

Summary

Provincial strategy on spatial planning and the environment for limburg

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Summary

PROVINCIAL STRATEGY ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT FOR LIMBURG

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Introduction: Working together to build a futureproof Limburg

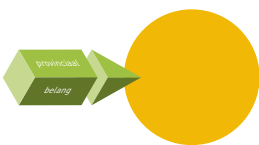
Health and safety issues, changes in society, climate change, the energy transition, the transition to sustainable agriculture, digitalisation and the circular economy: these are, in a nutshell, the challenges that the Province of Limburg is facing. We regard them as challenges and as opportunities that call for a comprehensive approach, both spatially and in terms of their social and economic dimensions.

In this document, we share our long-term view of spatial planning and the environment. We describe how we continuously seek to strike the right balance between protecting and using the physical environment. In our strategy, we address issues for which the Province bears statutory responsibility, but we have also acted autonomously to claim ownership of issues of particular importance to our province. Our underlying principle is the Rhineland Model, which is synonymous with consultation and cooperation, solidarity and professionalism and which focuses on the long term, on such values as quality and happiness. That means that we are interested in all stakeholders and in society as a whole.

Reader's guide

We have divided this strategy document into two sections. The first section is thematic and explains in detail what we hope to achieve and what tasks await us in the various themes; the second section is area-specific and links the main themes on a supra-regional scale covering the three regions of North, Central and South Limburg. Our partners in the three regions have cooperated closely with us on developing the regional strategies. That means that each region-specific text has different emphases and that both the topics covered and the level of detail vary from one to the next.

Graphic design



We use two different types of text bubbles in the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment. Each of the two means something different and comes from a different source. The text bubbles are not reproduced in this summary, but they are visible in the full version of the Provincial Strategy.



The document refers throughout to 'provincial interests'. They are represented by a circle with an arrow and can be found on the cover page of the theme chapters. In the area-specific section, provincial interests are identified in the text.

A public participation process was undertaken for the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment (see the chapter on 'Background') in which the people of Limburg were asked their opinions on a range of different topics. Squares with pointers identify examples and typical responses. We do the same for the results from other relevant (ongoing) studies, such as KSOL study on consumer buying behaviour and Dear Euregio.

1 Challenges in Limburg's physical environment

We have identified three main tasks. They address the whole of Limburg but the details vary per region and economic sector. They are:

1. To ensure an attractive, socially responsible, healthy and safe environment
 - a. In urban or built-up areas
 - b. In rural areas
2. To ensure a future-proof, innovative and sustainable economy (including the transition to sustainable agriculture)
3. To promote climate change adaptation and the energy transition

The Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment for Limburg is a dynamic, modular document whose contents can be updated as needed. The coronavirus crisis has made us realise that we need to be flexible in our approach to the future (see also the chapter on 'Implementation').

2 Imagining the future, 2030 – 2050

Here is how we see the future.

Limburg is firmly embedded in its Euroregional setting, thanks to closely inter-linked infrastructures, social and economic ties and cooperation between governments.

Limburg is a great place to work, learn and live. Our province enjoys a favourable business climate, a large measure of social cohesion and an outstanding environmental and spatial planning standards. We offer all our residents prosperity, well-being, quality of life and a safe and healthy environment in which to live. We achieve this by collaborating with other authorities, civil society organisations, the business community and our people, each one working from their own strengths.

Cities and villages have undergone a coordinated but gradual transformation. They have an appropriate range of housing, shops, offices and other work locations, as well as facilities for transport, utilities, the arts and culture and education. The transformation has respected local heritage assets and local identity.

Businesses, educational institutions and authorities are working together to continue building a sustainable, circular and inclusive economy.

Limburg is connected to robust national and international energy grids. Green energy generation has been integrated into villages and cities and takes place at a few large-scale production sites in Limburg. Society as a whole, including the business community, has made the transition to a more circular economy.

The transition zones between built-up and rural areas are designed to optimise urban (circular) farming, leisure activities, enjoyment of nature and the landscape, and climate-adaptation facilities.

Groundwater aquifers are well protected and reserved for the supply of drinking water. Stream valleys serve climate-adaptation purposes. There is more room for water, afforestation to mitigate climate change, nature-inclusive forms of agriculture and the leisure economy.

The Limburg Ecological Network^[1] and the Natura 2000 areas that lie within its boundaries are more robust than in the past and are more closely linked. The multipurpose transition zones surrounding the Ecological Network have helped to improve the conditions for maintaining biodiversity.

Beyond the Green-blue Zone,^[2] i.e. stream and river valleys, nature reserve and connecting zones, and the Limburg Ecological Network, circular agriculture dominates land use in the rural areas of North and Central Limburg. Harmony with the environment has been restored. In the South Limburg National Landscape Protected Area – part of Drielanden Park – such environment and planning factors as groundwater, hydrological systems, nature, the soil, peace and quiet, the landscape and cultural heritage are important and go hand in hand with the development of agriculture, the leisure economy and villages.

3 The Limburg Principles and general zoning

3.1 The Limburg Principles

We seek to strike the right balance between protecting and utilising the physical environment in which we live, work, learn and spend our leisure time. Any trade-offs are based on the following principles, the Limburg Principles^[3]:

- *We seek to build an inclusive, healthy and safe society. The design and accessibility of areas encourages interaction, leisure activities and social engagement.*
- *Local and regional attributes and identity are paramount. An area-specific approach forms the basis for cooperation with other parties and initiators and customisation can therefore be accommodated.*

1 Limburg Ecological Network: previously, Golden-green Nature Zone.

2 Green-blue Zone: previously, Silver-green Nature Zone and Bronze-green Landscape Zone.

3 These principles reflect those underpinning the Netherlands' National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment (NOVI) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 by the United Nations.

- *More city, more countryside. We cherish diversity. Urban amenities are concentrated in compact cities and villages. Rural areas are developed to counterbalance busier urban areas.*
- *We treat our space and resources with care, both above ground and below the surface. We are committed to socio-economic development without passing on problems to future generations. In line with the Dutch Environment and Planning Act, our Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment is based on the precautionary principle: take preventive action, prioritise tackling pollution at the source, and make the polluter pay. We consider not only the impact on people, the economy and prosperity, but also on the environment and the ecology. Our aim is the multipurpose use of space and optimisation of existing uses. We focus on waste prevention and make conscientious use of natural resources such as raw materials, fossil fuels and water. We are committed to renewable raw materials and to a circular economy. We treat our archaeological and geological assets with due care.*

3.2 General zoning

Main classification	Category
Rural areas	Green-blue Zone
	Limburg Ecological Network (including Natura 2000 zone)
	Outlying area
Built-up areas	Urban area
	Urban centre
	Rural centre
	Work locations
Infrastructures	National/international road
	Secondary road
	National and international railway line
	National/international waterway
	Port/Airport
	National/international pipeline

The future of Limburg can be captured in indicative zoning that builds on the 'timeless' nature of the subsoil, i.e. the geomorphology and the water system, and the typology and development of spatial use in subareas of Limburg over the past several decades. Adjacent zones are closely linked and interdependent.

4 Provincial interest

Like other public authorities, the Province of Limburg is the guardian of the public interest. We are specifically committed to safeguarding the public interest of Limburg's people and business community. In addition to our autonomous tasks, we focus on our core tasks.

The term 'provincial interest' is not identified in the Dutch Environment and Planning Act. We identify a provincial interest based on the following criteria:

- performance of one or more of the Province's core tasks;
- a problem that transcends municipal/regional boundaries;
- the public interest of Limburg's population, the quality of the environment or business in the Province of Limburg.

These criteria apply both separately and in combination. The Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment identifies the Province's role and interests within the various themes or areas. Mobilisation of financial resources will be described in separate provincial policy frameworks and programmes.

Provincial interests defined in Limburg's Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment

In the full Dutch-language version of the Provincial Strategy, the following list of provincial interests is presented on the title page of the theme chapters. In the area-specific section, provincial interests are identified in the text of the Strategy.

Housing and living environment

- Planned and available housing stock in which supply matches demand in terms of quality and quantity, so that there are enough (affordable) homes available of the right quality at the right locations and at the right time.
- We regard every development in the housing market as a provincial interest.

Health and safety

- A safe and healthy living environment for every person in Limburg.
- A living environment designed to encourage exercise, interaction, self-sufficiency and assisted self-sufficiency, education and a healthy lifestyle.

The arts and culture, sport and heritage

- A diverse range of regional sport and cultural facilities.
- Cultural heritage and heritage assets preserved and used or reused in their setting (cultural heritage ensemble).
- Archaeological finds treated and preserved with due care.

Economy

- An excellent business climate and robust economic structure:
- Innovativeness and flourishing innovation ecosystems based on triple helix partnerships.
- A circular economy.
- A sound knowledge and educational structure/infrastructure.
- An agile and employable workforce in a labour market where talent at every level can thrive.

Work locations

- Enough high-quality development sites for existing and new businesses: work locations for businesses, office buildings and retail zones.

Mobility

- Good connections to national, international, regional and Euroregional networks (road, rail, water, air, pipeline).
- Futureproof, accessible, safe, smart and clean cross-border mobility so that people can move freely as they wish and need.

Energy

- An innovative energy transition that strengthens the economic structure, reduces reliance on fossil fuels, mitigates the impact of emissions and is sensitive to biodiversity.

Agriculture

A favourable business climate for the agrifood sector.
A meaningful transition in the agrifood sector to more sustainable, circular, demand-driven production that is in balance with, and contributes to, a healthy and sustainable environment.

Water

- Ecologically healthy, resilient and adaptive water systems capable of coping naturally with extreme weather events.
- A comprehensive and realistic approach to flood protection, flooding, water shortages, groundwater depletion and the improvement of water quality in the entire catchment area of the Meuse.
- Assessing and addressing the fresh water supply (for drinking water and other purposes), nature restoration, water system restoration, water security, agriculture, landscape and nitrogen pollution as a single system.

Nature

- Maintaining and where possible improving biodiversity.
- Creating a robust ecological network (nature areas, woods and water) and a rural area with green veining.
- Embedding nature and the experience of nature in society.

Landscape

- The preservation and enhancement of the distinctive features of Limburg's landscape in all its variety, including the Green-blue Zone, the (expanded) National Parks, the South Limburg National Landscape and urban-rural transition zones.

Soil and subsoil

- Sustainable use of subsoil so that it is available for future generations.
- Restraint in raw materials extraction: for multiple purposes and with public support.
- Ensuring the safe use of underground limestone quarries.
- Follow-up management of closed landfills.
- Effective protection of the ecological quality of the soil.

Part A – Strategic themes

Each theme is divided into three parts. (1) We explain the task, (2) identify our aim and (3) state what we have chosen to do in our Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment. The summary below states our long-term objectives for each theme. The choices we have made in that regard are described in the full Dutch-language version of the Strategy.

5 Housing and living environment

We wish to work with our partners to create an outstanding living environment in which people feel happy. It is important for people to be able to live in a home and neighbourhood of their own choosing (one appropriate for their capacities and life stage) where they feel at ease. We accomplish this by working towards a future-proof Limburg housing market with enough homes of the right quality at the right location, wherever possible affordable and available at the right time.

We facilitate flexibility on the housing market and encourage flexible housing solutions so that we can meet the changing needs and wishes of a more diverse group of people in both existing and new buildings. In addition, we want the 'housing' component to be about something more than just the proverbial bricks. By looking at housing issues in context, we make the right connections at district/neighbourhood level between social and physical challenges (housing, care, welfare and quality of life) and ensure a sustainable, safe and healthy living environment with a variety of different residential settings. In doing so, we want to prevent further segregation and manage spatial development by prioritising infill (redevelopment/rezoning), in accordance with the 'Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation' principle.

It is our aim to complete the Ruimte voor Ruimte ('Space for Space') project in cooperation with the municipalities by building a total of 900 dwellings at locations in the outlying area that are acceptable from a spatial planning perspective. The Strategy does not alter the agreements made in 2001 between the Province, the municipalities of North and Central Limburg and Ruimte voor Ruimte Limburg C.V./B.V.

The Strategy describes the choices in terms of housing and living environment that correspond to the above objectives.

6 Health and safety

We want a healthy and safe living environment for everyone in Limburg. The Province aims to place more emphasis on risk-driven approach in the coming years. The goal is to ensure that the basic physical and social quality of the living environment is at least adequate, regardless of location. This means complying with the statutory standards. We are striving to achieve an air quality that is in line with the current statutory standards. The Province is working continuously to make improvements in air quality, within the scope of its competences and roles.

As far as noise pollution is concerned, we are aiming to ensure an acceptable noise level along provincial roads and near provincial businesses. Within the same context, we are seeking out opportunities for improvement area by area and development by development so that we can achieve a higher standard of quality. That quality depends on the environment in the area in question. In addition, we want the arrangement of the living environment to contribute to a safe and healthy setting that encourages exercise, encounters, self-reliance, education and a healthy lifestyle.

By doing the above, we will help to improve the self-reliance and community engagement of vulnerable people and encourage them to participate in society.

We are also striving, based on the relationship between the various challenges, to work with the community and our partners on delivering extra quality where necessary. Quality of life, health and safety are the unifying and binding factors here.

The Strategy elaborates on our choices regarding health and safety, for example:

The Province of Limburg works closely with its network partners to ensure a comprehensive and effective approach to safety and quality of life in cities and villages and the health of their inhabitants. We play a coordinating role. We promote cooperation between partners and take responsibility for our core health and safety tasks.

7 The arts and culture, sport and heritage

We are proud of our heritage and committed to preserving it. At the same time, we are open to new perspectives and new forms of cultural expression. We are working with the national and municipal authorities to build a strong basic infrastructure for the arts and culture. The municipalities are the driving force in the North Limburg and South Limburg Culture Regions.

We want as many people in Limburg as possible to be able to exercise and play sports. In our role as a supra-local authority, we work with others or use our support structure to focus on recreational sport, talent development/professional sport and sporting events, all from a Euroregional perspective. Our arts and culture and sports policy supports large and small events with funding and through the provincial Culture Plan and the Sub-Infrastructure. In doing so, our efforts must add value to what other partners are doing, whether or not on the basis of a statutory task. We view this from a Euroregional perspective.

Together with property owners, national and municipal authorities and experts, we work to preserve and repurpose heritage assets. We want new spatial planning projects to approach cultural and industrial heritage not only from a conservation perspective but also with a view to ensuring that historical structures inspire area-specific interventions. We want to connect our archaeological riches with our current and future living environment. Effective and efficient archaeological research is important for this.

The Strategy describes our choices with regard to the arts and culture, sports, heritage and archaeology.

8 Economy

Like the rest of the Netherlands, Limburg is dealing with global challenges and transitions in energy, sustainability, food, health and digitalisation. These transitions are interrelated and indicate a move towards a circular economy. The transition to circularity is critical for Chemelot Industrial Park.

This challenge offers Limburg opportunities for innovation and economic growth, but it also requires entrepreneurs and businesses to be highly adaptive. The four Brightlands campuses can play an important role in this regard, but that will require closer integration between the campuses and a closer relationship with SMEs, as well as accommodation for start-up firms and growing companies.

A futureproof economic structure also requires an attractive climate for entrepreneurs, employees and students. Sound infrastructure and accessibility – by road, rail, water, air, pipeline and by digital means – are essential, along with a large pool of qualified employees and an adequate stock of affordable premises.

Education and the labour market also help to reinforce the economic structure. Important factors are quality training and education responsive to demand, as well as a healthy, sustainable cross-border workforce. As a provincial authority, we can help as many people in Limburg as possible to participate in employment. We must do so not only to achieve our economic aims but also to reduce disparities in health outcomes and employment participation.

In addition to the Brightlands campuses, large economic drivers such as Maastricht Aachen Airport, Chemelot Industrial Park, VDL Nedcar, Greenport Venlo, our urban centres and the possible arrival of the Einstein Telescope in South Limburg are also important for the province's economic structure and employment. The question that arises is how to maintain and bolster these economic drivers without compromising the quality of the environment and the quality of life of local residents.

The leisure economy is also an important pillar of Limburg's economy. The quality of the landscape and nature, attractive cities and easy accessibility are important factors for a flourishing leisure economy. We will have to strike a firm balance between protecting and preserving the landscape and nature on the one hand and the interests of various groups of tourists, recreational users and local inhabitants on the other. With regard to leisure accommodation, there must be a better match between supply and demand in both quantity and quality. Continuous quality improvement is needed to adapt the existing stock to the changing demands of regular and new guests.

The guiding principle for Limburg's economic development will continue to be reinforcement of the regional economic structure within an outstanding business climate. Spatial planning is the prerequisite for achieving this ambition. Our efforts, in cooperation with our partners, must help to resolve a number of societal challenges facing Limburg. To this end, we – like the UN, the EU and the national government – are identifying a set of missions to bring our efforts into focus. Two missions have been cited in the mission-driven economic policy framework: 'Limburg energises' and 'Limburg boosts health!', relating to health, healthy food, green expertise and sustainable/circular enterprise.

We are working towards a circular economy in which energy, raw and auxiliary materials, and components retain their value for as long as possible for production and consumption purposes. This is how we are making a sustainable and impactful contribution to employment, innovation, carbon reduction and added value for Limburg. It is important in this context to make sparing use of natural and often finite resources.

In addition, we are focused on maintaining and extending our educational system so that it offers broad, future-proof and top-calibre education, and on boosting the flexibility and employability of Limburg's labour force. Although the Province is not the statutory or competent authority in the education, labour market and social domain, it can facilitate other authorities, educational institutions and businesses and put regional interests on the agenda.

The Strategy describes our choices with respect to campus development, innovation and cross-overs (the importance of urban centres), the Einstein Telescope, education and the labour market, the circular economy, the Chemelot site, VDL Nedcar, Maastricht Aachen Airport and the leisure economy.

9 Work locations

Businesses that wish to set up shop or expand must have access to suitable premises and space. That can be a problem in Limburg. Space is at a premium at times, or if it is available, it does not meet the users' requirements. In addition, those requirements may change in the future as business processes come under the influence of digitalisation, standards of sustainability, globalisation or robotisation. In North Limburg, the demand for large-scale lots by logistics operators requires choices to be made.

Our aim is to continue to have enough work locations and suitable development space – for industrial and business parks, office buildings and shopping districts – to accommodate existing and new enterprises. We will be working with municipal authorities and/or owners in the coming years to ensure work locations that are up to standard in terms of both quantity and quality. In doing so, we intend to make the most efficient use of the available space.

The Strategy describes our choices with regard to industrial and business parks, logistics, offices and shops in business parks, office buildings and shopping districts.

10 Mobility

Mobility goes beyond mere accessibility. Its goals include safety, sustainability and quality of life. We define quality of life as a concern for health and social inclusion: everyone should be able to participate, including people with disabilities.

We are striving to achieve forward-looking, accessible, smart, clean and borderless mobility, so that people can move around freely. We want Limburg to be easily accessible for people, goods and information, in part by ensuring proper links to the national, international, regional and Euroregional networks (road, rail, water, air, pipeline, digital). Passenger and goods transport must be reliable, fast, safe and sustainable, and not have too much of an impact on the quality of life and the natural environment. We encourage cycling and e-biking, including over longer distances, to reduce the pressure of mobility and improve health and air quality.

To achieve our aims, we not only consider physical measures but also look at influencing human behaviour, smart mobility, multimodality and technological

innovation. Our aims are in line with the national policy on smarter, more sustainable and safer mobility

In Limburg, our approach is area-specific. We continue to focus on general themes such as traffic safety, traffic and transport management, management and maintenance, public transport and on the specific themes of cycling and logistics.

The Strategy describes our choices with regard to mobility, for example:

In accordance with our mobility plan *Slim op weg naar Morgen* (The Smart Route to Tomorrow), we are carrying out area-specific studies in collaboration with other government bodies and partners in civil society with spatial planning as the basis. Collaborating in this way allows us to arrive at a comprehensive approach to mobility-related tasks in designated areas and to deploy a well-balanced combination of measures. We prefer to make better use of existing mobility networks rather than to build new infrastructure. This new approach delivers added value in terms of time, money and quality.

Our aim is to improve traffic flows on Limburg's main road network, in cooperation with other government bodies.

Together with our Euroregional partners, we will continue to work on international rail connections with Liège, Aachen, Düsseldorf and Antwerp by emphasising close legal and technical coordination.

11 Energy

The coming decades will see major changes in the Netherlands' energy supply. These changes require us to make sensible choices about the future and the security of that supply.

The energy transition will necessitate adjustments to our infrastructure, both above ground and below the surface. The existing energy grid will change on a local, regional, national and international scale. Investments will have to be made in modernising and/or expanding the existing grid. Existing pipelines and new techniques for storing renewable energy will also play an important role. The energy transition, then, requires space, both above and below the surface – space that must be freed up.

In the Netherlands, we have agreed to phase out natural gas for households in the run-up to 2030, but mainly thereafter until 2050. The people of Limburg can help make this happen, but it is a major challenge that is more complex in some of our regions than elsewhere in the country. That is because the housing stock in those regions is relatively old, with low energy performance ratings. In addition, there is a large proportion of owner-occupied homes in our province, there are more single-family houses, and housing is more widely dispersed.

We recognise that people come from many different backgrounds and have many different viewpoints when they embark on the energy transition. We would like to work with all parties to ensure that that transition is innovative and structurally sound. To this end, we are searching for a suitable energy mix with matching infrastructure for Limburg. This search will take at least 10 to 20 years and involves the Energy Infrastructure System Study. Important factors are supply security, public support and ownership, and a realistic pace with feasible and affordable investments.

We are aiming to reduce our consumption of natural gas by 2050. By 2030, the 30 Regional Energy Strategy (RES) regions will be generating 35 TWh of onshore electricity (through solar and wind energy). As we work towards complying with the energy transition agreements and national targets, we will base our actions on public support. Initiatives must be feasible and affordable.

The national target is to have a sustainable energy supply by 2050. Accordingly, the aim within the context of the Chemelot Circular Hub is for the Chemelot chemicals cluster to operate in accordance with the climate targets by 2050, i.e. with zero carbon emissions and sustainable circular use of materials.

The Province of Limburg will contribute to the energy transition to the best of its ability. We will do this on the basis of our statutory tasks, administrative agreements and established policy. In addition, we will offer guidance and respond to new developments and innovations. The Province will not propose additional standards or tasks of its own.

We will act as an equal partner in the formation of the RES regions.

Our Provincial Energy Strategy (PES) describes five perspectives (with accompanying courses of action) that form the basis for our approach to the energy transition, aimed at residents, institutions and businesses. One proviso is that the energy transition must be integrated into the living environment.

The Limburg Hydrogen Agenda 2.0 sketches the growing role of hydrogen in energy supply and transmission. It is important not to delay connecting to the national and international hydrogen infrastructure, and to investigate whether and how the production of blue and green hydrogen can be facilitated in Limburg.

The Energy Infrastructure System Study has identified a number of challenges that are bound to have a spatial impact. Existing energy grids must be upgraded and expanded between Maasbracht, Chemelot and South Limburg and most of the substations will have to be enlarged. There is not enough room for this at every location. The energy transition will necessitate new pipelines between Chemelot and Rotterdam and Germany. This also represents a further step towards a circular economy.

The energy transition entails investments. However, energy must remain accessible and affordable for everyone in Limburg. We are involving our inhabitants as

much as possible in the measures and initiatives that are part of the energy transition.

12 Agriculture and horticulture

The agriculture and horticulture sector uses and manages much of the land in rural areas and is therefore of great importance to the appearance and quality of our agrarian landscape and living environment. We want to offer this sector the leeway to work with other knowledge regions on developing a new standard for modern, sustainable, circular, demand-driven agriculture and horticulture that are in balance with and contribute to a healthy and sustainable environment. It is the sector itself that must spur the transition to sustainable agriculture, along with society. Our job is to facilitate, encourage, coordinate and regulate. We are offering scope for planning with a view to a comprehensive quality improvement in the environment, in keeping with the capacity of the region concerned and subject to the relevant statutory and regulatory constraints.

The Strategy describes our choices with regard to agriculture and horticulture, for example:

We facilitate initiatives that contribute to improving revenue models for agriculture and horticulture, such as farming geared towards community services. Examples include nature-inclusive agriculture, agricultural landscape management and food communities (such as the 'farming communities' concept), regional markets, short supply chains, and high-tech and personalised nutrition, with activities that focus on a circular agrifood system anchored in the relevant region's own potential.

We play a coordinating role in reducing emissions and improving the quality of the environment and quality of life in the vicinity of intensive livestock farms. We choose to take a comprehensive area-specific approach to Natura 2000 and other vulnerable areas. By doing so, we seek to achieve multiple goals, with nature, water, landscape and ecological targets guiding the choices we make. The area-specific deployment of existing resources can have a multiplier effect.

We facilitate and support the conversion of traditional forms of agriculture and horticulture to more extensive forms. We control animal numbers by implementing national legislation.

The Southeast Sandy Soils pilot, part of the Vital Countryside IBP (Intergovernmental Programme), promotes such themes as environment and planning quality and circular agriculture. The Heuvelland IBP aims to reduce flooding, improve ecological and hydrological conditions in Natura 2000 areas, restore the quality of groundwater and surface water in extraction and groundwater protection areas, and make agriculture more sustainable by promoting futureproof and nature-inclusive land use. The results of these projects can be scaled up for specific areas. They provide input for a programme-driven

approach to nature-inclusive agriculture and for the formulation of regional soil and manure strategies, the latter being initiated by the Province where appropriate given its role in these themes.

13 Water

Limburg faces challenges all across its water system: in the Meuse's winter bed (the Meuse Valley), in the regional water system, and in our groundwater system. Two particular concerns are the supply of drinking water and the restoration of Natura 2000 areas.

The Province and executive agencies, including the water board, municipalities, site managers and the water utility company, have an important role to play in adapting our living environment, the water system and water use to new weather conditions. To cope with dry and wet periods, we are using our role as coordinating body for the regional water system to work towards an ecologically healthy, well-functioning, resilient and adaptive water system that has the natural reserves to cope with the impact of extreme weather and changing water quality.

It is important to take an all-round and realistic approach to flood protection, periods of drought, water shortages but also to occasional downpours and to improving water quality throughout the Meuse catchment area. We will consider and tackle challenges related to freshwater supplies, nature conservation, water system recovery, water security, agriculture, landscape and nitrogen levels as a whole. We will do this in conjunction with the various stakeholders in society, including those across the national border.

Since much of our water system is transboundary in nature, we will continue to collaborate at various levels with our partners abroad, with the water board and with the national government.

The Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment takes a long-term approach to the main water-related issues and describes our choices regarding the Meuse Valley, streams and stream valleys and groundwater. The 2022-2027 Provincial Water Programme specifies these choices and elaborates on them.

14 Nature

We wish to maintain and, where possible, improve biodiversity by creating a robust, high-quality cross-border ecological and water network and by developing a rural area with green veining. We aim to attain the targets laid down in the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. A new national Nature Programme is being drawn up in which the national government and provincial authorities

agree on the targets to be achieved by 2050 under these directives. Agreements will also be made about the definition of a favourable national conservation status for protected species and Red List species. Clarity about the national government's funding is an important prerequisite. In the run-up to 2050, we will take the necessary intermediate steps and connect the dots between, among other issues, the nitrogen problem, upgrading the natural environment, the Forests Strategy, the energy transition and nature-inclusive circular farming practices.

For forests specifically, we are striving for better management of existing and planting of new woodland, among other things to comply with the obligations of the climate agreement. We will elaborate on this in a provincial forests strategy.

Using a coordinated, area-specific approach, we will seek to combine natural assets with other land use near nature reserves and in urban-rural transition zones. Evaluation and monitoring are necessary to determine whether the nature-specific targets and measures remain effective and realistic, or whether they need to be adjusted.

Our aim is a nature-inclusive society in which the natural world is deeply rooted and can be experienced by young and old close to home. A nature-inclusive society bridges the gap between the natural world and other issues and challenges (related to change). Nature and the landscape can thus help to improve the health, welfare and prosperity of local people; in turn, society will take more responsibility for local nature.

The Strategy elaborates on our choices regarding more natural habitats of better quality, fauna management and species protection, and engagement with and support for nature and landscape.

15 Landscape

We wish to preserve and enhance the distinctive features of Limburg's landscape in all its variety while tackling the spatial tasks and transitions at hand. The challenge is to use the landscape as a vector for enhancing the quality of the various transitions that our province faces. We define spatial quality as: the right activity in the right place, properly integrated into the surroundings. As our basis, we adhere to the trinity of practical value, experiential value and future value, and our guiding principles are to promote complementarity between rural areas and urban centres and to seize cross-border opportunities. We not only facilitate developments, but also use them systematically to improve the quality of the environment. Our aim is make Limburg a more functional, more sustainable and more attractive place to be.

Our focus is on Limburg's unique landscapes: the Green-blue Zone, including the Meuse Valley, the expanded National Parks (De Meinweg, De Maasduinen

and De Groote Peel), and the South Limburg National Landscape, including the urban-rural transition zones. The Green-blue Zone across the entire province consists of the Meuse Valley, the scenic stream valleys, slopes and zones around and between existing nature reserves and the farmland within, historic landmarks, small-scale cultural-historical landscape features, watercourses, archaeological sites, etc. In South Limburg, the Green-blue Zone also includes the steeper slopes, dry valleys and the key landscape corridors to the Meuse Valley.

We are particularly interested in the stream valleys. They must be re-natured and become more climate-resistant (see also the chapter on Water).

The Strategy describes the choices that accompany this aim, for example:

Our landscapes do not stop at the provincial borders. That is why we invest in cross-border partnerships and projects focusing on the themes of 'landscape health', 'vital citizens (in Limburg)' and 'sustainable tourism'. Our cross-border alliances include the Drielanden Park, Meuse Valley River Park, Kempen-Broek and Meuse-Swalm-Nette.

16 Soil and subsoil

We wish to ensure that Limburg's subsoil remains sustainable for ourselves and for future generations. This means that we exercise restraint in extracting primary raw materials. Extraction of building materials is limited to what is absolutely necessary to supplement raw materials of circular origin, within the context of projects that serve multiple purposes and have the greatest possible added value for society. In cooperation with our partners, we aim to prevent any negative after-effects of former coal mining activities and to act appropriately when they occur. We are committed to ensuring adequate safety in the use of underground limestone quarries. In addition, we will continue, insofar as our competences as a province allow, to work towards effectively protecting the ecological quality of Limburg's soil. With regard to closed landfill sites, our aim is multifunctional high-grade land use where this is compatible with aftercare.

The Strategy describes our choices with respect to subsoil, excavation and soil protection.

Part B – Area-specific strategies

17 Limburg from a supra-regional perspective

17.1 Euroregional orientation

Limburg is situated in highly urbanised northwest Europe, at the crossroads of large population concentrations in the west and south of the Netherlands ('Randstad' and 'Brabantstad'), Belgium ('Vlaamse Ruit', including Brussels) and Germany (Rhine-Ruhr region). Thirty million people live within a 100-kilometre radius around Limburg. Two thirds of Limburg's population lives in highly urbanised South Limburg. North and Central Limburg have four towns (Venlo, Venray, Roermond and Weert) in a predominantly rural area dotted by villages and a few large rural centres that also serve a regional function. The natural habitat of Limburg's human population extends across national and provincial borders. Conversely, a substantial share of retail expenditure in Limburg comes from people who live outside the province.

From an economic point of view, Limburg's situation on the national borders offers both opportunities and challenges. It would be easier to take advantage of the opportunities if the European agglomeration were strengthened, for example by promoting economic and knowledge networks, removing administrative and cultural obstacles at the borders, setting up large-scale projects such as the Einstein Telescope, undertaking joint spatial planning and improving cross-border mobility. Limburg is active in the Euroregions and keys into developments in the European Union. Cooperation with our partners in the Euroregion is important in that regard. We are using European funding allocated for the new funding period of the European Structural and Investment Funds (2021-2027) and will continue our current co-funding system.

17.2 Towards a futureproof countryside

Multiple transitions

Two thirds of Limburg is rural. The Meuse Valley links the Heuvelland hill country in South Limburg and the higher-lying sandy soils that include the Meuse river terraces and the peat landscape of the Peel region in North and Central Limburg. Agriculture, horticulture and the leisure economy are important economic factors in the countryside.

There are major differences in the agricultural and landscape structures of Limburg's regions and how the two interact. North and Central Limburg can compete with global leaders in terms of agriproduction, agribusiness and agrilogistics. The link with Greenport Venlo, including the Brightlands Campus Greenport Venlo and Food Valley, is important for the agrifood sector. In South Limburg, land-based agriculture and horticulture have traditionally contributed significantly to the development and management of an attractive and varied cultural landscape. This heritage has been accorded a special place in the

Netherlands because of its distinctive architecture and design, for example half-timbered farm buildings and castle-like farmsteads with a square central courtyard. It is crucial to manage and preserve these unique landscape and cultural assets properly, something that requires new revenue models.

In the near future, radical transitions and major challenges will significantly change the appearance of the landscape.

Cross-border nature and water systems and landscapes

Limburg is a green corridor and therefore a strategic area between important European nature reserves. Our province also has landmark cross-border landscapes and nature reserves of major importance for leisure pursuits. The Meuse catchment area is a cross-border area. Ninety percent of Limburg's water comes from outside the Netherlands. This succession of cross-border nature reserves and valuable landscapes provides an opportunity to restore biodiversity and ecosystems.

Three categories of rural areas

The Limburg Ecological Network is Limburg's section of the Netherlands' National Ecological Network (NEN). This network plays an instrumental role in preserving and protecting biodiversity. It also serves as an important zone for leisure activity and as the backbone of the landscape structure, alongside cultural heritage assets. The Limburg Ecological Network includes 23 Natura 2000 areas, but there are also Natura 2000 areas situated just across Limburg's provincial and national borders. Among other things, reducing the nitrogen load from the surrounding area is paramount here.

The Green-blue Zone consists of the Meuse Valley and the stream valleys that have value as landscape and cultural heritage assets. The focus here is also on adapting the water system to climate change and there are opportunities for nature and landscape improvement in combination with agricultural, leisure and other activities.

The higher-lying sandy soils of North and Central Limburg and the South Limburg plateau together comprise the outlying area. This area faces major transition-related challenges, for example the problems of nitrogen overload and particulate matter. There are opportunities for a broad spectrum of farming practices, but also for other activities, for example within the context of the leisure economy.

A comprehensive approach

In many cases, it will be possible to take a comprehensive approach to the issues at hand and thus create win-win situations. At times, however, there will be competing claims for the limited space available. We will have to make choices by weighing up the disparate interests of the economy, energy supply, public health and safety, nature and spatial quality. This calls for an area-specific approach in which businesses, civil society organisations and authorities work together. The Province wishes to encourage and, where necessary, initiate such cooperation, among other things by making use of the opportunities and

facilities provided by the European Union and the national government.

17.3 Major challenges for cities and villages

Limburg's cities and villages must continue to be attractive places that offer their inhabitants a good quality of life. In the coming decades, they will be facing complex major issues and transitions. It is important to tackle the transitions and challenges in the built-up area in tandem and to manage them up-front. Government, civil society organisations and the business community will have to work together to solve many of the problems that will arise in built-up areas. The municipal authorities have an important role to play but an increasing number of issues transcend the local level and call for joint action by municipalities at regional level. We will support the municipal authorities in that respect. On certain matters that affect provincial interests, we will also provide guidance. We are taking a broader view that extends beyond the provincial and national borders.

Compact cities as a basis

New urban development projects should be accommodated within the built-up area as much as possible. This is necessary to preserve the distinction between city and countryside, between dynamic and tranquil, and between living, working and leisure as a feature of our living environment. In accordance with the instructions of the Environment and Planning Decree, we continue to support the 'Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation' and the choice for 'more city'. In doing so, we are focused on compact city centres, the preservation of basic amenities and quality of life. The decisive factor is not random borders but the inhabitants' way of life. The Province supports municipal authorities in resolving issues related to quality of life and social issues arising from disadvantages in participation, education and health.

17.4 Working to create an attractive business climate

Innovativeness

Looking ahead, it is important to maintain the competitiveness of our economic sectors in response to global trends. At the same time, Limburg's economy must become sustainable. Sustainability involves circularity, reducing environmental impacts, saving energy and transitioning to renewable sources of energy.

Cross-border business climate

Limburg's business climate is cross-border in nature. We wish to make the best possible use of Limburg's favourable location at the crossroads of key economic regions in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany and of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). In addition, we want to capitalise on our connections with knowledge regions such as Brainport Eindhoven, Amsterdam/Utrecht, Nijmegen/Wageningen, Leuven and Aachen.

Quality, availability and accessibility of work locations

Having a sufficient stock of work locations that meet the rapidly changing requirements of businesses and authorities in terms of digitalisation, sustaina-

bility, climate resilience and accessibility is an important prerequisite for improving the regional economic structure. Applying the Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation should minimise the negative impact of work locations on their immediate surroundings.

Multimodal accessibility

The transport volumes and logistics involved mean that the freight transport corridors between the main ports of Rotterdam, Antwerp and the Ruhr (Duisburg) are of major economic value for the Netherlands. From Limburg's vantage point, the Southeast Corridor (Rotterdam-Noord-Brabant/Limburg-Germany; A16/A58/A67 motorways, the Brabant Route, the Meuse and Brabant canals and pipelines) is particularly important, as is the corridor between Antwerp and the Ruhr (including Trilogicport Liège). In Limburg itself, Venlo-Venray and Sittard-Geleen/Stein/Beek are above-average logistics hubs.

We are committed to taking the freight transport corridors to new quality heights and are keying into the New Silk Road and other developments. We are also taking advantage of opportunities for pipeline transport. These efforts will go a long way to improving Limburg's position as a logistics hotspot.

It remains important for businesses that investments are made in infrastructure and accessibility by road, rail, water, pipeline and air as well as digitally. Accessibility challenges include upgrading multimodal access to our economic centres and improving traffic flows on and the reliability of the main road network (motorways), as well as meeting the demands of the logistics sector. Potential solutions can be sought in innovation (smart mobility) and more sustainable transport modalities (e-mobility). International accessibility is a particular point of concern. One of the tasks at the top of our agenda is to improve the capacity, quality and service of the rail infrastructure that we share with other countries.

Transport by waterway is limited at the moment. Removing physical barriers and close cooperation between the various stakeholders will enable us to capitalise more effectively on the existing potential.

Energy supply

Sustainable energy generation is set out in regional energy strategies (RESs). The national government is responsible for the Netherlands' main energy system, based on an all-round assessment of other issues and interests. It is documenting its approach in a Programme for the Main Energy System. It is important for Limburg that it does so in an international context, the basic premise being a level playing field at national and preferably international level. Our aim is to create an energy corridor with pipelines between Rotterdam and the Ruhr that will make Rotterdam a 'gateway to Europe' for hydrogen, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and other sustainable energy carriers and products (green pyrolysis, etc.) linked to Chemelot and Germany. This is a factor of huge economic significance.

Labour market

Due in part to demographic trends, there is a risk that a shortage of labour and young talent will hit Limburg harder and sooner than other areas of the Netherlands. Should that be the case, it could affect the province's development opportunities and economic positioning. Part of the solution is to retain workers and young people and improve the employment participation and labour productivity rate through technological and social innovations. In addition, it is important to help international employees, who are indispensable in some sectors, in their quest for suitable housing, integration into the local community and educational facilities.

18 Regional strategies for North, Central and South Limburg

19 Regional strategies for North, Central and South Limburg

North, Central and South Limburg have each produced their own regional strategies. After providing a profile of their region, they look ahead to the 2030-2050 period and discuss region-specific challenges and tasks by theme.

20 Implementation process

The Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment offers a strategic view of Limburg's physical environment. It describes the direction that the Province has chosen to take, how we will go about doing so, and who will take on which role in that process.

The Province aims to serve as an innovative and unifying force in helping Limburg to meet its future. It does this by helping, supporting, guiding, setting boundaries or enforcing. The Province turns its attention to developments in which it has a vested interest by providing temporary additional or long-term support, or, conversely, by deliberately withdrawing when it is confident that its support is unnecessary.

20.1 Basic principles for implementation

Subject to the requirements of feasibility, affordability and public support, the Province, as regional authority, acts as a reliable partner to other authorities and civil society organisations. Our cooperation is therefore based on a number of process-driven principles:

- The challenges and opportunities faced by society are central to our efforts
- Cross-border and other cooperation, participation and ownership

- Our approach is area-specific
- We take an adaptive approach to our tasks
- We work as one government
- Financial commitment by means of provincial policy frameworks

20.2 Three types of instruments

The Province can use three types of instruments to implement its environment and planning policy: administrative and communicative, financial, and legal. Which instrument it uses depends on the needs of society, priorities and level of urgency, the risks involved, and its role in the relevant matter. If the Province does indeed have a role to play, then it will determine which approach to take.

20.3 Cooperation

Limburg's Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment was developed in consultation with our regional partners. Our dialogue and cooperation with them will not end once the strategy has been adopted. Authorities, in cooperation with commercial parties, other partners in the region and beyond, civil society and the public, are charged with achieving the aims and carrying out the tasks identified here.

Regional alliances

Starting in 2015, administrative agreements between municipal and provincial authorities have been drawn up for each region, with the municipal authorities as the responsible parties. For each theme, the municipal authorities work in a regional context to develop joint municipal/intermunicipal programmes (previously: strategic structural agendas) that flesh out the frameworks of the Province's strategy. The basic elements of these programmes will be incorporated into the municipal strategies on spatial planning and the environment. The Province is closely involved in developing these programmes, which are adopted by municipal councils and the governing bodies of the water boards.

The administrative agreements will be updated in consultation with the regions after the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment comes into force and will be aligned with the choices made therein and with other current initiatives, such as the 'Regio Deals' partnerships between the national government and the regions.

Cooperation between the national government and the region

At approximately the same time as Limburg releases its Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment, the first National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment (NOVI) will also appear. Like the provincial strategy, the national strategy also promotes the concept of 'working as one government'. The national government wishes to conclude NOVI cooperation agreements with the organisations of provincial authorities, water boards and municipal authorities as a concrete manifestation of the 'one government' concept. The NOVI introduces a new instrument, the Regional Agenda. This agenda describes the tasks as stated in the various environment and planning

strategies – i.e. at the national, provincial and municipal levels – within the context of the national and regional implementation programmes, with the parties jointly identifying where additional actions are required. The aim is to have a shared understanding of the tasks to be undertaken in the physical environment to ensure that the relevant decision-making is more closely coordinated. This allows for more forceful and speedier implementation and promotes a better return on the financial investment.

A second instrument introduced in the NOVI are the NOVI areas. These are areas where the environment and planning issues are so complex that the national government intends to devote extra attention to them over a longer period. Limburg has two NOVI areas: NOVI region De Peel and NOVI region South Limburg.

20.4 Aligning with a policy cycle

The Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Environment and Planning Decree and the related programmes are important components of the provincial government's policy cycle. The Strategy describes the course of action that will take more concrete form in programmes. The Province of Limburg has committed itself to the Strategy and related programmes. The Environment and Planning Decree sets out rules to ensure that the aims identified in the strategy document and programmes are legally binding on third parties. It is important for environment and planning strategies and programmes to remain up to date and aligned with one another. That is why updating and monitoring are important elements of the policy cycle. Part of the policy cycle involves monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Strategy. To this end, we will prepare a monitor for the living environment.

Modular nature of the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment

There is but a single Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment for the territory of the Province of Limburg. This strategy consists of interrelated and coordinated policy and other modules, both area-specific and thematic in nature. The Dutch Environment and Planning Act will not lay down rules obliging the Province to update its environment and planning strategy. This means that we have the flexibility to undertake partial revisions amending one or more modules when necessary. The impetus for this may come from new provincial executive or coalition programmes, from trends in society, from the results of monitoring and evaluation, or from legislation. The consolidated document always contains the most recent versions of all modules.

20.5 Instruments provided for in the Environment and Planning Act

The Environment and Planning Act makes numerous legal instruments available to the Province. These instruments can be used to elaborate on policies outlined in the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment and related programmes. We explain the legal instruments briefly below, indicating in each

case whether it is the Provincial Council (PC) or the Provincial Executive (PE) that adopts the relevant environment and planning documents.

Programmes (PE)

Programmes addressing certain matters are prescribed by law with a view to implementing EU directives. Four programmes are mandatory for the Province:

- Noise Action Plan
- Regional Water Programme
- Management Plans for Natura 2000 areas
- Programmes in the event of imminent breaches of environment and planning standards (sulphur dioxides or nitrogen)

In the period ahead, we will take stock of which provincial programmes are necessary and advisable in addition to the mandatory programmes. We will do so against the background of planned national programmes and in conjunction with the municipal/intermunicipal programmes addressing specific themes that we anticipate will be drawn up at regional level.

Environment and Planning Decree (PC)

The Environment and Planning Decree establishes binding rules for Limburg's physical environment. The Province may only deviate from these rules if the relevant matters are clearly identified as provincial interests or relate to one of the Province's statutory tasks. The rules are those addressing such matters as groundwater protection, regional waters, functional zoning, nature conservation, species management and sanctuaries.

Instruction (PE)

The Provincial Executive (and in urgent cases, the King's Commissioner) may instruct a municipal council or the governing body of a water board to undertake a task or exercise a competence based on a provincial interest. That interest must have been communicated beforehand in a policy document such as the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment or a policy brief. An instruction cannot be issued if it is intended for recurrent implementation by differing administrative bodies. In such cases, the rules of the Environment and Planning Decree apply.

Project Decision (PE)

The purpose of the Project Decision is to amend the environment and planning strategy to allow for changes in the physical environment that are the responsibility of national or provincial government or a water board, ensuring that the relevant project can be carried out and maintained. If necessary, the national and provincial authorities have the power to overrule when taking such decisions.

Reactive intervention (PE)

The Provincial Executive may order a reactive intervention when a provincial interest is contravened and it needs to do so to ensure an even balance in functional zoning. Evidence for the provincial interest must be provided in a

document published by one of the Province's administrative bodies. The document may be a legally binding decision, such as the Environment and Planning Decree, an instruction or preliminary decision, but also a policy document, such as the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment, a policy brief or a policy memorandum.

Environment and Planning Permit (PE)

The Environment and Planning Permit helps to assess in advance activities that may have an impact on the physical environment, such as those that cause pollution. The permit covers activities for which the Province is the competent authority.

20.6 Policy documents affected by the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment

The following documents become null and void upon the entry into force of the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment:

- Provincial Environment Plan Limburg (POL2014)
- Supplements to the POL
 - Sand Meuse(2002, 2004, 2010)
 - Expansion of 't Rooth Quarry (2006)
 - Discontinuation of limestone quarrying St Pietersberg (2009)

The POL Border Meuse supplement (2005, 2010) remains in effect but will be regarded as a Programme falling under the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment.

Effective date of Provincial Environment and Planning Decree

The effective date of the Environment and Planning Decree is the same as that of the Dutch Environment and Planning Act (currently scheduled for 1 July 2022).

The following documents become null and void upon the entry into force of the new Environment and Planning Decree:

- Environment and Planning Decree Limburg 2014 (2014) and
- The related Decrees introducing amendments:
 - Decree amending the Environment and Planning Decree Limburg 2014 (2016)
 - Chapter 3, Nature, in the Environment and Planning Decree Limburg 2014 (2017)
 - Rules on geothermal energy in protected areas (2017)
 - in connection with the Treaty on the Modification of the Border between the Dutch Municipalities of Eijsden-Margraten and Maastricht and the Belgian Town of Visé (2017)
 - in connection with the correction of map 10, Regional flooding standards in section 5.3 (2018)
 - Section 2.4 Regional Details of Administrative Agreements POL2014 (2018)

- Modification of the boundaries of the Golden-green and Silver-green Nature Zone and Bronze-green Landscape Zone (2018)
- Section 2.14, Goat farming (2019)
- Modification of the boundaries of the Golden-green Nature Zone as implemented upon adopting the Nature Management Plan for Limburg (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)
- Decree amending the Environment and Planning Decree Limburg 2014 (amending certain provisions on water extraction areas and groundwater protection areas) (2020).

Where appropriate, the Environment and Planning Decree for Limburg may be amended with effect from 1 July 2022 by means of Decrees introducing amendments. These changes may arise from further elaborations based on the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment but also from a societal issue and at the instruction of the PC, national laws and regulations or in connection with the implementation of Programmes, such as the Water Programme. The consolidated version of the Environment and Planning Decree for Limburg will always represent the latest state of affairs and will be made available through the national Digital System for the Environment and Planning Act.

21 Background to Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment

21.1 Process leading up to the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment

The Provincial Council adopted a plan to formulate a Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment in spring 2018. In the plan, it was agreed that the Strategy would be the product of an interactive process involving authorities, quasi-governmental organisations, interest groups and other partner organisations. During that process, as much use as possible was made of ongoing work processes (such as the elaboration of thematic strategies or policy frameworks). A broad working conference commenced in late summer 2018 at which the parties began to define their common aims and agenda. In addition, a total of eight regional meetings took place between September 2018 and July 2020 to discuss both substance and processes. This yielded the basic elements of Limburg's 31 Environment and Planning Dilemmas. The Strategy was revised on this basis and two draft versions were shared and discussed with the Province's partners. The Draft Strategy was adopted on 25 August 2020. It was then made available for formal public consultation between 7 September and 18 October 2020.

21.2 Participation in the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment

Because the Strategy addresses themes that influence the daily lives of the people of Limburg, we have set up an online and offline participation process and invited not only partner organisations and stakeholders but also the province's inhabitants to contribute ideas. We have also involved neighbouring countries and entered into dialogue with the residents of the Euroregion through the research agency Dear Hunter. Input by all of these participants has been incorporated into the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment.

21.3 Environmental Impact Assessment

To give ecological and environmental interests^[4] their full due in the Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment, an environmental impact assessment (EIA) was carried out and an environmental impact report (EIR) drafted.^[5]

For the summary and the full text of the EIR, please refer to the separate documents at <https://www.limburg.nl/onderwerpen/omgeving/omgevingsvisie/milieueffectrapport/>.

4 The term 'environmental' no longer covers the full meaning, but still applies as the legal term.

5 It is customary to use the abbreviations EIA and EIR. The abbreviation EIA stands for the full assessment procedure. EIR stands for the environmental impact report that is drafted as part of that procedure. The EIR, like the EIA, not only looks at the environment but also at the broad assessment framework based on the categories people, planet and prosperity.

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