



## Summary

# Provincial strategy on spatial planning and the environment for limburg

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provincie limburg



## 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.

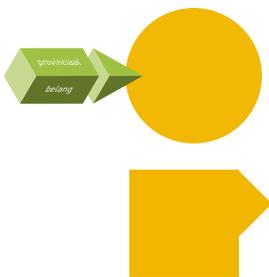
In this document, we share our long-term view of spatial planning and the environment. We describe how we continuously seek to strike the right balance between protecting and using the physical environment. In our strategy, we address issues for which the Province bears statutory responsibility, but 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.

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

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

- To ensure an attractive, socially responsible, healthy and safe environment
  - In urban or built-up areas
  - In rural areas
- To ensure a future-proof, innovative and sustainable economy (including the transition to sustainable agriculture)
- 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

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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<sup>[1]</sup> 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,<sup>[2]</sup> 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

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#### 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<sup>[3]</sup>:

*>We seek to build an inclusive, healthy and safe society that 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.*

*>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.*

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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.

>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

Adjacent zones are closely linked and interdependent. The transition zones between different rural areas require a customised approach.

## 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 defined in the Dutch Environment and Planning Act. Our definition is based on the following criteria, for example with regard to area-specific development:

- 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 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.

### Housing and living environment

Planned and available housing stock in which supply matches demand in terms of both quality and quantity, so that there are enough (affordable) homes of the right quality at the right locations.

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 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. We explain the task, identify our aim and state what we have chosen to do in our Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment. The summary below states the main choices we have made for each theme.

### 5 Housing and living environment

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From a legislative point of view, our input as a province is limited in this area. That is why we have opted for a role as an agenda-setter, facilitator, co-manager and liaison. We act on the basis of added value and support and complement our partners. Where necessary, we take corrective action pursuant to the Environment and Planning Decree.

We consider housing development projects from a broad societal context. That calls for a comprehensive approach in which safety and quality of life are always taken into account. In addition, we encourage efforts to make existing and new homes both sustainable and ageing-friendly.

We consider it important to first ensure the quality of built-up areas. Based on the 'Ladder of Sustainable Urbanisation' principle, we make optimum use of space in built-up areas by first reusing and repurposing vacant property. In principle, residential use is permitted only in designated residential areas, with – temporary – exceptions being made in a flexible shell.

The Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment identifies the broad guidelines for all this. To meet rapidly changing housing needs and allow for differing local and regional issues in housing and the living environment, Limburg needs more targeted approaches in the form of provincial, regional and/or municipal programmes, agendas and instruments, such as the Limburg Housing Agenda 2020-2023.

## 6 Health and safety

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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.

We work to improve the quality of the living environment in accordance with our statutory tasks as the competent authority overseeing a broad range of environmentally detrimental activities. In doing so, we take advantage of opportunities to link these activities to standards of health and safety in the broadest sense. We have entrusted tasks in a number of areas to the regional implementation services, the RUDs.

We adhere to national and European health and safety standards in environment and planning. We are efficient and professional in our approach to performing our core statutory environment and planning tasks (Permit Awards, Supervision and Enforcement, VTH).

As far as external safety is concerned, our focus is on managing existing and/or future risks.

We focus on clustering high-risk industrial activities. If a combination of high-risk activities and vulnerable structures cannot be avoided, we want the area affected to be designed to be as safe as possible, so that populations are protected against accidents involving hazardous substances.

Together with our partners, we are developing an economic agenda in the health sector not only with a view to employment but also in terms of health as business, for example through Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus and Brightlands Greenport Venlo.

## 7 The arts and culture, sport and heritage

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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.

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 focus on recreational sport, talent development/professional sport and sporting events, all from a Euroregional perspective. Wherever possible, we promote a living environment and infrastructure that encourage physical exercise.

Together with property owners and national and municipal authorities, we work to preserve and repurpose heritage assets of both a religious and non-religious nature. The preservation of heritage assets is an important factor in urban development or in the management of Natura 2000 areas. In our role as an advisory and funding body, we look at the heritage asset in its setting, i.e. the cultural heritage ensemble. We support initiatives that contribute to purposeful and efficient archaeological research and contribute to this ourselves, by consulting with the commercial parties involved.

## 8 Economy

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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.

#### Campus development

We remain committed to the ongoing development of the four Brightlands campuses. The Province of Limburg is a shareholder member of each of the campus organisations, alongside Maastricht University and a third, often private, party..

#### Innovation and cross-overs: importance of urban centres

Looking ahead, innovation hubs may develop not only on the campuses but also in our city centres and complement one another and the campuses.

#### Einstein Telescope

We support South Limburg's candidacy as the site of the Einstein Telescope.

#### Education and labour market

We would like the regional labour market and knowledge and education infrastructure to be properly aligned and to modernise in anticipation of the transitions.

#### Circular economy

These are our principles for driving the growth of a circular economy:

- Set a good example and facilitate promising initiatives.
- Link parties and chains.
- Encourage innovation and professionalism.
- Share knowledge with businesses and the public.

#### Chemelot site

We support the aim of Chemelot to become a climate-neutral chemicals site by 2050 (European Circular Hub).

#### VDL Nedcar

We wish to embed the automotive sector in Limburg. We therefore propose to facilitate VDL Nedcar's expansion strategy in cooperation with the municipalities involved so that we can help to ensure the company's continuity.

#### Maastricht Aachen Airport

The national government has designated MAA as a regional airport of national significance. In terms of further airport development, we believe it is important to balance the economic opportunities offered by the airport with matters of safety and with environment-related interests, such as the ecology and human health.

#### Leisure economy

We wish to promote professionalism in the sector. We encourage entrepreneurs, authorities and knowledge institutions to work together on developing a good physical infrastructure. We also encourage data and knowledge sharing, networking and the development of a joint marketing strategy aimed at the right target groups. A specific concern is to avoid overtourism in the interests of local residents.

## 9 Work locations

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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.

#### Industrial and business parks

We choose to facilitate compact work locations in an effort to optimise the use of space and integration into the landscape. We use the following order of preference: first, upgrading or redeveloping outdated work locations and only then permitting the development of new business parks. We prefer to expand existing sites; the development of new locations is the final option.

### Logistics

Proper delineation and strict management of noise production ceilings at business parks are crucial to optimising the use of space available for development and to protecting quality of life in the vicinity. In the Environment and Planning Decree, the Chemelot and VDL Nedcar sites will again be designated as 'industrial sites of provincial importance'. Accordingly, the Provincial Council has the power to amend, delineate and enforce noise production ceilings on those sites.

### Offices and shops in business parks

Stand-alone offices and retail outlets have no place in business parks. Manufacturers may have office space and showrooms within their production facilities. Retailers that trade in bulky goods or products that pose a risk of fire or explosion may also be located in business parks.

### Office buildings

Limburg is witnessing long-term vacancies in office buildings and a consistently weaker demand for office space. We support and encourage municipalities that serve as regional centres in their efforts to concentrate office buildings and to upgrade the quality of office developments in urban centres and adjacent railway station zones.

### Shopping districts

Limburg has too many shops. We support and encourage municipalities in their effort to boost their economy and improve quality of life by making existing shopping districts in cities and rural centres more compact and by raising the standard of quality.

## 10 Mobility

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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.

Mobility involves physical measures, but also measures that influence behaviour and technological innovations, for example smart mobility and smart logistics. Mobility is an ever-changing field, so flexibility, anticipation and adaptive planning are a must.

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.

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 the A2, A67 and A76 motorways and the A73 motorway at Venlo 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.

We encourage inland shipping and the use of Limburg's inland ports. They are an important element in the cross-border logistics corridors of waterways, contribute to sustainable transport and relieve pressure on the road network. Looking ahead, they may also play a role in the transition to a circular economy.

We keep facilities at the two logistics hubs in North Limburg (Venlo-Venray) and South Limburg (Sittard-Geleen/Stein) up to date and anticipate new developments at these sites.

We continue to offer public transport in Limburg on a demand-driven basis. We coordinate trends and developments in public transport with our stakeholders in the Euroregion, such as shipping companies and other contracting authorities.

We are committed to smart mobility and smart logistics, allowing leeway for long-term innovations. One crucial factor in this regard is to have well-documented and up-to-date mobility data.

## 11 Energy

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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 apply the 'trias energetica' principle in all sectors. This means that:

- we reduce the demand for energy by avoiding waste;
- we use non-fossil, renewable energy as much as possible, for example wind energy, solar energy and hydropower;
- any non-renewable energy that we require is as clean as possible and used as efficiently as possible.

We are committed to setting aside the necessary space and connecting effectively to national and international energy grids. To ensure that the spatial requirements of the energy transition are properly coordinated with developments in, for example, industry, agriculture, mobility and climate change mitigation, the Province is carrying out an energy infrastructure system study with its partners.

The RES (Regional Energy Strategy) regions bear primary responsibility for achieving the 2030 climate targets for onshore sustainable electricity production. The national government will only initiate an administrative consultation process if it emerges, after mutual deliberation, that the targets set at national level are not being achieved. It may be necessary, in the public interest, to introduce unpopular measures. This will always take place consultation with the region.

For the time being, we will adhere to the ban on wind turbines in exclusion areas such as the South Limburg National Landscape Protection Area and Natura 2000 areas. We will involve the RES regions in updating exclusion and priority areas as listed in the Province's 2014 Environment and Planning Strategy.

## 12 Agriculture and horticulture

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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.

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

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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 Provincial Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment takes a long-term approach to the main water-related issues. The 2022-2027 Water Programme elaborates on the following and other choices.

### International

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.

### Meuse Valley

We are focused on re-evaluating flood safety policy for the Meuse Valley. Our aim is to achieve a comprehensive and realistic approach to flood protection in the Meuse catchment area in Limburg. We are doing this as agreed and in consultation with the Limburg Water Board, Limburg's Meuse Municipalities, Rijkswaterstaat, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and the Staff of the Delta Programme Commissioner. We also involve Limburg's Security and Safety Regions in our efforts.

As a partner in area-specific planning and guardian of spatial planning quality, we will continue to cooperate and contribute to a number of area-specific projects focusing on flood protection and other matters, under the terms of our agreements with the national government, the Limburg Water Board and the Meuse Municipalities. Our input is aimed at enhancing area-specific assets.

### Streams and stream valleys

Our spatial planning procedures must allow for changing weather, groundwater depletion and flooding. That is why we are exploring whether we can exercise our legal powers more vigorously to achieve our goals for the regional water system. If so, then we can ensure that the consequences of groundwater depletion, flooding and other matters that have an adverse impact on water quality will be factored into arguments for developing the physical environment.

Streams and stream valleys are the basis of the regional surface water system and also influence spatial planning. We will examine whether the Dutch Environment and Planning Act affords better protection of stream valleys and other depressions against spatial encroachments so that they have enough room to hold and store water.

### Groundwater

We will continue to perform our statutory groundwater management tasks. We will describe the breakdown of responsibilities between the Water Board, as the overall water management body, and the Province, which has a number of specific groundwater management tasks, in our Provincial Water Plan.

We ensure the proper distribution of available groundwater for multiple purposes, for example drinking water supply, nature, agriculture and industry, even when the supply of water is scarce. In doing so, we consider the quantities available, what the various purposes require, potential savings and other mitigating measures.

## 14 Nature

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### More natural habitats, of better quality

Our efforts to attain the biodiversity targets run along several different tracks. The primary track concerns our efforts to improve the quality of existing habitats in the Limburg Ecological Network and, in particular, in Natura 2000 areas. In addition, we have opted to create new, high-quality habitats within the Limburg Ecological Network. In addition to the Ecological Network, we will create zones in the Green-blue Zone, where land use helps to achieve biodiversity targets to a greater or lesser extent.

Our aim is to restore the abiotic factors of the Limburg Ecological Network and in particular the Natura 2000 areas by improving water, soil and ecological conditions, for example by tackling nitrogen overload. We are pursuing these efforts in tandem with our nitrogen policy.

In continuing to develop the Limburg Ecological Network and the Green-blue Zone, we are seeking cross-border cooperation.

As the competent authority under the Dutch Nature Conservation Act, we continue to protect nature by applying the rules set out in the Environment and Planning Decree and by making informed choices when granting environmental permits and exemptions. Under the Decree, we will continue to compensate for the loss of nature (natural assets) resulting from developments in other areas as agriculture, housing, energy generation, the economy or leisure activity.

### Fauna management and species protection

With regard to fauna management, we prefer to manage populations of wild animals in a way that prevents or limits harm. We use an escalation model in which we encourage the use of preventive measures and culling only as a last resort.

For invasive exotic species, we apply the precautionary principle in which we remove new populations from habitats as quickly as possible. As a provincial authority, we wish to play a coordinating role in this and call on those who manage nature areas and public space to make an active contribution.

### Engagement with and support for nature and the landscape

We aspire to integrate nature and the landscape into society. This means, among other things, that we challenge the public and businesses to help manage nature and the landscape and that we support green citizens' initiatives.

We reinforce the ties between nature/landscape and the economy by encouraging nature-inclusive entrepreneurship in agriculture, leisure and tourism, care and innovation and other sectors, and by encouraging corporate social responsibility in relation to nature and the landscape. We support nature-inclusive spatial planning and economic development.

## 15 Landscape

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Where spatial planning is concerned, we offer guidance and advice at an early stage of the assessment process, with the aim of arriving at integrated designs.

The Province plays a unifying role in implementing the programme governing the South Limburg National Landscape.

In North and Central Limburg, we support the two regions' efforts to use integrated area-specific planning to transform traditional National Parks into wider regions encompassing the present core nature reserves. These efforts improve the experiential value and quality of the countryside, boost the economic potential of the regions and promote social cohesion between rural areas and urban centres.

We will continue to focus on preserving, managing, developing and promoting the experiential value of the core landscape assets of the South Limburg National Landscape Protected Area and its Green-blue Zone.

We encourage the water board, municipal authorities and other stakeholders to adopt climate-adaptive and ecologically sustainable measures for the streams, stream valleys, dry valleys and steeper slopes situated in the Green-blue Zone.

We wish to view cities and their adjacent rural areas more as an integrated whole. We are particularly interested in the transition zones around our cities, i.e. the urban-rural transition zone.

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

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When the Dutch Environment and Planning Act enters into force, the Province will in many instances remain the competent authority for issuing environment and planning permits.

### Subsoil

We encourage the sustainable use of Limburg's subsoil. Exploitation must be balanced against protection and vice versa.

We play an active role in administering the agreements with the national government regarding the after-effects of Limburg's coal mining past. It is important that the national government provide suitable compensation for damage caused by former mining operations.

### Excavation

Any form of excavation (whether or not it involves the quarrying or mining of building materials) must be contingent on its resulting in or improving a socially relevant outcome. The initiators of such operations must see that they have the support of the local community.

Evidence must be presented that a new quarry or mine is more useful and necessary than recycling secondary raw materials and the transformation to a circular economy.

Preference is given to sand and gravel quarrying projects that contribute to area-specific planning in the Meuse Valley.

### Soil protection

The Province will continue to act as an intermediary between the national and municipal authorities and other provincial partners in tackling Substances of Very High Concern, such as PFAS.

## Part B – Area-specific strategies

### 17 Limburg from a supra-regional perspective

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#### 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, joint spatial planning and improving cross-border mobility. Limburg is active in the Euroregions and keys into developments in the European Union. 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 agrilistics. 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 areas that fall within the Green-blue Zone often function as a buffer around and as corridors between existing nature reserves. They are predominantly agricultural areas (where more extensive farming is practised) with historic structures, small-scale landscape features and watercourses. In South Limburg, this area also includes the steeper slopes, dry valleys and key landscape corridors to the Meuse Valley. The focus in the Green-blue Zone is on adapting the water system to climate change.

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.

### 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, 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. 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, sustainability, 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 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.

Challenges include upgrading the multimodal accessibility of 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.

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 (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

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## 19 Regional strategies for North, Central and South Limburg

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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

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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
- We focus on cooperation, participation and ownership
- Our approach is area-specific
- We take an adaptive approach to our tasks
- We work as one government
- We determine our 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 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. Potential NOVI areas are the De Peel region and 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.

### 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 ground-water 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 January 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 January 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

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### 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.

### 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<sup>[4]</sup> 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.<sup>[5]</sup>

For the summary and the full text of the EIR, please refer to the separate documents at [www.limburg.nl/toekomstvanlimburg](http://www.limburg.nl/toekomstvanlimburg).

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

<sup>5</sup> 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.