider risks they use a much richer moral repertoire than the "safe versus unsafe" model, and politicians can speak in similar terms when discussing the tolerability of a particular risk. Some of the rhetoric used by politicians and in the media seems to reveal entrenched beliefs, such as the notion that an accident could always have been prevented and is therefore someone's fault or that there is a moral obligation to enhance safety at almost any cost.

## III. Response

### 1. Mixed reactions

Many organisations have become involved in the discussion by participating in meetings and/or seminars or engaging in one-on-one conversations. These organisations include the Inspectorate Council, National Ombudsman, State Council, Court of Audit, Dutch Advisory Board on Administrative Burdens (Actal), and the Dutch Safety Board.

There has also been an active collaboration with various organisations. The WRR discussed informally DRRP's plan of approach and organised a meeting with MPs. The Council for Public Administration (ROB) organised a meeting for mayors and other public administrators, and the Academy for Legislation hosted one of DRRP's high-level seminars. The Dutch Expert Group on Aviation Safety contributed to conferences on several occasions.

The overall response was positive; however, there were two evident areas of criticism. Some questioned whether there was actually a problem at all. Others wondered whether the Interior Ministry was the most suitable organisation to lead the programme, if the principal focus was going to be on physical safety, even though other parties, such as the WRR, favoured the idea of approaching the subject from the Interior Ministry's somewhat detached position. DRRP has so far maintained a joint process, including the critical parties..

### 2. Spreading the word

DRRP has on several occasions enlisted MPs to take part in conferences and seminars as speakers, chairpersons or panel members or to accept an interview invitation. Pierre Heijnen showed particular interest, being the MP whose questions in Parliament had led to the Minister's promise to develop a vision. Local and regional politicians were involved on various occasions.

Discussion about the risk regulation reflex is clearly gaining momentum as a number of organisations have picked up on it. The National Think Tank incorporated many of the principles concerning the risk regulation reflex and ways to move forward in their

23 Published in Dutch in: J. van Tol, I. Helsloot and F. Mertens (eds.), *Veiligheid boven alles? Essays over oorzaken en gevolgen van de risico-regelreflex*, The Hague 2011 (Safety above all? Essays on causes and effects of the risk-regulation reflex).

24 Published in Dutch: J. van Tol, *De risico-regelreflex in het openbaar bestuur*, in 'Magazine Nationale Veiligheid en crisisbeheersing', May 2011 (Magazine for National Security and Crisis Contingency)

25 In collaboration with Maastricht University.

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2010 report on trust in government. Their suggestions included a draft Incident Guide for public administrators and 'Warm Heart Cool Head Awards' for politicians and public administrators who deal with incidents in a calm and collected way.[26] The 2011 annual conference for public administration scholars gave a prominent place to DRRP's analysis.[27]

Although DRRP focused on central government, some local and regional governments latched on to the theme. The Province of Noord-Holland organised a number of events, to which DRRP contributed ideas. The province arranged internal workshops and a conference for local and regional public administrators from four provinces. In her speech, Minister Spies invited the audience to contribute to developing the Cabinet vision. The Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation has launched two projects following DRRP: one about food safety communication and the other about innovation versus safety perceptions.

The Day of Risk attracted considerable attention in specialist magazines. The bimonthly magazine, *Nationale veiligheid en crisisbeheersing* (National Security and Crisis Contingency), published three articles about DRRP activities. The magazines *PM* and *rePublic* (both aimed at the public service) published a total of five articles devoted to the project. In contrast, the general press has not covered the programme because results have not yet been presented to the public.

The signature term *risico-regelreflex* (risk regulation reflex) has caught on. Internet browsers yield hundreds or even thousands of hits, depending on the spelling and the browser. The number of unique hits and their origins have not yet been analysed, but there is clearly a consistent pattern of growth. It is particularly interesting to note that national newspapers sometimes use the expression and that it also pops up in government reports and even in a study by a political institute.[28] Some MPs have also started to use the term in Parliament; so far, there are around two dozen documents in which the term is recorded, for instance in a discussion following a tragic shooting incident. Perhaps the increased use of the term is the most significant result of the programme so far, as it indicates an increased awareness of overreaction to risk.

## 3. International connections

There was an international connection right from the outset. Among the deliverables in the remit of January 2010 were 'guidelines based on lessons learned in the UK (UK guests to share their experiences and insights)'.

The Day of Risk was set up as an international conference with ample opportunity to discuss British ideas on risk and responsibilities. Donald Macrae, a member of the former RRAC, participated as a speaker. To exchange ideas ahead of the conference, a Dutch delegation went to London to meet him, and this meeting developed into an impromptu conference for 20 people, including several other RRAC members. At the Day of Risk, Simon Webb joined as the second British speaker, and representatives from OECD, World Bank/IFC and UNECE also presented. Nine high-calibre guests attended the conference, which was conducted in Dutch but offered simultaneous translation. The following day there was an informal forum at the Ministry of Agriculture with four of these foreign guests.

Further, the Day of Risk resulted in DRRP presentations at the OECD Regulatory Policy at the Crossroads conference in October 2010 and at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in November 2010. Subsequently, DRRP became a member of UNECE's Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies and provided input for OECD's Recommendation on Regulatory Policy and Governance.

DRRP has internalised BRC's and RRAC's work and therefore its analysis and propositions will resemble the British example, even though they are the result of tackling the subject within the Dutch context using a broad process. Specific elements thatcan be traced back directly to the UK are the Risk Landscape (particularly how it shows that government actually has a limited role) and the case of the Killer

26 Nationale Denktank, *Zelf Vertrouwen. Adviezen aan publieke organisaties om de vertrouwensrelatie met burgers te verbeteren,* 2010 [National Think Tank, *Self Confidence. Advice for public organisations to improve mutual trust with citizens*]. The National Think Tank is an annual event where some two dozen academic high potentials look for fresh solutions in the course of three months with expert guidance. Neither of the two suggestions has as yet been picked up.

27 Landelijk Congres der Bestuurskunde, *Risico Rijk.Risico (in)tolerant Nederland,* 2011 [National Congress of Public Administration Science, *Risk (in)tolerant Holland*].

28 CDA Wetenschappelijk Instituut, *De ontregelde samenleving*, 2011 [Christian Democrat Scientific Institute, *The un ruled Society*].

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Trees. DRRP's first set of case studies[29] was modelled on the ones in the Risk report. And, of course, the concept of public risk, which the Dutch programme has now adopted as an outline for further developing the Cabinet vision.

In June 2012 DRRP presented some of its provisional results at the annual conference of the Society for Risk Analysis (SRA-Europe) on a panel dedicated to coping with the risk regulation reflex. In the same week there was an international seminar in The Hague in which further connections were established with influential people from political, academic and government circles.

All in all, international response and cooperation has been considerable and has greatly benefited the programme.

29 These are 15 Dutch cases studies as prepared for the Day of Risk conference, which were later published in *Veiligheid voor alles?* (Satefy above all?).

## IV. Towards conclusion of the programme

In the remaining months of 2012, there will be further dialogue meetings, for instance with TV news journalists and with legal experts. Other significant input for the vision is expected in October from a report by the Council for Public Administration. The closing conference is scheduled for 15 November. The Cabinet vision will be developed further in an interdepartmental process. An informal meeting between four of the present Ministers is expected before the general elections on 12 September. The polls indicate that it may once more be difficult to form a coalition.

So far, the theme of unbalanced response to risk has struck a chord with most people involved, and several organisations seem to have taken the point. Finishing the vision, let alone implementing it, will depend on the position the new Cabinet will take on the subject of risk and responsibility.

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