

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Also on behalf of the Council of State, welcome to this event : election costings around the world.

My name is Laura van Geest, Director of CPB.

The title - election costing around the world - says it all, as far as I am concerned.

What started as a cottage industry in the Netherlands over thirty years ago, has evolved into a mature undertaking. As we prepare ourselves for the 10<sup>th</sup> edition by the end of next year, we are no longer the lonely only ones. Election costing got a following beyond the Dutch borders. The idea has gained traction in countries as far flung as Australia, Canada and closer to home Latvia and Belgium.

The growing popularity of election costing is something to be happy with, as far as I am concerned. We are no longer the nerdy one – bright perhaps, but definitely weird - but part of a group of trendsetters, promoters of evidence based policy at a moment that it really counts: elections. When people can use their vote to tell politicians what they want. A precious right to exercise, gained through strive. Difficult to imagine, but it was only 100 years ago that women got the vote in the Netherlands.

To really take advantage of their voting rights, people need the full story. Yes, political visions are important:

- What should we aspire to,
- what role do we see for ourselves in the world,
- what type of society do we want to be?

But vision alone changes only so much on the ground. Practical policies – plumbing in the words of Nobel prize laureate Esther Duflo - is needed to make a difference.

This is where election costing comes in handy. It leads to specific policy proposals and it ensures clear choices, as things need to add up. Politicians are forced to show their true colors.

The growing popularity of election costings is remarkable, in a sense. The successful export of CPB's charted choices comes in what some might call hostile or difficult circumstances.

Fake news, fact free politics are the buzz words of our time. Politicians, like Michael Gove, are on record stating that the People have had enough of experts. While the Netherlands still has a strong predilection for evidence based policy, it seems less self-evident than in the past.

This poses new challenges to institutes as ours. Proper analysis is a necessary, but no longer a sufficient condition for success.

- We do not only need to do our best, but we must be seen to do our best.
- We must leave the ivory tower and be accountable for what we do;
- We must be independent and impartial and be perceived as such,
- This raises the stakes for communication: clear, transparent, responsive and modern.

And all this is especially true in the case of election costings, the superlative of any policy analysis. Election costings can make or break reputations, both of the parties concerned and of the institute undertaking the exercise. It comes with a big responsibility.

This spread of election costing - against the tide - so to speak is a cause for celebration, even if election costing is not mainstream as yet. We still hope for new conversions of course. But it also explains the various forms the costing exercise takes in de different countries, varying in scope, timing and legal framework. The work needs to be tailormade to local circumstances. A path of steady growth in scope is less risky than a big bang approach.

I am coming to the end of my introduction. Election costings are on the rise, and that is a good thing. Abraham Lincoln once stated: you can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time. Election costing is one way to speed up this process. Let's get down to business!