



**BUURT
FONDS**

Impact Report Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds

(Postcode Lottery
Neighbourhood Fund)

Summary

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In recent years, the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds (Postcode Lottery Neighbourhood Fund) - part of Stichting DOEN (the DOEN Foundation) - has built up a unique position in supporting communities that work towards a more inclusive and connected society. Since its launch five years ago, the fund has financed more than 3,200 initiatives throughout the Netherlands.

The Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds shows that the neighbourhood is not the smallest scale of change, but the starting point of broader systemic change. It shows that structural change does not start with policy, but with people who dare to act together and create new possibilities for the future.

DOEN's mission is to support pioneers who drive the transition towards a sustainable, inclusive and connected society. DOEN considers engaged citizens and their organizations key pioneers shaping this transition through a bottom-up approach.

The impact report for the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds, drawn up by THRIVE Institute, has analysed the impact of the approach, identified the underlying mechanisms that make this impact possible and explored the role of the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds within broader societal change.

The study included document analysis, interviews and case studies drawn from more than five years of practical experience. This not only provides insight into the results achieved, but also into how change actually takes place: from individual level to broader system change. This summary provides an overview of the impact of the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds over the past five years.

What does Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds do?

The Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds supports initiatives of all sizes, from neighbourhood projects with simple improvements to communities that work in an innovative way to create significant change.

The fund supports small-scale **neighbourhood projects** with contributions between 500 and 5,000 euros. These are projects developed by local residents themselves that contribute to a nicer, greener and more socially inclusive living environment. These are often small-scale projects that quickly produce visible results, such as a communal vegetable garden, a new playground in the neighbourhood or planting greenery in a street. Social and creative activities are also supported, such as a bingo evening or a workshop where residents can meet up and learn something new.

Innovative community initiatives that bring about broader and more structural change at the system level can also apply for funding. These are projects in which residents work together in innovative ways to tackle social issues and



create structural change. Examples include citizen collectives that strengthen the economy and employment within the neighbourhood, or projects that operate on a regional or national scale. They go beyond immediate changes in the neighbourhood, and focus on structural change by experimenting with new forms of citizen participation, governance and cooperation with the authorities and other partners. An example of this is Collectieve Kracht (Collective Power), a self-organising platform that

supports citizen collectives in sharing knowledge and developing new forms of collaboration, thereby contributing to broader structural change and stronger social cohesion. By supporting projects such as these, the fund gives citizens room to implement their ideas, build partnerships, and develop knowledge and experience that can also be used in other neighbourhoods and regions. In this way, the fund encourages ownership and achieves structural change by challenging the status quo.

Key findings

The study has shown that the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds plays a distinctive role in the field of social funding by supporting initiatives that create positive social change in local communities. While many funds focus on supporting projects, activities or products, the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds focuses primarily on people and strengthening social connections. The impact that is made manifests itself on four levels:

- Individual level: people feel seen and appreciated, and they are given room

to realise their ideas.

- Neighbourhood level: community-led initiatives foster new connections, cooperation and a sense of ownership.
- Ecosystem level: networking between initiatives strengthens collaboration in communities working on the same topics and themes.
- System level: cooperation and connections between initiatives and networks influence policy, institutions and social discourse (the system).

This layered impact structure shows that the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds not only provides funding but also stimulates social dynamics between the different levels (individual, neighbourhood, ecosystem and system). The role of programme managers - close, reflective and people-oriented - has proven to be crucial in this regard. They function as strategic partners that provide trust, legitimacy and continuity.

Key insights

The key insights below show which factors contribute to the impact of the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds. Where the findings describe what is changing, the key insights make clear the principles and practices that enable these changes in neighbourhood projects and innovative community initiatives.

Connection and participation

The essential social value of the

Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds lies in strengthening communities. The low-threshold, accessible approach lowers barriers to participation and stimulates ownership. People feel co-responsible for their environment.

Security and trust

Change requires psychological security.

The personal, trust-based relationship with the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds

creates room for experimentation and learning. While traditional funds operate on the basis of control, the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds works on trust. This proves to be not only effective, but also empowering: people dare to take responsibility.

Room for innovation

The combination of flexibility, autonomy and people-oriented guidance creates a context in which local innovation can emerge. The Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds invests not only in activities but also in learning processes. This shifts the focus from performance to development.

Policy advocacy

Thanks to support from the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds, local community initiatives have greater access to policy circles. They are recognised as well-informed experts, which ensures that knowledge gained locally is passed on to policy making. This reveals a new kind of legitimacy: the power of experience as a source of change in the system.



GESC 1104 in Amsterdam
(photo: Jurgen Jacob Lodder)

Working mechanisms

Working mechanisms are the processes and factors that ensure that initiatives actually bring about change. They show why certain projects in neighbourhoods, districts or organisations work and others do not. They are often not found in structures or rules, but in social processes such as building trust, creating shared meaning, and sharing ownership. The analysis shows that the impact of the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds stems from three fundamental mechanisms:

1. Trust and closeness: a partnership based on equality and long-term involvement.

2. Learning attitude: evaluation as a joint reflection process, not as marking closure.

3. Vision and courage: willingness to invest in uncertain outcomes, based on trust in human and social capital.

These effective mechanisms ensure that the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds can work where real change begins: between residents, projects and organisations - where behaviour, collaboration and mindset change.



Buurthuis Bol in Amsterdam
(photo: Amy van Leiden)

Transitions: from doing to doing and thinking

Transitions are moments when existing ways of thinking and organising lose their self-evident nature, and new forms arise. What once worked no longer always proves to be suitable, while new ways of collaborating and organising are gradually developing. Transitions often arise in practice: in the daily activities of people who try out new solutions together and thus initiate change step by step.

The findings show that social change primarily arises from the way in which people collaborate and give meaning to change. Real change happens in

relationships, language and values. The Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds shows how that works. With neighbourhood projects and innovative community initiatives, the fund does not operate as an external party but as part of a living social ecosystem.

The strength lies in empowering agency. This is the shared capacity of people to influence their environment. By investing in networks, knowledge sharing and relational continuity, these people promote a new form of systemic care - they cultivate social resilience.



Badhuis Leidsebuurt in Haarlem
(photo: Jurgen Jacob Lodder)

Locally rooted, systemically connected



Vereniging Drostebuurt Groen & Leefbaar in Haarlem
(photo: Bastiaan van Musscher)

Transitions arise where the local and the systemic meet: at the point where the impact of neighbourhood projects (especially at the individual and neighbourhood levels) and innovative community initiatives (especially at the ecosystem and system levels) converge. The Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds shows consciously and unconsciously that

the neighbourhood is not the smallest scale of change, but the starting point of broader systemic change. By empowering individuals and networks, the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds fosters the collective ability to come up with solutions, and the self-reliance of communities.

Conclusion

The role of the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds goes beyond that of a funder. The fund acts as a catalyst for change by strengthening relationships, stimulating learning and creating room for new ideas. The impact lies not only in achieving measurable outcomes, but in redefining how social change

takes place. In a time of acceleration and uncertainty, the value of the Postcode Loterij Buurtfonds lies precisely in its ability to connect and deepen. It shows that structural change does not start with policy, but with people who dare to act together and create new possibilities for the future.

