

For the Quality of Limburg

draft PEL2014



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 - 3 *Economy*
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0. For the Quality of Limburg

This document is the PEL2014, the Provincial Environment Plan Limburg.

This lays down our vision, which focuses on the steps that need to be taken to improve the quality of our physical environment, in particular during the coming ten years. This, together with the efforts in other areas, is intended to achieve the highest quality level in our residential and business environment.

Our vision pivots on invitation and inspiration, specific needs our partners emphasized from the very beginning of our cooperation. However, it has also become clear that the Province will nevertheless need to adopt an explicit, directive role for some issues.

Our vision was formulated in a process of co-creation and intensive cooperation with municipalities and regional stakeholders. This process was carried out in a number of phases. We began by jointly determining the agenda for the plan. Next, we drew up an outline sketch to identify the most important issues, ambitions, and tasks. We then held administrative dialogues with our most important partners to discuss ideas for the approach. This resulted in the outline for a PEL2014. The final step was a rigorous consultation process to jointly formulate the roles and instruments.

The result of this process of co-creation was a draft PEL2014. This draft was available with the the EIA plan and the draft Environmental Decree, and alongside the draft Provincial Traffic & Transport Programme, for review for a period of six weeks. In that time, over 600 responses were received, containing a great many suggestions for amendment and improvement. The Provincial Executive considered all of these in its review process, which resulted in the adoption of the PEL2014 on 12 December 2014.

The adoption of the PEL2014 is by no means an endpoint, but rather marks the transition to a phase in which the regional implementations can take centre stage, and in which partners are invited to contribute to the quality of Limburg in the spirit of the PEL.



Status of the PEL2014

PEL2014 performs four statutory functions, namely as the structural concept (Spatial Planning Act), provincial environmental plan (Environmental Management Act), regional water plan (Water Act), and Provincial Traffic and Transport Plan (Traffic and Transport Planning Act).

Explanation

The process in brief

The Provincial Council commissioned the integral revision of the current Provincial Environment Plan Limburg, dating from 2006, in December 2011. The Provincial Council's Agenda for the PEL2014 (June 2012) gave the directions for the planning process on the basis of directional specifications for the form, content, and process for the new PEL.

The conference Richting geven aan Limburg ('Setting Limburg's Course') organized in September 2012 marked the beginning of the PEL planning process. In meetings held in Autumn 2012, theme groups comprised of members from the Province, together with the most important stakeholders, explored the issues relating to twelve priority themes. Working groups comprised of members from the municipalities and the Province drew up visions for North, Central, and South Limburg. During the first six months of 2013, the Province, in consultation with the municipalities and regional stakeholders, compiled all the resulting building blocks to create an outline sketch. This sketch, which the Executive adopted in July 2013, primarily answers the WHAT question. In autumn 2013, administrative dialogues were conducted with the municipalities, water boards, and other partners on the approach to the most important themes: the answer to the HOW question. This resulted in the draft PEL2014 (October 2013). The last phase of the co-creation process involved discussions on the precise approach (the rules, the organization, and the instruments). The approach was reviewed in detail in a PEL conference, organized in November 2013, and an administrative workshop held on 24 January 2014. This resulted in the memorandum on the PEL2014: management and instruments, which was reviewed in sounding discussions held by the Council Spatial Planning, Infrastructure, and Finances Committee. These jointly formed the building blocks for the draft PEL as adopted by the Executive of the Province of Limburg on 6 May 2014.

The draft PEL2014 was available for review alongside the EIA plan (see below), the draft Environmental Decree, and the draft Provincial Traffic & Transport Programme for the duration of a public input period from 16 May to 27 June 2014. It received over 600 comments. These were addressed in a memorandum indicating which submissions and comments had prompted revision of the draft.

On 21 November, the proposals were discussed in the aforementioned Committee. The Provincial Executive definitively adopted the

PEL2014 on 12 December 2014.

Plan Environmental Impact Assessment

The PEL process includes the preparation of a new Plan Environmental Impact Assessment (Plan EIA) that compares the current policy course and the intended new policy course in terms of their effects on people, the environment and the economy.

An Appropriate Assessment was also carried out at a level of detail compatible with the abstraction level of the PEL2014.

Based on the EIA Committee's explicit recommendations, calculations were carried out for Limburg's Natura 2000 areas and the adjacent Natura 2000 areas in the neighbouring countries to determine the magnitude of the reduction of nitrogen deposition in these areas resulting from the emission reduction policy.

General conclusion: Many of the stipulated targets will be achieved, although there are a number of dependencies, in particular with respect to the economic developments and the actual deployment of resources. The overall indications are identical for all three regions and, consequently, are applicable to Limburg in its entirety. The condition in which the Natura 2000 areas are maintained remains a point for attention. The impact on these areas (not only through nitrogen emissions, but also via groundwater and co-use for leisure purposes) will be reduced as a result of the implementation of the measures laid down in the PEL and other autonomous policy. Achievement of the objectives will depend on the specified instruments (dynamic stock management of residential and business areas, the regulation of livestock farming emissions, and a focus on the deployment of resources in the vicinity of Natura 2000 areas). The cross-border effects of nitrogen deposition and placement of wind turbines in the border area will be a factor to be reckoned with. The EIA Committee gave a positive evaluation of the EIA plan (including Applicable Assessment); according to the Committee, the document contains the essential information required for the decision-making.

The environmental policy has increasingly moved towards an intersectoral policy, and has an impact on a wide range of policy themes. See also 'Modernizing Environmental Policy' (Parliamentary Document 28663, no. 55). This is why this PEL has no separate chapter devoted to the environment, as the PEL2001 and PEL2006 did, but instead the environmental policy is developed in its relationship to the individual policy areas, such as agriculture, infrastructure, and accessibility. (see 6.1.1)

1. Essence and most important changes

Essence

This document is the PEL2014, the Provincial Environment Plan Limburg.

Our central **ambition** is based on the Limburg Agenda: We intend to create an excellent cross-border residential and business environment that contributes to individuals and businesses deciding to come to Limburg – and, and above all, to stay in Limburg. The PEL focuses on the physical aspects of the residential and business environment. The major **challenges** will then be the promotion of innovation, retention of the region's appeal to young people and the working population, accelerating energy transition, the fundamental change in the housing and facilities tasks, the liveability of city centres and residential districts, and the response to climate change.

The important principles governing our environment policy are explained in Chapter Three.

Quality is pivotal. This is manifested by the nourishment of Limburg's diversity under the 'more city, more countryside' motto, based on providing scope for interweaving facilities, quality awareness and dynamic stock management that will need to result in a new form of growth. This is also compatible with the general principles for sustainable urbanization, such as the sustainable urbanization ladder and the priority assigned to the reuse of cultural & historical and landmark buildings.

Invitation is also pivotal. This relates more to the manner in which we, in cooperation with our partners, intend to create this excellent residential and business environment. We shall employ customized instruments and provide scope for experimentation. The Province then intends to be selective: The PEL focuses solely on issues that really need to be addressed at the Provincial level and which require regional solutions.

There are regional differences within Limburg. The ambitions and the most important issues and challenges for the North Limburg, Central Limburg, and South Limburg **regions** have been formulated in cooperation with the regional partners. These are reviewed in Chapter Four.

Pursuant to the Agenda for PEL2014, chapters Five to Eight inclusive review the ambitions, tasks, and approach for the **themes** in which the Province has a role to play or intends to play a role.

We have enough homes, industrial and business parks, offices, and retail establishments in Limburg – in fact, to an increasing extent, too many. At the same time, the quality is increasingly less compatible with the demand. Major qualitative tasks still await us in all these areas. Consequently, continual modernization and innovation are great importance: We cannot afford the luxury of standing still. The challenge is then to complete the transition 'from quantity to quality' and to create more scarcity.

The key lies in **dynamic stock management**. Visions will be drawn up for each region which detail joint ambitions, principles, and methods, to result in detailed and concrete commitments for implementation. Some themes will also require joint programming. These programmes then form the basis of administrative agreements between the regional municipalities and the Province. The Province provides assurances for the

implementation of these agreements with precautionary provisions in the Environmental Ordinance. These agreements are focused on the improvement of the existing stock, the potential approach to excessive vacancy levels and the scrapping of plans that are not sufficiently compatible with the intended quality. There is room to add good new stock, under certain conditions, one of which would necessarily be the scrapping of existing stock. This will need to be given form and substance in the visions. The precise approach can vary by issue and region.

Limburg's general **accessibility** is reasonably in order. Some points need to be improved to ensure that Limburg remains suitably accessible in the future. These include the rail connections with our neighbours. The approach continues to be based on the utilize-influence-build triplet.

A major transition is required in the field of **energy**: Energy conservation and sustainable energy generation will be required to fulfil the ambitions. All potential sources of energy will be necessary. The PEL devotes specific attention to wind farms, as Limburg has reached agreement with the central government on the minimum capacity to be installed. This PEL reflects our vision of the best means and locations (preferred regions and exclusion regions) for the fulfilment of this agreement.

We make a distinction between four zones in the rural areas that are assigned a range of tasks and space for the development of nature, water, the landscape, and agriculture and horticulture. In addition, we have defined further ambitions for the South Limburg National Landscape and the Meuse Valley.

The plans for the **golden-green nature zone** focus on the protection and enhancement of nature, with particular attention to the Natura 2000 areas and natural streams. The hydrologically-sensitive areas (including the 'wet pearls') also require attention. We intend to optimize the leisure co-use of nature. Nature and the nature policy need to be an integral part of society.

The **silver-green nature zone** includes agricultural areas offering major opportunities for nature development and nature management tasks, which we need to utilize primarily relying on regional resources. We will need to avoid irreversible developments in these areas.

The **bronze-green landscape zone**, primarily concentrated in and around brook valleys and along the steeper slopes in South Limburg, is comprised of attractive landscape areas that fulfil a wide range of functions. The brooks and brook valleys need to be climate-resilient: They need to absorb both future peaks in the regional discharge of water and periods of drought and, in so doing, be a part of the achievement of the European objectives. They offer scope for the sustainable development of land-based agriculture and horticulture. We need to cherish the specific qualities of the landscape – the core qualities – and make optimum use of our heritage of monuments.

The **rural areas** offer most space for agriculture, horticulture, and the leisure economy.

The **Meuse valley** confronts us with the task of anticipating peak water discharges. The PEL assigns a directorial role for the Province in the approach to the task of managing high water levels in relation to the spatial and economic developments in the Meuse valley. Climate change also imposes new requirements on the structure of the **regional water system** needed to provide for adequate supplies of freshwater and avoid flooding in the periods of drought and large amounts of rainfall that will face us in the future.

The PEL specifies how we, in cooperation with our partners, will fulfil our ambition for the **agricultural and horticultural sector** in 2025: Every holding is an asset to its surroundings. The PEL devotes the necessary attention, for example, to the approach to the achievement of 'clean sheds' on the basis of a combination of incentives and regulations. We also intend to offer prospects for new developments in the sector, such as the agglomeration of agricultural production. Industrial and business parks will be most suitable for these agglomerations. The greenhouse horticultural sector is offered adequate space for growth in the greenhouse horticulture development areas.

The Province has an explicit role to play in **subsoil** issues relating to appropriate spatial planning for the use of underground resources and reconciling above-ground and below-ground use of land. This relates to issues including groundwater extraction, geothermal and deep geothermal energy systems, minerals extraction, archaeology, and soil management.

Chapter 9, in conclusion, outlines how we will also provide scope for the necessary **dynamism and flexibility** following the adoption of the PEL.

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