

2007

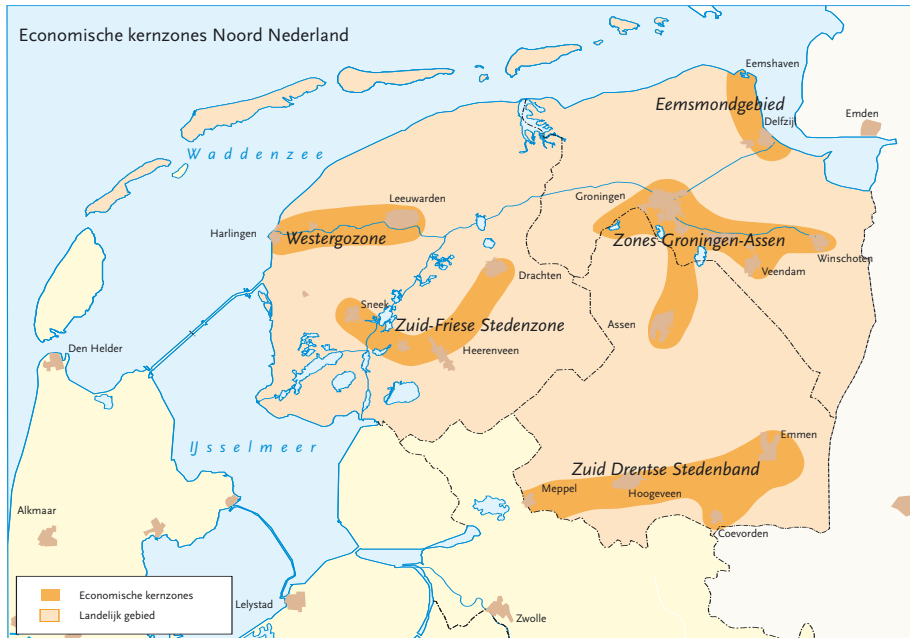
# Strategic Agenda for the Northern Netherlands



2013

*Vision under development of  
Drenthe, Fryslân and Groningen  
in the  
Northern Netherlands  
Assembly*





## Abstract of the adopted text

This brochure provides a summary of the ambitions and the main points of the Strategic Agenda for the Northern Netherlands 2007-2013.

For the complete text of the document, please see the website of the Northern Netherlands Assembly at the address [www.snnonline.nl](http://www.snnonline.nl).

26 January 2005

# On the lookout for promising space

*Fortunately, there is still sufficient space in the Northern Netherlands.*

*Space to live and space to do business.*

*Both now and in the future.*

The Northern Netherlands has all the opportunities it needs. The regional capital is ready and waiting.

In recent years, those opportunities for the North have increased in scope. Thanks to the investments in the area's own infrastructure. And thanks to the changes to the European map.

The Northern Netherlands wants a larger share in the Dutch economy.

The North is determined to take its opportunities. And to continue to take them. Always in partnership with local authorities, social organisations and educational institutes, recent years have demonstrated the importance of that collective approach.

## **The Northern Netherlands Assembly**

In 1992 the provinces of Drenthe, Fryslân and Groningen initiated the Northern Netherlands Assembly (Samenwerkingsverband Noord-Nederland, abbreviated to SNN). Since that time they have worked in partnership to determine their strategy, develop new regional policy and protect their interests in The Hague and Brussels.

## **Kompas voor het Noorden**

In 1998 the Northern partnership was pointed in the right direction by the Kompas voor het Noorden, or 'The Northern Compass'. The three provinces decided to combine living and working in core zones. In that context the countryside was given the opportunity to retain its identity whilst continuing to develop. Scientific research recently confirmed that thanks to their Kompas the Northern Netherlands and SNN are on course.

## **Strategic Agenda**

Now that the Kompas programme is coming to an end, SNN has drawn up a Strategic Agenda for 2007 and six years thereafter. Building on the existing policy and focusing more than ever on what the Northern Netherlands is best at.

# The ambitions of the North

*It's not about what we expect of others.  
It's about what we ourselves want for the Northern Netherlands.  
The ambitions of the North.*

The ambition of the Northern Netherlands is to be and remain a good place to live, where liveability is important and where you can easily get to. And of course a region where work can be found. SNN and the Northern Netherlands know better than most that this involves more than economic development alone.

In recent years the Northern Netherlands has invested in the mould (*the city*) and the countermould (*the countryside*).

- More than two-thirds of the economic activities in the Northern Netherlands are now concentrated in the core zones. People live and work in the North mainly in the National Urban Network Groningen-Assen, Leeuwarden and Emmen. These cities make it possible for the Northern Netherlands to offer top quality amenities for education, culture, healthcare and welfare.
- The core zones and the cities are however aware that their liveability depends on a vital countryside. A countryside where there is space, and where silence can still be heard. Nature and agriculture together determine the value of the countryside in the Northern Netherlands.

This coexistence of strong cities and a vital countryside – of mould and countermould – has in recent years proved its worth for the development of the Northern Netherlands. This also remains an important ambition for the SNN in the Strategic Agenda.

The same applies to the issues of accessibility and living environment.

- The Northern Netherlands intends to continue extending the Northern Development Axis in order to fulfil the linking function between the Randstad (the Netherlands' Western cities) and North-eastern Europe.
- The Northern Netherlands asks a lot of the connections between the countryside and the city and the organisation of transport because the quality depends on them.
- Just as the North continues to set strict requirements for the quality of spatial planning and the environment, thus sustainably investing its regional capital.

The North has ambitions that make a distinction. Ambitions about which Hans Alders, chairman of the Northern Netherlands Assembly, wrote the following in his introduction to the Strategic Agenda:

*'As always, we come a long way under our own steam. And with the strong support of The Hague and Brussels we will meet our objective.'*

SNN therefore subscribes to the view of EU Commissioner Danuta Hübner when she stresses that the regional policy of the EU is not a question of charity:

*'The regional policy of the EU sets out to reduce differences in the regions' levels of development.'*

## **Ambitions and policy**

The Kompas programme has taught SNN and the Northern Netherlands that partnership involves more than the development of a regional spatial-economic policy. Sustainable development, living environment, liveability and accessibility are therefore also items on the Strategic Agenda. SNN sets out to mutually coordinate the policy and implement it in partnership wherever possible.

## **Three tracks**

In the Strategic Agenda for the Northern Netherlands 2007-2013, the ambitions of the North have been detailed in a three-track policy:

- working towards innovation and a knowledge economy
- bringing about a competitive establishment climate in the urban area
- retaining and strengthening a vital countryside

More information about these three tracks is given further on in this brochure.

## **Judging by results**

The plans in the Strategic Agenda are not free of obligation. SNN has formulated its objectives in such a way that they are as concrete as possible. In 2013 the Northern Netherlands will therefore be able to judge the Strategic Agenda on the results achieved.

# A key for new opportunities

*Partnership provides opportunities.  
Partnership between innovative companies, knowledge centres and  
public authorities offers unprecedented opportunities.  
That kind of partnership is a key to success.*

Not least thanks to the Kompas programme, the Northern Netherlands has three 'key areas' for knowledge and innovation: Energy Valley, the Water Alliance and Astron/Lofar.

## **Energy Valley**

Virtually everything being done in the Netherlands in the area of extracting, treating, transporting and researching natural gas takes place in the Northern Netherlands. The North also has important, innovative sustainable energy projects. This striking combination was given shape in the Energy Valley concept. The Northern Netherlands is continuing to extend its position in the areas of gas and sustainable energy. There are new initiatives that are intended to combine existing knowledge of energy as much as possible by having all parties work more in partnership. Innovative projects will make the Northern Netherlands the European test bed in the area of energy transition. Energy Valley has everything it takes to become the driving force behind the northern economy.

## **Water Alliance**

Major opportunities for the Northern Netherlands are to be found in the water sector. The national Innovation Platform has noted that up to now the Netherlands has adopted a rather indifferent approach to its knowledge and experience in the water sector. According to the platform, the process between innovation and the market is

being pretty much neglected.

Organised in the Frisian Water Alliance, the Northern Netherlands wants to seize this opportunity. The Water Alliance gives companies, knowledge centres and local authorities the chance to make their own contribution. That is not restricted to offering the latest technology, but also includes marketing new forms of policy and organisation. The Northern Netherlands is becoming a pilot region and will thus gain a wide range of impressive water projects. The Frisian Water Alliance concentrates primarily on countries with a fast-growing economy and the new EU countries.

## **Astron/Lofar**

Astron is one of the leading institutions in the world of astronomical research. Since its inception Astron has always been firmly rooted in northern soil. The new Lofar project will draw these links even closer. The ultimate objective is a single huge radio telescope formed by twenty thousand radio sensors joined by a fibre-optic data network and a supercomputer.

Lofar confirms the leading scientific position of Astron. This project is also placing the Northern Netherlands under the microscope. Lofar will make new product-market combinations possible. The finely-meshed fibre-optic data network that Astron will need to lay for Lofar will also be used for countless other functions that are important to the North.

## Sectors with opportunity for growth

The Northern Netherlands has sectors with considerable growth potential. They are placed on the Strategic Agenda as 'spearhead sectors'. SNN is setting out with each sector to develop a joint vision of the opportunities offered by that particular sector for innovation and economic growth.

These are the sectors with growth opportunities that the Northern Netherlands is focusing on:

- **Agribusiness**  
The dairy industry and the potato starch sector are strongly represented in the Northern Netherlands. Most of the Netherlands' sugar is also produced in the North. Biogasification, biorefinery and other forms of green chemistry will give the northern agribusiness a role to play in the development of new, sustainable energy sources, for example.
- **Chemistry**  
The chemistry complex in Delfzijl and Emmtec in Emmen are important to employment. Here and elsewhere in the Northern Netherlands there are still all sorts of opportunities in the chemicals sector for new, innovative products and for more processing industry.
- **Commercial care**  
More elderly people will be needing care in the years to come, while there are increasingly fewer young people to offer it to them. The Northern Netherlands wants to respond to that extra demand for care and services, both for medical treatment and for nursing and accommodation.
- **Life sciences**  
As a technological knowledge area, life sciences concentrate on new medicines and medical technologies, cleaner processes and new foods. The number of people employed in life sciences in the city of Groningen represents a good 20 per cent of the overall sector in the Netherlands, and there are good opportunities for increasing this share even further.
- **IT**  
Groningen and Leeuwarden both have a strong IT sector. Together with the one in Amsterdam, the Groningen Internet Exchange is the Netherlands' only large international interconnection point. This GN-IX – certainly in combination with the Lofar fibre-optic data network – facilitates countless new developments in the North.
- **Shipbuilding**  
There is a long tradition of shipbuilding in the Northern Netherlands and the sector has an outstanding international reputation. The northern shipbuilding sector is making the necessary efforts to increase productivity and find new production methods. The sector is continuing to seek new opportunities in the area of product and process innovation.
- **Tourism**  
The Northern Netherlands is an attractive area for tourists. The opportunities for growing to be one of the top tourist areas in North-western Europe are not yet by any means being fully utilised. The sector is continuing to look for innovative tourism products and for new marketing forms.

# On the way to a knowledge economy

The northern economy is undergoing a renewal process. More and more familiar companies are disappearing because their production is being moved to the low wage countries. A development of that nature is irreversible. The northern companies will have to innovate to stay ahead of the competition.

The transition of the northern economy into a knowledge economy is in full flow. Knowledge is the production factor with a future. In its Strategic Agenda, the Northern Netherlands Assembly describes this as 'the key issue' in its vision.

## **Innovation**

Innovation leads to an improved competitive position. The European Union resolved in Lisbon that the European economy must be the most dynamic and competitive in the world by 2010. The Northern Netherlands can make an important contribution to that aim. SNN is concentrating in particular on its specific opportunities in a number of areas.

## **Small and medium-sized enterprises**

The small and medium-sized enterprise sector accounts for 75 per cent of jobs in the Northern Netherlands, which makes it the engine of the northern economy. The advantages of the small scale are the faster decisions-making processes and greater flexibility. A possible downside is the level of knowledge. It is stated in the Strategic Agenda that the North will be combining the knowledge and skills that are present and offering them to the small and medium-sized enterprise sector.

## **Professional education**

Supply and demand on the employment market are not sufficiently in line with each other in the Northern Netherlands because the knowledge economy is making increasing demands on the professional population. Measures intended to strengthen professional education by more effectively linking learning and working occupy a high position on the Strategic Agenda. To achieve this, SNN is asking The Hague for more freedom to experiment with the education supply.

# Cities where you feel at home

The Northern Netherlands has attractive cities where you can live with pleasure, where you can find good jobs and where there are outstanding amenities. Cities where you feel at home and where companies are happy to set up business.

Investing in the knowledge economy means investing in cities. The choice made in the Kompas programme to concentrate living and working in the core zones has turned out to be the right one. The Strategic Agenda is building on that with new emphases.

## **Living environment**

An attractive living environment is a significant factor regarding the choice of where to settle.

The Northern Netherlands has an outstanding cultural climate. And the North has the peace and the space that many seek elsewhere in vain. The North of the Netherlands is still green, there is clean air, you can see the horizon and it still gets dark at night. Everyone can find their own place in the North.

## **Establishment climate**

Groningen, Leeuwarden and Emmen have the knowledge centres that provide an establishment climate that could help the northern economy on its way. More attractive locations for commercial activities are being located in the core zones. The station areas are becoming the cities' showpieces.

## **Accessibility**

By improving the international connections the Northern Netherlands is setting out to benefit more from its position between the Western Netherlands and Northern Germany and beyond. The North is continuing to invest in the Northern Development Axis. In that context, the building of the Zuiderzee line is indispensable to the Northern Netherlands.

# Northern space for the future

The Northern Netherlands still has 'real' countryside: where space for farming remains, where living is valued and where tourists like to go.

The Strategic Agenda takes action on behalf of such a vital northern countryside. Retaining and developing the qualities of the 'Northern Space' call for a series of targeted investments.

## **Competitive strength**

Eighty per cent of the land in the Northern Netherlands is still used for agriculture. Farms here are on average twice as large as elsewhere in the Netherlands. Changes to European policy are forcing dairy and arable farms to increase their scale. If competitive and sustainable agriculture is possible anywhere in the Netherlands, it is in the large-scale farming areas of the Northern Netherlands. Modern land use planning could optimise the space that is available for this purpose.

## **Countryside economy**

Jobs in the countryside are continuing to disappear. Good new jobs are therefore needed to keep the countryside liveable. But this works both ways. New jobs call for a dynamic environment. The Strategic Agenda is investing in new economic activities and in better amenities.

## **Water Management**

Water is indispensable for man, flora and fauna. At the same time, water forms a threat if there is too much or too little of it somewhere. Water management is becoming increasingly emphatically an ordaining principle in the Northern space. The Strategic Agenda states the measures for preventing water nuisance and water shortages in the Northern Netherlands in the years to come and for further improving the water quality.

## **Nature and landscape**

Of the eighteen Dutch national parks, six are located in the Northern Netherlands. The Wadden Sea is an international biosphere reserve. The Northern Netherlands features unspoilt, often centuries-old cultural landscapes that give the Northern space its own identity. The North takes good care of its nature and landscape. With the Strategic Agenda, the Northern Netherlands Assembly is investing more than ever in the quality of the rural area.



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