

Regional innovation hotspots





Summary

In this report the Advisory council for science, technology and innovation (Awti) indicates ways in which Dutch central and regional government can support regional hotspots for innovation and thus help increase their prosperity. Regional hotspots are geographical clusters of enterprises, knowledge institutions and other partners which consulate a network concentrating on boosting innovation. International examples show that hotspots are often of crucial importance for the region and in specific cases for the nation as a whole.

Hotspots come in all shapes and sizes. The Awti distinguishes between three main types: creative urban hotspots, engineering hotspots and science-driven hotspots. Hotspots follow a life cycle with different phases of emergence, growth and transition or decline, each with their own characteristics. Governments would do well to take these differences into account when determining and implementing policies.

In the past, both central and regional authorities have played an important role in the development of Dutch hotspots, while building upon the self-organizing capabilities of the hotspots themselves. Government authorities should not initiate hotspots but support existing initiatives. Central government should create the conditions under which hotspots can thrive, and coordinate between hotspots from a national perspective. Regional and local government agencies also play a role in creating favorable conditions.

The central government should specify which hotspots they consider to be of national importance. These hotspots can be identified by examining qualitative criteria and discussing political and administrative considerations.

The AWTI presents three recommendations:

To the central government of the Netherlands:

1. *Identify and support hotspots of national importance.* Criteria to be considered are, amongst others: i) the importance of the hotspot for the national economy and the top sectors of industry and ii) its contribution to public interest or the international position of the Netherlands. Support these hotspots through the existing financial instruments and resources and by connecting hotspots with one another. Take into account the chances each specific hotspot has to offer as well as the life stage of the hotspot. Promote the hotspots of national importance in *Holland branding* activities.
2. *Help regional and local authorities to facilitate regional hotspots.* Collect knowledge on hotspots, especially on the factors contributing to their success or failure. Encourage regions to invest effectively in science and innovation and promote a culture of interregional cooperation.

To the regional and local authorities:

3. *Participate and express commitment. Offer tailor-made support based on the type of hotspot and its stage of development.* Be open to initiatives aimed at forming hotspots. Participate in hotspots by bringing different parties together and by publicly voicing the importance of the hotspot. Invest more widely in the regional knowledge economy.